

Challenges Before Indian Democracy

Varshney, Ashutosh, 'India's Democratic Challenge', *Foreign Affairs*, 86 (2), March-April, 2007, pp. 93-106.

Market-based policies always meant to increase the efficiency of the aggregate economy, frequently generate short-term dislocations and resentment. In a democratic polity, this resentment often translates at the ballot box into a halt or a reversal of pro-market reforms. Today, market interests and democratic principles are uneasily aligned in India. Though the two are not inherently contradictory, but there are tensions between them, that the leaders

of India have to manage carefully. In order to continue this growth, a low-income democracy such as India must nurture the energies of its entrepreneurs, while, in the short run, responding to the reservations and resentment of the masses.

The important challenges, which India faces in this context is the urban-rural inequalities, which have grown, since the reforms began. Therefore, there is a pressure on politicians, to make reforms relevant to the masses is rising, even it has not reached a critical threshold, which the author says is reflected in the 2004 electoral results.

Lavoy, Peter R., 'India in 2006: A New Emphasis on Engagement', *Asian Survey*, XLVII (1), January/February, 2007, pp. 113-124.

The writer describes the year 2006 as a momentous year in India's quest to become a great power. After 59 years of its existence, India is nearing the status, its first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, envisioned at the time of independence. India took important steps in 2006 to develop its economy and improving its standing abroad. Strengthening its strategic partnership with the United States, while at the same time maintaining positive relations with China, was a significant achievement. Increased attention to energy security has driven India to reach out to countries well beyond its borders. For the first time in India's history, New Delhi Appears comfortable using the military and diplomatic tools that great powers have used throughout history.

Today, every global power-including the United States and China-treats India with the respect and consideration befitting a country that has posted an average economic growth rate of 7 per cent. However, three sizeable challenges – stabilizing relations with Pakistan, raising the democratic poverty line, and finding solutions to long-term water, energy and environmental problems remain barriers to Nehru's ambition for India to truly become a country that counts in world affairs.

Arora, Vibha, 'Unheard Voice of Protest in Sikkim', *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLII (34), August 25, 2007, pp. 3451-3454.

This article presents a lively account of the people's persistent protest against a slew of hydel projectson the river Teesta in the state of

Sikkim. The Teesta hydel project, like such projects elsewhere in the country, profusely promises development in the long neglected region of North Sikkim. However, the regions indigenous inhabitants, largely the Lepchas and the Bhutias, along with the Buddhist community, have waged a sustained and relentless campaign against the project. The protest is powerfully propelled by the fear of large-scale involuntary displacement and of extinction of region's cultural and ethnic traditions.

Not only have Lepcha men and women and Buddhist lamas swung into action against the hydel projects, already planned and in the pipeline, but also a number of organisations spearheaded the protest, undeterred by the promise of development benefits. The lead acquisition in May 2007 galvanised the scale and intensity of the movement, opposing the projects on socio-cultural and humanitarian grounds. The agitators, under the indomitable leadership of Athup Lepcha and Dawa Lepcha, could realise the hidden agenda of the Government of Sikkim. Involuntary displacement and extinction of ethnic traditions rooted in the Teesta and its environs aside, the fear of indigenous majority inhabitants being rendered minority through influx of migrants made the people to fight tooth and nail. For the Lepchas, the implementation of the Teesta hydel project and the loss of Dzongu (the ancient Lepcha reserve) may result in ethnocide, the disappearance of their cultural heritage.

The people's protest is symptomatic of a seething anger and anguish of people, whose voices are being heard and respected under inexorable pressure and public action, against unilateral government decisions that put people at risk.

Chelliah, Raja K.R. Shanmugam, 'Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Narrowing Regional Disparities', *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLII (34), August 25, 2007, pp. 3475-3481.

At a time when "growth with social justice" or development with a "human face" or 'inclusive' growth is being, increasingly emphasised, it is a well-established fact that our planning and economic policies have failed to produce inclusive growth to enable the bulk of the country's population to reap the benefits of development. Based on India's experience and robust evidence of non-inclusive growth of the economy, the paper suggests a set of

innovative policies, especially for accelerating growth in the backward states in order to narrow the spatial or regional disparities.

Upadhyay, Suggeta, 'Wastage in Indian Higher Education', *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLII (2), January 13, 2007, pp. 161-168.

Despite increase in enrolment during the preceding decades, the proportion of students of the relevant age-group (18-24) is quite low in 2002: 9.28 percent for boys and 6.71 percent for girls in higher education institutions. This indicates the exclusion of a large number of girls from the opportunities for higher education. A pertinent question, therefore, is: what explains this low gross enrolment ratio/net enrolment ratio in higher education? Is it due to the demand-side constraint in terms of lack of demand for higher education or the supply-side constraint in the form inadequate access. The present paper examines the issues in the context of women as the female participation rates are unacceptably low.

The study examines the extent and nature of wastage in higher education institutions from two perspectives, viz. student-waste and expenditure-waste. The period of consideration relates to the pre-liberalisation and post-liberalisation periods. A few of the relevant findings of the study are : (i) women receiving higher education do not attach much importance to job prospects; (ii) higher education without technical degree does not have much demand in the job market; (iii) professional/vocational education both at the school and higher educational levels are much in demand compared to the general level of higher education; (iv) in view of increased private investment and increasing use of technical skills, the demand for professional higher level is expected to increase much more in future; (v) regarding women's education, general higher education has comparatively little scope for utilization in the economy.

There appears, the author observes, to have been a lack of consistency between the pattern of education that is available and the pattern of education that is demanded by the process of economic development. Public subsidies in higher education are inherently inefficient. Cost reduction adjustment, remoulding the pattern of education and redistributing student enrolment away from higher cost fields with surplus manpower can help. Education that is likely to increase potential for self-employment are to be preferred.