Women and Community Development in India:
Examing the Paradoxes of Everyday Practice

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Supriya Pattanayak

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support provided by my husband, Dr. Mukti kanta Mishra. I shall be eternally grateful to him for being there.
Map of India: Orissa State is on the east coast of India
Village Balipada is north of the capital Bhubaneswar

Source: www.mapsofindia.com
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Women and Community Development in India:
Examining the Paradoxes of Everyday Practice

Thesis Summary

Supriya Pattanayak, RMIT University

My experience as a development aid worker has brought to the fore the incongruence between the rhetoric and practice of community development in India, more so in relation to women. Historically, the practice of community development in India has also been imposed and could be considered as an ‘imperialist’ relic of the colonial rule. This has been traced through an extensive literature review and discourse analysis of the five year plan and other related documents.

The research aimed to uncover the manner in which rural Indian women engaged with structures and processes of community development and to explore what benefits or otherwise accrued to them. It further sought to explore the reasons for the failure of a particular program as envisaged by local women. The thesis used the framework of structuration, everyday life and community development theories (Giddens, Lefebvre, de Certeau, Ife) and an ethnographic methodological approach. One rural community of 52 households, in the state of Orissa (India) was the subject of study and in-depth interviews were conducted with three key informants.

Participant observation was the cornerstone of this research in order to gain an in-depth view of the everyday lives of women, with the researcher spending seven months in the community. Themes were developed around the community development program (Mahila Mandals) and the key informants were interviewed regarding the same, its formation, structure, processes, the reasons for its initial success and subsequent failure and finally women’s agency in engaging with various aspects of the program.

The findings showed that this program would not have developed unless it had been driven from the top; women had no say in the structures and processes, and while it was successful initially for instrumental reasons, not taking into account women’s agency was the reason for its downfall. Despite these lessons, it is recognised that the practice of community development continues to remain top-down. Till date, international aid
agencies, government’s (national, state and local), and/or INGOs/ NGOs determine the needs of communities and the approaches to address and evaluate them.

Conclusions include a policy discussion on the attempt by international agencies, especially DFID, and governments (of India and Orissa) to address gender issues in their existing and new programs taking into account women’s agency as constructed in their everyday lives. The centrality of poverty debates in a developing country like India, especially the construction of poverty and the implications for women in this, has been highlighted. There is an agreement within the international, national and local debates that gender issues have to be addressed with great urgency in view of the changing roles of women.
Introduction

Positioning Myself in the Context of the Research

This thesis is an attempt to explore the contested relationship between development, community development and women. It recognises the pluralist starting points of these concepts, ‘development’ covering a range of theoretical and political stances and a wide variety of practices as does ‘community development’. Likewise, the category of ‘women’ is not singular or homogenous. While there has been no shortage of reflexive engagement within gender and development research (Kabeer 1994; Goetz 1997; Miller & Razawi 2003), critical reflection on changing orthodoxies and on issues of positionality and representation (Mohanty 1991; Jackson, C. & Pearson 1998; Mohanty 2003) and a growing and increasingly sophisticated literature on gender mainstreaming (Kabeer 2003; Macdonald 2003; Rai 2003; Prugl & Lustgarten 2005), the practice of gender mainstreaming within organisational contexts (primarily development institutions) and governments has been disappointing. As Gouws (2005, p. 78) puts it: ‘while the driving force around gender activism used to be women’s experience, mainstreaming turns it into a technocratic category for redress and also suppresses the difference between women’.

In this thesis, I have reverted to engaging with everyday life experiences of women and their agency in resisting the technocratic solutions imposed on them.

Feminist research, through its exploration into the knowledge about women’s lives, shifted the status of what was previously considered legitimate knowledge. In determining where social practices begin, feminist standpoint epistemologies highlighted the centrality of the researcher’s positionality. Smith (1990, p. 52) has argued that traditional social science objectifies social reality and the aim of advancing social science research should not involve the building of conceptual edifices, applied as filters for investigating the world. Research should not be ideologically structured and should not constitute a virtual reality under the guise of objectivity, which it currently is.

Whilst there is a plethora of literature on women and development in India, most have concentrated on women’s deficits, their lack of access to resources and power, and the need for them to be integrated into existing programs. They may even have critically questioned whether the discourse of development does have the real potential to empower
women and/or to meet their strategic needs exists within its programmatic designs, but the changes initiated, if any, have not translated into any real difference in women’s lives.

A general supposition made by the international development sector is that most ‘good practices’ – either as theories, practices, knowledge, skills, ethics and principles - that have originated in Western cultures, can be introduced to developing countries, with modifications, as a way of assisting these countries in their ‘development’ (Eytesemitan & Gire 2003). It is my contention that the practices of Community Development and the analyses of gender in India likewise have evolved and progressed within a Western framework.

I decided to undertake this study because of the frustrations I experienced throughout my academic trajectory and work life, when often confronted with the contradictions between the rhetoric (mainly embedded within a dominant western discourse) and practice (grounded in everyday realities of life in the highly diverse cultural context of the people). I found that social science research in India has worked within a western epistemological framework and value base and has not been concerned with uncovering the subjugated knowledges and practices which have enabled women to enact their agency despite the overpowering influence of (imposed) dominant discourses and structures.

Social Work Education in India has been an import and a legacy of colonialism and suffers from the plague of ‘professional imperialism’ (Midgley 1981). The practice of community development accordingly has been influenced by this, despite a long history of philanthropy and, more recently, attempts at self-reliance as demonstrated in the independence movement. Following independence, development agencies and international financial institutions have played a major role in determining the course of development of the economy and community development in particular. While they have policies addressing various structural disadvantages in society, they have failed to address their applicability to different cultures and have therefore been severely and quite justifiably criticised.

Especially the impact of various development policies on women within these communities has been my main concern; women and other marginalised groups who are the users (or non-users) of services are often seen to operate passively within established (or implicit) rules of their communities. The assumption that ‘development’ is the key to
socio-economic advancement (and subsequently the improvement of women’s own social status) in India has not provided insight into what it actually means to women as ‘users’ of the associated ‘services’ or as participants in the programs. What has assisted women to maintain their efforts in preserving their subsistence – or what Shiva (1989) has called ‘their life base’ – is different from the representations they have been ascribed in mainstream western feminist literature. My experience of working with a development agency has not only reinforced this perception, but has further forced me to adhere – however reluctantly - to the dominant discourse of development and its hegemonic practices, creating a great degree of discomfort with the contradictions I faced.

Situating Myself and the Research

To tell ‘where one comes from’ (Code 1995, p. 1) is no longer just a process of situating epistemologically a person/theorist (myself) within a philosophy or ideology, as there is no single point from which one can definitely state that ‘one comes from’. I have to first situate myself as an Indian, from a country which finds itself in a period of transition, where there is a resurgence of Hindu nationalism/fundamentalism and which has succumbed to the multiple pressures of the IMF and the World Bank to bring about structural adjustment, all with an aim to ‘globalise democracy’ and ‘develop’ the economy.

In the present social and political climate, my hybridity stems from my intellectual and geographical/spatial dislocation. I experienced my hybridity first when realising that, although my parents hailed from the State of Orissa in eastern India, we always maintained a hyphenated identity. I was born in the state of Maharashtra and spent my early years there, moving to Karnataka at the age of 5, when my father took on an appointment with the Government of India. In Karnataka, we were the only Oriya family, and thus were forced into a certain amount of isolation, although as children we learnt the local language very quickly and settled into the local community. All along, though, I recognised the privilege we all enjoyed by virtue of my father’s position. The advantages that went with the privilege were the exposure my three siblings and I had to intellectuals from all over the world. While my father was an academic in linguistics, he approached the study of language from a multidisciplinary perspective and from very early, therefore, we had exposure to ‘experts’ in the field of language, literature, folklore, semiotics, economics, mathematics, development, anthropology, sociology, psychology,
communications and other fields. For me, this paved the way to an interest in issues of development and social justice.

The trajectory of my education weaves through a variety of experiences from public school, to training in social work where theory was far removed from the reality of everyday experiences of people. Of course, the major factor in this distancing was the language of communication within these elite institutions, which was different from the language of formal school education and from the language people in rural communities used. Further, the theoretical frameworks were western – UK and US - imports and most inappropriate to the everyday cultural context within which social work was practised. This paradox also became evident in my experience of working in different agencies. My first social work experience was working with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, followed by work with the Governments of India and the State Government of Orissa, with a grassroots level NGO and, finally, with an international aid agency, the Department of International Development (DFID, UK Government). It was from these experiences that my interest in ‘women’ as an ontological category and as enmeshed in organisational contexts arose.

Higher education in Australia not only exposed me to a plethora of western feminist literature, allowing me to recognise the distinctions between various traditions of feminist thought; it also has made me, I must admit, subscribe to the discipline Spivak (1993) called ‘new orientalism’, where English constructs an object of study called ‘third world’ or ‘post-colonial’ literature.

In addition, I am looking at the intersection of social work and community development as practised today, as a form of professional imperialism and the impact it has had on the

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1 I am well aware of the debates surrounding the definition and the meaning of the ‘Third World’ (Wolf-Phillips 1968). The frequency of the use of this term seems to have taken the derogatory sting out of its meaning. Bauer (1981) suggests that the Third World is the creation of foreign aid and is a product of ‘Western guilt’. I am using it here not only as a mental construct or abstract notion but, also as a concrete/tangible notion to denote the countries of Asian, African and Latin American states which are marked by their poverty, lack of bargaining strength in the international political economy and a subordinate position in the international hierarchy of states. I do not deny, however, the diversity that exists within these nations (Hoogvelt 1982), but there is a commonality defining a ‘world of their own’/the ‘Other’ that can be contrasted against the more developed nations. Thus my conception of the Third World is not just economic, but also historical, social and cultural. Whilst ‘second world’ no longer exists, the frequent use of the term Third World by development experts denotes an attitude, a world view, a territory and particular actions of the states of the South, has given it some specificity that its existence is no longer defined by the existence of the Second World. Sen and Crown (1987) have also used the term as a positive self-affirmation based on the struggles against the multiple oppression of nation, gender, class and ethnicity.
structures in a rural community and the everyday lives of women within that community. Postmodernist critiques have brought to the fore particularities and differences and universal claims to knowledge have been questioned. This has certainly had an impact on issues related to women and development, especially in Third World countries.

While I am well aware of the diverse debates surrounding the methodological universalism in cross-cultural practice in western feminism, the common ground I have utilised for the purpose of this discussion is the oppression of women, but mainly in the context of India, and how their experiences have placed them in a position of ‘victim’ in the ‘developmental process’; that no matter what the intervention may have been, it is still based within the ‘women in development’ approach and has ‘left the mainstream of development untouched, commanded marginal budgets, treated women identically, and failed to look systematically at why and how women were disadvantaged’ (Derbyshire 2002, p. 8).

**DFID and Community Development**

My interest in the field of community development began with my social work education in India; the disjunct between theory and practice became apparent as my career progressed, but I am especially drawing on my work at the Department for International Development (DFID), which I will again refer to in the concluding chapter. DFID is the part of the UK Government that manages Britain’s aid to poor countries and works to abolish extreme poverty. Needless to say, the rationale for UK Governments involvement in development is because more than a billion people – one in five of the world’s population – live in (what is called) extreme poverty, living on less than 70p a day. Ten million children die before their fifth birthday, most of them from preventable diseases; more than 115 million children do not go to school, so the thought is that getting rid of poverty will make for a better world for everybody.

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2The debates surrounding this methodological universalism in western feminism are clearly outlined by Mohanty (1988), where she analyses the work of Hosken, who equates purdah with rape, domestic violence and forced prostitution, thus emphasising the ‘sexual control’ function as the primary explanation of purdah disregarding the context. Mohanty asserts that while there is physical similarity in the veils worn across various cultures, the specific meaning attached to this practice varies according to the ideological and cultural context. Similarly, she states that concepts like reproduction, the sexual division of labour, the family, marriage, household, patriarchy, etc. are assumed to have a universal applicability. Finally, she states that some writers confuse the use of gender as a superordinate category of organising analysis with the universalistic proof and instantiation of this category.
DFID in India (DFIDIndia 2005) works with the Indian government, State governments and other development agencies to help achieve the objectives of India’s 10th Five Year Plan and reach the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Orissa state, with its high poverty headcount, its stated determination to improve the living conditions of its people and its willingness to work with DFID, is one of the focus states. Objectives of DFID’s programme in Orissa are:

Objective 1: Poverty reduction through accountable governance and effective use of resources
Objective 2: A coordinated approach to human development so as to improve health and education outcomes, especially for the poor
Objective 3: Improved and sustainable rural livelihoods and economic growth opportunities for the poor (DFIDIndia 2005, pp. 4-5)

The priority themes throughout all objectives are inequality, disaster risk reduction and communications; while these are lofty objectives and are extensively critiqued, what constantly concerned me was the lack of particular focus on the issue of gender, even with a DFID policy paper on that very subject.

While stating that DFID India has been consistently ambitious in its efforts to target aid to the poorest and remain closely aligned with India’s development needs and with DFID’s corporate strategy, Heath (2006) also highlights the need for a rigorous impact evaluation of certain parts of its programmes, but his report makes only cursory mention of the themes of gender, inequality and social exclusion.

Since the 1990s, there has been a shift in DFID towards greater sectoral programme aid and general budget support, as the agency increasingly moved in the direction of supporting country-owned poverty reduction strategies and toward management by internationally agreed targets, with health and education often seen as the key pillars of pro-poor change. This move was viewed as important for donor harmonisation and coordination, but creates challenges for identifying commitments within health and education sectors, let alone commitment for gender within these sectors.

3 For example, the criteria that are used as indicators of good governance vary enormously, indicating that aid agencies are not neutral. By choosing particular sets of governance criteria, these agencies are, in fact, making political choices. However, the political nature of donor interventions in recipient countries is not always directly apparent. As anthropologist James Ferguson (1990) famously demonstrated, development practitioners will sometimes go to great lengths to translate intrinsically political realities of poverty and powerlessness into ‘technical problems’ awaiting solution by ‘development’ agencies.
An evaluation report of DFID development assistance (Rose & Subrahmanian 2005) states that it is often argued that a sector-wide approach (SWAp) provides greater opportunities for gender mainstreaming; however, drawing on evidence from Ghana, India and Uganda, Sibbons et al (2000) conclude that experience with SWAs in education has resulted in problems of policy evaporation, failure to promote gender policy by development partners for fear of undermining the local SWAp ownership, focus on girls’ enrolment in primary enrolment, rather than gender issues in education provision or post-primary education, and lack of attention to power relations in the countries concerned and to the involvement of women’s rights groups. Moser et al (2004) also consider that the shift from programmes and projects to sector-wide approaches and direct budgetary support in Malawi is likely to raise even more challenges for issues of evaporation, invisibilisation and resistance, and is further supported by the analysis of country programs. This underscores the concern raised in DFID (2005) that, in the transition from projects to sector-wide approaches, there may be difficulty in focusing on concrete actions for gender equality in the short term. Further, if fungibility of resources is taken into account, attributing budget support to particular sectors is arbitrary and DFID’s priorities in various sectors will be compromised. Given that budget support is linked to a country’s poverty reduction strategy, assessment of the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) needs to consider whether gender is appropriately addressed. The focus of gender issues in health and education is usually seen to be on supply-side factors, with limited reference to social constraints. The focus usually is on highly generalised strategies aimed at addressing gender disparities (see Subrahmanian 2004 for a discussion). On the other hand, given that gender often continues to be discussed within PRSPs at the sectoral level, the opportunity for including a diagnosis of poverty which integrates a gender analysis is missed (Kabeer 2003; Whitehead 2003 as cited in Lucas et al. 2004). Moser et al (2004) further raise the concern that gender concerns have become subsumed under poverty reduction with a narrower focus on gender to one that identifies problems that make poor women and children particularly vulnerable. They suggest this is an indication of policy evaporation.

DFID further continues to support projects; support for girl-specific initiatives suggests that governments are more in favour of such initiatives as these can be easily highlighted as evidence of their commitment, as opposed to more complex broad-based reforms which require far deeper constituency building and institutional change. Further, while
girl-specific initiatives are valuable in keeping the issue of gender equality on the agenda and getting results in the short run, the question of translation into sector-wide and general budgetary support, which is becoming the dominant mode of aid delivery, is a key issue.

Derbyshire (2002, p. 11) identifies four core components of a gender mainstreaming approach:

- context-specific sex-disaggregated data to inform policy development and monitoring
- support of senior officials for gender equality
- capacity building backed by sufficient resources
- measurable outcomes to create a framework for gender-sensitive implementation.

Problems of evaporation prior to project implementation continue because of lack of attention to incentives systems, adequate terms of reference, absence of advisory support, adequate time and resources to sustain actions, amongst others. These suggest that the organisational change dimensions necessitated by a gender mainstreaming approach have not necessarily been addressed (Kanji & Salway 2000). The question is: ‘who owns’ gender mainstreaming, especially if there are problems making it operational (Freeman & Mikkelsen 2003).

While this is an overall scenario of DFID program evaluation, there is little evidence to suggest that country programs (to which gender mainstreaming has been devolved) have effective mainstreaming systems and how far they are bound by government-set indicators. Further, there appears to be a focus on sectoral issues rather than an overall gender approach, which more clearly articulates gender equality and women’s empowerment.

**Nature of this research**

In this thesis my attempt has been to understand the trajectory of the ‘development’ discourse in the global and local contexts in India and Orissa. Further, I have tried to understand community development, also in the global and local contexts, through discourse analysis, essentially to highlight that the dominant (western) discourses of development and community development persist at the local level.

In this thesis, I provide a written account of (local Indian) women’s everyday lives and their agency in negotiating the programmatic structures and processes of community
development as I observed it. I conducted an ethnographic study of one village, where in I was immersed in the everyday lives of the people. I tried to understand how women negotiate and experience their capacity to act in the variety of interdependent structures and everyday events, routine and occasional goings-on. In observing how women negotiated the structures of community development, I was closely engaged in dialogue with the local Government offices. I was also keen to enquire into the reasons for the failure of the previously thriving Mahila Mandal, a women’s group which had come into existence as a result of a government program and was essentially responsible for the distribution of supplementary nutrition. My attempt was to uncover women’s subjugated knowledge and practices which had enabled them to negotiate these imposed structures.

Eventually, I have attempted to analyse how the discourses of development and community development and the understandings of the everyday lives of women and their capacity to experience and act have influenced the nature of my work with an international aid agency.

The Research Questions

This thesis, however, has grown out of my desire as an academic and practitioner to understand the process of community development and the emergence of new mechanisms of the structures and institutions of society, which shape and are shaped by the practice of community development. Some of the questions I seek to find responses to are –

- How have the interdependent structures in the local Indian rural community changed and how do they continue to change?
- How has the western academic establishment influenced the theory and practice of community development and how have persons participating in these processes been represented?
- How have policies in international aid taken into account the paradoxes existing in everyday lives of women in rural Orissa, India so as to enhance women’s agency?

Of specific interest to me is the role played by women, though not underplaying the role of other actors or that of the State, in structural transitions such that they do not suffer from new forms of subjugation in addition to the traditional ones -

- How do these structural transitions in turn maintain or modify the process of community development?
Organisation of the thesis

An introductory chapter attempts to contextualise the study, outlining the geographical and intellectual dislocation I have journeyed through, traversing a path of the post-colonial and seeing that colonialism is a dynamic process that has infused the very fabric of everyday life. What has been ignored and/or displaced into the inevitable logic of modernisation/development are the cultural effects of colonialism. Colonialism was itself a cultural project of control and colonial knowledge - through the imposition of a discourse and a reconstruction of the local knowledge as the “traditional” - both enabled conquest and was produced by it. In many ways, knowledge was what colonialism was all about.

Following the introduction, the thesis is presented in three parts followed by a conclusion. Part I comprises of two chapters. Chapter one deals with the epistemology and methodology I have adopted in conducting this study. Further, in this chapter I have also looked at the complexity of dealing with subject matters like community development, women and development and everyday life and how they relate to each other and how they are influenced by the larger structures of society. I have also discussed the methodologies adopted, that is, ethnographic research, participant observation, discourse analysis and community studies. I conclude this Chapter with the issues and dilemmas faced in the field. Chapter two deals with the theoretical frameworks that underpin the research - the everyday life theories of Lefebvre and de Certeau, and Anthony Giddens Structuration Theory.

The theme of Part II is the discourse of ‘development’. It is divided into four chapters; Chapter three looks critically at the various theoretical frameworks in developmental discourse in a historical perspective, which for obvious reasons has not progressed in a linear fashion. There have been various currents of thought which have progressed simultaneously and I have attempted to present them as such without laying emphasis on either the economic or cultural aspects. The various relationships of development theory with the dominant discourse of western knowledge, with discourses of culture (with special reference to women), within the post-colonial context (local and global) and within the post modern context have also been dealt with.
Chapter four deals with Development within the Indian context with special reference to the State of Orissa attempting to better understand how development in India has progressed, if indeed it has and if indeed it was ‘progress,’ and what has been unique to the development strategies adopted by India.

Chapter five deals with theory and practice of Community Development. At the outset the attempt is to seek some conceptual clarification to the concept of ‘community’, providing some definitions and highlighting the various dimensions of it. Subsequently the notion of ‘community development’ using a historical perspective is discussed, some definitions have been provided and finally the principles of community development have been discussed in detail. Chapter six examines the historical trajectory of Community Development in India. Decentralization through the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments and devolution of powers to the panchayati raj system has also been discussed. This chapter finally also examines the subject of ‘women’ and community development and the state initiatives for women.

Part III comprises two chapters offering empirical data. Chapter seven analyses the everyday lives of women and chapter eight examines the interface between the everyday lives of women and a particular community development initiative of the state – the mahila mandal, especially highlighting what happens in practice in the villages.

I conclude this thesis by including a policy discussion on the attempt by international agencies, especially DFID, and governments (of India and Orissa) to address gender issues in their existing and new programs taking into account women’s agency as constructed in their everyday lives. There is an agreement within the international, national and local debates that gender issues have to be addressed with great urgency in view of the changing roles of women. The centrality of poverty debates in a developing country like India, especially the construction of poverty and the implication of women in this, has been highlighted.
PART I
Chapter One

Epistemologies and Methodologies

The present work is a community study about women and development. Any community study attempts to establish a mental picture or a representation of the community, or the people and the place one seeks to bring to awareness of the readers. It is not a project fixed for all time, nor does it indicate slow evolution but it is influenced by the concerns of the local people. In this chapter, I shall, therefore, refer to the context of the study and to my own location and positionality and to the problems which arise in each of these areas and those arising from studying them in combination. I have often wondered whether the concepts and methods available to us within the social sciences are adequate to get an understanding and provide an interpretation of the everyday lives of people; that in the pursuit of understanding what some call the ‘internationalisation of daily life’, of the global culture, we have missed the fact that all knowledge is situated in historical and social contexts. I shall, therefore, also be using visual images to complement the written rendition of my impressions.

In the use of visual images, in chapter seven, there is always the ethical issue of anonymity; where, on the one hand, this has been overcome with informed consent, the potential effects of using visual images have also been subverted through crowd scenes and description of events where either privacy has not been significantly invaded or the emphasis is different and shifts the focus of the reader. There are also drawings of the structure of houses, lanes and villages, attempting to explore the physical and the tangible, thus contextualizing the social and the intangible. Visual images are just an additional context or provide an additional dimension for the enrichment of inter-subjective meanings.

In this part, I have viewed this study from mainly three aspects: the epistemological framework, the subject matter and the methodology. Because of its very nature, the study is grounded in a phenomenological epistemological framework. The perspective is, however, not just one of interpretation, reinstating human experience as the primary source of data about the world, but it also rests on a critical/structural framework, as I have made extensive use of documents and existing theory of that nature, attempting to
see the relation between historical conditions and present human subjectivities. There is also extensive reference to feminist and post-colonial theories to provide a basis for my argument. It is necessary, though, to provide the reader with an idea about the scope and importance, so as to be able to properly situate this thesis’ methodological approach.

Epistemological Frameworks

…From the individual object to the individual subject of study

To talk about how to think is to raise the matter of science (Curry & McGuire 2002). Science has had enormous technical successes and contributed to higher standards of living among many on the planet, so much so that its criteria of knowledge production are sometimes thought identical with knowledge production in general. As a way of knowing and as a knowledge production community, it has often been accorded exemplary status (Berry 2000).

Historically, everyday knowledge production practices were deemed deficient. Nature came to be accorded female characteristics and was interrogated for its secrets. Knowledge had been a communal product and was inherently fraught with disagreements. Enlightenment aimed to minimise such disagreements and, in so doing, brought about an individualistic form of knowledge production. The new thinking was framed within the assumptions of non-religion-based study, a science recurrently articulated in empiricist, logical positivist terms.

As “true” Science is said to be based on positivist principles and the values and standards of objectivity, reliability and validity, subjective interpretations, atypical events and reasons are of little concern to Science. Theory has come to mean quantitatively expressed law-like statements, which are systematic and logically integrated. Historically, however, there has always been a dissenting view of the domination of positivist views in the social sciences. Religion, commonsense, intuition, dialogue and other non-scientifically measurable aspects of reality have gained currency of late. Scientific methods are no longer the ultimate test of truth that we once thought they were, but do we trust self-reflective knowledge, practical reasoning or traditional authority as arbiters of what is ‘true’ or ‘real’?

It is therefore important that we view some of the historical antecedents to what is today a
plethora of methodologies that would be considered valid. In the first wave, philosophers like Aristotle considered politics as continuous with ethics, referring them to the realm of human action or praxis. In doing so, he said that the keystone to a virtuous character was an understanding of variable situations with a view to what was to be done, as a purely contemplative life was an unattainable ideal for most. He therefore stressed the need for a hermeneutical reflection to sharpen methodological self-consciousness of science.

It was Weber (1947) who – in tune with emerging phenomenology - emphasised the importance of meaning in social behaviour and proclaimed that social sciences must abstain from value judgements. ‘If meaning is insufficiently understood’ he stated, ‘then regardless of the uniformity and the numerical precision of probability, the statistical probability is still incomprehensible’ (p. 2). He therefore stressed the role of interpretation throughout and concluded that understanding social behaviour by interpreting its subjective meanings as found in the intentions of individuals is central to the social researcher’s enterprise. Weber, however, positing ‘methodological individualism’ as a scientific principle, reduced all kinds of social relationships and cultural complexities to the most elementary forms of individual behaviour. The meaning of complexities of the social world exists in so far as the meanings individuals attach to their acts.

Although Weber made the distinction between the subjectively intended meaning of an action and the meaning that can be objectively known, he did not make a distinction between an action, as being in progress, and the completed act; or between the various meanings attached to events and objects by the producers of cultural objects, or between the meanings of actions of the various actors in an event, or between understanding oneself and understanding another person.

Recognition of the inherent subjectivity of human understanding had previously led the phenomenologist Husserl (1970, p. 8) to conclude that ‘positivist scientific method has neglected the “lived world” of everyday activity in which human beings get interested in what is going on, in why certain questions are interesting, what they mean and the meanings of investigations into them’. He argued that universal scientific truth necessarily operates at a level of abstraction, which obfuscates primary experience and the achievement of meaning, which only occurs in so far as human beings reflect on lived experiences.
Reflexivity

Geertz (1973, p. 19) pointed out that ‘self-consciousness about modes of representation (not to speak of experiments with them) has been very lacking in anthropology’ and Myrdal (1969, p. 4) warned: ‘In our profession there is a lack of awareness even today that, in searching for truth, the student, like all human beings whatever they try to accomplish, is influenced by tradition, by his environment, and by his personality. Further, there is an irrational taboo against discussing this lack of awareness. It is astonishing that this taboo is commonly respected leaving the social scientist in naiveté about what he is doing’.

On skirting the borders between the everyday lives of people - on the one hand - and structures and processes of community development on the other, my point of departure has been to seek out people’s representations of what they perceive to be the relationship between the two. These representations are almost never in agreement, but often reflect several contested ideas. I was convinced that, if I could understand how people mediated the various structures which conditioned their everyday lives, that that knowledge would allow me to become an ‘insider’.

Anyone who recognizes that self-reflection, as mediated linguistically, is integral to the characterization of human social conduct, must acknowledge that such holds also for his own activities as a social ‘analyst’, ‘researcher’, etc. (Giddens 1976, p. 8). As Giddens (1990, p. 38) sees it, ‘The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character’. The notion of reflexivity recognizes that texts (spoken and written) do not simply and transparently report an independent order of reality; rather, they themselves are implicated in reality-construction (Atkinson 1990). The human scientist has had to learn how to relate self-knowledge of him- or herself as a multi-sensory being with a unique personal history as a member of a specific culture at a specific period, to ongoing experience and how to include as far as possible this disciplined self-awareness in observations on other lives and in other cultures (Mead 1977). It was, therefore, important for me to perform a ‘phenomenological reduction’, that is, to ‘bracket’ my taken-for-granted assumptions about ‘facts’ or ‘reality’. A close relationship between ‘authenticity’ and ‘authority’ in this ethnographic account is also apparent. ‘Authenticity’ arose from my very presence and participation,
which are evident in the reproduction of processes in the text. Whether one desires it or not, the graphic representation of the social reality in a language other than the one used in the fieldwork and research largely based on theoretical knowledge that is ‘Westcentric’ has led to the exercise of ‘authority’ which further enhances ‘the discredited links with the Empire that are difficult to shed’ (Eagleton et al. 1990, p. 76). What is also evident is the constant interplay between the familiar and the strange (to me and to the participants), between the mundane and the exotic in terms of the surroundings and the actions they contain.

The first stage of ‘representation’ lay in the taking of ‘field notes’ where there was no self-conscious intervention or reflection. The ‘creation of narratives’ involved moving from the signifier to the signified, or that which is being studied (the culture of everyday life) to that which is represented in the text. From this developed a narrative of people and the way they go about their daily lives with the argument being developed in the way the material is organised and presented.

#### To the Knowing and Acting subject

The reductionism of science based on the search for universality sharply contrasts with both sustainable livelihoods proponents of local knowledge (Geertz 1983) and with feminist epistemology, which also emphasises situated knowledge, limited location, and the inability to split subject and object (Haraway 1988). It has also been argued that the traditional approach of science has hampered questions about human relationship(s) to natural systems (Keller 1985). Much social scientific work portrayed experience in terms of acquired customs, habits, or norms that followed without much thought or sense of choice, again utilising the focus on the individual, the atomised actor (Wrong & Gracey 1977). Phenomenological reductionism, which presupposed the bracketing of the social world and treated it as a given, was abandoned by Husserl when he dealt with the notion of ‘the other’; the concept of the social world must be based on the concept of ‘everyone’.

The sense of embeddedness in relationships as a result of choice is not emphasised

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4 In his *Formal and Transcendental Logic* and *Cartesian Mediations*, Husserl deals with the problems arising by accepting the existence of the social world as it is always accepted in the attitude of the natural standpoint or as a sheer ‘object’. The ‘real world’ is an intertwined matrix of sensation and perceptions, a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles. The mutual intertwining of experiences makes the individual phenomenal field into a single, ever-shifting fabric, a single phenomenal world or ‘reality’. The solidity of the real world, however, is sustained by the continual encounter with others, as well as bringing to the fore the fact that there is more to the world than what I perceive it to be at any moment (Abram 1997).
enough and behaviour is viewed rather as the result of a set of roles, where decisions involving more than one individual are the result of role-prescribed behaviour (Granovetter 1985).

For Schutz & Luckmann (1974, p. 125) ‘action is intrinsically meaningful, it is endowed with meaning by human intentionality, that is, by consciousness…we are continuously ordering, classifying and interpreting our various experiences according to various interpretative schemes’. They go on to state that, for a genuine understanding of action, there is a need to view it from two different directions: where action is performed without any communicative intent and where communicative intent is present. In the former, there is ‘a reflective analysis of another person’s completed act’ and in the latter ‘the observer’s living intentionality carries him (/her) along without having to make constant playbacks of his (/her) past or imaginary experiences’ (Schutz & Luckmann 1974, p. 129). There is no preconceived notion of a goal, of the act as already performed/completed and then having to reconstruct the lived experiences which have accompanied it. There is thus identification with the observed person’s actions within a common relationship, the basis of grounded theory.

To use grounded theory is to acknowledge the situated and continually evolving nature of group life. The attempt here is to formulate a more complex and yet tentative theory that more closely addresses questions about experienced social life rather than what is externally deduced (Glaser & Strauss 1967), enabling us to understand the culturally situated meaning of discourse. The perspective of local knowledge is a good starting point as it turns the establishment on its head and argues that knowledge, just like social and economic life, is embedded in specific localities.

**Intersubjectivity**

As Heidegger and the Hermeneuticians have observed, our ‘perceptions’ are indeed mediated by concepts; so, far from being transcendental - and thereby ensuring universal communication - these concepts are relative and thus instrumental in constituting the different ‘life-worlds’ that render understanding problematic. As Husserl (1970) and, following him, Thomas Kuhn (1970) have demonstrated in detail, the empirical sciences cannot escape this ‘life-world’ relativism either. Husserl (1970, pp. 138-9) eventually recognised that ‘everything here is subjective and relative, even though normally in our
experience and in the social group united with us in the community of life, we arrive at ‘secure’ facts ... when we are thrown into an alien social sphere, ... we discover that their truths, the facts that for them are fixed, generally verified or verifiable, are by no means the same as ours ...’.

To counter the charges directed against phenomenology – an approach that seals the philosopher inside his/her own experience, rendering him/her ultimately unable to recognise anyone or anything outside his own mind – Husserl discerned that there was an inescapable affinity between these others and the self. Husserl5 (1970, p. 253) recognises that ‘...self-consciousness and consciousness of others are inseparable’. Similarly, Schutz & Luckmann (1974, p. 67), for example, insist that ‘I experience myself through my consociate and he experiences himself through me’ in what they refer to as a ‘reciprocal mirroring’. The gestures and expressions of these others viewed from without echo and resonate one’s own bodily movements and gestures, experienced from within. By an associative ‘empathy’, the embodied subject comes to recognise these other centres of experience, other subjects. While still a subjective realm, the field of appearance now has multiple subjectivities, a collective landscape, comprising oneself and other experiencing subjects.

The phenomenological epistemology as the framework for this study is about ‘restoring this (inter-)subjectivity to the dialogue between researcher and researched and legitimising it as an adequate basis for research and science’ (Boulet 1985, p. 27). Phenomenology describes the sources of ontological claims, which are intrinsic to everyday life and, therefore, deals with historicity, biography, social and cultural features of everyday experiences and to the structures which impress upon them. The goal of phenomenology as described by Luckmann (1978, p. 9) is ‘to describe the universal structures of subjective orientation in the world, not to explain the general features of the objective world’.

The interpretive approach is used when ‘the relationship between personal troubles ...and the public policies and public institutions that have been created to address those

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5 It is of course clear that, even at this time, Husserl remained ambivalent as is evident, for instance, from his claim, “... the ego ... starting from itself and in itself ... constitutes transcendental intersubjectivity” that “... only by starting from the ego and the system of its transcendental functions and accomplishments can we methodically exhibit transcendental intersubjectivity and its transcendental communalization ...” (Husserl 1970, pp. 185-6)
personal problems’ (Denzin 1989, p. 10). This necessarily means that in interpretation there is no progress in the linear fashion, but repetition or re-iteration, leading to a ‘plurality of interpretations’. Macheray (1978) has mourned the loss of the human voice and claims that there needs to be a recovery of this voice which would enable the subject to celebrate his/her plurality. This I see as being congruent with the study of everyday life as it is about the ‘natural attitude’ of lay persons, ‘where common sense is a repository of ideas and practices that has to be looked at in order to rebut some of the very mistakes and extravagances of previous philosophers’ (Giddens & Cassell 1993, p. 56). The language here is necessarily ‘in flux’, which Husserl (in Derrida 1978) indicates is expressive of the inappropriateness of mathematical precision to phenomenology. Schutz & Luckmann (1974, p. 21) define intersubjectivity as ‘...constructs of a typified knowledge of a highly socialized structure which supersedes the thought objects of my and my fellow-man’s private knowledge of the world as taken for granted’. This concept is what people know, believe, or understand in order to participate in role playing, positioning, dominance hierarchy, or divisions of labour known as the Objective View, a concept in which the ‘we are of one mind’ prevails. As we are born into the world filled with others with whom we have continual contact and interaction, in every interaction is a connection of the two minds. This is then a bilateral/positive feedback relationship, because if we all are of the same thinking mind, then the natural changing and evolution of thoughts would consistently build one upon another.

For Skolimowski (1994, p. 76), Ontology and Epistemology are indivisible, ‘they are dexterously tied together, feed on each other, and elicit from each other what they assume in each other’. In addition, ‘if not all past and present cosmologies, what is assumed to be there and how we explore it are intimately linked together. If some societies assume the existence of bad spirits which inhabit human bodies, these societies must find an appropriate methodology (an appropriate diagnosis and ritual) which recognizes these bad spirits and then expels them’ (Skolimowski 1994, p. 77), bringing into question the notion of absolute knowledge and its reliability, which would deem other forms of understanding and knowledge inadequate. Previously, Geertz (1983, p. 21) considered interpretive explanation as ‘a move toward conceiving of social life as organized in terms of symbols (signs, representations, signifiants, Darstellungen…the terminology varies), whose meaning (sense, import, signification, Bedeutung…) we must grasp if we are to understand that organization and formulate its principles’. Interpretive explanation,
therefore, ‘trains its attention on what institutions, actions, images, utterances, events, customs, all the usual objects of social scientific interest, mean to those whose institutions, actions, customs, and so on they are’ (Geertz 1983, p. 22).

….From the knowing subject/ intersubjectivity to the knowing community

The knowing subjects in the empiricist epistemologies still were passive recipients of knowledge, whose particular social, historical and cultural contexts were irrelevant to their knowing. The responses, therefore, were definitive and spoke for themselves. Generalisations based on quantifications that would apply across time and space were sought to simplify human experiences in order to isolate those aspects deemed most essential (Sacks 1989). Human beings were assumed to be utility maximizing and their relation with others mainly instrumental (Friedmann & Barclay 1974). Feminists have spoken in great detail about the implausibility of ‘epistemological individualism’ (Addelson 1991; Scheman 1993), of the ‘solipsistic knower’ (Jaggar 1983; Longino 1990; Nelson 1990) and the necessity of interpersonal experience for individuals to know (Jaggar 1983; Bleier 1984; Longino 1990; Nelson 1990; Code 1991; Scheman 1993).6

Nelson & Nelson (1996) argue that it is communities that construct and acquire knowledge. Hekman (1990) – employing a postmodernist argument - states that there are no subjects or agents of epistemology, whilst Nelson (1990) suggests that it is communities or sub-communities and not individuals that are the collaborators, the consensus achievers or the agents who generate knowledge. They claim that this does not in any way undermine the capacity of the individual to know, but that this knowing is derivative, that is, it comes from ‘our’ knowing. Finally, ‘communities that construct and acquire knowledge are not collections of independently knowing individuals; such

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6 The positivist epistemology has been critiqued by feminists in three main spheres: (1) philosophical critique and the pretense of a value-free science; (2) moral critiques and objectification and exploitation of subjects; and (3) practical critiques and the way positivism opposes the interest of the researcher and the researched (Gorelick 1991, 1996). Habermas, concurring with Husserl, also rejected the objectivity of positivism questioning whether scientific knowledge is really ‘released from every normative bond’ and also provided the initial basis for reflexivity in stating that ‘social and cultural reality is already pre-interpreted by the participants as a cultural symbolic meaning system which can be changed over time. Therefore, the process of understanding this socially constructed reality is “dialogic”; it allows individuals to communicate about their experience within a shared framework of cultural meanings’ (Blakie 1993). Feminist epistemology on the other hand is “contextual, inclusive, experiential, involved, socially relevant....complete, but not necessarily replicable, inclusive of emotions and events as experienced” (Nielsen 1990, p. 6). While some feminists have claimed that being objective and value-free is not possible, others have claimed that it is also undesirable (Cancian 1992), and still others (Caplan 1988) have claimed that objectivity is simply a form of male subjectivity. More recently some feminists (Antony & Witt 1993; Nanda 1996) have begun to reassess the relationship between feminist inquiry and objectivity.
communities are epistemologically prior to individuals who know’ (Hekman 1990, p. 124). This follows from intersubjectivity and only strengthens the collective nature of knowledge and emphasises the need to abandon individualistic explanations of the social reality in all its guises.

Giddens (1984) too states that it is important to bear in mind that social reality is produced and reproduced by the skilled activities of social actors but not necessarily under the conditions of their own choosing. Whereas this leads to interpretation at two levels - which Giddens (1984) has referred to as the ‘double hermeneutic,’ - feminists argue that multiple realities can exist and they are the result of social realities constructed by people who in different situations have different life experiences. Although I share the same framework of cultural meanings as the people in the village I conducted my research in, my life has been very different from that of the participants in this study, in that I am an urban, educated, middle class, woman which implies that I am in a position to exercise many more choices.

I have attempted to overcome the preoccupation with minor aspects of everyday life by emphasising their relation to the larger social structures and processes of community development, which India has adopted since early post-colonial days.

**Subject Matter:**

**Community Development**

In this day and age of ‘globalisation’ and the ‘risk society’, the notions of community and community development are undergoing change. The changes happening in the world, beginning with the ‘death of communism’ leading to changed geo-political contexts, the armed conflicts, terror and the fragmentation of nations, have not been without human consequences, not to mention the increasing number of natural calamities/disasters. Craig et al (2000, p. 324) claim that ‘this fragmentation has brought a range of political, security, economic and social consequences which are addressed, albeit in a discriminatory fashion, by richer countries acting, it is claimed, on behalf of the ‘international community’’. It is often seen that the West has been able to force its own

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7 Nelson (1990) bases her entire argument on three assumptions: that the category ‘agents of epistemology’ is dynamic; that our views of such agents are interdependent with our understandings of evidence; and that epistemology is radically interdependent with other knowledge and projects.
version of political democracy onto other countries irrespective of whether it was appropriate to local conditions and needs. They have used economic embargoes and threats to ensure that these states comply. Structural adjustment programmes have been a key instrument used by the West to force local economies to open up and join the harsh discipline of the ‘free’ market. The promise of economic aid has increased the grip of Western nations over poor and weak states. In this changed climate, however, there is a rediscovery of the value of ‘community’ through ‘communitarianism’ (Etzioni 1993), ‘social capital’ (Coleman 1990; Putnam 1993) and/or ‘civil society’. Although encouraging, one should be wary that this resurgence does not fall prey to the persistent danger of co-optation into the agendas of state and of capital, especially by thrusting responsibility without adequate power and resources onto the local community, or dumping the consequences of the global movements of capital onto local and vulnerable communities. Craig et al (2000, p. 329) assert that community development ‘needs to drive rather than substitute for structural and institutional change’. Likewise, the discourse of participation, empowerment and partnership mask the dilemmas that communities face, as these processes often view communities as homogeneous entities, avoiding issues of difference and conflict; further, they may pit communities against each other in the race for limited resources. The aim of community development in the present context is challenging globalisation from above with a movement of ‘globalization from below’. There are attempts to ‘upscale’ experiences of participatory approaches, as a growing level of participation by poor people, often in the most difficult circumstances, has been recorded by Rahman (1995) and Gaventa (1998). However, as Chambers (1998, p. 197) caution us, we need to bear in mind that ‘(E)mpowering poor people to conduct their own appraisal and analysis, and to present their realities is one thing. Whether their voices are heard, understood and acted upon is another’.

In the third world too, changes are evident; many of the current generation of Third World community-based organisations which originally operated in parallel to state institutions, sometimes openly confront official policies and they have come to occupy centre stage. Increasingly, within the new development orthodoxy, state provision is often regarded as second best to collective self-help efforts through ‘grassroots’ organisations, NGOs and other sectors of an emerging (or hoped-for) ‘civil society’. The dominant development paradigm is decentralised, people-centred and bottom-up. In some countries, the shift away from public sector provision has been made inevitable by the dwindling state
capacity and resources, although most governments still seek to contain radicalism of such social forces through various forms of co-optation and control/repression. In India, there has been a move away from development policies per se to a focus on poverty alleviation which is like ‘trying to eliminate consequences without attacking the causes’ (Bejar 1998, p. 289); the move from ‘things’ to ‘people’, as called for by Chambers (1995), has not occurred in most cases. Besides other structures within the community, such as the hierarchical caste structures superimposed by the upwardly mobile middle-class, lead to the co-optation of community level development processes by local elites and prevented genuine participation from occurring. Therefore, one observes that the term ‘community development’ is no longer in currency, but is instead replaced by a plethora of other terms, such as ‘local development’, ‘grassroots development’, ‘decentralised development’, etc., and they are more often the mainstay of the work of grassroots organisations and NGOs, constituting the wider agenda of ‘strengthening the civil society’ in view of the retreat of the state in third world countries.

The vexed question, however, is that the state will not ‘go away’. Hintjens (1998, p. 284) asserts that ‘however strong civil society may be, it cannot flourish in a vacuum, and it is becoming increasingly apparent that the degree of control people may hope to exercise over the course of their own community-level development is to a large extent dependent on broader institutional infrastructure which the state, at least in theory, is in a unique position to provide’.

In the later chapters, I have explained in great detail the model of community development followed in India and what has been the role of women within these programmes and how have they benefited or otherwise.

**Women/ Women and Development**

Similarly, the subject matters of ‘women’ and ‘women and development’ are equally contested as there appear to be a variety of theories posited by women of colour and post modernists. The discourse on women in India is largely confined to pre-nineteenth century representations, which owe their textual point of origin to Sanskritic literature and a customary point of origin in everyday life. Most commentators, either critics or defenders of Hindu customs relating to women’s lives, saw in them evidence of a single ancient ‘orthodoxy’ whose ideas and customs needed to be either overturned or upheld.
(Borthwick 1984; Walsh 1995), and they are well marked by a male perspective. The inferiority of women is exemplified by the much-quoted verse from the Laws of Manu (Manu 1991, p. 196)

*Her father guards her in childhood, her husband guards her in youth, and her sons guard her in old age. A woman is not fit for independence.*

Scriptures urged male family members to protect women from their own tendencies towards sexual promiscuity; custom decreed the restriction of women to the confines of a home’s inner spaces. Often, patriarchy found expression through the extended family organised as a patrilineal and patrilocal institution under the authority of the eldest male member (Mies 1980). The totality of their duties involved fulfilling familial obligations and relationships which were encompassed in the term ‘dharma’. A virtuous wife should constantly serve her husband like a god, even if he behaves badly, freely indulges his lust and is devoid of any good qualities (Manu 1991, p. 115).

Feminist researchers have argued that traditional social theories have either marginalised or rendered insignificant women’s participation and, where included, they have been distorted. The category of ‘gender’ or ‘sex’ has often been subsumed under a single indicator in mainstream social science research or appears in a very generalised form. The notion of ‘female headed’ is also a highly heterogeneous one and may include lone female units, households of single wage earners with young dependants, or households in which women earners receive significant remittances from absent males and so on. In addition, at the intersection of gender and poverty, characteristics of the poor say very little about the reasons why they have become impoverished and this may have far-reaching implications in the development strategies initiated. The belief that female disadvantage is a matter of poverty, whilst having much currency, is largely misleading. It is increasingly recognised that prosperity within a society may help to reduce inequalities in basic well-being outcomes, but intensifies restrictions on women’s autonomy.

The impasse in social research and theorising about development has been recognised since the 1980’s. Crucial questions of everyday life were not being addressed and the complex heterogeneity of the world and the experiences of people were being ignored, leaving an ever widening gap between theory and practice/policy. In providing credibility to social science research, women scholars have also been absorbed into the dominant rules of sociological methods. Whether intentional, deliberate or incidental, they appeared
to ignore the human aspect of society, its culture, the meanings and interpretations of actions and interactions and the ‘social construction of reality’. For some, it was only with bringing to the centre of the discourse women’s issues and the diversity of their specific local experiences, that has provided the way out of the impasse (Sklair 1989). The study of gender has disentangled itself from the universalist, essentialist and functionalist baggage with which it was encumbered and because of which different strands have emerged in feminist theory and research.

Everyday life

In today’s world, the same period which has witnessed a breathtaking development of the application of technology to everyday life, has also witnessed the no-less breathtaking degradation of everyday life for large masses of people. More and more people are living in conditions previously undreamt of by anyone; the deterioration of the basic conditions of existence is spreading to a great many areas. While the use of technology has significantly increased, one can see houses that are more dilapidated; people cannot afford to repair their houses or modernise their farms. The latter are compromised for the sake of the former. Problems of choosing what to buy/use are altering the very fabric of everyday life. There is a new ‘social need’ (Lefèbvre 1984), the size or the extent of which is not easily known, nor the extent to which it is satisfied, or, if satisfied, whether that has happened to the detriment of others. Such critique of everyday life becomes possible and is made those living it when the distant becomes familiar and the near remote. Consciousness is capable of moving through different spheres of reality: we are conscious of a world consisting of multiple realities and which, through interaction with others, is constantly affected by our common participation in the available stock of knowledge.

If reality, as portrayed above, were looked at in terms of a continuous and active flow of social life, then Giddens’ theory of structuration enables us to view the complex relationship between agency and structure. Giddens (1998, pp. 76-7) states that social life should be viewed as a series of ongoing activities that reproduce larger institutions. ‘Society’, he states, ‘can be understood as a complex of recurrent practices which form institutions. Those practices depend upon the habits and forms of life which individuals adopt’. This, then, would mean that structures are produced and reproduced in what people do and language plays a major role in this in as much as it is the core of social life. Giddens (1998, p. 81) states that ‘structure only exists in so far as people do things
knowledgeably and do them in certain contexts that have particular consequences’. People may not foresee these consequences, but it is their repeated occurrence or reproduction that makes them structural and allows us to speak of structural effects. Along similar lines, (Berger & Luckmann 1967) also point out that structure is the sum total of ‘typifications’\(^8\) and of the recurrent patterns of interaction established by means of them and is an essential element of the reality of everyday life. According to (Bordieu 1977) structure is conceived as the *structure of the consequences of human practices* and it is because of the presence of what he calls *habitus*\(^9\) that actors are not entirely basing their actions in (individual) free will. Eventually, structures depend on conventions which are both a means for and an outcome of action; they can have very severe constraining effects on what is possible for any individual, but they can also be enabling. People can only act on conventions because of a mutual understanding about and of them. Agency, on the other hand, is the *elemental basis of power*; it is the capability to do otherwise and thus represents a basis of power, no matter how large-scale any given structure of power may be. Power relations are expressed not only through the exercise of agency and choice, but also through the *kinds* of choices people make. Understanding of agency is anchored, first, within an institutional understanding of the conditions of choice (that is, structures of constraints) and, secondly, by including the consequences of choice within an account of agency, which effectively overcomes ‘*physical condition neglect*’ (Sen, A. 1985).

Structures of constraints limit the choices that women make (as in cultures where daughter disfavour becomes a ‘rational’ response to social norms). This is countered by the argument that women seek to subvert and reformulate those social norms (as in the ways in which women faced with onerous work and with work threatening their well-being, may ensure their well-being by hiring labour or by persuading their husband/child/daughter-in-law to do it) (Kabeer 1999). This is the context within which women’s everyday lives are being studied, leading to a set of more or less specific research questions: How do women shape their everyday lives and create and recreate the structures? how do they exercise their agency and are they able to negotiate the boundaries of the structures of government sponsored community development and how

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\(^8\) Face-to-face interactions are also patterned provided they take place within the routines of everyday life. Language is the objective repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience that crystallizes subjectivities and typifies them (e.g. everyone within the culture understands, that she had to go to the Doctor for female trouble, etc). Social reality of everyday life is apprehended in a continuum of typifications which are progressively anonymous as they are removed from the ‘*here and now*’ of the face–to-face situation.

\(^9\) *Habitus* refers to systems of durable, transposable dispositions; it is the principle of generation and structuring of practices and representations.
do they do so? what role does language and the specificity of the discourse play in shaping their realities? does the public-private dichotomy, so much a part of the western feminist discourse, merit a place in the everyday lives of women in rural India? how is power defined by women and how do women traverse the imagined boundaries of their everyday lives and the formal structures of community development that have not taken account of their realities?

**Methodology**

This study is mainly qualitative and participatory in nature and contextualised through information regarding broader socio-historical processes and content analysis of archival material and documents. The methods I have adopted in this study can broadly be classified under three areas.

**Ethnographic Research**

History and the Judeo-Christian tradition has it that time was conceived in a linear fashion with an attempt to universalise and secularise it. In Indian philosophy, time is considered to be in constant flux and the notion of fixity is wholly fictitious (Hiriyanna 1993 (reprnt)). Fabian (1983, p. 24) also speaks of the inter-subjective time which ‘signals a current emphasis on the communicative nature of human action and interaction. As soon as culture is conceived as ... the specific way in which actors create and produce beliefs, values, and other means of social life, it has to be recognized that time is a constitutive dimension of social reality’. In other words, this social reality in time is perceiveable because of its very reference to it. Pursuit of knowledge occurred through travel, that is the experience of geographical space, initially in search of religion and, therefore, to places of religious significance and subsequently in search of secular knowledge; it was to places ‘where man (sic) was to find nothing but himself’ (Fabian 1983, p. 88). It is no wonder than that, in the past, ethnography has been defined as ‘to see culture and its norms - beauty, truth and reality - as artificial arrangements, susceptible to detached analysis and comparison with other possible dispositions,’(Clifford 1981, p. 541) thus leading to the ‘belief that the Other was a crucial object of modern research’ (Clifford 1981, p. 542) and therefore the ethnographer must ‘strive to render the unfamiliar comprehensible’ (Clifford 1981, p. 542).
Ethnography is a social research style that derives from anthropology; Agar (2004, p. 21) has defined it as ‘a social research style that emphasises encountering alien worlds and making sense of them... (and) ethnographers set out to show how social action in one world makes sense from the point of view of another’; Said (1976, pp. 1-4), has referred to ‘the other’ (often being ‘inferior, ignorant, and needing protection and guidance’) as being culturally, intellectually and spatially far away. Research is being pursued more and more from “within” by ‘conducting fieldwork “untainted” by nationalist accusations of imperialist and colonialist connections’ (Fahim & Helmer 1980, p. 644). Although traditional ethnographic research and its methods have been subject to criticism, it is only through rich ethnographic data that we can begin to understand the complexities of human relations and cultural constructions. As de Certeau (1984, p. 117) has pointed out that ‘space is practiced place’, it is through overlapping and intersecting practices boundaries get blurred. The relationship between the local and the non-local and the manner in which they mould each other thus becomes evident. Ethnographic studies are not only processual, but also a reflection of historical developments. Finally, the researcher becomes the author of a “thick description” (Geertz 1983).

The description is in the form of a narrative which is a description of events as opposed to settings. People’s accounts of events and activities have been observed for what may be inferred and how such activities may be embedded in other types of situated actions. Analysis and evaluations are made throughout the text, as they are not intrinsic to the world. The written text is distinguished from the narrative, as it does not follow the order of events as they occurred, but has been interspersed with commentaries and supported by literature for the sake of the argument.

The impact of post-colonialist developments have been such that what is ‘local culture’ in India now should be constituted as ‘uneven encounters’, that is, people have made of the structures and practices of the ‘studied regime’ something quite different from what was intended. They have further manipulated/subverted the system by using these structures and practices in order to create (re-create) a space for themselves.

**Participant Observation**

That the participatory approaches have been critiqued extensively goes without saying. Mosse (1994, p. 498) points out that participatory methods ‘involve highly formal and
public social events, which collect information in ways that are strongly influenced by existing social relationships and hierarchies'. Jackson (1997) goes on further to state that expectations that poor village people willingly divulge truthful and accurate information in one-off participatory research exercises are unrealistic. Further, Razavi (1999, p. 422) point out the importance of how data is selected, interpreted/analysed and presented. They argue that the fieldworker is a crucial figure in selecting and transmitting the voices of the poor, but is largely invisible in participatory poverty assessments or assumed to be transparent.

Notwithstanding this critique, the aim of this research is an attempt to gain accurate knowledge, trying ‘... to catch the interpretative process by remaining aloof as a so-called “objective” observer and refusing to take the role of the acting unit is to risk the worst kind of subjectivism -- the objective observer is likely to fill in the process of interpretation with his own surmises in place of catching the process as it occurs in the experience of the acting unit which uses it’ (Blumer 1969, p. 86).

The concept of participant observation... signifies the relation which the human observer of human beings cannot escape - having to participate in some fashion in the experience and action of those he (sic) observes (Blumer 1969, p. 39).

Participant observation has been defined as a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection (Denzin 1978). Participant observation10 represents a delicate balance between subjectivity and objectivity, between being a participating observer and an observing participant. The ethnographer’s personal experiences, especially those of participation and empathy, are recognised as central to the research process, but they are firmly restrained by the impersonal standards of observation and “objective” distance (Clifford & Marcus 1986). It therefore involved me getting close to the people over an extended period of time and making them comfortable with my presence so that I could observe and record information about their everyday lives. Although I clearly explained the purpose of my research to the villagers, there is a certain amount of deception involved and, by admitting it, I hope to have conducted myself ethically through this research. Madge (1993, p. 297) has rightly argued, that we as academics ‘...have not yet adequately explored the power relations, inequalities and injustices’ upon which difference between ourselves and those we research is based. I

10The genealogy of participant observation can be found in Bruyn (1966).
realise how they have been excluded in several other processes of the research. While I recorded my notes each day, I found the villagers were curious and would gather around me. Any exposure they had had to research was in the form of surveys conducted by the Health, Revenue and Census Departments of the Government. People were puzzled by my desire to spend time amidst them when they realised that no financial benefits accrued to me personally.

Participant observation requires the researcher to adjust and adapt skilfully to concrete conditions of daily life (Johnson, J.M. 1975; Johnson, A.G. 1977); often non-rational factors influence observation and participant observation occurs in a non-linear fashion, therefore requiring the researcher to exercise a wide variety of skills, make judgements and be critical and creative. It involves a variety of data collection methods such as observation, natural conversations, interviews, checklists, questionnaires and unobtrusive methods (Bernard 1994). As the study demands a closer observation of the complex social interdependencies, this was considered a suitable method.

**Discourse Analysis**

I have in my research addressed the discourse of development, community development and women/ gender through the five year plan documents of the government of India. Discourse analysis can be characterised as a way of approaching and thinking about an issue. It has enabled me to interpret the hidden motivations behind the text and behind the particular choice of approaches to development adopted by the national and state governments. I have looked at how ‘social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context’ (van Dijk 2003, p. 352). Further, I have emphasised here ‘how language gets recruited “on site” to enact specific social activities and social identities’ (Gee 2005, p. 1). Individuals have different ways of participating in different social groups, cultures and institutions, which is constantly changing; in effect language is in use everywhere and is always ‘political’

Whether it is the documents of the governments or the everyday lives of people as articulated in their discourses, language in its magical property is designed by us to fit the

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11 By political is meant the manner in which social goods are thought about, argued over and distributed in society. ‘Social goods’ are anything that a community believes to be a source of power, status, value or worth.
situation in which it is being communicated, while at the same time creating the situation. In effect, language and institutions are enmeshed and interdependent and come into existence in a reciprocal process through time. We continually and actively build and rebuild our world not just through language but through language used in tandem with actions, interactions, symbols/ gestures, objects, tools, technologies, distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling and believing. The aim is to bridge the gap between the micro level of the social order which includes language use, discourse, verbal interaction and communication and the macro level of analysis which include terms such as power, dominance and inequality between social groups.

Early language and gender research (Key 1975; Lakoff 1975; Thorne & Henley 1975) tended to focus on (1) documenting empirical difference between women’s and men’s speech, especially in cross-sex interaction; (2) describing women’s speech in particular; and for many, (3) identifying the role of language in creating and maintaining social inequality between women and men (Kendall & Tannen 2003). The third goal is the most imminent to this research as well. Lakoff’s (1975) work provided a starting point from which to explore the complexity of the relationship between gender and discourse and continues to be accepted by diverse groups of speakers as a valid representation of their own discursive experiences. Although her account of ‘women’s language’ does not represent the way each individual women speaks, it nonetheless represents the norms by which women are expected to speak, or what Bucholtz and Hall (1995, p. 6) call, ‘the precise hegemonic notion of gender appropriate language use’. While this is based most often on the ‘idealized language of middle-class European American women’, and often imposed on representations of women of colour, the diversity of experiences and the various forms of resistance to dominance that is part of the repertoire of women’s agency in India are not taken into account.

However, as research has progressed there is an agreement regarding (1) the social construction of gender, (2) the indirect relationship between gender and discourse, (3) gendered discourse as a resource, and (4) gendered discourse as a constraint. There is greater consensus amongst researchers that ‘meaning’ of gender is culturally mediated, and gendered identities are interactionally achieved (Kendall & Tannen 2003). Tannen (1994) claims that discourse and gender are ‘sex-class’ linked rather than just sex linked, that is, ways of speaking are associated with the class of women or the class of men in a
given society. Bucholtz and Hall (1995, p. 7) hold that ‘gendered speaking styles exist independently of the speaker’, such that gendered discourse provides a resource for women’s and men’s presentation of self.

Gee (2005, p. 6) notes that ‘there is no ‘scientific method’, even in the ‘hard’ sciences, if by this we mean such a set of rules to follow. Rather, research adopts and adapts specific tools of inquiry and strategies for implementing them. These tools and strategies ultimately reside in a ‘community of practice’ formed by those engaged in such research’. He further adds ‘such tools and strategies are continually and flexibly adapted to specific issues, problems and contexts of study. They are continually transformed as they are applied in practice (p. 6).

In this research, I will be highlighting what is of significance to people, especially women in their everyday lives and in programs meant for them, through their use of language as well as accompanying behaviour. What activities are women enacting, or women’s agency as portrayed in their language use. Further language is used to recognise the identity or role someone is taking on, that is to build an identity here-and-now, which changes based on the contexts. The manner in which individuals adapt to these various identities is of import in this research. Further, we use language to build social relationships, to signal what sort of relationship we have, we want to have, or are trying to have with our listener, reader, or other people, groups or institutions about whom we are communicating. Language is also implicated in the distribution of social goods, that is, what is being communicated as to what is taken to be ‘normal’, ‘right’, ‘good’, ‘correct’, ‘proper’, ‘appropriate’, ‘valuable’, ‘the ways things are’, ‘the way things ought to be’, ‘high status or low status’ ‘like me or not like me’ and so forth. Language is also used to connect or disconnect things, that is, how does language make one thing relevant or irrelevant to another. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the manner in which language privileges of disprivileges specific sign systems or different ways of knowing and believing or claims to knowledge and belief (Gee 2005, pp. 11-3). I have attempted in my research to critically analyse documents of the Government of India and those of the Orissa State Government, not excluding the gender related policy documents of DFID. Further, in observing the everyday lives of women, I have further highlighted under what circumstances language is used to create representations of women that is suitable for the policies of the government and international aid agencies.
Knowing the Community? – Community Studies

Community studies represent a holistic approach to sociological or social scientific research, an interdisciplinary field concerned with social institutions and social change at the community level. Comparative insights about community derive from areas of study as diverse as literature, sociology, social psychology, anthropology, economics, politics, history and, increasingly, ecology. Community studies integrate knowledge and methodology from all of these disciplines.

Communities are not homogenous and their actors do not interact with each other in a similar ways and manner; patterns of kinship may be different and therefore difficult to recognise and to seek or receive support from (but this can be exaggerated because of its anthropological significance and support may just as easily be sought from non-kin).

What may be more important is how the apparent significance of kinship relates to the equally reported significance of friendships, or of neighbouring, or of labour exchange, all of which have become part of the conventional wisdom of the community study.

The sub theme within this overall community study was to highlight the more complex issue of women’s lived experiences and its relationship to state and civil society responses, which brings to fore three sets of issues:

(i) the politics of how women’s interests are represented in both the state and civil society and struggled for at the local level;
(ii) the nature of subsistence livelihoods and women’s place as distinct actors within the larger (community development/agrarian/economic) structures;
(iii) and the specificities of gender relationships.

My concern throughout the period of field work was whether the coverage of my investigative activities was comprehensive? Whether the items highlighted in the analysis were representative of that coverage? And, whether some observed behaviour was a characteristic of this one community, or all small communities, or typical of the wider Indian community?

In the field

Had I not used my personal contacts to gain entry into the field with the permission of the gatekeepers, it would have been extremely difficult to find as suitable a situation as I
experienced. The question of safety in the field is highly significant. My greatest advantage was my knowledge of the local language and culture (obviously, the reason for my choosing this location in the first place), which led me to a greater understanding of the cultural meanings of my observations. England (1994, p. 85) warns that ‘fieldwork might actually expose the researched to greater risk and might be more intrusive and potentially more exploitative than more traditional methods’ further emphasising that ‘…exploitation and betrayal are endemic to fieldwork’. My attempt was to minimise these to the extent possible. In observing and seeking information from people, I had to also reveal of myself; although I tried to suspend judgement and become a keen learner, I was often concerned with the unquestioning acceptance by the people of certain unusual behaviours, attitudes on my part and events generated by my presence. As I became less and less of a curiosity and novelty, people’s ‘reactivity’ reduced, that is, they became less and less concerned about my activities.

My initial attempt was to locate a community development organisation which worked in the area of women’s livelihoods/empowerment, leading me to the State Social Welfare Board, from where I collected lists of agencies engaged in work of similar nature. These lists were not exhaustive, as they only included those agencies that were funded by the Board. I also pored over the Directories of NGOs, visited several agencies, many of which existed on paper only whilst others which did exist and had stated objectives of working towards women’s empowerment, in actual fact were not. I visited several other agencies which either, maintained lists of agencies (such as the Orissa State Social Workers and Volunteers Association), or provided funding or worked in collaboration with various other agencies and communities (such as OXFAM, UNICEF, Council for Youth and Social Development, Institute of Socio Economic Development).

Eventually, through a personal contact, I was introduced to the ex-Panchayat Samiti member of village Balipada, to whom I explained the nature and purpose of my research. My friend then accompanied me to the village, where I had a formal introduction to some of the key persons in the village.

In observing how women negotiated the structures of community development, I was closely engaged in dialogue with the local Government offices. I was also keen to enquire into the reasons for the failure of the previously thriving Mahila Mandal, a women’s
group which had come into existence as a result of a government program and was essentially responsible for the distribution of supplementary nutrition.

Information was gathered by interviewing key informants on various issues and through conversations and observations. In everyday discussions, a distinction was drawn between those who were locals and those who were transient visitors, mainly including married daughters of the community, school teachers, revenue collectors, hawkers, health visitors, etc. I had to strive to become one of these transient members in order to gain access to information, interaction and comprehension of data. Sometimes I was compelled to remain on the margins of the locality, often a good sign for the reflexive researcher as there is no fear of ‘going native’ in the process... being a ‘local’ certainly helps to cut through some of the subtleties of kinship and friendship and as the locality was also familiar, hence there was no need to know who to ask and who to ask first (lines of authority – whether permission was required and so forth).

Information gathered was sometimes based on key informants’ response to what people typically do in certain situations. Most information on norms and statuses was fairly institutionalised, such as marriage procedures, descent, inheritance, patterns of exchange of goods, etc. and they were easily accessible. Information about events and incidents were subjected to comparisons from various informants in order to establish and substantiate the time sequence and validity of reported events. Sometimes, I realised information was being withheld, but when several informants were questioned, a picture emerged that was substantially different from the original version.

Information of any significance to the members of the community was immediately relayed which indicated the existence of strong networks; usually children and older women were the carriers of good and bad tidings. Sometimes I realised that a significant event had occurred in another part of the village and it was then that I had to substitute my own observations with those of an informant. Of course, I could not be at every place every time, nor could I be on time everywhere. There were always things occurring that I had not or could not see and certainly not foresee. Often local people censored the reporting of incidents and I therefore got to know only what they wanted me to know. At times, even when I observed the event, the actors denied it occurring, as it was demeaning to the community for an outsider to know, especially in the case of class- or caste-related events in the elaborate game of everyday social negotiations. The reverse was also true
with the community responding to me when not warranted; often the competition for limited resources can cause discord within the community and a distinction is drawn between insiders and newcomers.

I did not depend much on my memory. I divided my observation by time slots and made brief notes each time, but I was also engaged in a lot of natural conversations with people about their daily lives, initially with the aim of establishing rapport and later on to clarify things that I had observed or heard. I soon began to realise that I was involved in all the daily conversations of people when they themselves realised that I could recognise all the referents. I became extremely aware, as Whyte (1978, p. 415) realised, that ‘one has to learn when to question and when not to question as well as what questions to ask’. I also became aware of my own interpersonal limitations, specifically because of the clearly assigned gender boundaries that were rather strictly enforced. The fact that I was so closely associating with persons in the village did not ensure cordial relations with one and all, just like in one’s own living milieu. There were obvious hostilities and ideological differences; however, due to the circumstances of the research, I was compelled to maintain a similar relationship with all respondents. On the other hand, alliances developed and this was also recognised by other residents. Even key informants were difficult to access lest this be considered as an advantageous alliance; the problems of ‘me’ being a/the researcher only added to the problem of having to deal with those respondents who declined to cooperate. This also meant that I had to modify my own usual behaviour in order to report on actions.

It has been noted that researchers often find it difficult to gain access to women, partly because the latter are extremely busy and time to sit and talk may be restricted to the late evenings, when it may not be appropriate or practical for a researcher to visit women’s homes (Scheyvens & Leslie 2000). During my research, I encountered a situation where women were inaccessible (often not wanting to be disturbed) during the nights, not so much due to excess work, but the infiltration of TV. In fact, they made every attempt to complete all household and other tasks prior to the regular TV soaps. Having only three TVs in the village did not deter people from gathering in those houses to watch their favourite shows. The younger women, however, were always available in their homes, as they were not allowed out due to cultural norms that prohibited them from leaving the house/transgressing the boundaries of gender relations. In addition, women were rarely
given the role of official spokespersons for a community; they were, therefore, not the first persons outsiders are likely to encounter. Generally, women’s freedom in public domains was and is constrained, meaning that it would have been unlikely for them to attend community meetings, or, if they did, they would sit quietly at the back rather than expressing their opinions or raising questions. Their low self-esteem also prevented them from expressing themselves before outsiders.

In so far as gender is a ‘negotiated idea’, my gender certainly played an important part in my fieldwork. Initially, it limited my access to male informants, especially as gender roles are fairly well defined in rural Orissa. In fact, people in the village could not imagine why I would want to leave my family and spend so much time with them, men being even more astonished. I know, for instance, that there were a number of rumours circulating about me - that I was a government official undertaking some investigation (because of my entry in the field with the friend who worked for the Government, which people tried to utilise and I will discuss that later) and even as a person who under the guise of research was actually trying to divest them of their property (as that was the theme in a TV soap opera then). There are always exceptions, however, and this only goes to prove that male and female attitudes within a given culture can vary tremendously.

My gender influenced not only how I perceived others, but how others perceived me as well. For instance, I realised that there were some questions I could not ask and some places where I could not go and others where I was not allowed to go. I realised that individually I could speak and interview male informants, but in the evenings, when they sat in the “common house” (kotha ghara) and discussed matters, I was not welcome; there were hushed silences and all the attention centred on me until I decided to leave, at times even being gently reminded to leave. How I conducted myself determined how others perceived me; after I had been there for some months, I had people inviting me into their homes at all times wanting to speak to me or seek my advice on various matters. However, my age, marital status and inexperience of parenthood impacted my fieldwork though some concession was gained by my position of knowledge.

Since ethnography was the methodology of choice, focus group discussions and observations with women in a community in rural Orissa, India were conducted. The duration of the field work was seven months during which I as the researcher lived within the community. The entire village community of 53 households (including the elderly,
children, disabled, etc) was the subject of study (primarily observation) and where indicated the adjacent hamlets were also visited and adults there were also engaged in dialogue. While in-depth interviews were conducted primarily with ten members in the village since the purpose of the research was to enquire into the nature of community development programs for women and the reasons for the failure, sustained dialogue with almost all residents was established, in order to understand the nature of everyday lives of people, especially women in the community, to establish rapport and to validate information gathered.

Data gathered was in the form of taped interviews, reflective diary notes (field notes) and photographic documentation of everyday lived experiences as well significant events in the community. Oral consent was sought from the participants (in community meetings since only few women were literate) at the start and at every stage. As indicated earlier, photographs of group scenes were taken so as maintain confidentiality. The tapes and the transcripts of interviews as well as the field notes, will be retained in a secure place for the requisite period.

All precautions have been taken to maintain confidentiality and individual’s oral consent have been taken to be part of the research. Further, I was conscious that observations were conducted so as not to infringe upon the privacy of people. However, in the text the place names, individual names have been altered to retain anonymity. No risk, other than what individuals face in the course of their everyday lives, was anticipated in the conduct of this research, as participation was purely voluntary. Where members of the community indicated that they were unwilling to discuss issues, or participate altogether, they were given the choice of withdrawing from the research at any stage. Further, no sensitive information was gathered and data gathered was shared with the participants (especially in-depth interviews and photographs) for comment and critique prior to being presented in the thesis (as is evidenced therefore no deception was used). This is in keeping with RMIT ethics guidelines.

An elaborate description and analysis of the field data will be presented in later chapters.
Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

While having discussed in detail the epistemological framework I have adopted in the previous two chapters, I approach the question of how to understand the everyday lives of women and the interface with community development by critically reviewing some conceptual spaces that help me arrive at an interpretive meaning of what I witnessed. I have chosen the theories of everyday life as proposed by Lefèbvre and Michel de Certeau to help me in understanding the everyday lives of women in the village. The structuration theory of Anthony Giddens helped me understand the structures that exist within the community and those of community development as interfacing with the unfolding of women’s agency in the village. In addition to this, I have also used the development and community development theories that I will elaborate in detail in subsequent chapters.

The Everyday Life Theories

Henri Lefèbvre

Everyday life is rarely viewed with neutrality, the concept being marked with a rich history of hostility, envy and desire, expressing both nostalgia for the concrete and disdain for a life lacking in self-reflection and criticality. Beyond the often-cited work of Lefèbvre and de Certeau, there is an extensive tradition of writing on the everyday, including the work of philosophers and sociologists such as Lukacs, Heidegger, Heller, Schutz, Goffman, Habermas, Bourdieu and Giddens among others. Given the current interest in the concrete and the particular and the enormous variations in human lives across cultural contexts, in what sense is it meaningful to talk about everyday life in general?

Lefèbvre (1987, p. 75) sees the extension of post-war capitalism ‘thoroughly penetrating the details of daily life’ as an inescapable fact for everyone. He saw contemporary everyday life as exploitative, oppressive and relentlessly controlled. For Lefèbvre (1987, p. 11), everyday life was simply lived experience, and in contemporary society this meant that together ‘modernity and everyday life constitute a deep structure’, but it was also opaque in that it was ‘defined by “what is left over” after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis’ (Lefèbvre 1991a, p. 97). He argues that everyday life is a distinctively modern phenomenon that only emerged
in the 19th century and that this claim is counterintuitive and that under modern conditions, the uniform and repetitive aspects of human lives become more prominent. Similarly, Alvin Gouldner (1975) suggests that the rapidly changing fabric of ordinary lives creates a new awareness of the mundane: that which was previously taken for granted becomes visible, in both its new and its traditional, disappearing forms.

Like the blurred speck on the edge of one’s vision that disappears when looked at directly, the everyday ceases to be everyday when it is subject to scrutiny. ‘The everyday escapes’ writes Blanchot (1987, p. 14), ‘it belongs to insignificance’. On the other hand, the everyday always holds out the possibility of its own transformation.

For Lefèbvre, ‘moments’ are those instances of intense experience in everyday life that provide an immanent critique of the everyday: they are moments of vivid sensations of disgust, of shock, of delight and so on, which, although fleeting, provide a promise of the possibility of a different daily life, while at the same time puncturing the continuum of the present (David Harveys 'Afterword' in Lefèbvre 1991b). Everyday life is typically distinguished from the exceptional moment; the distinctiveness of the everyday lies in its lack of distinction and differentiation; it is the air one breathes, the taken-for-granted backdrop, the commonsensical basis of all human activities.

Kristin Ross (1995, pp. 1-13) argues that, in Lefèbvre’s work, the continual reference to the colonisation of everyday life by capitalism should be taken literally as the continuation and transformation of the processes and forces of imperialism and that colonisation must be seen as central to the development of capitalism. Further, she stresses that modernity witnesses a continuation of colonialism in a re-ordering of the world whereby the processes of imperialism have taken on new configurations at a local and global level. I will allude to this at a later stage, when speaking of the persistence of caste and other hierarchical relations in village and urban India, despite the success of the struggle for independence in India. For Lefèbvre, however, capitalist modernity can be characterised by contradictory tendencies that increase homogeneity in everyday life (a standardisation of work and objects through a general commodification) whilst, at the same time, social differences are extended and deepened (the intensification of hierarchical differences of class, race, gender, age, etc).
Everyday life bears a complicated relationship to the distinction between private and public; it includes domestic activities but also routine forms of work, travel and leisure. Furthermore, everyday life is not simply interchangeable with the popular: it is not the exclusive property of a particular social class or grouping. Everyday life is also a secular and democratic concept; secular because it conveys the sense of a world leached of transcendence. The everyday is everyday because it is no longer connected to the miraculous, the magical or the sacred. The everyday is also democratic, because it recognises the paramount shared reality of a mundane, material embeddedness in the world, but also because of a ‘right to difference’.

Gender has been an important factor in conceptions of everyday life; Lefèbvre regards women as the quintessential representatives and victims of the quotidian. ‘Everyday life weighs heavily on women’, he writes (1984, p. 73), ‘some are bogged down by its peculiar cloying substance, while others escape into make-believe…They are the subject of everyday life and its victims’. Women, like everyday life, have often been defined by negation; their realm has not been that of war, art, philosophy, scientific endeavour, high office. What else is left to a woman but everyday life, the realm of the insignificant, invisible yet indispensable?

The position of women in Lefèbvre’s (1984) theorising of the everyday is probably the most contradictory; in saying that women are in an ambiguous position as ‘both consumers of commodities and symbols for commodities’, he makes a startling claim that it is because of this ambiguous relationship with everyday that women are incapable of understanding it (p. 73) and then characterises women’s protests as ‘clumsily formulated, directionless claims’ (p. 92), probably a predictable response to the emergence of feminism. In the same book, however, he sees women in a totally different light, contrasting their ‘intimate knowledge’ of poverty, ‘repressed desires’ and the ‘endlessness of want’ with ‘the power of women, crushed and overwhelmed’, ‘object’ of history and society but also its inevitable ‘subject’ and foundation (p. 35). Here, women are not only given critical consciousness in relation to the everyday, but are also seen as agents of a historical struggle to transform it. In his theorising, Lefèbvre encountered the same problem that Simmel sought to negotiate: the need to attend to the everyday in general, without assimilating the particular differences of daily life within an overarching schema. The everyday, Lefèbvre insists, is not an ‘object’ or a place, but a totality of relationships.
Similar issues were constantly faced in the field in the observations of the everyday and, therefore, in the organisation of the field data exploring the complexities and differences of everyday life in village India.

For Lefèbvre, the goal of transformation must be the overcoming and obliteration of the everydayness of everyday life; the privileging of creativity and play as the basis for a social life stripped of boredom and routine places him in a utopian tradition which is quite in contrast to the discussion of his theorising of everyday life so far. The association of the everyday with repetition, home and habit often involves assumptions about gender and women’s relationship to the modern world. These assumptions become most explicit in Lefèbvre’s sociological and Marxist-oriented account of everyday life. While I have found many of his insights useful, I want to question his view that the habitual, home-centred aspects of daily life are outside, and in some sense antithetical to, the experience of an authentic modernity.

**Repetition**

It refers not to the singular or unique, but to that which happens ‘day after day’; the activities of sleeping, eating and working conform to regular diurnal rhythms that are, in turn, embedded within larger cycles of repetition: the weekend, the annual holiday, the start of a new semester. For Lefèbvre, this cyclical structure of everyday life is its quintessential feature, a source of both fascination and puzzlement: ‘In the study of the everyday’ he writes, ‘we discover the great problem of repetition, one of the most difficult problems facing us’ (1987, p. 10).

Women’s affinity with repetition and cyclical time is noted by numerous writers; de Beauvoir (1988, p. 610) claims that ‘woman clings to routine; time has for her no element of novelty, it is not a creative flow; because she is doomed to repetition, she sees in the future only a duplication of the past’. Unable to create or invent, she remains imprisoned within the remorseless routine of cyclical time. For Lefèbvre, women’s association with recurrence is also a sign of their connection to nature, emotion and sensuality, their lesser degree of estrangement from biological and cosmic rhythms.

Why are women so persistently linked to repetition? Felski (2000) identifies three reasons for: first, women are almost always seen as *embodied subjects*, their biological nature
never far from view. Menstruation and pregnancy become the pre-eminent, indeed the only, examples of human subordination to natural time and a certain feminine resistance to the project of civilisation. Second, women are primarily responsible for the repetitive tasks of social reproduction: cleaning, preparing meals, caring for children. While much of paid work is equally repetitive, only the domestic sphere is deemed to exist outside the dynamic of history and change. Finally, women are identified with repetition via consumption. For Marxist scholars of the everyday, commodification is its paramount feature, evident in even greater standardisation and sameness. As the primary symbols and victims of consumer culture, women take on the repetitive features of the objects that they buy. Femininity is formed through mass production and mass reproduction, disseminated through endless images of female glamour and female domesticity. Women become the primary emblem of an ‘inauthentic everyday life marked by the empty homogeneous time of mass consumption’ (Felski 2000, p. 89).

Home

Everyday life is characterised by contrasts of blurred boundaries and specified boundaries and thus contradictions in spatial differentiations. It includes a diversity of spaces as well as a multitude of forms of movement through these spaces. Our experience of everyday in the present environment is powerfully affected by technology (TV, computers, mobile phones), in providing us with knowledge of places and things remote from our own.

Home, like everyday life itself, constitutes a taken-for-granted grounding which allows us to make forays into other worlds. According to Heller (1984), familiarity is a need and familiarity combines with the promise of protection and warmth to create the positive everyday associations of home. Home is also a highly gendered space where women have often been seen as its personification.

Freedom and agency are traditionally symbolised by movement through public space which is further strengthened by Grossberg’s (1988, p. 384) characterisation of nomadic subjects, ‘wandering through the ever-changing places and spaces, vectors and apparatuses of everyday life’. In response, Janet Wolff (1995) has suggested that such metaphors are masculine and hence problematic for feminism. She claims that there is a persistent association of maleness with travel and femininity with stasis, although she acknowledges that women have always travelled.
One needs to recognise that the idea of home is complex and temporally fluid. Home need not be ‘where you’re from’; it can also be ‘where you’re at’ (Gilroy 1990-91). Silverstone (1994, p. 28) argues that ‘home is an investment of meaning in space’. Home often contains many of the objects that have helped to shape a life history and the meanings and memories with which these objects are encrypted. According to hooks (1990), one’s homeplace is the one site where one could freely confront the issues of humanisation, where one could resist.

Home, Young (1997) argues is a specific materialisation of the body and the self; things and spaces become layered with meaning, value and memory. This materialisation does not fix identity but anchors it in a physical space that creates certain continuities between past and present; ‘Dwelling in the world means we are located among objects, artefacts, rituals, and practices that configure who are in our particularity’ (p. 153). Home can be a place of important human values, including safety, individuation, privacy and preservation that need to be reclaimed rather than disdained by feminism.

Habit

The everyday is synonymous with habit, sameness, routine; it epitomises both the comfort and boredom of the ordinary. Lefebvre (1984, p. 24) writes, ‘The modern… stands what is novel, brilliant, paradoxical…it is (apparently) daring and transitory’, whereas ‘the quotidian is what is humble and solid, what is taken for granted…undated and (apparently) insignificant’. Habit describes not simply an action but an attitude: habits are often carried out in a semi-automatic, distracted or involuntary manner. Everyday life simply is the routine act of conducting one’s day-to-day existence without making it an object of conscious attention.

‘The reality of everyday life is taken for granted as reality. It does not require additional verification over and beyond its simple presence. It is simply there, as self-evident and compelling facticity. I know that it is real. While I am capable of engaging in doubts about its reality, I am obliged to suspend such doubt as I routinely exist in everyday life’ (Berger & Luckmann 1967, p. 37).

Everyday life is the sphere of what Schutz calls the natural attitude; unless a specific problem emerges to demand our attention, we rarely pause to reflect on the mundane ritualised practices around which much of our everyday life is organised. Agnes Heller (1984) also insists on this point, claiming that it is impossible in principle to adopt a critical, self-reflexive attitude toward all aspects of everyday life: ‘we would simply not be
able to survive in the multiplicity of everyday demands and everyday activities if all of them required inventive thinking...disengagement is an indispensable precondition for continued activity' (p. 129). Heller’s defence of habit is a pragmatic one: in order to survive in the world and get things done, we depend on routine; certain facets of everyday life can be called into question, but it is simply impossible to doubt everything at once. Heller insists, ‘it is absolutely imperative that in certain types of activity our praxis and our thinking should become repetitive’ (p. 259). Habit is the necessary precondition for impulse and innovation.

I disagree with the common claim that only the elite are free to transcend the quotidian, that ‘most persons have nothing but that ordinary everyday life’. This is to impose a fantasy of sameness and profound limitation onto the lives of ordinary individuals. Every life, in other words, interweaves the everyday and non-everyday, though some lives are clearly more anchored in the mundane than others. I tend to agree with Schutz (1983) when he states that to live in the life-world is to take pre-existing knowledge as simply given ‘until further notice’, until a particular encounter or event serves to render it problematic.

To me, everyday life is not to be conceptualised as a homogeneous and predictable terrain; it embraces a diverse range of activities, attitudes and forms of behaviour; it contains as Silverstone (1994, p. 7) notes ‘broken patterns, non-rational and duplicitous action, irresolvable conflicts and unpredictable events’. Finally, I would like to conclude this section by stating that, in contrast to Lefèbvre, modern feminism should revise the category of the everyday from a seemingly unproblematic ground supporting shared experience, ‘theoretical consistency, and ultimate social harmony to a site of irresolvable difference, of conflict whose resolution is not simply delayed, but theoretically impossible’ (Langbauer 1992, p. 48).

**Michel de Certeau**

For de Certeau, the everyday is hidden and evasive; to attempt to attend to it requires something of a leap of faith. He approaches the everyday from the material of the everyday itself; in so much as he approaches it in the name of faith, it is because ‘faith’ and ‘belief’ are the characteristics of the kinds of knowledge that circulate in the everyday. His studying of the everyday was not about finding new cultural texts to
interpret, value and celebrate; instead it was an attempt to focus investigation on the way people operate, the way they ‘practise’ everyday life. For de Certeau, the popular culture of everyday life evidences ‘ways of using the products imposed by a dominant economic order’ (de Certeau, M. 1984, p. xiii). Everyday life is the scene of use within ‘a system that, far from being their own, has been constructed and spread by others’ (de Certeau, M. 1984, p. 17).

What characterises the everyday is the creativity that responds to the situation; by ‘making-do’ with a readymade culture, but also, and crucially, by ‘making with’ this culture (through acts of appropriation and re-employment), everyday life evidences inventiveness: ‘Creativity is the act of reusing and recombining heterogeneous materials’, it is the creative arrangement and re-arrangement of bricolage (de Certeau, M. 1997b, p. 49). These assemblages, however, are the product of a culture seen as heterogeneous, not the products of an individual’s will or actions, that heterogeneity evidenced through the stubborn insistence of the body, of childhood memories and cultural histories.

The ‘resistance’ of the everyday is a resistance born of difference, of otherness: bodies that are at variance to the machines that they operate; traditions that are unlike those being promoted; imaginings that are different from the rationale governing the present (Highmore 2002). Buchanan also (1997, p. 177) suggests that, for de Certeau, ‘the everyday is already extraordinary; a virtual carnival’. Certainly not to misrecognise the dreary and repetitive nature of the everyday, Buchanan (p. 179) further clarifies that ‘the everyday itself be treated as always already containing the possibility of carnival’. In so much as de Certeau’s work figures the everyday as a potentiality that points at an overcoming, it is a continuation of Lefèbvre’s work. ‘Popular procedures’ constitute a ‘style’ that can be seen as evidence of a resistance to the colonisation of everyday life. de Certeau’s position ‘serves to confirm the unsutured nature of the social, the impossibility of the full colonization of daily life by the system, the continued fact of resistance to the temporal logic of democratic capitalism, and the ubiquitous eruption of the heterogeneous’ (Poster 1997, p. 125).

The difference between Lefèbvre and de Certeau is most visible in the political outcomes that result from their staging of the everyday; for Lefèbvre, the outcome of analysis is the revolutionary ‘praxis’ that will capitalise on the ‘moments’ of possibility, those moments that germinate the seeds of a different everyday. For de Certeau, the instrumentality of
politics necessarily has to be held in abeyance; nothing can be more damaging to the study of everyday life than to greet it with a prescriptive ‘political’ assessment. This is not to evacuate the political from the field of everyday life; rather it is to re-imagine it for the everyday.

Both these theoreticians of the everyday had in common the following: both were concerned with the everyday as an ensemble of practices; both bring the language of avant-gardism to bear on the business of attending to the everyday. Both note the extensive ambition of rationalism, while recognising its mythic and irrational underside and its failure to erase ritual and superstition in general. Both concern themselves with the everyday as phenomenal and sensual: an ‘aesthetic’ realm that requires attention to style and the poetics of living.

In line with de Certeau’s commentary, it is necessary and essential to produce a poetics that distances itself from ‘traditional socio-political frames of reference’, that is, moving away from the stark polarising language of such a tradition. It means to side-step the binary logic that is inherent in the analysis of the social and allow for the differentiation of a multiple everyday. Everyday is also a sphere of resistance rather than the remainder in forms of analysis that offer an overarching perspective of social relations. Resistance, according to de Certeau, is what dissipates domination and resists representation. Resistance is as much an activity born of inertia as it is a result of inventive forms of appropriation:

*On the one hand, there are slowly developing phenomena, latencies, delays that are piled up in the thick breadth of mentalities, evident things and social ritualizations, an opaque, stubborn life buried in everyday gestures that are at the same time both immediate and millenary. On the other hand, irruptions, deviations, that is, all these margins of an inventiveness from which future generations will successively draw their ‘cultivated culture’* (de Certeau, M. 1997b, pp. 137-8).

This echoes the work of Raymond Williams (1977, pp. 121-7), in his emphasis of emergent and residual cultures that are differentiated from dominant cultures, but de Certeau diverts from this approach in asserting that the ‘residual’ or ‘opaque, stubborn life’ is not to be found simply in the continuation of cultural practices and values no longer in vogue, but that there is cultural density around objects and practices that evoke what might be thought of as a ‘cultural unconscious’ or ‘cultural imaginary’.
He further clarifies through a series of examples that resistance is both preservative and a creation of something new: rather than presenting the inverse of power, it offers a different and pluralized account of power:

*Between the symmetrical errors of archaistic nostalgia and frenetic over modernization, room remains for micro-inventions, for the practice of reasoned differences, to resist with sweet obstinace the contagion of conformism, to reinforce the network of exchanges and relations, to learn how to make one’s own choice among the tools and commodities produced by the industrial era. Each of us has the power to seize power over one part of oneself. This is why the gestures, objects and words that live in the ordinary nature of a simple kitchen so much importance. (de Certeau, M et al. 1998, p. 213)*

De Certeau (1997a, p. 9) saw that a form of representation was lacking in France:

*Becoming increasingly opaque, a marginalized life has no escape in our system of representations. Rural areas and cities – and not just labor unions and universities – are populated with silent subjects. And it is not because they lack ideas or criteria! But their convictions are no longer affiliations.*

However, an ‘indifference’ to gender is also evident in much of de Certeau’s work; feminism has conceived itself as a politics of everyday life. On the one hand, feminists have deployed hermeneutics, showing how the most mundane, taken-for-granted activities – conversation, housework, body language, style of dress, etc. – serve to reinforce patriarchal norms. The feminist gaze reveals the everyday world as problematic; in Dorothy Smith’s (1987) phrase, it is here, above all, that gender hierarchy is reproduced, invisibly, pervasively and over time.

Because of the grounding in the mundane, it is argued, women have a more realistic sense of how the world actually operates and are less estranged from their bodies and from the messy, chaotic, embodied realities of life. Thus, from the perspective of feminist standpoint theory, women’s connection to daily life is something to be celebrated. Here, everyday life is not a ruse of patriarchy but rather a sign of women’s grounding in the patriarchal world. It is the marginalised opaque lives of women that I am attempting to unveil in my study of everyday life of women in a village in Orissa. I have tried to show that everyday life is not simply a neutral life for pre-existing reality, but is freighted down with layers of meanings and associations. *Everydayness* is not an intrinsic quality that magically adheres to particular actions or persons (women, the poor); rather, it is a lived process of routinisation that all individuals experience.
Anthony Giddens’ Structuration Theory

*Structure and Social Systems* - Giddens proposed that social sciences should stop imitating the natural sciences and should redirect efforts at developing ‘sensitizing concepts’ that allow us to understand the active processes of interaction among individuals as they produce and reproduce structures while being guided by these structures.

In rejecting the dualisms in social theory and proposing elaborate critiques of interactionism\(^\text{12}\) and structuralism\(^\text{13}\), he emphasised that ‘structuration’ is intended to highlight that the individual/society, subject/object and micro/macro dichotomies do not constitute a dualism, but a ‘duality’. That is, people in interaction use the rules and resources that constitute social structure in their day-to-day routines in a context of co-presence and, in so doing, they reproduce these rules and resources of structure. Thus, individual action, interaction and social structure are intertwined and interdependent on one another. They do not constitute separate social realities, but a duality within the same reality, for ‘the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems’ (Giddens 1979, p. 69). Structuration theory thus concentrates on the production and reproduction of society by social agents themselves; as he states (1981b, pp. 41-8; 1984, pp. 164-5), social agents, not social theorists, produce, sustain and alter whatever degree of ‘systemness’ exists in society.

One cannot understand actions and interactions without reference to rules and resources and, likewise, one cannot understand institutional structures without knowing how actors use the rules and resources to interact with these institutional structures. Therefore, according to Giddens, structures are both ‘enabling and constraining’.

As a methodological procedure rather than an ontological assertion, Giddens recognises the need to ‘bracket out’ consideration of either individuals in interaction or institutional

\(^{12}\) Tends to perpetuate the dualism of individual versus structure, sometimes dismissing institutional processes as somehow less ‘real’ than face-to-face symbolic interaction. They ignore motivation and there is an implicit view of actors as cynical manipulators of gestures in staging areas. Further, Giddens states that in the structurally oriented forms of interactionism, it is the actual practices of people or collective units, not roles that are the point of articulation between the individual and society.

\(^{13}\) Giddens is critical of structuralism since it ignores human agency – the capacity of people to reflect, monitor, define and decide. Either individuals are forced to act in accordance with immanent systems of codes or social structures simply require actors to do their bidding.
structures, further asserting that functional analysis tends to ignore the active processes of agents in interaction and over-emphasises social structures as an ‘external constraint’ on actors. In this analysis, the agents in situations of interaction are marginalised and structures are removed from the actors who are involved in their reproduction and transformation.

The notion of the ‘duality of structure’, whereby the properties of the social structure are ‘used’ by active agents to transform or reproduce it, is a key concept in the ‘theory’ of ‘structuration’. For Giddens (1984), structure is conceptualised as the ‘rules’ and ‘resources’ that actors use in ‘interaction contexts’ that extend across ‘space’ and over ‘time’, thereby reproducing the structures. Rules of social life are the techniques or generalisable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social practices (p. 21) and are distinguished from formulated rules (canons, laws, bureaucratic rules, etc.) which are more codified interpretations of rules rather than rules themselves. Rules are the formulae that are constantly invoked in the course of day-to-day activities, that enter into the structuring of much of the texture of everyday life (p. 22). Turner (1991, p. 525), summarising Giddens, points out that rules reveal certain characteristics: (1) they are frequently used in (a) conversations, (b) interaction rituals and (c) the daily routines of individuals; (2) they are tacitly grasped and understood as part of the ‘stock knowledge’ of competent actors; (3) they are informal, remaining unwritten and unarticulated; and (4) they are weakly sanctioned through interpersonal techniques. Rules are part of actors’ ‘knowledgeability’, some of which are normative and the actors can articulate and explicitly make reference to, whilst other rules are more implicitly understood and used to guide the flow of interaction in ways that are not easily expressed or verbalised (Turner, J.H. 1991). Actors can also transform rules as they deal with one another and the contexts of their interactions.

Resources, as another critical property of structure, are facilities that actors use to get things done – these are the resources required for the capacity to perform tasks or the material equipment and the organisational ability to act in situations. The capacity to perform tasks requires resources or the material equipment and the organisational ability to act in situations. It is these resources that generate power (Giddens 1984, pp. 14-6); power by itself is not a resource, most social theory argues, but it is the mobilisation of resources that gives actors power to get things done. Thus, power is integral to the very
existence of structure, for, as actors interact, they use resources; and, as they use resources, they mobilise the power to shape their own actions and those of others (Turner, J.H. 1991). Giddens (1984) visualises rules and resources as ‘transformational’ and as ‘mediating’, by which he means that rules and resources can be transformed into many different patterns. Rules can guide people to communicate and interact with one another in different ways and resources can be mobilised in different ways to perform different activities to achieve different ends. They are mediating in that they represent and constitute that which ties social relations together across time and space. Rules and resources are attached to social systems via three modalities: specific rights and obligations, facilities to realise goals and interpretative schemes and stocks of knowledge, which, in turn, are used to generate the power for some actors to control others, affirm the norms that allow actors to be sanctioned for their conformity or non-conformity and create and use the interpretative schemes that make it possible for actors to communicate with one another.

Thus, the social structure is defined as the rules and resources that can be transformed as actors use them in concrete settings and across time and space.

**Social Institutions and the Reproduction of Action and Structure in the Duality of Structure** - Accounts of social action are typically designed to stress the intrusion of structural or systemic circumstances into the consciousness of actors or the domains in which activity occurs, while the practices through which the production of social life takes place remain unaddressed. Which gains precedence over the other, individual social action or that of collectivities is difficult to ascertain\(^\text{14}\); the only possible conclusion is that properties of collectivities and procedures of actions in some way presuppose one another in the reality of social life. As already mentioned, Giddens states (1981b, pp. 41-8; 1984, pp. 164-5) that it is social agents, not social theorists who produce, sustain and alter whatever degree of ‘systemness’ exists in society; therefore, according priority to structure or action may be misleading when it is recognised that the two are interwoven whenever human beings make their own history (Cohen 1987).

\(^\text{14}\) The existence of collectivities exhibiting specific properties and particular configurations depends on the transaction of determinate forms of conduct; conversely, social conduct is carried out in different ways in historically-specific types of collectivities.
It is Giddens who attempted to unravel the complexities of the relationship between (individual) action and collectivities. For Giddens, ‘agency’ denotes the events that an actor perpetrates rather than ‘intentions’, ‘purposes’, ‘ends’ or others states. Agency is what an actor actually does in a situation and that has visible consequences. What Max Weber promulgated and Parsons sustained - though in a substantially altered form - was that human action fundamentally involved the meaning and motives that actors associated with their behaviour; while acknowledging this, Giddens’ conception of human agency shifts attention to a more basic aspect of human conduct: the power to intervene in the course of events or state of affairs (1976, pp. 110-1; 1979, p. 88; 1984, pp. 14-6). Power in this broad sense precedes all matters regarding subjectivity and the reflexive monitoring of conduct (Giddens 1979, p. 92; 1984, p. 15), because social agency depends solely upon the capability of actors to ‘make a difference’ in the production of definite outcomes, whether or not they intended the particular outcomes; this is the essence of transformative capacity that Giddens refers to. This does not, however, in any way deny the existence of social uniformities; in emphasising that, to some extent, all interventions undertaken by social agents are under their own control, Giddens (1979, pp. 92, 267; 1981b, p. 53; 1984, p. 9), insists that at any phase in any given sequence of conduct any agent could have acted in a manner somehow different than she or he did. Like the order in nature, social activity will be produced everywhere, which may also be altered by the actors who are engaged in its production.

According to Giddens, no agent engaged in interaction is completely autonomous, that is, in every social relation there exists a dialectic of control involving the asymmetrical access to manipulation of the resources through which agents influence one another’s behaviour. The conception of agency in structuration theory resists the polarities of both thoroughgoing determinism and unqualified freedom, while preserving all possibilities between the extremes (Giddens 1984, p. 179). The latitude of freedom of agency crucially depends upon the range of practices that an agent is competent to perform. No agent is sufficiently skilled to perform every type of practice that his or her fellow actors have mastered.

15 Archer (1982, pp. 459-60) and Carlstein (1981, pp. 52-3) argue that this contention of Giddens implies that all actors exploit a generous degree of freedom in their conduct. Giddens (1984, pp. 169-80) has since indicated at length that structuration theory directs a lot of attention to both social and material constraints that any individual agent may be unable to change, hence, making ample allowance for a limited set of options available for the exercise of agency in any given situation.
Undoubtedly the conception of social agency, especially Giddens’ account of social practices, within the structuration theory provides fundamental grounds for denying the transposition of the principle of uniformity from nature to social life. The actors exercise their agency in these social practices and ‘make a difference’ to the outcome of social activities, which in themselves may involve the sequential and interactive organisation of numerous activities undertaken by a number of actors. The distinction between nature and social life rests on Giddens’ theses that the production of social life is a skilled performance, which includes methods and/or techniques appropriately performed by social agents (Giddens 1984, pp. 20-2). Not all practices are discursive, however; there are a variety of tasks which are performed in the absence of others, including a range of subtle consequential modes of physical gesture and bodily postures that resist reduction to conversational practice (Goffman 1959). Giddens further distinguishes between practical consciousness, whereby the agents need to be only tacitly aware of the skills they have mastered, and discursive consciousness, the level of awareness determined by the ability to put things into words. According to Giddens, actors have tacit awareness of the skills and procedures and most day-to-day activities are performed without actors being directly motivated. This, Giddens affirms, is because of the ‘mutual knowledge’, that is shared by all who are competent to engage in or recognise the appropriate performance of a social practice or range of practices (1976, pp. 88-9, 107; 1979, pp. 73, 84, 251-3).

Social practices and mutual knowledge are based on a series of rules, which are tacitly understood social procedures and therefore different from legal codes and bureaucratic regulations and other rules that are discursively formulated. Two aspects of rules can be identified: the semantic aspect, referring to the qualitative and procedural meaning of practices, the locales associated with their performance and the likely outcomes (some, if not all) and the normative aspect, referring to the same practices, locales and outcomes from the point of view of the rights and obligations that establish their legitimate or illegitimate nature as well as the appropriate and inappropriate ways in which practices may be carried out (Giddens 1976, pp. 104-10; 1979, pp. 81-8; 1984, pp. 16-25).

Since social agency involves interventions that alter or transform social events, Giddens introduces the notion of resources (which is akin to the notion of capabilities of Sen (1985) which are the bases of power to which the agent has access and which she or he manipulates to influence interactions with others. The manipulation of resources involves
the mobilisation of both the semantic and normative aspects of mutual knowledge. There are two aspects of resources which are interwoven in social practices, the *authoritative* resources are capabilities that generate command over people (life chances, positioning in time and space, relations between human beings) and *allocative* resources representing capabilities that generate command over material objects (raw materials, means of production, goods, etc.) (Giddens 1976, p. 112; 1979, pp. 91-4; 1981a, pp. 40-63).

Giddens does recognise historical diversity as a fundamental characteristic of social practices. In structuration theory the types of resources to which agents have access and the knowledgeable skills with the assistance of which action is performed, as well as the discursive knowledge of broader social conditions, always exist within defined historical and spatial boundaries.

While emphasising that generalisations ultimately based upon the reproduction and consequences of historically bounded forms of conduct are highly relevant to social analysis (Giddens 1979, pp. 242-4; 1984, pp. 343-7), Giddens also highlights the neglect by theorists of action of the structural properties of collectivities (1976, pp. 126-9; 1977 Chapter 4), which he himself has reconciled by proposing the duality of structure. To neglect the reproduction of regularities in practice makes it impossible to determine how enduring structural properties are generated and sustained; conversely, to neglect structural properties makes it impossible to determine the circumstances that agents require to reproduce such regularities. In summary, Giddens places great emphasis upon persistently repeated forms of conduct, how forms of conduct are reproduced and on trans-situational rules and human cognitive capacities.

Giddens calls for an institutionalised theory of everyday life, since he finds that there is an inadequate conception of reproduced forms of conduct in most theories of social action. The concept of social institutions in structuration theory specifically refers to routinised practices that are carried out or recognised by the majority of members of a collectivity (Giddens 1979, p. 80; 1981b, p. 164; 1984, p. 17). There are repetitive enduring practices in small scale societies, but in the diverse social practices that constitute life in the modern world, the extent to which institutionalised routines are constitutive of the daily transactions of events is obscured.

Giddens (1979, pp. 83-4; 1984, p. 119) emphasises the reflexive contextuality of social encounters, in that he points out that agents can constitute the meaningful context and
content of social conduct in an institutionalized manner. Many subtle aspects of reproduction of practices, however, may never be known, although there is consistency of practices which enables us to conceive them as institutionalised regularities. I have attempted, therefore, to concentrate on the individual situations of reproduction of practices so as to bring out the subtle, yet significant aspects of praxis, so as to deepen my understanding of how regularities of praxis are reproduced. In addition, in the reproduction of practices and contexts, there is manifested certain idiosyncrasies in personal mannerisms and in the local references of circumstances and affairs which can only be exposed through an in-depth and finite exploration of the situation.

In the reproduction of institutional activities, the physical aspects of social settings play a prominent part; Giddens (1984, pp. 67-73) proposes that the physical circumstances always interweave with social routines in reproduced practices. The physical aspects of settings are mobilised and categorised during the course of social action and interaction and do not simply impinge upon social conduct. I was in a position to generate, understand and reproduce the context primarily because of my co-presence in the field and the conversations and non-verbal procedures in the face-to-face encounters I had with members of the community.

Perceptual and conversational procedures are joined to the material circumstances of social conduct in the structuration theory by the concept of locale, which specifically refers to the way in which the material aspects of social settings are used during the course of social routines, though they may be designated by the physical circumstances and human artifacts associated with institutionalised activities (Giddens 1976, pp. 106-7; 1979, pp. 206-7; 1981a, pp. 39, 161; 1984, pp. 118-9).

Giddens’ account of the reproduction of institutional practices in the duality of structure provides a basis for his reconciliation of action and structure. The duality of structure refers to:

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\text{the essential recursiveness of social life as constituted in social practices. Structure is both medium and outcome of reproduction of practices. Structures enters simultaneously into the constitution of social practices, and ‘exists’ in the generating moments of this constitution (Giddens 1979, p. 4).}
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Treating rules regarding regularities of conduct as structural properties of social collectivities is Giddens’ most significant contribution in the duality of structure; since
rules are made manifest only when institutionalised practices are reproduced, they cannot be conceived exclusively in holistic terms. Rules have to be irreducible without remainder to individual situations where specific instances of conduct are carried out if they are to be identified in collective terms. Irreducibility implies that rules of conduct transcend situations in the sense that they are involved in forms of conduct that are: (a) reproduced and recognised many times over during the routine activities undertaken by members of a collectivity and (b) reproduced and recognised for a considerable period in the history of that group (Cohen 1987). Here it is apt to point out that mutual knowledge cannot be thoroughly reduced to any specific situation of conduct; indeed, at the same moment, agents in different settings may draw upon the same form of mutual knowledge to reproduce the same general kind of activity.

Giddens’ (1984, p. 170) contention is that knowledgeability should be associated with practices carried out in a collectivity beyond the lifetime of any agent or any cohort of agents. Further, he suggests that ‘memory traces’ of how things are done provide the basic means by which mutual knowledge is ‘stored’ by social agents. Mutual knowledge is different from discursive consciousness (memory that is self-reflective recall of past experiences and events and can be verbally expressed) in that it is fundamentally sustained and recalled in a tacit manner at the level of practical consciousness.

Resources conceived as properties of collectivities do not exert an independent influence upon the reproduction of practices in the duality of structure; instead, it is the meshing of rules and resources in institutionalised conduct that results in what Giddens (1981a, pp. 61-4; 1985 Chapter 1) terms strategies of control: the ways in which agents apply knowledge about the manipulation of the resources to which they have access in order to reproduce their strategic autonomy over the actions of others. To say that social routines are reproduced in the duality of structure is not to claim that the routinisation of social life is inevitable; social practices do not reproduce themselves, social agents do; as mentioned, social agents always have the capacity to act otherwise than they do or did. Giddens (1979, p. 70) notes: ‘all action exists in continuity with the past, which supplies the means of its initiation’. Mutual knowledge and resources establish the continuity with the past but serve only as the media for the reproduction of institutionalised practices and contexts. There is no guarantee that agents will reproduce the regularity of conduct as they
previously have done, that is, ‘the concept of social reproduction…is not explanatory: all reproduction is contingent and historical’ (Giddens 1981a, p. 27).

The contingencies of reproduction refer to the possibility of innovation in social conduct, one of the many ways that agents may depart from established routines. Agents may make mistakes which constitute ‘situational improprieties’ or ‘cultural lapses’, which may be fairly infrequent. For continuity to social life to be present, actors must be right most of the time (Giddens 1984, p. 90). Secondly, actors who have the competence and capacity to reproduce the routine may refrain from doing so. But the alteration of established modes of conduct, the possibility of novelty provides the praxiological basis for social transformation. While conceiving the possibility of change in every act of social reproduction, Giddens (1976, p. 102), therefore, also sees the possibility for the generation of discontinuities accompanying the continuities of conduct and some routine continues even during the most radical periods of social change (1979, pp. 216-7; 1984, pp. 26-87).

Fundamental to the duality of structure, is that the rules and resources of collectivities not only are the media through which social reproduction occurs, but are also reproduced as an outcome of the process. In summary, Giddens (1979, p. 128; 1984, p. 104) says, structure exists in a manifest form only when it is instantiated in social practices; it otherwise persists between instances of social reproduction only as ‘memory traces’ sustained by knowledgeable social agents. In saying that structure is reproduced in the duality of structure, Giddens implies that structure is reconstituted in each instance where a pervasive and enduring practice is reproduced, which, in turn, reinforces agents’ familiarity with established cognitive outlook. That is, for those who participate in social practices and for those who recognise the performance of these practices, it reinforces the mutual knowledge of rules and the strategies of control of resources. Likewise, agents reflexively regenerate the contextual relevance of their circumstances when they monitor the physical, social and temporal aspects of their circumstances in a routine manner. It is the continual repetition and recognition of modes of conduct by members of a social collectivity or group that is responsible for the reconstitution of structural properties. Conversely, when there is a transformation of conduct or certain conducts cease, the mutual knowledge associated with this begins to lapse and fade and, over a period of time,
Giddens (1984, pp. 174-9) mentions that, other than direct motivation, there are specific interests and long-term projects that impel agents to undertake similar types of practices on numerous occasions. Further, he stresses the importance of the material milieu of action, the exercise of sanctions as strategies of control and the constitution and configuration of the practices that prevail within any given social system constraining the possibilities of alternative modes of conduct. But he (Giddens 1984 ch 2) also suggests that underlying all routine activities, agents develop an unconscious sense of trust in the fabric of social activities that comprise their everyday world. This is what he calls ‘ontological security’ which serves to connect the agents’ unconscious ‘basic security system’ to the routine procedures of social reproduction. Still, agents may ‘make a difference’ by contributing to the reproduction of structure without even being aware that they are doing so. Such an unintentional reproduction of structure is not a necessity; agents can thematise the contributions they make to ongoing circumstances and alter their practices on the basis of the insights.

Giddens further highlights that social relations must always involve differentiations of identity and practice between individual agents, as well as among and between different groups. Further, social relations need not involve individuals who are physically co-present; in fact social relations between those who are physically absent are presupposed in Giddens conception of social systems; social relations are structured by means of rules embedded in practices of interaction. The *positioning* of practices is crucial to this conception; by positioning Giddens means the differentiation and interrelation of practices associated with social locales (contextual settings). He further concludes regarding *positioning*:

*Social relations are...involved in the structuring of interaction but are also the main ‘building blocks’ around which institutions are articulated in system integration...Social relations concern the ‘positioning’ of individuals within a ‘social space’ of symbolic categories and ties. Rules involved in social positions are normally to do with the specification of rights and obligations relevant to persons having a particular social identity. The normative aspects of such rules, in other words, are particularly pronounced, but all previously stated characteristics of rules apply to them too* (Giddens 1984, p. 89).
From the above, it is evident that social relations are identities, rights and obligations that are embedded in institutionalised practices and sustained in the practical consciousness of social agents. Giddens is limited in the way he uses the term ‘role’, to mean encounters where agents are co-present in a determinate locale and where normative definitions of ‘expected’ modes of conduct are strongly pronounced. Social position are the less well-defined identities (such as age, gender, etc.) associated with a broader range of modes of conduct, which he terms ‘position practices’ (based on Roy Bhaskar’s (1979, pp. 51-2) concept of ‘position-practice relations’). The distinction between roles and position practices are not very clear-cut, however, and at best should be viewed as two extreme points of a continuum and not as alternatives. While social roles involve a closure based on the propinquity and identity of agents, Giddens does not take into account the framework of personal knowledge agents establish and reproduce in ‘anchored relations’ (Goffman 1971, p. 189), but rather emphasises the unanchored role relations between agents who maintain impersonal identities. It is especially impossible, however, to account for family relations on any basis other than anchored relations; anchored family relations are crucibles within which many powerful emotions are forged and fused throughout the life cycle of family members, the ramifications of which extend to the very core of human experience.

Agents: Active and Passive – It is worthwhile here to draw on Archer’s (2000) social realist theory; she poses the stratified view of the ‘subject’ whose different properties and powers emerge at each level. The four strata she mentions are the self, the person, the agent and the actor. The latter two are the ‘social selves’ which emerge through our involuntary interaction in society’s distribution of resources and our voluntary involvement in society’s many roles. They are dependent on the prior emergence of self-consciousness and co-dependent with the emergence of personal identity. The emergence of social self occurs at the interface of ‘structure and agency’ and is necessarily relational. Here there is a slight distinction from Giddens’ contention, in that, Archer contends that, in order for the relational aspect to be properly so, independent properties and powers have to be granted to both ‘structures’ and ‘agents’. This position acknowledges the existence of human agency and also the reality of structural and cultural properties. Further, she claims social identity is only assumed in society: personal identity regulates the subject’s relations with reality as a whole. The kind of social beings that we become both individually and collectively, the social identities we acquire in the process of this
becoming and the relationship between our social and personal identities depend on the interplay between three sets of properties: those pertaining to people, to structures and to cultures respectively, none of which are reducible to the others.

In acquiring a social identity, there are three phases: (i) how society impinges on the social self, that is, the development of the primary agency, (ii) how primary agents collectively transform themselves seeking to transform society, that is, the development of the corporate agency, and (iii) how social reproduction or transformation affects the extant role array and thus the potential social identities available, that is, the development of Social Actors (Archer, M. 2000, p. 260).

Primary Agents are defined as collectivities sharing the same life-chances, because of which everyone is necessarily an Agent (as it means occupying a position on society’s distribution of scarce resources). However, this does not give strict identity, because one is a member of a group that is equally privileged or under-privileged.

The morphogenesis of agency is much the same as ‘social stratification’, dealing with the different life chances to different collectivities. These structures impinge upon us without our compliance, consent or complicity, that is, we are involuntarily situated beings. While certain social roles associated with particular strata are generated by systems of social stratification, especially those that are rigid and unidimensional, this is contingent upon stratification rather than a necessary and internal feature of it. Archer (2000, p. 262) concludes that the quintessential features of all stratification systems, namely, ‘propertylessness’, ‘powerlessness’ and the lack of prestige (together with their opposites) are thus distributions determining life chances, rather than an array of roles with clearly defined normative expectations.

In this chapter, I have discussed the theoretical frameworks that underpin the research. They are the theory of everyday life and structuration theory which attempts to break down the dichotomies between structure and agency. Community development theory has not been discussed here but in chapter 5. The cross cutting theme is of course one of gender and development.

The categories used to organise and implement policies in international aid render invisible the specific needs and experiences of women who are often the target of such
policies. Neither do the institutions nor the policies recognise the work women do to maintain various institutions and how these gendered activities affect women’s daily lives. Only by shifting the standpoint to the everyday lives of women do these activities come into view.

Underlying much of the tension women face in negotiating divergent institutional expectations is the simultaneous differentiation between women’s ‘productive’ and ‘reproductive’ lives in policy (whether in international aid or domestic policies for community development) and the failure to reconcile this false division (Sarvasy 1988). This problem is made visible when we ground our analysis in women’s concrete negotiations across these multiple arenas and conflicting policy prescriptions. In fact, as Griffith and Smith (1990) argue, the bipolar construction of productive and reproductive labour fails to capture ‘actual organisation of women’s work’ (p 6). Such a dualistic formulation misses ‘the actual work processes, the ways in which they are coordinated, the ways in which people are active and inventive in the specific local conditions of their lives’ (p 6). Further, it fails to take into account women’s agency (or lack thereof) in various spheres of life.

In this research I attempt to draw all these aspects together to highlight the paradoxes not only in everyday lives, but the manner in which they have been understood within the policy environment of community development and international aid.
PART II
Chapter Three

The Story of Development

The hegemony of the development discourse

*I think economic growth is a good thing. It pleases me to see it achieved; it distresses me to see its failure, especially when the failure is due to misdirected policies. I can see little sense in the argument that happy people in poor countries ought to be left alone. Whether they are happy is irrelevant, for the drive for economic development that causes such turmoil in the poor country is led for the most part by the elites of those countries themselves. The drive for modernization is a fact; there seems to be no turning back.*

(Ness 1967)

*The concept of development is laden with the cultural values of post-colonialism, of Northern countries, and of economists. Over the last 30 years, development has been synonymous with a Northern-based notion of ‘modernisation’ – economic progress from a ‘traditional’ to a ‘modern’ society. Therefore when we consider the issue of culture this involves us in questioning assumptions about the sort of development which is currently being promoted, and the vision of the world which motivates it.*

(Sweetman 1995, p. 1)

The construction of development as a hegemonic discourse is based on the many changes occurring in the material base of the political economy in the global arena. Political struggles and social movements by and between nations, classes, castes, ethnic groups, linguistic groups and genders define and drive it. The hegemonic discourse of development began with the race for accumulation of global capital, leading to an ever-widening gap between the classes that are on top of the accumulation process and those that are in the race to reach it. Colonialism initiated this process.

Control over nature promised by Enlightenment led to the control over territory by Europe. Colonialism thus was a cultural project of control and it can be understood in terms of the expansion of one form-of-life at the expense of other long established local forms-of-life (Preston 1996). The outcome of this has been either ignored or inevitably

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16 Re-iterating this view, Sachs (1990, p. 3) states that ‘the concept of development presents the world as a collection of homogenous entities, not held together through the political dominion of colonial times, but through economic interdependence’ that is, the emphasis has shifted from the possession of territories to the openness of economic penetration.
displaced into the logic of development and modernity, that is, previously colonised countries have become locked into a system of trade, payments and resource transfers. It also succeeded in subjugating populations, especially women, into a universal cosmology that is both imperialist and patriarchal (D'Souza 1990). Whilst dependency theorists have strongly identified colonialism with ‘underdevelopment’ and more latterly with political weakness, social instability and constrained economic choices in the third world (Leys 1994), colonial knowledge replaced what came to be classified as ‘traditional’ knowledge as the dominant discourse (Cohn 1996), thus undermining the value of local knowledge and eroding the possibility of viable alternatives (Shiva 1993b). Cultural forms were reconstituted and transformed, leading further to the cementing of dichotomous/binary oppositions and the creation of hierarchical relationships in which one was considered superior and the other subjugated. This probably hindered the emergence of a local form and mode of modernisation and led to the dissipation of much talent, which could have been otherwise creatively utilised in developmental sectors.

The view that progress can be fostered in developing countries is a preoccupation of western intellectual traditions nurtured in a post-imperial paternalistic climate. This has been accompanied by the emergence of a substantive body of theory leading to the establishment of a legitimate interdisciplinary field of enquiry. As will be evident in tracing the trajectory of the development discourse, the theories range from small-scale hypotheses to grand paradigms. The emphasis in this discussion is more on the interpretation assigned to the term ‘development’ rather than discussing it as a ‘science’ based on conceptual knowledge and prescribed variables and indicators. In this thesis, the experiences of people and the tentativeness in local knowledge is used as the basis for establishing different sets of meanings and their interpretations, using their own signs and referents. The privileged position of the development discourse is only used as a take-off point for furthering the discussion.

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17 Education was a particularly difficult area for colonial policy at the local level. While official statements have always stressed the need for ‘relevance’, the bureaucracy demanded a European curriculum which was clearly exclusive and privileged. In the Indian context, ‘relevance’ where it existed, clearly related to agriculture rather than to technical vocational education.

18 Schurmann (1993) provides an update of the discipline recognising the role of ‘diversity’ in the field. Although he has been criticised (Booth 1994), like the post modernists, for not having taken into consideration capital’s own tendency to afford ‘no alternatives’ and viewing structural adjustment programs as ‘essentialist and economically reductionist’, his contribution to the field is immense. Verhelst (1989), on the other hand, speaks of the cultural factors that impact the developmental process and how they are steamrolled by the economic reductionist view.
As Esteva (1992, p. 8) has pointed out, ‘development occupies the center of an incredibly powerful semantic constellation...at the same time, very few words are as feeble, as fragile and as incapable of giving substance and meaning to thought and behaviour’. As an ideology, development has previously been considered advantageous for humankind; people were to strive for it and should reap the benefits for themselves and the future generations. Growing disillusionment and the havoc wreaked on the masses (the increasing gap between the rich and the poor nations and poverty stricken and wealthy individuals) and on the environment (leading to resource depletion, pollution of waterways, greenhouse effect) with and by this ideology, led Sachs (1993, p. 1) to comment that ‘the time is ripe to write its obituary’. There is a constant need to de-privilege development. In fact, Escobar (1985, p. 430) stresses that ‘the deployment of development has not only significantly contributed to maintaining the domination and economic exploitation, but that the discourse itself has to be dismantled if the countries of the Third World want to pursue a different type of development’.

So, what is development? Much has been written about what development is (or should be), what it does (or fails to do), and how it can be better implemented (Kothari, R. 1988; Alvares 1992; Hobart 1993; Moser, C.O.N. 1993; Pottier 1993; Sachs, W. 1993; Krishna 1996; Pottier et al. 2003). It is evident from the literature that development defies definition; it has come to mean different things to different people. Attempts to define it have provided a wide range of meanings and this has become evident in the power of language to describe and define reality. Development has been construed as a ‘process.
of enlarging people’s choices”; of enhancing ‘participatory democratic processes and the ability of people to have a say in determining priorities and making decisions that shape their lives’; of providing ‘human beings with the opportunity to develop their fullest potential by raising the sustainable level of living of the masses of poor people as rapidly as is feasible’ and of enabling the poor, women, and ‘free independent peasants’ to organise for themselves and work together. In addition, development is defined as the means to ‘carry out a nation’s development goals’, introduce change in a society or community to increase its productive or organisational capacity, improve the quality of people’s lives, and to promote economic growth, equity and national self reliance (Staudt 1991, pp. 28-9)\(^{20}\). In these definitions, however, the distinction between development as an action and development as an outcome of action appear confused. *The Declaration on the Right to Development* proclaims:

> Development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all its individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 1986, Preamble, Para 2).

Allen and Thomas (2000, p. 29) point to three aspects of the idea of ‘development’ which together show it to be an inherently ambiguous concept:

- *Development is a vision, description or measure of the state of being of a desirable society;*
- *Development is a historical process of social change in which societies are transformed over long periods;*
- *Development consists of deliberate efforts aimed at improvement on the part of various agencies, including governments, all kinds of organisations and social movements.*

Thus, ‘there can be no fixed and final definition of development, only suggestions of what development should imply in particular contexts. To a large extent, therefore, development ought to be contextually defined and should be an open-ended concept, to be constantly redefined as an understanding of the process deepens’ (Hettne 1995, p. 15).

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\(^{20}\) The International Development Research Center’s (1986) Program and Policy Review: VIII stressed the widespread use of the terms sustainable growth, equity and participation. The World Council of Churches also envisages an economic order that is ‘just, participatory and sustainable’ (Daly, H.E. & Cobb 1989, p. 20). These words mean different things to different people, agents and institutions and have been used with remarkable flexibility, holding various interpretations to indicate different hues of hegemony. Sachs (1990) calls them the ‘cliches of development philosophy’.
This view of development as contextually defined is supported by Preston (1996), who perceives development as an ethico-political notion and that what is going to count as development will inevitably depend upon circumstance-sensitive and problem-specific analyses. What is going to count as development will have to be locally determined.

According to Eade (2000, p. 9), the term development represents ‘a body of thinking and practice about why poverty exists and persists and about how to eradicate it. It covers an array of approaches and activities from the provision of basic needs of food, water and shelter to advocating for more structural change through tackling policy issues’.

Turner and Hulme (1997, p. 11) provide a six-point definition of what they envisage development should encompass:

- An economic component dealing with the creation of wealth and improved conditions of material life, equitably distributed;
- A social ingredient measured as well-being in health, education, housing and employment;
- A political dimension including such values as human rights, political freedom, enfranchisement, and some form of democracy;
- A cultural dimension in recognition of the fact that cultures confer identity and self-worth to people;
- A full life paradigm, which refers to meaningful systems, symbols, and beliefs concerning the ultimate meaning of life and history; and
- A commitment to ecologically sound and sustainable development so that the present generation does not undermine the position of the future generations.

Sinha (1994) has conceptualised development in two senses, first, as a vision based on a set of logic, and second, as a process based on multiple actions and interactions. Redistributive justice forms the core of this conceptualisation of development, which is sought to be achieved through enhancement of the capabilities of the rulers and entitlements of the ruled. Thus, development, as is conceptualised here, requires a transformation of logic and vision to attain a considerable degree of culture-specific social transformation. Therefore, for nations to follow a policy of sustainable development becomes a subjective course of action with different goals, in contrast with industrial development, where development becomes an objective process with pre-conceived outcomes (Cowen & Shenton 1996).

**Historical Overview**

Arndt (1981), in tracing the semantic history of ‘economic development’ notes that,
initially, economic development signified the development or exploitation of natural resources; in the post-war years it was virtually synonymous with growth in per capita income in developing countries. It is evident from this that development implies a linear notion of historical change and Samuel Beer - back in 1974 - stated that ‘the concept of development recognizes the importance of the time dimension’ (quoted in Charlton 1984, p. 7).

_It treats the evidence of past behaviour not as data cut off from their temporal context, but on the contrary as intimately connected with the flow of events in earlier and later time. In common speech, some entity – a structure or institution or system – is said to have ‘grown out of’ or to have ‘developed’ or ‘evolved’ from its previous history. This means …that something can be learned about the entity by the study of its past that cannot be learned in any other way._

The history of development is the history of modernity, progress, science and reason; Enlightenment opened up a period of material progress and prosperity, the abolition of prejudice, the relative loss of importance of traditional belief systems, values and superstitions and without doubt established the belief in the centrality of human beings achieved through the mastery over nature. In other words, this was the modernisation of traditional societies through the establishment of associations and institutions similar to those of advanced industrial societies, including universal norms of work, values of social behaviour and beliefs about equity. It was during the industrial revolution that development as ‘progress’ and the West as ‘progressive’ was juxtaposed with Asia as ‘backward’ and ‘despotic’; it included the emergence of the modern nation state, governed by new economic relations of industrialisation and capitalism, regulated and represented by market forces, followed by the emergence of social and sexual divisions of labour, the unequal distribution and accumulation of wealth leading to a great disparity between nations and within nations, between the rich and the poor. Marx and Engels in the late 19th century believed that nineteenth century European expansionism was bringing ‘progress’ to the rest of the world. Weber (as quoted in Marks 2002, p. 4) actually investigated Chinese and Indian societies, compared them with Europe and concluded that those two societies at least, and by implication all other non-European societies, lacked the cultural values necessary for capitalism. Nonetheless, they too could ‘modernise’, Weber thought, but only by going through a painful process of cultural change, getting rid of their cultural ‘obstacles’ to capitalist development. This led to a façade behind which external hegemonies, multinational corporations and other
institutions worked toward their own interests (Apter & Sawa 1984) and attempted to influence and control processes and relationships, utilising the rationality associated with scientific knowledge (Beer 1974).

Policy makers have essentially viewed and determined the ‘state’ of the developmental process based on Western scientific knowledge and rationality and the current notion of ‘development’, therefore, has had to bear the burden of the criticisms arising subsequently. Development also brings about multiple changes across various dimensions – social, cultural, political and economic and although we may recognise the complexities of these changes, we may not realize the extent of their impact on each of these dimensions. The concern then is how to integrate these growing complexities and contradictions and incorporate them within the social networks of the nation state that generate equitable appropriate development, with greater participation and accountability.

The expansion of the European capitalist system through colonisation left behind not only forms of governance and an infrastructure of institutions, but also a legacy of ‘replacement elites’ to continue the project of development. Characteristic of these patterns of activity of the colonial state were (a) law and administration; (b) trade and development and (c) social regulation of European and indigenous or immigrant non-European populations which effectively integrated global systems and local agents (Worsley 1967). Where initially a civilising mission seemed central, the period of high- or late colonialism saw the ideas of superiority of the colonists and the responsibility for the colonised, but what the colonists had not foreseen was the capacity of the colonised peoples to assimilate the European ideas and, later on, use the same ideas in their pursuit of independence.

The post-second world-war era was the period of rapid decolonisation, which marked a significant moment in the history of the relations between those with power and those without, those at the centre and those at the periphery, the North and the South, the West and the Rest, the First, Second and the Third Worlds. The withdrawal of colonial powers, the reconfiguration of the global system, the establishment of key international agencies such as the UN, World Bank and the IMF, the agendas of the developed countries and those of the previously colonised countries, not only led to the establishment of the development rhetoric at the national level, but to some extent the agendas of non-governmental and voluntary agencies as well. This still led the developed world to access
territories of the third world and the establishment of the growth/ modernization theories. Foremost in this was the influence of the work of Keynes, which transformed economics in the 30’s and 40’s.

In the 50’s, the rhetoric related to *distributive justice, institutional changes, self-sufficiency, checks on market forces* and the *centrality of the State*. The 60s were characterised by development’s thrust toward channelling large amounts of aid and technical assistance and expertise from the North to the South, accompanied by solid centralised national planning with the support of international agencies. It was thought that, with this injection of aid and technical support, the South would rapidly catch up with the North and the disappearance of poverty and injustice would be inevitable. Already in the 60s, however, there was growing concern as to whether the goal of economic growth was part of the problem or part of the solution. Poverty and inequality between and within nations were on the rise, despite the massive injections of aid and the crucial question was whether the underdeveloped countries of the South could really catch up with the developed countries of the North.

Since the late 60s and early 70s, there has been an attempt to redefine development in human terms, with an emphasis on providing basic living standards for the poorest sections. There has been a marked shift from the dominant ‘growth-first-redistribute-later’ approach to strategies promoting growth with equity and redirecting resources with favourable bias towards the poorer ‘target groups’ and from industrialisation as the core sector to a priority for rural development. Various international organisations became involved in this issue, triggered off by Robert McNamara’s speech (1973).

‘Absolute poverty is a condition of life so degraded by disease, illiteracy, malnutrition and squalor as to deny its victims basic human necessities. It is a condition of life suffered by relatively few in the developed nations but by hundreds of millions of the citizens of the developing countries. The absolute poverty: a condition of life so limited as to prevent the realization of potential of the genes with which one is born; a condition of life so degrading as to insult human dignity – and yet a condition of life so common as to be the lot of some 40% of people of the developing countries. And are not we who tolerate such poverty, when it is within our power to reduce the number afflicted by it, failing to fulfil the fundamental obligations accepted by civilized man since the beginning of time’.

Further, he discussed how the concentration of poverty is in the countryside of the developing nations and how investment, limited to the modern sector, increases the
disparities in income and, therefore, the necessity of reorienting development policy towards more equitable growth by increased investment in agriculture and rural development, focusing on small farm families. Thus, during the early 1970s, seemingly revolutionary ideas – growth with equity, poverty alleviation and basic needs – emerged from international organisations, whose main concern otherwise was to expand their market into Third World countries (Barara 1984).

The mid- and late-1970s heralded the onset of a neo-liberal, de-regulated capitalist approach to development, seemingly in recognition of trade inequities between the North and the South, an approach still with us today. As well, the ‘basic needs’ discourse moved to the centre of development concerns, moving away from grand scale ideas to, first of all, resolve the problem of poverty through delivery of social services – through health, education and welfare programs. Of course, this led to the reappraisal of the development concept – was development solely about economic growth? was it not ignoring the ecological and social costs? What was also being questioned was whether the North would be a valid model for the rest of the world to emulate. The notion that development itself represented a tool for economic and cultural domination became of great concern to those who worried about social justice and equity.

During the 1980s, that voice became more audible both because of the imperialistic nature of interventions from the North and the ideas, visions and voices heard from the South as the latter tried to shake off the exploitative paternalism of the North. The North-South dialogue became extremely animated and a number of ideas from the 70s were increasingly being questioned. This was also the period when an alternative vision of development emerged – that is, a move away from economic and trade initiatives towards strategies for people’s empowerment, participation and local autonomy. The 80s also heralded the start of the women in development movement, whereby women outlined their own assessments of the limitations of development, joined by ecologists, indigenous peoples and other in ‘civil’ society.

By the 1990s, as the global market economy moved beyond the world’s available resources, the emphasis shifted to the greater role of market forces, both internal and international, a greater role for technology and financial institutions and the marginalisation of the State and the goals of social justice. The alternative vision, however, now being carried under the umbrella of non-governmental organisations, also
gained greater currency during this period as the need to sustain other cultures, knowledges and lifestyles became more evident. While having benefited some, development had also marginalised large sections of the population of many countries. While ‘sustainable development’ is more often being pronounced as an alternative, it is less and less about development that is (ecologically) sustainable and increasingly about sustaining (economic) development itself.

Fifty years of development experience have yielded four critical lessons. First, macro-economic stability is an essential prerequisite for achieving the growth needed for development. Second, growth does not ‘trickle down’; development must address human needs directly. Third, no one single policy will trigger development; a comprehensive approach is needed. Fourth, institutions matter; sustained development should be rooted in processes that are socially inclusive and responsive to changing circumstances (World Bank 2000a, p. 1). In addition to reducing poverty, the development challenges for the future include issues of food security, water scarcity, cultural loss and environmental degradation and they must be confronted even as many forces reshape the development terrain: innovations in technology, the spread of knowledge, the growth of population and its concentration in cities, the financial integration of the world and rising demands for political and human rights. The following section attempts to expatiate some of the critical issues and approaches in development thinking.

Critical Issues and Approaches

Colonialism

Colonialism, from the 17th and 18th centuries onwards, started with the intention of trade and the altruistic notion of ‘civilising’ the ‘natives’. Following the attainment of independence by previously colonised countries, it took the form of ‘development’ with the focus shifting to ‘developing the undeveloped and underdeveloped’. It now takes the form of ‘protecting’ the environment and ‘empowering’ women and marginalised people. Colonialism has taken on newer garbs but the ultimate aim remains exploitation. Therefore for many within the contemporary development studies it was a perceived imperative to distance themselves for the predominant negativity that surrounds this genealogy of development.
During the colonial period, the primary locus of decision making was removed from the local to the national level and, superimposed by the colonial decision-making mechanism, by men who held prescribed views of ‘proper’ gender roles. An illustration from Spivak (1988, pp. 276-77) indicates the role of the superimposed colonial decision-maker:

*The small peasant proprietors cannot represent themselves; they must be represented. Their representative must appear simultaneously as their master, as an authority over them, as unrestricted governmental power that protects them from the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. The political influence (in the place of the class interest, since there is no unified class subject) of the small peasant proprietors therefore finds its last expression (the implication of a chain of substitutions is strong here) in the executive force, subordinating society to itself.*

The impact of colonial education is equally important. Macaulay’s ‘*Minute on Indian Education*’ (1835 as quoted in Spivak 1988, p. 282; Marks 2002):

*We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.*

Where the society was predominantly agricultural and some of the major tasks in agriculture were borne by women, the emphasis was more on formal English education and favoured men. Subsequently – with the introduction of new technology - several agricultural routines were appropriated by men.

It is important to understand the persistence of colonial forms of power and knowledge into the present. Undoubtedly contemporary global inequalities between rich and poor countries have been, and continue to be, shaped by colonial power relations. Through problematizing, deconstructing and decentering the supposed universality of Western knowledge, post-colonial perspectives critically engage with and resist the variety of ways in which the West produces knowledge about other people in other places and interrogate hegemonic histories that often obscure the continuing effects of colonialism (Kothari, U. 2005). In questioning the history, objectives and means of development, some of these critics have argued for the recognition that the current economic, social and political situation in developing countries and the continued interest of the West in the Third World, cannot be properly understood without an adequate understanding of their
historical, and particularly colonial background (Chandra 1992; Crush 1995; Cowen & Shenton 1996).

It is also important to understand the pre-existing kinship relations, because what is considered today as traditional is sometimes really the outcome of a relationship created by colonialism and has no similarity with the pre-colonial kinship relationships. There is ample evidence that colonialism survives the post independence period in the form of economic and political relations and social and cultural representations as well articulated by Said (1989, p. 207) when he said that ‘to have been colonised was a fate that was lasting, indeed (with) grotesquely unfair results’ (see also Miege 1980). Goldsmith (1997) claims that development reproduces a form of unequal trade that is reminiscent of colonial forms of economic control and exploitation. The colonial legacy of other fields of contemporary development practice has also been explored through the genealogies of participatory approaches (Cooke & Kothari 2001), gender and development (Radcliffe 1994; Parpart 1995; McEwan 2001), community development and conservation and development (Adams & Mulligan 2003). In most of the developing world, diversity was a given, with harmony existing within communities, even if individualism found deliberate expression as well.

Difference usually leads to conflict only at two extreme points in a continuum, however; Bhabha (1994, p. 2) states that ‘the borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual; they may confound our definitions of tradition and modernity; realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public, high and low; and challenge normative expectations of development and progress’. Our understandings of the past – who we are, where we came from, why we are here – inform our definitions of who we are in the present and have real implications and applicability for actions taken by us or in our name to shape the future. Debates on the nature of postcolonial domination also abound and can be summed up in Appiah’s (1996, p. 62) statement: “postcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a comprador intelligentsia: of a relatively small, Western-style, Western trained, group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery”.

21 Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1995) suggest that postcolonialism begins from the very first moment of colonial contact. It is the discourse of oppositionality which colonialism brings into being.
It is important to recognize that there is a political imperative to distance the international aid industry from the colonial encounter so as to avoid tarnishing what is presented as a humanitarian project far removed from the supposed exploitation of the colonial era. There is a need to question the comparison made whereby development can only be ‘good’ as it is set against a colonialism that is wholly ‘bad’, but that in presenting a different history of development we can see how development works in and against its colonial past and therefore I have started off this discussion on development with a discussion on colonialism.

**Growth and Progress**

The idea of progress has had a great impact on western culture since the 16th century, when scientists and philosophers began questioning what was then conventional wisdom. The decline of the church’s supremacy, the invention of various instruments like the compass and the discovery of continents led to the idea of progress. With the decline of the church, the futility that humanity was heading toward a moral and material collapse was reconstituted by the idea of progress, which has been central to the Western identity. The impact of science on human activity has led to the application of science to production, which has led to the association of development with economics.

Adam Smith, who is often identified as the eighteenth century precursor to modern development, contented that human economic activity evolved through a series of stages, commencing with hunting and fishing, progressing through pastoralism and settled agriculture and culminating in commerce and manufacturing. With technological innovation, he believed that the forces of the market place would act as regulators and this would ultimately lead to material and moral advancement (Cowen & Shenton 1996).

For England and France, as indicated earlier, colonialism was initially a civilising mission. Lord Lugard had formulated the doctrine of the “double mandate” of economic profit and, above all, the responsibility to elevate the ‘coloured races’ to a higher level of civilisation. Progress thus came to mean unilinear, evolutionary and material growth (Chilcote & Johnson 1983; Chilcote 1984).

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22 It is interesting to note that while 19th century developers were already speaking of development and underdevelopment the use of the semantic of development was also seen in the Christian doctrine (Cowen & Shenton 1996).
Most texts of development begin with Truman’s invocation and his promise of a ‘fair
deal’ for the entire world, subsuming into a single category the immeasurable diversity of
half the globe, calling it underdeveloped. Although this was not the origin of the
development discourse, it was a product of the history of the post-world war and was
embraced by everyone in power. The development discourse, of course, was old long
before Truman. 

Truman outlined a program of technical assistance designed to relieve the sufferings of
the ‘underdeveloped’ regions through ‘industrial development’ and a ‘higher standard of
living’. This was the beginning of the catching up theory – the South was to catch up with
the North. The imperative during the colonial period was not only an economic one, but
with the establishment of a universal rule for development, economics and development
became inseparable, ‘thus people and whole societies could, or even should, be seen as
objects of development’ (Sachs, W. 1990, p. 30). This created a dichotomy producing a
‘norm’ and what constituted the ‘other’, which then became more or less permanent in the
global context. Development thus became the modern way of labelling things and
situations and living conditions that already existed in the form of colonialism,
exploitation, discrimination, subjugation, etc. Rostow’s work, outlined in The Stages of
Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto (1960), famously highlights this notion
of progress.

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23 The development discourse also arose in juxtaposition to what later came to be recognised as backward
civilizations, the three continents which are now termed the third world. Although intellectually, morally
and spiritually some of them were more advanced than Europe, they were considered backward as they
were less advanced than Europe in a purely material respect. Europe had achieved breakthroughs in the
technology of war and of sea travel which were the basis of her military conquests. The evolution of
industrial capitalism in Europe, while on the one hand engaged in the exploitation of human beings and of
nature, also had a peculiar contempt for it thus devaluing several dominant modes of agriculture and
livelihood such as fishing, hunting and gathering, hoe and plough culture, etc. which were prevalent until
then.

24 Sachs (1990) further discusses how this led to the hegemony of the West both epistemologically and as a
teleological category and how Western/American development became the inevitable goal for all nations to
achieve.

25 The first stage is that of the traditional society ‘whose structure is developed within the limited production
functions’. This society was not static and evidenced improvements in agriculture but the absence of
modern science and technology imposed inevitable limits. Rostow (1960) characterises this society in terms
of its agricultural base, clan-based polity and fatalistic mentality. The second stage was to establish pre-
conditions for take off into self-sustained growth. During this stage, medieval society disintegrates, modern
science grows and trade develops. The third stage of take-off toward economic growth is when the obstacles
to steady growth are overcome, and those who are able to seize the opportunities that limited resources
provide come to dominate the society. The fourth stage of the drive to maturity in which old industries
mature and level off, new industries are established and the society in general reaches maturity and rests on
the absorption of home generated new technologies. The stage five is one of high mass consumption in
which the industries move to the provision of consumer durables and services in the consumer marketplace.
Development suffered a dramatic transformation when it was reduced to economic growth and thus growth of income per person gained prominence in underdeveloped areas. ‘Distribution’ was never the issue to be concerned with then. As has been highlighted above, for most influential development economists, growth or development was the increase in per capita production of material goods. Esteva’s (1992) critique of development progressed the discourse from a discussion of the economic focus of development, to the introduction of social development, human-centred development and integrated development.

Progress measured by a single measuring rod, the GNP, contributed significantly to exacerbate the inequalities of income distribution. It was due to this that McNamara (1973) declared that the central objective of development policies should be ‘the attack on absolute poverty’ which resulted from economic growth and which affected ‘40% of the nearly 2 billion individuals living in the developing nations’. The ‘International Development Strategy,’ adopted in 1970, was replaced by the ‘Basic Needs Approach’, aiming at the achievement of a certain specified minimum standard of living to be achieved before the end of the century. This approach conceives of poverty as a lack of income but also recognises the need for education, health and other essential services like clean water, which prevent people from falling into poverty. The approach proposed the idea of dealing directly with the task of coping with the needs, instead of expecting their satisfaction as a result of the process of development. This approach possessed the virtue of offering ‘universal applicability’, while being at the same time relative enough to be ‘country specific’. Into this conceptual brew were added the concepts of ‘endogenous development’, which was extremely popular for a while, as it proposed taking due account

At this point, the society is said to have undergone a transition from a traditional to a modern one. Rostow (1960, p. 1) claimed that these five stages ‘constitute, in the end, both a theory about economic growth and a more general, if still highly partial, theory about modern history as a whole’. UNESCO (as quoted in Esteva 1992, p. 15) defines integrated development as: ‘A total multi-relational process that includes all aspects of life of a collectivity, of its relations with the outside world and its own consciousness’.

A critique of the concept of ‘needs’ is provided by Ivan Illich (1992, pp. 88-101) in the ‘Development Dictionary’, highlighting that ‘for the new generation, the needs that are common to men and women, yellow and white – rather than common dignity or common redemption in Christ or some other god – are the hallmark and manifestation of common humanity. With unscrupulous benevolence, needs are imputed to other. The new morality based on the imputation of basic needs has been far more successful in winning universal allegiance than its historical predecessor, the imputation of a catholic need for eternal salvation. As a result, needs have become the worldwide foundation of common social certainties that relegate inherited cultural and religious assumptions about human limitation to the realm of so called personal values that, at best, deserve tolerant respect’. He cautions that ‘the spread of needs that modern development has wrought will not be stemmed by the end of the development discourse’.
of the particularities of each country, and ‘sustainable development’ following the ‘Brundtland Commission’ Report. Increasingly, however, as already pointed out, this is a strategy explicitly conceived for sustaining ‘development’, not for supporting the flourishing and enduring of an infinitely diverse natural and social life.

It was in the 1990s that the Human Development Report was conceived to give development another lease of life, but it was soon realised that they followed in the steps of the economic quantifiers. ‘Human Development’\textsuperscript{28} Esteva (1992, p. 17) notes ‘was rendered as a process and a level of achievement; as a process, it is ‘the enlargement of relevant human choices’. As a level of achievement, it is ‘the internationally compared extent to which, in given societies, those relevant choices are actually attained’… Human Development is presented by the authors of these Reports through an ‘internationally comparative level of deprivation’, which determines how far from the most successful national case are the other countries. The most ambitious goal of the Report is to produce a Human Development Index, synthesising, along a numerical scale, ‘the global level Human Development in 130 countries. The method: combining life expectancy deprivation, adult literacy deprivation and real GNP per capita deprivation. While access to resources for the satisfaction of material needs was recognized, measuring it was plagued with difficulties and the authors once again resorted to the use of the universal yardstick, GNP.’ It was difficult to separate the economic, social and political factors contributing to poverty, or to say where one influence ends and another begins. The term exclusion recognised this overlap and the synergy between the processes that cause poverty.

**The Centre and the Periphery**

Marxists and neo-Marxists have approached the issue of development from the perspective of international capitalist exploitation of the third world. Probably the first discussion on the issue of centre and periphery relations was by Marx and Engels themselves in the Communist Manifesto (1848), suggesting that the capitalist system would manifest itself both through intensification within the central territories of the established system and the geographic expansion to the peripheries of that system. Marx

\textsuperscript{28}The human development approach, advanced by UNDP in the 90s, stresses that freedom from poverty extends to being able to live a long healthy life, with dignity, self respect and respect for others. This approach is exemplified in the World Development Report 2000/1 (World Bank 2000/1), identifying four dimensions of poverty: income poverty, health and education, vulnerability and voicelessness.
attempted in the mid to late 1800s to uncover the fundamental dynamic of the social world in the interconnection of the political economic, social institutional and political cultural logics of development.\textsuperscript{29} Theorists have also attempted to grasp the relationship between centre and periphery in their discussions on imperialism and a third set of analyses is seen in the work of Baran and Frank (Andre Gunder Frank’s Dependency theory and World Systems theory and Paul Baran’s seminal work on the Political Economy of Growth in the 1960’s).

The core-periphery dichotomy, popularised by dependency theorists, held the thesis that the global system was not a uniform marketplace with producers and suppliers freely making mutually beneficial contracts, but was, in fact, divided into powerful central economies and relatively weak peripheral economies and these links were the primary cause of underdevelopment. Instead of assisting the periphery nations as was envisaged in modernisation theory, the core nations had engaged in virtual exploitation of whatever surplus might have been accumulated in the periphery. That there were unequal terms in trade was evident in that it was characterised by the periphery supplying raw materials and the core being the exporter of manufactured goods. The global sources of finance were equally controlled and regulated by metropolitan capitalist countries. By implication, it was observed that the state was not autonomous from external control either – but it was merely a ‘handmaiden of foreign capitalists’ (Leonard 1980, p. 461).

The solution, it was suggested, was that the export base of peripheral countries should be increased and that industrialisation should be accelerated through the policy of import substitution, so that over time they could catch up and become non-dependent economic agents. Furtado (1963), on the other hand, considering the historical expansion of industrial capitalism, stressed that the impact of capitalist expansion on archaic structures varied from region to region and created hybrid structures. He condemned the solutions for dependency previously posed, claiming that such solutions had reached the limits of their possibilities. Instead, based on his work in Latin America, he proposed that externally regional economies should re-enter into the expanding mainstream; that economic relations with the United States and with the multinational corporations should

\textsuperscript{29} Peter Worsley (1982) and Raymond Williams (1973) are of the opinion that Marx’ work is indeed overly economic in tone. The establishment of economics as a science and its attaining hegemony has been clearly stated by Theodore Roszak in his Introduction to Schumacher’s (1973) ‘Small is Beautiful’. He has also applauded the attempts made by the latter to subvert economic science by calling its every assumptions into question and by embracing wisdom gathered from historical experience.
be re-shaped. Changes should also be internal, for which he proposed the reconstruction of economic structures to permit the use of modern technology, the avoidance of social marginalisation of large sections of the population, the reorganisation of the state sector to enable the state to assume its proper role as the agent of development.

**The dominant discourse of Western knowledge**

For Blaut (1993, p. 1), in speaking of Euro-centrism, notion that ‘the West has some unique historical advantage, some special quality of race or culture or environment or mind or spirit which gave this human community a permanent superiority over all other communities’ is a myth. Amin (1989, p. vii) has seen Euro-centrism as an ideology, or a distortion of the truth, used by the West to mask its global dominance and Frank (1998) deems it a ‘theoretical model’, one explanation among several for how the world works. Unfortunately, Euro-centrism not only emphasises the superiority of the Western culture – all that is good, progressive and innovative starts only in Europe – but it also sees that package as having universal applicability, as having spread to encompass the globe in the 20th century. An extension of this notion is that Euro-centrism ‘is a matter of …scholarship’ (Blaut 1993, p. 8), a way of establishing what is true or false, views deeply help by North-Americans.

Knowledge has been either considered as a product of experience (empirical) or the product of thought (rational). All history has been considered as European history and all other knowledge has been reduced patronisingly by Trevor-Roper (1963, p. 871) to be the ‘unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the world’. So deeply embedded is Euro(Western)-centrism in everyday life that it often ebbs into obscurity.

The move has occurred from Aristotelian times to modernity in the areas of ontology, epistemology, methodology and practice. Ontologically, the nature of experience has shifted from firm religious beliefs to a materialistic existence, so much so that it has often been said that ‘God is dead’. Epistemologically, the shift has been in the nature of knowledge from medieval scholasticism to rationalism and empiricism. Methodologically, there has been a shift from abstract theoretical reflection to the use of experimental design and in practice from contemplative concurrence to the notion that effective action flows from the deployment of practical reasoning.
In addition, Euro(western)centrism in the production of knowledge has led to the bifurcation of the World into ‘the West and the Rest’ and has organised ordinary everyday language into binary hierarchies delegating a superior status to one and an inferior status to the other. Not only have universal claims to knowledge been made, but in dividing the East into near-, middle- and far-East, Europe became the arbiter of spatial evaluation and – by designation of the Greenwich Mean Time - established England as the centre of temporal measurement.

As mentioned, against this backdrop, Truman assigned all countries that were not developed as underdeveloped, thus ignoring not only the multitude of conditions which led them to what they were then, but also setting the agenda for devaluing and trivialising local knowledge, so much so that development of the underdeveloped became a key concept (Sachs, W. 1992). The historical domain of development was truncated and what was progress in the nineteenth century became development and it was suggested that the perceived chaos of progress would be ameliorated by development.30

A useful point of departure is Said’s (1978, p. 3) oft quoted definition of Orientalism as a ‘systematic discourse by which Europe was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively’. When some of these words are appropriately substituted, it is an indication of the power and purpose of development, though one must be careful in pointing out that power emanates in a diffuse manner from multiple spaces and is reciprocal. Power, as Said (1983, p. 25) suggests, is comparable ‘neither to a spider’s web without a spider nor to a smoothly functioning flow diagram; a great deal of power remains in such coarse items as the relationships between rulers and ruled, wealth and privilege, monopolies of coercion, and the central state apparatus’. In the development context it is power exercised over, or ‘ascertainable changes stemming from who holds power and who dominates who’ (Said, E. 1983, p. 28). The rhetoric, the strategies and practices of the

30 Perhaps the greatest indication of the hegemony of the economic imperative of development and the devaluing of local knowledge and culture is this statement from the UN Report 1951: Measures for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries (quoted in Escobar 1984, p. 389): ‘There is a sense in which rapid economic progress is impossible without painful adjustments. Ancient philosophies have to be scrapped; old social institutions have to disintegrate; bonds of caste, creed and race have to burst; and large number of persons who cannot keep up with progress have to have their expectations of a comfortable life frustrated. Very few communities are willing to pay the full price of economic progress’. It is no wonder that Sachs (1990, p. 2) states that ‘to talk about development meant nothing more than projecting the American model of society onto the rest of the world’.
development discourse have also changed over a period of time depending on where the balance of power lies, or ‘who dominates who’, a variation of which is ‘knowledge for whom?’

Said’s Orientalism has started a wide range of debates around the theme of representations of the third world and various other contexts; in India, the colonialist, having gained control over the land for its wealth, there was an attempt to gain ideological control, which was achieved through the compilation of an Indian history by the colonialists (Guha 1987; Sarkar in Chakrabarty 1989)\(^{31}\), this representation was in turn being appropriated by Indian writers to define their own identity.

Presently, with a preoccupation with the post-modern, disparate ‘interpretive communities’, be they Marxists, Feminists or any other, have brought the concept of ‘culture’ to the forefront of most debates. Strangely enough, where the preoccupation with ‘culture’ began with the western anthropological desire to seek the unknown, the remote, the place untouched by civilisation, the ideal innocence and the noble savage, the current interest grows out of globalisation and the attempt to disseminate knowledge and information about peoples. This, in turn, has not only changed the meaning and value of culture but has also transformed into artefact all that does not conform.

Perhaps the critique of development provided by anthropologists is an indication of the devastation the notions of development have had on various societies; Mauss (1966), in his book ‘The Gift’ was one of the first to highlight that certain practices were valued highly by traditional societies. Sahlins (1995) showed that the economistic bias has served to give a totally distorted picture of life in the so-called archaic or primitive societies. According to Sahlins, hunters/ gatherers were not poor; rather, they were free, indeed leading quite a simple and frugal life; yet, as a rule, the people’s material wants were satisfied. Helena Norberg-Hodge (1991, p. 7), in her seminal book “Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh,” states that ‘a concern not to offend or upset one another is deeply rooted in Ladakhi society; people avoid situations that might lead to friction or conflict. When someone transgresses this unwritten law...extreme tolerance is the response. And

\(^{\text{31}}\) Sarkar (1928) notes that it was in the nineteenth century that we recovered our long lost ancient literatures, Vedic and Buddhistic, as well as the buried architectural monuments of Hindu days. The Vedas and their commentaries had almost totally disappeared from the plains of Aryavarta where none could interpret them; none had even a complete manuscript of the texts. The English printed these ancient scriptures of the Indi-Aryans and brought them to our doors.
yet, concern for the community does not have the oppressive effect on the individual that one might have imagined. On the contrary, I am now convinced that being a part of the close-knit community provides a profound sense of security’. She shows how the preservation of the cultural sap had enabled another society to continue enjoying a good life until development broke in forcefully. Rosaldo (1989) too highlights the impact of development on the head hunting traditions and Hobart’s (1993) ‘Anthropological Critique of Development’ provides a series of examples of the exploitation wrought by development on various cultures.

Escobar (1997, p. 91) shows how the development discourse made it possible for the rulers ‘to subject their population to an infinite variety of interventions, to more encompassing forms of power and systems of control including killing and torturing (and) condemning their indigenous populations to near extinction’. Previously (1995) he has dealt extensively with the issue of representation, which implicitly assumes Western standards as the benchmark against which to measure the situation of Third World women, which, in turn, reinforces the hegemony. Spivak (1988), Mohanty (1988) and Mani (1990) have also entered into elaborate discussions on the representation of women in colonial discourse and the creation of the ‘Other’. Mohanty (1991) refers to the production of discourse under conditions of unequal power as the ‘colonial move’, whilst Spivak (1988) speaks of the ‘epistemic violence’ in the remotely orchestrated, far flung and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as the ‘Other’. For Illich (1997), underdevelopment is the surrender of social consciousness to pre-packaged solutions, a phenomenon that was totally forced by development.

**The Environment**

The Environment was also a major concern for development ‘experts’; ‘survival of the planet’ was the major issue, a concern triggered by acid rain, pollution in various waterways and the levels of pesticides and heavy metals in fish and birds. Countries discovered that they were not self-contained units, but their situation was contingent on actions taken by others, creating the emergence of ‘global issues’. Theorists pointed out that

‘infinite growth, is based on self-delusion, because the world is a closed space, finite and of limited carrying capacity. Perceiving global space as a system whose stability rests on the equilibrium of its components, like population, technology, resources (including food) and environment, they
foresaw – echoing Malthus’ early challenge to the assumption of inevitable progress – an imminent disruption of the balance between population growth (exacerbated by technology) on the one hand, and resources and environment on the other’ (Sachs, W. 1993, p. 27).

Resource, ‘a concept that highlighted nature’s power of self-regeneration and her prodigious creativity’ and also ‘implied a relationship between humans and nature’ (Shiva 1992, p. 206) was first exploited by the colonialists to facilitate the generation of revenues and the growth of capital; ‘[n]ature’s transformation into natural resources needed to go hand in hand with the transformation of culturally diverse people into skilled human resources’ notes Shiva (1992, p. 207). When this process led to degradation and uncontrolled destruction of nature, the management of natural resources became important.

In the 70s, the debate on the crisis of non-renewable natural resources started, due to rising oil prices; technological fixes for this scarcity were proposed in the form of identifying substitutes. Should current investments equal the current depletion of finite stock, only then, would maintaining high levels of consumption be sustainable. The destruction of the commons with the introduction of the Enclosure Laws in England of the sixteenth century, was replicated in the colonies by replacing the existing customary rights. Enclosures led to deforestation and the enacting of legislations declaring certain areas as reserved forests, a first step towards the ‘scientific management of forests’. Shiva (1992, p. 211) notes that this ‘amounted basically to the formalization of the erosion both of the forests and of the rights of local people to forest produce’. She (p. 213) further notes that ‘the transmutation of nature into resource goes hand in hand with alienating the ancient rights of people to nature as a source of sustenance…in order to supply industrial inputs, they are appropriated from communities whose lives and livelihoods they have supported for centuries’. But this dispossession has not gone unchallenged, as there have always been forest struggles.

Women/ Gender and Development
Boserup\textsuperscript{32} (1970), in ‘Women’s Role in Economic Development,’ emphasised gender as a basic factor in the division of labour; while speaking of the radical shifts in sex roles in agriculture, she concluded that

\begin{quote}
Such a development has the unavoidable effect of enhancing the prestige of men and of lowering the status of women. It is the men who do the modern things. They handle industrial inputs while women perform the degrading manual jobs; men often have the task of spreading fertilizer in the fields, while women spread manure; men ride the bicycle and drive the lorry, while women carry headloads, as did their grandmothers. In short, men represent modern farming in the village, women represent the old drudgery (p. 152).
\end{quote}

She further analyses a variety of factors behind those differences, the most often quoted analysis being the difference between the ‘female’ and ‘male’ systems of farming. The ‘male’ system of farming, akin to the plough cultivation in Asia (with high population density and supply of landless labourers), discouraged women’s involvement in agricultural tasks and encouraged segregation of the sexes, including the seclusion of women in some areas. She then delineates the negative effects that colonialism and the penetration of capitalism into subsistence economies has often had on women, emphasising that ‘subsistence activities usually omitted in the statistics of production and income are largely women’s work’ (p. 163). Finally, Boserup’s comparative analysis projected the different sexual divisions of labour encountered in farming systems onto patterns of women’s participation in non-agricultural activities. However, her analysis is not without problems\textsuperscript{33}.

Daly’s (1978) assertion that women could develop only outside the patriarchal structures led to a new subfield of development named ‘Women in Development’. The central theme of gender equity became less important while there was an attempt to respond to issues of basic needs, health and education and it was asserted that this would assist both economic development and women’s lives, which came to be called the empowerment approach (Moser, C.O.N. 1993). This led to a debate, known as ‘Gender and Development’ and increasingly focussing on the intersections between class, race and gender inequity in a global context, whilst a more recent approach looks at the intersection between gender development and the environment (Mies & Shiva 1993).

\textsuperscript{32} Although Ester Boserup’s work is regarded as a landmark contribution, Mohanty (1988) criticises her analysis as having the assumption that development was synonymous with ‘economic development’ or ‘economic progress’ and has called development in this analysis as an “all time equaliser”.

\textsuperscript{33} In revisiting Boserup’s work, Sen and Beneria (1997) have attempted to provide a comprehensive critique.
A solution to the problem posed by Boserup was sought by following an integrationist approach and ‘its limited success is due in part to the difficulties of overcoming traditional cultural attitudes and prejudices regarding women’s participation in economic and social life’ (Bisnath & Elson 1999). Customs within a culture determine modes of behaviour not conducive to any development attempts; for example, poverty alone is not responsible for more women dying than men as customs determine who gets the larger portion out of meagre resources and who is more likely to get to a doctor (access to basic health, nutritional status and employment). Custom is also likely to determine who will get education, who takes decisions and who is more likely to protest against ill-treatment. Women lack the security tradition is supposed to offer and an equally important factor in women being overlooked in the development process is the nature of the process itself (Sen, G. & Crown 1987). Cross-cutting issues of gender and poverty alike are processes through which individuals gain access to commodities and other resources (or fail to do so), which are said to depend on their socio-economic position and the rules which render claims over commodities ‘legitimate’. Inasmuch as these rules and norms entitle people differently and unequally, they draw attention to the likelihood that deprivation will be diversely constituted across a population along the lines of gender, caste, class, etc (Kabeer 1997).

The impetus for integrating women into development programs arose out of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the US Women’s Movement during the early seventies. It was during the Second Development Decade that the phrase ‘integration of women in the total development efforts’ was included in the International Development Strategy by the UN General Assembly. An Amendment to the US Foreign Assistance Act was passed in 1973, requiring the USAID to administer its programs ‘so as to give particular attention to those programs, projects and activities which tend to integrate women into the national economies of foreign countries, thus improving their status and assisting the total development effort’ (Tinker, I. 1997, p. 35). The Women in Development (WID) concept became popular, both amongst governments and with women, due to the pronouncement of the UN Decade for Women (1976-85) and the three World Conferences on Women. These conferences warranted governments to submit sex disaggregated data and, for the first time, national planners were forced to confront the implications of their own development policies as they were differentially affecting
women. The parallel non-governmental meetings that happened simultaneously provided a forum for global interchange of ideas.

Marilyn Waring (1988), in ‘Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women are Worth’, first highlighted the invisibility of women and women’s work through a detailed analysis of the UN systems of accounts. She noted that those who were making the decisions within these systems were men and that the values which were excluded from the determination of certain decisions were those of the environment, of women and children.

Very early on it was recognised that there were a growing number of women who headed households and were particularly disadvantaged, a trend encapsulated in the phrase ‘the feminization of poverty’. Women were over-worked and under-productive in their economic activities; before being available for alternative work, women needed to be relieved from some of the drudgery characterising their daily struggle to provide the basic necessities to their families. Efficiency became the primary WID argument used by scholars and advocated to indicate to the development community that projects would be more likely to achieve their goals if women were an integral part of both design and implementation. While women as a category has been challenged, it has been pointed out that women, for whom patriarchy is the source of subordination, across all classes and in all societies are disadvantaged. Further, the debt crisis and the structural adjustment programs imposed by the IMF have made obvious the connection between global trends and women’s poverty.

By contrast, the focus of Gender in Development is not on women per se but on gender relations, that is, the relations between women and men in a variety of settings. Here, development is viewed as a complex process involving the social, economic, political and cultural betterment of individuals and of society itself. This approach views women as active participants and not passive recipients of ‘development’; however, it does not assume that women have perfect knowledge or understanding of their social situation and thus may not recognise the structural roots of their subordination.

Sen and Crown (1987) have argued that there are fundamental conflicts between women’s economic well-being and wider development plans and processes, because gender relations oppress women and because of the long-term harmful effects of
economic/developmental processes, which have succeeded in reducing the access of women to resources and thus marginalise them. As well, the inherent universalities in (western) feminism have negated the wide variation in women’s experiences.

Charlton (1984) discusses four clusters of issues surrounding the definitions of development that are especially important for women: the role of ethical and moral choice in development; the structure of the international system in the late twentieth century; the influence and, in some instances, domination of Western norms and institutions in development concept and policies; and the political control over development. The need to recognise the diversity and the many existing value systems in the peoples of the world has been called-for often enough and the centrality of ethical issues in development, therefore, cannot be reiterated often enough. The changes in the international system have – obviously - also had an impact on women. The hierarchy of nation states due to decolonisation; overlapping with an existing but very different social structure; and the historical creation of the Third World and the formation of various international organisations for its assumed benefit and wherein women were only marginally represented, are spaces where women have been greatly impacted upon by any decisions.

Similarly, feminist theories have recognised the voices of women of colour (Amos & Parmar 1984), as post-modernists (Mohanty 1988; Mani 1990) have recognised that the metaphors, narratives and discourses used in certain contexts are not universal. Mohanty (1988) has raised the question as to who produces knowledge about the third world and from what spaces; she discovered that third world women in development are represented as having ‘needs’ and ‘problems’ but few choices and no freedom to act.

_The average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and her being “third world” (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc). This, I suggest, is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions_ (Mohanty 1988, p. 65)

Third world feminists have also emphasised that the struggle against gender subordination cannot be separated from other forms of oppression, but they have also been accused of uncritically adopting imported women’s liberation movements (Sen, G. & Crown 1987). These representations become standards against which third world women’s situation is being measured. Third world women are considered an impediment to development if
they are considered at all (Marchand & Parpart 1995). Further, development specialists readily accepted colonial representations of third world women ‘as exotic specimens, as oppressed victims, as sex objects or as the most ignorant and backward members of ‘backward’ societies’ (de Groot 1991, p. 115).

One must not lose sight of the fact, however, that people working in Gender and Development (GAD) are sometimes accused of being ‘western’, no matter where they come from. Dominant ideas in development are disproportionately influenced by the richer countries, whether these ideas are about what good gender relations might be (GAD), how economies should be run (structural adjustment), what is considered ‘good’ governance, or what counts as human rights. At the same time, even those efforts to increase gender equality which are guided by local priorities, are discredited by being labelled ‘western’ and being treated as an imposition from outside.

Although feminists have challenged the notion that modernisation is not a panacea to all ills, Women In Development programs have still remained situated within the modernisation paradigm (Chowdhury 1992). The integration of women into development programs does not allow for a rethinking of the development paradigm itself and this is evident in World Bank Reports (1993) and Goetz’s (1991, p. 122) argument that ‘the process of modifying women’s projects to fit the blueprint of standard development projects has distorted their original objectives. In the end, they represent no threat to the existing power structures and budget allocations within the development establishment’.

Socialist feminists (Beneria & Sen 1981; Mies 1982; Mueller 1986, 1991) and postmodernist feminists (Mohanty 1988; Spivak 1996) have provided the greatest criticism of Women In Development programs, not only in that WID projects are strategic tools to promote capitalism, but also focussing on issues of power that are responsible for creating the third world ‘other’. As well, in subscribing to a certain economic reductionist view in describing the relationship between the ‘developed’ and the ‘developing’ countries, women are denied any specificity (Mohanty 1988). The greatest contribution of post-modern feminists is the challenge to universal knowledge claims by western feminists and there have been calls for development practitioners to acknowledge the silenced voices of third world women (Omvedt 1980; Parpart 1993).
The efforts emerging from feminist writings and grassroots organisations of third world women, the *empowerment perspective* (Moser, C.O.N. 1993) speaks of particularities of experiences of men and women of the South, focusing on political and economic issues. The main critique is aimed at the Structural Adjustment programs, the environment and democratisation movements (new social movements) (Bhatt 1989; Shiva 1989; Parajuli 1991; Chatterjee 1993). Manzo (1991) has made a call for ‘counter-modernist alternatives’ in order to pay attention to the experiences of third world grassroots actors. Mohanty’s (1988) discussion of power is worth noting here; she reports that most discussions of power have looked at women as already constituted categories and power relations are structured in terms of a unilateral and undifferentiated source of power.

Shiva (1993b, p. 11) warns us that ‘it is essential to beware of simply up-ending the dualistic structure by discounting the economy altogether and considering only culture or cultures’. There is a fear then, that euro-centric and andro-centric universalism would be replaced by cultural relativism, which is not without problems as no one can claim that all cultures are of equal value. Shiva further uses several examples to illustrate this point and states that taken to the extremes, ‘difference’ can lead to losing sight of all commonalities, even making communication impossible.

**Focus on Poverty**

Poverty has been the most used and abused word in history and has been the basis for most development programs (Rahnema 1991). The reordering of the global landscape led to the domination by the US and the ‘war on poverty’ in the third world became a priority. Poverty was problematised and the solution imposed was economic growth and development, through an attempt to reorganise the world and order differences in a hierarchical manner so as to make it ‘manageable’. For the Western logic, ‘ordering of differences’ (Haraway 1988) in a linear, hierarchical progressive manner is conceivable,

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34 The single most important reason for poverty in the third world during the pre-industrial era and even today to some extent, is the absence of any significant agricultural surplus over and above the survival needs of the farmers (Harrison, P. 1979). This, it was propounded, was due to the infertility of the soil and the primitive state of agricultural technology, which needs further questioning. In pre-colonial India, villages were largely self sufficient and could produce most of the manufactures they required. There was no widespread demand for anything but the basics, as the rulers had swallowed up the surplus with which people would otherwise have bought extras. The market demand for manufactures was largely limited to the courts requirements for luxuries and these would be one-off, hand made items from skilled craftsmen. Caste was the final barrier to industrialisation. What little economic specialisation did exist was based on caste. A man’s occupation was hereditary and there was no competition to stimulate technological improvements (Harrison, P. 1979).
but a multiplicity characterised by ‘hierarchy’, ‘holism’, ‘continuity’ and ‘transcendence’ (Singh 1973), that not only persists but is capable of adaptive changes, as is the ‘Indian tradition’, is difficult to comprehend.

Countries were poor because of primitive methods of production, an anachronistic culture and apathetic personal disposition (Midgley 1984), on the one hand, or because tropical climates discouraged initiative and effort and the mental faculties of the people of poor countries was considered to be inferior, their capacity for science and technology as the basis for progress was considered nil (Adas 1990; Pratt 1992). The other factors identified are political-military ones (feudalism leading to absolute monarchs and then nation-states and the evolving technology of war) and demographic ones (small families promote capital accumulation)35 (Marks 2002). It was also considered that Europe learnt first how to get rich by industrialising and, eventually, the developing countries of the world would soon catch up, as long as they identified and eliminated the local institutions and cultural traits that prevented them from becoming modern (Marks 2002).

A statement from the Panel of Experts from the Milbank Memorial Fund (1948 as cited in Escobar 1995, p. 22) that ‘genuine world prosperity is indivisible, and it cannot exist in one part of the world if the other parts live under conditions of poverty and ill health’ triggered the war on poverty. In essence, poverty was a creation of the post-war period. Sachs (1990) and Rahnema (1991) have maintained that there was a distinction in the definition and treatment of poverty in the pre- and post-war periods. Rahnema (1991) suggests that the first break was in the systems of dealing with the poor based on assistance; modernisation of poverty took the form of the poor being transformed into the assisted and this had great implications for the global system. Local forms of definition and treatment of poverty in the community were displaced into transformative structures, which led to mechanisms of control not seen before and whereby the poor were designated as a social problem in need of new and different forms of intervention in society. Like the colonisation of territory, the treatment of poverty also led to the conquering of new domains. Poverty became an organising concept on a global scale with the economic tools of per capita income in the hands of players created to be powerful, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, rendering two-thirds of the world poor and creating the basis for the emergence of the development discourse. For

35 Also see, Landes (1998) for further examples of these theses.
modernisation theorists, development has been commonly described as a process leading to modernisation, whereby societies disadvantaged in terms of living standards and material wealth, reach socio-economic levels perceived to be acceptable to society as a whole (Young, E. 1995).

Most of the assumptions once held by development practitioners are now being proved invalid. While production in most poor countries presently has risen to meet the basic needs of all their people, or, given the appropriate application of existing land, labour and capital, could rise in the near future, ‘still a billion people live in appalling conditions, perhaps 730 millions are hungry and as many as 80,000 could be dying everyday as their basic needs are not met’ (Trainer 1989, p. 3). This is essentially because of some basic myths surrounding affluence and poverty in which production for ‘direct’ consumption is not considered as production. As this has become the measure for economic growth, the market economy, dominated by capital is hailed supreme (Shiva & Moser 1995). While speaking historically of the consolidation of capitalism and ‘systemic pauperisation’, Escobar (1995, p. 22) states, ‘it is true that massive poverty in the modern sense appeared only when the spread of the market economy broke down community ties and deprived millions of people from access to land, water and other resources’.

When the problem of poverty became the agenda the world over, underdevelopment came to be considered as a managerial problem, a result of a massive failure of society’s political structures, functions and processes in solving the social and economic problems, especially the distribution of wealth. It was thought that, with the implementation of development policy, poverty could be eradicated, leading to the conjunction between democracy and economic prosperity.

So what is poverty? Poverty is increasingly being recognised as inherently multidimensional, its various dimensions including (McCulloch et al. 2001, p. 38):

- **Income**: having low income or consumption.
- **Assets**: having little or poor-quality land, housing, livestock or other productive assets.
- **Environmental**: having to live in a polluted or hazardous environment or having to work on poor-quality land.
- **Education**: having little or no education.
- **Health**: having illnesses of various kinds.
- **Powerlessness**: being excluded from decisions that have an impact on one’s life.
• **Discrimination**: being subject to arbitrary discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity or any other reason.
• **Vulnerability**: being susceptible to a wide range of ‘shocks’, such as harvest failure, illness, price changes, violence, etc.

The word poverty is generally used to refer to an overarching concept that involves the combination of the many different dimensions of poverty; Sen (1993) describes poverty as a combination of ‘entitlement failure’ (the loss of command over resources) and ‘capability failure’ (the loss of the ability to convert resources into useful functionings\(^{36}\)).

The World Bank’s (2000/1) approach to understanding and responding to poverty is based on:

**Lack of Opportunity**: other than including traditional concepts of income and consumption poverty, also includes the lack of key assets (human, natural, physical, financial and social) necessary to attain basic necessities. In addition, lack of opportunity includes the inability of poor people to use the assets they have to satisfy their basic needs.

**Insecurity and Vulnerability**: poor households often suffer severe insecurity because of risks from a variety of sources, some of which are idiosyncratic to particular households and others are covariate, i.e. experienced by many households simultaneously. The poor place a high value on mechanisms to protect themselves against such shocks, since they can have devastating effects on an already poor household. There are three mechanisms through which households improve their security and reduce their vulnerability:

(i) minimizing the effect of a negative shock in the first place, such as preventative health practices, migration, seeking out more secure income sources, diversifying from existing sources, and investing in physical and human capital;

(ii) insurance to protect themselves against a bad outcome, which may include the creation of marriage and extended family ties, entering into sharecropping tenancy agreements and maintaining buffer stocks of key goods. Communities may also invest in building social capital through networks, associations, rituals and reciprocal gift giving; and

(iii) coping; often, poor people have to rely on adaptation or ‘coping’ mechanisms to mitigate the worst aspects of a shock once it has already occurred.

\(^{36}\) Functionings, according to Sen (1993) represent the various things that people can do or be in their lives. Basic functionings might include ‘being well nourished’ or ‘escaping avoidable disease’, while more complex functionings might include ‘being able to take part in the life of the community’. See Sen (1981) and Dreze and Sen (1989) for a comprehensive discussion of these concepts and their relation to poverty.
The mechanisms they often adopt are increasing their income through increased participation in the labour market, running down their savings and assets, accessing credit and migration. Despite these mechanisms, poor people are extremely vulnerable since they are at a disadvantage right from the start.

_Powerlessness:_ poor people constantly highlight their sense of disempowerment as central to their experience of poverty (Narayan et al. 2000). Further, the empowerment and income dimensions of poverty are linked; that is, discrimination based on several parameters can reinforce social barriers and perpetuate inequalities in access to resources to transcend income poverty.

Oyen (2002) discusses poverty understanding from roughly three phases: Tale-telling, studies with a client focus as well as development research, and knowledge building about poverty reduction. She claims it is about time we have a new phase that of understanding the processes that produce poverty and continue to produce poverty at a rate no present poverty reducing measures can possibly win over or even compete with. Gans (1973) earlier has highlighted the interests served by upholding poverty which may vary from economic and political to social and emotional gains, which Oyen points out strongly contradicts the harmony model within which official pro-poor plans avoid taking into account conflicts of interest. It is therefore time to focus research on poverty production and to understand better the forces that keep on producing poverty in spite of all the many poverty reducing strategies that have been introduced.

Further, Oyen (2002) notes that in general the major bulk of public and private resources are invested in an infrastructure that ignores the needs of the people already marginalised, while institutions of all kinds are built on the norms and needs of the non-poor who set the agenda for what is good for its own kind, which is also demonstrated in this study. Much of this activity cannot be said to benefit the poor; in reality part of this activity is directly and indirectly harmful to the poor. She eventually highlights the need for a new discourse on poverty production and the effects of different kinds of poverty production. A second focus is the attempt to develop a new language built on more adequate concepts that catches poverty production as a reality. A third focus is a critical approach to the present dominating discourse that describes poverty in a quasi-scientific language that conceals major poverty producing forces. A fourth focus is an approach that overlooks powerful tale-telling, ignore ineffective and dubious standard solutions to poverty reduction, and
repudiates empty rhetoric about concern for the poor and final focus in the discourse is the right to turn every stone without being stopped and the right to ask questions and gather necessary information wherever it will serve an understanding of the extent and effect of poverty production.

Below are the International Development Targets (IDTs), the foundation of the new international commitment to poverty reduction. They reflect the view that extreme poverty must be tackled by improving incomes but also by making real improvements in the quality of people’s daily lives, including better health for mothers and children, primary schooling for all children and control of the spread of HIV/AIDS.

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**The International Development Targets**

**Economic well-being**

- A reduction by one-half in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015.

**Social and human development**

- Universal primary education to all by 2015.
- Demonstrated progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005.
- A reduction by two-thirds in the mortality rates of infants and children under five.
- A reduction by three-fourths in maternal mortality by 2015.
- Access through the primary health care system to reproductive health services for all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015.

**Environmental sustainability and regeneration**

- The existence of effective processes for sustainable development in all countries by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015

Also essential to the quantitative targets are democratic accountability, protection of human rights and the rule of law.

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More recently, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been adopted in a UN forum; while embracing most of the IDTs, they add additional poverty concerns related to hunger, safe drinking water, disease, AIDS orphans and urban poverty. These targets appear unproblematic and achievable, not taking into account the precedents that have
been in most instances responsible for the present situation of most third world nations, leading me to believe in what Appadurai (1996, p. 47) calls a world of ‘disjunctive global flows, fields of action and organization that have different speeds and trajectories, but always in relation to certain centralizing and singularizing pressures that are productive of a world order rather than its expression.’

Nevertheless, the gap between the wealthiest and poorest parts of the world continues to grow, not shrink. Ted Trainer (1989), in his easily read and understood book, ‘Developed to Death: Rethinking Third World Development,’ describes the living conditions of the Third World and the Western mode of imposed development, which he then critiques and proposes an alternative in the form of an appropriate global development involving both the rich and the poor countries. A pertinent statement he makes is that ‘for people in the third world to simply live, people in the first world have to learn to live simply’ (p. 4).

**Choice**

Choice and decision have often played an important role in the development process (Staudt 1991). Often, the outcomes of development (as development is both a means and an end) are either preconceived or assumed and this is evident in the programs of the World Bank and the IMF in relation to third world countries. As the dominant ideology, this is appropriated by (or enforced upon) third world countries for their own planning as well. Staudt (1991) argues that the goal of development is to enlarge choice; while this necessarily means that there should be a desire and capacity to choose as well as the knowledge of possible choices, what is being undervalued is the pre-existing knowledge. As development in the Western sense, based on its notion of historical time,

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37 The notion of choice in development was first posited by Mill (as quoted in Cowen & Shenton 1996, pp. 39-40) while commenting on mid-nineteenth century England. ‘Customs’ he wrote ‘might be good as customs, and suitable’, ‘yet to conform to custom, merely as custom, does not educate or develop…any of the qualities which are distinctive endowments of a human being. The human faculties of perception, judgement, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference, are exercised only in making choice…The mental and moral, like the muscular powers, are improved only by being used’. Cowen and Shenton (1996, pp. 40-1) further go on to discuss the links established by Mill between choice, individuality and development, and the development of the stationary state which today’s developers would call sustainable development. However, the development necessary to bring about the stationary state could only happen autonomously in societies which were not bound by ‘custom’ and in which tolerance and rational discussion were permitted. An India, argued Mill, needed to be governed despottiically through the exercise of trusteeship in order to create the conditions under which ‘education’, ‘choice’, ‘individuality’ – in a word ‘development’ – might occur (Cowen & Shenton 1996, p. 41).

38 In assessing whether an achievement embodies meaningful choice, we have to ask ourselves whether other choices were not only materially possible but whether they were conceived to be within the realms of possibility. The absence of actual or imagined alternatives has been explained (Lukes 1974) as a factor for the absence of protest to the injustices of an unequal order.
has been viewed as linear, vertical, upward, onward, forward and unidirectional, most of the discourses of development begin with the slate wiped clean in order to start afresh, as if there was no existing state of being.39

On the other hand, expanding choice will ensure a greater control of the access to that choice, thereby restricting it in order to generate surpluses, through disciplined mobilisation and planning. Increasingly, this notion has been critiqued based on the inequalities in people’s abilities to make choices rather than in the differences in the choices they make (Kabeer 1999). Choices may stem from and serve to reinforce the subordinate status of persons, women and the marginalised, indicating that power relations40 are expressed not only through the exercise of choice, but also through the kinds of choices people make. Also of concern would be how to initiate and manage new forms of social stratification and networks, especially those challenging the existing power structures.

Capabilities

An approach to international development proposed by Nussbaum (2000) that is attentive to the special problems women face because of sex in more or less every nation of the world and which provides the philosophical underpinning for an account of basic constitutional principles that should be respected and implemented by governments of all nations as a bare minimum for what respect for human dignity requires, is an approach that focuses on human capabilities. Human capabilities, according to Nussbaum, is ‘what people are actually able to do and to be’ (p. 12) – in a way informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being.’ (p. 73). Capabilities according to her can be the object of an overlapping consensus among people who otherwise have very different comprehensive conceptions of the good. ‘Capabilities in question should be pursued for each and every person, treating each as an end and none as a mere tool of the ends of others’ (p. 74). Sen (1985; 1989; 1993) uses the notion to indicate a space within

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39 Apter (1987) indicates that central to the developmental project is ‘choice’ which he refers to as the range of articulated alternatives available to individuals and collectives. He further goes on to say that choice can be operationalised in terms of access through networks of roles, classes and institutions. When organised and ranked functionally according to contributions to industrialisation access, these networks connect choice to hierarchy. How to control access to choice and promote the sharing of it according to approved rules and conditions of equity has been the special political concern of development. Therefore, inevitably inherent in choice is the notion of hierarchy and issues of accessibility and availability.

40 This notion of power is also controversial one because it allows for the possibility that power and dominance can operate through consent and complicity as well as through coercion and conflict.
which comparisons of quality of life are most fruitfully made, but Nussbaum goes further to state how a threshold level of capabilities can provide a basis for central constitutional principles that citizens have a right to demand from their governments. It is her contention that women have all too often been treated as supporters of the ends of others rather than as ends in their own rights; thus, this principle has particular critical forces with regard to women’s lives. Finally, her approach uses the idea of a threshold level of each capability, beneath which it is held that truly human functioning is not available to citizens; the social goal should be understood in terms of getting citizens above the capability threshold. In as much as women in developing countries suffer from acute capability failure and also as people whose situation provides interesting test of this and other approaches, indicating the problems they solve or fail to solve, they are an important point of departure.

**Participation**

*It is not that we should simply seek new and better ways for managing society, the economy, and the world. The point is that we should fundamentally change how we behave.*

-Vaclav Havel


It was in the late 50s that the term participation and participatory development entered into the development literature. The initial optimism of the growth and progress approach was waning and activists and development professionals began advocating the end of the top-down approach. Failures were mainly attributed to the marginalisation of the people concerned from the processes related to the design, formulation and implementation of development projects. The inclusion of participation and participatory methods of interaction was proposed as an essential dimension of development. An growing consensus emerged that development cannot be sustainable and long-lasting unless people’s participation is made central to the development process.

Participation is as much a problem as it is a solution, as much a goal as an instrument. Participation is a form of social action that is voluntary, rational and based on the belief that individuals (and/or communities) have joint interests that allow cooperative solutions (da cunha & Junho Pena 1997). It is an instrument for negotiating divergent interests; it does not eliminate losses but makes them transparent and acceptable. Max Weber observed (Weber 1964, p. 37), ‘people want to engage in social relations. People
willingly join participatory movements because through them they can satisfy their interests. They may like the outcome, they may enjoy the solidarity that the social relation creates, they may even derive some compensation from the simple expression of their interests’. The Final Report of the Participation Learning Group of the World Bank (1996, p. 3) defines participation as ‘a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them’.

Participatory development is defined as a process by which people take an active and influential hand in shaping decisions that affect their lives. It is essential for most development agencies for at least two reasons (OECD 1995, p. 10):

- It strengthens civil society and the economy by empowering groups, communities and organisations to negotiate with institutions and bureaucracies, thus influencing public policy and providing a check on the power of government; and
- It enhances the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of development programs.

The attraction for participatory and community-based development programs is their capacity to achieve redistribution with incremental localised gains. Participation can be used to interpret demands and produce a better match between project outputs and local wants; it can be used to align the distribution of benefits and costs with the needs and aspirations of the community. Participation is a powerful method of determining demand and helps agencies resolve the vexing question of how to provide goods and services—and who should provide them.

The fact that decisions are made collectively does not mean that they represent the best interests of the group. Determining whether the decisions represent the group’s best interest is difficult because it requires comparing interpersonal well-being, whether by aggregating preferences or establishing a hierarchy of preferences. Moreover, it is not clear how best to design, implement and monitor an instrument based on collective action. Participation demands regulation by government action, by those directly involved in the interaction, or by both.

Participation itself does not ensure sustainability. For example, participation could be the key to environmental protection, but it may lead to very wrong technical decisions on what and how to protect.
‘Empowerment,’ it is considered, is essential for participatory development. Empowerment is enhanced when the organisations in which people participate are espousing a democratic approach, strengthening the capacity of members to initiate actions on their own or negotiate with more powerful actors. It thus builds up the capacity of people to generate and influence development at various levels, increasing their access to and influence over resources and institutions, including by groups hitherto marginalised, such as low-income populations and, most particularly, women.

Rahnema (1992) suggests that there are at least six reasons as to why governments and development institutions have recently taken in the concept of participation (and by extension, empowerment):

(1) The concept is no longer perceived as a threat: governments and institutions interested in greater productivity at low cost are increasingly in need of ‘participation’ for their own purposes, including risk management/risk-sharing inherent in the possible abuses of participation. Development policies also tend to create needs and create dependence on those needs for ‘target populations’ and then suggest ‘participation’ in public activities and policy-making decisions in legitimising/manufacturing consent for those needs.

(2) Participation has become a politically attractive slogan, where governments and institutions have learned to contain participation, important political advantages are obtained through the display of participatory intentions.

(3) Participation has become an appealing proposition economically: where most states find themselves in difficult fiscal situations that force them to ‘adjust’ their economies – passing on the costs to the poor is a plausible option – which is done in the name of ‘participation’ and ‘self-help’.

(4) Participation is now perceived as an instrument for greater effectiveness as well as a new source of investment: they bring to development projects knowledge of the field reality, networks of relations essential both to the success of ongoing projects and long term investments in rural areas and cooperation of local organisations to carry our developmental activities.

(5) Participation is becoming a good fund-raising device: as NGOs have demonstrated that their ‘participatory’ and less bureaucratised approaches have allowed them to meet the needs of the people with greater efficiency and less cost, governments
and inter-governmental organizations now seek to demonstrate their ability to be both professional and participatory.

(6) An expanded concept of participation could help the private sector to be directly involved in the development business.

**Local Community Development and Community Participation**

Community Development focused on small communities, seeking to establish democratic decision-making institutions at the local level. It attempted to mobilise people to improve their social and economic circumstances through undertaking a variety of development projects. Community participation, however, developed as a response to the inadequacies of community development in practice. Advocates of community participation have sought to formulate a more politicised and people-centred approach that conceives of participation in a more dynamic way. Community development featured prominently in United Nations documents as a response to the failure of top-down macro-economic development policies. While critics looked on community development as a failure, due to its bureaucratic administration and superimposed direction that stifled the innate capacities of ordinary people to determine their own destiny but perpetuated the structures of inequality and oppression both at the national and local level, a grassroots approach that liberates the powerless and ensures their involvement in community life is needed to promote genuine participatory development.

Having reviewed these issues briefly, what I am emphasising is how the hegemony of the development discourse has come to be established and is silencing alternative voices and other forms of knowledge and the manner in which the dominant ideology of development as industrial and growth oriented (in the sense of the market economy) is appropriated and adopted by the post-colonial subject, so as to deliberately introduce interventions and structures without taking into consideration the impact this may have on the lives of women in rural India. There are great discrepancies between policies and results as is evident in some of the community development programs designed and implemented for the ‘empowerment’ of women.
Reclaiming Development

Alternatives to the developmentalism and the socio-economic rather than geographic bipolarism between the ‘North’ and the ‘South’ circumscribed above are posed with the aim of building more humane futures. As Sachs (1997, p. 8) points out, ‘the certainty which ruled two centuries has been exposed as a serious illusion: that growth is a show with an open end’. Gandhi (in Parel & Dunn 1997), Illich (1971) and Schumacher (1973) have – each in their own ways - highlighted the most harmful consequences of thinking big, that is, of pushing all human enterprise beyond the human scale. Their proposal converges to think on a scale that humans can really understand, know and take care of the consequences of their actions and decisions upon others. This involves a change in thinking starting with the basics of life and the way people negotiate the circumstances in their everyday lives in local contexts.

The Hammarskjöld Report (1976, p. 4) states that development ‘is a total comprehensive process, informed by a value-laden vision’ and shaped around five pillars:

- The satisfaction of human needs, both material and, in a wide sense, political
- Self-reliance
- Endogenous growth
- Harmony with the environment
- Structural transformation in the economy, society and polity.

The goal of restructuring economy, polity and society should be to create a more just and equitable process and development, therefore, ‘is not merely an economic and political concept, it is more fundamentally a process of culture and civilization’, and the world needs ‘cultural alternatives to the dominant Western paradigm of development’ (IFDA Dossier 1979, pp. 7-8).

Esteva and Prakash (1997, p. 281) have stated ‘the whole history of economic development, in its colonialist, socialist or capitalist forms, is a history of violent interventions by powerful forces persuading small communities to surrender with the use of weapons, economic lures and ‘education’. This is a convincing argument in favour of people thinking and acting locally, forging solidarity with other local forces that share this opposition to the ‘global thinking’ and ‘global forces’ threatening local spheres. The aim, as Kohr (quoted in Esteva & Prakash 1997, p. 287) suggests, is ‘to reduce the size of the body politic which gives them their devastating scale, until they once again become a
match for the limited talent available to the ordinary mortals of which even the most majestic governments are composed’.

When speaking of an alternative, Gandhi’s vision (in Parel & Dunn 1997) needs some elaboration; he was the only leader in India at the time of independence who rightly pointed out that the path of development that India should seek should take into account the five lakh villages that India is comprised of. According to him, ‘true economics is the economics of justice. People will be happy in so far as they learn to do justice and be righteous’. His vision was stated in simple terms: ‘my idea of the village swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants and yet interdependent for many others in which dependency is a necessity...In a structure composed of innumerable villages...life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom, but it will be an oceanic cycle whose center will be the individual...The outmost circumsphere will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give the strength to all within and derive its own strength from it’.

It was in the early 80s that Robert Chambers (1983) spoke of putting the people first in development and, prior to this, the work of Paulo Freire (1972) on conscientisation highlighted firstly that rural poverty was under-perceived in the Third World. While discussing hegemony of knowledges and discourses, he has suggested reversals of professional values and learning and finding the gaps, which may be, in reality the centres for the poor. He suggests six practical approaches to reversals in learning: (1) sitting, asking and listening; (2) learning from the poorest; (3) learning indigenous technical knowledge; (4) joint R&D; (5) learning by working and (6) simulation games. This would reverse the process of learning from the many below rather than the few above; while he suggests reversals in learning, he emphasises that they cannot take place in isolation and should be facilitated by reversals in management incorporating (1) altered styles of communication; (2) improved transfer and posting policies and practices and (3) shifting of power and initiative downward, that is, decentralising that would enable and empower clients to demand for their rights. Finally, in emphasising the primacy of personal action, he notes that social change flows from individual action. Change can be evidenced when the last is put first over and over again and many small reversals support each other and build up towards a greater movement.
Rahman and Rahman (1993) propose people’s self development as an alternative based on their experiences of participation of the rural poor in development.

‘Anyone’s self development starts, as it must, with one’s self understanding to guide one’s own action, and is a process in which self-understanding develops as action is taken and reviewed. Formal efforts at social ‘development’ have however been in the hands of the elites who have in general considered themselves wiser than the people, and instead of seeking to promote the people’s self enquiry and understanding have sought to impose their own ideas of ‘development’. In doing this they have promoted their own self-development, for one cannot develop with somebody else’s ideas. This has been, I suggest, also the single most important intellectual error in many otherwise committed efforts towards social change for people’s liberation, which seek to indoctrinate the people in a vertical relation with them, and give priority to structural change over liberation of the mind. Only with a liberated mind which is free to enquire and then conceive and plan what is to be created, can structural change release the creative potential of the people. In this sense, liberation of the mind is the primary task, both before and after structural change’ (p. 195).

This implies breaking down the monopoly of knowledge in the hands of the elites – i.e. giving the people their right to assert their existing knowledge to start with, giving them the opportunity and assistance if needed, to advance their self knowledge through self enquiry as the basis of their action and to review themselves and their experiences from action to further advance their self-knowledge. In this reflection-action-reflection process by the people (people’s praxis), professional knowledge can be useful only in a dialogue with people’s knowledge on an equal footing through which both can be enriched and not in the arrogance of the assumed superior wisdom. Thus altering the relations of knowledge, to produce and advance ‘organic knowledge’ as a part of the very evolution of life rather than abstract (synthetic) knowledge produced in academic laboratories to be imposed upon life, is a central commitment of what is being termed as ‘participatory research’.

Down to earth, low-profile stratagems designed to minimise appropriation have been proposed by Guha (1989, p. 212), who posits that

‘open acts of desacralization and disrespect are often the first sign of actual rebellion. Even seemingly small acts – for example, lower castes wearing turbans and shoes, a refusal to bow or give the appropriate salutation, a truculent look, a defiant posture – signal a public breaking of the ritual of subordination. So long as the elite treat such assaults on their dignity as tantamount to open rebellion, symbolic defiance and rebellion do amount to the same things and is strikingly similar to the logic of everyday forms of resistance’.
Jean Marc Ela (as quoted in Verhelst 1989) states that ‘laughter, meaningful silences, humour and the Africans’ art of ridiculing political personalities are forms of struggle that currently show there is neither awareness nor resignation. To this must be added the power of secrecy. Many Africans operate under cover of secret societies, even in politics. They carry on the struggle using every aspect of their culture. This is true of various Third World Countries’. Forms of resistance may also be disguised, low profile and undeclared and impose a fundamentally different logic of political action. Scott (1991, p. 127) states that in this instance ‘all political action takes forms that are designed to obscure their intentions or to take cover behind an apparent meaning. Virtually no one acts on his own name for avowed purposes, for that would be self defeating… (therefore) requires more than a little interpretation’.

Manfred Max-Neef has become an exponent and spokesperson for what has come to be known as ‘ecological economics’, holistic or ‘barefoot economics’, a new praxis rooted in the principles of Human Scale Development (HSD), based on the imperative of the satisfaction of fundamental human needs, the generation of growing levels of (economic) self-reliance and the construction of organic articulations (a continuous process of ‘construction of coherent and consistent relations of balanced interdependence among given elements’) of people with nature and technology, global processes with local activity, of the personal with the social, of planning with autonomy and of civil society with the State. People are, as they always have been and ought to be, the real protagonists of their own development and future (Max-Neef et al. 1991, p. 12). In other words, as Carmen (1996, p. 139) puts it, ‘HSD is congenial to autonomous human agency: development cannot be built on impositions, on transfers, plans or interventions. The essence of development is creation – not pre-planned and pre-targeted economic growth’.

It is symptomatic of development economics as we know it to concentrate on ‘basic’ needs such as clothing, food, shelter and health – the economics of survival – and call this development. In the ‘developed’ world, people do not have needs, but wants and desires which have to be pandered to. These wants and desires are infinite and insatiable because they are based on ‘purely transient, fashionable preferences’. The real basic need, however,

\[\text{is not any of these: it is to do the right things for themselves, i.e., to create, for being human is being creative, and this is what distinguishes the human from the animal in oneself. The animal, indeed, needs to be fed and clothed and sheltered}\]
and medically cared for and taught how to find all these; but the human needs are to be fulfilled by creative acts (Rahman, A. & Rahman 1993, p. 133).

The multidimensional taxonomy of needs as explained by Max-Neef et al (1991) establishes a clear-cut distinction between needs, goods and satisfiers; needs not only encompass human deprivations (for example, poverty as deprivation of consumption goods) but also individual and collective creative human potential. Satisfiers are individual forms of being, having, doing and interacting which ‘actualise’ those needs in the present space and time. Satisfiers may include forms of organisation, political structures, social practices, subjective conditions, values and norms, spaces, contexts and modes and various types of behaviour and attitudes. A satisfier is, ultimately, the way in which a need is expressed. Economic goods, finally, are objects or artefacts which affect the efficiency of the satisfier. Satisfiers are to historical and cultural manifestations of needs what economic goods are to their material manifestation. The interrelationship between needs, satisfiers and goods are dynamic: needs are not simply fulfilled or unfulfilled, satisfied or unsatisfied; because they exist in dialogical tension with satisfiers and goods, needs should be conceived of as forever in the process of being ‘realized’, ‘experienced’ or ‘actualized’ (p. 26). Needs have been subdivided along existential categories (horizontal axis: being, having, doing and interaction) and axiological categories (vertical axis: the needs for (1) subsistence (2) protection (3) affection (4) understanding (5) participation (6) idleness and (7) creation. While these needs have existed from the dawn of time, the need for (8) identity may have appeared later and the need for (9) freedom at an even later date.

The Gender and Development approach, in rejecting a purely top-down approach to development, argues for a planning based on a closer, more localized and contextualized examination of women’s strategies for survival, both in the South and in the North; third world women, it appears from this approach, have to become the subject rather than the object of development theory and practice. This approach to development recognises the connection between knowledge, language and power seeks to understand local knowledges, both as sites of resistance and power. It provides a more subtle understanding of Third World women’s everyday lives, one that questions development discourses that represent women as the vulnerable ‘other’. It reminds practitioners to uncover their ‘silent voices’, their ‘subjugated knowledges’, to dispel some of the myths about the vulnerability of the women of the South as being un-contentious and all-
pervasive. Development theory should, therefore, be grounded in the multiple realities of women’s lived experiences. A post-modernist feminist approach, in recognising the dangers of overemphasising difference, should encourage global, regional and national solidarity among women over issues of mutual concern. A synergy that incorporates the multiple realities of women without losing touch with the insights and political goals of feminist thinking will deepen our understanding of women’s lived experiences within local contexts and, at the same time, remain committed to the struggle to improve the lives of women throughout the world.

_Eco-feminism_ has been the most prominent approach to the gender and development debate; for Mies and Shiva (1993, p. 13), eco-feminism is ‘a new term for an ancient wisdom’. It is women’s readiness, or otherwise, to examine the roots of the problems which forms the ridge along which the great traditions of feminism and eco-feminism divide and follow their own ways. Eco-feminism challenges the European project of the Enlightenment and the project of Western Patriarchy, with their in-built reductionism and dualism and their separationist distinction between economy and culture. It also challenges the myth of gender neutrality with its hostility of both nature and women. For Mies (1986), gender and environment are linked to class struggle: women’s bodies and nature were both ‘colonised’ by patriarchy and capitalism operating in tandem. Agarwal (1992, p. 123), on the other hand, finds the eco-feminist argument deficient on several counts and criticises it for presenting the domination of nature and women as based solely on ideology, ‘neglecting the (interrelated) material sources of this dominance’ (based on economic advantage and political power) and for ‘saying very little about the social, economic and political structures within which these constructs are produced and transformed’, in particular inveterate forces of privilege, power and property which predate the old colonialism. She suggests that women’s and men’s relationships with nature need to be understood as rooted in their material reality, in their specific forms of interaction with the environment.

‘Sustainable development’ as an alternative proposed by the World Commission for Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission, 1987, p. 8) defined it as the development ‘that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs’; however, deep political and ethical controversies make this definition a contested area. While the perspective of ‘sustainable
development’ has come to accept the finiteness of development as truth, the ‘finiteness’ is understood in terms of space or time disregarding one or the other in each instance. Sachs (1997, p. 299), therefore, suggests a ‘home perspective’ where the fundamental concern is the search for ‘a society which is capable of remaining on an intermediary level of performance; in other words, a society which is able not to want what it would be capable of providing. Self-limitation always implies a loss of power, even if it is sought in the name of new prosperity. However, in what way a renunciation of power for the sake of the common good could be reconciled with the question of individual liberty remains the conundrum of this perspective’. The crisis of sustainability led to the ethical imperative of humanising the landscape and reclaiming development using education as critical consciousness to invoke creation, culture, ownership and control, the satisfaction of fundamental human needs and everything involving autonomous human agency. Rather than advocating ‘alternative development’ (Sen, G. & Crown 1987), both the reality and the term development need to be recaptured and reclaimed.

New Social Movements/Grassroots Movements have now turned their backs on ‘received’ theories of any kind. Sheth (2004, p. 1134) notes that ‘Organisations see poverty as a function of the structural locations of the poor in society, because of which they are excluded from development (which is guarded by the legal, political and economic immunities it provides to its insiders) and imprisoned in poverty (the world constituted of vulnerabilities and exposures to exploitation for its politically unorganised and economically marginalised inhabitants)’. Further, organisations also reject the ‘inputs’ view of rural development as a partial and lopsided view; for, making inputs available to farmers is more a political than an economic problem. Inputs are often appropriated by the upper stratum of society. The focus of the activities of organisations therefore is on creating capabilities of self-development among the rural poor, even as they fight for their rights to create and secure resources for collective development.

Voices of resistance have also been heard from black feminists and women of colour; Kate Manzo (1996, p. 252) states that people all over the third world ‘have been questioning values, assumptions, and meanings in a manner that has been describes as counter-modernist. In rejecting the equation of progress with whiteness, and in calling into question the logocentric production of a white/black dichotomy, Black consciousness drew inspiration from a number of other critical discourses’. She cites Steve Biko’s
Black Consciousness Movement as a social movement situated within a wider context of discursive relations between white and black, rich and poor, and oppressive and oppressed that exist on a global scale. She is insistent when she notes that ‘the centrality of any critical discourse cannot depend only upon the balance of forces within the specific local site that it inhabits. Embedded within a larger system of meanings, values and concepts, it must rely for sustenance on the dissemination of particular attitudes and practices worldwide’.

In reclaiming development, I would like to conclude with a quote from Shrestha (1995, p. 277)

Let us get serious and have enough moral courage first to challenge our own elitism and vested interests. Let us free ourselves from the trappings of Westernized development fetishism; let us unlearn the Western values and development thinking which have infested our minds. However, unlearning is not complete without relearning. So let us relearn. All of this, of course, requires that we consciously deconstruct our colonial mindset. This is a colossal battle against the entrenched culture of imperialism. If it is to succeed, it is to be fought on two fronts. First the battle is waged at the personal front to decolonize individually our colonized minds. Second, the battle is fought at the societal front. This demands a collective force to deconstruct the colonial mindset that pervades (Nepalese) society. The outcome of the second battle will depend on the degree of success achieved at the personal front. If we muster enough moral courage to wage these battles and win them, we can then consciously demystify the seductive power of development. I am fully cognizant that this is a very bitter medicine, but we have few other choices if we want to create a future of human dignity and relative economic autonomy.

In this chapter I have discussed the hegemony of the development discourse which underpins the argument of this thesis and attempts to find and alternative to the mainstream community development practice that is participatory and inclusive. In the following chapter a discussion of development and reform trajectory in India which despite its reality has adopted similar practices as the western development discourse.
Chapter Four

Indian Development: An Overview

In this chapter I attempt to portray a picture of India’s development mainly during the post-independence phase (of course, continuing to be laced with a tremendous colonial influence). Here, I have highlighted three aspects of India’s development which are of significance: the first two constitute the Green Revolution and the Planned Development sponsored by the Central Government that played such a significant role as food was the main concern for the burgeoning population. In the section on Planned Development, I have also attempted to highlight how community development was viewed by planners in the post-independence era. A third aspect is the initiation of economic reforms by the Government in the early 1990s that had significant and differing consequences on the lives of the people, especially women.

Historically, India and China, put together, accounted for two-thirds of the world’s economic output (Marks 2002). In the course of less than 200 years, the world has seen a great reversal of fortunes, where once Asians held most of the economic cards, today it is primarily Western countries and Japan. Following colonisation, the British exploited the Indian agricultural industry and production of opium significantly increased and became its major export, at the cost of its cotton textile industry, which was previously a flourishing industry. The British also erected trade barriers to keep Indian textiles out. With the establishment of the British East India Company, Britain appropriated the right to collect land taxes, to increase its share in the trade of textiles and to maintain its own army, thus extending its territory as well. The disarray of the Indian political powers and the decline of the Moghul influence helped them to consolidate their advantage throughout India. Additionally, the Industrial Revolution resulted in greatly reduced costs for Britain’s manufactured goods, also crippling India’s textile industry and instead making India a market for British cotton textiles. British colonial policy in India removed tariff barriers to British manufactured goods. Indian textile workers, being unable to compete, were left without work and wages and began to export raw materials instead of finished goods. They were forced to turn to agriculture or emigrate. Since the East India company collected taxes in cash, farmers turned to producing cash crops, such as indigo,
sugar cane, cotton and poppy, which in turn led to the ‘ruralization of India’ (Marks 2002).

Cowen and Shenton (1996) have also discussed how the British in India viewed and spelt out the necessary conditions for its development and what were the strategies to be adopted by them for the same. They conclude this section by quoting Mill: ‘*In many parts of the world the people can do nothing for themselves which requires large means and combined action; all such things are left undone, unless done by the State. In these cases, the mode in which the Government can most surely demonstrate the sincerity with which it intends the greatest good of its subjects, is by doing the things which are made incumbent on it by the helplessness of the public in such a manner that it shall tend not to increase and perpetuate, but to correct, that helplessness*’ (pp 55-6). This was a clear injunction for the empowerment of the peoples of India.

Since then, so much has been written about Indian development that it has led Bhagwati (1993, p. 2) to state that ‘*there is little that can be said that has been left unsaid*’. Development planning in India, be it mainly economic, has been a lively exercise that has been closely followed by many social scientists. I have, therefore, given only a brief description of economic development in India and then go on to speak of some of the critiques that have been proposed.

It is often seen that the enormity of the complexities that exist in India today are either ignored or simplistically viewed - what holds true in one area is frequently inapplicable and incongruent in others. This is also evident in the scholarship emanating from India and that is based on multitudinous theoretical foundations, making it distinct from the ‘either–or’ logic of western theoretical traditions. The diversity is evident in the number of languages and dialects spoken, the number of religious groups and castes and communities that exist in specific locales. Despite its diversity, India has demonstrated its unity through cultural reinterpretation of various symbols and institutions of its ‘great tradition’, such as the principle of self-governance, the origin of which can be traced back to the 19th century and before.

It is difficult to know what the initial conditions were for assessing development, but it would be beneficial to look at the state of affairs at the turn of the 19th century. The village community, considered as the basic unit, had a hierarchical frame within which
there was a definite social arrangement, assigning roles and claims to everyone. The difficulty of communicating with the outside world gave the village community a strong sense of its own identity and while there was no question of complete self-sufficiency, this relative isolation called for an internal order consisting of mutual obligations and claims sanctioned and maintained by customs and traditions. Within this frame, the use of resources rather than their ownership was the main issue; this too, was governed by certain traditional patterns. Ownership at that time was a bundle of claims and there were instances where questions of ownership and use possessed a strong community dimension (Bayly 1999; Harriss-White 2003).

Following independence in 1947, India followed the British model in its development; the reason for this acceptance was partly the fact that this model represented the ideology of the Western educated, articulate urban middle class that dominated the independence movement and partly because a liberal democracy seemed to be both a necessity and an adequate guarantee to maintain a semblance of order in a country that had experienced great divisions along communal lines. In fact, it was on the basis of liberal values that the new leaders, products and promoters of a new awakening, were seeking a greater share as Indians in the decisions affecting Indian people. Yet, there was a lot of incongruity in the lives they led, in their relation to women and people of lower castes. While they were willing to adopt the liberal philosophy, they were unwilling to provide the same opportunities to others (Gore 1994).

The process of development after independence was based on Nehru’s vision (which was in opposition to Gandhi’s) when he emphasised that ‘it is not a question of theory: be it communism, socialism, or capitalism, whatever method is most successful, brings the necessary changes and gives satisfaction to the masses, will establish itself on its own…Our problem today is to raise the standard of the masses…’ and this he sought to do by ‘the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity’ (Nehru as cited in Kurien 1992, p. 163). For this he adopted the strategic path of

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41 In further expatiating this, Vandana Shiva et al (1997) have claimed that a resource is a common property when social systems exist to use it on the principles of justice and sustainability. This involves a combination of rights and responsibilities among users, a combination of utilisation and conservation, a sense of co-production with nature and sharing them among members of diverse communities. They do not view their heritage in terms of property at all, that is, a good which has an owner and is used for the purpose of extracting economic benefits, but instead they view it in terms of possessing community and individual responsibility. The marginalisation of peasant communities’ rights over their common property, that is their forests, sacred groves and ‘wastelands’, has been the prime cause of their impoverishment.
‘economic’ development as the primary aim of the state which has led to both successes and failures.

In the post-independence era, therefore, India invested heavily in the public sector (heavy industries) and the railways. At the same time, a model of welfare state based on free health services, free education and a system of social security for the vulnerable and disadvantaged was adopted. I might add here (to provide a flavour of the environmental debate in India) that Indian planners were well aware of the social and environmental dimensions of development, such as the need to maintain the health of the soil, to safeguard people’s livelihoods, to establish institutional mechanisms for a more participatory, decentralised development. There was a recognition that the environment provides the resource base for development, but how people used or abused these resources depended on their technological capacities, on the social structure that governs their relationships and on their world views (Krishna 1996).

Over the decades, while reforms to release the economy from excessive controls and regulations to ensure greater efficiency have been initiated, the formal commitment of the state to safeguarding the social rights to health and education as also the commitment to safeguarding human rights has been sustained. In 1976, the goals of socialism and secularism were specifically incorporated in the Constitution of India to indicate the kind of society we would seek to achieve.

While India houses a sixth of the world’s population (Dreze & Sen 1995) and has progressed in leaps and bounds in terms of life expectancy at birth, economic growth, literacy, etc., a third of its population lives in conditions of abject poverty. The contemporary phase, therefore, is characterised by the disadvantaged social sectors seeking greater opportunity, a greater share of the economic product, asserting and seeking protection of cultural identity, a more effective role in the exercise of power and in defining the purposes to which it should be put (Basu & Sisson 1986). It becomes necessary, therefore, to review the complementarity between the opening up of economic opportunities and the social conditions that facilitate the use of those opportunities. As Dreze and Sen (1995) suggest, there is some empirical evidence that the returns to educational expansion tend to increase with the expansion of market opportunities. They also suggest that there is, in addition, the other side of complementarity between economic opportunities and social conditions, that is, the effectiveness of opening up new
economic opportunities and the possibility of good use of labour and skill, which may, in turn, depend greatly on basic educational facilities and related circumstances. This brings to the forefront the complementarity between economic and non-economic factors towards a better understanding of the developmental experiences of India.

Indian society is not only rife with contrasts, but is also an extremely troubled one; there are extreme injustices and inequities but before going into detail about them, it is important to speak of what has been achieved in the 50 years since attaining independence. India’s higher education sector is larger even than any other country’s with a per-capita income twice that of India’s. In numbers of Doctors per unit of population, India is second only to China among all countries having a per capita income no higher than twice India’s (Dreze & Sen 1995). For most of the country, diversity has proved to be less of a problem than estimated by experts.

On the other hand, endemic malnutrition is most pronounced in rural India. Although India is now self-sufficient in food production, the purchasing power of the large rural population is limited. Vast differences exist between what is available to them in the larger context and what they have access to. India has an approach to social service that is conservative; it has clearly chosen a strategy of growth with short-term benefits in terms of high and rapid economic growth and a much slower impact on the quality of life. This, in turn, has benefited the elite and the powerful in the country, further marginalising the poor and the less powerful as the opportunities available to them are limited.

Although India is scientifically and technologically well advanced, has a very high higher education ratio, sheer neglect of primary education and poor social services are the two main factors responsible for India housing the world’s largest number of illiterates. The question of enforcing universal elementary education, taking children away from traditional sources of income generation, which were in place to enhance the family income and the inability to provide adequate buffers in the form of other social services, has eroded the socio-cultural system further. Although the lower castes are more visible

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42 Amartya Sen (1982) has dealt with this issue in great detail, while speaking of the contrast between ‘needs’ and ‘entitlements’ and has reiterated that the government has been able to ignore this endemic hunger because that hunger has neither led to a run on the market and chaos, nor grown into acute famine with people dying of starvation. Persistent orderly hunger does not upset the system.

43 While caste in many sociological texts was considered as a form of social stratification in which status was ascribed, increasingly several factors impinge upon the caste status such as name, style of speech and in a limited way, occupation. But, given changing economic opportunities, norms of what it is proper to do for
in white collar jobs because of the reservation policy adopted by the Government of India, by and large, it has not improved the status of the vast majority of the lower caste people and this, therefore, necessarily means that they are also economically disadvantaged. Positive discrimination of this kind has always benefited those already in a position of privilege. Traditionally, they were not allowed property ownership and in the interface between social values, customs and conventions and modern structures and agencies, they are further reduced to abject poverty. To endeavour to bring about economic and social advantage to this group of people without making efforts to change the rural power structures is a futile exercise.

In Indian planning, time and again, the emphasis has shifted from agriculture (food production) to industry (technological advancement); although five year plans have led to remarkable achievements in the field of agriculture, industry, science and technology, higher education and infrastructure development, this has also caused growing discontent as feelings of injustice and oppression and disparities in the population are on the rise. These disparities between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, urban and rural areas, between different social groups, between workers in organised and unorganised sectors and, in the extreme sense, between men and women have arisen due to a reductionist view of India as a homogeneous aggregate and the subsequent course adopted in planned development. In addition, decline in initiatives and employment in traditional crafts, small scale and cottage industries, the production and consumption of elitist consumption goods in keeping with international trends, exploitation of natural resource base, the lack of political will in establishing demographic controls, etc., have further resulted in the present impasse in the development scenario in India. Bagchi (1982, p. 220) was of the opinion that ‘state intervention as a way of countering Western European domination and, if possible catching up with the West has formed part of the middle- and upper-class ideology of the third world’. He also maintained that ‘for a host of reasons, the aspiration of most third world countries to become capitalist is impaired and whatever may be the quantum of effort and plan exercise, they end up with retarded capitalist development’ (Bagchi 1982, p. 250).

upper/lower caste men have shifted considerably. Women are more frequently restricted by caste norms of propriety. Thus, often, upper caste women did not engage in paid work – or if they did, out of economic necessity, they tried to conceal it from their relatives. Today this is less of an issue.

44A. K. Bagchi (1982) not only discusses the economics of the third world but also delves into the fragility of Indian planning and the government’s strategy in overcoming balance of payment deficits through
By the early 1960s and 70s, many third world countries, India included, came to realise that the development strategies they have pursued in the past two or three decades were inappropriate and even irrelevant to their needs. They realised that a development strategy with a primary focus on economic growth would not by itself solve problems of unemployment and income distribution or improve the conditions of the poorest segments of the population. It was further observed that, in many countries, rapid economic growth has further aggravated the problems of poverty, unemployment and inequality (Aziz 1978).

The Green Revolution

The world’s worst recorded food disaster, known as the Bengal Famine, happened in 1943 in British-ruled India, in which an estimated four million people died of hunger that year alone in eastern India. The initial theory put forward to ‘explain’ that catastrophe was that there was an acute shortfall in food production in the area. Amartya Sen (1981) has already established, however, that while food shortage was a contributor to the problem, a more potent factor was the result of hysteria related to World War II, which made food supply a low priority for the British rulers. The hysteria was further exploited by Indian traders, who hoarded food in order to sell at higher prices. Following the departure of the British from India four years later in 1947, India continued to be haunted by memories of the Bengal Famine. It was therefore natural that food security was a paramount item on free India’s agenda. This awareness led, on the one hand, to the Green Revolution in India45 and, on the other, to legislative measures to ensure that businessmen would never again be able to hoard food for reasons of profit. The term ‘Green Revolution’, however, is applied to the period from 1967 to 1978. Between 1947 and 1967, efforts at achieving food self-sufficiency were not entirely successful; until 1967, they largely concentrated on expanding the farming areas but starvation deaths were still being reported in the acceptance of foreign ‘aid’ thereby avoiding unpleasant decisions. He also speaks extensively of the various contradictions that are inherent in India’s development planning.

45The link between green revolution and imperialism is evident in the following statements. The potential following the introduction of the Public Law 480 in 1954 to Herbert Humphreys (one most responsible for the Law’s introduction) was stated as such: ‘I have heard …that people may become dependent on us for food. I know that was not supposed to be good news, because before people can do anything they have got to eat. And if you are looking for a way to get people to lean on you and to be dependant on you, in terms of their cooperation with you, it seems to me that food dependence would be terrific…’. In 1966, Lyndon Johnston announced that future shipments of “Food for Peace” under PL 480 would be subject to stringent new conditions. Deliveries would depend on the willingness of receiving countries to shift emphasis from industrialisation to agricultural development, to expand or institute population control programs, and to open their doors to interested US investors.
newspapers. In a perfect case of Malthusian economics, population was growing at a much faster rate than food production. This called for drastic action to increase yield, which came in the form of the ‘Green Revolution’.

The Green Revolution, which was adopted as the developmental strategy by many third world countries during the 1960s, was to pave the way for capitalist development. This path of development called for major structural changes in the agricultural sector, which resulted in the initial attempts at land reform. Land reform, which had been a high priority for Nehru ever since he worked for the cause of peasantry in the campaign of 1930, remained more or less at the level predetermined by British Indian Tenancy Acts. These Acts were beneficial in securing the rights of those peasants who held their land directly from the landlord, but had left sub-tenants and other categories of the rural poor unprotected. With the abolition of the Zamindari system\textsuperscript{46}, the rights of the superior landlords were done away with and they joined the ranks of their former tenants. This led to the emergence of a category of peasant landlords with complete freedom to exploit the rural poor. Of course, there were ceilings on landholdings imposed by legislation and there was the prohibition of the sub-letting of land, but in the absence of proper record of rights, breaches of the law were hard to prove and this type of legislation remained in name only.

The land reform measures, however, were ineffective given the rigid and hierarchically based local power structures. Green Revolution was an attempt to overcome this failure and it was implicitly assumed that technology could be a substitute for structural changes.

\textsuperscript{46} Under the Zamindari system, which the British introduced, it became the duty of the zamindar to collect money from the individual farmers and pass it on to the British rulers. In course of time, all contact between the rulers and the cultivators was lost and the zamindar wielded supreme authority deciding on the degree of exaction from the farmers. In turn, some of the farmers gave their land to others for cultivation on terms they thought best and the chain continued. These other farmers had no ownership right to land and enjoyed no transfer rights; they were tenants-at-will. It was not possible to link them with formal credit agencies in the absence of their right records and they were dependent on their landlords, traders or money-lenders to meet their immediate cash requirements. In the absence of transport and communication links, the cultivators were growing food crops for their own consumption or for payment to workers. Village artisans who were paid by a customary share in the family produce mostly met their own non-food requirements. The rulers took little interest in the improvement of cultivation practices except in the case of export crops like cotton, jute and tea. The railway system was built only for connecting ports with the export production centers and the import markets; all other infrastructural facilities were lacking. The urban centres being places of collection and distribution, pilgrimage places, industrial centres or capitals of important states were humming with activity. It was, however, the artisan sector of India that foreign rule affected the most. Forced transactions, unfair tariffs, the change in tastes of the elite groups which wanted to emulate their rulers and the sheer inexpensive nature of factory goods destroyed the vitality of Indian industry, and in rural areas many of them were thrown back on the land which gave them sustenance at a much lower rate (Alagh et al. 1993).
The introduction of technology did lead to rapid and increased production but widened the economic disparities and deepened the poverty of the masses (Desai 1986).

The term ‘Green Revolution’ is a general one that is applied to successful agricultural experiments in many Third World countries and, whilst not specific to India, it was most successful there. There were three basic elements in the method of the Green Revolution:

- Continued expansion of farming areas; although the area of land under cultivation was being increased right from 1947, this was not enough in meeting rising demand. So, the Green Revolution continued with this quantitative expansion of farmlands; this, however, was not the most striking feature of the Revolution.
- Double-cropping existing farmland; double-cropping was a primary feature of the Green Revolution. Instead of one crop season per year, the decision was made to have two crop seasons per year. The one-season-per-year practice was based on the fact that there is only one natural monsoon per year; this was correct - so, there had to be two ‘monsoons’ per year, one the natural and the other an artificial ‘monsoon’. The artificial monsoon came in the form of huge irrigation facilities; dams were built to arrest large volumes of natural monsoon water which were earlier being wasted and simple irrigation techniques were adopted as well.
- Using seeds with improved genetics; this was the scientific aspect of the Green Revolution. The Indian Council for Agricultural Research developed new strains of high yield value (HYV) seeds, mainly wheat and rice but also millet and corn.

Crop areas under high-yield varieties needed more water, more fertilizer, more pesticides, fungicides and certain other chemicals, spurring the growth of the local manufacturing sector. Such industrial growth created new jobs and contributed to the country’s GDP. The increase in irrigation created need for new dams to harness monsoon water. The water stored was used to create hydroelectric power, in turn boosting industrial growth, creating jobs and improving the quality of life of the people in villages. India paid back all loans it had taken from the World Bank and its affiliates for the purpose of the Green Revolution, improving its credit-worthiness in the eyes of the lending agencies. Some developed countries, especially Canada, which were facing a shortage in agricultural labour, were so impressed by the results of India’s Green Revolution that they asked the Indian government to supply them with farmers experienced in the methods of the Green Revolution. The Green Revolution created plenty of jobs not only for agricultural workers but also industrial workers by the creation of lateral facilities, such as factories and hydroelectric power stations.

The green revolution has been hailed as a great success in India with almost all classes of cultivators experiencing some improvement in income and yields from the introduction of modern methods of agriculture. The gains of the new technology, however, have been
very unevenly distributed. India’s agricultural output sometimes falls short of demand and the Green Revolution, howsoever impressive, has not succeeded in making India totally and permanently self-sufficient in food. In 1979 and 1987, India faced severe drought conditions due to a poor monsoon; this raised questions as to whether the Green Revolution was really a long-term achievement. In 1998, India had to import onions and in 1999 sugar. The nation also failed to extend the concept of high-yield value seeds to all crops or all regions; it remains largely confined to food grains only, not to all kinds of agricultural produce.

Narrowly focusing on increasing production - as the Green Revolution does - cannot alleviate hunger because it fails to alter the tightly concentrated distribution of economic power, especially access to land and purchasing power. Furthermore, in many areas, rice and wheat are only minor parts of the diet of the poor. This means that even where there has been success, the poor may be the last to benefit from the new production. Even the World Bank (Reutlinger & Pellekaan 1986) concluded in a major study of world hunger that a rapid increase in food production does not necessarily result in food security, that is, less hunger. Current hunger can only be alleviated by ‘redistributing purchasing power and resources toward those who are undernourished’, the study said (p. 4). In a nutshell, if the poor don’t have the money to buy food, increased production is not going to help them.

The rapid modernisation of agriculture and the introduction of new technologies such as those that characterised the Green Revolution have had a differential impact on rural populations by both class and gender. How the Green Revolution affects rural people depends on whether they are wage earners, cultivators or consumers, whether they come from landed or landless, rich or poor, male- or female-headed households. Two general trends are apparent: the wealthy have benefited more from technological change in agriculture than the less well off and men have benefited more than women.

As early as 1971, Frankel (1971) opined that the high yielding variety was being introduced into a setting where economic disparities have been substantially sharpened by the differential capacity of small and large farmers and tenants and landowners to sustain the capital outlays on land development, especially minor irrigation, and other modern equipment that are necessary to realise the full benefits of the new technology. Given the much higher cultivation costs of the new varieties and an even greater premium on timely
agricultural operations – including the right schedule for the application of fixed amounts of water to achieve maximum potential yields – the economic disparities between the minority of cultivators who could finance any improvements and the majority who cannot are bound to widen further. The introduction of modern technology under the intensive areas and the high yielding variety programs has not only quickened the process of economic polarisation in the rural areas, but it has also contributed to increasing social antagonism between landlords and tenants and landowners and labourers. Also, introducing any new agricultural technology into a social system stacked in favour of the rich and against the poor - without addressing the social questions of access to the technology’s benefits – will, over time, lead to an even greater concentration of the rewards from agriculture.47

Whether the Green Revolution or any other strategy to boost food production will alleviate hunger depends on the economic, political and cultural rules that people make. These rules determine who benefits as a supplier of the increased production - whose land and crops prosper and for whose profit - and who benefits as a consumer of the increased production - who gets the food and at what price. There has, therefore, been increasing recognition on the part of the government that small farmers have not benefited in proportion either to their numbers or their needs from the various programs of rural development which have been under implementation during various plans48.


48 Closely associated with the effort to increase output has been the transformation of agrarian social and economic relations by integrating once isolated areas or farmers into the capitalist market system. This ‘modernisation’ of the countryside, which has been an important part of the so called nation-building throughout the post-war period, has been facilitated by the dependency of the new technology on manufactured inputs. The peasant who adopts the new seeds must buy the necessary complementary inputs on the market. In order to buy these inputs, he must sell part of his crop for cash. Thus the international community widened the proportion of peasant producers tied into the national (sometimes international) market as it succeeds in pushing the new technology into the hands of subsistence farmers. The new seeds accompanied by chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and, for the most part, irrigation had replaced the traditional farming practices of millions of Third World farmers. Obviously, women do not figure in this scheme of things, as there was the additional issue of access to and control over resources. In the case of commercial producers, adoption only reinforced existing ties to the market. In addition, an effort to teach personal gain and consumerism is also attempted. Mosher (1966) insists on the theme of teaching peasants to want more for themselves, to abandon collective habits and to get on with the ‘business’ of farming. He also advocated extension educational programs for women to create more demand for store-bought goods. The ‘affection of husbands and families’ (p. 34) will make them responsive to these desires and drive them to work harder.
Planned Development

In India, what cannot be denied either is the fact that the development project is insurmountably limited by the nature of colonial rule. The introduction of appropriate strategies and practices would necessarily have justified the superior colonial power, but it was compromised and subverted by the need to maintain a specifically colonial form of power. This was achieved by maintaining the distinction between the coloniser and the colonised and by not allowing for representativeness. This translated on the ground as a lack of desire to encourage participation of the people in development programs in order not only to emphasise the superiority of western knowledge but also in assuming that cultures other than the West were ignorant. A consequence of the transition from colonial power to Independence was that the vested interests were, by and large, unvanquished. In the first fervour that followed independence, they remained acquiescent and silent. After a while, realising the futility of open hostility, they resorted to back-door tactics of whittling down the implications of all important reforms, locating loopholes and safety valves. Enough attention was not paid to defeat these tactics, with the result that the attempts at institutional changes have succeeded only very partially.

The era of planned development started soon after independence. Since then, development plans have been growing in dimensions, scope, diversity and complexity.

“The Constitution of India has guaranteed certain Fundamental Rights to the citizens of India and enunciated certain Directive Principles of State Policy, in particular, that the State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life, and shall direct its policy towards securing, among other things,

a. that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;

b. that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good; and

c. that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment” (Article 39 of The Indian Constitution, as quoted in Government of India 1951).

In the context of development planning it is useful to draw attention to three other Articles in the Constitution of India:

a. “The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public

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assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want” (Article 41).

b. “The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years” (Article 45).

c. “The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation” (Article 46).

The Five Year Plans aimed to have regard to these rights and further these principles and the declared objective of the Government was to promote a rapid rise in the standard of living of the people by efficient exploitation of the resources of the country, increasing production and offering opportunities to all for employment in the service of the community. The guiding principles of India’s Five Year Plans are provided by the basic objectives of growth, employment, self-reliance and social justice. In addition, each Five Year Plan takes into account the new constraints and possibilities faced during that period and attempts to make the necessary directional changes and emphasis. Certain administrative changes have been brought about within the governmental system. One of them relates to the devolution of politico-administrative powers, which includes strengthening of local self-government to play a role in local developmental processes. People’s participation through representative local bodies is envisaged to energise these processes and also make these more relevant and responsive to people’s needs and expectations.

The impact of these influences in favour of strengthening of local bodies tended to be diluted by the administrative orthodoxies to which the government clung by and large, and the opposition of the rural vested interests. The first Five Year Plan (1951-56) (Government of India 1952) projected the problem thus:

_The urge to economic and social change under present conditions comes from the fact of poverty and of inequalities in income, wealth and opportunity. The elimination of poverty cannot obviously be achieved merely by redistributing existing wealth. Nor can a program aiming only at raising production remove existing inequalities. Only a simultaneous advance along both lines can create conditions in which the community can put forth its best efforts for promoting development._

In the field of agriculture and community development, for instance, additional programs were introduced with a view to ensuring that the targets of agricultural production would be reached (additional allocation to community development projects, minor irrigation
projects and National extension organization). During the First Plan, the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was set up with the objective of assisting voluntary agencies in organising welfare programs for women and children and the handicapped groups. Further, the CSWB, in collaboration with State Governments, organised State Social Welfare Boards (SSWB) throughout the country which, in turn, assisted a variety of institutions.

For the approach to the Second Plan (1956-61) (Government of India 1957a), the Planning Commission requested State Governments to arrange for the preparation of district and village plans, especially in relation to agricultural production, rural industries and co-operation. The preparation of such plans was undertaken as it was felt that in sectors which bear closely on the welfare of large numbers of people, local planning is an essential means for securing the maximum public participation and voluntary effort. It was recognised in the Second Plan document that ‘development is a continuous process; it touches all aspects of community life and has to be viewed comprehensively. Economic planning thus extends itself into extra-economic spheres, educational, social and cultural’ (Government of India 1957a, chapter 1). Typically economic-reductionist forms of analysis and response, however, were utilised for analysing these so-called ‘extra-economic spheres’ (as an extension of the economic sphere).

Further, the second plan document provided evidence of shades of the dominant discourse of development, keeping in line with the thinking of those times. The community was also co-opted into this mainstream development by being asked to measure and justify all allocations and expenditure in terms of demand and supply and maximising incomes and expenditures. During the Second Plan period, Social Welfare gained currency with a chapter designated to it. The building-up of organizational networks, CSWB and SSWBs, made it possible to embark upon larger programs of social welfare in the second five-year plan. Social Welfare was, however, perceived as an add-on, which can be clearly seen in the following statement: ‘The growth of social services is necessarily a slow process whose limitations relate to the financial resources available and resources which can be spared for social services, lack of trained personnel and of organizations devoted to social welfare and lack of reliable data pertaining to social problems’ (Government of India 1957a, chapter 29).
During this period, the CSWB made a beginning in tackling the ‘*difficult task of providing work for women in their homes*’ (Government of India 1957a, chapter 29). As evidenced from this statement, there was no attempt to challenge the existing gender relations or workloads of women, but it suggested to stretch women’s working time by engaging in tasks that perpetuated the status quo.

In the Third Plan (1961-66) (Government of India 1962), it was felt by Planners that the first two plans had generated an institutional structure needed for rapid economic development; it, therefore, set as its goal the establishment of a self-reliant and self-generating economy. This long-term approach was intended to provide a general design of development for the country’s natural resources, agricultural and industrial advancement, changes in the social structure and an integrated scheme of regional and national development. With the Chinese aggression in 1962 and the constant threat from Pakistan, the focus had to be on development as well as on defence.

The primary focus of the third plan remained on agriculture; however, the approach to development was predominantly economistic, the emphasis being on increasing incomes. It was thought that the rural economy had to be diversified and the proportion of the population dependent on agriculture gradually diminished, aims considered essential if the incomes levels of the rural population were to rise steadily and to keep pace with incomes in other sectors. The development of basic industries was considered fundamental to rapid economic growth. Emphasis was also given to the development of education and other social services, programs considered essential for ensuring a fair balance between economic and social development and, equally, for realising the economic aims of the Plan. The programs included expansion of facilities for education, control of diseases, development of health and medical services, award of scholarships, supply of drinking water in villages and towns and the provision of welfare services for the less developed sections of the community. Three annual Plans were implemented due to the pressures on the economy on account of severe drought and the subsequent devaluation of the rupee.

The Fourth Plan (1969-74) (Government of India 1970, Chapter 1) set before itself the two principal objectives ‘growth with stability’ and ‘progressive achievement of self-reliance’. For the first time, economic indicators appeared with the aim to achieve an average of 5.5 percent rate of growth in the national income and the provision of a
national minimum for the weaker sections of the community – the latter came to be known as the objectives of ‘growth with justice’ and ‘Garibi Hatao’ (removal of poverty).

The Fourth Plan represented a conscious, internally consistent and carefully thought-out program for the efficient exploitation of the resources in the country as possible under the existing conditions. The basic aim was to raise the standard of living of the people, especially of the less privileged sections of society, not only by achieving increased production, but by the rational distribution of the added wealth. The benefits of development, it was considered, should accrue in increasing measure to the weaker sections of society, so that the forces of production could be fully unleashed. A sense of involvement, of participation by the people as a whole, was considered vital for the success of any plan of rapid economic growth and securing social justice by reducing disparities of income and wealth and by redressing regional imbalances could only evoke this. A reorientation of the socio-economic institutions in this spirit was, therefore, considered a first necessity.

The Fourth Plan thus provided corrective measures (in the form of greater investment in public expenditure and schemes for small farmers) to the earlier trend, which enabled particularly the stronger sections in agriculture as well as in industry to rapidly enlarge and diversify the production base. In the long run, it was realised that the full potential of growth could not be achieved unless the energies of all the people were put to profitable use. Greater industrial activity and the modernisation of agriculture such as was proposed through the wider use of electric power and the adoption of intensive methods of cultivation in both irrigated and dry areas, meant an increased generation of employment opportunities.

The Fifth Plan (1974-79) (Government of India 1975, Chapter 1) document proposed to achieve the two main objectives, removal of poverty and attainment of self-reliance, through promotion of a higher rate of growth, better distribution of income and a very significant increase in the domestic rate of saving. After three and a half decades of planned development, India did not seem to have made much progress towards the achievement of this cherished objective. After a careful evaluation of the first three decades of planned economic development (in which the progress achieved on many fronts was acknowledged), the Sixth Five Year Plan (1978-83) (Government of India 1979, Chapter 1) document noted that ‘the most important objectives of planning have not
been achieved, the most cherished goals seem to be almost as distant today as when we set out on the road to planned development'. If the stubborn persistence of mass poverty is any indication at all, the situation even today is much the same.

Alleviation of rural poverty has always been one of the primary objectives of planned development in India. Ever since the inception of the planning process, the policies and the programmes have been designed and redesigned with this aim. The problem of rural poverty was brought into a sharper focus during the Sixth Plan and the Seventh Plan (1985-90) (Government of India 1986a) equally emphasised growth with social justice. It was realised that a sustainable strategy of poverty alleviation had to be based on increasing the productive employment opportunities as part of the process of growth itself. It was also recognised that the process of growth had bypassed sections of the population and that it, therefore, was necessary to formulate specific poverty alleviation programmes for the generation of a certain minimum level of income for the rural poor.

The Seventh Five Year Plan sought to emphasise policies and programs which would accelerate the growth in food grains production, increase employment opportunities and raise productivity – all these three immediate objectives were regarded central to the achievement of long term goals. The development perspective of the Eighth Plan (Government of India 1992) was framed with the objectives of fulfilling the social and human aspirations of the people, meeting the essential requirements of living, raising income levels and improving their quality of life.

Keeping in line with the rhetoric of the time, the Eighth Plan included a social development perspective. The main purpose was the increased recognition of disparities across States, between the urban and the rural areas, between males and females and between those working in the organised and those in the unorganised sector. The need to concentrate on reducing these disparities and to improve the quality of life of an average Indian citizen was to be the perspective for the next 10 to 15 years. To achieve this, emphasis was to be on improving the income opportunities of the less privileged sections and in the areas of gross underdevelopment. Improvements in basic social services and reductions in infant mortality were considered pre-conditions for realising the desired restraint on population growth. Improved literacy rates, improvement in the health status of the people, availability of electricity, availability of safe drinking water and providing rural and urban sanitation were some of the priorities set.
In the Eighth Plan, an employment-oriented growth strategy was thought to achieve this goal only in the medium- and long-term; in the meantime, it was envisaged that short-term employment would have to be provided to the unemployed and underemployed, particularly among the poor and vulnerable sections, through the existing special employment programmes, i.e. the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY). The planning and implementation of the rural development programmes was to enable greater self-help by the people and their participation in programmes through *panchayati raj* institutions, cooperatives and other self-managed institutions, which would mark a reduction in the dependence on the present development administration. It was emphasised, however, that this was not to be interpreted as a greater move towards ‘privatisation’ or leaving the rural poor to look after themselves. State intervention was to continue, in fact, on an expanded scale so as to protect the poor and vulnerable sections from some of the burdens of structural adjustment.

The Approach Paper to the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) (Government of India 1997) accorded priority to agriculture and rural development with a view to generating adequate productive employment and eradication of poverty; accelerating the growth rate of the economy with stable prices; ensuring food and nutritional security for all, particularly the vulnerable sections of society; providing the basic minimum services of safe drinking water, primary health care facilities, universal primary education, shelter, and connectivity to all in a time-bound manner; containing the growth rate of population; ensuring environmental sustainability of the development process through social mobilisation and participation of people at all levels; empowerment of women and socially disadvantaged groups, such as Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes and Minorities as agents of socio-economic change and development; promoting and developing people’s participatory bodies, like the Panchayati Raj institutions, co-operatives and self-help groups; and strengthening efforts to build self-reliance. These very priorities came to constitute the objectives of the Ninth Plan.

Direct poverty alleviation programmes, which were the focus of all previous plans, were considered important and were expanded in the Ninth Plan, but they were oriented towards strengthening the productive potential of the economy and providing more opportunities for involving the poor in the economic process. Increasingly, it is being
recognised by Indian planners that there is a visible shift in the focus of development planning from the mere expansion of production of goods and services and the (assumed) consequent growth of per capita income, to planning for enhancement of human well-being. The notion of human well-being itself is more broadly conceived to include not only the consumption of goods and services in general, but more specifically, to ensure that the basic material requirements of all sections of the population, especially those below the poverty line, are met and that they have access to basic social services such as health and education. Specific focus on these dimensions of social development is necessary, because experience shows that economic prosperity, measured in terms of per capita income alone does not always ensure enrichment in quality of life, as reflected, for instance, in the social indicators on health, longevity, literacy and environmental sustainability. The latter must be valued as outcomes that are socially desirable in themselves and hence made direct objectives of any development process and that they are valuable inputs in sustaining the development process in the longer run. In addition to social development measures, in terms of access to social services, an equitable development process must provide expanding opportunities for advancement to all sections of the population. Equality of outcomes may not be a feasible goal of social justice, but equality of opportunity is a goal for which we must all strive. The development process must, therefore, be viewed in terms of the efficiency with which it uses an economy’s productive capacities, involving both physical and human resources, to attain the desired economic and social ends (and not just their material attainment). To this end, it is absolutely essential to build up the economy’s productive potential through high rates of growth, without which we cannot hope to provide expanding levels of consumption for the population. While this is a necessary condition, it is, however, not sufficient in itself; it becomes imperative, therefore, to pursue a development strategy that builds on a policy focus for exploiting synergies between economic growth, desirable social attainments and growing opportunities for all. Such a strategy must have at its heart a commitment to widen and deepen the participation of people in all decisions governing economic and social development and this has been, finally, the focus of the Tenth Plan (2002-07) (Government of India 2002), which, however, falls partly outside of the timeframe within which the empirical work for this thesis has been executed.
Planned Development and Women

What appeared to be the major shift in the approach from ‘welfare’ to ‘development’ of women took place only in the Sixth Plan (1980-85); but I would argue that, in reality, the situation for women did not alter much. The Sixth Plan adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with a special thrust on three core sectors: health, education and employment. In the Seventh Plan (1985-90), the developmental programmes continued with the major objective of raising the economic and social status of women and bringing them into the mainstream of national development. A significant step in this direction was to identify/promote the ‘Beneficiary - Oriented Schemes’ (BOS) in various developmental sectors which extended direct benefits to women. The focus on the generation of both skilled and unskilled employment through proper education and vocational training continued. The Eighth Plan (1992-97), with human development as its major focus, played a very important role in the development of women; it promised to ensure that benefits of development from different sectors would not by-pass women, to implement special programmes to complement the general development programmes and to monitor the flow of benefits to women from other development sectors and enable them to function as equal partners and participants in the development process.

The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) made two significant changes in the conceptual strategy of planning for women; firstly, ‘Empowerment of Women’ was one of the nine primary objectives of the Ninth Plan. To this effect, the Approach of the Plan was to create an enabling environment where women could freely exercise their rights both within and outside the home, as equal partners along with men. Secondly, the Plan attempted a ‘convergence of existing services’ available in both women-specific and women related sectors. To this effect, it directed both the centre and the States to adopt a special strategy of ‘Women’s Component Plan’ (WCP) through which not less than 30 percent of funds/benefits would flow to women from all the general development sectors. It also suggested that a special vigil be kept on the flow of the earmarked funds/benefits through an effective mechanism to ensure that the proposed strategy would bring forth a holistic approach towards empowering women.

It was hoped that the objective of Empowerment of Women would be realised through early finalisation and adoption of the ‘National Policy for Empowerment of Women’ which laid down definite goals, targets and policy prescriptions along with a well defined
Gender Development Index to monitor the impact of its implementation in raising the status of women from time to time.

Commitments of the Ninth Plan (1997-2002)

Objective

- Empowering women as agents of social change and development

Strategies

- To create an enabling environment for women to exercise their rights, both within and outside home, as equal partners along with men through early finalisation and adoption of a ‘National Policy for Empowerment of Women’
- To expedite action to legislate reservation of not less than 1/3 seats for women in the Parliament and in the State Legislative Assemblies and thus ensure adequate representation of women in decision making
- To adopt an integrated approach towards empowering women through effective convergence of existing services, resources, infrastructure and manpower in both women-specific and women-related sectors
- To adopt a special strategy of ‘Women’s Component Plan’ to ensure that not less than 30% of funds/benefits flow to women from other developmental sectors
- To organise women into Self help group and thus mark the beginning of a major process of empowering women
- To accord high priority to reproductive child health care
- To universalise the ongoing supplementary feeding programme - Special Nutrition Programme (SNP) and Mid-Day Meals (MDM)
- To ensure easy and equal access to education for women and girls through the commitments of the Special Action Plan of 1998
- To initiate steps to eliminate gender bias in all educational programmes
- To institute plans for free education for girls up to college level, including professional courses
- To equip women with necessary skills in the modern upcoming trades which could keep them gainfully engaged besides making them economically independent and self-reliant
- To increase access to credit through setting up a ‘Development Bank for Women Entrepreneurs’ in small and tiny sectors.

Organising women into Self-Help Groups was considered to mark the beginning of a major process of empowering women and the institutions thus developed, it was thought, would provide a permanent forum for articulating their needs and contributing their perspectives to development. Recognising the fact that women have been socialised only to take a back-seat in public life, the government has considered initiating affirmative action through deliberate strategies to provide equal access to and control over factors contributing to such empowerment, particularly in the areas of health, education, information, life-long learning for self development, vocational skills, employment and
income generating opportunities, land and other forms of property including through inheritance, common property, resources, credit, technology and markets etc. To this effect, the newly elected women members and the women Chairpersons of Panchayats and the Local Bodies were to be sensitised through the recently launched special training package to take the lead in ensuring that adequate funds/benefits would flow towards the empowerment of women and the girl-child.

The Ninth Plan recognises the special health needs of women and the girl-child and the importance of enhancing easy access to primary health care; therefore, a holistic approach with Reproductive Child Health (RCH) measures was adopted in improving the health status of women by focusing on their age-specific needs. Taking into account their multiple roles, including the physical labour that women in the lower strata of the society living in the backward rural areas and urban slums have to carry on, government would make efforts to ensure that the health services become more responsive towards women-specific health problems. In this direction, the major strategy will be to increase women’s access to appropriate, affordable and user-friendly health care services.

Special efforts would be made through the Special Action Plan of 1998 to universalise the on-going supplementary feeding programmes, viz. the Special Nutrition Programme (SNP) for pre-school children and expectant and nursing mothers and Mid-Day Meals (MDM) for school-going children to tackle the problems of micro-nutrient deficiencies and protein energy malnutrition (PEM). These feeding programmes were reinforced with necessary support services, like health check-up, immunisation, ante-natal care, health and nutrition education and awareness etc.

Efforts in the Ninth Plan were also target-oriented in fulfilling the goal of ‘Education for Women’s Equality’ as laid down in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (Government of India 1986b, revised 1992). Special attention was paid to the already identified low female literacy areas and to the women and the girl-children belonging to the socially disadvantaged groups, viz. Scheduled Casts, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, Minorities, Disabled, etc. as they still lagged behind the rest of the population with the lowest literacy rates ranging between 5 and 10 per cent, while the national average of female literacy was 39.3 percent in 1991.
To capture women’s work in the informal sector, there was a need to consider redefining the ‘concept of work’ and provide conceptual clarity to the ‘definition of work’ by the Census and National Sample Survey (NSS). Keeping in view the ultimate objective of fulfilling the ‘Right to work for every citizen’, special efforts were made to generate gainful employment through promotion/expansion of both wage and self-employment opportunities for women so as to make all women potentially economically independent and self-reliant. In this context, the ongoing training-cum-employment-cum-income-generation programmes were expanded to create more opportunities and cover as many women living below the poverty line as possible, with priority given to female-headed households and women in extreme/abject poverty.

Women in the Informal Sector, who account for more than 90 percent of the female labour force, were to receive special attention during the Ninth Plan especially with regard to their working conditions, as they continued to be precarious without any legislative safeguards. Attempts were, therefore, to be made to extend important labour legislations to the informal sector so as to ensure basic minimum working conditions for women. In this direction, special efforts were made to ensure that laws relating to both minimum and ‘equal pay for equal work’ for women, was to be strictly implemented.

As is evidenced from excerpts of the Tenth Plan document, the attempt is to further the targets set out in the Ninth Plan.

Commitments of the Tenth Plan to Empower Women (2002-2007)

The Approach

To continue with the major strategy of ‘Empowering Women’ as Agents of Social Change and Development

Strategies

To adopt a sector-specific 3-fold strategy for empowering women, based on the prescriptions of the National Policy for Empowerment of Women. They include:

- **Social Empowerment** - to create an *enabling environment* through various affirmative *developmental policies and programmes* for development of women besides providing them *easy and equal access to all the basic minimum services* so as to enable them to realise their full potentials.
- **Economic Empowerment** - to ensure provision of training, employment and income-generation activities with both ‘forward’ and ‘backward’ linkages *with*
the ultimate objective of making all potential women economically independent and self-reliant; and

Gender Justice - to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and thus, allow women to enjoy not only the de-jure but also the de-facto rights and fundamental freedom on par with men in all spheres, viz. political, economic, social, civil, cultural etc.

However, Batliwala and Dhanraj (2007) caution all feminists – whether activists, policy advocates or researchers to interrogate past assumptions and strategies, or else risk becoming completely marginalised and/ or instrumentalized by the forces of resurgent patriarchy, religious fundamentalism or unregulated neo-liberalism. They highlight two myth complexes, the first complex of myths being that giving poor women access to economic resources – such as credit – leads to their overall empowerment. This myth has been debunked by John (2004) who observes that a nationwide study like Shramshakti (National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in Informal Sector 1988) recorded an enormous amount of evidence of the incredible work burdens stoically borne by poor self-employed and informal-sector working women; but in the hands of neo-liberal advocates, ‘these findings are no longer arguments about exploitation so much as proofs of efficiency’ (pp. 247, italics in original). Poor women were increasingly viewed as hard working, easier to mobilize, honest, better credit risks, and great poverty alleviation agents. While most of these stereotypes were generally true, ‘the myth making arose when qualities born out of women's struggle for survival were turned to political and economic ends, rather than the feminist commitment to empowerment’ (Batliwala & Dhanraj 2007, p. 22).

Economic reforms of the 90s: A difficult reform trajectory

Development economists in India have felt the need to consider the restructuring of the Indian economy, as it has been unable to cope with the changing needs of the society and has not succeeded in establishing an infrastructure that could provide for the basic needs of the people. The socialist model adopted by Nehru has proved to be extremely disappointing, while its theoretical foundations itself are being questioned. Dreze and Sen (1995), however, speak of the importance of learning from India itself; that there is a remarkable regional diversity in the elimination of basic deprivations. Life expectancy at birth and infant mortality varies tremendously, so does the literacy rate.
In 1991, India’s economy was plagued by 14 percent inflation, falling international reserves and a budget deficit. In addition, virtually all international firms were blocked from entering the Indian market, a policy that dated back to the days of Gandhi. The financial crisis of 1991 played a major role in the election of Rao, who immediately initiated a campaign of free-market reforms, including lowering trade barriers, eliminating complex licensing laws, devaluing and floating India's currency, simplifying the tax structure and permitting the private sector into the country's banking industry. In the five years since Rao took office, inflation dropped and international investment grew. Nevertheless, many economic problems still persisted, including a large fiscal deficit, many money-losing public enterprises and extensive poverty. Furthermore, interest on public debt consumed 45 percent of all revenue and some international companies were still experiencing regulatory difficulties in establishing operations in the country. Political analysts say that in order to eliminate some of the country’s current economic difficulties, Rao had to take the reforms a step further by initiating budget cuts and layoffs; however, the analysts also pointed out that these steps were difficult to accomplish by a minority or coalition government.

India has a public sector which accounts for a great majority of India’s industry, and current law prohibits any company, both public and private, from terminating excess workers. Additionally, the top occupation in India continues to be farming, which accounts for the fact that 70 percent of the population continues to reside in rural areas. Some economists believe that, if the Indian government proceeds with its planned next wave of economic reforms, poverty in the country could eventually be eliminated and an economic growth rate of 7.5 percent achieved. Many Indian voters are wary of the economic reforms and, as a result, socialist and nationalist parties, which have promised more to the people, have grown at the expense of the Congress party. The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, India’s largest opposition group, opposes the influx of most Western consumer goods.

During the early 1990s the economic reforms package was introduced, but the excitement and optimism generated by it has since abated. Special interest groups in various areas have blocked the progress of reforms. Industrial growth has decelerated, exports growth fell, infrastructure bottlenecks persist and poverty, illiteracy and ill-health still remain major problems. The environment of political instability, coupled with nuclear tests and
sectarian violence, has not provided an atmosphere conducive to domestic and foreign investment.

For India, globalisation is no longer an option, it is a fact; in the globalising world, an economy sustained by mass consumption, increasing economic concentration and domination by trans-national corporations is likely. The financial integration accompanying globalisation posed new challenges for policy makers; with appropriate policies, the country could benefit a lot but it also exposed the country to risks. To benefit fully from globalisation, it is thought, India had to move forward with reforms.

The blueprint for the Reforms was provided by the combination of macro-economic stabilisation and structural adjustment programmes of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank respectively, which had been adopted by many countries before in similar situations. The underlying economic philosophy of these programmes was to rely more on market forces, dismantle controls, reduce the role of the state, liberalise prices and replace the public with the private sector, based on the presumption that the public sector leads to inefficient allocation and utilisation of economic resources.

Summarising the above, it can be said that the three major components of the socio-economic reforms in India consisted in:

- Releasing the economy from the excessive controls and regulations that had emerged during the past few decades and ensure greater efficiency is brought into the system, particularly the public sector enterprises. Other reforms required were to free farmers of restrictions on storage and trade, create a safety net, empower the poor, push human development with compulsory elementary education, protect the environment, improve governance and reform the legal system.
- Allowing the Indian economy to enter more into international trade as India’s share in international trade came down from 1.5% during independence to 0.5% in the beginning of the 1990s. Flexibility was crucial if Indian firms were to be Trans-National Corporations. For this, there was a need for an exit policy, labour law reforms, free trade both domestic and international and first rate financial markets that permit risk hedging and provide capital at competitive rates.
- Allow a greater role for foreign capital in the functioning of the Indian economy, which had a variety of consequences for India.

Some of the inputs which would help in exploiting the knowledge-based economy were telecom facilities at international prices, thriving institutions of higher education, an open and democratic society which is hospitable to innovation, protection for intellectual property rights and a financial sector that can fund high risk projects.
As Kurien (1999, p. 45) states, the third aspect requires some scrutiny:

“The ownership of and control over foreign capital has been undergoing a major transformation during the past couple of decades or so. Through the organisational pattern of multinational corporations, there is now enormous concentration of capital under the control of some corporate entities whose ownership is highly diffused and constantly changing. The few who exercise control over vast sums of capital are private persons and groups whose primary concern is to secure as high a return as possible for the funds that they control. The recent revolution in communication technology has made it possible for such funds to move about from place to place all over the world in search of that objective. Consequently, the operation of globally mobile capital now is much more in the realm of finance than in the realm of production. Such capital therefore is more pervasive, but less stable in its operations. In view of these characteristics of globally floating capital to free play is likely to accentuate the typical impact of capital on people’s enriching some, excluding some and marginalising many. A small section of the population has become exceptionally affluent while millions of people groan under the impact of rising prices and insecure living conditions”.

**Women and Economic Reforms**

Experiences from economic reforms (Gupta, S. 1995) - mainly the structural adjustment policies and programmes - have shown that the efforts to establish competitive and efficient markets and production structures did not necessarily lead to the intended outcome in terms of increases in production and growth. It also became evident that adjustment policies have contributed to increasing poverty. If growth has not occurred as fast or as much as predicted, in addition, it has, where it occurred, in general not been ‘pro-poor’. Among those affected by increasing poverty, women constitute a particularly vulnerable group (Krishnaraj 1993; Krishnaraj & Deshmukh 1993).

Since the thrust of economic reforms is towards the introduction of technological inputs, women are being marginalised in economic activities, men traditionally being offered new scope of learning and training. Consequently, female workers are joining the informal sector or casual labour force more than ever before (Ray 1995; Sen, AK. 1998). For instance, while new rice technology has given rise to the higher use of female labour (Ghosh & Mukhopadhyay 1984; Standing 1989), the increased work-load for women is in operations that are unrecorded and often unpaid, since these fall within the category of home production activities. Application of commercial chemical inputs (fertilisers and other plant treatment), essential for new (HYV) rice technology, are done exclusively by men (Poats et al. 1988; Poats & Feldstein 1989; Ghosh 1995).
Secondly, since structural adjustment programmes have led to the unemployment of a large number of men and has increased frustration, tension and a fear of job insecurity, women are being made to pay the social cost. Family violence has increased, rape has become an everyday event and dowry deaths (a fall-out of consumerism) are escalating (Krishnaraj 1993).

Thirdly, the economy, strained to the utmost under the challenges of globalisation, is unable to bear the burden of necessary health-care and educational expenses. The weaker sections, especially the women, are denied the physical care they deserve (Das Gupta et al. 1996; Kishwar 1999). Maternal mortality is extremely high, anaemia is common and women die in large numbers from preventable communicable diseases while increasing use of amniocentesis is killing yet-to-be born women in mothers’ wombs. Forty percent of all women are illiterate and drop-out rates among girls in schools are excessive. Skyrocketing food prices and an export-oriented cropping pattern in agriculture contributes to women’s declining access to food and nutrition. The less than satisfactory public distribution system deteriorates under the economic reforms and brings extra sufferings to women, especially to women heading households (and women-headed households are on the increase in India, (Dreze & Srinivasan 1997)).

Apart from the acknowledgment of the negative social consequences of adjustment, economic reforms and adjustment policies also have increasingly been criticised in the past years for not meeting efficiency targets due to gender-blindness. The main arguments focussing on the non-consideration of gender issues in adjustment/reform programmes include (Rodgers & Cowles 1993; Sparr 1994):

1. Gender-related market distortions
   Male biases and gender discriminations in labour market legislation, property rights and inheritance laws, cultural norms and restrictions as well as reproductive responsibilities make that women are not always in full command and control over their own labour or property. They may not have equal access to markets and therefore may not be in a position to react flexibly to macroeconomic incentives, e.g. diversification, etc. The failure to consider gender-related barriers to markets may lead to over-optimistic assumptions about the impact of macroeconomic policies on production and growth.

2. Hidden inefficiencies
   The cut in public investments and social services has shifted societal costs of reproducing and maintaining the labour force into the private sphere mainly to the detriment of women. The invisibility of unpaid domestic labour may be hiding inefficiencies. For instance, measures to streamline the health sector through user fees
may lead to shorter stays in hospital but extend convalescence periods at home, thereby increasing unpaid caring labour.

3. Invisibility of informal sector activities

Negative effects in income distribution under structural adjustment programmes have forced women and men to intensify paid work outside the household. Women were and are often incorporated into informal employment under insecure and worsening conditions of work. Since large parts of the informal sector activities are not measured or are undercounted, the true impact of policies on efficiency at the macroeconomic level cannot be assessed.

4. Gender-differentiated consumption patterns

There is empirical evidence of gender differences in consumption patterns. Women have a higher marginal propensity than men to spend on goods that enhance the capabilities of children and that are therefore directly productive. Gender inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth together with the above mentioned distortions in goods and factor markets are likely to have considerable short- and long-term effects on the overall economic growth and the wealth the society is able to accumulate.

Development in Orissa

Orissa is an overwhelmingly rural state; its coastal areas have many of the same characteristics as most of the rest of India, including a high dependence on paddy rice, much of which is grown for subsistence. Agriculture is, however, somewhat less developed than in the rest of the country, in terms of the use of irrigation and modern inputs. The climate is relatively humid and water resources are plentiful but apparently underexploited. In the hinterland, Orissa has extensive forests and many tribal groups, many of whom derive their livelihoods largely from the forest and 26% of the population is tribal. The state has extensive mineral resources, many of which are mined under concessions.

The economic structure of the different regions in Orissa varies widely; the coastal areas are in general more integrated into the national and international economy whilst the forests play an important part in the lives of a number of districts. The head count poverty ratio has persistently been higher in rural than in urban areas in Orissa, as it has in the rest of India; in 1999-2000, the proportion beneath the poverty line was 48% in rural areas and 43% in urban areas. A large proportion of Orissa’s population are from scheduled tribes and castes; in the 1991 Census, there were 5.1 million from scheduled castes and 7.0 million from scheduled tribes, together forming 38% of the total population of 31.6 million. The tribal population is concentrated in specific areas, particularly (but not
exclusively) in the forest areas. The poverty profile provided by the government shows that poverty is much higher among scheduled tribes and somewhat higher among scheduled castes than among the rest of the population. In 1993-4, the poverty headcount ratio in rural areas was 64% among scheduled tribes and 40% among scheduled castes, compared to 33% among the rest of the population; in urban areas, the ratio was 59% among STs, 42% among SCs and 32% for the rest of the population. These gaps also exist within each of the regions; members of scheduled tribes are much poorer than the average even when they live in the coastal region. Literacy rates also show a major gap; in 1991, only just over 1 in 5 of the adult tribal population was literate, compared to more than half of the whole population.

Child mortality is higher than in the rest of the country, with infant mortality (mortality in the first year) officially estimated at 96 per thousand in 1997, compared to 71 in the rest of the country (NFHS 2) (Government of India 1998-99).

**Health and fertility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table : Health and fertility outcomes in Orissa and India</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality, SRS, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of females per thousand males (1991 census), whole population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of females per thousand males under 6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of children severely underweight (weight/age more than three standard deviations below reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of children severely stunted (height/age more than three standard deviations below reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of children severely wasted (weight/height more than three standard deviations below reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DALY loss per 1000 population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of ill health: communicable diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table: Health and fertility outcomes in Orissa and India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orissa</th>
<th>India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-communicable diseases</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total fertility rate</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crude birth rate (1998)</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table: Education indicators in Orissa and India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orissa</th>
<th>India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy, 1991 census: male</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 Census: male</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment (primary): boys</td>
<td>104.4</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>girls</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>89.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment rate (middle)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net attendance rate</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years (NSS data)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table: movements in the distribution of land in the 1990s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990-1</th>
<th>1995-6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>share in holdings</td>
<td>share in area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 hectare</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hectares</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4 hectares</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-10 hectares</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above 10 hectares</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

State’s Economy in Figures, from Agricultural Census

It can be seen that less than 5% of land is in holdings over 10 hectares and about 20% in holdings over 4 hectares. There is a change in the distribution during the early 1990s and
the changes observed may reflect increasing population size rather than any major shift in inequality. Data for earlier periods from 1953 to 1982, based on the NSS, are summarised in Mearns and Sinha (1999) and show a fall in the share of large holdings (over 6 hectares) and small holdings (1-2 ha.), while the shares of holdings between 2 and 6 hectares and of holdings below 1 hectare markedly increased. A possible interpretation is that land reform did succeed in reducing the share of large holdings, but that the main beneficiaries were middle-scale farmers; meanwhile, increasing demographic pressure reduced the size of many smallholdings below one hectare. Further, land alienation has also been cited as a major problem for tribal groups. Pradhan, Panda and Menon (1997) report estimates that over 100,000 members of scheduled tribes and castes have been displaced by large projects in Koraput district and that 25,000 people are displaced by each major irrigation project.

Scheduled tribes held 26.6% of the number of holdings and 28.7% of the area, whereas they formed 22.2% of the population, which suggests that the main reason for the relative poverty of tribal groups – which is discussed below – may not be disadvantage in access to land, but in access to infrastructure, markets or information and to non-agricultural occupations. This does not rule out the possibility, however, that their land is of lower quality than other groups. Scheduled castes, with 16% of the population and 13.7% of holdings but only 8.6% of the total area, are clearly disadvantaged in terms of assets. The scheduled castes are often sharecroppers in coastal areas (Pradhan et al. 1997).

Summarising, it can be concluded that ‘Orissa is much poorer than the rest of India: poverty has fallen over time in Orissa, but India has grown faster than Orissa and the gap between Orissa and other states in per capita incomes, and probably in poverty, has widened. Deficiencies in governance have also contributed to Orissa’s relative poverty’ (Mackinnon 2002, p. 1).

As a World Bank study (World Bank 1999, p. i) indicates,

‘Increasing Orissa’s growth rate is thus critical, but will not be possible unless the state addresses its fiscal problems. It is no exaggeration to say that Orissa today is in a fiscal crisis. Salaries, pensions and interest payments now more than exhaust the total revenues. The authorities are facing a ‘fiscal crunch’ in the very practical sense of finding it difficult to provide the cash to pay the government bills. The crisis is already harming the state’s growth prospects. If unattended to, it will leave the government solely as a bankrupt employment agency, unable to perform any developmental role at all. Although Orissa has a track record of
reform it needs to enter a new phase of intensified reforms, if it is to solve its fiscal problems and grow more quickly".


‘No perceptible improvements in living condition of the common people is noticed although the State has been borrowing indiscriminately on an enhanced scale from year to year to invest in irrigation and other infrastructure and development programs. The result is that the State is in a debt trap, the stock of debt as on 31st March 2000 having exceeded 46 % of GSDP (at the end of 2003, the stock of debt has risen to more than 70% of GSDP) and per capita the debt burden is likely to exceed Rs. 5757.80 by end of the financial year 2000-2001. There is such a great slide in the fiscal situation that nearly 80% of State’s own revenue and 33% of its total revenue inclusive of shared taxes and grants-in-aid are being used up only in debt servicing which again constitutes more than 6.5% of GSDP’.

The state finance has already reached a crisis point. Time has come to seriously think and ponder as to how such a grave erosion in the fiscal wealth of the state can be tackled and this devastating and serious fiscal condition of the state can be overcome: ‘Persistence of this kind of great fiscal slide will push the state to the point of sinking down the quicksand of debt’ (Government of Orissa 2001, p. 1)

**Reforms in Orissa**

Planning in Orissa follows the same pattern as that of the Government of India; the state being in such a fiscal crisis, the ability to manoeuvre in terms of actual re-allocations in funding for women, as suggested in the Women’s Component Plan, is next to impossible. The high wage share of recurrent expenditure and the reported problems in maintaining infrastructure are classic symptoms of under spending on non-wage recurrent expenditure. The State also reports that capital spending is being squeezed; discussions with sectors established that the health sector is experiencing particular difficulty in meeting demands on its resources.

Orissa has, therefore, embarked on an ambitious program of fiscal and governance reforms; during the late-1990s, the Government of Orissa became aware that its financial situation was extremely difficult; its access to external and central government funds was severely compromised by the difficulty it had in meeting its obligations on the wage bill and interest payments. It had also become clear that access to funding on more generous terms, including external support and debt relief from the Government of India, was likely
to be conditional on actions by the Orissa government to address the sources of fiscal imbalance.

The Government of Orissa, accepting that reform was necessary, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of India in November 2001, with an attached Medium-Term Fiscal Framework. This memorandum commits the government of Orissa to achieving the target of reducing the ratio of revenue deficit to revenue receipts from 44% to 15% over five years and sets out a set of macroeconomic assumptions and reform measures to be undertaken to achieve this. The government has underlined the seriousness of its commitment to the reform by publishing the MOU (unlike some other states) and by publishing a White Paper and developing a set of papers on the reform process.

The government’s fiscal reform programme consists of a fiscal framework and a set of expenditure compression and revenue-raising measures; however, the impact of these reforms depends on various structural reforms currently being undertaken. For instance, the impact of a tax on forest products depends on the market structure of the forestry sector and the net impact of downsizing the civil services will depend on the quality of the public expenditures for which space is made. Hence, these measures go beyond the fiscal reform to consider the related structural reforms.

While progress has been made on several fronts in the state of Orissa, there is no doubt that the policy makers, both political and bureaucratic, have a long way to go. Orissa’s fiscal situation is a difficult one, its human development indices are the poorest in the country and it has the highest levels of poverty in the country. Poverty reduction can be achieved, in general, by improvements in efficiency - increasing aggregate incomes – or by making the distribution of income more equal. For this reason, in Orissa, both equity and efficiency implications had to be considered for any reform. Justifications for public action may arise either on efficiency grounds (because of some form of market failure) or on equity grounds and, in many cases, – such as public funding for primary education – reflect both concerns. In some cases, such as the provision of social safety nets, the same justification may be couched in terms of equity (the beneficiaries are poor) or in terms of efficiency (the insurance market is missing). Therefore, one of the biggest challenges for Government of Orissa is the hard decisions that it has to take in the process of fiscal and governance reforms that may affect various entrenched vested interests.
The structure of the government is large, weak and inefficient due to its involvement in all sectors of the economy, leaving some priority sectors reeling under poor funding. The government suffers from weak planning capacity, centralised planning systems, duplication and poor distribution of functions, a lack of synergy between policy portfolios, weak public administration, poor accountability and transparency, absence of a system of monitoring and evaluation and a demoralized public service. There has to be, therefore, a definite commitment by political and bureaucratic leaders to carry through this programme of fiscal and governance reforms for the broader interest of the State.

In conclusion, it can be said that there is no clear-cut and consensual policy direction; reforms have proceeded in a fragmented manner, often contradictory. Political culture, formal structures and procedures and the practices of key actors interact, giving rise to relations of different types between actors and to different outcomes. In as much as there is a limited political/bureaucratic commitment and civil society’s demand for good governance is limited, this situation is less likely to change. Most ostensibly, in democratic regimes that are in practice highly clientelistic, decisions are made informally and the allocation of resources depends on the balance of power between patrons and clients. Thus, in a system where governments lack capacity, resources are inadequate and bureaucratic processes lack efficiency, it is important for residents to cultivate bureaucratic and political relationships. This may enable some poor to negotiate the space from which to access services as personal or group favours. The efforts from other stakeholders (such as multilateral and bilateral agencies) to push the issue will only have limited impact in delivering the desired outcomes.

Good governance is a question of attitude and mindset; much effort still needs to be invested in bringing about this change in attitude in order to demand and deliver good governance from and by all stakeholders. Solutions to the fiscal problems will remain at arms’ length unless the issues of governance are addressed on a priority basis. More so will be the response to problems of poverty, especially of women and disadvantaged groups.

In the following chapters, I will discuss community development in the wider context, in India and in Orissa successively.
Chapter Five

Community Development in a Global Context

In this chapter, I attempt to highlight the ideological confusion that plagues the discourse of community development; I first provide a historical overview of the theory and practice of community development and discuss its practice principles. The latter will provide a framework to critically examine community development in India and Orissa in the next chapter and, in the following two chapters, present and analyse the community development programmes I have observed and intend to use as the empirical basis for this thesis.

Introduction

Ife (1995, p. xi) states that

‘Modern society is unable to meet the two basic prerequisites of human civilisation: the need for people to be able to live in harmony with their environment and the need for them to be able to live in harmony with each other. World is characterised by increasing instability and the existing institutions seem only able to provide solutions, which in the long term and even in the short term only make things worse’.

In these days of mammoth trans-national corporations, powerful quasi-governmental global organisations like the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund, information superhighways and of the virtual realities sustained by internet, fax machines and cellular phones, one wonders if there still is a place for face-to-face associations and communication? Are traditional notions of community still valid? Has technology brought us closer together or merely created new layers of filtering devices we use to construct walls around us? What is community? Is it diminishing? Is it necessary? Why should we care? Research shows that the need for community is plentiful but the debate still continues as to what exactly this thing called ‘community’ is? Increasingly, it seems to be about the relation of the local to the global.

Both globalisation and localisation are terms that provoke strong reactions, positive and negative. Globalisation is praised for the new opportunities it brings, such as access to markets and technology transfer – opportunities that hold out the promise of increased productivity and higher living standards; at the same time, it is feared and condemned because it regularly seems to bring instability and unanticipated change. Localisation, on
the other hand, is appreciated for raising levels of participation in decision-making and for giving people more of a chance to shape the context of their own lives; it suggests responsive, accountable and efficient government, by decentralising government and bringing relevant decisions closer to the citizens. The autonomy of local governments, however, has been shown to have led to macro-economic instability, whereby central governments have had to bail out sub-national governments that have gone into excessive borrowing (as shown to have been the case in Orissa in the previous chapter). Both globalisation and localisation are phenomena that no development agenda can afford to ignore. In this thesis, I lay greater emphasis on the process of localisation and the notions of community and community development as to what they mean to the various actors, their hopes and aspirations and how they interact with the institutions that they have built and sustained over a period of time.

**The Confusion of Community**

Today, the global context is characterised by ideological confusion; simply put, on the political right, for example, are those who argue for rolling back the boundaries of the state, allegedly in the pursuit of individual freedom. On the left are those arguing for the empowerment of the poor, equally claiming this as the route towards freedom. For the poor it is important, however, to distinguish between ‘freedom from’ (for example hunger, poverty, etc) and ‘freedom to’ (for example, choose among alternatives). ‘Freedom to’ is dependent to some degree on ‘freedom from’ which doubly disadvantages the poor.

As Craig (1998) points out, anti-poverty work in UK, underpinned by a concern for Community Development and the participation of the poor, has led the local state to move in where central state has moved out – especially in the aftermath of the ‘Thatcher revolution’. Community participation is another means by which cuts in essential services are hidden behind a rhetoric of voluntarism and community involvement: self-help can mean the route for democratic participation in decision making, as on the political left, but it can also mean social services on the cheap (as on the liberal right).

The ‘communitarian’ idea as proposed by Etzioni, represented a major influence on the thinking on community development claims that ‘a good society is one in which people live freely, take responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities, and
solve most problems at the level of the neighbourhood and household’ (Anderson & Davey 1995). On the face of it, this sounds like a political program that would be strongly supportive of Community Development; from another perspective, communitarianism gives social democratic parties a package that is classless, attractive to conservatives and compatible with economic austerity, especially in the face of mass unemployment - about which they can do little - and a welfare state - which they increasingly regard as unsustainable. For yet others, it apparently offers a middle way forward from both the failures of the free market and over-patronising welfare bureaucracies.

Globally, one can find contradictory understandings of the meaning of community and community development, reflecting very different political and economic agendas. There is an increasing interest amongst various agencies in strategies to promote community participation as a means of enhancing the developmental process. The Brundtland Commission report (1987, p. 25) states that one of the main prerequisites of sustainable development is ‘securing effective citizens’ participation’ and the Human Development Report (UNDP 1993, p. 1) commented that, in the face of current challenges for development, ‘people’s participation is becoming the central issue of our time’. The World Bank, in its various reports, highlights that community participation can be a means of ensuring that Third World Development Projects reach the poorest in the most efficient and cost effective way (although reverting more to character, it expects the poor to share the costs of development as well as its benefits (Paul 1987)).

Ife (1995, p. 2) claims that ‘the main reason for the confusion in community work and community based service and the seeming inadequacy of much of what passes for community work ‘theory’, is that community work has not been located in its social and political context, or linked to a clearly articulated social vision, in such a way that the analysis relates to action and ‘real life’ practice’.

There is a need to explore and expose the real agendas of the many organisations and individuals who now claim ‘community’ for their own. To what extent, for example, are they concerned with social justice, with respecting the dignity and humanity of all, with their right to participate in decisions, which affect them, with mutuality or equality? Or are they in reality, for example, advocating community development as a means of helping people to adapt their way of life to the changes they have had imposed on them (subtly phrased as ‘facilitating empowerment’ in the World Development Report, World
There is a need for the promotion of a view of community development based on
tolerance and human dignity, on needs and not greed, on creative interdependence rather
than destructive competition.

Some Definitions

‘Community’ is a much-debated issue in the social sciences. On reviewing the literature,
one finds that it is a much-contested topic rather than being clear-cut. It is a most
ambiguous, elusive and controversial concept, so much so that Lowe (1986, p. 45) notes
that ‘it ranks only with the notion of class in this respect’. The multiplicity and variety of
applications of the term being so diverse renders the concept almost meaningless. The
term, however, can be said to have both descriptive and prescriptive connotations; it may
refer to social relationships that occur within geographically defined territories or may
refer to relationships which exist at a more abstract ideological level, which have been
variously termed ‘territorial community’, ‘community of interest’, ‘community of
attachment’, ‘sense of community’, etc.

The colonizers constructed community as a narrow anaemic one, quite in contrast to what
they encountered. The community is not a limited relationship based on self-interest, but
requires an unlimited commitment based on loyalty and trust. It involves obligations to
one another that transcend self-interest, while there is a deeper sense of self-fulfilment
through participation. Community is something we are; it is a property of our personhood;
it constitutes the shared life of a number of persons.

While the distinction earlier was between those meanings of community indicating actual
social groups and those portraying a particular quality of social relationships, the
emphasis in early 19th century was the recognition of community as being more
immediate than society. The concept of community was first portrayed as dichotomous by
Tönnies, but when it was realised - and as a re-reading of Tönnies would indicate - that
such clear-cut distinctions could not be made, communities were represented on continua,
such as rural-urban, pre-industrial and industrial, etc. Along these continua, communities
could be placed according to various features of their social structure, which raised,

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49 An overview of India’s religious pluralism and caste system and its implications for the economy is
provided by Harris-White (2003) and Bayly (1999)
50 The misinterpretation of Tönnies in translations has been highlighted by Boulet (1985)
however, a whole range of other problems as social scientists could come to no consensus about what features differentiated communities along these continua. The only features they agreed on was the significance of kinship, friendship and territory; that they exist and operate within boundaries which may be very strictly maintained or more fluid and open and would have clearly demarcated social membership which ensured a community spirit.

Community may be defined as a complex of overlapping social networks, characterised by a shared sense of interests and responsibilities, accompanied by feelings of togetherness. It represents a set of mutually beneficial social bonds and manifests itself in solidarity, trust and security. Historically, community has been strongly tied to place, based on the assumption that people of a specific geographic region tend to have shared experiences and values, etc.; however, community cannot be thought of solely in terms of place. There are many examples where the inhabitants of a particular geographical region are torn apart by different perceptions and motivations that grow out of the real-life inequalities they experience. Conversely, there are many examples of people from distant places developing community bonds. These have become more commonplace as high speed transportation and communication systems have proliferated. In thinking about these two types of communities (the spatial and non-spatial) we begin to uncover some of the factors that promote community and some that tear it apart. For example, when people live in proximity, they are likely to see each other regularly and initiate communication, i.e. they are likely to develop a familiarity, which represents a big part of creating the intangible, nebulous, but extremely valuable thing we call ‘community’. Of course, some types of familiarity or frequent social contact are not effective at creating community; indeed, there are types of contacts in which there is significant status differentiation between or among the participants, differences that can inhibit comfortable and frank interaction. In short, inequality is one factor that can go a long way toward undermining community.

When Henry Maine (1906), one of the first legal scholars of community in India, referred to the community as a collective based on kinship, he also made the distinction of community as existing independently of external structures, but he did not elaborate on the nature of the kinship nor on the kinds of internal structures as being distinct from the external structures. **Boundary**, thus, is an important element in this distinction, be it in abstract or symbolic terms, that is, what boundary means to people within the community
- that which is created through the process of interaction, or in concrete terms as in village, state and national boundaries.

As indicated earlier, the bases for any definition of a community are common identity markers; following an analysis of some ninety definitions of community by Hillery, it was concluded that ‘Community is a territorial area, a complex of institutions within the area and a sense of belonging’ (Bell & Newby 1971, p. 21). Sandel and Barber (as cited in Young, I.M. 1990) both take shared subjectivity as the meaning of community. Through political participation individuals confront one another and adjust their wants and desires, creating a ‘common ordering of individual needs and wants into a single vision of the future in which all can share’ (p. 230). Cox (1999), on the other hand, replaces commonness in the meaning of community with mutuality and reciprocity, the recognition of each individual of the individuality of all others. Benhabib (1986) refers to a vision of community of needs and solidarity, in contrast to the community of rights and entitlements envisaged by Liberalism.

Worsley (1987, pp. 112-5) has suggested three broad meanings for the term community, encompassing most of the meanings suggested so far:

- ‘community as locality’, which is closest to its geographical meaning of a ‘human settlement within a fixed and bounded local territory’;
- denotes a ‘network of interrelationships’, characterised by conflict as well as mutuality and reciprocity;
- a particular type of relationships, one that possesses certain qualities; this infers to the ‘community spirit’ or ‘community feeling’.

and it serves five purposes (Maser 1997, p. chapter 3):

Social participation – where and how people interact to foster the feelings of value and self worth
Mutual aid – services and support that are both mutual and reciprocal
Economic production, distribution and consumption – where the local community attempts to not only generate employment but also ensures the marketing of produce and also the import of essential foods where necessary
Socialization – educating people about cultural values, customs and traditions and acceptable norms
Social Control – the structures for maintaining these cultural values and norms.

In order to bring some clarity to the concept of community, Ife (1995) has suggested five related characteristics that communities possess and may be considered as different manifestations of the same phenomena:

Human scale – Where numbers are small so as to ensure readily accessible
interactions and a measure of ownership and control over structures, thereby allowing for empowerment

**Identity and Belonging** – Being accepted and valued within the group and thereby receiving membership and owing allegiance and loyalty to the group

**Obligations** – Members owe a certain obligation to the community by participating in at least some of its activities and help to maintain the community structure

**Gemeinschaft** – The relationships implied by the community enabling people to interact in a greater variety of roles that are less differentiated and contractual and which will encourage interactions with others as ‘whole people’ rather than as limited and defined roles and categories

**Culture** – It enables the production and expression of a local community-based culture, which has characteristics unique to that community and which encourages diversity and broad-based participation.

Community is formed by the meanings people give to it, which are symbolic and may therefore imply different meanings to different people. People’s experience and understanding of their community, therefore, depend on their understanding of this symbolism. As community is the place where people acquire their greatest experiences of social life outside their homes, Geertz (1973, p. 5) stated that ‘...man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.....’, constituting “culture”, whose analysis is ‘......not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning’. One can infer from this that “culture” is a process that people create and recreate through social interaction, which allows for people to perceive meaning in or attach meaning to social behaviour. As actors in a community, we attempt to understand behaviour and make, act upon and attach meanings to interpretations of that behaviour. However one views the term community, the ‘warmly persuasive word’ as Williams (1976, p. 66) describes it, and which can be applied to ‘an existing set of relationships or an alternative set of relationships’, its perhaps most important aspect is that ‘it seems never to be used unfavourably’. The comforting nostalgia the term community hints at is responsible not only for its continued usage, but the inspiration toward utopia it promotes may cause the term to be misused, even if unconsciously.

That community was a ‘non-concept’ and that it would make greater sense to think in terms of ‘local social systems’ and study those instead was voiced by Stacey (1969) in response to ‘community studies’ as a method. The term community no longer refers to a particular social structure, as it no longer is seen to be self-contained and, as is obvious from its various interpretations, is not ‘the same everywhere’. An important component of people’s perception of the ‘community’ has to do with where they see the proper balance between their ‘private’ lives and their ‘public’ commitments. Technological and
Communication advances have ensured greater personal mobility leading to more dispersed communities sometimes at the cost of local ones (Willmott 1989). National and global considerations are becoming more important to social scientists. On the other hand, where community is unrecognised and unquestioned, it leaves unanswered the questions raised by those subjugated and marginalised by patriarchy, racialism and other forms of difference (Young, I.M. 1990).

When Young (1990, p. 227) states that ‘the ideal of community denies and represses social difference, the fact that the polity cannot be thought of as a unity in which all participants share a common experience and common values’, there is, on the one hand, an implicit presumption that communities encompassing difference are non-existent and, on the other, a recognition of the supremacy of the meta-narratives which have led to the maintenance of such a position. Appadurai (1988, p. 42), in arguing against this very homogenising tendency, states that ‘India has come to be signified as a hierarchical society and as a result, forms of social organisation and thinking which are not hierarchical have tended to be ignored or considered uncharacteristic of that area’. Social scientists have articulated time and again the imposition of a desire to form clear-cut categories in order to create an orderly field of study, which has led to the underplaying of this very social diversity.

Liberal communitarians have emphasised that each individual has the same rights to keep others out. Their emphasis, on the one hand, has been on the greater choices available to individuals as consumers, voters, etc., while, on the other hand, denigrating the community as a social contract, something that individuals construct because it suits their self interest. It is my contention that community needs to be rescued from these various conflicting viewpoints. Community, therefore, not only indicates having things in common but also has dimensions in which people differentiate themselves in important ways from others and community thus implies simultaneously both similarity and difference. It is a usage that is relational and often is used to emphasise the distinction of one community from the other.

Ife (1995, p. 33) has come to the conclusion that ‘community is essentially a subjective experience which defies objective definition’. The context, concept and meaning of community should be left for people to discern and should aim toward realisation of the characteristics of a community. In suggesting a more comprehensive and integrated notion
of community, he notes, however, that ecological and social justice perspectives are essential as they not only indicate a kind of society that will be *viable* in the long term – a society based on holism, sustainability, diversity and equilibrium - but also one that provides a vision of what is *socially desirable* – one that is based on equity, empowerment, the overcoming of structural disadvantage, freedom to define needs and have them met, the definition and guaranteeing of rights and so on.

**Community and Culture**

Critiques of liberalism frequently invoke a conception of community as an alternative to the individualism and abstract formalism they attribute to liberalism. For them, the ideal of community evokes the absence of the self-interested competitiveness of modern society. Existing in community with others entails more than merely respecting their rights; it entails attending to and sharing in the particularity of their needs and interests, all this indicating that the role of culture in community development has been characterised by a number of competing approaches. These include the use of cultural change as a strategy to diffuse Western, ‘modernizing’ attitudes and values within less economically developed countries, other more subtle but nonetheless top-down approaches, such as programmes based on communities’ ‘felt’ needs (Braden & Mayo 1999), and, finally, Freirean-based approaches that make the connection between knowledge, power and culture in enabling more authentic community empowerment and development (Weiler 1991). The latter approach has a more critical focus on cultural values as the facilitators of or constraints on development and is the approach adopted by many community development writers (Eade 1997; Sen, A. 2000). This literature has given recognition to the way in which ethnicity, gender and other cultural identities shape people’s capacity to change their lives.

Young (1990) characterises a social group as the relational outcome of interactions, meanings and affinities according to which people identify themselves. The self is indeed a product of social relations in profound and often contradictory ways, she asserts. A person’s social group identities, moreover, are in some meaningful sense shared with others of the group. Most often terms such as individualism and community are defined as dichotomies; in both instances there is a denial of difference and a desire to bring multiplicity and heterogeneity into unity, sometimes in opposing ways. While
communitarians urge to see persons in unity with one another in a shared whole, very seldom does the concept of culture come into this configuration.

The word culture has many meanings. Schech and Haggis (2000) separate out several ways the word is used in western thought, historically and today and which have an impact on development thinking: culture as cultivation of mind, arts, civilisation; culture as ways of life, meanings and values and culture as ways of life structured by representations and power. In the first instance, culture has been understood in a hierarchical way as cultivation of mind, arts and civilisation, with only the elites seen as truly cultured. Therefore, the colonial civilising mission is ever prominent, where development is seen as a one-way learning process, with developing countries learning from and developing according to particular western models, such as ideas of free market economics and good governance, or appropriate gender relations.

In the second instance, as Said (1978, p. 332) points out ‘the development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another differing and competing alter ego’. Western cultures were seen as modern and cosmopolitan and taken for granted as norms, whilst the cultures of ‘others’ were seen as exotic and exciting and interpreted as ‘primitive’ in contrast with ‘civilised’ European culture.

A hierarchy is evident in both the above understandings of culture; both reinforce the idea of differences between the west and other regions as being a gulf of belief systems, lifestyles and also time, with people being seen as having life-styles of different times, ‘modern’ or ‘primitive’. Essentially, this means that people’s capacities are shaped by power relations; by the power and privilege that cultural systems may confer on some and by denying the rights and access to resources of others. The ‘underdevelopment’ of some nations and ethnic communities is being increasingly attributed to issues of culture and power by many development theorists (Harrison, L. et al. 2000; Schech & Haggis 2000).

The above conceptions of culture have been challenged by new understandings coming out of recent anthropology and cultural studies, taking culture to be ways of life of everyone, not just of the elites, or of third-world societies. Here, culture is understood as formed by internal and external influences (Nyamnjoh 2001), structured by power and influenced by representations. Corin (1994) refers to culture as the web or collective matrix of influences that shapes the lives of groups and individuals, including social
institutions, systems of norms, beliefs, values and world view. In summary, culture can be considered as ‘ways of life structured by power and representation’ (Jolly 2002, p. 6). Culture can, therefore, be articulated as dynamic and multifaceted, its elements including individual agency, variation and contested meaning (Rodseth 2001).

Bhabha (1994) points out that the move away from the singularities of ‘class’ or ‘gender’ as primary conceptual and organisational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions - of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation - that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. What is theoretically innovative and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood - singular or communal - that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. It is in the emergence of the interstices - the overlap and displacement of domains of difference - that the inter-subjective and collective experiences of nation-ness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. How are subjects formed ‘in-between’, or in excess of, the sum of the parts of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)? How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable?

In communities, the borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual; they may confound our definitions of tradition and modernity; realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public, high and low; and challenge normative expectations of development and progress (Bhabha 1994). Such analysis and the appreciation of the subtle and often changing nature of the power-culture dynamics from one context to another, provide a useful basis for cultural evaluation within the broader context of community development. As suggested by Williams (2004), the emphasis in critical postmodernism on the significance of exposure to discourse and participation in social practices that enable more empowered modes of subjectivities and cultural identities also has value in conceptualising ways forward in terms of cultural
change; people’s self-perception and ability to exercise power are influenced by exposure to such new social practices. Communities will benefit by reconceptualising their cultural beliefs and practices as important tools for cultural adaptation, rather than fixed patterns that simply determine the way things are.

**Community and Caste**

In the Indian context, one cannot comprehend community without an understanding of castes; Dumont (1980), in his single most influential contribution, *Homo Hierarchicus*, provides the underlying principles of Comparative Sociology through four propositions, without which it would be difficult to understand caste:

(a) Traditional society is holistic: modern society is individualistic.
(b) Because we (moderns) are individualistic, we always perceive hierarchy in terms of inequality: traditional society perceives hierarchy in terms of holism.
(c) ‘The principle of hierarchy is the attribution of a rank to each element in relation to the whole’ (p. 91) – this is what ‘holism’ means. And
(d) in order to understand traditional society, we must transcend our individualistic ideology and embrace the holistic vision.

He further goes on to argue that in the modern West, inequality is generally perceived as ‘exploitation’ or ‘discrimination’ or ‘segregation’: it is unjust, morally indefensible. This perceived injustice provides the West with its primary motivation to explain inequality wherever one finds it. He adds that any evaluation of caste divisions as iniquitous is inappropriate – because it introduces a concept of individualism which is foreign to the traditional Indian worldview. In conclusion, he states that the orientation of the caste ideology is to the whole, not to the individual and we cannot imperialistically impose our values on theirs.

According to Dumont (1980, p. 20) the holistic character of traditional societies is manifest in values because ‘a certain consensus of values, a certain hierarchy of ideas, things and people is indispensable to social life’. Holism and hierarchy are thus defined in terms of each other: ‘so we shall define hierarchy as the principle by which the elements of whole are ranked in relation to the whole, it being understood that in a majority of societies it is religion which provides the view of the whole and that the ranking will thus be religious in nature’ (p 66). In other words, in order to understand any particular traditional society, one must understand its system of values in the holistic fashion that

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51 Dumont makes no distinction between comparative sociology and anthropology throughout his text.
this system is conceived of by the people themselves. Dumont is not saying that traditional societies are holistic or that Western society is individualistic, instead emphasising that the two types of societies differ in their ultimate values. In the final analysis, traditional ideology places the highest moral value on the idea of society whereas modern ideology places the highest moral value on the idea of the individual.

Madan (1989, pp. 364-5) states that

‘castes and families are the building blocks of Hindu society. Membership of a caste is by birth...castes reproduce themselves through endogamy, that is, marriage within a defined group. Caste occupations are usually hereditary, particularly among artisan and service ‘jatis’. Each caste stands below, above or on par with others in a system of social ranking. While the top and bottom rungs of the social ladder are fairly well defined and occupied by the Brahmin and Shudra castes, there is much competition for the middle positions. According to traditional caste ideology, which is obviously the brainchild of Brahmins, the key to the rank order lies in the notion of ritual purity.’

Studies have indicated that this theory is both inadequate and misleading and yet has been resistant to attempts to modify it. The debate about the nature of caste has generally led to division between two main sets of protagonists whose only shared conviction is that members of the opposing camp are utterly misguided. Respectively, the two groups endorse a materialist and an idealist conception of history. According to the materialist interpretation, caste is simply a rationalisation and obfuscation of more basic inequalities. High castes, it is noted, are generally wealthier than low castes; therefore, the idiom of purity and impurity through which caste differences are expressed must be ‘simply’ a means of legitimating and obscuring the ‘true’ nature of social divisions. According to the idealist explanation, caste is a cultural construct, the product of religious ideas: castes are higher or lower in relation to religiously conceived notions of purity and impurity. As per this view, material considerations are largely irrelevant, because caste is essentially an ideological framework for explaining universal problems of social order.

With further concepts such as ‘varnas’ and ‘jatis’, to set out with the idea that castes are, in general, bounded groups with a fixed membership, is to embark on a path of endless frustration from which many students of Hinduism have never escaped. Sometimes the boundaries of castes are relatively unambiguous; sometimes they are extremely fuzzy. Sometimes it is relatively straightforward to say who belongs to a caste and who does not;

52 A bibliography of the main protagonists in this debate can be found in Krause (1988, p. 31).
sometimes it is impossible. One must bear in mind, however, that the conventions of castes, sub-castes and jati are too well established to be wished away; for hundreds of millions of people, these concepts are the primary means by which they identify themselves and others (Quigley 1993).

The British attempted to reduce the complexity of Indian society by slotting all groups into a neat series of caste-ordered pigeonholes:

> Attempts were made in the first census of 1871-2 to collect information on caste. The principle of organization was to try to place castes (jatis) in the four varnas or in categories of Outcastes and Aborigines…From the beginning of the census operations it was widely assumed that an all India system of classification of castes could be developed (Cohn 1987, p. 243).

One can see two mistakes in the colonial understanding of caste, however, which has persisted in some form or other till today; the first was the confusion with the varna system. There is no such thing as the caste system, only several political units, each of which is divided into different castes. The second mistake is the assumption that there is an unambiguous interpretation of the varna system to which the Sanskrit scholars have access; the varna system is a set of ideas developed to explain an early division of labour, but these ideas have always been interpreted in different and contradictory ways (Quigley 1993).

There is great agreement on the proposition that caste is inextricably linked to kinship; in the world of caste, virtually every aspect of behaviour is regulated by kin – not only major decisions such as marriage, occupation and place of residence, but everyday activities, such as what one eats and who with, or the forms of address one employs for different categories of people. Caste most often is ordered internally by the same principles which govern relations between castes. Most caste categories are frequently viewed as homogeneous from the outside but are in fact endlessly fragmented internally into sub-groups which are hierarchically ranked in much the same manner as ‘castes’ are. These groups are either united or divided according to whether they admit marriage alliances with each other (Parry 1979). Bayly (1999, p. 307) notes that

> ‘the idea of promoting allegiance among people of like caste has come to be invoked in public speech as a way of imputing backward social attitudes to others. Thus ‘we’ are the ones with the legitimate claim of solidarity, it is always ‘they’-one’s unworthy rivals – who are given to so-called ‘casteism’ or ‘casteist’ values and actions’.
In more recent debates, the persistence of caste is attributed to the pressures and insecurities of everyday life (Beteille 1996a). The complex calculations that contribute to marriage choices as well as decisions about food, dress and ritual observances, still provide many Indians with important challenges and opportunities through which they may negotiate standards of decorum and piety within the household or small-scale community. Bayly (1999, p. 322) contends that ‘the bonds of shared ‘community’ have been most ardently proclaimed in environments where agrarian resources are scarce, and where control of land and labour has proven contentious and unpredictable’.

**Community and Social Capital**

Increasingly, in recent years, it is asserted that the quantity, quality and persistence of social interactions among neighbours, friends and members of groups and associations, generate *social capital* and the ability to work together for a common good and that this is especially important for the poor. It consists of all the varied networks that people create and use to communicate, set goals, mobilise resources and coordinate actions. No matter the controversy surrounding the concept of social capital, Collier (1998) concludes that social capital can be used by the poor as a substitute for human and physical capital while Narayan and Pritchett (1999) emphasize that social capital can have a positive impact on the well being and prosperity of an entire community and not just on the households with a lot of social capital. Kolby (2000) provides six reasons as to why social capital is a ‘good thing’: it allows citizens to resolve collective problems more easily; it increases trust and reciprocity and makes social transactions less expensive; it widens our awareness of the many ways in which our fates are linked; people become more tolerant, less cynical, and more empathetic to the misfortunes of others; people whose lives are rich in social capital are healthier and happier, they are better able to cope with trauma and they fight illness more successfully; it is second only to poverty in its effect on children’s lives. Putnam (2000, p. 297) writes: ‘while poverty is an especially potent force in increasing youth fertility, mortality, and idleness, community engagement has precisely the opposite effect’ and social connections affect one’s life chances. Social ties can influence who gets a job, a bonus, a promotion and other job benefits.

Social capital can be defined along a continuum – the narrowest view holds social capital to be the social skills of individuals – one’s propensity for cooperative behaviour, conflict resolution, tolerance and the like (Glaeser et al. 2000). A meso-view associates social
capital with families and local community associations and the underlying norms (trust, reciprocity) that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. This view highlights the positive aspects of social capital for members of these associations but remains largely silent on the possibility that social capital may not impart benefits to society at large and that group membership itself may entail significant costs. Another meso-view proposed, therefore, is that group membership can have both positive and negative effects (Coleman 1990; Burt 1992; Portes 1998). This approach broadens the concept of social capital to include associations in which relationships among members may be hierarchical and power sharing unequal. A macro-view of social capital focuses on the social and political environment that shapes social structures and enables norms to develop; this environment includes formalised institutional relationships and structures, such as government, political regime, rule of law, the court system and civil and political liberties (North 1990; Fukuyama 1995). The micro-, meso- and macro-views of social capital can co-exist and have the potential to complement one another.

Social capital increases with use, making it a particularly worthwhile investment; communities do not exist in a vacuum. A country’s political environment, cultural factors and, increasingly, the global economic environment can make it easier for social capital to flourish or fade at the community level. Social capital offers many benefits to communities; relationships with kin, neighbours and friends are an important safety net and are crucial to survival when formal safety nets are absent or inadequate. Trust among community members and their ability to work together for the public good can reduce problems by enforcing shared values and norms of behaviour; it can increase business opportunities by providing informal access to credit and reducing transaction costs; and improve the quality of education and the accessibility of health services.

High levels of participation in various community activities help to solve collective problems and generate further social capital in various ways: frequent interaction cultivates norms of reciprocity through which actors become more willing to assist one another; improved coordination and communication facilitate information sharing that increases mutual trust; and successful cooperation encourages future collaborative efforts in new areas.

One must, of course, be careful not to fall into the trap of thinking that all of the consequences of high levels of social capital are positive; Putnam (2000, p. 21) points out
that ‘networks and the associated norms of reciprocity are generally good for those inside the network, but the external effects of social capital are by no means always positive’. In order to address this drawback, Putnam (2000) further distinguishes between bonding social capital and bridging social capital, the former referring to in-group ties, which may have some positive benefits for the members but frequently being exclusionary and divisive. Bridging social capital refers to networks that create or promote ties among varied individuals and groups; this goes a long way in breaking down the estrangement and conflict that may exist among people and it helps promote trust and reciprocity.

Similarly, whilst it appears that the mechanisms by which social capital operates are well understood, there is less consensus as to whether it qualifies as ‘capital’. Some argue that networks are built for reasons other than their economic value to participants (Arrow 2000). They may serve perverse rather than productive purposes (Dreze & Sen 1995; Levy 1996; Portes & Landolt 1996; The PROBE Team 1999). The economistic explanation of social capital in relation to community, in that social capital is indeed both capital (in that it raises incomes) and social (in that household incomes depend on village, not just household social capital) (Narayan & Pritchett 1999), makes it reductionistic and diminishes the contours of community.

In addition, isolation has also led to a decline in trust; where religious institutions played a significant role in increased social engagement, this has declined significantly in the West. In India, however, one finds a complex pattern emerging of a middle-class increasingly adhering to fundamental values of Hinduism and an equally large following of the constitution that promotes secularism in the ‘western’ sense, resulting in an increase in social capital on the one hand and a wariness ‘to build bridges’ on the other. Of course, the expansion of formal work has also led to the decline of social capital, especially as it cuts into leisure time and the activities associated with it. Increased migration from rural to urban areas in India has also led to a decline in social capital in some senses; however, new forms of engagement are also emerging.

**Community Development**

The subject matter of Community Development is a difficult area as one encounters unexpected diversity at the local level; as well, Community Development has once too often been made synonymous with rural/agricultural development and most studies speak
of patterns and trends in rural/agrarian change. Another view expressed is that ‘community development and community participation are basically the same (but that) community development has gone out of fashion and been re-invented as community participation’ (Sheng 1990, p. 57). There is also a relative paucity in prescribed explanatory frameworks (Booth 1994); more recent studies, however, appear to span across the formerly first, second and third worlds and also seem to avoid falling into the trap of ‘false opposites’ or ‘one way determinism’ and instead study both the specificities of particular locales and the broader forces that interact and impact upon and are in turn shaped by them.

Weber (1930) famously argued that non-European countries developed slowly because their cultural inheritance did not include the Protestant work ethic of northern European countries. Sinha and Kao (1988) criticise this ethnocentric view and argue that other western concepts, such as individualism and achievement motivation, support it. The historical interpretation of community development located it within the paradigm of western democratic theory and economic development; it was considered that there was a need for community development because of the failure of conventional economic development and that the widespread poverty among populations necessitated it. The idea that ordinary citizens have the right to be involved in decision-making had taken root. Alternative approaches were also sought within the dependency theory. Two distinct approaches soon became evident: community development and community involvement through conscientisation (Freire 1972). According to de Kadt (1982, p. 574), the basis of conscientisation was the ‘existence of socio economic inequalities, the generation of these by the economic system and their underpinning by the State…. the poor and the exploited needed to be helped to become conscious of their situation.’ Soon conscientisation came to be replaced by the term empowerment, which is defined as representing ‘the organised efforts of disempowered groups to increase control over resources and regulative institutions’ (Pearse & Stiefel 1979, p. 8; Stiefel & Wolfe 1994, p. 5).

It can be seen that community development emerged as a response to the perception of imbalance between the public commitments and private lives of people, which was further enhanced by the feeling that people had of losing control over their lives and the decisions surrounding it, especially those related to the conditions that assured them their livelihoods. Community Development has been present in various guises for aeons and its
rise and progress can be attributed to the gradual rise of Empires and Nation-States, Mercantilism and Colonialism, the Industrial Revolution and Capitalism as the dominant mode of socio-economic organisation.

In the 50s, Community Development/Participation was envisaged by the UN to be a ‘process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation’ (quoted in Moser, C.O.N. 1989, p. 81). Firstly, it collapsed categories and was very large in scope and, therefore, was inappropriate to the needs of the communities. Further, the various processes of colonialism, globalisation and capitalism shaped a process of centralisation/ decentralisation, intensification/ decline and differentiation/ universalisation of control by politically and economically powerful forces over the masses, especially those who had lost the basis of their subsistence and the means to achieve it.

The 1970’s saw the stance of putting ‘people first’, pioneered by, amongst others, Robert Chambers; but the outside interveners or change agents always played a major role. Keeping in line with the thinking of that time, poverty or poor people were targeted and participation, which originated with the grassroots movement, had by now become a powerful tool in the hands of development agencies and policy makers.

The need for alternative ways of doing things has at present become an imperative and development at the local community level has generated a great deal of interest - again. Increasingly, Community Development is viewed as a set of practices, strategies, ideologies, mediating between the phenomena of globalisation and localisation by the various stakeholders involved in the process. On the one hand, local communities are attempting, through organising themselves, to defend their livelihoods and improve their conditions of living, often against forces that they perceive as threatening to them. On the other hand, various other players such as governments, non-government actors and international agencies have initiated processes and demarcated funds and personnel to projects, to organise local populations towards pursuing activities which would enhance the satisfaction of their needs.

The literature in Community Development suggests that, initially, it was sponsored by governments. It has experienced recurring quests for developing an ‘own’ identity, seeking definitions that distinguish Community Development from other forms of
deliberate change efforts. Still more recently, in line with the interest of the international community, expressed through the support of the United Nations and its affiliate organisations, it has confirmed its international flavour with seemingly universal applications, especially in the context of attempts to modernise ‘underdeveloped’ nations through a so-called War against Poverty, to be launched by Governments. Developing countries thus joined the bandwagon of progress even if some amount of self-criticism is evident.

Gradually, however, the role of the socio-political context and the organisational sponsor⁵³ in shaping the distinctive attributes of Community Development as a form of professionally directed planned change and what constitutes practice dilemmas (previously conspicuous in their absence), have come to the fore. Various relationships in this formula have been neglected; the relationship between the professionalism or lack thereof of change agents; between government bureaucracies and the local communities; and, in the present context of globalisation, the increasing relationship between ideologies in practice and those that are imposed upon local contexts; they all have become bones of contention. Additionally, the inherent tensions between local and global interests are not really conducive to a harmonious process and, in most cases, there will be a mixture of the two orientations, making it rather difficult to identify and distinguish between those elements which are liberating for the local people and those which potentially lead to even higher degrees of dependency. More recently still, the growing focus on macro-economic issues has tended to exclude concern for social issues and disempowered local communities (Friedmann 1992).

There are presently increasing numbers of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in a field previously dominated by government sponsored programs, which is an indication of the change in policies of governments that have withdrawn welfare programs or changed priorities or simply because the government-sponsored programs have failed (Karunaratne 1976). NGOs also have various priorities: some have emphasised developmental strategies rather than the ‘traditional’ ‘charity’ and ‘welfare’ activities; they are, hence, sometimes referred to as second generation NGOs. A third generation of NGOs have adopted a more catalytic role, attempting to achieve reforms for people-centred, sustainable local development, at the national and regional levels. A fourth generation of

⁵³ Jim Ife’s (2001; 2006) work portrays a more comprehensive and integrated approach to community development.
NGOs align themselves with social movements, again emphasising a people-centred development vision, such as the women’s movement, the Human Rights movement or the environmental movement (Korten 1987).

It is also propounded that Community Development exists because it has a value-based commitment to working with the excluded of society, those people who are too poor, too alienated to be confident about getting involved in community activities, activities that challenge and transform the status quo and do so in a way that is political and confrontational (Henderson 1997). Community Development even today, however, generates a great mystique because of the range of issues it deals with and the various approaches it adopts to achieve them. It has been variously conceived as a process, method, program, movement, philosophy or ideology and even a profession, but often it has addressed itself to the capitalist industrial models and government-initiated welfare programs that are centralised, hierarchical and which follow a pattern of top-down and institutionalised decision-making.

Central to this dialogue are some concepts which need clarification; Onyx and Benton (1995, p. 50) state that ‘the concept of empowerment is located within the discourse of community development, connected to concepts of self help, participation, networking and equity. Empowerment is the taking on of power, at both the individual and social levels’. McArdle (1989, p. 47) defines it as ‘the development and utilization of a set of ongoing structures which allow the community to meet its own needs’, a particularly handy definition, as it suggests that we can actually measure the extent of a person’s disempowerment.

Some definitions

I will attempt to impose a somewhat historical logic to this brief examination of definitions of Community Development. According to the Round Table Inter-American Development Bank Report on Community Development: Theory and Practice (1966, p. 2) ‘Community Development is actually a process that acts upon marginal low-income populations, the members of a subsistence economy or the inhabitants of a backward area. Its goals are social, economic and financial. Social goals include political, educational and administrative goals, health and services in general, etc. The economic and financial goals include raising the income level and basic capital formation in its various forms. Results sought are both tangible and intangible. As a technique, it is an instrument for integrating marginal populations
into an economy and consists in achieving their full participation in the national processes of production, distribution and consumption’.

Community Development implies the conscious acceleration of economic, technological and social change or development and projects of local significance initiated and carried out by local people (Sanders 1968). Communities - as units of action along with outside assistance - and organised local self-determination and effort, attempt to achieve goals, material and non-material. It was thought that development was to be achieved in stages by moving toward modernisation, through mobilising sizable popular participation. Although community programs were non-coercive, they operated within certain social controls, such as pressures by neighbours, or positive incentives and recognition.

In much earlier days, Dunham (1963, p. 142) categorised Community Development as ‘organising people’s efforts toward improving conditions of community life and the capacity for community integration and self-direction’. It consists ordinarily of four basic elements: a planned program, encouragement of self-help, technical assistance including personnel equipment and supplies and integrating various specialities for the help of the community.

The Encyclopaedia of Social Work in India (Government of India 1987) defines Community Organisation in terms of Lurie’s definition of 1959 as

(a) referring to a structure or stage of development as in the ‘organised’ and ‘unorganised’ community;

(b) a field of practice such as ‘planning social service services’, ‘federal fund raising’, ‘national service agencies and

(c) as a method, ‘a way of working on an orderly conscious basis to affect defined and desired objectives and goals’.

Community organising means bringing people together to address shared problems and to increase their say about their decisions that affect their lives. Community development occurs when people form their own organisations to provide a long-term capacity for problem solving (Rubin & Rubin 1992); it helps people overcome the feeling that they face problems alone or that they are to blame for their problems and it combats the sense of helplessness people feel in dealing with the problems that confront them.

The basic functions of the Community Development process, as suggested by Sanders (1960) in another earlier circumscription, is to generate initiative and self help, to draw in
an increasing number of participants from the community and to pass from minimum to maximum cooperation between community residents. As Tinker (1963, p. 95) puts it, ‘the problem is one of making people want what they need and do what they want’. Based on liberal thought and individualism, this view was imposed on communities that believed in mutuality and reciprocity; it is fair to say that Community Development has come a long way even in the developed world…

**Historical Overview with special focus on developing countries**

The expression, Community Development, based on the UN experience, has come into international use to designate the processes through which the efforts of a people are added to those of their government to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate them into the life of the country and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. This complex of processes depends on the operation of two essential factors: participation of the people themselves in the efforts made to improve their living standards, with utmost reliance on their own initiative, and the provision of technical and other services in such a way as to encourage aided self-help and enhance its effectiveness. This definition also proposes two important goals – improvement and integration and defining the cut-off for development action as the point at which the community has succeeded in establishing the preconditions or prerequisites ensuring its full contribution to national progress in the future.

The culture of Community Development – the concept, the philosophy and the technique – taken over ready-made from America and Britain (especially also from colonial Britain), did not germinate automatically in the developing nations. In fact, difficulties had arisen around these imported slogans and clichés, so religiously repeated without either conviction or understanding. Skills and techniques perfected by European countries were ‘made available’ to the ‘underdeveloped’ countries without change. They were further tested and retested and validated through application and would provide the bases for the growth and development of ‘backward’ countries. Colonial governments instigated improvement and welfare programs designed to modernise the economy of their dependent peoples and contemporary forms of education, health, transportation, credit, organisation and discipline were made available with a view to launching ‘the natives’ upon the adventure of self-development. However, such programs failed as the colonies
took no interest in the proposed innovations and preferred to continue their marginal existence based on traditional knowledge and patterns of living.

The colonial experience demonstrated the need for ensuring active participation by the public in all improvement programs. The resistance shown by the indigenous populations to improvement programs implemented by colonial policy revealed the existence of a dual stratification directly resulting from colonial domination. Within the same country, two societies based on different principles and practices existed side by side:

- *The modern industrial, culturally complex society, represented by the metropolitan foreign population and their descendants, and those whom they trained to be ‘Indian in blood and British in thinking’, constituted the governing elite*
- *The traditional or archaic society, represented by the common Indians, formed the subordinate masses.*

The two societies were separated by a social and cultural gap so great that the efforts to bridge it entailed a high cost which the metropolis was never willing to pay.

Foster (1962, pp. 183-4) notes that the pre-conditions which led to the philosophy and formulation of the concept of Community Development in America and Britain are not correspondingly available in the newly developing countries. He further states (p 185) that ‘felt needs’ usually turn out to be rather standard programs in environmental sanitation, agricultural extension etc; these are needs more often recognised from above by the national planners and attributed to the rural areas under development programs; as such, they are not necessarily the felt needs of the concerned rural people.

These statements raise the crucial question (Foster 1962, pp. 184-5) regarding necessary and sufficient prerequisites of Community Development, which are –supposedly - lacking in the developing countries. They may be – summarily - put as follows: leadership patterns are poorly developed; village government is truncated and only minor decision making is legally provided for; communities have little power to levy taxes, whereby they are wholly dependent on the government grants-in-aid for all major and even minor works of development; there is too little of a tradition of cooperation and too much of mutual suspicion of being cheated and exploited; the basic technical facilities are poorly developed and at times just lacking; and, finally, as part of a national economy which may be termed (Government of India, 1960-62) a ‘stationary state of disequilibrium’, there is
too little to fall back on, since there is too much of unutilised and under utilized excess capacity. The hegemonic discourse of the ‘white developer’ is certainly evident here!

There may be social and cultural structures that may act as barriers to change; this is evident when we examine terms like self-help, people’s participation and felt needs in the context of India. In the traditional value scheme, almost ‘welfarist’ in orientation, those who had surpluses over consumer and productive outlays donated for manifold purposes. Benefits of these endowments were measured in terms of their economic productivity and discounted the role they played in the community and the social value they bore. During the British rule, the traditional mode of welfare donation was definitely strained and modified, as there was an element of compulsion to donate for welfare works, such as hospitals and schools that did not receive official recognition or sanction. Even in this modernised form, however, parochialism reappeared, in so far as many such gifts were endowed for exclusive utility and benefit of one’s caste members. All such cases were almost excluded from government purview for financial or other consideration.

In India, cooperative work patterns are based on reciprocity and redistribution, integrationist principles that appear, deceptively, to be favourable elements in the formulation of modern cooperative methods, but which actually run counter to the basic framework of modern capitalism. The existence of a dual structure in the colonial countries led the economic planners to follow the line of least resistance, that is, they concerned themselves with the growth of the modern sector of society, leaving the traditional or archaic sector to work out its own salvation. Planners dealt with familiar problems, ignored pre-industrial sectors, widening the gap between the modern and archaic sectors and failing to achieve harmonious national growth that could have been the basis for sustained development.

It was only after independence that the government has taken initiatives to mobilise local resources to promote the welfare of the rural people. Felt needs of communities were spelt out, keeping the broader plan objectives in view; government officials would usually suggest to the community leaders as to what items could elicit grants-in-aid from the Community Development block allocations, matched against community contribution from individual sources, or through a collective levy by the panchayat executive. This was how it was envisaged that a community would learn self-help.
The Community Development Program in India was a remedial measure to smoothen and rectify the structural discordance in the rural social system and gear it to the overall process of modernisation, involving both the rural and the expanding urban sector. For this purpose it was necessary to suitably adapt organisational aspects (Firth 1961, pp. 35-6) of social relations and action which concern concrete activity and are capable of variation. Social organisation implies a process of planned action arranged in sequences and in conformity with social ends that need not be identical for all participants concerned but which, in the case of discordance, can still produce a unified consensus and expression. Thus, the allocations of societal resources and the relative contributions of individuals come together in terms of reciprocal decisions and choices, leading towards effective and efficient achievement of shared goals.

The Indian development bureaucracy found the influential landed elite a good ally in promoting their phased programs; it is thus that the ‘egalitarian’ Community Development programs really contribute to a further elevation of the few who are already in an affluent and privileged position. The machinery of Community Development needs to grasp the structural realities of rural community organisation in order to address the issues of diversities that exist in the community. As well, the financial and technical resources mobilised by the Government through an only partly efficient bureaucratic cadre were not sufficient to meet the needs of the rural community. Full use of both human and material resources was, therefore, necessary as were resources of voluntary associations. These goals could be attained only through the willing and involved participation of the people as one of the primary requisites in Community Development is the correspondence between the planned program and the community’s basic needs. No measure howsoever desirable could be put through, so long as it remained unwanted by the people.

**Evolution in Approaches and Issues**

From the 30s to the 50s, the emphasis in community work was on the need for community education and this was the basis for the establishment of schools by the Christian missionaries in the colonised countries. The newly emerging independent countries were an arena to experiment in and with; the aim of school education was to prepare young people for life outside their local communities, which at no time considered the possibility of a sustainable community that provided education for a whole way of life. It was due to
this that people’s indigenous ways of education were undermined\textsuperscript{54}, which, coupled with greater exposure, created greater needs; in turn, in order to fulfil the latter, traditional community education became less and less relevant. That there could be a co-existence of the two was never seen as a possibility. So there was first a need to draw the ‘\textit{rural community}’ into the scope of development and, subsequently, women who were previously marginalised or entirely ignored. The programs introduced for women in community development, while seemingly integrating them, in reality were only responsible for commodifying them and their labour and leading to their ‘housewifization’ as Mies and her colleagues (1986; 1988; 1993) name this phenomenon.

The UN experience of Community Development characterised \textit{people} as its focal point, whereas economic development, which was the primary focus in development, posited as its primary objective increasing the outputs of goods and services. This objective translated itself in planning not only as enlisting local cooperation in the implementation of national plans, but also the involvement of the community in planning processes itself, thereby assuring continuity of two-way communication for planning at all levels. This, however, contrasted with the notions of \textit{Regional Planning}, where \textit{community} could not be (and was not) considered as a viable unit for economic development. Experts were concerned, therefore, with institution building and ways and means of strengthening especially local institutions in order to provide continuity and stability to local effort. The problem is complicated by political factors, traditional ideas, insufficient delegation of power, lack of finances and other elements, which cannot be controlled or modified without reference to the entire public administration system of the country. Land Reforms were the first area of intervention and Community Development was thought to be a useful tool in educating peasants as to their rights under law. Once implemented, Community Development Programs could be instrumental in providing the supporting

\textsuperscript{54} I make this assertion while responding to an example cited by Batten (1957, p. 58), ‘\textit{people will plant a new crop once they are sure that it will give them profit, and they will adopt a new tool, such as the plough, if it will ease their work. They will accept such changes because they benefit from them almost immediately. It is much harder to get them to contour ridge or manure their land, because changes like these mean work without immediate reward. Similarly, it is easier to have their cattle inoculated against disease than to limit the size of their herds to prevent the overgrazing and erosion of their pastures. Yet in the long run they must maintain the fertility of their land in order to live. This and other examples suggest that there is a real need for community education which will help people to consider the future effects as well as the immediate benefits of the changes they are making’}. What Batten failed to note, however, is that the notion of profit itself was a thrust of the capitalist endeavour of the Western world and that many rural people recognised the delicate balance in the environment and had developed time-tested knowledge that often followed patterns of rotation of crops, sometimes substituting high yielding varieties for lesser yielding varieties, used organic green manure and at times leaving the lands to lie fallow for a season to regenerate, etc.
services needed for the development of land and in the introduction of new farming techniques and organisational arrangements to ensure the full benefit of land reform. Developing human resources to effect positive change became an imperative.

New concepts and approaches emerged which were of significance and were influenced by the development discourse of the time: community felt needs, working at the pace of the people (proper motivation and education can enhance the pace), and reviewing the relationship between the role of the people and that of the government. Community Development thus became an amalgam of two separate and generally complementary strategies; one has found expression in the self-help philosophy of realising community goals and the second strategy has laid emphasis on securing outside public and private resources to assist the community economically and socially.

In the case of rural community development, the following areas were thought to be crucial:

- The pressing need to improve living conditions for the masses of peasants and villages that have not shared in the relative abundance that the 20th century has made possible and which is enjoyed by certain groups of society in all countries;
- The high rate of economic and social return on the resource inputs because of increased production and productivity.

In comparison with urban areas, poor living conditions in rural areas imply the lack of adequate housing, potable drinking water supply and sanitation facilities, schools, minimum medical assistance, electric light and other facilities, the main reason for which has been cited as migration to urban areas. This type of migration does not lead to economic development and should, therefore, be discouraged by means of affirmative programs of rural development, which should be part of a concerted national effort to transform rural areas. The economic and financial cost of certain features of Community Development programs is usually much lower than the value of the social improvements realised, making the participation of the community in a variety of work with labour, materials, land and money in accordance with their capability, imperative.

The emphasis on local community development is a more recent transition in the community development thought. ‘Local community development is a process of organization, facilitation and action that allows people to create a community in which they want to live through a conscious process of self determination’ (Maser 1997, p. 101). It is a mechanism through which people empower themselves, gain more control over
their own lives and resolve shared problems through mutual efforts and shared decision making processes. Kenny (1994, p. 3) defines community development work as assisting ‘people in the community to identify their needs and obtain resources, and collectively empower people to have more control over their lives’; its key themes are:

- The establishment of supportive communities based on developing and sharing resources, social interaction and participation, self-help and mutual support activities;
- Employ outreach methods to increase the participation of people in community activities and programs;
- To build structures that facilitate democratic participation in decision making;
- Committed to empowerment of ordinary people such that they have greater choices available to them in the future.

One must guard against reducing Community Development to a device to secure local compliance with the requirements of overall development, of loading the program with activities conducive to improving productivity without regard to the fundamental objective of human development – the danger, as the Economic and Social Council (UNDP 1993) pointed out, of seeing human beings ‘only as instruments of production, rather than as free entities for whose welfare and cultural advance the increased production was intended’.

In order to be effective Community Development must incorporate analytic and evaluative devices capable of increasing our understanding of the process and should train personnel at all levels. Ife (1995), therefore, bases his practice of community development on two principal foundations: the ecological perspective and the social justice perspective that are conceptually distinct.

**Principles of Community Development**

In order to analyse the community development programme in India, it is important to, firstly, outline the principles of community development practice. Here, I have drawn mainly on the work of Ife (1995) and Kenny (1994), the former taking an ecological and social justice perspective to the practice of Community Development. It deemed important that, in the practice of community development, the structures and processes should develop organically from the community itself, taking into account the diversities (cultural, social, economic and political factors) that exist in the local environment. Therefore, practice will differ from context to context and from one worker to the other and the achievement of the goals of Community Development requires a long and
sustained process of change and should mainly aim at increasing self-reliance and reducing dependency.

Ife (1995) outlines 22 principles of community development practice which are not independent and represent a coherent approach to practice; their order certainly does not indicate the priority accorded to each, but all are deemed critically important for a successful approach. I will go into some detail, as I will use these terms later to engage in some critical reflections about the empirical work I undertook in the Indian communities and which will be discussed in later chapters.

**i. Integrated Development**
A community development programme must take into account social, economic, political, cultural, environment and personal/spiritual development which are essential aspects of community life. The decision or not to focus on any one, depending on the strengths in the community, should be made consciously by the community itself, rather than any external agency.

**ii. Confronting Structural Disadvantage**
Community development programs must ensure that they do not reinforce forms of structural oppression (class/caste, gender, race/ethnicity, age, disability, etc.), but rather confront and counter them in ways that are appropriate and context-specific. Community workers should be aware of the subtle interplay of these structures of oppression and should also be critically aware of their own participation in them. Ife (1995, p. 180) states that community development should incorporate strategies specifically designed to overcome disadvantage, such as affirmative action, positive discrimination, equal opportunity, consciousness raising, education and so on.

**iii. Human Rights**
A commitment to fundamental human rights is an important principle. Human rights are integral to community development practice both as a protective measure and for their promotion, that is, any planned intervention should not contravene the human rights principles.

**iv. Sustainability**
Any community development programme should work within a sustainable framework in order not to further the existing unsustainable order. Sustainability requires a commitment to greater use of renewable resources and therefore has implications for local communities regarding use of land and other natural resources for livelihood, conservation, transport, etc. Sustainability also requires that the outputs into the environment be minimised, recycling should be considered the first option where possible. It is also important to help communities to accept the principle of ‘small is beautiful’ and to create structures, organisations, etc. that do not have to grow to survive.

v. Empowerment
Ife (1995, p. 182) defines empowerment as ‘providing people with the resources, opportunities, knowledge and skills to increase their capacity to determine their own future, and to participate in and affect the life of their community’, meaning that the barriers (structures of oppression) people experience in exercising power must be understood and overcome. Empowerment of the disadvantaged sections of society will help bring about a more socially just society, will strengthen the community and will enable community-based structures to emerge.

vi. The Personal and the Political
The link between the personal and the political will enable the individual needs, problems, aspirations, sufferings and achievements to be translated into effective community level action. The personal is political, the watch-cry of the feminist movement and one of its most important contributions, emphasises how the ‘private’ is an arena of oppression for women. There is an increased individualisation of social problems within the dominant paradigm, denying the link between the public and the private, rendering responses to problems conservative and ‘therapeutic’. There is a personal side to every political issue, such as unemployment, health insurance, etc. The human impact of political issues is often ignored as well; Community Development has the potential to highlight these links, a critical step in consciousness raising and empowerment at the individual level and transformation of the community.

vii. Community Ownership
There has to be community ownership (or widening of community ownership if it exists minimally) of material resources and of structures and processes (delivery of services for which decentralisation is critical). This can help support a community’s sense of identity,
can enhance participation and lead to more efficient use of resources. Increased community ownership is pitched against the ethic of private ownership and consumption, but inevitable when we are to have an ecological approach.

viii. Self-Reliance
The community should seek to utilise its own resources - financial, technical, natural and human - where possible rather than relying on external support, all carried by the principle of sustainability. The ‘welfare state’ way of thinking weakens community structures, which could cause issues, as so many doubt the viability of the latter.

ix. Independence from the State
Self-reliance necessarily means relative independence from the State; State-sponsored Community Development programmes are very common and not necessarily an appropriate direction, since they may weaken the basis of community. Community workers must, therefore, consider carefully before they apply for government funding or participate in government-sponsored programmes.

x. Immediate Goals and Ultimate Vision
There is always a tension in community development programs between immediate goals, such as setting up a self-help group and the ultimate vision of a better society. This distinction between pragmatism and idealism is often drawn amongst workers and is sometimes viewed to be in conflict; however, both elements are important and the challenge rests in linking one with the other in the pursuit of a sustainable goal of community development.

xi. Organic Development
Simple cause-and-effect relationships do not govern communities; they are more organic and undergo a complex and dynamic process of development. Communities have their own inherent capacity to develop and the particular attributes have to be valued and respected and its complex relationship with the environment understood.

xii. The Pace of Development
Because communities develop organically, they must determine the pace at which their development occurs; if it is ‘pushed’, the community will lose ownership of and commitment to the process. Community Development is a long-term and learning
process, which, in order to become sustainable, should not be hurried along by the worker providing direction by telling people what to do or by providing persuasive suggestions.

**xiii. External Expertise**
Historically, it has been proven that things don’t work when they are imposed from the outside (or above) and this was the very reasoning behind the Community Development approach, which, therefore, should itself not be imposed but should emerge from within the community, in a context-specific manner and sensitive to local culture, traditions and environment. There is no one right way of doing things, and an imposed structure or solution should, therefore, not be trusted. Local knowledge and experience can be compromised in the process.

**xiv. Community Building**
Community building involves strengthening the social interactions in the community, bringing people together and helping them to communicate with each other in a way that would lead to genuine dialogue, understanding and social action (Ife, 1995, p 191). Community building is often the consequence of some other activity and seldom is a primary goal. It is about encouraging people to work together, enhance structure that encourage interdependence, and seek ways in which people can contribute and be genuinely valued by others.

**xv. Process and Outcome**
A matter for discussion in Community Development work is whether it is the end or the means to achieving the end that matters most. Alinsky (1971) stresses the critical nature of the end and the reason for discussion of the means is merely for the purpose of achieving the desired end; all other matters of process are irrelevant. Means and ends, process and outcome can, however, seldom be separated and are both vitally important to community development; means can become ends in themselves and the ethical and moral issues of process become central.

**xvi. The Integrity of Process**
Since the process is the outcome in Community Development, issues of sustainability and social justice should be integral as they in themselves will help attain the long-term objectives. Conventional approaches and attitudes to process, such as ‘having the
adequate numbers’, ‘working behind people’s backs’ etc, should no longer be assumed as they will be counterproductive to achieving the long-term vision.

xvii. Non-violence
Non-violence implies more than simply the absence of physical violence between people; the notion of structural violence implies that social structures and institutions can themselves be seen as violent (Ife, 1995, p 194). A non-violent approach will not only oppose the physical forms of violence, but will also recognise structural violence and other forms of coercion and seek to counter them. This essentially means changing the ‘rules’ by which people operate and, often in the case of women, it means changing the times and patterns of meetings and other activities. Gandhi was one of the greatest proponents of non-violence, both physical and structural.

xviii. Inclusiveness
Integral to the non-violent approach is inclusiveness, where opponents are not defeated and isolated. The process of Community Development should include and value people - even if they hold opposing views - and they should be comfortable to change their views without feeling threatened. Confrontation should not necessarily lead to conflict and consensus should be achieved through amicable means. Gandhi (1964; 1982) said that the essence of non-violence was to oppose structures and ideas but not people.

xix. Consensus
It is absolutely essential that community development processes should build on a foundation of consensus. The consensus model works towards agreement and aims at reaching a solution that the whole community will ‘own’ as theirs (Ife, 1995, p 196). It is the inevitable consequence of non-violence and inclusiveness. Consensus can mean more than the will of the majority or reaching a compromise; it means the community commits itself to a process to find a solution or course of action that everyone can accept and own; consensus, therefore, is a long-term process, but also ensures that decisions last.

xx. Cooperation
Competition is celebrated in modern society and is the basis of many an institution, such as the education system, the economy, the arts, recreation, employment, etc. and which Community Development challenges. Community Development seeks to establish alternate processes and structures, based on cooperation rather than competition and
conflict. Cooperation also extends beyond the boundaries of the community to include cooperation with other communities around common problems and issues of concern.

xxi. Participation
Everyone in the community should be actively involved in the processes and activities to ensure community ownership and inclusive process. People participate differently, but their participation should be considered legitimate and should be valued by the community. The interplay between class, gender, ethnicity, age, disability and other categories should be taken into account when ensuring participation. The nature of traditionally exclusive activities should be changed to allow for greater and more effective participation.

xxii. Defining Need
Community development should seek to bring about agreement between the various need definers, the population, the consumers, the service providers and the researchers; otherwise there is less likelihood that the need will be met. The needs as defined by the people themselves should take precedence over all else such that the ecological and social justice principles are not compromised.

The purpose of this extended presentation and discussion of the principles of Community Development has highlighted the need for consideration of the structures and processes which surround it and has suggested the necessity of making connections rather than isolate relevant phenomena and study or present them in their isolation. A holistic perspective thus assists in locating specific actions or interventions (or programs) within a broader perspective. As already indicated in chapters 1 and 2 while contextualising the research (page 11 and 37), the mahila mandal program I have been able to become involved in for the purposes of this research will be assessed against these principles to assess whether they are based on social justice and ecological approaches.

Chapter 6 is a historical description of community development theory and practice in India, which has primarily been state sponsored. Although reference is made to the non-government sector, to a large extent in India they have been coopted for a variety of reasons, primarily for reasons of availability of resources. Part III of this thesis is the portrayal of the everyday lives of women and the women's narratives regarding the mahila mandal programme of the government of Orissa as implemented in village
Balipada and the reasons for its failure with a concluding chapter that brings all the threads together in attempting to providing an alternative.
Chapter Six

Community Development in India

In the previous chapter, I have discussed the evolving and contextually specific meanings of community and community development. I have provided an introduction to the interface between community and culture, community and caste and community and social capital, items and concepts especially relevant in the Indian context as well as in the present global discursive context globally. In this chapter, I further explore the theory and practice of community development in India, the various state initiatives for rural development and, specifically, for women, and have made special reference to panchayat raj and decentralisation in India, one of the important institutional contexts within which the practice of community development occurs. As I shall show, there is a lack of conceptual clarity between the process of community development and the institutions of local self-government which are the vehicles for community development in India.

Mill (cited in Cowen & Shenton 1996, pp. 55-6) wrote that: ‘A country which makes regular (non-commercial) payments to foreign countries, besides losing what it pays, loses also something more, by the less advantageous terms on which it is forced to exchange its production for foreign commodities….The paying country will pay a higher price for all that it buys from the receiving country, while the latter besides receiving the tribute, obtains the exportable produce of the tributary country at a lower price’. This became the basis for the ‘drain theory’ from which most modern theories of underdevelopment arose. To reverse the drain was supposedly the work of an alternative developmental process. The village community was considered a field of such developmental activity and trusteeship its vehicle. Trusteeship as the source of action toward development has not been renounced but displaced and re-established through the rural development programmes of post-independent India. The colonialists believed that

55 Sir Henry Maine, who had been the Law Member of the Supreme Government of India, had initially spoken of the importance of village community ‘whether the older or the later ideas are best suited to the future; and if the changes from the one to the other were brought about by circumstances which the world has since outgrown – still more if it appears to have been in great part the result of usurpation – it may well be that the principle, at least of the older institutions, is fitter to be chosen than that of the more modern, as the basis of a better and more advanced constitution of society’ - from which Mill derived his view that the village community was the basis for the best form of taxation or rent collection.

56 Trusteeship is directly related to the colonial period in which it was the duty of the administrator or missionary to try to improve things. In view of the extreme difficulty and danger of deciding for other people what is good for them, it is a duty which people trusted they would always face with proper humility and one that they are not likely to shirk.
cultures contained ‘confusion’ and that they approximated a system that often worked badly. The role of the government was to foster the welfare of the individuals and where a culture appeared falling short of this, it had to intervene, thus adopting a reformer role. The emphasis on individualism as the justification for intervention takes away from communities and societies the right to control their own futures and the rights of individuals came to take precedence over the rights of communities.\footnote{An example is the Firka Development Scheme in Madras after the post-war period and closer to independence – the overall purpose of the scheme was to organize the villagers for ‘a happier, more prosperous and fuller life in which the individual villager will have the opportunity to develop both as an individual and as a unit of a well integrated society’ (Government of Madras 1951, p. 7). This was to be achieved by using local initiative and local resources.}

While the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India (Royal Commission on Agriculture 1926-28, pp. 672-3) recognised and stated that ‘of all the factors making for prosperous agriculture, by far the most important was the outlook of the peasant himself’ and, therefore, ‘if the inertia of centuries was to be overcome it was essential that all the resources at the disposal of the State should be brought to bear on the problem of the rural uplift’, this had no impact on the planning by the British Government as it was left to the initiative of provincial governments who had various ‘nation building departments’ under their jurisdiction. They had no control over finances, however, and even then some departments suffered at the expense of others under dyarchy.\footnote{Dyarchy was the dual control established under the Government of India Act 1919 when a limited experiment was tried in democracy between 1919 and 1936. Under this Act, the Provincial subjects were divided into transferred and reserved. The transferred subjects (education, sanitation and public health, agriculture, cooperative societies, public works, local self government, development of industries, etc.) were controlled by the elected ministers and the reserved subjects (land revenue, police, prisons, administration of justice, finance, etc.) were controlled by the civil servants. This distinction was abolished by the Government of India Act 1935, when all the subjects were transferred to the popular ministers.} The British in India concerned themselves only with governance and did not want to engage in the improvement of the social and economic well-being of the people. Their first Town Council was set up in 1688, on British lines, for the express purpose of raising taxes for the establishment of municipal works and services, which, however, was not fulfilled (because an efficient system of tax collection was not set up); by 1726, two more were added and by 1870 the number increased to 543. Thus began Indian ‘local self government’ and when the Community Development Programme was initiated, there was already a history of a representative form of government at the local level (Hicks 1965). The demands of the colonial economy and the local situation ensured their entry into the
field of rural development. The British Government, following their own experience, thrust upon local autonomous bodies statutory duties which have endured till date. The rural development function of the British in India began against the backdrop of recurrent famines, making rural development basically a humanitarian act which received legal currency only later, but leaving agricultural development as the priority.

According to Gaikwad (1978, p. not numbered),

‘the extremely pragmatic British evolved a system of administration most suitable for keeping the unorganized, rural population under subjugation and for exploiting the natural and human resources for the benefit of the colonial power. District administration was the strongest unit of this system. Through procedural means and the raw use of authority, district administration prevented organized resistance of the rural population to the systematic exploitation of this class by the government and other vested interests’.

Sadasivan (1988) explains that, historically, district administration in India was designed to resist political pressures rather than to generate a climate to enable social forces to resolve political conflicts in the larger interest of society. Its primary purpose was to realise land revenue and enforce law and order, with a clear-cut distinction between the administrative and the political setup and public opinion. The Collector, who was the head of the district administration, was the kingpin and, as seen later, the same position has been reinstated by the subsequent system of the Community Development Programme.

Although Rai (1980) points out that public business demands technical knowledge and specialisation which required training, it is evident that the British system benefited in maintaining the lack of knowledge and specialisation amongst the local population, leading not only to the consolidation of its powers but also thrusting upon a highly complex society a system of uniformity and alienating the administrative setup from informal contact with people.

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59 For a detailed account of this, see Hicks U. (1961). While the beginnings were small, the demands of the industrial revolution in England created greater need for services and this led to the appointment of improvement commissioners which in turn was the basis for the Municipal Corporation Act of 1835. The doctrine of the political and educational value of representative local institutions that emerged, it was thought, would be appropriate for the colonies and was firmly put into operation in India by the Ripon reforms of the 1880s and gained ground by the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms of 1920.

60 It was Lord Curzon who argued in favour of such a programme, following which research institutes, provincial departments of agriculture, agricultural colleges and experimental farms were set up.
Gandhi and Rural/Community Development

The predominantly rural character of India’s national economy is reflected in the very high proportion of the population living in rural areas and agriculture, still the mainstay of the vast majority. Any strategy of socio-economic development in India that neglects rural people and rural areas cannot be successful and the rural character of the economy and the need for regeneration of rural life was stressed by Mahatma Gandhi.

He wrote in Harijan (4 April 1936):

*India is to be found not in its few cities but in its 700,000 villages. But we town dwellers have believed that India is to be found in its towns and the villages were created to minister to our needs. We have hardly paused to inquire if those poor folk get sufficient to eat and clothe themselves with and whether they have a roof to shelter themselves from sun and rain.*

And equally in Harijan (29 August 1936):

*I would say that if the village perishes, India will perish too. Her own mission in the world will get lost. The revival of the village life is possible only when it is no more exploited.*⁶¹

Gandhi’s economic ideas were part of his general crusade against poverty, exploitation, socio-economic injustice and deteriorating moral standards. Gandhi was an economist of the masses and his approach was rooted in a concept of human dignity. The core of Gandhian economic thought is the protection of the dignity of human person and not mere material prosperity. He aimed at the development, uplifting and enrichment of human life rather than a higher standard of living with scant respect for human and social values. Fundamental ethical values dominated his economic ideas and he intended to liberate modern economic philosophy from the quagmire of materialism and bring it to a higher spiritual plane, as human actions were motivated by the social objectives of the protection of human rights.

Gandhi’s efforts towards ‘spiritualising economics’ are truly reflected in his concept of trusteeship, which arose from his faith in the law of non-possession. Gandhi stated that trusteeship was the only ground on which he could work out an ideal combination of economics and morals. In concrete terms, trusteeship translated as:

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(i) Providing a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives the present capitalists a chance to reform as it is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.

(ii) It does not recognise any right of private ownership of property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.

(iii) It does not exclude legislation of the ownership and use of wealth.

(iv) Thus under state regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction in disregard to the interests of society.

(v) Just as it is proposed to give a decent minimum living wage, a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that would be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time, so much so that the tenancy would be towards the obliteration of the difference.

(vi) Under the Gandhian economic order, the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal greed. The theory of trusteeship applies equally to both tangible and intangible property, *such as the muscular energy of the labourers and the talents of a Helen Keller* (Mashruwala 1951, p. 79).

According to Gandhi, all property belongs to God and in his concept of trusteeship the trustees have no right to destroy that property deliberately and wantonly; in addition, trusteeship aims at the raising of the morale of the people by giving them a sense of security in the hands of the trustees. The trustees, in their turn, are beholden to creating an urge among the masses for a higher standard of life. Gandhi suggested this doctrine as an answer to the economic inequalities of ownership and income - a non-violent way of resolving all social and economic conflicts which grew out of inequalities and privileges of the present social order; therefore, man’s dignity and not his material prosperity is at the centre of Gandhian economics.

Rural (Community) development received mass popular support with the entry of Gandhi into public life. Even to this day, Gandhi is probably the most contemporary thinker in his understanding of the Indian realities and his vision for India; as the principal exponent of village autonomy, he held an integral view of India, not believing in the compartmentalisation between political, economic and social life. He emphasised the need for autonomous village republics at the base with the widest possible dispersal of political power as a true measure of the end of colonial rule in India. With the aim of village

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62 The non-cooperation movement started by Gandhi in 1920 was the first political attempt in India to mobilise the villagers. The non-cooperation resolution moved by Gandhi and passed by the Congress in its Calcutta session of September 1920 articulated the approach of rural development by recommending *‘hand spinning in every house and hand weaving on the part of millions of weavers who have abandoned their ancient and honourable calling for want of encouragement’* (Sitaramayya 1935 as quoted in Maheshwari 1985, p. 122).
autonomy, he envisaged the retention of functions of local governance with the local people themselves and the residual functions being assigned to the various other higher tiers of the government.

Gandhi believed that the political economy of the village republics would be short lived if it were not based on self-sufficiency in the economic sphere, which signified the sustainability or the proximity of production and consumption that should be based as far as possible on local resources. For this, Gandhi designed a comprehensive rural development programme which included the production of goods such as cloth, edible oils, utensils, footwear, furniture and other consumer goods for local consumption through traditional village industry, the eradication of untouchability, provision of basic adult education, prohibition, women’s uplifting and the propagation of a national language. When confronted with the question of the efficiency of such an expectation, Gandhi (12th February, 1938) argued that, ‘If I could produce all my country’s wants by means of 30,000 people instead of 30 million, I should not mind it, provided that the 30 million are not rendered idle and unemployed’. The chronic unemployment in India was the basis for his choice of techniques and mode of production and he viewed the industrialisation as envisaged in the Five Year Plans as leading to subservience and the destruction of the villagers and their crafts.

Gandhian theory can be understood only in the context of certain basic spiritual values of the Indian tradition; whilst Marxian socialism aims at the destruction of the class of capitalists, the Gandhian approach is not to destroy the institution, but to reform it. As man is an ethical being first and a social being later, Gandhian socialism differs from Marxian socialism.

The Post Gandhian Period

According to ESCAP (1977), the objectives of rural development are:

* Drawing the entire rural labour force into the mainstream of economic activity;
* Realising the creative energies of the rural people;
* Checking the drift of rural population;
* Enhancing participation of women and youths in the development process;
* Improving the quality of life through integration between development and environment; and,
* The all-round development of the abundant manpower.
The goal is to liberate the energies of the rural people, so that they can realise their full potential and thus improve their capacity as well as their commitment to development, organise and govern themselves toward the attainment of a higher quality of life for the individual and the community. The twin objectives are accelerated economic growth with wider participation leading to an equitable distribution of the gains.

Unfortunately, the beliefs of Gandhi’s followers stood in stark contrast to his and the village republics, which were the very pillars of Gandhian thought, were relegated to obscurity. Reflecting the influence of Western liberal thought imposed on India’s historical, religious and cultural background, the nation adopted a model of centralised national planning blended with a decentralised effort of community development. In the subsequently drafted Constitution of India, power rested with the Centre and Gandhi’s approach to industrialisation no longer had any relevance following independence, as Nehru’s priorities were different. Mahalanobis helped Nehru achieve his vision of technology-based industrialisation, but he saw the importance of the role of traditional industries and laid down strict conditions to enable them to play their assigned roles. He did not consider village industry as pivotal but tried to allocate roles to capital and labour as a temporary measure until large industries would be in a position to generate large-scale employment.

However, Mahalanobis’ stipulated suggestions and conditions were also violated and we are left with a large backlog of unemployed and underemployed, especially in the rural areas. In spite of rampant unemployment, large-scale investment was still being made in the consumer goods industry contrary to the suggestions of Mahalanobis and the policies of premature mechanisation rendered several sectors redundant and led to further unemployment.

According to the 2001 census, 38% of people still live in great poverty in the rural areas; it was initially thought that the benefits of the programmes of industrial development as envisaged in the Five Year Plans would eventually trickle down to the masses and bring prosperity to rural areas, but the review of the development programmes as stipulated in the Five Year Plans I offered in the fifth Chapter of this Thesis, indicates that the quality

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63 Mahalanobis recorded that there may be a need to impose temporary bans on expansion of factory production that is competitive with small scale industries. Although he recognised that this may keep some industries idle temporarily, at least it would not keep human beings unemployed.
and quantum of development are far from satisfactory, and that the approach was not appropriate either.

The three basic components of the strategy of planning for rural development in India in the 1950s and early 60s - land reforms, cooperative farming and Community Development – attempted to incorporate class, caste and gender relations as well as the Gandhian idealism of ‘mutual cooperation and profound outlook for the development of all’. The powerful class of the rich landlords and the social structure of hierarchic, patriarchal family had their influence as well, but there was no attempt to destroy the class-based institutions and patriarchal bases of power.

The Constitution of India and the First Five Year Plan were drafted following Independence and they were meant to be mutually supportive documents to face the challenge of India’s political, social and economic development. The Constitution guarantees to secure justice for all citizens, social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all Fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation. Specifically, the Directive Principles of State Policy (which are not legally binding) were also supportive of these ideals.

**Community Development Programme (CDP)**

In order to comprehend local development in India and put it in the context of the larger development scenario affecting the country, we need to re-examine the community development programme, which was used as a vehicle to achieve an improved standard of living of the masses. As a collective and participatory process to bring about structural change in the country, it was probably one of the most ambitious programmes of independent India.

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64 ‘The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life. The State shall direct its policies in such a manner as to secure the right of all men and women to an adequate means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work and, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, to make effective provision for securing the right to work, education and public assistance in the cases of undeserved want. The State is also required to secure the workers humane conditions of work, a decent standard of living, full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities’; the State has failed in the realisation of these goals and their relevance to the rural community has always been contentious.
Esman and Uphoff (1982, p. ix) on the basis of a cross national analysis of the Asian experience, concluded that effective local organisation, ‘accountable to the local people, and involved in rural development functions, generally accomplished rural development objectives more successfully with respect to the available resource base than those with less rural organization’. While their analysis draws attention to the scope for significant intervention in the process of development at the local level, their focus on formal organisations shifts attention away from local elites who, without necessarily holding elective or administrative positions, give meaning and substance to what would otherwise be merely paper organisations.

Mitra (1992) argues that India’s local elites represent a hinge group, whose ability to incorporate newly emerging social forces into the political arena and to ease out the old style ones, is the critical determinant of the stability, legitimacy and expansion of the state. The process of state formation in India is different from the models of bureaucratic state and the developmental state, in the sense that the agenda of social and economic change is not the prerogative of a technocratic elite who are not accountable to the people through the normal political process. Instead, social and economic change are a part of a larger political agenda, so that the statesman committed to development and modernisation is beholden to the local leader for political support; high politics of the state and local politics, rather than being worlds apart, are closely intertwined. The political role of local elites is thus an integral part of the model of state that has evolved in India after Independence. Local elites perform this role with a complex combination of institutional participation and radical protest.

Although India attained Independence in 1947, a comprehensive programme of Community Development (CDP) only started in October 1952, with 55 Community Development Projects, aiming to provide infrastructural support to rural development. Prior to this there were inspired but isolated attempts at rural development. 65

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65 The Etawah and Gorakhpur projects were started in 1948 assisted by the US Point Four Programme and began with the training of local people as teachers and demonstrators for the promotion of better cattle breeding and wheat cultivation. Later, it extended its programme to adult literacy and in collaboration with the Agriculture Ministry co-operated in farm improvements. The Servants of India Society set up Rural Centres at Mayanur in Madras and Shadanjana in Madhya Pradesh. The Faridabad Co-operative Community was a pilot project of the Central Government and its programmes included construction of co-operative townships of 5000 homes and establishment of an industrial area, built by untrained refugees on self-help, self-sufficiency basis. Dey’s Nilokheri project in Punjab was also based on similar lines. The Sarvodaya Scheme was started in Bombay state as a tribute to the memory of Gandhiji in 1949. The main objective of the Sarvodaya Scheme was the gradual reconstruction of society so as to secure the ‘greatest
origins of the programme lay in a bilateral agreement, the ‘Technical Cooperation Programme’, between India and the United States, that went into great detail about its administrative structure, making a mockery of the fact that it was termed a people’s programme. Eventually, the model India opted for was an integrated pattern of development of rural services with inter-related administrative units of a village, a block (100 villages) and a district.

A few examples of rural development efforts in the post-Independence period are briefly described below whilst the CDP will be discussed in greater detail later:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Period</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Year of Introduction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Plan</td>
<td>Community Development Programme</td>
<td>1952</td>
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<td></td>
<td>National Extension Service</td>
<td>1953</td>
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<td>Second Plan</td>
<td>Khadi and Village Industries Programme</td>
<td>1957</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Village Housing Projects Scheme</td>
<td>1957</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Multi Purpose Tribal Development Blocks Programme</td>
<td>1959</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Package Programme</td>
<td>1960</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intensive Agricultural District Programme</td>
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<td>Third Plan</td>
<td>Applied Nutrition Programme</td>
<td>1962</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rural Industries Project</td>
<td>1962</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intensive Agricultural Areas Programme</td>
<td>1964</td>
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<td></td>
<td>High Yielding Variety Programme</td>
<td>1966</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Plan 66</td>
<td>Farmer’s Training and Education Programme</td>
<td>1966</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Well Construction Programme</td>
<td>1966</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Plan 67</td>
<td>Rural Works Programme (RWP)</td>
<td>1967</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Plan 68</td>
<td>Tribal Development Block</td>
<td>1968</td>
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<td>Annual Plan 69</td>
<td>Rural Manpower Programme</td>
<td>1969</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fourth Plan</td>
<td>Composite Programme for Women and pre-school children</td>
<td>1969</td>
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The main programme revolved around improved agriculture and cattle breeding, formation of workers co-operatives to enhance forest produce, hand spinning and basic education. Other examples are Tagore’s Sriniketan in West Bengal, Wiser’s Indian Village Service in Madhya Pradesh, Community Education Centres of the Jamia Milia Islamia Institute of Adult and Social Education and Martandam Rural Reconstruction Project.

The programme was designed to create new administrative units for rural development called the Community Development Blocks with a population of 60 to 80,000 in normal areas and 20 to 30,000 in desert or hilly regions or areas inhabited predominantly by tribal population. The Block was to be headed by an administrator, the Block Development Officer, to coordinate the services of extension officers in diverse fields of rural development such as agriculture, animal husbandry, village industries, public health, social education, rural engineering, co-operation and women and children’s programme. It was a hierarchical structure with the Extension workers on the top rung of the ladder; they functioned through ten multipurpose village level workers called the Gram Sevaks who served approximately ten villages. In addition, there were women workers who were responsible for women and children’s welfare, called Gram Sevikas and functioned under a Mukhya (chief) Sevika. Maheswari (1985) has discussed in detail the administrative structure of the CDP when it was first initiated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Crash Scheme for Rural Employment</td>
<td>1971</td>
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<td>Small Farmers Development Agency</td>
<td>1971</td>
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<td>Tribal Area Development Programme</td>
<td>1972</td>
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<td>Pilot Projects for Tribal Development</td>
<td>1972</td>
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<td>Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme</td>
<td>1972</td>
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<td>Minimum Needs Programme</td>
<td>1972</td>
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<td>Command Area Development Programme</td>
<td>1974</td>
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<td>Fifth Plan</td>
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<td>Hill Areas Development Programme</td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td>Special Livestock Production Programme</td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td>Food for Work Programme</td>
<td>1977</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desert Development Programme</td>
<td>1977</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whole Village Development Programme</td>
<td>1979</td>
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<td>Training Rural Youth for Self Employment</td>
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<td>Integrated Rural Development Programme</td>
<td>1979</td>
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<td>Sixth Plan</td>
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<td>National Rural Employment Programme</td>
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<td>Prime Ministers New Twenty Point Programme</td>
<td>1980</td>
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<td>Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas</td>
<td>1983</td>
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Source: (Maheshwari 1985, pp. 33-4)

Little distinction was made between community/rural development and the agencies/institutions designated for its implementation, as it was believed that any strategy for rural development must involve the people themselves and their institutions at all levels. The need for revitalising Panchayati Raj Institutions, therefore, had been recognised as an instrument for participative planning and implementation of various development programmes at grassroots level. The Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India and the State Governments were constantly endeavouring to empower the Panchayati Raj Institutions in terms of functions, powers and finance. Being potentially the most significant institution for participatory democracy and decentralisation, 1999-2000 was observed as the “Year of Gram Sabha”.

As it was the initial phase in the post-Independence era, the emphasis was on the provision of basic amenities; the CDP was service-oriented but has been criticised for not caring for the needs of the weaker sections of the population and only for selected regions in the country. It also had the added disadvantage of lacking local government structures and it had to create its own infrastructure, which eventually was to become the new, higher level local government areas\(^67\); as well, the utilisation of the budget initially allocated only occurred very slowly.

\(^67\) Based on the recommendations of the Balwant rai Mehta committee.
The programme was inaugurated by India’s first president Rajendra Prasad who hailed it as ‘the small seed which will grow into a huge and mighty tree’, adding that

‘India lives largely in villages. Anything done to bring about an all-round improvement of the villages and those who inhabit them should not only be welcome but given all encouragement by the State and by the people at large. Mahatma Gandhi used to look upon all work for the common benefit as yajna and it is in this spirit of yajna that the work has to be undertaken and accomplished. I can only hope and pray that the government and the people will travel together hand in hand in this mighty effort’ (Hindustan Times, 3rd October 1952).

Two basic premises were fundamental in India’s decision to create the National Community Development Programme in 1952 (Ensminger 1968, p. 3):

The overall development of the rural community can be brought about only with effective participation of the people, backed by the coordination of technical and other services necessary for securing the best from such initiative and self-help. It was to provide the necessary institutional structure and services that early attention was given to the development of basic democratic village institutions – especially the Panchayat Raj, cooperatives and village schools. The problems of rural development have to be viewed from a holistic perspective and the efforts to solve them have to be multifaceted.

Dube (1958, p. 8) summarised the basic aims of the programme as follows:

‘To provide for a substantial increase in the country’s agricultural production, and for improvements in the system of communications, in rural health, and hygiene and in village education,
To initiate and direct a process of integrated cultural change, aimed at transforming the social and economic life of the villagers through the people’s own democratic and cooperative organizations, the government helping with technical advice, supplies and credit. The essence of the programme is its insistence on self-help and participation by the people in their own welfare.’

While these premises and aims were well intentioned, there appears to be no doubt that it was people’s cooperation that was being sought and not their participation. Whilst the CDP in India had no precedents of its kind, largely drew on local initiatives in India and to some extent from community development programmes in the US and the UK, this has led to misleading statements like ‘only with the initiation of the CDP did the intricacies of village life and the differentiated nature of the village community begin to be disclosed’ (Maheshwari 1985, p. 87).

The central objective of the CDP was to secure the total development of the material and human resources of rural areas and to develop local leadership and self-governing institutions. It aimed to raise the levels of living of rural people through a number of programmes, which was to be attained by bringing about a rapid increase in food and
agricultural production by strengthening programmes of resource development, such as minor irrigation and soil conservation, by improving the effectiveness of farm inputs supply systems and by providing agricultural extension service to farmers. In so much as the programme concentrated its efforts on agricultural development, not much distinction has been made between community development, rural development and agricultural development\(^{68}\), some social development and social justice elements of the programme therefore loosing their significance.

The draft outline of the programme which received the sanction of the Government of India stated at the beginning that

*The purpose of the community projects shall be to serve as pilot in the establishment, for men, women and children covered by the project areas, of the ‘Right to Live’; food – the principal item in the wherewithals for this purpose – receiving the primary emphasis in the initial stages of the programme* (Ensminger 1972, p. 4).

The CDP was formally inaugurated on 2 October 1952, intending to be the first step in a programme of intensive development, which was expected to cover the entire country over a period of time. As stated earlier, initially the CDP was launched in 55 project areas located in different parts of the country and another 110 areas had necessarily to be added in the course of 6 months, as demands for expansion from members in the state legislatures and from Members of Parliament continued skyrocketing. It was difficult to resist the mounting political pressure to expand the programme.

A new somewhat less ambitious scheme, called the National Extension Service (NES), was evolved and launched in 1953; whereas intensive development was taken up in all fields and meant to extend for a scheduled period of time in the CDP, the NES scheme was designed to provide essential basic staff and a small amount of funds with which the people could start and continue the development work essentially based on self-help. Thus, rural development came to consist of both community development blocks and national extension service blocks, explaining why the impermanent nature of the

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\(^{68}\) Dey (1955-56) called for a distinction to be made between community development and other measures of rural uplift based on the following characteristics:

- The programme should be comprehensive, encompassing the betterment of the entire plane of living of the people of the area concerned.
- The programme should be integral, in that it should take into account the requirements of progress in different spheres such as agriculture, industries, health and all else and device measures in each of these fields.
- The programme should be organic and stimulate the potential vitality of the people of the area.

According to Dey, any programme of Community Development has to satisfy this triple criteria.
community development blocks ruled official thinking for a long period, only changing with the introduction of the Panchayat Raj system.

By the end of the First Five Year Plan period (1951-56), the CDP had extended across 1,114 blocks, covering 163,000 villages with a population of 11 million and, by the 60s, it covered the entire country. In its planning, the CDP took a more holistic approach, attempting to form linkages between economic betterment and other non-economic goals that determine the livelihood of people in the rural areas, attempting to include as many areas of concern to the farmer: agriculture, animal husbandry, roads, health, education, housing, employment, social and cultural activities.

Despite its multi faceted approach, the CDP mainly focused on the economic development of the people, whose fundamental problem was poverty, therefore giving priority to agriculture. The expansion of the non-agricultural sector of the rural economy depended, to a large extent, on the generation of surpluses in the agricultural sector to provide necessary capital, raw material and market. The CDP has been hailed as a very comprehensive programme based on popular participation/ cooperation, with a decentralised administration and with economic progress being a central point. A political base was provided to the community development movement with a greater devolution of authority to rural organisations. With the introduction of a political system of development, various warring political forces began to emerge. In a country which was characterised by patronage and protection and had recently gone through a process of decolonisation, the increasingly marginalised feudalistic forces reasserted their influence through dominant caste and class organisations and groups, who usurped the resources allocated for community development programmes, further depriving and marginalising the poor – and women more so since they were subsumed under the category of ‘poor’, both of financial resources and technological know how. Not many commentators of the CDP, however, have critically looked at CDP as a programme, which emerged from the Indo - US co-operation, with several of the details regarding administration and functioning clearly determined by the US.

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69 In contrast, another programme initiated by the government, the Grow More Food movement during the war (1939-45), was a failure, since it did not relate the need for food production to a farmer’s other concerns.
A 1958 study team recommended that the CDP call for a radical reorientation in its outlook, that the programme of attenuated services and facilities envisaged at the start be abandoned and recommended that a more holistic pattern of community development be adopted to cover the entire country by 1963. The Committee further suggested that a programme which involved the day-to-day living of the people could only be implemented by the people themselves.

At the end of the First Plan period, based on a survey conducted in a sample of villages and a qualitative observation of a smaller number of villages, it was found that 41 different types of programmes had been introduced (Kurien 1992):

- **Construction programmes** – construction of roads (kutcha and pukka), culverts, drains, pavements, school buildings, community centre buildings, dispensary buildings, houses for harijans and drinking water sources.
- **Agricultural programmes** – reclamation, soil conservation, consolidation of holdings, improved seeds, manure and fertilizer, pesticides, improved methods of cultivation, improved implements.
- **Institutional and other programmes** – youth clubs, women’s organisations, community centres, vikas mandals, cooperative societies, distribution stores, maternity centres, dispensaries, veterinary dispensaries, key village centres, panchayats, adult literacy centres, primary schools, dai (midwife) training centres, cottage industries, production cum training centres, demonstration plots, soakage pits and smokeless chulha.

The study already recognised that (Kurien 1992, p. 186)

> ‘it is also necessary that greater flexibility and capacity for adjustment to local variations should be provided in the programme, with reference to local natural conditions in the case of production and construction programmes, and with reference to local social and cultural conditions and the felt needs of the people. As regards techniques, far more emphasis should be placed on preparing the people in each block for the planning and operation of developmental programmes’.

Its salient observation on the community aspects of the programme were:

> ‘(i) When the programme has been in force for a sufficiently long period, it is expected that government agency will be minimal in regard to these factors and that they will rest largely either on individual or cooperative and local community initiative. Advance on the rural front cannot be made merely by the institution of an extension agency.

> (ii) Every attempt should be made to utilize organized channels of the village community for the planning and implementation of development programmes rather than just stray individuals, however progressive they might be. This means a more and

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70 This programme was perhaps most subjected to reviews and evaluations since Independence. There were annual conference of development commissioners and independent evaluations conducted by Programme Evaluation Organisation (PEO), 1956.
deliberate and definitely greater use of the panchayat and cooperatives than has been done so far, and

(iii) It is perhaps not entirely a matter of coincidence that the three best projects in the evaluation centres happen to be those where the project officers have made the best use of the panchayat and the cooperative in the implementation of their development programmes. Organized and institutional participation by the public in development programmes is bound to give better, more consistent and more lasting results.’

The limited participation of the local people, the panchayats and cooperatives in the planning and implementation of development programmes was evident; the attempts at evaluation, however valuable, were piecemeal and the Balwantrai Mehta Committee (Government of India 1957b) conducted the first comprehensive overview of the programme; the Committee was appointed mainly to suggest measures for the problems in implementation and prepared an elaborate Report with painstaking effort.

Although the contributions of the programme were commended, the Committee found that the organisation had been prevented (by its bureaucratic nature) from allowing the community to occupy the place of prime importance in planning or implementation or in ensuring coordination among the various departments at the centre or block levels. The Committee (p. 8) found that ‘one of the least successful aspects of the CDP and the NES was that its attempt to evoke popular initiative was unsuccessful’. As a way out, it recommended ‘administrative decentralization’, a system which should be under the control of elected bodies:

‘Development’, the report (p. 5) said, ‘cannot progress without responsibility and power. Community development can be real only when the community understands its problems, realises its responsibilities, exercises the necessary powers through its chosen representatives and maintains a constant and intelligent vigilance on local administration. With this objective we recommend an early establishment of statutory elective bodies and devolution to them of the necessary resources, power and authority’.

This led to the emergence of Panchayat Raj – interwoven democracy –providing for the extension of services at the Central and the State Government levels, the District, Block and Village levels and with responsibilities assigned to each level for the ‘progressive growth of the will and competence of the people’ (Dey 1962, p. 7). The Gram Sabha at the

71 The system is based on the following principles: there should be a three tier structure of local self-governing bodies from village to district level, with an organic link from the lower to the higher ones, there should be genuine transfer of power and responsibility to these bodies, adequate financial resources should be transferred to these bodies to enable them to discharge their responsibilities, all development programmes at these levels should be channelled through these bodies, the system evolved should be such as to facilitate further decentralisation in the matter of power and responsibility in the future.
base was the people’s forum and the Panchayat was the executive decision-making body which functioned on its behalf. At the Block level, the executive body was the Panchayat Samiti which was entirely responsible for CDP and NES under its jurisdiction. At the district level was the Zilla Parishad which included the representatives of the Panchayat Samitis, with the members elected from the district to the state legislature and Parliament acting as the ex-officio members of the Zilla Parishad. As Dey (1962, p. 12) notes ‘thus grew the concept of ‘Gram Sabha to Lok Sabha’ which has since been spreading throughout the country and attracting the attention of the world’.

The grounds for democratic de-centralisation, far from being based on ideological grounds, were based on empirical evidence gathered from crucial questions addressing community participation, the nature and extent of people’s contribution, its success in generating a development process and the administrative co-ordination. The Committee reported that, far from being efficient, the CDP had failed on all these counts. While benefits were evident in some spheres, a number of loopholes were evident in others and steps were therefore taken to remove regional imbalances and to extend the benefits of development programmes to the weaker sections of society. Addressing the Seminar for Block Level Planning for Full Employment in 1977, Prof Lakdawala, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission mentioned that ‘area planning had the great advantage of compelling planners to look more closely and concretely at the problems at local levels and to devise measures for the optimum utilization of the natural and manpower resources to suit local potentials, needs and problems’. In a similar vein and addressing the same Seminar, Morarji Desai, the then Prime Minister of India, referred to the inadequate attention given to rural development and deteriorating problems, like the disruption of life in the countryside leading to the exodus of the rural population to the towns, resulting in the creation of slums. To make up for the neglect of rural development, he said, it was necessary to reorient efforts in order to catch up with the problems and to ensure faster progress in the rural areas. He also emphasised the importance of de-

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72 Karunaratne (1976) suggests the following reasons for the failure of the CDP: the lack of involvement of the people, poor participation of all stakeholders in villages, people’s participation in panchayats limited leading to poor overall functioning of panchayats, the ill-conceived rural works programme, neglect of non-contributing areas, focus on and bias toward agricultural development, the marginalisation of literacy and cultural programmes and the de-prioritisation of social education components. Skewed distribution of benefits, failure to evoke popular support, inability to achieve common acceptance of the decisions due to factions among the villagers, lack of spirit in leadership, dominance of rich and large farmers, undue and too much political interference in the work of the development functionaries and paucity of funds, are some of the weaknesses of the Panchayat Raj system (Saxena 2000; McCarten & Vyasulu 2004).
centralisation in the whole process of planning and the need for adequate and appropriate delegation of functions and powers, right from the centre or the top, through the State, down to the village Panchayats.

On the development aspect, the Committee endorsed the target the programme had set for itself, to assist farmers to raise agricultural production\textsuperscript{73}. While questions were raised about attempts made to increase awareness of farmers and motivate them toward increased agricultural production\textsuperscript{74}, at no point was there a questioning of the notions of agrarian change in capitalism or development itself.

Community participation was found to be minimal, as there was a time lapse between the implementation of various development tasks and the institutional arrangements, that is, the appointment of Block Advisory Committees (BAC) who were to approve and monitor these programmes. As the BACs were appointed after the start of the programme, which was wrong in principle, it was found that they did not, in effect, realise the priority accorded to different tasks by the community itself.

It was observed by the Committee that, although community contribution was an integral component, very often there was no contribution by the people as the task was completed within the amount allocated by the Block, that is, the expenditure to be incurred was not properly calculated prior to the task. Labour at reduced rates, a feature related to people’s contribution, did not have any meaning in several cases as it did not take into account the regional variation in rates.

\textsuperscript{73} While the green revolution, with its exclusive focus on high yielding variety seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation and mechanised farming has brought about improvement in agricultural production and in the economic conditions of rural areas in the developing world, the new technology has produced significantly adverse impacts on the rural ecology and environment (Roy & Clark 1994), on the living standards and lifestyles of people, in the roles within the families, in the changes in community relationships, in the aspirations and expectations of people (Thimmaiah and Hadimani in Campbell 1990). The other aspect is evident in this vignette from Whitcombe (1980), ‘In the new capital intensive agricultural strategy, introduced into the provinces in the late 1960’s, the Congress government had the means to realize the imperial dream: progressive farming among gentry. Within a year or two of the programmes inception, virtually every district could field a fine crop of demonstration ex-zamindars – the Rai Sahibs with their 30, 40, 50, 100 acre land holdings, their multiplication farms of the latest Mexican wheat and Philippines paddy, their tube wells gushing out 16,000 gallons an hour, much of it on highly profitable hire, their tractors, their godowns stacked with fertilizer, their cold stores….in short, a tenth of the zamindari, but ten times the income’.

\textsuperscript{74} The approach adopted in agricultural extension work was a top-down approach and the local people’s knowledge and experience were hardly utilised, their real interests and requirements were often ignored. Extension officers primarily visited the more powerful villagers (Roy & Clark 1994) and those villages that were connected with modern modes of transport from their offices (Chen 1989). For further details in this regard, refer, Roy K C & Clark C, 1994, Technological Change and Rural Development in Poor Countries: Neglected Issues, Calcutta: Oxford University Press.
Co-ordination was next to impossible despite strict guidelines; duplicate controls existed (technical and administrative sanctions had to be sought for each scheme) under which various schemes and projects were executed, insufficient administrative control over technical and other specialist staff and frequent transfers of officers, leading to a lot of duplication and wastage.

Based on the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee (Government of India 1957b), the National Development Council in 1958 decided to lay down some broad considerations in determining the problems of administration and development within the district, which enabled the local government to accept the recommendations of the Committee and provide adequate powers to popularly elected panchayat raj bodies. In the case of women, the recommendation of the Report was to co-opt two women ‘who are interested to work among women and children’ and several state panchayat Acts also provided for co-opting one or two women to the panchayats.

In 1960, the Seventh Evaluation Report of the PEO found that there were both achievements and weaknesses in respect of programme content and democratic decentralisation. Where programme content was concerned, while tangible aspects of the programme content saw positive changes (increased land under irrigation, soil conservation, distribution of improved seeds and fertilisers, artificial insemination of domestic animals, improved credit facilities), little had been achieved in disseminating the philosophy and operations of the CDP to school teachers and most of the social education centres established had become inactive or defunct.

Where democratic de-centralisation was concerned, while village panchayats had been established, statutory bodies at the block and district levels had not been set up and the panchayat system has proved to be ineffective as there were a number of limitations imposed on their power and authority and the manner of their execution because of different statutes in different states.

As the shift in the priority areas occurred, the nature of democratic de-centralisation also varied, at times even bypassing the very needs of the community that it professed as its central objective. A good example of this was the Intensive Agricultural District programme, initiated by the government on the advice of the Ford Foundation, resulting from the disappointment faced by the inability of the CDP to raise food production.
The Report of the study group on the welfare of the weaker sections of the village community, chaired by Jayprakash Narain (1963), noted several contradictions in the CD component of the Third Plan (1962-66). While there was a greater emphasis on community aspects, especially the welfare of the less privileged sections of society, there was also an emphasis on the effectiveness of the CDP as an agricultural extension agency. Thus, the lack of clarity between the principles of community development and the institutions of democratic de-centralisation was highlighted (Government of India 1962 ch 20):

To a large extent because the programme was proclaimed as the rural dimension of India’s development planning, and was from the beginning, hitched to a block budget in which substantial funds were allotted alike for administrative and development items like minor irrigation, rural electrification, staff expenditure for primary health centres, etc, as well as for community participation…the result has been a medley of activities carried out with varying efficiency which made little impact on the core of the problem. A craze for spectacular results and piling up physical achievements and the evils of targetism have unfortunately been in the fore. The introduction of panchayat raj institutions by itself will not, we are afraid, correct the position.

The Group recommended a further consolidation and integration of all the programmes under the CDP, noting that there was ‘no longer any valid reason for the continuing individual allocations subject wise even to serve as a guide’ (Government of India 1962, ch 20). They noted that in several states there were also impediments to de-centralisation that hindered its efficiency.

By mid 60s, the programme had reached its peak; the Annual Report of the Ministry of Community Development (Government of India 1965, p. 1) recorded that ‘the entire country is now covered by CDP Blocks and Panchayat raj in all its tiers has been established in 12 states’. However, the position of women in panchayats remained tenuous and the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women (Government of India 1976, p. 3) therefore demanded representation of women in Panchayat as well as the establishment of ‘All-Women Panchayat at village level’.

**Recent State Initiatives in Community Development in Orissa**

I shall now offer brief accounts of some of the community development programmes, planned and implemented by the Orissa government, some in conjunction with NGOs and community groups. The implementation of the community development programmes is spearheaded by the Panchayati Raj Department of the Government of Orissa. The annual
report of the Department (Government of Orissa 2002-2003) states that the willing participation of the people in the development process is a prerequisite for attaining the objectives of the various development programmes. Lack of awareness, the report states, is the major difficulty in securing people’s participation in the development process. The Department is also concerned that there should be total transparency and accountability in the implementation of programmes; all the beneficiaries for the various programmes were to be selected by the palli sabha (the collective of all adults in a ward, a unit smaller than the revenue village) and the details of estimates regarding all civil works should be available for the public. One rationale for de-centralisation is that the ‘PRI{s can facilitate the convergence of various services for the wholesome development of the rural population’ (Government of Orissa 2002-2003, p. 2). The Panchayat Raj Department sees itself as a facilitator and catalyst for sustainable development of rural Orissa through various programmes aiming at empowerment of the rural community and strengthening of PRIs as units of self-governance and committed to Gandhiji’s dream of ‘Gram Swaraj’. All these highlight that the government is attempting to move from being the dispenser of services to being a catalyst for sustainable development, that is, how the notion of community development has changed over the years along with the priorities of the State.

**Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana**

*Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana* (JGSY) is the restructured, streamlined and comprehensive version of the erstwhile *Jawahar Rozgar Yojana* (JRY). Launched on 1 April 1999, it has been designed to improve the quality of life of the rural poor by providing them additional gainful employment. The objectives of this programme are: creation of demand-driven village infrastructure including durable assets for increasing the opportunities for sustained employment and generation of supplementary employment for the unemployed poor in the rural areas. People living in villages constitute the target group of JGSY. Preference is given to SC/ST families living below the poverty-line and physically handicapped persons.

Village panchayat is the sole authority for the preparation of the annual action plan and its implementation with the approval of Gram Sabha. A quarter of the JGSY funds have been earmarked for individual beneficiary schemes for Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes. Three per cent of annual allocation would be utilised for the creation of barrier-free infrastructure for the disabled and 15 per cent can be spent on asset maintenance.
DRDA/ZP/Intermediate Panchayats will be responsible for overall guidance, coordination, supervision, monitoring and periodical reporting.

**Employment Assurance Scheme**

The Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) was launched on 2 October 1993 for implementation in 1,778 identified blocks in the drought-prone, desert, tribal and hilly areas of different States, to be later extended in phases to the remaining blocks of the country. The scheme, being implemented in all the rural blocks of the country, has been restructured from 1 April 1999.

EAS is now the single wage employment programme being implemented at the district/block level throughout the country with a focus on areas suffering from endemic labour. Its objective is to provide gainful employment in manual work to all needy, able-bodied adults in rural areas during the lean agricultural season and the creation of community-, social- and economic assets for sustained employment and development.

The EAS was open to all adult rural poor with a maximum of two adults per family provided wage employment, subject to availability of funds.

**Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana**

*Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana* (SGRY) - launched on 25th September 2001 - emerged from the merging of the above two wage employment programmes and is very ambitious, in that it hopes to ensure food security, provide additional wage employment and enhance village infrastructure (that is durable community-, social- and economic assets) at the same time. While providing wage employment, preference is given to agricultural wage-earners, non-agricultural unskilled wage-earners, marginal farmers, women, members of scheduled castes/scheduled tribes and parents of child labour withdrawn from hazardous occupations, parents of handicapped children or adult children of handicapped parents, who are desirous of working in waged employment (Government of Orissa 2002-2003).

**Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana**

*Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana* (SGSY) is the single self-employment programme for the rural poor; it was launched on 1 April 1999 and replaced the earlier self-employment and allied programmes – Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Training of Rural Youth for Self- Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and
Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Supply of Improved Tool-Kits to Rural Artisans (SITRA), Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY) and Million Wells Scheme (MWS), which are no longer in operation. The SGSY tried to address all the strengths and weaknesses of the earlier self-employment programmes.

SGSY aimed at establishing a large number of micro-enterprises in the rural areas, offering capacity building, training, supporting in the selection of key activities (based on economic viability studies), planning of activity-based clusters, infrastructure support, technology upgrading, credit and marketing linkages. Persons assisted under this programme were known as Swarozgaris and not beneficiaries. A significant aspect of SGSY is that it was envisaged that every family assisted would be brought above the poverty-line in three years and, as such, the programme aimed at creating substantial additional incomes for the rural poor, proposing to cover 30% of the rural poor in each block in the next five years. The programme was designed to provide proper support and encouragement to tap the inherent talents and capabilities of the rural poor and intended to target at least 50% SCs/STs, 40% women and 3% disabled.

It is a holistic programme of micro-enterprises covering all aspects of self-employment, emphasising activity clusters based on the resources and occupational skills of the people and availability of markets. The selection of key activities occurred with the approval of the Panchayat Samitis at the block level and the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA)/Zilla Parishad (ZP) at the district level. Individual Swarozgaris were identified through a participatory process, but activities were taken up in suitable clusters to enable extension of appropriate facilities and the establishment of backward and forward linkages. The major share of SGSY assistance was in activity clusters, adopting a project approach for each key activity and implementing a group approach, involving the organisation of the poor into self-help groups (SHGs) and their capacity building. Efforts were made to involve women members in each SHG and group activity was given preference and, progressively, the majority of the funding went to self-help groups. In each Panchayat Samiti, at least half of the groups would be exclusively women groups and the Gram Sabha will authenticate the list of families below the poverty-line identified in the Below Poverty Line (BPL) census.

SGSY is a credit-cum-subsidy programme; credit was the critical component in the programmer, with subsidy being only an enabling element. Accordingly, SGSY envisaged
a greater involvement of the banks in the planning and preparation of projects, identification of activity clusters, infrastructure planning as well as capacity building and choice of activity of the SHGs, selection of individual Swarozgaris, pre-credit activities and post-credit monitoring including loan recovery. It sought to promote multiple credit rather than a one-time ‘injection’ and the credit requirement of the Swarozgaris was carefully assessed and they were encouraged to increase their intake over the years. Special emphasis was laid on skill development of the Swarozgaris, especially in the areas of technology and marketing needs, with the programme providing promotion of marketing of the goods produced by them. The SGSY was implemented by the DRDAs through the Panchayat Samitis and the process of planning, implementation and monitoring integrated the banks and other financial institutions, the PRIs, NGOs as well as technical institutes in the districts.

The progress under this scheme is still reviewed by the government in terms of targets – in monetary terms, as the expenditure of funds allocated for the programmes and in numerical terms, as the number of groups/individuals assisted. Main activities identified and taken up in all districts under this scheme are: dairy, minor irrigation, leaf plate making, pisciculture, food grain processing, agro-service centres, poultry, value additions for minor forest produce, vegetable cultivation, etc. Gender segregated data for these activities are not available.

**Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission**

The Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) was introduced in 1972-73 by the Government of India to assist the States and Union Territories to increase the pace of coverage of drinking water supply. The programme was given a missionary approach with the launch of the Technology Mission of Drinking Water and Related Water Management, also called the National Drinking Water Mission (NDWM) in 1986. The NDWM was re-named the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission (RGNDWM) in 1991.

Rural water supply being a State subject, State governments implemented the rural water supply programme under the minimum needs programme (MNP). The Central Government, through the RGNDWM, supplements the efforts of the State governments by providing assistance under the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme. The
salient features of the revised policy for implementation of Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme during the Ninth Plan period are:

(a) The present allocation criteria of funds under ARWSP to the States based on normative criteria should be replaced with a need-based approach. The States having large number of ‘not covered’ and ‘quality affected habitations’ and which are in drought prone, desert regions and hard rock areas would get more allocation than the States well endowed with water resources;
(b) Decentralisation of powers to the States for implementation of Sub-Mission programmes;
(c) Enhancing ceiling for Operation and Maintenance from the present level of 10% to 15% of the annual plan allocation;
(d) Providing 100% funds for the nascent programmes, such as Human Resource Development (HRD), Research & Development (R&D), Information Education Communication (IEC) and Management Information System;
(e) Institutionalising community based demand driven rural water supply programme with cost sharing instruments by communities, gradually replacing the current supply-driven, centrally-maintained non-people participating rural water supply programme; and
(f) Institutionalising water quality monitoring and surveillance systems.

Out of 1.43 million rural habitations in the country, 1.40 million habitations have now access to safe drinking water (RGNDWM, 2001) and greater efforts are being made for ensuring sustainability of the facilities provided under the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme by initiating action to institutionalise community-based rural water supply programme, with special emphasis on areas affected by quality problems due to excess fluoride, arsenic, iron and other pollutants.

Rural Housing
Indira Awaas Yojana
To meet the housing needs of the rural poor, Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) was started in May 1985 as a sub-scheme of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. From 1 January 1996 it is being implemented as an independent scheme, aiming to help rural people below poverty-line in the construction of dwelling units and upgrading of existing unserviceable kutchha houses (from the year 1999-2000), by providing grants-in-aid.

Salient features of the scheme are: allotment of the house is done in the name of the female member of the household or in the joint names of husband and wife; a minimum of 60% of funds are to be utilised for construction of houses for the SC/ST people; sanitary latrine and smokeless chulah are integral to an IAY house. Selection of beneficiaries under IAY is done by the Gram Sabha, whilst the selection of construction technology, materials and design is left entirely to the beneficiaries.
Credit-cum-Subsidy Scheme for Rural Housing
The Credit-cum-Subsidy Scheme for Rural Housing launched with effect from 1 April 1999 and has been conceived for rural households below poverty-line; its salient features are: subsidies for eligible households; loans for households; sanitary latrines and smokeless *chulhas* are integral part of the house.

Innovative Stream for Rural Housing and Habitat Development
With a view to encouraging the use of cost effective, environment-friendly, scientifically tested and proven indigenous and modern designs, technologies and materials, a scheme called Innovative Stream for Rural Housing and Habitat Development has been launched with effect from 1 April 1999. The objective of the scheme is to promote/propagate innovative and proven housing technologies, designs and materials in the rural areas.

Rural Building Centres
The Rural Building Centre Movement, popularly known as the *Nirmithi* Movement, started 1985 in Kerala; its aims were technology transfer, information dissemination, skill upgrading through training and production of cost-effective, environment friendly building components. The centres were involved in transfer of technology from lab. to land; they could be set up by the State government, rural development agencies, credible NGOs, private entrepreneurs, professional associations, autonomous institutions and corporate bodies including public sector agencies.

Samagra Awaas Yojana
*Samagra Awaas Yojana* is a comprehensive housing scheme launched with a view to ensuring integrated provision of shelter, sanitation and drinking water; its basic objective is to improve the quality of life of the people as well as the overall habitat in the rural areas. The scheme specifically aimed at enhancing the convergence of various rural development activities, such as the construction of houses, sanitation facilities and drinking water schemes and ensuring their effective implementation by suitable and sustainable induction of technology, IEC and innovative ideas. In the first phase, the scheme was implemented in one block each of 25 districts in 24 States and one Union Territory. Intended beneficiaries under the scheme are the rural poor, preferably those below the poverty line.
Centrally Sponsored Rural Sanitation Programme

Rural sanitation is a State subject; the State Governments implement the Rural Sanitation Programme under State sector Minimum Needs Programme (MNP); the Central Government supplements the States’ efforts, providing financial and technical assistance through the Centrally-Sponsored Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP). It was launched in 1986, with the objective of improving the quality of life of the rural people and to provide privacy and dignity to women. The concept of sanitation was expanded in 1993 to include personal hygiene, home sanitation, safe water, garbage and waste disposal and waste water disposal. The components of the programme include construction of individual sanitary latrines for households below the poverty-line (BPL), conversion of individual sanitary latrines, construction of village sanitary complexes for women, setting up of sanitary marts, intensive campaign for awareness creation and health education, etc.

The objective of the programme is to accelerate coverage of rural population, especially among BLP households with sanitation facilities, complementing the efforts in Rural Water Supply. Generation of felt-need through awareness creation and health education, involving voluntary organisations and Panchayati Raj Institutions, eradication of manual scavenging by converting all existing dry latrines into low cost sanitary latrines and encouraging cost-effective and appropriate technologies to support other objectives.

The salient features of the Rural Sanitation Programme, which was revised during the Ninth Plan period were:

(a) To raise sanitation coverage to at least 50% by Ninth Plan,
(b) Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) in select districts with 50% allocation during first year
(c) Balance 50% for existing ‘allocation-based’ programme
(d) Switch over from ‘allocation-based’ programme to a ‘demand-driven’ one
(e) Shift from ‘high subsidy to low subsidy regime’
(f) Greater beneficiary participation and private sector involvement
(g) Active participation of NGOs/cooperative institutions, etc.
(h) Emphasis on school sanitation and
(i) Increased technological options and adoption of “Vertical upgrading” concept.

National Social Assistance Programme

The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) came into force on 15 August 1995 to provide social assistance to poor households, including three benefits:

(i) National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) - Central assistance to persons who were aged 65 years or more and were destitute;
(ii) National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) - Central assistance was available as a lump sum family benefit for households below the poverty line on the death of the primary bread winner between the ages of 18 and 65 in the bereaved family;
(iii) National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) - Central assistance was available to pregnant women belonging to households below poverty line up to the first two live births, provided they are 19 years of age and above. A lump sum cash assistance was disbursed several weeks prior to the delivery or even after the birth of the child.

**Drought-Prone Areas Programme**

The Drought-Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) was started in 1970 with the following objectives:

(i) to minimise the adverse effects of drought on production of crops and livestock and productivity of land, water and human resources through integrated development of the natural resources base of the area by adoption of appropriate technologies;
(ii) to conserve, develop and harness land, water and other natural resources including rainfall for restoration of ecological balance in the long run; and
(iii) to improve the economic and social condition of the resource poor and disadvantaged sections of society.

Since 1995-96, a new approach based on watershed development has been adopted and watershed development projects have been sanctioned for implementation in 13 States through local communities. The programme also aims at restoring the ecological balance by harnessing, conserving and developing natural resources, i.e. land, water, vegetative cover and raising land productivity.

**Desert Development Programme**

The Desert Development Programme (DDP) was started in the year 1977-78, in the hot desert areas of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Haryana and the cold desert areas of Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. The thrust of the programme is capacity building and empowerment of the village community, ensuring participation of Panchayati Raj Institutions and NGOs in the programme implementation at grassroots level and transfer of funds as well as decision-making power to local people.

**Wastelands Development**

The Integrated Wastelands Development Project (IWDP) has been under implementation since 1989-90; from 1 April 1995, the scheme is being implemented on a watershed basis under new guidelines for Watershed Development of the Government of India. The Scheme also helps in generating employment in rural areas and enhancing people’s participation in the wastelands development programmes.
**Land Reforms**

The Land Reforms Policy adopted since Independence aims at restructuring agrarian relations to achieve an egalitarian social structure, the elimination of exploitation in land relations; realising the age-old goal of land to the tiller; increasing agricultural productivity and production and infusing equality in local institutions.

The aim of Land Reforms (LR) in the successive Five Year Plans is the fulfilment of all the principles of the National Land Reforms Policy consisting of the following objectives: abolition of intermediary tenures; tenancy reforms; ceiling on agricultural holdings and re-distribution of surplus land; and updating and maintenance of land records.

Additionally, about 0.88 million hectare of *Bhoodan* land and 5.97 million hectares of wasteland have been distributed. Legislative provisions have been made for the consolidation of holdings and 64.08 million hectares of land has been consolidated so far. One significant area of modernisation is the Government decision to initiate computerisation of land records; at present, the scheme is being implemented in all districts of the country except those where land records are not maintained.

**De-centralisation: Panchayati Raj**

**Historical Perspectives**

In the 1882 Resolution on Local Self Government, Lord Ripon underlined the practical importance of local self-government (Venkatarangaiya & Pattabhiram 1969). The 1909 Royal Commission on De-centralisation went a step further, making a powerful plea for the village as the basic unit of local self government, as had been the custom in the past. The Commission also recommended that the village panchayats be used for the administration of certain village affairs.

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report (approved by the British Parliament, enacted in 1919) on Constitutional Reforms followed this up by linking the domain of local self-government to the process of achieving ‘responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire’ (as quoted in Houghton 1919, p. 226; Reed 1926, p. 195). The

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75 The operational part of the Resolution said: *‘The Government of India desires, then, that while maintaining and extending, as far as practicable, the plan of municipal government in the cities and towns of each province, the Local Governments will also maintain and extend throughout the country, in every district where intelligent non-official agency can be found, a network of local boards, to be charged with definite duties and entrusted with definite funds’* (Venkatarangaiya & Pattabhiram 1969, p. 115).
Report (as quoted in Mehta, N.D. 1928, p. 372) recommended that local bodies be ‘as representative as possible of the people whose affairs they are called on to administer’, that the powers entrusted to them should be ‘real and not nominal’, and that they ‘should not be subjected to unnecessary control, but should learn by making mistakes and profiting by them’.

In a Memorandum submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission (better known as the Simon Commission, appointed in 1927 to enquire into the steps taken to edge closer to responsible government), the Government of India made the following statement:

Local self-government in India, in the sense of a representative organisation, responsible to a body of electors, enjoying wide powers of administration and taxation, and functioning both as a school for training in responsibility and a vital link in the chain of organisms that make up the government of the country, is a British creation. The ancient village communities were constituted on a narrow basis of hereditary privilege or caste, closely restricted on the scope of their duties – collection of revenue and protection of life and property were their main functions – and were neither conscious instruments of political education nor important parts of the administrative system (Simon 1930).

Panchayats have been the backbone of the Indian villages since Independence, especially in Orissa, which has been a pioneer state in the implementation of the system. In 1946, Gandhiji aptly remarked that Indian Independence must begin at the bottom and every village ought to be a Republic or Panchayat, having powers. Gandhiji’s dream was translated into reality with the introduction of the three-tier Panchayat Raj system to ensure people’s participation in rural reconstruction.

The 1948 Orissa Gram Panchayat Act was the first legislation prescribing constitution, power and functioning of Gram Panchayats in the state. The initial plans were to phase in the Panchayats across the whole state, with a provision to withdraw should circumstance necessitate such action; this experiment did not succeed because people in villages were misled by negative propaganda that it would lead to additional taxes without appreciable benefits at the local level. Government, therefore, adopted a scheme of establishing Panchayat covering an entire district or sub-division effectively from year 1952-53. Panchayats are formed in a single village with a minimum population of 1,500 or in a group of villages having a minimum of 1,000 inhabitants. The three-tier system of PRIs was formed in 1951 covering the entire state; while initially under the administrative control of Health and Local Self Government Department (1950), in 1956 they came under the newly constituted Political and Services Department, later designated as the
Planning and Coordination Department. In 1962, a new Community Development and Panchayati Raj Department was formed, in 1975 again renamed as the Community Development and Social Welfare Department and later the Community Development and Rural Reconstruction Department. It was in 1994, that its Welfare activities were separated to form the Women and Child Development Department, whilst the independent Panchayati Raj Department remained, mandated to monitor district (zilla parishad level) rural development agencies responsible for the implementation of poverty eradication programmes and the implementation of the programmes at the lower levels of governance (panchayats samitis and gram panchayats) (Government of Orissa 2003-2004). Presently, 30 Zilla Parishads (District level), 314 Panchayat Samitis (Block level) and 6,234 Gram Panchayats (Village level) are managed by 107,784 popularly elected representatives. As a first step towards devolution of powers, 21 subjects of 11 Departments, have been transferred to Panchayati Raj Institutions and the functionaries of the said Departments will be ‘accountable’ to the PRIs at different levels for the implementation of the subjects/schemes transferred to the PRIs (Government of Orissa 2003-2004). This development is very much in its nascent stage and requires extensive capacity building of elected representatives if it is to attain its true objective of local self governance.

The Constitution of India 73rd and 74th Amendments

In the post-Independence period, the draft Constitution of India failed to find a place for ‘popularly elected panchayats’. The demand to revise the draft was sought to be met by addition of Article 40 among the Directive Principles of State Policy, which states that ‘the state shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government’ (Government of India 1951), was adopted unanimously. The aim was to provide a definite and unequivocal direction for the state to take steps to organise panchayats (Mathur & Narain 1969). The tragic fact is, however, that this ‘definite and unequivocal direction’ for the entire structure of self-government was ignored by the authorities in the first forty years (1950-90) of the adoption of the Constitution, that is, until the 73rd and 74th amendments. Some sporadic and indifferent steps were taken by some of the state governments to organise Panchayats, but they were invariably denied any meaningful powers and authority and, worst of all, the elections were seldom held at 5-year intervals as required. This deplorable state of affairs was an affront to the
Constitution (Article 40) and there was growing demand in the country for a definite constitutional mandate to secure periodical and regular elections to Panchayats, just as in the case of Parliament and State Assemblies.

The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India, dated 24 April 1993, directed all state legislatures to amend their respective Panchayat legislation to conform to the Constitution Amendment, within one year. All the states complied and adopted new Panchayat legislation by 23 April 1994 and by April 1995 all the states were expected to complete decisions on new Panchayats - and those who delayed ran the risk of losing central government assistance, as announced by the Prime Minister.

The features of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act are as follows:

- Panchayats shall have a uniform five-year term and elections to constitute new bodies shall be completed before the expiry of the term. In the event of dissolution, elections will be compulsorily held within six months.
- In all the Panchayats, seats shall be reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in proportion to their population and one-third of the total number of seats will be reserved for women. One-third of the offices of chairpersons of Panchayats at all levels shall also be reserved for women.
- Offices of the chairpersons of the Panchayats shall be reserved in favour of SCs and STs in proportion to their population in the State.
- The Gram Sabha will be a body comprising all the adult members registered as voters in the Panchayat area.

Current Realities

The process of participation is complex—and it is by no means clear that it is comprehensively inclusive; it is not possible to assume that all sections of the population take part effectively in the political and democratic processes of society as there are many reasons why people may not participate—from apathy to a sense of helplessness.

Panchayat Raj as a form of de-centralisation at the grassroots level, has the main responsibility to accelerate the pace of development and involve all people in this process, so that the felt-needs of the people and their development aspirations are fulfilled.

The First Five Year Plan Document (Government of India 1952chapter X) emphasised:

*We believe that Panchayats will be able to perform its civic functions satisfactorily only if those associated with an active process of development in which the village panchayat is itself given an effective part. Unless a village agency can assume responsibility and initiative for developing the resources of the village, it will be*
difficult to make a marked impression on rural life, for only a village organisation representing the community as a whole can provide the necessary leadership.

In more recent times, following the international trend where the policy emphasis is on strengthening local governments, the Government of India Task Force on Decentralisation (2001) stated, ‘Decentralization in the context of Panchayats means that when authority...is transferred from the state to the local governments, the latter should have the prerogative of taking decisions...(on the) planning and implementation of such activity’. Fifty years after Independence, action to endow local governments with significant resource generation and increased expenditure autonomy remains rhetoric.

There are over three million elected local representatives, making this the widest democratic base in the world; of these three million, one-third are, by law, women. Unless specific conditions are met, women face multiple hurdles and find it difficult to participate in the political process that has hitherto been a male bastion. The reasons for this are gender specific; women are less mobile than men are, they have domestic responsibilities putting limits on the time they can spend in such processes. There are also historical prejudices, so that consistent efforts will have to be made over a period of time to engender the political process, institutions and issues that are critical to this process.

**Perceived Benefits and Costs of De-centralisation**

De-centralisation is viewed as a panacea for many of the ills afflicting society; it is often perceived as a means to improve service delivery, involve a greater proportion of the population in governance and increase revenue mobilisation (Bahl 1999; Bird 1999). In contrast, arguments against de-centralisation have focused on the reduced ability of the central governments to implement macro-economic stabilisation programmes, efficiency losses due to the poor capacity of local governments to undertake the functions assigned to them and the potential for increased corruption (Prud'homm 1995; Tanzi 1996, 2001).

The Ashok Mehta Committee Report (1977, p. 9) had listed the positive achievements of the Panchayati Raj system as follows:

‘politically speaking, it has made the average citizen more conscious of his/her rights than before. Administratively speaking, it bridged the gulf between the bureaucratic elite and the people. Socio-culturally speaking, it generated a new leadership, which was not merely relatively young in age but also modernistic and pro-social change in outlook. Finally, looked at from the developmental angle, it helped rural people cultivate a developmental psyche’.
Despite these merits, there has been a tendency to view Indian society from a typical western worldview, claiming that social relationships in rural India historically were mainly vertical and that, through Panchayat Raj, they have increasingly become horizontal. This binary view somehow strips Indian society of its complexity, thus making us bask in the assumed glorious achievements of the Panchayat Raj system.

**Obstacles to De-centralisation**

Why has so little de-centralisation actually taken place in India, in spite of the embarrassingly frequent affirmation that it is a good thing and must be brought about?

Discussions on de-centralised planning show that considerable ambiguity exists about the concept itself. At least three ‘wrong’ notions about de-centralised planning can be easily identified; the first may be referred to as the ‘romantic’ approach, arising from an almost ideological commitment to localism per-se along the ‘small is beautiful’ philosophical track. Other often implicit assumptions are that the ‘locality’ has well-defined economic boundaries within which the planner has complete freedom and that villages are self-contained and self-sufficient communities forming the basic unit of the Indian economy and polity. As Panchayats were assumed to be the administrative bodies of these little republics, it followed that the village must be the primary unit of de-centralised planning and the Panchayats the natural agencies for the task.

The Ashok Mehta Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions (1977) examined two crucial aspects of the traditional, romantic notion of the little republics; based on the 1971 census, the Committee showed, first of all, that as many as 26% of Indian villages had a population of less than 200 and another 29% had populations of between 200 and 499; in other words, over 50% had a ceiling population of 500 persons. Moreover, 92% had a population of less than 2,000 inhabitants, making it difficult to think of such tiny habitations as either self-contained or self-sufficient, although geographically, many might well be isolated. In any case, such tiny units hardly qualify to be the primary units for planning in any meaningful sense.

Secondly, the Committee called attention to the wide variety of changes that had taken place since Independence, noting that ‘administrative, technological, social and structural changes and innovations (had) begun to penetrate rural India and make a dent into its
traditional concept of changelessness’ (p 11). The Committee saw rural development becoming ‘essentially a two-way flow process with extra-local finances, and technical expertise and institutional supervision flowing into the villages and individual villagers belonging to all sections of the rural economy and rural society’. Village products would flow increasingly to other rural as well as non-rural localities. In this situation, an essential component of local-level planning in the future would be development management, ‘under conditions of rapid changes, continuous growth and sustained innovations in all spheres of rural life’ (pp 27-28).

Women and Community Development: Past State Initiatives

In the Indian context, in the past and at present, there is no alternative to the State in development work as it has at its disposal great resources, a mandate (as laid out in the Constitution and the various plan proposals) and an implementing agency and administrative mechanisms, mostly out of reach of any other agency.

Central to this debate is whether the policy approaches adopted by the State were beneficial to women in overcoming their subjugated situation or whether the very processes adopted by the State marginalised them even more. Have women been empowered by the previously discussed approaches or are they left more vulnerable than before, not only in economic terms but also in other dimensions of their lives? Looking back, until the Fifth Plan there was no effort to see women as human or productive entities, nor in terms of their roles in productive activities. The statistical ‘purdah’ concealed the full extent of their participation and their contribution to the national domestic product, rendering them invisible persons to the policy planners (Bandyopadhyay 2000).

The participants of the ILO Asian Regional Seminar (1982) concluded that the prevailing models of development tended to work to the detriment of poor rural women, denying them due recognition as producers and contributing to a growing polarisation and alienation. The commercialisation of agriculture and other non-farm activities tended to displace female labour, thus reducing their access to various resources. It was stated that improper and insufficient investment in the interests of poor women in rural areas resulted in migration in search of work.
In a subsistence economy, which is for much of India’s population still the major mode of production, the basic necessity is the availability of and the access to fundamental needs such as adequate food, clothing, shelter and primary health care. The development component, both economic and political, failed to create the necessary resources or the conditions for women to exercise their agency in their attempts to get their entitlements. Half the population – women - were effectively marginalised as their agricultural roles and tasks were redefined (Mies & Shiva 1993).

In the initial stage of planning, it was assumed, in the fashion of the proponents of the trickle-down theories, that the benefits of development would ultimately reach the poorest and most vulnerable sections of the society and that benefits accrued to men would also percolate to women resulting in improved status and gender equality. The trickle-down theory has been shown to be based on faulty assumptions and periodic evaluations of each plan in India have shown similarly. Evidence of this emerged by the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) and, as a consequence, a Minimum Needs Programme was incorporated into the Fifth Plan design. While the household was considered as the unit of analysis and benefits were targeted towards the household within the larger patriarchal framework, a gender perspective was not adopted to look at the contentious manner in which family was defined or at the specific needs of women and to address those issues that were responsible for inequities in the intra-familial allocation of and control over resources.

The celebration of the International Year of the Woman in 1975 led to the passing of a resolution in the Indian Parliament to initiate comprehensive programmes for women. Similar lacunae were spelt out in the review of the Sixth Plan document, however, in that women, minorities and the rural poor were lagging behind in terms of incremental development. For the first time, a chapter on women and development was included in the Sixth Plan document. It stressed economic independence, giving of joint titles to husbands and wives in all asset transfers and a public policy package included ownership rights and enforcement of wage laws. While the Sixth Plan (1980-85) adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with a three-pronged thrust on health, education and employment, it specifically declared that, ‘a fair share of employment opportunities would have to be created through poverty alleviation programmes’ (Government of India 1979, p. 3). The approach in this instance was rather simplistic and based on the assumption that weaker sections of society
were lagging behind in terms of incremental development. There was still an economic focus in the assumption that employment and income generation would automatically lead to improvement in the status of women, as evidenced in the many programmes that were implemented thereafter – the integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Development of Women and Children of Rural Areas (DWCRA) and Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM). The IRDP has been described as a typical example of the tangled thinking marking the official approach towards women’s betterment as subsidised loans were given to procure assets, which were really of no relevance to the issues faced by a poor rural woman.

Similarly, tailoring training and sewing machines were made available, but at the end it was found that there was no market for a trained woman’s tailoring skills in the area (as poverty levels in the community in general would not allow for such an enterprise to thrive) or the women had to pawn-off or sell their sewing machines to meet other emergencies, such as the cost of illnesses. The basis for women’s poverty - their social vulnerability - was not addressed and training was often a non-viable economic activity.

DWCRA was introduced in the middle of the Sixth Plan, specially targeting rural women. Starting with 50 districts, this revolving grant scheme, by the end of the Eighth Plan, covered 291 districts. With the Central and State Governments and UNICEF each contributing one third of the seed money, this programme emphasized collective-based activities for women beneficiaries to engage in, rather than the previous experiment of granting aid to individual women, which had failed. In 1996-97, with the withdrawal of UNICEF funds as planned, the State Government’s funding presented a bottleneck because of a resources crunch and the scheme seemed threatened. Although the group focus meant to ensure that peer pressure would improve timely repayment of loans without default, the uncertainty has led to a lot of anxiety. The allocations for various other schemes such as the JRY and IRDP were similarly cut during the 1990s following economic liberalisation and structural adjustment programmes, leading to the decline of commitment to gender equality policies.

DWCRA’s success in meeting its income generation objectives, however, was not due to the group formation per se, but because of the proportion of groups that took up income generation activities. The populist foundations of these programmes were evident in the statement made in the preparatory document of the Beijing Conference (Joint Women’s
Programme 1995, p 8) which pointed out that several social sector programmes were ‘found to be seriously flawed on many counts – they are totally inadequate in terms of numbers reached, they do not reach the target group, and are being used as an instrument of political patronage’.

The Support for Employment for Women Programme (STEP) also faced a similar fate; employment and income generation targets were not met and gains registered did not translate into an improved status of women. A number of procedural issues were intimidating to women and more so to rural illiterate women. The records to be maintained by providers of services were numerous and tedious and the modest resources allocated were, therefore, not optimally utilised. The government ‘grants-in-aid’ schemes for mahila mandals to encourage women to be self-reliant and to run training-cum-production centres were also failures as the benefits accrued were not commensurate with the inputs.

The government’s approach to the dominant problems of inequalities in society, based on caste and gender disparities, is typified by the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) programme in which the focus is on creating work for community asset formation (such as water tanks, irrigation canals, etc). The programme provides for the village sarpanch (head) to be the supervisor – a proviso which does not take into account the fact that a sarpanch from a dominant caste may not be interested in, or committed to, the issue at hand. Moreover, in case of any malpractices in implementation, ‘the development commissioner is to be contacted’ (the guidelines say) – but the crux of the problem is that the disadvantaged are inhibited and feel intimidated by the unequal power relations vis-à-vis the bureaucracy and neither an improvement in the economic condition nor the expected socio-cultural transformation do occur.

An Employee Guarantee Scheme through Shramshakti (voluntary community labour) was introduced specifically for women from the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities below the poverty line. This programme calls for at least 50 workers to make themselves available every day. Those unable to muster the number for any reason become, under the rules, ineligible for assistance even if they need and qualify for it individually.
The Seventh Plan (1985-90) introduced women’s targets in mixed programmes in an attempt to mainstream women and development, whilst the Eighth Plan (1992-97) emphasised women’s equal participation in development and economic independence. These plans noted that the benefits accrued to women were ‘not commensurate with the inputs made’.

Two important schemes launched in 1993 were Mahila Rashtriya Kosh, the Women’s National Fund, to meet the credit needs of women, and Mahila Samriddhi Yojna to inculcate the habit of thrift among rural women. The task of creating a sense of awareness, particularly among the rural women, to enable them to become active participants in the process of social transformation and regeneration has been entrusted to the Indira Mahila Yojna. Under the Mahila Samriddhi Yojna scheme, a woman who deposits Rs.300/- in a post office account for a year, receives an incentive bonus of Rs.75/- (25%). This is, at the core, still a welfare-oriented intervention and only partially leads to empowerment, as whilst addressing the economic empowerment of women, it does not respond to the *intra-household gender inequities*.

This led to the creation of a separate Ministry for Women and Children in 1984, after three planning groups of the Government of India had identified issues relating to the advancement of rural women:

- The core group on Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) 1976,
- The working group on the development of village level organisation of rural women, and
- The National Committee on the role and participation of rural women in agriculture and rural development.

In addition to the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995, these initiatives supported the formulation of a draft policy by the Ministry of Human Resources Development (1997) to address the issues of women’s empowerment. The main issues raised were:

<table>
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<th>Main Issues</th>
<th>Components</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Women and the Developmental Process</strong></td>
<td>Mainstream women into development policies, programmes and systems as catalysts, participants and recipients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poverty Eradication and Basic Needs</strong></td>
<td>Macro economic policies and poverty eradication programmes to address needs and problems of the poorest women</td>
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<td>New programmes based on mobilisation of poor women and</td>
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convergence of services, through a range of economic and social options and support services

| **Economy:** | Institutionalisation of women’s participation in design and implementation of macro-economic and social policies  
Development of employment-related policies, based on recognition of women’s contribution to socio-economic development as producers and workers in informal and formal sectors  
Redefinition of conventional concepts of work in census records, etc., to reflect women’s contributions as workers and producers |
| **Education:** | Equal access to education  
Priority to development of occupation/vocational/technical skills of women |
| **Environment:** | Increased participation of women and inclusion of perspectives in policies and programmes for eco-systems management |
| **Support services:** | Expansion and improvement of support services such as childcare, crèches at work and training centres, etc. |
| **Resources:** | Increased funding for Women and Child Development Department and earmarking in budgets of other Departments, e.g.: RD, Labour, Science and Technology, etc. |
| **Involvement of NGOs:** | Involvement of voluntary and women’s organisations, NGOs, trade unions, etc. in all stages of policies and programmes that affect women |
| **Gender development indices and gender disaggregated data:** | Development of indices to support planning, implementation, etc., of policies, plans, laws and programmes and to determine ‘gender just’ resource allocation  
Collection and publication of sex disaggregated data by all government ministries and departments, corporations, banks, etc. |

The community development programme launched in 1952 failed in its aim of channelling community efforts and uniting the same with those of the government towards generating an enduring base of development. Only the rural elite derived advantages from this scheme, because of access to information and familiarity with the procedures for accessing facilities, which crucially, the illiterate poor lack.

During all the plans, ‘progress’ had been measured in tangible terms, that is, through infrastructure or utilisation of funds. Although it was recognised at the end of each Plan period that the outcomes of programmes were not commensurate with the efforts and the needs of the targeted populations, no alternative methods and/or strategies were considered. Under the Ninth Plan, this responsibility was passed to the NGOs. There is a total lack of sensitivity to the perspectives of the rural poor in the government approach, as income generating programmes do not have a good marketing network to market the products and, therefore, do not benefit the producers, as they become open to exploitation by middlemen. The purpose of the programme - economic empowerment - does not
occur. About all the government programmes and interventions had little or no understanding of community participation and continued to treat people as ‘targets’/’beneficiaries’ and not as participants or decision makers.

**Non-economic measures**

Article 15 of the Constitution empowers the State to enact legislation to protect women and promote the welfare and progress of persons belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribe. These legislations were aimed at giving the weaker community sections greater clout to assert and claim their legitimate entitlements, irrespective of sex or caste. The rural poor have, nonetheless, been bypassed by these legislations, as they have neither the information nor the machinery to claim their entitlements or dues under the law (minimum wages, maintenance following desertion). Also the fact that 94% of working women are in the unorganised sector makes it difficult to enforce or monitor legal provisions in practice. It is still another matter that the government itself flouts the law by paying less than the statutory minimum wage for labour recruited under the food-for-work programmes for relief. Similarly, the law on child marriages is also flouted all the time because of the lack of awareness and deep-seated social customs.

The National Perspective Plan cites the following reasons for the chasm between the letter of the law and what happens in reality - ‘Lack of comprehension of the relevance of women’s development to national development’ along with ‘half heartedness in implementation’.

The National Perspective Plan for women was drawn up as a long-term action blueprint during 1998-2000, but women’s groups have pointed out several shortcomings in its approach, coverage and methodology. Likewise, the National Commission for Women, set up in 1992 following an Act of the Parliament, could only take up specific complaints of discrimination against women, but has no clout to award punishment. Suggestions to this effect are still pending and amendments to the Acts are not considered important or of priority.

**Women and Panchayat Raj**

For centuries, women have been part of the traditionally deprived sections of society in India and attempts to open access to power and resources for them as part of a wider democratisation process are very much in order. It must, however, be recognised that the
task is difficult in view of the age-old attitudes and structures which have been used to keep women in subjugation. Achieving any measure of success on this front calls for carefully negotiating the extremely complex, segmented, stratified hierarchical social order which has served as the source of denial of any kind of agency and power to women along with the other socially and economically deprived sections of the Indian society (Raman 1999).

The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution has been considered as a hallmark in the empowerment of women, making it mandatory for local governments to include women. Around one million women have been elected as decision makers at the Panchayat level (Vyasulu & Vyasulu 1999; Mathew & Buch 2000). The experiences of the elected women representatives, however, have been both positive and disheartening. Positively, ‘these new women in panchayats reported increase in self-confidence, change in lifestyle, awareness about critical need of education and increased concern for village development’ (Vyasulu & Vyasulu 1999). A study conducted by PRIA (2000, p. 2) reveals that ‘…25% women notice and remark on the visible change in their status within their family after they have been elected …about 60% of women said that they would encourage women to stand for elections and an equal percentage is contemplating to contest PRI elections again’. The Working Group on De-centralised Planning and PRIs observed on this issue that ‘one of the significant achievements of the provisions of the 73rd Amendment Act concerning reservation of seats and political offices in favour of women and the disadvantaged sections of the rural community is that it has improved their awareness and perception levels and has created an urge in them to assert their rightful share in the decision making process at the local level’ (Government of India 2001).

Most women members are not equipped with the necessary tools to take on such a role and end up being mere pawns at the hands of their husbands; they are not treated on a par, both by their male colleagues and officials and their views are undervalued on many occasions. Many women did not come forward to contest the election because they lacked formal qualifications and anticipated communication problems with officials in addressing the grievances of their constituents (Panchayati Raj update, 1997). The large expenditure on elections makes it difficult for women with minimum independent economic resources to participate, but completely eliminates poor women from
participating leading to a dominance of women belonging to the upper castes and classes as elected representatives (Mishra & Gupta 1999). In addition, elected women are not yet seeing themselves as empowered and therefore lack the required confidence in asserting themselves and the community does not perceive the woman as capable, or worthy of leadership. A parliamentary bill for 30% reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and Assemblies has also been pending as the 81st Amendment. This is a contentious method of bringing about social change and may not be a sufficient condition for bringing about empowerment.

Terms like ‘empowerment’ and ‘people’s participation’ are used repeatedly in several documents, including the Plan proposals, but the mechanism for achieving them are not spelt out anywhere (other than in economic terms in some instances) and the poor, women and minorities, for whom these policies are intended, remain marginalised. The status of women in society as individuals has consistently been given low priority in all developmental plans against quantitative targets like income, employment and access to credit. The means to an end of a better quality of life have become ends in themselves. Further, it is recognised that the major cause of ineffectiveness of economic intervention projects has been the failure to simultaneously generate a concomitant momentum for social change.

Bandyopadhyay (2000, p. 2699) has summarised the response of Indian governance to the women issue as ‘one step forward, two steps back’; a Marxist view would hold that the emancipation of women would be possible only by wrecking the old patriarchal-feudal system and by the seizure of power by the peasantry, within which there would be a role for women’s associations giving effect to their own agenda. Bandyopadhyay (2000, p. 2699) further states that ‘women in our (the Indian) society suffer from a double jeopardy; under an iniquitous and unequal socio-economic order, which promotes and sanctifies exploitation and oppression, both vulnerable men and women suffer; moreover as an effect and concomitant attribute of this irrational and unethical order, women suffer greater subordination and deprivation both at home and in society’.

**Critique of the Community Development Programme**

The government sponsored CDP in India are handled by a bureaucratised community development administration. The more recently introduced democratic de-centralisation under the panchayati raj set-up uncovered hitherto unnoticed tension points and their
determinants; the problem could be summarised as one of simultaneously promoting democracy and economic development, in which the participants are very unequally placed in a highly complex social structure, which largely disallows either competition or mobility. The Panchayati Raj institutions came to be dominated by the socially or economically privileged sections of the local community and, in the process, the previously marginalised scheduled castes and tribes and other poorer groups were deprived of the benefits. The Working Group on Block Level Planning set up by the Planning Commission under the Chairmanship of M L Dantwala in 1978 observed

Our reservation about the role of the panchayati raj institutions in the formulation of micro level plans arises from the widely shared view that the weaker sections of the rural community do not feel that their interests will be fully protected under the panchayati raj institutions. A strong version of this feeling is that the leadership of the panchayati raj institutions acts as a gatekeeper and prevents the flow of benefits to the weaker sections of the rural community (Government of India 1978, p. 8).

This view has not been subscribed to by many and in fact refuted by some; EMS Namboodaripad a member of the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions (Mehta, A. 1978, p. 160) was of the opinion that

The constitution itself failed to envisage an integrated administration in which apart from the Center and the States, there will be elected bodies which will control the permanent services at the district and lower levels. Democracy at the Central and State levels, but bureaucracy at all lower levels – this is the essence of Indian polity as spelt out in the Constitution. Added to this is the fact, in the actual work of the Constitution the Center made increasing encroachments into the rights and powers of the States. This trend reached its high watermark in the 42nd amendment of the Constitution. It was with such a centralized administration as its core that the panchayats were envisaged in the Constitution and the Balwantrai Mehta Report. It is, therefore not surprising that neither the bureaucrat nor the politician at the state level is prepared to decentralize whatever power has been conferred on the State under the constitution. The point is to make a radical change in the very concept of democracy and adopt what is called a four pillar democracy.

The developmental thrust expected from these institutions was either distorted or weakened as they were ridden with factionalism; there was a considerable amount of corruption and inefficiency and rules and regulations have been often flouted by elected members resorting to favouritism. These criticisms, however, can also be applied to all levels of government.76

76 Before independence and in keeping with traditional forms of ascribed responsibility, the village headman had almost always been the senior member of the household representing the senior segment of the lineage
These were the reasons for the fall from grace of the Panchayat Raj as a form of local government and it is increasingly viewed as an institution geared at augmenting agricultural production. This can be attributed to the fact that subsequent governments had weaker links with the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi. The mounting food shortages of the mid-60s led to a re-prioritising in the Community Development Programme, resulting in an overriding emphasis on agricultural production. As a result, the comprehensive and integrated character of the Community Development Programme became de-emphasised. There was also a tendency for the consolidation of power at the level of the Central Government and the State Governments became mere pawns to the former, ensuring that the panchayat raj system did not grow and flourish. A technological orientation began to be given to agriculture by the Central Government to the detriment of both state and local governments. Panchayati raj institutions were bypassed as the central government set up its own independent administrative hierarchies to implement and monitor these programmes, even providing the finance for them.

**By way of Conclusion**

The perception of what needs to be done in a given locality should come from the people of that area, indeed from those for whom local activities are crucial. The perception should not be handed down from experts who think they know exactly what poor people need. Moreover, real needs will differ from place to place; hence, local-level planning cannot be a single package applicable to all places. As Jayal (2006, p. 15) points out ‘the quality of political participation, and therefore of public life, will be substantively transformed only when people collectively debate and deliberate upon issues of common concern, and possess the decision making powers to give effect to their shared concern’.

Common mistakes that administrators make as they form policies and allocate limited resources are, first, to assume that they have understood the needs of their clientele group and then to make decisions without that knowledge and the priorities of the communities. Community development projects with a high degree of people participation at the local

and was by and large a hereditary office. Challenges to authority invariably arose from other segments of the same caste. Post-Independence, although the situation has remained the same, there has been a transformation of the process of achieving this and political superiority is preserved by the application of new techniques. In 1967, Gould (p. 42) stated that ‘the principle of hereditary political succession had actually been denied legitimacy with the result that the perpetuation of the principle itself was only possible through a process of subterfuge, of trying to give an air of traditional sanctity to power acquired in fact through guile and coercion’. My experience in the field indicates that there is an additional element of capital being used as means of coercion.

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level are more successful in accomplishing their objectives than those that lack these characteristics (Belakere & Jayaramaiah 1997).

In this part I have discussed the discourse of development and community development in the global and local contexts. In the following part is presented the data regarding the everyday lives of women and the story of the mahila mandal in village Balipada.
PART III
Chapter Seven

Every day life in the village Balipada

In the previous chapters comprising Part Two of this thesis, I critically discussed the development and community development discourses, gradually moving from a more general to a more specific focus on India and Orissa, so as to provide sufficient context within which to better understand and interpret the empirical data I collected. This Part comprises two chapters, the first circumscribing the village Balipada in Orissa where I conducted my fieldwork, highlighting various aspects of the everyday lives of women and the second further detailing the interface between the everyday lives of women and the state-sponsored community development programs being implemented there. Given my epistemological and methodological commitments as enunciated in Part One, I did not consider it necessary to separate ‘theoretical’ pronouncements from descriptive or ‘ethnographic’ ones. Moreover, the inseparable contingencies of experience that go beyond constraints of signification – the prison houses of language and discourse, so to speak – evince the difficulty of speaking about a predicament from within it (Ganguly 2001).

In so much as the objectivity of the world can be established if there are perspectives other than our own, this chapter is an exercise of that objectivity which is intersubjective. There is a mediation, negotiation and confirmation with different and independent perspectives, which has helped us (I and the community) to arrive at some mutual agreement, a mutual sense of understanding, which has arisen from the reciprocity of individual and collective perspectives and an interchangeability of individual standpoints that are in constant flux. As Husserl has suggested, the collective human phenomena, such as culture and community are inaccessible to the individual researcher and he/she has to rely on the possibility of a human ‘interworld’, a world of shared meaning which transcends individual consciousness (Crossley 1996).

In discussing issues of theory for women in non-western contexts, Griffiths (1995) speaks of the limited usefulness of theory for a number of reasons: because it is the activity of an elite and so doesn’t reflect the concerns of the majority of women; because it can be difficult to do it justice when one doesn’t know much about the philosophical traditions
from which it emerges; and because, as abstraction, it is even more difficult to situate in its specific context than are descriptions of experience. Griffiths, (1995, p. 34) further asks, ‘where are the voices unmediated by an education in the West?’ The aim here is not to find an ‘authentic voice’ from elsewhere, but to listen to the voices that share the ‘impure’ spaces of feminist theory from different contexts.

I would like to state that, in this thesis, the subject of my study are women who have taken their place as the centre of the discourse responding to Dorothy Smith’s (as quoted in Aptheker 1989, p. 8) statement: ‘What we have not known is how to begin from our own center, how to begin from our experience, how to make ourselves as women the subjects of the…act of knowing’. In as much as I am part of this milieu, in many ways the reality reflects my own experiences; but I have also interrogated the status of this experience in order to get closer to the core of sensuous activity frozen and disguised in the husk of everyday life.

It is evident that the world of women has a vast multiplicity of facets, facets that clearly relate to the external, that is, historical and that have nothing to do with their location in time and space. While this historical context is in the background, I try to find a solution to the problem of reality from the perspective of modern consciousness; it is this other reality that haunts the everyday life. Women in village Balipada stand in the very midst of an everyday reality that is intricate, complex and difficult and in which power relations are always at work within the category of ‘women’. It is this everyday life of women that serves as a backdrop for all the foils that women engage in to escape the very difficulties they face and venture into other areas of being – the ‘paramount reality’ in Schutz’ sense, in which ‘normal life’ takes place and which persists in its massive facility even after various breakdowns in the fabric of ‘normality’. The contrary mix of ‘boredom, mystery and rationalism’ (Highmore 2002, p. 5) needs to be disentangled to figure out the everyday which is both known and unknown, comfortable and uncomfortable. The everyday temporality is experienced as anything but ‘debilitating boredom’, although it is composed of ‘routines’. This is evidenced in the text that follows in its overwhelming richness, a vast assemblage of different social worlds. In an intricate world we meet a large kaleidoscope of different milieux as that of political representatives, the persons possessing power by virtue of their social status, the women, the business people as well as the dank subterranean sphere where the out-casts have their social habitat.
De Certeau (1998, p. 9) has given me a framing of the concept of a cultural practice on which I have relied throughout:

(1) It is the more or less coherent and fluid assemblage of elements that are concrete and everyday (a gourmet menu) or ideological (religious, political), at once coming from a tradition (that of a family or a social group) and reactualized from day to day across behaviours translating fragments of this cultural device into social visibility, in the same way that the utterance translates fragments of discourse in speech. A ‘practice’ is what is decisive for the identity of a dweller or a group insofar as this identity allows him or her to take up a position in the network of social relations inscribed in the environment.

If *The Practice of Everyday Life* is an investigation of ‘the ways in which users operate’, its object ‘is not to discuss this elusive, yet fundamental subject as to make such a discussion possible’:

This goal will be possible if everyday practices, ‘ways of operating’ or doing things, no longer appear as merely the obscure background of social activity, and if a body of theoretical questions, methods, categories, and perspectives, by penetrating this obscurity, make it possible to articulate them.

de Certeau (1984, p. xi)

In order to create an alternative discourse, an oppressed group must at once shatter the self-reflective world which encircles it and, at the same time, project its own image onto history. In order to discover its own identity as distinct from that of the oppressor, it has to become visible to itself (Romazanoglu 1989; Rowbotham 1992). One needs to shed not only the ‘whitened center’ (in our case, the pseudo white centre) that homogenizes and creates a ‘universal woman’, but attempt ‘to interpret, to form patterns, to make intelligible the multiple, highly complex and ever changing ensemble of social relations in which women are lodged’ (Aptheker 1989, p. 14).

The pages of a thesis are never quite adequate to inform the reader of the intricacies of everyday life in a village in India; the complex relationships that are portrayed here are but a glimpse into a tapestry of interwoven consciousnesses. Over and above this is the impact on people’s lives of modernity in its various guises. The post-modern preoccupation with difference is a reality and yet, the commonality of interest, in maintaining community, very much determines the actions of people.

I did not enter the field with a whole range of hypotheses; rather the research is more or less inductive in nature. My task was, however, more difficult than that faced by a British Anthropologist studying tribes in Africa or the Pacific Islands; I did not have the luxury of
claiming ignorance of the society I was researching, even though the society is undergoing rapid change. Based on the epistemological framework I have adopted, the analysis also becomes selective where some issues are highlighted and others are not, although I would like to mention here that this does not mean that they have no bearing on the larger processes or have not contributed to shaping women’s realities and everyday lives. Everyday life that I observed was at one and the same time composed of ‘exceptional moments’ and the cyclical time (as unopposed to linear time) as expressed by Lefèbvre (1984). I would also like to make reference to Fabian (1983, p. ix) who writes ‘time is a carrier of significance, a form through which we define the content of relations between the Self and the Other’. In other words, time is not just a measurement but a metaphor dense in cultural meanings.

Women’s affinity with repetition and cyclical time is noted by numerous writers; de Beauvoir (1988, p. 610) claims that ‘woman clings to routine; time has for her no element of novelty, it is not a creative flow; because she is doomed to repetition, she sees in the future only a duplication of the past’. Here repetition is a sign of a woman’s enslavement in the ordinary, her association with immanence rather than transcendence. Unable to create or invent, a woman remains imprisoned within the remorseless routine of cyclical time. Lefèbvre (1984) asserts that women’s association with recurrence is also a sign of their connection to nature, emotion and sensuality, their lesser degree of estrangement from biological and cosmic rhythms. In the Indian context, André Béteille (1996b, p. 156) states that, ‘in the traditional structure, the cleavages of caste, class and power tended much more than today to run along the same grooves; the Brahmans were the landowners and they also constituted the traditional elite. This is no longer the case at present; the social system has acquired a much more dynamic character and now there is a tendency for cleavages to cut across one another’.

The sharpness of the traditional cleavages, however, continues to be reflected in the settlement patterns of the villages; where caste groups were divided along not only ritual lines, but also economic and political life, it seemed natural for them to live separate lives which were cohesive amongst themselves. Presently, many areas of life are becoming caste free and women are constantly being subjected to the vagaries of these changes. While education has brought significant change to the society, it has had little influence on the settlement patterns of the village. Education has not only provided greater
opportunities to all caste groups in the competitive labour market, it has also provided them with more equal chances of political participation.

Land has also become a commodity with exchange value and thereby freed production from the structures of caste. Probably the greatest impact on the social life of a village is produced by the changes in the distribution of power, which is no longer related only to caste, but the emergence of new bases of power is related to the creation of new structures, which are - at least formally - independent of caste. The formal structure of rules and laws has, to a large extent, altered/weakened the role of caste in politics. On the other hand, new forms of convergences and coalitions are emerging around caste lines within politics as well.

The compression of time and space is characteristic of the process of modernisation, leading to the constant interplay between globalising influences, on the one hand, and personal dispositions, on the other. It has loosened the boundaries of traditional structures and provided greater personal choice to the individual. Privileges that were previously concentrated in one group are now dispersed and new social strata have emerged and have appropriated/accumulated wealth, power and prestige. Kirby (1996, p. 5) suggests that ‘space is a slippery entity that filters through the screen between such categories as the psychic, the social and the physical. It is an objective material and a site for inserting the subjective. It flows across the walls between the domains supposedly ‘inside’ language and the world we imagine to be ‘outside’ language’.

The village is the space, an inhabited area where institutions and relations affect and produce the subjectivities of those who dwell within it, more particularly the women, my focus in this thesis. The women’s outdoor clothes and permissible behaviour or otherwise were a means by which the private lives of women - their seclusion - extended beyond the four walls of the house. Space should be considered as a dynamic and productive zone rather than as simply a transparent and pre-existent zone in which events ‘just happen’; it is not neutral and static: a space such as a house for a young village woman is experienced as a series of active spatial relations that are both socially situated and formative of social dynamics. It is not so much, as Massey (1994, p. 2) puts it, that social relations occur ‘in’ space, as that ‘both social phenomena and space [are] constituted out of social relations’ which are also signifying practices. Thinking in this way about the ‘spatiality of power’ (Massey 1994, p. 2), the interpretation and representation of space will be constructed and
understood in multiple ways by the individuals encountering it. Space positions the observer in particular ways, ‘partly constituting the observer and the observer it’ (Massey 1994, p. 3).

I would like to emphasise here again that this is a qualitative study, which makes no attempt at reducing the lived realities of people into statistical categories; rather, I tried to understand the social life from within, how women shaped their realities, the values and meanings they attached to these realities, what the forces were which had an impact on them and how they had learned to negotiate the boundaries they had set for themselves and that patriarchy would allow them. As Foucault (quoted in Kirby 1996, pp. 1-2) suggests, the purpose was to look at the ‘correlation between the forms of subjectivity, the mobile field of discourse and the material effects of three dimensional institutional spaces’.

As already stated in the introductory chapter, I am also trying to negotiate my presence within the various borders; my facility lies in the fact that I am able to move from one space into another with relative ease, but my position within the village was ambiguous in nature. In many ways I was marked as the ‘outsider’ – especially coloured by the many icons of modernity – and yet, in as much as I shared in the multiplicity of identities and cultural traditions, I was very much a part of that collective. An incident I was made aware of only when I was leaving the field illustrates this point in all its complexity; I was told people’s attitudes towards me throughout my stay at the village were influenced by a TV serial called ‘Tehkikat’ (Investigation) being aired on the national television during the period of my visits. The serial centred on a young female saleswoman, who entered a house with the plea to demonstrate a product she was marketing, then mugs the residents and steals things from their house. I was often observed with suspicion regarding my motives for being there, despite my having explained the nature of my research. At any rate, the ambiguity of my presence sometimes helped me to seize the opportunity of accessing the predominantly female spaces and cultures whilst, at the same time, communicate with relative ease with the men in the community.

Throughout my elaborations based on the impressions and data gathered I will maintain a certain fluidity, as I traverse the boundaries between individual time-bound events to descriptions of the everyday lives of women. I have used the analytical/discursive categories of women, the public and private and the discourses of modernity and the
traditional. Language, as it is both used or otherwise in everyday life and in government discourses forms another layer of analysis. I have also tried to express the stories of people’s lives through a visual portrayal of it.

**Social map of village Sana Balipada**

*Circumscribing the village*

Everyday life is usually distinguished by an absence of boundaries and thus a lack of clear spatial differentiation. It includes a variety of spaces (the place of work, the home, the street) as well as diverse forms of movement through these spaces: walking, riding a bicycle and often on the backs of cattle. More recently, the everyday experience of space is powerfully affected by technology; thanks to television and telephones, we have virtual knowledge of remote places and cultures, markets and products and such others in our living rooms. On the other hand, there are also clearly delineated spaces for particular tasks and times of the day which are not transgressed; in India, furthermore, these spaces are made more complex by gender, caste and generational contexts, because of which sometimes the boundaries are also very clearly delineated. The village – as well as the
house - is a space with an overburdened signification in several clashing discourses, often implicitly and explicitly in contestation with each other. Especially for women, the village space can be experienced through different modalities of socialising by the various bodies that encounter them – or that are positioned by them; some village inhabitants were, hence, positioned as outsiders by its segregating spatial system, thereby encountering the gendering effects of the village’s (and the households’) special rules.

The village Balipada is situated 25 K. to the North of the Capital Bhubaneswar, close to one of the most popular tourist locations of the State, the Nandankanan wildlife sanctuary. Equally very close-by is one of the oldest industries of the State, the Barang Glass Factory, where previously at least one member of each family in the village would work; with the closure of the factory, however, many persons were without formal work and have had to return to their traditional agricultural endeavours. Balipada is part of the Dadha Panchayat, formed by a total of seven villages\(^{77}\). The river Kuakhai has made the land surrounding the region very fertile and there is an elaborate system of canals irrigating outlying areas, making the region quite prosperous with outlying villages having two and sometimes three crops a year\(^ {78}\). The overflow from the river forms an inland lake, the water of which is used by the people of all three hamlets comprising the village Balipada for purposes of bathing and cleaning\(^ {79}\). Open wells are the source of drinking water (primarily privately constructed and collectively used) and there is one Government-provided tube-well outside the village and seldom utilised\(^{80}\).

The source of fuel consists in leaves and twigs gathered from the nearby commons and pellets made from cow dung, but there is never enough of it. Women have to spend long hours collecting fuel wood and where people can afford it, they supplement it by buying fuel wood from the open market. Only a few families have other fuel sources and they do not find it very cost-effective. Electricity is available in the village and while only three houses have legal connections, others draw from the public system by paying a subsidised

\(^{77}\) The seven villages are Dadha, Marchia, Jhinkardhia, Balipada, Balipada, Kharsuan, Kantunia and Satpada

\(^{78}\) This has differential effects on the population, benefitting most those who own land. Since these villages are very close to the national highway, during the winter seasons the vegetables grown are often sold on the road side for a premium.

\(^{79}\) Bathing times are strictly adhered to, with women bathing at dawn and the men and children fairly late in the day. While it is to ensure a degree of privacy, this is also because of the rules governing relationships in rural India (in this instance in the state of Orissa) where women cannot look at or take the names of their fathers-in-law or elder brothers-in-law.

\(^{80}\) The community complains that members were not consulted on the site of the bore-well, which they now consider inconvenient and they also complain about the quality of the water.
amount to the electric line man. While this serves the interest of many, there is a constant sense of insecurity that they may be penalised for such acts. Other than a few families who have made their personal arrangements, there is no formal system of sanitation available and the people have to use the protection of shrubs for defecation, problem more acute for women and girls as they have to go out under the cover of night, a situation which could be viewed as ‘exploitative, oppressive and controlling’ of women. In some instances, women constructed small shacks for bathing in their backyards, surrounded by bushes, which lent them some amount of privacy. The modern houses were also constructed without bathrooms as this was considered inessential by men or an added cost; traditionally, natural physiological processes were considered impure and therefore remained outside the home and often, on attainment of puberty, young women had to stay outside the house. With the passage of time, when bathrooms were constructed, they were ensconced in the interiors of the houses adding onto the time that women were confined to their houses already. Likewise, with the passage of time, young women on attaining puberty then also had to remain indoors, constituting one example of the colonisation of everyday life by capitalism.

The village Sana Balipada has a single teacher school, which caters for children at the primary level; the teacher does not live in the village but in a neighbouring village. There are close to 40 children from the neighbouring locality who attend school here. The grandson of the Panchayat Samiti member attends this school, but his parents want to move him to a nearby private Ashram school, often complaining of the low standards; the preference for private schools as a status symbol rather than a desire to improve the standards of public schools as beneficial to the community reveals itself here. Community members thought that the influence the local member could bring to bear upon the authorities to improve the standard is not exercised, intentionally or unintentionally. Nearby is also a High School where the Panchayat Samiti member plays a prominent role, as he is the president and responsible for appointments of teachers and other staff of the school and therefore wields tremendous power. In fact, people often maintained that he took undue advantage of his position seeking bribes to appoint teachers, which led to some dissension as other candidates were supported by different members of the community. This led to frequent conflicts and was resolved on the grounds that, in the

81 Women’s security is paramount to them and therefore they tend to conduct most activities in groups. They go to the river as a group to bathe, wash clothes and utensils; women take the animals out to graze in groups and they wander out in groups in search of fuel wood.
next elections, there would be an opportunity to choose a different candidate for the office.

The nearest facility for health care is a Community Health Center (CHC) at Barang, which is at a distance of 5 K. Here, specialist care and minimal in-patient services are available, but since these services are over-crowded and often expensive (although meant to be ‘free’ for people living below the poverty line), unless absolutely necessary, people do not go there. On the few occasions when it had become imminent to seek professional advice and a community member ventured to the CHC, horror tales about the behaviour of the medical staff and the cost users had to incur that were not legitimate did the rounds. The intransigence and indifference of the medical bureaucracy is confronting to an urban person, let alone a poor, illiterate villager. A health worker visits the village fortnightly to provide immunisation for children and pregnant mothers and for antenatal and post-natal checkups. In addition, she is also supposed to conduct/assist in delivery where requested and provide family welfare services. The health worker is also responsible for maintaining all the data about infant mortality, maternal mortality and family planning matters (often maintaining as many as 18 registers with sometimes overlapping data sets). There are often complaints that the health worker is over burdened with work as evidenced by the various lapses in her duties and some educated families were sceptical of the knowledge and skills of the health worker and - as a status symbol - would consult the Doctor at the Panchayat Headquarters rather than seek the assistance of the former in the first instance.

People of Sana Balipada believe that, at one time, some members were excommunicated and formed Bada Balipada. They are also called ‘terah gharia’ by the Sana Balipada

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82 People had to pay bribes to get access to information about where different services were available, for getting their test results on time if not early and sometimes even to see the Doctor. A World Bank (2000b) study has shown that poor people considered physical well-being to be vital for sheer survival and many feared ill-health above all, as the start of a cycle of impoverishment. Most poor people identified their physical health and well-being as an asset and it was observed that ill-health or injury could cause a vicious cycle, in which the illness of one income earner could result in lower household income and sales of assets, in turn deepening malnutrition and further reducing poor households’ ability to afford medical treatment. For many poor people, the financial, travel and time costs of accessing good medical care make it unaffordable; in other contexts the attitudes and behaviour of medical staff can be an obstacle for poor people to seek treatment.

83 Sub-centres, which are the last rung of medical bureaucracy and infrastructure, are personed by the health worker and she is to conduct deliveries there. These sub-centres are designed to include the residence of the health worker and a section is a store for medication, a consultation cum delivery room. In reality, the health worker has appropriated the entire space as her residence and does not want to perform deliveries there; as well, she has no assistance and no place to dispose of the placenta and other organic matter. The limited training she receives is also reported as the reason for not conducting deliveries.
community, which literally means *thirteen households* and probably alludes to the families excommunicated. The same was also stated by the residents of Bada Balipada regarding the Sana Balipada community. While the world around is re-ordered and processes of modernity have created new configurations at the local level, the hierarchical structures of caste persist. While Sana Balipada has remained a single caste hamlet, Bada Balipada has accommodated many more castes; in addition to the two mentioned hamlets, the village Balipada also includes Bhoi Sahi, the scheduled caste hamlet, and all three are characterised by a complex set of relations of production and reproduction. The existing contrasts between caste and status groups within the community can be illustrated by the pictures below; while the garishly painted concrete structures are symbols of newly acquired wealth and status, of what is valued, they also impose newer forms of restrictions on women. Women’s movements outside of these houses are severely curtailed, sometimes with the covert approval and sanction of women themselves, and they are further subjugated to the whims of patriarchy. Modesty, often portrayed as the symbol of Indian womanhood, is therefore deemed protected.

Sana Balipada boasts one of the most famous temples in the region, the temple of Budhi Siali, which visitors from all over the State visit, as the Goddess is known to fulfil people’s desires. Here, the shaman (Kalasi) owns land and tills it to support his family, in addition performing the rituals at the temple. He previously lived in the village as a member of the community, but a visiting Seer advised him to perform these rites, after which he travelled extensively with the Seer to various holy sites and returned to his village, moved to the periphery of the village and continued to perform these duties ever since. Being at the periphery gives him a sense of privacy, providing a spatial expression of his symbolic position with regard to the community, as a Shaman’s knowledge and practice ‘*is not encompassed within the society; its place is at the edge of the community, mediating between the human community and the larger community of beings upon which the village depends for its nourishment and sustenance*’ (Abram 1997, p. 6). The kalasi acts as an intermediary between the human community and the larger ecological field, ensuring a mutual flow of nourishment between the human inhabitants and the landscape. Each Tuesday, there are festivities at the temple during which the priest prescribes local cures for any problems that people consult him for, both physical and psychological. Because of their faith in the goddess and the kalasi, people from as far away as the north of the state (a day’s journey) come to seek treatment.
Disease is often conceptualised as a kind of systemic imbalance within the sick person, or more vividly, as the intrusion of a demonic or malevolent presence in their body. Through his everyday practice, the kalasi is involved in mediating and maintaining the relations between the human village and the larger ecology that can appropriately diagnose, treat and ultimately relieve ailments and illnesses arising within the village. The kalasi’s allegiance is not primarily to the human community, but to the earthly web of relations in which the community is embedded and from where he derives the power to alleviate human illness, locating him apart from other persons. It appeared that most persons seeking assistance of the Kalasi were women and here as well, a masculinist epistemology provides interpretations for many community members, beginning with hysteria to genuine illness to the symptoms portrayed by women. Often women claimed that they visited the Kalasi when all else failed or when they had no money.

A mango grove surrounds the temple of Budhi Siali, providing a common meeting ground for travellers and members of the community. Each day, the senior male members came and sat under these trees to read the newspaper and discuss the issues with other men who could not read. Women were excluded from these gatherings not merely because of the boundaries between public and private, but because of the complex gender and inter-

84 It was evident that men in the family usually sought assistance from the formal health provision system whereas women sought alternative sources of treatment, first home remedies, then indigenous forms of treatment and, when all else fails, modern medicine. Women, like everyday life, were relegated to the realm of the insignificant, invisible yet indispensable. Local knowledge about problems that would respond to different forms of treatment are available in the community and people are advised accordingly, men, however, appear to be more sceptical.
generational relations. Everyday life constitutes this totality of relationships and should be viewed as such and not as an ‘object’. Children from the community usually played while the elders had their discussions and kept an eye on them; collective minding of children was very much part of the everyday in the village community. The mango grove is the village common property and each family has, therefore, a share of the harvest depending on its size and status and the contributions made toward the upkeep of the various common resources. The care of the commons falls to the women, whether it concerns the wood lots or water sources; they tend to locate knowledge and practice in the relational space between individuals, not in the abstraction of isolated, autonomous individuals and the relations that define community are therefore broader than the human community and encompass the ecological community. Women’s knowledge is also inherently collaborative and not abstract and rule bound; they are the carriers of culture and, to form an opinion, women need to know the life histories of the people and the contexts they are speaking about.

The hamlet of Sana Balipada comprises 52 households and all members, other than a single family, belong to a single caste group (Khandayats) and from three family names (Jena, Rout and Pradhan). The one family who does not belong to this caste group has settled in the village since the past few generations, reportedly for occupational reasons (Maharana). Most of them can trace relationships within the family, which therefore implies that they have to go out of the hamlet to seek alliances for marriage. The Sana Balipada community, however, does not have any marriage alliances with families of Bada Balipada; where some of the better-off persons have formed extended kin relationships with persons from Bada Balipada, there is a reluctant acceptance of the same by the rest of the community because of the status that family enjoys, which cannot be said for a person without as much wealth and status. The animosity between the communities has persisted for generations, because time past is time present and people cannot temporally locate the incident of the excommunication.

Most of the persons in Sana Balipada own some land (the land holding varying from 1/2 to about 5 acres), often not enough to sustain the family and many people have to seek outside work in order to supplement their income.
While agriculture is the primary occupation of most people in the community, it is surprising that the hamlet Sana Balipada does not have a single bullock cart (after all the everyday does include such surprises). The bullock cart was once the only means of transportation and still is in large parts of rural India, but with the construction of roads and the availability of faster means of transport, it is no longer an essential element of everyday life in this village. Because of the erosion of agricultural activities, the maintenance of bullocks also becomes an added burden for the rural household. Whilst some people are still engaged in agriculture during the planting and harvesting seasons, others have tried to seek viable alternatives in sharecropping. Because of its location at the urban periphery, some of the men from Sana Balipada have jobs in the nearby industries or in Government positions. They recognise the compression of time and space in their everyday lives and want to keep in pace with events occurring around them.

Undoubtedly, women were the ones who maintained kitchen gardens; Vandana Shiva (1993a, p. 37) gives a contemporary example of the contrast between typically women’s and men’s agricultural knowledge; traditionally, ‘the backyard of each rural home was a nursery, and each peasant woman a silviculturist. The invisible, decentred agroforestry model was significant because the humblest of species and the smallest of people could participate in it.’ This plant diversity, along with the mixture of private and public tree stands, provides ‘food and fodder, fertilizer and pesticide, fuel and small timber.’

In masculinist development projects, this knowledge is replaced by the ‘reductionist mind’ of outside experts who do not understand the multiple uses of traditional plantings nor their uses in Indian culture. Shiva (1989, p. 79) says:
The experts decided that the indigenous knowledge was worthless and ‘unscientific’, and proceeded to destroy the diversity of indigenous species by replacing them with row after row of eucalyptus seedlings in polythene bags, in government nurseries. Nature’s locally available seeds were laid to waste; people’s locally available knowledge and energies were laid waste. With imported seeds and expertise came the import of loans and debts and export of wood, soils - and people. Trees, as a living resource, maintaining the life of the soil and water and of local people, were replaced by trees whose dead wood went straight to a pulp factory hundreds of miles away.

**Festivities – Yajna, The event of the Year**

The pages falling off the calendar, the notches marked to a tree that no longer stands – these are the signs of the everyday, the effort to articulate difference through counting. Yet it is precisely this counting that reduces differences to similarities, that is designed to be ‘lost track of’. Such ‘coming’, such signifying, is drowned out by the silence of the ordinary.

(Stewart 1993, p. 14)

For Lefèbvre (1991b), festival holds an equivocal position in the everyday; it is part of popular everyday life but it is also a radical reconfiguring of daily life that is anything but ‘everyday’; ‘Festival differs from everyday life only in the explosion of forces which had been slowly accumulated in and via everyday life itself’ ([1947] Lefèbvre 1991b, p. 202). Blanchot (1987, p. 12), in reviewing Lefèbvre’s critique, suggests that everyday becomes visible at moments of ‘effervescence’, ‘when existence is public through and through’. What interests Lefèbvre is the community celebrating by excessive expenditure, by turning the world upside down:

During the feasts there was much merry making: dancing, masquerades in which boys and girls changed clothes or dressed up in animal skins or masks – simultaneous marriages for an entire new generation – races and other sports, beauty contests, mock tournaments…It is the day of excess. Anything goes. This exuberance, this enormous orgy of eating and drinking - with no limits, no rules…


Lefèbvre’s interest in festivals is in their ability to overturn cultural values for (potentially) revolutionary ends, the overturning of established differences: differences of gender and class that have fixed hierarchical determinations. Such an overturning is not the erasure of difference; rather it is a negation that generates the possibility of re-ordering difference. Over centuries, India has been known as the land of everlasting festivals. An indispensable part of the Indian lifestyle, almost every festival is celebrated with the same zeal; the entire land reverberates with enthusiasm and vivacity whereby a multitude of
festivals, fairs and other events have become a part of its culture. A long procession of festivals characterise the Indian calendar, so much so, that it is a land of 13 festivals in 12 months, almost each day of the year is celebrated. They are varied in origin and relate to every little occasion – harvesting of crops, welcoming the spring or rain, seeing of the full moon – all lend themselves to joyous celebrations splashed with colours, music, dances and songs. There are festivals in celebration of the wind, the rain, the fire, animal forms and other animate and inanimate objects. If the sun is eclipsed, it calls for a holy dip and when the moon reaches its full glory, the event calls for a feast. Even birthdays and marriages of divine beings are celebrated by their very own particular festival. Depending on whether festivals are celebrated according to the solar or the lunar calendars, the dates and months may vary.

While people celebrated all festivals with equal fervour, there are also repetitive events; every Tuesday, women of the house worship the Sun to ward off evil; Thursday is considered extremely auspicious as it is the day to welcome the goddess of wealth; the house is cleaned and often the walls are painted with intrinsic designs; this is also the day when no meat is cooked at home. Saturday is the day of Shani or Saturn and bodes evil if one does not fulfil what one promises. In addition, I participated in most of the festivals celebrated but choose to highlight only one, because the community considered it as the most important event of the year. While some of the festivities outlined above are performed by each household, what distinguishes the Yajna from the others is that it is a collective celebration. In Sana Balipada it was celebrated once a year, a period of five days of festivities during which rituals and offerings are made for peace on earth. The five days are characterised by offerings of fruits, flowers, milk and ghee to the holy fire. Undoubtedly, it is a period of excess, when people can least afford it, with contributions being made by individual households and by people not belonging to the village. The men and women in the community will come out adorned in their finest clothes and jewellery. The altar is covered with flowers and loudspeakers ensure that the chanting was heard in all the neighbouring communities as during periods of recess devotional songs blared. The festivities are presided over by a Brahmin invited from the natal village of the woman of one of the important families. The rites comprise the lighting of the holy fire to which all the offerings are made and the chanting of Sanskrit verses from the Vedas and other texts. The invited priest has been performing these rites for the past five years and is now accepted as an honorary member of the village community and there is a lot of give and
take between the two villages now. Some members of the village (only men) play a significant role during this period, serving at the site of the yajna and staying there for the five days, practising severe austerities. Women play little part in the organisation because they are considered ‘impure’; however, they attend each day’s events and partake in the excesses.

Once a village starts the Yajna, it must continue for a period of at least five years before it is discontinued, otherwise this would bring the wrath of the Gods upon the community. On this occasion, some members of the village Balipada wanted to discontinue the event and one of the more devout persons in the village went all the way to Kakatpur (about 70 K. away), another holy spot, to find out the implications of discontinuance. The person was counselled against such a decision being taken and the Yajna was again performed.

People live with the fear of the Gods in them, since they see the interdependence of nature and their lives in many ways; everything unexplained is attributed to the divine. It is in the collective celebration of festivals that communities reify their group identity (Durkheim 1965) and Turner (1982, p. 5) describes festivals as ‘generally connected with expectable culturally shared events’. He further suggests that when a social group celebrates a particular event, it ‘celebrates itself’ by ‘manifesting in symbolic form what it conceives to be its essential life’. Festivals thus serve to build social cohesion by reinforcing ties within the community.

While the Yajna is a Sanskritised version of ritual, simultaneously, the kalasi performs the rites of the temple of Budhi Siali, as this is considered an auspicious period; each year during this period, the members of the community claim that their kalasi is possessed by one of the pantheon of Hindu Gods and he adorns himself likewise. The traditional kalasi, I would concur with Abram (1997), cultivates an ability to shift out of his common state
of consciousness precisely in order to make contact with the other forms of sensitivity and awareness with which human existence is entwined. Only by temporarily shedding the accepted perceptual logic of his culture can the kalasi hope to enter into relation with other species on their own terms; only by altering the common organisation of his senses will he be able to enter into a rapport with the multiple non-human sensibilities that animate the local landscape. ‘It is this that defines a shaman: the ability to readily slip out of the perceptual boundaries that demarcate his or her particular culture, boundaries reinforced by social customs, taboos and, most importantly, the common speech or language, in order to make contact with and learn from the other powers in the land. His rituals are precisely this heightened receptivity to the meaningful solicitations – songs, cries, gestures – of the larger, more than human field’ (Abram 1997, p. 57). The kalasi’s intimate relationship with non-human nature becomes most evident when we attend to the easily overlooked background of his practice – not just the more visible tasks of curing or the larger ceremonies at which she presides and dances - the content of the prayers by which he enacts, when alone, the daily propitiations and praise that flow from him toward the land and its many voices.

During this period, it is said that anyone in the gathering may also be possessed and utter either individual prophecies or those related to the well-being of the village; they may also suggest cures to various illnesses during this period and heal people. Another common reason for seeking assistance was hex death or illness, which could be done by a person concentrating their thoughts upon the victim, visualising him/her and mentally transmitting thoughts of illness or death onto them. That year, the Kalasi was possessed by Krishna and, interestingly, the others who were possessed were women. Entering trance-like states, they uttered words that would not be part of their vocabulary otherwise and claims of extraordinary healings were narrated by many people gathered there. Spirit familiars were also used to gather information from the environment and bring it back in a clairvoyant fashion. Being a culture close to nature, natural objects were often used as signs, such as the sighting of a particular animal or bird. Most researchers indicate that these are experiences when the ‘Noble Savages’ communed with each other and the gods, when alternative means of communication were unavailable and paranormal ability was normal and used virtually on a daily basis. One member of the audience asked me whether I believed in what was happening and I realised that it was not so much a matter of my belief, as much as it was a matter of faith for the villagers. In the absence of explanations
for a number of things happening around them, it was their sense of confirmation for how insignificant their presence was in the larger scheme of things.

It was during this period that the new temple was being built and the auspicious occasion of the Yajna was used to lay its dome, a lot of ceremony surrounded this and the ‘karta’ of the village climbed to the top of the dome with the first brick that is then laid. Subsequently, other members of the village also carried bricks to the top, which is considered to bring one ‘punya’ and therefore the desire to do so and a lot of austerities are practised before one is allowed to do so.
During the five evenings, performances from local theatre and dance groups were taking place, continuing throughout the night and with almost all residents from villages in the locality watching these performances. It was interesting to notice the transformations that had occurred; whilst previously such events were dominated with performances portraying mythological events, now there were modern plays interspersed with dances, which were the exact portrayal of those in the popular Hindi cinema. There were young women in the performances, again a relatively recent phenomenon as previously the roles of female characters were played by men, as few women participated in theatre. This is an extremely lucrative profession and, once commodified, is accepted and celebrated, with the audience loudly applauding the spectacle.

When people in the community spend excessively during festivities, are they driven by private motives or are they better thought of as altruistic contributions towards a public good? It is for the social cohesion and the benefits that individual households accrue from such involvement that ensures their participation; these are the forums where parents are looking for potential bridegrooms for their daughters and one finds that the expenditure on festivals of families with marriageable daughters is, therefore, higher. Are households that spend more money on festivals held in higher esteem by others in community? Generally, in rural Indian society, festivals serve as arenas where social status is maintained and even enhanced. Clearly, families with more wealth enjoy higher status and this is probably because they can provide a greater buffer against risk.
The house and the communal living space

The above plan represents a traditional house in a village in Orissa; this is the home of a joint family where parents along with married sons and their children live. The houses are mainly built of earth with an inner lining or either hay or bamboo lashes. The floors and the walls are swabbed each day with cow dung. A window may or may not exist, the door to each room opening onto the courtyard. Doors are made of hardwood roughly handmade (usually by the local carpenter) in order to resist termites. The hearth is situated in one corner of the house and, sometimes, common hearths are located in verandas and courtyards. Women’s knowledge and practice is also inherently collaborative, demonstrated by cooking, an epistemic practice that has its own rules and procedures; sharing family and community culinary traditions is a perfect example of a collaborative epistemic community.

The roofs are thatched with hay, laid on a bamboo grid and tied down with plant fibre. Mud houses, though ideally suited for the tropical climate, have to be thatched each year; where previously people were mainly engaged in agriculture, the by-product, hay, was used to thatch the roof of their houses. Increasingly, greater numbers of people are moving away from agriculture as an occupation and, therefore, finding themselves having to buy hay. Maintenance of such houses is becoming an expensive proposition and where
people can afford it, they are often building more permanent structures to live in, disregarding all the ill-effects, even though it is extremely evident to them.

The grains for consumption and for planting are stored in one corner of the room, although in larger houses a room may be allocated to this. The grain is stored in large bamboo baskets and often *neem* leaves are put in it to keep it free from termite infestation. The par boiling\(^85\), drying and husking of paddy is done by women and it is again stored in either jute bags or the bamboo baskets as indicated earlier.

In the homes of the better-off, one finds a wooden cot in the room, a cupboard and all modern amenities, often coming with a new bride on demand as a dowry. The room is also the place where the young bride is made to sit with a few rays of sunlight filtering in, to be shown off to the extended family and friends. This is also the place where the most intimate secrets within the world of intimacy are retained, that is, the place that pertains to sexuality and procreation. New-born babies also stay in the room with the mother until they are slightly less dependant on her; for ten days after the birth of the baby, burning embers are kept in the room, possibly to retain the warmth (called the *enthulisala*), with nobody being allowed in other than one older woman as during this period the mother is said to be impure. After the ten days, all the clothes, the linen and the bedding are washed

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85 In many parts of India, the paddy is partially boiled, prior to being dried and husked. The rice then is called par boiled.
and other family members are allowed to see the mother and the baby. It is also the very room that a young woman is confined to, both for the performance of the puberty rites and during the monthly menstrual cycles. Previously, women were kept outside the house and out of the vicinity of men during this period (as this was considered impure), but with the passage of time, the room has become the space for confinement of women during the various phases of her life. Marriage, sexual intercourse (the world of intimacy), childbirth and death are all confined to the inner space of the house, which is used during the night whereas the daytime activities are centred around the courtyard. It is, however, also a generational feature, as daughters grow older and reach puberty, they have to stay indoors while older women are then allowed to venture outside, into the courtyard. Based on the division of space and organisation of the house, the division of labour between the sexes also gave women the responsibility for most of the objects in the house related to social reproduction.

Invariably one finds pictures on the walls (either in the form of old calendars or locally framed pictures) of one or several of the 36 million Hindu deities, a mirror and a small shelf in which are placed the daily articles of adornment. In most houses a tassel of paddy is tied up, replaced each year following the harvest of the new crop as a sign of fertility, symbolising both female fertility and that of the land. Woman’s fertility is also akin to the assumed female nature of the earth and the celebration of puberty rites of mother earth, which young women celebrate with great pomp. In rural Orissa, on the three designated days of the festival ‘raja’, young women will wear new clothes, adorn themselves with jewellery and have their faces decorated like a bride and will not set foot on the ground. This is a festival that is celebrated only by young unmarried women (and for the last time during the first year of their marriage), a period during which they are not allowed to do any work, but merely enjoy themselves and, as part of the celebrations, swings are tied in most villages where young girls will be seen.

As is seen in some of the photos, the cattle and other livestock also have a place in the house as they are an integral part of the household economy and the village community. Further, the space may be shared with other domesticated animals such as chicken or pigeons.

Each couple and their children have a single room to sleep in. While most adult men and children go about their daily chores during the day, the household and childrearing tasks
are shared between the women. Older women take on some of the lighter tasks and the new brides often have to do the cooking for the entire household. Most of the outdoor tasks are carried out by older women and these generally relate to taking the cattle for grazing or collecting fuel wood. Cooking often extends to preparing food for labourers working in the fields, as this constitutes part of their payment in some instances.

The public lives of men and the private lives of women

Everyday life bears a complicated relationship to the distinction between private and public, including domestic activities but also routine forms of work, travel and leisure. Furthermore, everyday life is not simply interchangeable with the popular, that is, it is not the exclusive property of a particular social class or grouping.

Gender has been an important factor in conceptions of everyday life; as Lefebvre (1984, p. 73) sees it, women are the quintessential representatives and victims of the quotidian: ‘Everyday life weighs heavily on women’, he writes, ‘some are bogged down by its peculiar cloying substance, while others escape into make believe… They are the subject of everyday life and its victims’. There is an opposition between the home and the outside universe; considered in relation to the male world of public life and farming work, the house, the universe of women, is both sacred and illicit for any man not part of it. Any male, especially the woman’s brother, therefore, visiting from her natal home comes bearing gifts to gain approval of the family and entry into the home. The woman can be said to be confined to the house only so long as it is also pointed out that the man is kept out of it. A man’s place is outside, that is, in the fields or the assembly (kothaghara) and panchayats; boys are socialised into this way of being from an early age, men therefore unaware of much that goes on in the house. Before sunrise, men set off for the fields during the summer months to work all day long and sometimes go off to the market to sell their produce of vegetables in the winter months. Evenings are usually devoted to assemblies in the village or some forms of gathering for entertainment; they are short in view of the fact that electricity was not available in every household. A man who spends too much time at home is somehow suspect and ridiculed and said to be henpecked; he should be seen outside and relations between men should be established outdoors.
Apthekar (1989, p. 12) states that ‘women have a consciousness of social reality that is distinct from that put forth by men; that is, they have a distinct way of seeing and interpreting the world’. This idea rests upon two assumptions:

(a) In virtually all societies there is a sound division of labour. Women perform distinct tasks, are socialised in gender-specific ways and must enact their gendered roles daily to continually reconstitute their identity as women. While the specificity of gendered roles may differ from culture to culture, the process of gendering is virtually universal.

(b) In almost all societies women are subordinated to men. Evidence is overwhelming – discrimination against women in education and employment, marriage laws in which women are the property of men, violence against women. Subordination of women is codified in all major religions and their practices.

Women as well as men give expression to this consciousness in their everyday lives by producing specific cultures, which are also expressed through the tasks each perform.
Men perform the heavy tasks involved in agriculture; alluding to Shiva’s (1989) earlier argument about women’s agricultural practice. It is important to acknowledge that in modern development practice, men’s agriculture, which can hardly be understood as anything but a practical activity, is nevertheless represented as a ‘theoretical practice’, that is, as an applied science. Women’s expert knowledge of the soil, climate and seeds is marginalised as anecdotal; it is often dismissed as mere ‘wives’ tales’. There are also taboos related to women performing certain agricultural tasks; they are ritually restricted from touching the plough, but both men and women perform threshing and winnowing. While women assist in tasks performed by men, the tasks performed by women are solely theirs. A task commonly performed by men is the maintenance of houses; when the monsoons are heavy, sections of mud houses often tumble down and rebuilding is entirely the task of men, though everyday maintenance is the task of women.

Not all biological activities are banished from the external universe to the realm of women’s lives and I tend to concur with Minh Ha (1989, p. 115) when she states in “Woman, Native, Other”, that ‘there is no clear-cut distinction between the public and the private realms in the realities of women’s lives and that the boundaries of one merge into that of the other’. Women perform a diversity of roles in the village community, having to keep the premises of the house clean and spending a large part of the day performing this task. The lack of running water facilities in the vicinity of their residence impels women to traverse some distance to complete the household chores. They travel great distances to collect firewood where this is still used by some poorer families; they also herd cattle and sheep during the long afternoons, sometimes at great distances from home returning late in the evening. Traditionally the inside of the house, usually consisting of a single room, is seldom utilised for purposes other than to provide protection to women and children during the long nights and all other activities are carried out in the public realm. I am inclined to concur with researchers who claim that this is more apparent in patrilineal societies where women have little right over property. Religious and cultural attitudes towards women also determine the roles they play out – segregation by virtue of their caste, class, religion – therefore subjugation, internalised by so many women, remains a reality with many different faces.
**Women and work**

While previously most women in the village were engaged in agricultural tasks, of late they have become subjected to the process of *housewifization*; women from upper-class families are confined to the private realm (as defined by them, being engaged in reproductive activities) and are no longer engaged in agricultural activities as technology has replaced the tasks previously performed by them. In addition, the household income has risen and often the rise in family status has led to the non-participation of women in economic activity. On the other hand, subsistence activities for poorer women remain plenty and are indicated by the tasks performed by women in the pictures below.

The day begins with a bath before sunrise in the pond outside the village; timings at the village pond are usually assigned to men and women so that they do not intrude on each other’s privacy. Women were usually assigned the early hours, firstly, because these were acts to be performed at dawn (still in partial darkness) and it was considered their duty to do all the household chores and send the children off to school, etc., but also because of all the social norms of purity governing women not to enter the cooking area prior to having a bath. Women not only bathed at the pond/river, but also washed their clothes and if there was a clean drinking water source, brought back water for cooking and drinking purposes as well, as indicated by the first picture. As mentioned before, some women have the luxury of having wells available close to their houses, but tube-wells sunk by the Government are not utilised because of their unsuitable location and the often poor quality
of the water. Whether the community has not participated or has not been consulted in the choice of siting the tube-well can be judged by the utilisation patterns. In the village Sana Balipada, the Government tube-well is near the school and the temple, on the outskirts of the village. It is used by the school and the temple, but not by the people in the village for their everyday use as it is at a distance from their houses and of poor quality. They would rather resort to unsafe drinking water sources than use the tube-well.

Following the bathing and washing, cleaning the household utensils is a routine everyday activity that women engage in; Pots and pans had to be taken to the nearby pond so as not to waste clean fresh water. A bucket is filled with clean water from the well, so that after the basic cleaning of the utensils at the pond, they are then cleansed with fresh water to ensure that the food does not get contaminated. Cooking in pots on firewood chulha (stoves) was an everyday activity that was considered quite monotonous. Often the monotony was broken by the give and take of food cooked by even the poorest family. Children in the village were rarely forbidden from visiting other’s houses or partaking of the food, although it may have been considered a taboo for an adult to do so, for a variety of reasons. Muna, the grandson of Bhagavan Jena, the local representative in the Panchayat Samiti, would run to the house across the street and have a meal with Suna, a distant relative and his parents often rebuked him for doing so. It was also a common thing for families to exchange food each day, even as someone sat down to eat and found that the dish did not cater to their choice, they would just call a child who might be playing outside and ask him/her to go and bring a curry from the neighbour’s house.
After cooking each meal, the stove had to be cleared of the ash and then smeared with a dung mixture in order for it not to break and also to maintain the hygiene of the place as it is also considered a local antiseptic and ritual purifier. In cooking each meal, a number of preparatory activities have to be carried out, grinding being one of them, especially for the local cakes and sweets. A rice paste is also used by women to create the images on the walls of the houses on most festive occasions, sometimes as an invitation to the Gods to visit their homes.

Women also perform a number of post-harvest activities and the food pattern is indicative of the tasks they perform. In Orissa, the staple food in the coastal districts is par boiled rice, a very difficult task performed by women. It involves the collection of fuel and drying it in the sun and after the paddy is boiled in large pots (using the fuel to par boil the paddy), the paddy is dried in the sun on a flat surface and has to be constantly turned over so that it dries out evenly. Women have the heavy task of lifting the pots of paddy onto and out of the fire and where the courtyard is not a large enough, it is taken to the roads and dried there. Women have to often sit guard all day long in the hot sun and at the end of the day, they gather the paddy, fill it in sacks and carry it over their heads to bring it indoors (sometimes having to carry the load a distance). It is then taken out again the next day. Depending on the preference, the paddy may be par boiled several times.
Obviously, repetition is one of the ways in which the world around the women is organised, both to make sense of their environment and stave off the threat of chaos. It is a key factor in the gradual formation of identity as a social and inter-subjective process. Clearly, women become who they are through acts of repetition. I find a tendency in the work of Lefèbvre (Lefèbvre 1987, 1991b) to equate repetition with domination and innovation with agency and resistance, which, however, remains trapped in a mindset that assumes the superior value of the new. In the lives of the women, however, the reverse is probably likely to be true. In the confusion of contemporary life, change is often imposed on individuals against their will and everyday rituals help safeguard a sense of personal autonomy and dignity and preserve the distinctive qualities of a threatened way of life. Repetition is, therefore, not simply a sign of human subordination to external forces, but also one of the ways individuals engage with and respond to their environment. Repetition can be both resistance and enslavement and acts of innovation and creativity are made possible by the mundane cycles of the everyday and it is, therefore, not very helpful when Lefèbvre (Lefèbvre 1984, 1987) persists in the opposition between cyclical and linear time, the everyday and the modern, the feminine and the masculine. I would agree with
Osborne (1995) when he insists that the temporality of everyday life is internally complex; it combines repetition with linearity, recurrence with forward movement. The everyday cannot be opposed to the realm of history, but is rather the very means by which history is actualised and made real.

**The interconnected social relations within the village**

During my preliminary visits the interconnectedness of social relations in the village truly amazed me; an incident with the Maharana family remains etched in my memory. The family consisted of the elder Maharana, his two sons, the younger daughter-in-law and three grandchildren, two of whom were the older son’s children. The elder daughter-in-law’s demise occurred during childbirth, whilst the younger daughter-in-law was also expecting a baby. After the death of the elder daughter-in-law, the younger one brought up the baby of her co-sister as her own as well; she even breastfed the child. With the passage of time (in terms of my presence in the village), however, I came to believe that she made distinctions between her own and her co-sister’s child; it was apparent to me that, while her own child looked healthy, her co-sister’s child looked malnourished. At times in expressing her frustrations she mentioned that she was doing what she was for another woman’s child out of compulsion and pressure from the family rather than any desire to raise a disabled child. Again a woman’s limited agency and lack of control over her body are demonstrated.

The reference names used in the village represented another aspect of community life that blurred the boundaries between the public and the private; in the terms of reference people used for one another, the significant fact was that everyone was related to each other, so much so that even I, after a period of time, became the universal ‘didi’ or ‘sister’. Although such relationships blurred the boundaries between the public and the private on the one hand, they also established distinct boundaries between them as they clearly outlined who could interact with whom and to what extent. My position, as indicated earlier, was an ambiguous one because of all the identity markers people attributed to me.

The relationship between the upwardly mobile and the rest of the community is highly significant; it is determined by the kinds of choices people make for a variety of purposes, the kind of dwelling they live in or aspire to live in, the symbols of modernity they possess (TV, etc.), the schools they choose for their children, the nature of health care
they seek (including their belief in different systems of medicines, valuing what is considered modern and devaluing the traditional), the choices in the food they partake of, etc. The aspiration of the Jena family to have their grandson admitted to a private residential school is an example of this.

As T. S. Eliot (1969, pp. 171, Beginning of 'Burnt Norton') states, ‘time present and time past are perhaps present in time future, and time future contained in time past’; a constant flux is seen in the openness or otherwise of the community. While what apparently seemed a relatively closed social system is being transformed into a relatively open one; caste played a central role in almost all spheres of life until recently, but presently various spheres of life have been freed from the bonds of caste.

Members of the Bhoi Sahi hamlet seek domestic and agricultural work from the other two hamlets, as they do not own property. Few families have begun to till the land around their households, but they do not have any legal rights over that property. Even when they fish in the joro, they become the victims of much abuse, verbal and physical. I observed some of this abuse where women from the Bhoi Sahi were primarily the minders of the community asset, the fish which had been bred for consumption. Men from the opposite bank wanted to forcibly deprive them of what they had cared for and appropriate the catch, but the women defended their position. The method adopted by men was to use abusive language mainly related to physical attributes of women, to almost deny them their personhood. The rights of the women of the Bhoi Sahi to participate in any community activities were often questioned and they were forced to contribute financially to several community events, but their ‘presence’ was also sometimes not allowed.

As opposed to spaces in general, places often seem to be distinct from each other, invested with a sense of fixity and authenticity; but they are also connected to places beyond themselves (Massey 1994, p. 120) so that individual subjects never only belong to one (spatial) community but experience and are positioned by multiple and fluid spatial frameworks. In this instance, women are given very high status in that they are equated with the mother goddess while at the same time publicly humiliated, as is the case of lower class women who resisted the men from the nearby hamlet trying to deprive them of their very livelihoods. Differences between women mean that there is no such thing as ‘women as a group having a consistent relationship to spatial frameworks’ (Mills 1996, p. 131). There is a lot of differentiation between women in village balipada, be it along
caste lines or along class lines and this means that they have differing relationships with space. Within the same caste/class group also new forms of domination and subordination emerge such that some women are disadvantaged more than others. These forms of domination and subordination often relate to access to resources and services. For example, Bhoi Sahi has limited physical infrastructure to support the community, as there is only one open well and no tube-wells, especially for use by the lower caste people. So this community has its own rules for apportioning resources such that some vulnerable people live under constant threat of water-borne diseases and skin infections.

Celebrations - Marriage

Arranged\textsuperscript{86} and intra-community marriages remain the dominant nuptial form in village India; getting a daughter married is considered an Indian parent’s primary duty; to have an older unmarried daughter is a tremendous misfortune with large social and economic costs. Many people in India continue to regard \textit{gandharva}, or ‘love marriage’, in which people marry independently of family consultation and arrangement, as anti-traditional, even dangerous. Many see love as ‘\textit{an uncontrollable and explosive emotion, blinding people to reality, reason and logic}’ (Harman 1995, p. 49). One seldom finds families having to negotiate divergent traditions and concomitant social opprobrium, but they instead maintain the social fabric of the rural Indian society. Family relationships are of the utmost significance to most people in India and marriage is the primary mechanism of control over the trajectory of a group’s lineage and construction of alliances. It is generally considered not as a betrothal of two individuals making a personal choice, but as an indispensable step in a collective effort to sustain certain characteristics of a family in relation to the wider community. The significance of the institution manifests in its regulation and protection by various laws and in intricate ceremonial rituals.

\textsuperscript{86} Klass as early as (1966) identified four structural features that emerge as significant in the Bengal variant of marriage in India: arranged marriage, kin-group exogamy/endogamy, intensification of ties and extension of ties.
The picture above portrays the bride in a traditional rural Orissa wedding; in this family, the parents went out in search of a bridegroom who was from the same caste but of a higher social status, based on his occupation. The preoccupation with purity and concomitant complexities of caste remain central to many families’ marriage prescriptions. Adherence to notions of caste boundaries reveals itself in people’s attempts to minimise chances of becoming ‘polluted’ by avoiding mixing of essential substances, whether through bodily contact, food exchange or proximal association. In rural areas, unlike urban settings, the emphasis is still on endogamous marriages; during the celebrations, the lowest caste members ate last and were given food to either take away or eat outside the formal dining area; they were also engaged to clean up after all the celebrations were complete.

Caste boundaries are fairly hazy in practice, with varying understandings of the rules of interactions, intensity of adherence to tradition and myths of origin and greatness. In urban settings, complex variations in notions of caste hierarchy are paralleled by a muddled relationship among caste, economic class and social standing in a community.

87 Notions of maintenance of rank and status do not preclude individuals from the desire to move up. Wealth, a prestigious job, acquisition of a rich husband or son-in-law is desired since they are preconditions to the acquisition of greater public regard and respect and this needs to be demonstrated through overt behaviour befitting the acquired rank and status, as Indians are under constant intimate and structured scrutiny.
The girl and the boy had not met prior to the marriage; they came as strangers into an alliance which brought two families and, in fact, two communities together. The young woman, following the completion of the marriage rituals, went to her husband’s family (patrilocal) to start her life as a wife, a sister-in-law, aunt and mother. A wedding marks the transition of a woman from daughter to wife and is the central event in her life-cycle (Fruzzetti et al. 1992). It marks events that shape her identity and meaning and is necessarily public; if wedding would not be public, the change in status would not be recognised as the community would not have observed the rituals. These public rituals therefore herald the oncoming of an important transition and they demonstrate, reify and often enhance the social and economic status of families.

The yellow sari which the bride wears during the wedding ceremony comes from her maternal uncle’s house and is a sign of fertility. The borders of the caste hierarchies are blurred also in the enacting of the ceremonies of a marriage in which the barber community (which is low caste) plays an important role. A traditional marriage in Orissa would not occur in the absence of the barber and a woman from the same community. They have not only to perform some of the crucial rites, conduct the bride to and from the altar, but also get the share of the clothes and other articles that are discarded after the rites are performed.

Very poor households spend large sums on celebrations; they find the resources for such celebrations by going into debts at very high rates of interests. Often they rely on the village networks to smooth over consumption difficulties. This family borrowed extensively to pay for the food and dowry transfers to the groom’s family; they gave the

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88 The relationship between public rituals and identity is supported by several arguments in the Indian context. Dumont (1980) argued that Hindu Indians see themselves within the context of the caste system as part of a strict ritual hierarchy; their sense of individuality is subservient to their identification with their family, caste, village/community. Marriot and Inden (1977) modified this to say that an Indian is not an individual, as much as ‘dividual’. A dividual’s identity is made up of different transferable ‘substances’ that they give and receive in their interactions with others. These substances then come together in a dynamic, negotiated, interactive manner to achieve a sense of self, that is, personhood is defined entirely in terms of one’s relationships to others. Mines (1994) argues that the Indian has a ‘civic individuality’ and is conditioned by how others estimate and evaluate the person and is determined within the context to which the individual belongs: their caste, religion and community. Therefore, one’s sense of self is fundamentally influenced by whom one knows and interacts with and Mines argues that this is an individuality of inequality, that is, individuality is graded and ranked. Therefore, it can be concluded that Indians are strongly driven by status and rank, which is not a matter of individual or relative wealth but derived from the size and influence of their familial and social networks and a public demonstration of access to these networks. The size and quality of one’s networks have an inherent value, what Appadurai (1990) calls ‘the prime value of sociality’. Further, status and rank require constant maintenance (Goffman 1959) and thus there are public demonstrations of actions fitting the expected behaviour of rank within the social group.
bridegroom a motor cycle in addition to all household articles. It always makes one wonder if such expenditure is wasteful, because it is not spent on food, health or education. One can conclude, however, that, in the absence of these networks, life would indeed be very hard, both in the case of unanticipated shocks, everyday forms of predictable problems and planned events.

The wedding itself lasted for about three days, with a very large number of people invited for the feast, including the local politician and members of other reputable families from surrounding villages. One could see the tendency to imitate the extravagant patterns of the rich; the bridegroom was dressed in a suit and, at the end of the ceremonies, the couple were driven away in a car. When asked why they spent so much on the ceremonies that they could barely afford, they said that it was expected and that since she was marrying into a better family, they had to ‘show’ that they could. The guests accompanying the bridegroom were given special treatment, with some additional items included in the menu especially for them.

Rao (2001) argues that publicly observable celebrations have two functions: they provide a space for maintaining social reputations and webs of obligations and they serve as arenas for status-making competitions. To the extent that these expenditures are central to maintaining the networks essential for social relationships and coping with poverty, these are reasonable expenses. To the extent that they are status competitions, they may merely increase conspicuous consumption. He further states that life cycle events become theatres where public reputations are maintained and stadiums where people compete in games of status competition, going beyond their roles as markers of life-cycle events.

**Political representation in the community**

Women’s role in political representation is worth mentioning here; differentiations in the class system due to the development of market mechanisms and changes in the caste system have led to the shifting of power between dominant and subordinate castes and within the dominant castes. In addition, power has shifted from the caste system to differentiated structures such as panchayats and political parties. Politics is being increasingly used as the avenue for social mobility. The State’s initiatives, while addressing people’s participation through Panchayat Raj Institutions, significantly

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89 Srinivas (1989) attributes social mobility to this imitation.
bypassed women. As we have seen, the 73\textsuperscript{rd} and 74\textsuperscript{th} Amendments of the Constitution attempted to redress these issues and women’s empowerment is one of the core issues in the Panchayats. Much has been written about this since the 73\textsuperscript{rd} amendment to the Indian constitution came into force and, for the first time, attempts were made towards affirmative action for women.

The participation of women in the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI) involves

(i) women as voters,
(ii) women as members of political parties,
(iii) women as candidates,
(iv) women as elected members taking part in decision making, planning, implementation and evaluation, and
(v) women as members of Mahila Mandals and their association with other Voluntary Organisations (Bhargava & Vidya 1992).

Reservations for women in Panchayats came into being and the legislation (The Constitution 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment Act 1992) states that ‘not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct elections in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat’. Different States made different provisions to bring women to the mainstream of political participation, as they did not come through in the regular elections. A system of co-option or nomination was therefore introduced in some States; this system, however, invited sheer patronage by the dominant political or social groups. Women’s representation on these bodies came to be symbolised by ‘tokenism’ and not by a meaningful association (Manikyamba 1989). Whilst women have been subjected to exploitation from time immemorial, living in the shadows of a patriarchal society, the reservation of seats for women and their presence in the political society (that is, the political institutions and actors, in this instance, women mediating between higher-level government authorities and the population) have led to greater autonomy being available to women’s agency and while women belonging to recognised political parties have begun to play a significant role, the political society also includes local political brokers and significant persons whether or not they belong to these parties\textsuperscript{90}.

\textsuperscript{90} The state-society boundary in rural India is often blurred as demonstrated by Gupta (1995) and Harriss-White (1997).
What has been increasingly perceived as a problem in this scheme of things is that of the division of the Panchayat areas into wards; wards are divisions within the Panchayats based on the population for purposes of representation. All households are numbered and divided into equal clusters from which a representative is elected, who is, however, not necessarily representative of people’s choices as there may be more than one of the preferred candidates residing in one ward. Similarly, it may so happen that one of the groups may not be represented if they have only small numbers. In the village Balipada, the woman candidate has never been to any of the meetings as she does not live in the area; she is the wife of a prominent member of the village (who happens to be a sub-inspector of Police). I had occasion of discussing this issue with her, when she was home during one of the festivals and she confessed that she had not done justice to her being the people’s representative in that area, but had little say in the matter. Every time she came to the village, she autographed all the minutes of the meetings and other papers she had to sign and her job was done. In effect, she had little scope to exercise the powers vested in her in regard to being the people’s representative, especially that of women. She was a pawn in the hands of local power brokers who found it easier to manipulate the situation in her absence. It has often been shown that political groups, for their own political gains, have used women, rendering the legislated reservation of seats ineffective in many instances and often merely strengthening the base of the rural elite.

It is no wonder that women and other marginalised group were unable to bring pressure to bear on their representatives other than at times of elections; their capacity to act on their own behalf was further diminished by the capacity of local elites and other power brokers to bypass the elected representatives. Sometimes, local representatives took advantage of various community development programmes and schemes as remuneration for their key supporters and poorer households often had to wait for the trickle-down effects of this spending.

In this chapter I have provided a description of the everyday lives of women based on my observations and dialogue with women in the community. The manner in which women exercise their agency when faced with adversaries is a critical factor in determining how they negotiate the oppressive structures within society, especially those of patriarchy. It is also essential to note their everyday lives and whether development/aid agencies actually take into account the structures and agency. Often interventions are suggestive of a
collective mindset and a unity so relevant to the social structure, but because they are based on a western model of knowledge construction, especially regarding issues of development, in reality the picture is one of a process of ‘othering’.
Chapter Eight

Women’s Programs, Women’s Voices

As a second attempt at situating rural Indian women within the (community) development discourses, this chapter attempts to outline the reasons for the continuance of and subsequent failure of the Mahila Mandal programme I have referred to in a previous chapter. While highlighting how certain aspects of women’s agency allowed for the programme to continue for a while, resistance was always present at the boundaries of the space and women negotiated this space with their agency. Other interlocutors (men, upper caste persons and government officials) are, however, also present in this discourse, playing a significant role in this complex canvas of social, cultural, political and economic factors. Herein I also attempt to tease out how women’s discursive and strategic positioning within the multiple categories of social identity impinge on their sense of themselves as individual selves and as social agents and actors. I refer to identity as defined by Hall (1996, pp. 5-6) as ‘the meeting point, the point of suture’ between the multiplicity of social institutions, discourses and practices which contend to position women as social subjects of a particular kind and the individual self who emerges from and circulates through that social world.

The conceptualization of gender identity as durable but not immutable has prompted a rethinking of agency in terms of the inherent instability of gender norms and the consequent possibilities for resistance, subversion and the emancipatory remodelling of identity (eg: Butler 1990, 1993; Sedgewick 1994; Pellegrini 1997). I have followed the generative logic for a theory of agency, in that ‘it yields an understanding of a creative or imaginative substrate to action; it is crucial to conceptualise these creative or productive aspects immanent to agency in order to explain how, when faced with complexity and difference, individuals may respond in unanticipated and innovative ways which may hinder, reinforce or catalyse social change. With regard to issues of gender, a more rounded conception of agency is crucial to explaining both how women have acted autonomously in the past despite constricting social sanctions and how they may act now in the context of processes of gender restructuring’. This should also lead to ‘renewed understandings of autonomy and reflexivity, understood as the critical awareness that arises from a self-conscious relation with the other’ (McNay 2000, p. 5).
There is an enormous body of literature dealing with the systemic and structural marginalisation of women within processes of development, including the transformative possibility of the post-colonial as the site for privileged subject-positions celebrating marginality and hybridity (Adam & Tiffin 1991; Ashcroft et al. 1995) and the necessity of gender-specific strategies to address structural and analytical impediments. The economic and social inequities that poor women globally and Indian women particularly confront on a daily basis are well documented and women in India who are both low caste and lower class are truly the ‘poorest of the poor’ (Sen, G. & Crown 1987). It is, however, also true that new forms of autonomy and constraint can be seen to be emerging which no longer can be understood through dichotomies of male domination and female subordination; as already alluded to, inequalities are also emerging along generational, class and racial lines where structural divisions are as significant as divisions between men and women (McNay 2000).

According to the stories village women relate themselves, domestic abuse, social oppression and low household status, throughout an endless day of domestic and financial responsibilities, are just some of the factors that threaten their well-being on a day-to-day basis. Gender-specific programmes are a feature of virtually all Government and NGO activities in India and women’s strategies are integral to the operational strategies of these organisations. Ideally, the programmes provide rural women with a forum for discussing problems to which they immediately can relate; a single gender forum is the only one in which Indian women will discuss problems openly and then only after a long period of encouragement and confidence building.

Rural Indian women rarely speak out in public, even when in a group composed of only women; men therefore literally speak for the community. In mixed groups, women’s voices are rarely heard. While the necessity for a female forum and strategy is acknowledged and integrated into development perspectives, in practice the sexual segregation of these programmes and the structural divisions within organisations reinforce gender hierarchy. In addition, gender-based programmes reflect some differentials in the organisational and mobility potential of male and female workers. Extensive programmes in place were and still are aimed at women in the areas of health, community sanitation, literacy and other forms of education and a steady stream of developmental messages were and are directed at them, as were a large variety of
programmes and projects. Points of conflict emerged over strategy and appropriate long-term approaches to identifying and addressing women’s problems.

The literature on women, gender and development supports the conclusion that women of this area are caught in two binds that constrain the prospects of changing their lives: poverty and low social status, which affect both men and women and the social oppression specific to their gender that intensifies the social manifestations of these conditions. The alternative perspective as expressed by some women is that the problems they face have nothing to do with being a woman, but are the result of exploitation by landlords and moneylenders – a burden that falls equally on men and women.

Comments such as these fall outside the rhetoric of the organisers of particular programmes as well as outside certain norms of the scholarship of gender and development. Such comments are a reminder of the necessity of continuously examining the assumptions and biases of gender-specific development policy and strategy, as well as their relevance to how issues and priorities are perceived at the local level. Uncovering the marginalised experiences of women should be the implicit concern of researchers and development workers in understanding agency, since these experiences attest to the capacity for autonomous action in the face of often overwhelming cultural sanctions and structural inequalities.

**Theoretical Paradoxes, Strategic Implications**

The proponents of feminist ethnomethodology tend to celebrate the experiences of marginalised or submerged practices of women as somehow being primary or authentic (Smith, D. 1987); it is also evident from the works of feminist historians that the experiences of women are viewed as an originary point of explanation (Scott 1991). All these positions point to the fact that the accounts of agency that rely on a dualism of male domination and female subordination do not capture adequately the complexities of agency in an era of transformation of gender relations.

In the context of India, the very process by which groups seek to lessen the disparity of the caste hierarchy intensifies the disparity of gender hierarchy; the most severe gender inequalities of all were found among the poor, low-caste groups which were striving for
upward mobility in the traditional, ritually defined hierarchy, through Sanskritisation. Women there have the worst of all worlds: they did not have gender parity because of the strictures imposed by Sanskritic status emulation and they did not have economic sufficiency and security because of their caste (ritual status). Put another way, they suffer discrimination unique to their gender status as defined by Sanskritic ideology, together with poverty and denigration which they share with their menfolk as a result of their class and caste statuses respectively (Barreman 1993, pp. 370-71).

Women’s perspectives on poverty

While some women in the village stated that they were materially better-off than previously, they still found that the nature of work had changed. A lot of the time, people were not working and that was a problem, because previously everyone was occupied with different tasks. In terms of what they possessed now, some have brick and mortar houses with a supply of electricity and therefore have televisions and other household appliances. There are others, however, who still cannot afford any luxuries, and are leading a mere subsistence existence. While some will share what they have, others tend to be over-protective of what they consider ‘their’s’.

Sometimes, money earned was used for the consumption of alcohol and this, women claimed, could be better spent on clothes and food for the family. Women stated that

‘following our marriages and our being sent to our marital homes, our parental families do not help us any longer, they are in strife as well; not that they have in excess to support us. But they will not come to our assistance even if we are being badly treated by our husbands and their families. They would consider that they are interfering in matters that they should not be involved in. So we have to fall back on our own resources to resolve some of these issues’.

During the group sessions women claimed

‘we had plenty before and we could grow three crops which we used for our own consumption and saved some of it as seeds for the next year. We used to work in the fields too which we no longer do. That is hard work and our husbands think

\[91\] The first use of the term Sanskritization was by Prof.M.N.Srinivas in his book ‘Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India’ (1952, p. 30) where in he states that ‘the caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially so in the middle regions of the hierarchy. A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetolism, and by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites, and beliefs of the Brahmans, and the adoption of the Brahminic way of life by a low caste seems to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called Sanskritization...’. This position was not without its critics, but it served as a major theoretical position for a while in Sociological studies in India.
that they can engage people to do that work. In the process it is a drain on meagre resources. Problems also arose when crops failed. It was these cycles of crop failures because of poor monsoons and no irrigation facilities that has brought us to the stage that we are in today. The river used to be full of water and used to overflow to full capacity sometimes creating havoc with our lives, but at others it was good for the crops. Now it dries off most of the times and we find it extremely difficult to grow our vegetables even’.

‘Women are increasingly being treated worse than before for a variety of reasons, there is a great desire for alcohol and often women are being forced to go back to their natal home and bring back money or property in their name. The natal families are poor as well that young women do not want to return to their homes and ask for anything, not to mention that the families stretch themselves to get their daughters married in the first instance. Men have been forced into occupations that do not engage them all the time, due to which they have diminished incomes or have so much free time on their hands that they tend to turn to alcohol. But speaking to men seems to have little impact and instead it creates unpleasantness in the house’.

‘Whatever we had, whether a little or a lot, we used to share it amongst ourselves and everybody else who needed. We can’t have extended family visit us even because we have little or nothing to offer them. Now we also have to protect what we have because there is so little of it to go round. I have a papaya tree and when it yields fruit I have to watch over it day and night so that nobody steals it. Values no longer have any meaning. It is all for oneself, a beggar is turned away, which never used to happen previously.’

There was a lot of cooperation before in everything people did in the village; now all people think and say is why do they (meaning others) have a TV, a brick house, nicer clothes, a better crop? While there is still a small measure of sharing - nobody would stop you if you wanted to watch the TV in someone’s house - there is a sense that they have worked hard to earn it and therefore should not be impinged upon and they, in turn, also consider it their private property and not for public consumption.

**Contested spaces: Kotha ghara**

The kotha ghara, place of public meetings regarding village matters, was not a meeting place for women. Matters regarding the village were predominantly the domain of men in the village, even when it related to women. So if it was the handing down of justice where a woman was concerned, other than the so-called guilty woman, only men were present and the sentence handed down was rarely in favour of her. Women made no effort to resist this practice and ensure that there was a place for them in the kotha ghara. The reservation of seats for women in local governments is bringing about change, however;
although the change is slow, we find evidence of its articulation amongst women at the local level itself.

One woman said

(laughing) we do not attend any meetings at the kotha ghara, that is not where women meet and matters that are discussed there are no concern of ours. Even these meetings are not well organised, as women keep coming and going as and when they please. They bring some of their work to it and often are distracted as they are wanted by the men at home for something or the other. We have our meetings in the mango grove and usually relates to programs for women. Usually the government worker comes and convenes the meeting.

Meetings for women were not commonplace and, when they were convened, happened in the mango grove surrounding the temple (which was the space for all public events) or in the courtyard of one of the member’s houses. Even here spaces were specifically allocated for different groups. Since, this was a single caste village, women from well-to-do families usually sat in the front while it was in descending order from there on. Although there was a scheduled caste hamlet nearby and for political purposes were supposed to be a member of Sana Balipada, they were not involved in any activities because of their supposed ‘inferior/impure’ status.

One woman at bada balipada said:

It is so difficult to get women together for a meeting. Usually the time is never right because the government people want it during the day and a number of poor women like me have to go to work in the fields, sell their wares or gone elsewhere. While the rich women are at home and could attend should the need arise...though some of them think it beneath their dignity...they often don’t, because the issues we discuss do not matter to them. When they do attend however, they take over the floor and we hardly ever get a chance to say anything.

Alliances are also formed between the providers of services, be they government or non-government workers and the well-off, who often wield the power. Although the gender differentiation was very evident to the outsider, when it came to challenging the same processes between women themselves, it seldom happened. My experience was, however, that these spaces were not free of contestations and, like for all commons, there were subtle expressions of the differences in this instance as well. There were always some women who claimed their right to being there, whether they had the right or not or whether they were welcome or not.
In the field, when one man from a well to do family fell seriously ill and the health worker and doctor came to visit, one woman said

*They only come for the rich because they get money from them. Why then do they get paid for from the government? They never come when I am ill...no matter how severe the illness, I have to go to the center...I have no money to bribe them.*

However when Bhagaban Jena’s daughter-in-law was due to deliver her twins and the Doctor came to assist, (although most women sought the assistance of the local midwife), there was not a single murmur of dissent. This was probably due to the position of power enjoyed by the family as well as the complications faced by Shefali. Besides she was the daughter-in-law of the most prominent family and also of the village and therefore required that all attention was given to her. However resistance took many forms - I already referred to the resistance of the women from the Bhoi Sahi previously (the scheduled caste hamlet), who used the overflow waters of the river as a fishing ground (because it was first and foremost a man’s job and since people from the hamlet were not allowed to fish in the main river, women from the scheduled caste hamlets nurtured the waters to ensure that they had a good catch of food) and were harassed by men from the main village. There were strong exchanges of words (some of which also related to the women’s bodies and were highly abusive), during which the women did not retreat (as one might have expected) but stood their ground and claimed what was theirs.

**Women - cogs in the wheel of development**

The main objective of the *empirical* side of my research was to examine the interface between the everyday lives of rural women and the discourse and practice of community development. The description of the everyday lives of women in relation to the larger community has been detailed above. In an attempt to critically analyse the discourse and practice of community development, I explored community development programs that were especially designed for women and discussed their theory and evolution in the Indian context in previous chapters, including the Panchayats as intended vehicles of community development and women’s empowerment.

As indicated, Panchayats have been – overall - ineffective in serving the cause of women; it has been observed in many places that women leaders are too old to deal with the demands of the office and funds meant for women’s welfare were often misappropriated. Because of the glaring shortfalls in the system, the elected women members were not
accepted as equals in local bodies (Jhamtani 1995). Orissa was the first State in the country to implement the 33% reservation of seats for women in Panchayats. Most of these seats were keenly contested and this was a great achievement in view of the fact that Orissa has a very low female literacy rate. In actual numbers, women’s representation at the grassroots has been quite encouraging.

In the village Balipada, one of the seats in the local government was reserved for women. The representative elected was a police officers wife. Although she was local to the village (marital home), she rarely lived in the village. She mostly accompanied her husband on his various postings. However, being the only educated woman in the village she became the defacto candidate. She had little interest in the issues of the village and seldom was available to take up the issues in the relevant forums.

One woman said

_We have so many concerns but nobody to take them up. We are not educated and cannot talk at meetings especially when there are mainly men. Besides a number of them are our relatives and we cannot speak before them. That is why we thought having an educated and well travelled person to represent us would be good...but in reality we have to fight our own battles locally and the bigger issues which impact our lives are lost as the representative has no personal stake in these matters._

It is likely that the workings of a participatory development scheme will be shaped more by the existing political networks than it will be by village-based stocks of social capital. The dealings of politicians and bureaucrats have affected efforts by the state to disseminate information to the grassroots and largely shape the ways in which benefits of development projects are made available to different groups of villagers.

_The local school here is managed by Bhagaban Jena and he runs it like his empire. He is the President and does not hand over charge to anyone else. Because he is the Panchayat Samiti member nobody can tell him anything either. He gives jobs to those he wants and from whom he can make some money. So we certainly don’t get the best teachers for the children._

In the village Balipada, I had heard that there had been a Mahila Mandal, which functioned successfully for a period of about eight years and subsequently failed. While trying to enquire into how the Mahila Mandal functioned and whether and how it had been beneficial to women, I thought it worthwhile to explore to the reasons for its failure as well. This is the story of the Mahila Mandal as narrated by Ruka and her grandmother,
who almost everybody called budhi ma (grandmother), since she was the oldest person in the village.

People in rural India find it extremely difficult to discern time frames; I consider this in many ways as my own failing, as I tend to associate particular events with particular timeframes, very much in keeping with my formal (western) training which preferences physical time rather than its cosmic essence. Time associations in the latter mode are made between events rather than with particular time frames, rendering the timeframes presented here mere approximations.

**Theory of Mahila Mandals**

Mahila Mandals are traditional local, informal community-level organisations of women who come together in celebration, sorrow or crisis. In recent times, they have become more relevant in the context of the reservation of seats for women in elections to panchayat raj institutions. Mahila Mandals often have contradictory processes and outcomes; for the majority of women, the most important role of the mahila mandals is in improving access to government programmes, rural infrastructure and connections to the outside or public realm. They also provide forums to articulate the practical problems of village women, including access to water, education, health facilities, income and sometimes the fight against alcoholism and violence. While they may covertly and overtly resist women’s domination by male structures, at other times they may serve to consolidate class, caste and sometimes gender inequalities. Mahila mandals bring out the complex issues of subjectivity, consciousness and resistance in the gendered context.

Although Shah and Gandhi (1991) acknowledge mahila mandals as part of the women’s movement in India, feminist theory and practice is apt to reject such associative forms that do not question the gender-power equation. Where such associations do not explicitly focus on deconstructing and reconstructing gender relations, they lose their value for women’s empowerment in feminist analysis. Prior to the international decade of women, mahila mandals were often perceived by feminist scholars as retrogressive to the interests of gender equality, Mazumdar (1979) seeing them as suffering from a lack of clear objectives and inability to reach the poorest women. This limited conceptualisation of mahila mandals was only to be expected, considering that they were encouraged in the early Independence period to ‘create opportunities for rural women to improve their
status as housewives and to take part in public affairs’ (Government of India 1974). Mahila Mandals have been viewed until recently as a strategy for women’s welfare – not in their potential as social and political movements. The feminist analysis of development programmes in India has tended to view them as subversive to strategic gender interests, in that they consolidate patriarchal norms and established gender ideology. Following Molyneux’s (1985) and Moser’s (1989) analysis of women’s needs, however, Kalegaokar (1997) sees the grassroots development ideology as broadly identifying with women’s practical gender needs, arguing that, for the majority of poor women, immediate rather than strategic concerns occupy their attention and they do not give priority to strategic gender needs.

In addition to this, the material and historical heterogeneities of women have been subsumed under a single category, arbitrarily constructed and representing the hegemonic developmental discourse in the planning, implementation and instrumentalisation of some of these programs. Women have been represented as uniformly poor, powerless, disadvantaged/vulnerable, thus denying their multiple realities and reducing the possibility of meaningful and purposeful coalitions. The tendency to essentialise women is not only due to the fact that third world women have been trained in western institutions but it is the product of an education that is western in origin and is valued over all other forms of education. Stereotypes are often adopted without any critical analysis of it.

The Genesis of the Mahila Mandal

About twelve years ago, the Mahila Mandal was formed, based on one of the government schemes for assistance for women. It basically was a top-down instrument – with a women’s group being formed by the village level worker, who was also driven by a target to be met. The group was used as the mechanism for the implementation of other programs, for example, the supplementary nutrition program, which was supposed to cater for all pre-school children and pregnant and lactating mothers in the community. It was seen, however, that few attempts were made to see that the group was representative of community diversity, rather it emerged as the dominant classes’ vehicle to further dominance. This was also supported by the values of the worker, who was from an upper caste and colluded with the leader of the group in keeping certain members out. While all persons in the above categories stood to benefit, women from lower castes were not
involved in group meetings and decision making. Dissent from the outside (women who were excluded) was one of the reasons for the downfall of the group.

Budhi Ma was nominated as the leader of the group by the members of the group; she was extremely dynamic and outgoing and, since she was an older woman, apt at interacting with men in the public sphere. The group would organise if it was in the interest of the members to organise and focus on their needs; as the public sphere is dominated by patriarchal relations, however, for women who have played key roles in undertaking community action defending caring values in the community, the value of their contribution has been consistently underrated. It was evident that tangible outcomes were easier to identify with, for these groups.

Budhi ma said: *It was a wonderful experience. I enjoyed managing the program. It was my responsibility to go to the block office and bring back the stocks. It was also my responsibility to see that the stock was distributed in a just manner. Many people had small children and were keenly involved in the program. For several years I managed this. But while I thought I did so fairly, there were many who did not agree with me. It eventually led to them finding another leader to the group which led to its downfall.*

The leader of the Mahila Mandal went to the Block Headquarters each month to bring the quota of supplementary nutrition for children and pregnant and lactating mothers from their Panchayat; she then took sole responsibility for the apportioning of the supplementary diet amongst all the eligible persons in the community. She took most of the decisions in the group, with little consultation with other members, and it became clear that a number of arbitrary decisions were taken, leading to a change in leadership. Even though the leadership of the Mahila Mandal was given to another woman subsequently, the task of distributing/apportioning the supplementary diet was appropriated by men, who would do so with any activity that would allow status and power to women in the community.

Budhi ma often said: *It was such a task at the Block office I had to argue with all the men there to get things quickly. Often I had to wait the whole day before I was given our quota and I had to quickly learn how to dodge the task of giving bribes. And then when I left and somebody else took over, it slowly withered away. Women were there, but it was mainly managed by men who then did not want me to play any part in it.*

When discussing the activities undertaken by the group, women in the community said:

*We had little role to play other than collect our share of the supplementary diet. The group was never used for any other purpose, certainly not to raise consciousness or our awareness. In fact with the little education women of the*
next generation have, they learn and discuss much more from reading newspapers and listening to various programs on television. But still the few programs we have they only tell us how the daughter/daughter-in-law should behave and always portray the mother-in-law as evil, but in reality the mother-in-law is not evil. Daughter's-in-law in fact, are veering away from the ideal and that is also bad.

Organising women was no mean task, however, given that they were isolated from one another, especially because of generational differentiation and mostly performing domestic tasks. This did not encourage younger women to express their personal experience and demands, develop their confidence and raise their consciousness about the social position of women in general. If anything, the forums were often used to reinforce the differentiated positions of women in the community and women’s personal experiences were not politicised to challenge gender, caste/class and generational oppression. But also women could not express their helplessness in the mounting pressure of poverty they were often faced with.

One young woman within the community often mentioned with some amount of distress in her voice: we were provided a weekly quota of supplementary nutrition for children below the age of five. But in my family because we did not have enough resources, the entire ration was prepared (into a porridge) as one meal for the family. So while in some ways the purpose was defeated, at least the other children too got a wholesome meal.

The problem is also with the nature of the program. The officers only want to find out about how the program works from their point of view but don’t take into account the problems we face and don’t cater to our needs. We are still the targets of the program, we are not treated as human beings. While the program is good and helpful, we still continue to remain disadvantaged, because those who do not need the assistance also get it.

Probably one of the biggest gains of this movement was the organisation of a collective and bargaining with established structures in finding solutions to tangible problems. Every time the voices of resistance rose, they were quashed or it led to a social transformation of sorts. Krishnaraj’s (1998) conception of the public domain as a supportive arena with collective management and control over resources, ‘while defining the distributive rights of members within the collective’, does not entirely cohere with the manner in which mahila mandals were functioning in the state. While they are clearly movements for the assertion of women’s interests, they can also be argued to be furthering divisive identity politics (Kandiyoti 1998). The divisions between women based on caste and class appeared to be more important than their collectivity as women. In some instances, it was also seen that local women’s groups were used to further
communal and religious politics and sometimes were formed to covertly and overtly question established relations of power.

A woman from the one lower caste family often complained: *I am not given what is due to me; budhi ma took sides and always excluded me. I was often left to the last and eventually informed there was no more stock left which meant that I had to go without, when I know that there was meant to be more than enough for all. This only meant that some form of corruption was going on and since I had no support in the community I could easily be excluded without any complaints from any of the others.*

The mahila mandal was mainly a training ground for women to enter the public domain as there exists a strong link between local governance in the form of PRIs and community development programmes (planning and implementation). In order to stand for elections, women need political training, financial and political support, networks and experience. There are four ways in which mahila mandals enabled women to enter the public domain: firstly, they allowed most of the members to engage in action and articulate their practical needs; secondly, they fostered a leadership cadre of privileged women who entered formal politics on the strength of their experience in mahila mandals; thirdly, they served as the arena for playing out the party politics of the area and finally, they allowed women to question the oppression that is contained in violence and to act against it.

Kandiyoti (1998) has pointed out that women’s resistance is ordered and constrained by their realities and the social normative framework and mahila mandals certainly function within the boundaries of the structured social norms. Thus, while at one level they resist, at another they serve to keep the lower caste women out of the leadership and decision making positions, restricting the engagement in the public domain of poor women and exacerbating class and caste hierarchies.

Recent critiques (Batliwala & Dhanraj 2007) in relation to women’s micro-enterprise and self-help group programs have also pointed out that ‘*women’s political agency has been reduced to the privilege of being agents, consumers and beneficiaries of state-controlled credit and micro-enterprise programs, with no other resources for improving the condition of their daily lives*’ (p. 24). Women are so preoccupied with earning an income to repay loans that they have little time or energy to participate in active citizenship. In the now famous BRAC program too it was acknowledged that ‘*the imperatives of credit delivery were eclipsing the objectives of social change*’ (Rao, A. et al. 1999a, p. 43).
The Rhythm of the Meetings

On my arrival in Sana Balipada, I was only to find that the Mahila Mandal, which had been started in the village and which I had gone to study, had, in fact, disintegrated. In effect, therefore, I proceeded to study the processes that led to the mandal’s continuation for a number of years and its disintegration and I present below in retrospect an account of interviews with key informants.

Budhi ma who was unanimously elected as the first secretary was extremely scathing about the demise of the mandal:

As long as I was the Secretary the mandal progressed very well. I had things under control. I had very good relations with the block officials and could negotiate to get our quota on a regular basis and managed it well. The whole thing fell apart because of the attempt by some women to sabotage the whole group. At the end of the day, everybody was the loser. Those women were not willing to take on the responsibility nor were they happy for me to manage it.

This group was formed with the intention to hand power and decision making to the community, but in reality we had no say in anything. The quota was determined on the population and did not take into account the resources available to the people.

The day of the meeting was designated as the first Monday of each month; the Secretary (who was also the Convenor) of the group and two other members arrived to bring all the material to be distributed to the venue. There was no need for formal introductions since everybody in the village knew one another. It was common to find children at these gatherings since there was no other place women could leave them. The meetings began entirely focussed on the task of distributing the supplementary nutrition; since food was such a major concern and every little bit was welcome, this programme was much appreciated by women and was acceptable to men in the community. Ruka mentioned that any radicalisation of the agenda of the group would have jeopardised the very existence of the group. The fact, however, remained that women did not want to speak with outsiders of matters that were controversial to the integrity of the community and that they, therefore, would not bring up any issues in the presence of the worker.

The government worker came along for the meeting. So although the rationale for setting up such a group was to ultimately help women feel more in control of their lives and resources, in reality how to broach matters of concern to their personal lives became an issue; practical needs seemed to take precedence over all others.
Some women returned home on collecting the supplementary nutrition while other women stayed back and discussed various issues of concern to them as women, but never anything that challenged relations of power within the family. It was reported that some of the matters they discussed had to do with the repair of the handpump near the school, the shortage of fuel wood, the fluctuation in prices which brought them very few returns for their produce, etc. Although the ration received was for a week for the mother and pre-school child, mostly the family consumed the entire ration in one meal with the child depending on mother’s milk, thus providing nutritious food for the entire family at least once a week, but again the purpose of the programme was lost.

The workers engaged in this programme had little knowledge and/or experience in community development work, of sustaining community, or of involving the community in their own decision making (since it was not a requirement of their recruitment), they were target driven and did not have a clear job description; they were not encouraged to use their initiative in engaging people in the process. In the end, it turned out to be a top-down programme, the field-level worker just implementing previously set objectives. The implications of the programmes as they occurred in the process of implementation were not followed up on and it thus seems that the purpose for which they were designed, that is, the empowerment of women, was doomed to failure right from the start.

**Women and Education: Enacting Cultural Norms**

There is a consensus in the rural Indian setting about the importance of literacy, particularly for children; that women valued it was clear from the increase in the enrolment and retention numbers of village children in the local schools. While women themselves were interested in learning the letters, they were burdened by the weight of their own social, economic and political marginalisation which had followed them till this stage in their lives.

Children of both sexes are productive members in the subsistence of the family and are given responsibility for a number of chores, depending on the assets of the family. Some children had to graze animals in the fields and common grounds, sometimes having to keep watch so that animals would not graze on farm lands. Young girls especially are engaged in a number of household tasks, such as cleaning clothes and utensils, fetching water and fuel wood for cooking and cleaning the family home. Women are now
encouraging sons to attend schools, however, and are freeing them from their productive responsibilities, whilst the acknowledgement for girls’ education is much slower in coming, though one notices that in the higher income families, a higher value is placed on girls’ education as well. Attending the village school was not considered to be sufficient for some people in the village. Bhagaban Jena’s grandson was sent to a nearby residential school as a mark of their status in the village. In one instance, Laxmi’s physically disabled daughter was sent to school and college to attain an education. This was partly in a bid to find her a husband; which was more important in view of her disability.

One of the reasons why young girls were barred from attending schools, especially on attaining puberty, was the lack of security for them; sexual abuse was a big threat. The lack of physical infrastructure, such as washrooms with a running water supply also hindered girls from attending schools. There also exists a belief amongst many that it is not appropriate to educate girls outside the home and that it decreases their potential to get married; an educated girl was considered a liability and not an asset. The conflict between social norms and rhetoric was evident in a number of situations; the community’s ambivalence regarding girls’ education could be detected in the way educated women were represented in everyday life: that they were individualistic and did not participate in the everyday life of the community; that they were free with sexual favours and were more demanding of their husbands and extended families. Of course, external constraints to the education of girls were ever present: the absence of teachers, the absence of a school building and amenities, such as bathrooms and water, etc. Whist education is spelt out in policies and development strategies as one of the major concerns, the realisation of this goal is more difficult than one anticipates, given the indifferent infrastructure and the socio-economic constraints.

Women and Health Issues

Despite the ongoing nutritional programme for pregnant women and pre-school children and the information provided, its basic instructions were not observed by young women in the community. This was governed by factors beyond their control, as there were both inter-generational and gender issues in the decisions taken regarding the apportioning of food. Further, if the nutritional mixture was not given in the right proportion by age, it would sometimes lead to the child having diarrhoea, which, in turn led to a loss of faith in
the programme. The word soon spread, with a number of women either abandoning the programme or serving the gruel to adults.

It was also seen that there was pilferage of the stock and sale to those entitled, which was made easier by some not accepting the nutritional supplement because of a loss of faith in its benefits. There was a huge cost involved in ensuring that the stock arrived on site and although it was the task of the worker to ensure that the stock reached the point of distribution, the leader of the group often had to go to the capital city nearby, meet with the concerned officers, complete the paper work and then transport the stock to the village, for which they were only given a nominal remuneration. Sometimes discriminatory practices were involved in the distribution and this was left to the arbitrary decision of the leader; in the process, it so happened that sometimes Mahiya’s child got his share whereas Suna’s child did not. This was one of the main reasons why members of the group resisted and proposed a change in leadership. Finally, the immediate medical support available to the community was the indigenous healer/ kalasi (shaman) and nutrition was not considered a high priority for him.

One of the issues which came up as a result of this programme was the large family size, leading to a discussion on reproductive health. This was never an easy issue to discuss with local women because of modesty and fear, lest they be considered barren and unable to produce sons. Unmarried women were less likely to know of issues to do with family planning as it was not considered good or proper for them to have this kind of information. Contraception was a major issue, although in Balipada more women tended to use alternate methods to surgical sterilisation, because of access to information and because of the range of contraception products (probably because of proximity to the urban centre). Since there was an imperative for health workers to meet targets for sterilisation (linked to incentives), they continued with mobilising people for the procedure.

Women’s Agency and Hierarchy

The strategies women adopted, to some extent, reflected the needs of the beneficiary communities as articulated by them. This was named by a few as ‘bottom up’ or ‘grassroot’ mobilization. This was, however, rarely seen to be operational in the field; when it came to critical decision making about how the stocks were to be brought to the
village, who went, to whom it was distributed, the extent to which women participated in these critical decisions varied in time and space. While for a long period the status quo was accepted and maintained, there were voices of dissent which eventually surfaced and were reflected in the dismissal of the leader of the group. In the early stages of the group, the participation of women was almost non-existent.

The explicit nature of hierarchical and centralised decision making (in complicity with the worker) was apparent in the group, especially in processes, such as membership of the group, allocation of the supplementary nutrition and the extent to which the norms were followed in the allocation. This structural hierarchy was informed by a diffuse and subtle set of behavioural norms with symbolic and cultural expressions, illustrating many of the more subtle cultural norms of hierarchy that all the women in the community shared. Mostly women explained these symbolic messages only as evidence of ‘the way things work’ and could not articulate a clearer understanding of these symbolic messages.

Sharing cultural norms did not result in smooth consensus as is evident in the description of the group thus far; the cultural patterns, while providing a basis for motivating actions or events, were also subject to multiple interpretations and these were often flash points around which conflicts arose between various members of the group and with the worker.

**Why Participate?**

While it is the goal of the programme to include as many eligible women, the choice of whether to participate or not, is – of course - based on women’s agency or on that of the household and this brings to bear a wide range of social, cultural and political considerations. Very often, association with a programme (and, by extension, with government officials) is seen as a route to upward mobility and, more so, to leadership in the programme and the opportunities it brings about for these individuals. Such status brought about an increased income (by whatever means) to supplement the uncertainties of household agricultural production or daily wages. It also gave status to women by linkages with people and institutions having greater power and influence than could be otherwise cultivated in the normal course of events. This was observed in the heightened self-esteem, self-confidence and the increased ease with which the women leader associated with people of upper castes and class, more so with men.
This kind of motivation for participation is not what is envisaged (as appropriate or desired) by the programme; it was expected that participation would be based on commitment to community-level service, as opposed to upward mobility or personal financial or other benefits. When the accrual of these benefits became visible through supposed symbols of middle-class prosperity - such as the acquisition of property, the construction of houses, purchase of a vehicle or the purchase of jewellery and, in some cases, even a good marriage alliance, which were out of reach of the other participants - this became a point of conflict between the group members.

The theme of individual gain through association with the group was used by members at different points in the discourse; in times of open conflict in the group, this theme raised its head, with accusations often being pointed at the leader. Previously, members close to the group leader and who no longer enjoyed her favour, inevitably pointed to the ‘prosperity’ of the leader and her family as evidence of the fact that they had personally benefited from the programme by misappropriation of programme components meant for poor women. I had – for obvious reasons - no means of substantiating these claims of misappropriation.

At the village level, local dissatisfaction and cynicism with government community development programmes reflect another reality of local development: that there are both winners and losers in the process and the losers are those who participated in the programme with the commitment and optimism, but were let down by the procedures, the priorities and/or the benefits or the accusations of misappropriation. The disgruntled losers - in this instance, the leader of the group - was one who attempted to utilise her position in ways that the programme deemed to be unfair or dishonest, but which from her perspective, was consistent with the familiar and acceptable norms, such as putting a hook on a main (public) line is not a theft of electricity. It is necessary to add, though, that this would not have been possible or acceptable without the complicity of the government-appointed village level worker (who did not belong to the village).

While narrating the history of the programme, the former leader spoke of it as though such corruption was her right and, in some instances, should be seen as her compensation, since she was not paid for the work she did. That such financial reward and individual upward mobility was motivation for the leader of the group was not acceptable to the
other members of the group as the programmes were envisaged as mechanisms for community development and not individual advancement.

**The government as dispenser of goods (they Plan, we Participate)**

The government, as part of its welfare measures, distributes grains and other items during periods of floods and droughts in the state. Unfortunately, this role has extended to the other community development programmes as well. Such role is problematic for the government as the relationship between it and the beneficiary communities evolves, as the government tends to remain the donor and people remain the beneficiaries, harbouring a relation of dependence. It is not uncommon to hear in Orissa that there are three seasons in a year, rabi, kharif (both agricultural crops) and relief, illustrating how the development of local initiative and independence is curbed. There are multiple interpretations for such activities.

Especially in the planning for a programme one can see that the views of the community are not sought, even if, in some contexts, it is a legal requirement to engage in community consultations. During the implementation phase, when consultations do occur, ‘expert’ knowledge will usually take precedence over local lay knowledge. The community, in spite of successfully mobilising resources and information, often does not (or in fact may not know how to) eventually take advantage of their economic or political muscle power. At the end of a community consultation process, public inputs are invariably subordinated to expert preferences and understandings.

Community participation is, however, a lot more than just consulting people for the successful resolution of social, cultural and economic issues related to particular programmes or conflicts. Whilst not able to elaborate, bottom up approaches are characterised by starting where the people are by establishing relationships of mutual respect, recognising the inherent knowledge of people, inserting regular moments of reflection about the direction the implementation of programmes are taking, making sure that at all times the process is being led by people themselves, and so on (Amongst many others, See Chambers, 1983 and Carmen, 1996).

The primary goal of participation is to give people proper responsibility for and control over their lives. Community participation should lead to the redistribution of power, but
experts have consistently noted the existence of a gap between academic enquiry and development practice (Slater 1992; Schuurman 1993; Booth 1994), highlighting community participation as it happens in the real world. Community development viewed as a process of conscientisation would be time-consuming and slow and since government programmes are target-driven and time-bound, the main thrust of the programme is lost.

Citizen participation in a developed country is more a matter of legal compliance but the primary strategy of the government is most often to reinforce its position by seeking ‘expert’ opinion, a more ‘rational approach’ and by privileging it, government excludes the generation of common ground and meaning in the community participation process. When governments become involved in community development, they work within a bureaucratic framework involving vertical communication, accountability upwards, the imposition of policies and the encouragement of uniformity, but also an acknowledgment that the bureaucrat is the expert. The community development process, on the other hand and when properly understood, is the opposite; it requires horizontal communication, it is accountable to the community and encourages diversity. Munro-Clark (1992) notes that citizen participation might be sought by government as a way of diffusing opposition, managing conflict or spreading responsibility and ‘delegating it downwards’. More importantly, the entire community is never really involved in the participation process; in India, the typical participant is male, upper caste and status in the community, with extended social networks on which he can draw for a variety of purposes. Those under-represented usually are women, more so those from lower castes, young people, the elderly, waged labourers and migrants. Lack of education and other assets is usually a factor in the non-participation of relatively powerless groups.

What is also not given much thought in the process is when and how to seek participation as well as the ideological issues related to this; other than privileging expert opinion, undoubtedly, participation is only encouraged during implementation and, if at all during planning, it occurs in the very late stages. Organised and established structures for effectively obtaining community inputs are lacking and governments tend to avoid community participation by making decisions secretively or at a level far removed from the people who are directly concerned by the issue, thus leaving little time for public discussion. Making provision for community participation does not ensure that it will take place in a fair and even manner either. If community participation does occur, the effort
by facilitators is usually to get agreement with a decision already taken or course of action already fully planned. Most importantly, however, there is a lack of time, expertise or monetary resources on the part of the community to make its voice heard effectively and this is especially important in the case where large investments in development projects or programmes are made. The state then has to mediate should there be a conflict between – what is posited as - the greater common good and the local interests and resolve it in the best possible manner, but usually the assumed ‘common good’ wins out.

In the case of the mahila mandals, while I have pointed out the theoretical assertions regarding their merits for the empowerment of women, the latter were not at all involved in their planning/formalisation. Further, the mahila mandal in this instance was used primarily for the distribution to identified recipients (targets) of supplementary nutrition whereby a traditional structure of a women’s organisation was utilised by the government as a management tool for their programme. When women tried to assert their views on the group, the group collapsed and, in this instance, since the programme was also in its last stages due to diminished funds, there was no interest on the part of the government to sustain the group or the process. An uncritical acceptance of a decision as necessarily being ‘good’, inevitably seems to work against the common interest of the ordinary person. Such programmes are social enterprises and as such are tied to specific interests and what appears best from the point of view of the government/bureaucracy may actually not be the best for people in the village and for achieving their objectives. Expert knowledge can take up a hegemonic form of knowledge, falsely confirming that such knowledge is true and neutral and that such knowledge can solve all social problems.
**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I critically reflect on my journey traversing the ‘development’, ‘community development’ and ‘women/gender and development’ literature globally, in India and Orissa and I attempt to evaluate the present status of women/gender in the development context, taking into account the everyday life experiences of women. Further, I tried to assess the manner in which gender has been ‘mainstreamed’ (or not) within international aid organisations, based on my experience of working with DFID. I am questioning whether ‘doing gender’ has become something different from ‘doing feminism’ (Sardenberg 2007) and whether a political project has been reduced to a technical fix, ‘leaving the unequal power relations intact’ (Mukhopadhyay 2007, pp. 135-6). Eventually, I shall propose an approach for community development workers for a sustainable global development.

**Focus on Poverty**

The focus on poverty reduction – long central to UN programmes – is now key to future IMF and World Bank lending to low-income countries, which is to be provided in support of locally-owned, participatory poverty reduction strategies, usually in connection with debt relief (Gupta et al. 2002). ‘Much of the poorer world’, wrote Sachs (2001) ‘is in turmoil, caught in a vicious circle of disease, poverty and political instability’:

> Through all of it US barely lifts a finger. It somehow thinks that sending the impoverished and unstable governments…..to get loans from the IMF and the World Bank will do the job, but even some staff of those organisations now publicly acknowledge that they have failed: making loans when grants are needed, imposing excessive austerity by collecting rather than cancelling debts, and failing to find partner-institutions with the scientific expertise to tackle underlying problems of disease, low food production, climatic stress and environmental degradation.

Still, one wonders whether leopards really can and do change their spots – more so when the spots seem integral to their functioning. Parris (2000, p. 1) suggests that cooperation between the UN, OECD, World Bank and IMF still rests upon a ‘simplistic advocacy of trade liberalisation in the face of the immense complexities of development and industrial policy’. 
The key is more effective coordination and planning, but based upon freedom and civil liberties. Sen (1999) argues for a view of development which places as much emphasis on process as outcomes. For him, the key to development are freedoms or peoples’ capabilities to live the type of life they value – these freedoms or capacities are political, economic, social, transparency guarantees (dealings under openness and disclosure) and protective security (social security). Everything is linked:

‘Political freedoms (in the form of free speech and elections) help to promote economic security. Social opportunities (in the form of education and health facilities) facilitate economic participation. Economic facilities (in the form of opportunities for participation in trade and production) can help to generate personal abundance as well as public resources for social facilities. Freedoms of different kinds can strengthen one another’ (Sen, A. 1999, p. 11).

In the context of international aid and the MDG’s, Harcourt (2007, p. 2) has pointed out that

‘The Millennium Development Goals process leave untouched the systemic causes of poverty while relying on ‘campaigns’ and ‘experts’ to calculate the figures and then sell all the strategies to governments and civil society. They fail to grasp the meaning of poverty in the lives of the poor, in all its complexity, an existence that for most educated and middle class people carried incomprehensible levels of pain, violence and disorder endured and resisted through back breaking courage and work. Measuring economic progress, introducing goals to be delivered by governments is blueprints to change the lives of 1.2 billion human beings in 15 years is almost meaningless when you consider what poor men, women and children have to live through in their communities’.

Linking women’s predicament and poverty does not seem to have had much effect on reducing their poverty levels as evident from the narratives of women I spoke with in the village. The following statement by Cornwall et al (2007, pp. 5-6) highlights what has happened to the attempts at gender mainstreaming after being first a buzzword and then falling out of favour:

‘Diluted, denatured, depoliticized, included everywhere as an afterthought, gender may have become something everyone works for an aid organisation knows that they are supposed to do something about, but quite what, and what would happen if they carried on ignoring it, is rarely pungent or urgent enough to distract the attention of many development bureaucrats and practitioners from business as usual.’

The Struggle for Power

Powerlessness is generally described as the inability to control what happens, the inability to plan for the future, and as establishing the imperative to focus on the present (Narayan
et al. 2000). There is no doubt that poverty and powerlessness are closely connected. ‘This powerlessness’ as Nussbaum (2000, pp. 78-80) points out ‘is a blight on the central human functional capabilities and prevents adequate care of the body, leaves the living places of the poor isolated, unserviced and stigmatised, and allows little possibility of education. It is the antithesis of political participation’. In the narratives of the women, the struggle for accessing clean drinking water and getting the tube wells repaired, the poor access (roads) to the village and the lack of proper health and education facilities are a clear illustration of this. Women negotiate this by identifying a patron who will assist them (and often exploit them). The dominant social values this fosters are those of submissiveness and gratitude, not of equality and mutual respect. Indeed, not all power is explicit and our capacity to internalise power relations, to delimit by ourselves the realm of the possible, is extensive. Undoubtedly, this led to women engaging in acts of resistance, especially as power is never concentrated in a single source or a single actor, rather it is diffuse, more scattered in its specific instance than in general, and capable of being created or appropriated. In the most difficult circumstances, therefore, women find the capacity and space for solidarity, resistance and organisation to flourish. This was seen in the continuation of the mahila mandal program despite several attempts to sabotage it and more recently one can find other examples of women’s solidarity in the establishment of self-help savings and thrift groups.

There is no doubt a struggle for interpretive power within the gender and development discourse. Cornwall et al (2007, p. 4) point out that

‘women appear in slogans, fables and myths both as abject victims, passive subjects of development’s rescue, and as splendid heroines, whose unsung virtues and whose contributions to development need to be needed’.

These notions sometimes become difficult to dislodge; the interviews with women in the village reiterated that, while ‘being for women’, the mahila mandal program meant little to women (although it did serve a certain instrumental purpose). There was no sense of feeling empowered within the existing unequal power relations. While subtle forms of resistance existed in the community, highlighting women’s agency, they were ‘clumsily formulated’, often ‘directionless’ (Lefèbvre 1984, p. 92) and incoherent. Such struggles, therefore, did not translate into long term benefits for women in the village, either

92 While the patron client relationship is fundamentally a societal relationship, it is also found in many forms of government, in the real operations of states. It is an unequal dyadic relationship and usually means one person is dependant on and ‘obligated’ to another.
individually or collectively. This is a small group of people, simultaneously living a ‘community life’ while also erecting walls between themselves, thus highlighting the complexity of everyday life. Some of these complexities have been addressed within policy discourses in the form of ‘discourse coalitions’ (Hajer 1995), constructed around particular feminist insights and used to frame a set of demands to challenge and reframe assumptions.

In India, the two gender myths complexes I have discussed in the introductory chapter - that women would be empowered if given access to economic resources and that women would alter the character of political culture and the practice of public power if given access to political power - are being used to construct and then utilize women as particular types of social, economic and political citizens. In the manner of old, the present attempt to create women’s self help groups as a vehicle for poverty reduction ‘is a form of depoliticized collective action that is completely non-threatening to the power structure and political order…such interventions…being designed and delivered in increasingly disempowering ways, instrumentalizing poor women, and being distorted to serve other agendas’ (Batliwala & Dhanraj 2007, p. 32). The mahila mandal program, being firmly an instrumental (welfare) program for the delivery of supplementary nutrition and not addressing matters critical to women’s strategic needs and empowerment, should be seen and understood in this way, probably leading to its downfall.

On the political front, far from women transforming politics, women are being marginalized and instrumentalised (for example, women’s political participation being fostered to advance the agenda of fundamentalist politics) in multiple ways. In village Balipada, it can be noticed that the system of representation that conveyed representative ‘authority’ through elected positions did not translate into actual ‘power’; the representative was seldom present to listen to the issues people raised nor did she feel that she had any power to do anything about the issues.

**Gender and the international policy environment**

There have been several criticisms regarding gender mainstreaming, perhaps the strongest being posed by Lewis (2006 as quoted in Goetz & Sandler 2007, p. 161), dismissing gender mainstreaming as a ‘pathetic illusion of transformation’ leading to nothing but a ‘cul de sac for women’ and calling for the establishment of a women’s agency with a large
budget within the UN system. Goetz & Sandler (2007) identify two deficits of gender mainstreaming strategies they have encountered as policy advocates within UNIFEM – fragmentation and a lack of emphasis on building on the strengths of women’s organising and women’s entities and, secondly, abuses of women’s rights simply fail to produce the same sense of life-threatening, economy-paralysing crises as humanitarian emergencies, environmental disasters or uncontrolled capital flows do. By contrast, there is callous indifference to the suffering of women the world over; women’s suffering is too routine, too normalized to generate shame and outrage.

There is a need to reposition gender in development policy and practice, to determine how to reclaim the political project while abandoning the present mode of engagement with development institutions. The importance of normative frameworks, microfinance or quotas while underpinning important areas of change, have failed to permeate the deep structures of patriarchy and inequality (Rao, A. et al. 1999b). For gender equality to receive the attention, status and resources it needs to generate action in bureaucracies; it is necessary to engage head-on with the bureaucratic logic, lest the achievement of gender equality will remain elusive. Based on several action research projects, Mukhopadhyay and Meer (2004) suggest the following:

- The importance of establishing citizenship as an intrinsic component of development, where citizenship is understood as feminists have been defining and redefining it to mean having entitlements, rights, responsibilities and agency. This includes the right to have a right, to politicize needs, and to have influence in producing wider equality in decision making in development.
- The importance of carving out spaces for articulation and citizen participation. Just as rights have to be articulated, the space for articulation and citizen participation has to be constructed.
- The importance of creating constituencies and ‘communities of struggle’. Changes in institutional rules and practices to promote gender equality and enhance citizen participation require that women emerge as a constituency, are aware of their entitlements and are able to articulate these.
- The importance of establishing substantive equality as opposed to formal equality. The lived experience of specific categories of women (the most marginalized or those who are most affected by the specific lack of rights) must be honestly represented in constructing substantive citizenship as against citizenship as formal rights.

These, Mukhopadhyay and Meer (2004) suggest, are ways of getting back to feminist concerns with the political project of equality. Goetz and Sandler (2007) rightly point out that, at the moment, governance reforms are in the main geared towards building secure environments for private investment, with less concern for building the capacity of the
state to serve as an agent of redistribution and equity. This is the right time for women’s rights advocates to engage with governance debates from a perspective that supports strengthening the capacity of the state to defend equality projects. For this there is no substitute for collective action to back up the change projects of women in positions of power or of ‘femocrats’ making their daily contributions in a range of organisations. Collective action should invigorate and inspire, that is, gender equality has to make sense to others beyond members of feminist groups. This is a matter of cultural transformation and is particularly important today, when the resentment of so many people about a range of economic, political and cultural injustices have made secular emancipation projects less appealing than a return to the certainties of tradition. The time, therefore, is right for transformative change through better linkages between a variety of interest groups to achieve the aim of gender equality.

**Sustainable global development – an approach for community development workers**

A global dimension to all our work is an idea whose time has come. It is important that conventional, locality and culture-bound practice should deal with cross-border or supranational issues. Globalisation, regional and local development, decline of the welfare state and its implications for users of services (as evidenced in the changes wrought by the reform agenda) – some of the major processes impinging on our everyday lives, are all reasons as to why community development workers need to take a global approach.

In the invocation of community, it is a matter of not *either/or* but of *both/and* – an awareness of problems and issues and building the ability to respond to them.

...the real importance of ‘living in community’ is that people – and groups of people – develop the ways and means to care for each other, to nurture the talents and leadership that enhance the quality of community life, and to tackle the problems that threaten the community and the opportunities that can help it.

(Aspen-Institute 1996, p. 1)

For community development workers, there is a need to be more proactive by moving beyond a passively dealing with one-way impacts of international change and develop an understanding and explanation of what might shape change in the global and local arenas. It is important for us as community development workers to theorise and/ or explain ‘...how we need to act, at local, national and global levels, for what purposes and to what
ends. If things are different, we need to understand what is different and how they are different now’ (Shannon & Young 2004, p. 277).

The eco-feminist, transpersonal, people-centered, autonomous and human scale developments’ challenge the hegemony of the ‘Western mode of development’ and its:

- economic bias and focus on paid work as the main and central meaning-giving human activity
- political bias towards ‘formal’ representation and the focus on democracy as ‘abstract’ delegation, rather than ‘participation’
- judeo-christian (monotheistic) bias towards and focus on ‘humans’ as the species central to the rest of the universe
- socio-cultural bias towards the primary if not exclusive focus on the individual
- masculine-patriarchal bias
- systematic reversal of the material and spiritual dimensions of our social-individual reproduction or recreation. (Boulet 2003, pp. 236-8)

Alternative change should be based on a bottom-up driven policy and on democratic, decentralized and participatory control, which will allow for a range of options to emerge. While Social Justice (Hugman 2001), Basic Human Needs (Mullaly 2001) and Human Rights (Ife 2001) have all been accepted as powerful tools for change within various spheres of action, practice cannot be universally based on them. There is no universally agreed-upon way of defining these principles; definitions are inherently contestable (Fraser 1989), making it essential to first fully theorise the reality we are dealing with.

Still there remains a need to put Human Rights at the center of the discourse; Ife (1995, p. 72) in relentlessly attempting to affirm social work as a human rights profession, summarises his approach to human rights: ‘not only provid(ing) a universal moral framework for the legitimation of a social justice perspective, but …also (being) relevant for a model of empowerment based practice’.

It is therefore essential to have partners for a broad discourse including civil society, media, government, faith based organisations, industry, education system, political and grassroots social movements and interested parties, which looks at the interconnected global-local futures, taking seriously matters such as poverty production, the struggle for power and gender mainstreaming.
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