

Regional and Social Development in India: Changing Policy Perspectives and Future Development Agenda

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1. Introduction

Development dynamics in different parts of the world in recent years reveal that a high rate of economic growth does not necessarily ensure spatial balance or healthy developments in important social spheres. In several countries, a high growth in income has been associated with accentuation of regional inequity and adverse effects on the social well-being of the people. It has been pointed out that even in India, which ranks much higher in human development than in terms of per capita income, as per the UNDP reports in recent years, adequate attention has not been paid to the issue of regional balance or social development. It has been argued that the planners in the country have "overemphasised physical and financial planning at the cost of social planning" (Krishnan 1995).

The alternate view on the subject is that the parameters of economic and regional/social development are so intertwined that growth in one automatically promotes the other. Steady growth would, in the long run, bring about spatial equity through diffusion of growth impulses and thereby improve social well-being, it is argued. Given the scarcity of resources in developing countries like India, scholars sharing this view have pleaded in favour of concentrating investible funds on economic growth only, and that too in select states, regions and cities, that have a development potential and can ensure a high rate of return. They believe that the problems of spatial equity and social development can be resolved through a sustained process of economic growth, thanks to the linkages among them.

Given the two opposing perspectives, it would be interesting to look at the trend and pattern of economic development in India, analyse the trend in regional equity and identify interdependencies between economic and social development. This exercise becomes all the more important with the launching of the New Economic Policy and programmes of structural ad-

justment in mid 1991. It has been observed that interstate inequalities in development, particularly in industrial development, declined in the era of planned development, i.e. during the fifties, sixties and seventies. With the relaxation of controls on industrial locations and withdrawal of the governmental programmes, promoting industrialisation in backward states/regions since the late seventies and early eighties, the trend seems to have been reversed. It is feared that regional inequality may have been accentuated in the nineties although the overall growth rate of the economy has been fairly satisfactory, after the formal launching of the liberalisation policy. Similar disturbing trends are noticeable in the spheres of social development as well, as public expenditure in some of the social sectors has been reduced significantly.¹

The present paper begins by analysing growth performance in the country in terms of a select set of indicators at the macro level, particularly since the early seventies. The male/female and rural/urban disparity are highlighted, when the available data permitted such a disaggregation. This is attempted in the second section. The third section looks at the interstate variation in the level and pattern of development, providing explanations, if possible, based on the analysis of the indicators included in the study. The fourth section examines the interdependencies between indicators of economic and social development, highlighting some of the interesting patterns. The final section attempts a few generalisations, using the empirical results of the study and discusses their implications for future development strategy.

2. Growth Performance at Macro Level: Aspects of Inequality and Social Development

The Indian economy experienced a growth rate of about four per cent per annum in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in real terms (at factor cost) between the early fifties and mid nineties. In per capita terms, the growth rate is less, viz. 1.7 per cent, as the population grew at about 2.1 per cent annu-

¹ An assessment of the impact of the programmes of structural adjustment on the regional structure of the economy and social dimensions of development in the nineties would be extremely difficult, due to paucity of data. Also, a four to five year period is too short to capture such trends empirically. It can, however, be argued that there have been attempts to decontrol the economy since the early seventies, although in an ad-hoc manner. An attempt has, therefore, been made here to analyse the pattern of regional and social development since 1971.

ally.² During the fifties, the first decade of planned development, the average annual growth rate was only 3.8 per cent. The rate was more modest in the sixties and seventies, coming down to 3.0 per cent and 3.5 per cent. In the eighties, however, India experienced a period of high growth of over 5 per cent per annum.

With the adoption of programmes for stabilisation and the economic liberalisation, the rate fell drastically. GDP grew by only 0.6 per cent in 1991-92. There has since been recovery and the current rate is placed at about 5 per cent per annum. Growth performance was considered reasonable during the period of liberalisation, but some scholars attributed this to high growth in agriculture, due largely to good monsoons and not necessarily reflecting the positive impact of structural adjustment. This proposition, however, may be discounted since the estimated growth in GDP in the year 1995-96, works out as 6.2 per cent, not including agriculture. It may be argued that the performance of the Indian economy in overcoming the problems of structural adjustment and maintaining a reasonable growth rate has been commendable by all standards.

It is not possible to analyse rural urban (RU) disparity for all the years since Independence as the disaggregated data for national income statistics are not available for this purpose. However, for specific years, the data have been made available by the Central Statistical Organisation. The data reveal that in urban areas, the net domestic product at factor cost was only 1.83 times the rural figure in 1950-51. This increased to 2.33 in 1960-61 and further to 2.40 in 1970-71 at current prices. As per the calculations of the Planning Commission (1983), this disparity index rose to 2.61 in 1980-81. A part of the increase can of course be attributed to the differential increase in prices. However, even after making the necessary price adjustments, one can note a significant rise in income disparity in real terms.³ Unfortunately, the data on income, disaggregated by rural and urban areas, are not available for any recent year. However, given the high income growth in the organised manufacturing sector, which is largely in urban areas, the RU differential is likely to have gone up during the eighties and early nineties. Importantly, the Planning Commission study, mentioned above, predicted that the disparity index would increase to 3.34 by 1994-95.

² This average growth estimate, however, does not appear very impressive compared with several neighbouring countries in South East Asia. Also, it has been characterised by significant fluctuations from year to year. Nonetheless, considering the vast size and the structural problems, partly inherited from the colonial period, this can not be dismissed as insignificant.

³ According to Raj (1990), urban per capita income, during the forty years since 1950, has grown by 135 per cent as opposed to a meagre 30 per cent rise in rural income.

RU disparity in per capita consumption has also increased, but not so much as in the case of income. The National Sample Survey (NSS) data suggest that the ratio of urban to rural per capita consumption expenditure at current prices was 1.40 in 1977-78, increasing to 1.46 in 1983 and to 1.58 in 1987-88. The study by Roychoudhury (1992) reveals that in the late sixties, the urban per capita consumption expenditure was only about 28 per cent higher than the rural figure. This went up to 37 per cent in 1987-88 at current prices. But for the increasing commutation for work from rural to urban areas and growing urban-rural remittances (besides the under estimation of urban consumption in the highest expenditure levels), the increase in disparity would have been greater.

During the eighties, the organised manufacturing sector recorded a high growth in value added per worker in real terms, viz. 6.7 per cent per annum. Unfortunately, total wages went up by only 3.2 per cent. About half the increase in wages is accounted for by the increase in man days of work, earnings per person day of employment increasing by only 1.6 per cent (Nagraj 1993). Growth of employment in the organised sector was less than 1 per cent. One can thus see that the rapid industrial growth during the eighties has benefited only a few, the workers in organised industries getting but a small share of it, thereby sharpening intra-urban inequality.

The growth in total employment was, however, high in urban areas during the eighties and early nineties. A large part of the increase was in construction and certain low productive tertiary activities. There was a process of casualisation and informalisation of work which absorbed the growing labour force (Kundu 1993). As a consequence, the wage rate between non-agricultural casual workers in urban and in rural areas at current prices declined from 1.25 in 1977-78 to 1.13 in 1987-88. Similarly, the ratio of wages for urban non-agricultural workers to rural agricultural workers decreased from 1.72 to 1.59.⁴ This provides an explanation for the striking result of the Lakdawala Committee (Planning Commission 1993) that urban poverty has declined much less than rural poverty. As per the calculations of the Committee, rural poverty was 3 to 7 percentage points higher than urban poverty during the seventies and early eighties. In 1987-88, rural poverty for the first time declined to a level less than that of the urban areas.⁵

⁴ The reduction in RU wage differentials in real terms would be more than what is apparent from the figures mentioned above since the consumer price index (CPI) relevant for urban areas viz. CPI for industrial workers, increased more sharply than for rural areas viz. CPI for agricultural labourers.

⁵ The decline in rural-urban migration and deceleration in the rate of urbanisation during the eighties alongside a sharper decline in rural poverty, as noted above, is therefore understandable.

This would imply that the developmental and anti-poverty programmes did make an impact on poverty, particularly in rural areas. The poverty estimates based on the methodology recommended by the Lakdawala Committee, using the data from the quinquennial survey of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) on consumption expenditure in the mid nineties, are not yet available. Scholars have, however, used the results of the annual data from NSSO (based on a thin sample) and reported a slight increase in poverty in the late eighties and early nineties (Gupta 1995 and Tendulkar 1995).⁶

It would be erroneous to believe that unemployment is a major cause of poverty in India. In fact, the percentage of unemployed persons is much less than that of those below the poverty line. Also, the former, which had gone up in the early eighties, registered a sharp decline in the subsequent period, unlike the case with poverty. In rural areas, the percentage of male unemployed to total labour force for the males, as per their "usual status", had gone up from 1.3 in 1977-78 to 1.8 in 1987-88 but then declined to 1.2 in 1992. By current "weekly status", too, the figure had increased from 3.6 per cent to 4.2 per cent but subsequently came down to 2.2 per cent. For females, the trend is similar. The unemployment rate increased from 2.0 to 2.4 to come down to 0.6 by usual status. By current weekly status the figures are 4.1, 4.4 and 1.2 in 1977-78, 1987-88 and 1992 respectively. In urban areas, the unemployment rates declined steadily between 1977-92, according to the above-mentioned concepts of unemployment. The percentage of unemployed males went down from 5.4 in 1977-78 to 4.3 in 1992 by usual status and from 7.1 to 4.6 by weekly status. Correspondingly, for the females, the rate went down from 12.4 to 5.8 by usual status and from 10.9 to 6.2 by weekly status (NSSO 1994).

In view of the fact that poverty estimates remained stable or showed a marginal increase, the decrease in urban unemployment during 1987-92 needs investigation. One may observe that the percentage of poor persons, both in rural and urban areas, is less than the share of the poor in person-days of employment. This is true for males as well as females. This implies that the poor, on average, work for a larger number of person days than the non-poor. One can possibly argue that the poor are so poor that they cannot afford to remain unemployed. Importantly, the percentage of poor among casual workers (outside agriculture) declined in urban areas during the period 1983 to 1988-89 while their share in the total number of person days

⁶ However, if one adopts the earlier methodology of the Planning Commission and adjusts the consumption data from the NSS to bring the aggregate figure at par with CSO estimates (by increasing the consumption expenditure pro-rata by about 30 per cent for all expenditure classes), one would note a declining incidence of poverty.

of employment increased (Kundu 1993). This would imply that in the late eighties, urban casual workers below the poverty line were devoting a lot more of their person days to work and yet were unable to lift themselves above the poverty line.

Employment and poverty linkage can be investigated further by analysing the changes in workforce structure. As mentioned above, there has been casualisation of male workers in urban areas. In 1972-73 the percentage of casual workers was only 10.1, which went up to 16.5 in 1989-90. The trend in rural areas has been similar, although the increase is less significant. The percentage of self-employed males also went up both in rural and urban areas during the period mentioned above. Taking the three employment categories given by the NSSO, studies have shown that the percentage of people below the poverty line is significantly higher in the case of casual workers and self-employed persons than with salaried/regular workers.⁷

For female workers, the distribution over these categories remained about the same. It may, however, be noted that for them, the ratio of wages of regular salaried workers to casual workers went up from 3.3 in 1983 to 3.7 in 1987-88. The corresponding figures for men are lower, namely 2.1 and 2.5 respectively. This implies that the degree of underpayment in the case of casual workers in relation to regular workers is very high and has gone up over the years for females much more than for males. Moreover, in sectors like agriculture and services that account for a large percentage of female workers, their wages are much lower than those of their male counterparts, even when working on a regular basis. This implies that regularity of job is no guarantee against economic exploitation of female workers. All this is a definite indication of growing inequality within the labour market in India.

Substantial improvements have, however, been recorded in the field of education. The percentage of literates went up from 39.4 to 52.7 for males and from 18.7 to 32.5 for females during 1971-91. For males above seven years of age, it increased from 56.5 in 1981 to 64.2 in 1991. The corresponding figures for females are 29.8 and 39.2 respectively. Furthermore, the gender disparity went down both in rural and urban areas. In 1971, female literacy was 39 per cent of male literacy in rural areas which went up to 53 per cent in 1991. Similarly, the figure for urban areas increased from 70 to 80 per cent. The progress and spread of educational facilities can also be seen in terms of improvement in gross school enrolment rates. The rate

⁷ For male casual workers, the incidence of poverty was 73.2 per cent in agriculture and 46.7 per cent outside agriculture in 1989-90. For self-employed persons the two figures are 48.4 per cent and 31.2 per cent. For regular salaried persons, however, estimates are much lower, viz. 38 per cent and 20 per cent respectively (Kundu 1993).

was 95.1 in 1970-71 which moved up to 118.1 in 1992-93 for the male in the age group of 6 to 11. The increase for females in relative terms is much higher, the figure going up from 60.5 to 92.7.

The progress in medical and health care services is reflected in the number of hospitals and dispensaries per million population which increased from 90 and 313 respectively in 1971 to 136 and 393 in 1991. The corresponding figure for hospital beds rose from 7250 to 9715. Along with a higher literacy, this has had a positive impact on the demographic indicators. The fertility rate declined from 5.5 per cent in 1970-72 to 4.0 per cent in 1990-92 in rural areas, as per the information from the Sample Registration System. The rate for urban areas also declined - from 4.2 per cent to 2.7 per cent, indicating a marginal increase in RU disparity.

Success in reducing the population growth rate has, nonetheless, been tardy, the rate stabilising at around 2.2 per cent per annum during the period 1951-91. The fact that the natural growth of population has not slowed down over the years despite the decline in fertility, is due to a corresponding decline in the death rate. For rural areas, the rate per thousand persons was 15.8 during 1971-80 which went down to 12.6 for the period 1981-90. The corresponding figures for urban areas are 9.2 and 7.7 (Visaria 1996). Similarly, the infant mortality rate (IMR) in rural areas per thousand of live births was 136 in 1970 which declined to 85 in 1992. In urban areas the figure fell from 89 to 53 (Registrar General of India 1978). The decline is slightly higher in urban areas in relative terms, indicating, here again, a marginal increase in RU disparity. The pattern for the total death rate, however, is the opposite. Significantly, life expectancy at birth increased significantly. The expectancy estimate for males was 54.1 years for 1971-80 which went up to 60.4 in 1992-93. The corresponding figures for females are about the same, viz. 54.7 and 61.2 respectively.

Child (0-4 age group) mortality rate (CMR) also showed a substantial reduction during 1970-92. The data from Sample Registration System (SRS) indicates that CMR in rural areas declined from 58.1 in 1970 to 29.1 per thousand persons. The corresponding figures for urban areas are 32.3 and 15.6. Thus, the absolute gap between the two rates has gone down over time although, in relative terms, there is a slight increase in RU disparity. The gender disparity, too, has been reduced over the years. The CMR for females during the period 1970-75 was 56.5, while for males it was 50.4 only. The gap is much less in the nineties - the corresponding figures for 1992 being 28.2 and 24.9. The difference continues to be high in rural areas, while in urban areas it has almost disappeared.⁸

⁸ Female babies (aged less than one year) had a lower IMR (infant mortality rate) than male babies in the seventies. Yet the CMR for females was higher than for males. This indicates

Growth in the housing stock during 1971-91 was impressive. It is higher than that of the preceding decade. The annual compound growth rates in dwelling units works out as 1.9 per cent for rural and 3.8 per cent for urban areas during this period, i.e. higher than the corresponding growth rates in population. Furthermore, the number of households per house went down from 1.07 to 1.03 and the percentage of *pucca* (using permanent material) houses increased from 28.0 to 40.5. Also, there was a decline in the houseless population in the country, the percentage declining from 0.35 to 0.09 in rural areas and from 0.43 to 0.05 in urban areas during 1971-91. These figures indicate an improvement in the housing situation in the country (Census of India 1991a and 1991b).

Progress in extending water supply, toilet and electricity facilities has been significant in both rural and urban areas, as reflected in the data available from the Population Census. The improvement in the coverage of households in terms of safe drinking water is indeed very impressive, particularly in rural areas. More than 55 per cent of rural households had this facility in 1991, which is more than twice the figure for 1981. (The comparable figure for "safe drinking water" is not available for the year 1971 from the Population Census). In urban areas, the coverage went up from 75.1 per cent to 81.4 per cent during 1971-91. In the case of toilet facilities, the improvement in coverage is not that high. In rural areas, the percentage of households having this facility went up from 5.4 in 1971 to about 10.0 in 1991. The figure increased from 54.0 per cent to 63.9 per cent for urban areas during this period. Similarly, the percentage of rural households having access to electricity was only 1.0 in 1971. The figure increased to 4.7 per cent in 1981 and then jumped to 30.5 per cent in 1991. In urban areas, the percentages are 27.9, 62.5 and 75.8 at the three points of time noted above. Clearly, the RU disparity in relative terms has gone down in the case of these three facilities.

It is not possible to analyse the gender disparity in the availability of basic amenities since the data are generated by taking the households as units. One can, however, see that the scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribe (ST) households continue to have poor access to electricity and toilet facilities. The percentage of these households provided with electricity works out as 28 and 23 respectively in contrast to the figure of 48 for the rest of the population. Similarly, 11 per cent of the SC and 5 per cent of the ST households have access to toilet facilities as opposed to 38 percent for the rest of

that societal prejudices against female children far outweighed the biological advantages. Now, with development, better health care, alleviation of malnutrition etc. the two IMR have become the same. The female-male disparity in CMR has also gone down. This can be taken as a positive indication of reduction in social prejudices against the female child.

the population. In the case of drinking water, the coverage is the same for the SC and general category, their figures being much higher than the ST households. This is primarily because the SC population is more intermixed in society than the ST population. Also, several special programmes were launched for the SC population during the seventies and eighties, having a focus on rural areas. It is therefore not surprising that the percentage of covered households among SC in rural areas is even higher than that of other households, the two figures being 60 and 56 respectively. In case of ST households, only 43 per cent are covered.

This overview of performance on the economic and social front during the past 20 or 25 years reveals that progress has been reasonably satisfactory. The disparities between females and males have, in general, narrowed down, although the gap continues to be large in case of several indicators. The gap between rural and urban areas has, however, increased, reflecting a differential accrual of benefits. Another disturbing trend is to be observed in the labour market in terms of casualisation and informalisation of the workforce and a low growth in real wages, particularly for casual workers. As a result, the situation in terms of inequality and poverty worsened marginally in the late eighties and early nineties. It would be important to see whether the pattern at the state level is similar and if the interstate disparity in the selected indicators (see Table 1) and their pattern of interdependencies have undergone changes over the recent decades.

3. Interstate Inequalities in Economic and Social Development

The regional structure of the economy was highly imbalanced on the eve of independence in 1947 as most of the manufacturing and processing activities were concentrated in and around a few cities. Mostly, these were the administrative centres and ports where the British rulers and Indian elites lived. Agriculture was at a primitive stage and the irrigation facilities limited to only a few regions, largely in the north western states. This further accentuated spatial imbalance (Kundu 1982).

The interstate inequality for per capita Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) has exhibited a slight decline since the early fifties and mid sixties (Mathur 1994). This may be explained in terms of location of some of the major industrial projects in the public sector and infrastructural development in backward states/regions. Nonetheless, these regions failed to attract institutional and private capital in any big way, due to insufficiency of market demand and the inadequacy of the infrastructural/incentive system designed to promote their development. This resulted in an increase in inequality from the mid sixties onwards.

The inequality in per capita NSDP at Factor Cost (at 1980-81 prices), measured in terms of coefficient of variation (CV), shows an increasing trend during the period covered in the analysis. The CV for the average income for the period 1970-75 was 22.6 per cent. This increased to 29.1 per cent during 1985-90 and further to 32.2 per cent in 1993 (Table 2). This increasing trend has been confirmed by several studies. Taking three yearly averages around the base year, Hashim (1995) reports the CVs as 31.5, 37.2 and 39.2 for the years 1970-71, 1980-81 and 1990-91 respectively. One may also note that the disparity increased much less in the eighties as compared to the seventies.

A mixed trend may be observed for disparity in the levels of industrial development during 1971-91. The development of manufacturing activities, measured by the percentage of workers employed (to total workers), value added per worker in organised industries, etc. shows a similar or a slightly higher interstate disparity in the early nineties compared to the early seventies. The CV for some of these indicators decreased up to the early eighties but showed an increasing trend thereafter (Rakesh Mohan 1993).

The CV for labour productivity in agriculture increased throughout the period under consideration. The sharpest increase was during the early sixties - the period of the Green Revolution. The CV for labour productivity between 1962-65 was only 37.6 per cent which went up to 50.6 per cent during 1970-73. In 1980-83, the percentage value was 51.1 which moved up further to 56.1 in 1990-93 (Bhalla 1996). One may thus infer that the variation in labour productivity increased only marginally during the seventies but somewhat noticeably in the following decade.

The high disparity in the growth rates of income during the seventies can be explained by the fact that the growth in agriculture as well as industry was high in the relatively developed states like Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat and Haryana (Kundu 1996). Besides, Tamil Nadu, another developed state, registered a high growth in industrial income. In the following decade, however, some of the less developed states like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh recorded high growth, both in agriculture and manufacturing, along with the developed states like West Bengal, Punjab and Haryana.⁹ Moreover, two other less developed states in the country, viz. Orissa and Assam, recorded a phenomenal growth in manufacturing.

⁹ A recent study by Sawant and Achuthan (1995) corroborates that agricultural growth during the eighties was more broad based than in the previous decade as it covered a larger number of crops and regions. Unlike in the Green Revolution period, increase in productivity covered crops like rice, maize, other pulses, rapeseed, sesamum, soyabean, rubber, cotton etc. Regionally also, the growth was much more dispersed as it was spread out in the western and eastern regions of India.

It is interesting that despite a decrease in the disparity in the growth rate of agricultural income (Kundu 1996), the CV in labour productivity went up much more sharply in the eighties than in the previous decade (Table 2). The states experiencing high growth in agricultural income during the seventies did not show a higher rise in labour productivity due to growth in the agricultural workforce. As a consequence, there was no or only a marginal increase in disparity in labour productivity across the states. This process of labour absorption in agriculturally growing states, however, seems to have weakened during the eighties.

The interstate disparity in monthly consumption expenditure in terms of CV increased from 11.1 per cent in 1973-74 to 17.3 per cent in 1992. This is less than the corresponding CVs for per capita income, discussed earlier (Table 2) and may be attributed to interstate price differentials as well as income transfers (through government and personal channels), mostly in favour of backward states, which have helped reduce the consumption disparities. Importantly, the inequality in consumption expenditure in rural areas across the states works out as higher than that estimated by taking the states as units, the figures being 14.1 and 21.5 for the two points of time mentioned above. One may infer that the rural areas vary across the states much more than the urban areas.

The disparities in economic and social infrastructure do not reveal a uniform pattern. The CVs in the percentage of *pucca* houses (in urban areas) and of households with access to drinking water and electricity went down during the period under consideration. However, for hospitals and hospital beds per million of population, an increase in disparity across the states clearly emerges (Table 2). Thus, one could argue that despite the important role played by central/state governments and public sector agencies in infrastructural development, the regional disparities did not show a declining trend in all spheres. This can be attributed to the institutional and private finance in infrastructural development which favoured the developed states. These states generally have a high credit deposit ratio, which indicates that the institutional funds flow into them from the backward states in response to market forces.

Happily, the interstate inequality in literacy rates went down systematically during the seventies and eighties in both rural and urban areas. The CVs for the males are 24.4, 19.6 and 16.1 in 1971, 1981 and 1991 respectively. For female literacy, the decline is much sharper - from 74.0 per cent in 1971 to 47.8 per cent in 1981 and further to 38.9 per cent in 1991 (Kundu 1996). This is partly because there was a significant increase in the value in many of the smaller states like Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and in Haryana, that had very low female literacy. The disparities in the crude birth rate and the overall population growth rate, however, registered an

increase. This may be attributed to the failure of the less developed states in the north to provide a substantial section of population with health care and family welfare facilities. The CV for the infant mortality rate also went up from 25.6 per cent in 1971 to 35.0 per cent in 1991.

The high variation in many of the infrastructural and health care facilities can be attributed to differences in both private and public expenditures across the states. In the poorer states like Bihar, Assam, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, per capita expenditure on non-food items (including health care and other amenities) works out as low, as per the household expenditure data available from NSS. The interstate variation went up marginally from 24.9 per cent to 26.8 between 1973-74 and 1992. The per capita expenditure of the state governments on social infrastructure between 1985-86 and 1992-93 shows a much larger variation, viz. 57.0 per cent (Hashim 1995). Public expenditure in all the less developed states mentioned above is low: only 60 per cent that of the developed states. Central assistance for the state plans has, however, been in favour of the backward states, which, to a small extent, has corrected the imbalance in the total public expenditure on these facilities.

The percentage of population below the poverty line shows an interesting variation across states. The less developed states like Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh report a much higher incidence of poverty than the national average in rural areas. Two developed states also in this category are Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. The backward states noted above report high poverty ratios in urban areas as well, as do some other states like Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Among the developed states, only Gujarat and Karnataka report a high incidence of urban poverty. The CV in poverty levels across the states has increased considerably. The figure for rural areas went up from 24.2 per cent in 1973-74 to 36.8 per cent in 1987-88. In urban areas, too, the increase in disparity is high, the figure going up from 28.4 to 42.1. This is because the poor states have shown only a marginal reduction in their poverty levels, so that the relative gap with the developed states has increased. This is understandable in view of the increase in interstate disparity in labour productivity, both in manufacturing as well as agriculture, as discussed earlier.

Based on the analysis of the limited data in the present section and the results of other studies, it is possible to demonstrate that regional disparity in India has increased in the process of development during the past thirty years. One could, therefore, argue that spatial inequality should be a major concern to the planners and policy makers in the nineties. The enthusiasm to accelerate growth at the macro level without adequate concern for regional development and access of different sections of the population to basic amenities would, therefore, be grossly misplaced.

4. Interdependencies between Indicators of Economic and Social Development

Interdependencies between indicators of economic and social development can be assessed by correlating their cross sectional distributions and temporal variations. It has been argued that economic development affects the processes sustaining social development and vice-versa with a certain time lag. As a result, it may not be possible to identify the underlying relationships through a simple correlation/regression analysis, using temporal data for a short period of time. Also, in a growing economy, the values of the development indicators increase over time because of the secular trend involved. Consequently, there will be statistical problems in drawing conclusions from the correlation coefficients, computed using temporal data. In view of this, it has been considered appropriate to use the comparative static framework and look at the cross sectional data in the seventies, eighties and nineties and draw inferences regarding the changing pattern of relationship (Table 3, 4 and 5). The interrelations discussed here are statistically significant at 5 per cent level, unless otherwise specified.

Per capita income at the state level correlates positively with consumption expenditure at all the three points of time for which the analysis has been carried out. The correlation, however, is not significant in the seventies (Table 3), which can be attributed to the differences in savings rate, consumption behaviour, income transfers across the states etc. Krishnan (1995) explains this in terms of failure of the market to freely move foodgrains from the surplus to deficit states. He argues that it is agricultural production in per capita terms which explains the variation in the levels of consumption and poverty across the states, rather than per capita income. This is because high (agricultural) productivity goes along with a better distribution of rural income and increased supply of foodgrains in markets within the state. Indeed, in the present analysis, agricultural productivity (per male worker¹⁰) emerges as the single most important explanation for the variations in consumption expenditure and rural poverty across the states in the seventies. The green revolution strategy which increased land and labour productivity in select regions (largely in wheat) thus contributed to increasing the level of consumption and reducing poverty before and during the seventies. However, with the gradual removal of restrictions on commodity movement, better transport facilities etc., correlation between the indicator of consumption and income (in per capita terms) has improved

¹⁰ Agricultural productivity has been computed for male workers only as there are serious problems of comparability over time for the Population Census data on female workers.

considerably over time (Table 4 and 5). These two indicators are more interrelated mutually and shows stronger correlation with poverty levels than with agricultural productivity in the eighties and nineties. This reflects state integrating with the national market, whereby income growth in agriculture or non agricultural activities in a state can effectively improve consumption levels and diminish poverty. Similarly, the percentage of workers in manufacturing in urban areas shows a positive relationship with per capita income in 1981 and 1991, unlike in 1971. The stronger correlation among these economic indicators in recent years can be interpreted to mean that the imperfections in the spatical functioning of the market have, to an extent, been reduced over the years.

Rural and urban poverty levels exhibit a high level of mutual interdependence across the states at all the three points of time. This could be attributed to strong RU linkages and a spill over of rural poverty into urban areas. Similarly, the rural urban literacy rates are strongly correlated, the relationship becoming stronger in the nineties. One may argue that the rural-urban gaps within the states have narrowed in relative terms for certain socio-economic indicators, despite an increase in income/consumption disparity, as discussed above.

Interestingly, unemployment rates (for rural and urban areas) do not relate with the developmental indicators in any significant manner and consequently their correlation has not been included in the Tables. Nor do they exhibit a negative interdependency with poverty. One could, therefore, argue that growth in employment or reduction in unemployment are not necessarily positive signs, as has been mentioned in a preceding section. These could be a consequence of economic growth, creating productive employment opportunities for the labour force. But they might equally be due to a supply-induced growth of employment at a low level of productivity. It is ironic that, given the present labour market situation in India, a low unemployment rate can not be taken as a positive factor in development.

The percentage of rural manufacturing workers is yet another economic indicator which bears no significant correlation to per capita income/consumption or any other developmental indicator even in 1991 (Table 5). Also, the states with a high incidence of manufacturing employment in rural areas do not show a low level of rural poverty or a reduction in it over time, the correlation coefficients between the relevant indicators being statistically insignificant (Kundu 1995). Furthermore, these states do not have a high percentage of manufacturing employment in urban areas. It may, therefore, be argued that manufacturing activities in rural and urban areas differ qualitatively. Possibly, a large part of rural manufacturing activities constitutes what has been described as "the residual sector", providing

sustenance to poor unemployed households. Their growth is contingent on excess labour supply.

The levels of basic amenities (indicators no. 15 to 19) are positively related to the indicators of economic development viz. per capita consumption expenditure, NSDP and agricultural productivity, at all time points. They are negatively correlated with poverty. A larger percentage of people in the developed states, thus, have access to basic amenities. This could be due to higher financial capacity of their people or their state governments being able to spend more on these facilities. Intercorrelation among the selected indicators of amenities is also high at all the time points. This is understandable. The states having a high percentage of *pucca* (permanent) houses would report a larger percentage of households covered by electricity and flush toilets etc. as these amenities are difficult to provide in temporary structures.

Importantly, literacy rates in both rural and urban areas do not show significant positive relations with most of the above mentioned indicators of economic development in the seventies and eighties. In the nineties, the correlation coefficients with per capita income are positive, but significant only at 10 per cent level (Table 5). The correlations work out as weak because many of the economically developed states with high levels of income, consumption and agricultural productivity like Haryana, Punjab and West Bengal do not exhibit high literacy rates. Some of the less developed states like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh, on the other hand, report high levels of literacy. This could be explained in terms of their plan and non-plan expenditures on primary education, since education is a state prerogative. Possibly some of the developed states attract illiterate migrants from outside the state, thereby depressing their literacy rate.

The interdependencies between economic and social development may further be assessed by examining the correlation of the development indicators with those of birth rate, death rate, IMR. The relationships are negative (except in the seventies) but not always significant. As expected, the consumption expenditure correlates inversely with these demographic indicators at all the points of time. The states reporting low levels of consumption expenditure in per capita terms and a high incidence of poverty, viz. Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh etc., have high IMR. The correlation of per capita NSDP, however, is weak. Surprisingly, it turns out as positive in the seventies (Table 3). It may, thus, be argued that it is the consumption expenditure that has a direct effect on the health conditions of the people and not their levels of income.

The percentage of literates does not exhibit a positive correlation with the levels of basic amenities, these being determined largely by per capita

income and other economic indicators. This is because many of the states that have made significant progress in providing basic amenities have failed in the sphere of primary education. This also shows that the people attach more importance to basic amenities than to sending their children to school.

A positive outcome of the access to these amenities, particularly *pucca* houses, electricity and toilet facilities, can be seen in terms of a reduction in infant mortality and the death rate. The states that have a high level of basic amenities, like Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, report a low death rate and IMR. Importantly, however, some of the economically backward states like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh have been able to provide a large percentage of households with toilets and electricity, thereby reducing their IMR and the overall death rate. The only amenity which does not show a negative correlation with the demographic indicators is the availability of flush toilets. This suggests that it is only *basic* sanitation which has a bearing on the level of hygiene and health and not the higher order services like flush toilets.

Importantly, literacy is linked inversely with the crude birth and death rate and with infant mortality, both in rural and urban areas at all the points of time. Its negative correlation with these demographic indicators is much stronger than that of most of the economic indicators. It could, therefore, be argued that investment in human resources through increasing literacy creates awareness regarding the benefits of a small family, a sense of hygiene etc., which in turn, significantly reduces the birth and death rate, particularly for infants, much more effectively than increase in income or even nutritional level.

Based on the pattern of interrelations as noted above, it may be argued that per capita income of the states affects the basic demographic indicators like the death and birth rate only indirectly, viz. through the level of basic amenities. The literacy rates, on the other hand, have a direct positive impact. Unfortunately, income and literacy indicators do not exhibit a high positive correlation. Understandably, therefore, the interdependence of income levels and demographic indicators is not very strong and keeps fluctuating over time.

5. Conclusions

The overview of growth performance in India during the past twenty five years suggests that the achievements in various economic and social spheres are reasonably satisfactory. The improvement in levels of income, consumption, health and educational facilities and other basic amenities at the

macro level has been moderate to high. Poverty levels declined during the eighties but towards the end of the decade and subsequently became stabilised and possibly showed a slight increase. The decline was not uniform as the backward states experienced a smaller reduction in their poverty ratio. This is largely due to the slow growth of employment opportunities in the organised sector and to the small or no increase in real wages/earnings of casual and self-employed workers.

The gender disparity seems to have narrowed down in terms of status of health and access to medical and educational amenities. This is reflected in the reduction of male/female gaps in IMR, death rate, literacy rate, school enrolment rate etc. RU disparity, on the other hand, has increased in terms of income and consumption levels, birth and death rates etc. In the case of literacy rates and access to educational facilities, however, RU disparity has declined substantially.

Trends in interstate inequality in various spheres of economic and social development may give reason to anxiety to the planners. In terms of per capita NSDP, consumption expenditure, poverty ratios etc., disparity across the states has increased. One could argue that while the poorer states have recorded some gains in the process of economic development, the gaps between them and the developed ones have widened. Even for basic amenities like access to toilets and electricity (not including safe drinking water), the disparity across states is high and, what is more disturbing, has not shown a significant decrease in recent decades. In the case of *pucca* houses and access to flush toilets, however, the disparity has been reduced. It may also have become less in the case of higher order facilities, wherein the market and financial capacity of the people are the major determinants. This could be due to the growth of a middle or high income class in all the states who can demand and are able to get certain facilities through private as well as public agencies. In the case of basic services, however, where the government still plays an important role, the disparity has increased. This could be attributed to the limited coverage/impact of the governmental schemes. Since urban development is a state responsibility, the growing disparity would reflect a low level of investment and expenditure by the relatively backward states for the provision of these amenities.

As for the socio-demographic indicators, the trend in interstate inequality is equally disturbing. The disparity has increased significantly for the crude birth and infant mortality rate, also for the growth rate in population in the seventies and eighties. The same is the case for health facilities, measured in terms of the number of hospitals and hospital beds per thousand population. However, in the case of literacy rates and educational facilities, there has been a substantial reduction in interstate inequality over the years.

As expected, the positive correlation of NSDP with consumption (in per capita terms) and the negative correlation with poverty level are not observed in the seventies (Table 3). This could be due to structural bottlenecks such as market imperfections, impeding free movement of commodities across the states, besides remittances, commutations and location of head offices of production units (in backward states) in the metropolises of the developed states. The correlation, however, turns out as highly significant in the eighties and nineties. One would, therefore, infer that a better integration of the regional markets through improved transport/communication systems and institutional linkages has taken place in the country in recent decades. Moreover, in the seventies, only agricultural productivity seemed effective in reducing poverty. Presently, however, per capita income provides a much better explanation for the interstate variation in poverty. One would infer that there has been a structural change in the economy whereby the states having a high income due to non farm employment (generated through governmental programmes and also market forces) could increase their consumption and reduce poverty levels.

Income or consumption expenditure affects the availability of amenities significantly at the state level, as may be expected. The weak correlation in the case of some basic amenities, however, suggests that even in the developed states, like Tamil Nadu, Haryana (in the case of access to toilet facilities) and West Bengal (in the case of electricity) etc., the essential services are inadequate. This could be due to unwillingness on the part of the people to incur expenditure for these services or pay taxes to local bodies for undertaking this responsibility. Generally speaking, the governments in backward states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan spend smaller amounts in per capita terms on social infrastructure than the developed states, as revealed through the data for the late eighties and early nineties. The capability of the states to incur expenditure for these services under plan or non plan heads is directly linked to their income, as one may infer from the positive correlation between expenditure on social infrastructure and NSDP in per capita terms.

Literacy rates, both for males and females in urban as well as rural areas, correlate strongly with the parameters of social development. These have a much stronger impact on reducing IMR, death rate, birth rate etc. than per capita income or agricultural productivity. The literacy indicators emerge as important in explaining the interstate variation in the level of basic amenities as well. Unfortunately, literacy does not relate very strongly with some of the indicators of economic development, like per capita NSDP. One would infer that many of the developed states have not paid enough attention or devoted adequate resources to primary education which has a direct bearing on literacy. The central and particularly the state governments

would, therefore, do well to concentrate on the development of primary education, creation of awareness and on building appropriate social institutions. It may be seen that Kerala and, to some extent, Himachal Pradesh which have low per capita NSDP but a high level of literacy and of infrastructural facilities, show positive developments socially and demographically.

Finally, the absence of strong and consistent interdependencies among the dimensions of economic, regional and social development in India in recent decades does not justify the optimism that progress in the one would automatically improve the others. This makes a strong case for designing a special support system through governmental schemes backed up with an appropriate organisational structure and adequate resource allocation. There is of course no denial of the positive impact of income growth in improving the level of amenities, quality of life and human resources. However, it seems that economic growth does not have a positive impact on all social dimensions nor does it benefit all regions equally. Policies and programmes specifically addressing issues of social and regional development would, therefore, be extremely important. Particularly, an increase in disparity in growth across regions in future years can be extremely dangerous, given the federal structure of the Indian polity. Recommendations to globalise the economy through a few large cities with a high growth potential, that can attract banking finance and capital from domestic and international investors may bring about rapid growth in the short term. But this would marginalise a large number of small and medium towns in the backward states (many of which show excellent potentialities for growth) and have socially adverse consequences. Spatially balanced development in the country, based on an appropriate system of incentives and provision of select critical infrastructure in a number of small and medium towns, particularly those located in backward regions, seems to be the optimal strategy at the present juncture of the Indian economy.

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Table 1: Indicators of Economic and Human Development

- 1 (a) Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) for 1970-75
- 1 (b) NSDP for 1980-85
- 1 (c) NSDP for 1990-93
- 2 (a) Agricultural Productivity Per Male Worker (AGP) for 1970-73
- 2 (b) AGP for 1980-83
- 2 (c) AGP for 1990-93
- 3 (a) Per capita Total Expenditure (CONEX) for 1973-74
- 3 (b) CONEX in 1983
- 3 (c) CONEX in 1992
- 4 (a) Per cent Share of Manufacturing in Total Workforce for Rural Areas (MANR) in 1971
- 4 (b) MANR in 1981
- 4 (c) MANR in 1991
- 5 (a) Per cent Share of Manufacturing in Total Workforce (MANU) in Urban Areas in 1981
- 5 (b) MANU in 1981
- 5 (c) MANU in 1991
- 6 (a) Per cent of People below Poverty Line in Rural Areas (POVR) in 1973-74
- 6 (b) POVR in for 1883
- 6 (c) POVR in for 1987-88
- 7 (a) Per cent of People below poverty line in urban areas (POVU) in 1973-74
- 7 (b) POVU in 1983
- 7 (c) POVU in 1987-88
- 8 (a) Per cent of Literates to Total Population in Rural Areas (LITTR) in 1971
- 8 (b) Per cent of Literates to Total Population in 7+ Age Group in Rural Areas (LITSR) in 1981
- 8 (c) LITSR in 1991
- 9 (a) Per cent of Literates to Total Population in Urban Areas (LITTU) in 1971
- 9 (b) Per cent of Literates to Total Population in 7+ Age Group in Urban Areas (LITSU) in 1981
- 9 (c) LITSU in 1991
- 10 (a) Number of Hospitals per Thousand of population (HOSP) in 1971
- 10 (b) HOSP in 1981
- 10 (c) HOSP in 1991

- 11 (a) Number of Hospital Beds per Thousand Population (HBED) in 1971
- 11 (b) HBED in 1981
- 11 (c) HBED in 1991
- 12 Crude Birth Rate per Thousand Population (CBR)
 - (a) CBR in 1971
 - (b) CBR in 1981
 - (c) CBR in 1991
- 13 Crude Death Rate per Thousand Population (CDR)
 - (a) CDR in 1971
 - (b) CDR in 1981
 - (c) CDR in 1991
- 14 Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) per Thousand Babies Born
 - (a) IMR in 1971
 - (b) IMR in 1981
 - (c) IMR in 1991
- 15 Percentage of *Pucca* (of permanent material) Houses (PUCU) in Urban Areas
 - (a) PUCU in 1981
 - (b) PUCU in 1991
- 16 Percentage of Households having Electricity (ELECT)
 - (a) ELECT in 1981
 - (b) ELECT in 1991
- 17 Percentage of Households having Toilets (TOILET)
 - (a) TOILET in 1981
 - (b) TOILET in 1991
- 18 Percentage of Households having Access to Safe Drinking Water (WATER)
 - (a) WATER in 1981
 - (b) WATER in 1991
- 19 Percentage of Urban Households having Flush Toilets (FLUSHU)
 - (a) FLUSHU in 1981
 - (b) FLUSHU in 1991

DATA SOURCES:

- (a) The figures for net state domestic product were obtained from the Central Statistical Organisation, Government of India, New Delhi.
- (b) Agricultural productivity indicators are taken from the Planning Commission Project at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (see Bhalla 1996).
- (c) Poverty and Consumption Expenditure data are from the National Sample Survey Organisation, Government of India, New Delhi.
- (d) Data on Literacy, workers in different activities, medical facilities, availability of basic amenities, death rate, birth rate, etc. are from the Population Census of 1971, 1981 and 1991.

Table 2: Average Value (AVG) and Coefficient of Variation (CV) of the Selected Indicators

INDICATORS	1970s		1980s		1990s	
	AVG	CV	AVG	CV	AVG	CV
1. NSDP	1456	22.8	1708	29.1	2108	32.2
2. AGP	3249	50.6	3883	51.1	4751	56.0
3. CONEX	59.1	11.1	129.7	14.2	293.3	17.3
4. MANR	2.55	84.0	3.9	51.4	4.7	63.0
5. MANU	19.66	32.7	22.4	26.7	19.4	32.0
6. POVR	51.7	24.2	39.6	40.5	33.9	36.8
7. POVU	45.5	28.4	37.7	43.4	35.1	42.1
8. LITTR	25.3	40.2	39.0	32.5	46.7	28.2
9. LITTU	51.8	13.4	67.8	10.8	73.8	9.5
10. HOSP	.01	51.5	.011	66.2	.01	118.0
11. HBED	.72	33.0	.95	46.4	.97	58.0
12. CBR	36.4	11.1	32.2	11.9	27.7	15.1
13. CDR	14.1	18.4	11.9	20.5	9.5	18.9
14. IMR	111.2	25.6	98.7	29.4	74.1	35.0
15. PUCU	NA	NA	56.1	23.6	69.6	20.1
16. ELECT	NA	NA	32.8	49.7	47.4	45.3
17. TOILET	NA	NA	24.2	42.2	24.2	42.4
18. WATER	NA	NA	39.7	45.4	79.1	17.2
19. FLUSHU	NA	NA	15.9	68.1	34.8	54.5

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