

Articles:

**Caste and Castelessness in the Indian Republic: Towards a Biography of the
'General Category'**

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Abstract:

The abolition of caste as demanded during pre-independence period had led to a predicament whereby the need to delegitimize caste was in conflict with the commitment to redress the disabilities of caste. The unbridgeable divergence between these two perspectives had made annihilation of caste seem more like a disabling dream than an empowering utopia. The central predicament in caste was the virtual invisibility of the upper caste and hyper visibility of the lower caste that had split society into two unequal and implacably opposed sections. One for which caste appeared to be the only available resource to improve life-chances in a game, where the playing field was far from level, while for the other camp; caste had already yielded all it could. Contemporary complexities of lower caste and their demands for social justice need to be addressed and close attention to be paid. To its taken for granted side, namely naturalization of upper caste as the legitimate inheritors of modernity. The paper retraces sociological, political, constitutional and judicial perspectives and the emergence and rise of the notion of castelessness.

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**Women's Autonomy, Maternal and Child Healthcare in India: Are the Women and
Children from Poorest Households Particularly Disadvantaged?**

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Abstract:

This study investigates whether the influence of female autonomy on safe maternal and child healthcare differs across rich and poor households in India, using the National Family Health Survey data for 2005-06. Employing the proportional odds model, I find that women with autonomy do not have significantly higher odds of seeking proper maternal and child healthcare, although the estimates turn out to be statistically significant. Women from richer households have marginally higher odds of seeking proper maternal and child healthcare than others. I use different wealth indicators to measure household's economic status and find that the results do not vary based on the wealth indicators. When the households are categorized into different wealth and standard of living quintiles, there is no evidence of any systematic

patterns of relationship between autonomy variables and healthcare seeking behavior. Women's education turns out to be a significant determinant of safe maternal and child healthcare, regardless of the economic status of the household.

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Agriculture in West Bengal: Can the New Policies Trigger a Second Green Revolution?

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Abstract :

The recent policy decision of the government of West Bengal to offer heavily subsidized power connections for well irrigation, and to remove the restrictions on issuing permits for drilling new energized wells, has not taken cognizance of the situation vis-a-vis arable land and agro-ecology and other socio-economic realities of the State. While these policies would do no good to WB's agriculture, it would surely and certainly do long term harm to the State's water and energy economy. Some of the recent studies endorsing the above approach of the government are built on faulty assumptions, and fail to reflect the ground reality. The new policy, instead, is retrograde in nature, as compared to the landmark decision of the Left Front government in the state, to introduce metering of agricultural power users and charge for electricity on the basis of actual consumption and cost of supply. It would only lead to a windfall gain for the existing diesel pump owners, as they would be able to produce water cheap and sell it to poor farmers at prohibitive prices.

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An Uncovered Truth in Fixation of MSP for Crops in India

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Abstract :

Providing assured prices for crops are very important not only for improving the profitability of farmers but also for increasing the production of agricultural commodities. This is particularly very important for Indian farmers where the agricultural markets are mostly distorted and

dominated by the middlemen. Keeping this in view, the Government has been announcing the minimum support price (MSP) for about 25 crops, every year before the kharif and rabi seasons, based on the recommendation of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). However, the recently announced MSP for kharif season 2012 has generated lots of euphoria among the economists and policy makers of our country. Some argue that the unprecedented increase in MSP for different crops will lead to inflation, while others squabble that the increase in the price of paddy and other crops is "dirty economics and dirtier politics". There is also a feeling among some quarters that this rise was unnecessary given the excess buffer stock of foodgrains. Are these arguments valid? Will the rise in MSP help the farmers to get more profit? Is the rise in MSP adequate to cover the cost of production of different crops? Is the hike in MSP justified? In this study, utilising the data from the cost of cultivation survey published by CACP, an attempt is made to answer these questions.

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Disinvestment of Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs): A Critique

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Abstract:

Privatization of Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) is a major constituent of the economic reforms introduced in Indian economy in 1991. Notwithstanding the weaknesses of the public enterprises unearthed in 1980s, their techno-economic contributions to India's development process cannot be undermined in the privatization debate. Disinvestment was an instrument to obtain higher level of efficiency and profitability of PSEs. The recent official data on divested enterprises taken together have shown improvement in the financial indicators which in fact portrayed a partial picture. The growing body of empirical research has however revealed mixed results. The present endeavour aims to critically examine the disinvestment exercise focusing on the institutional structure, management issue in addition to financial results of the PSEs divested during the past two decades of reforms. The study concludes that disinvestment made so far has met with only limited success. This calls for certain policy initiatives in the disinvestment design, as suggested by the author.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Deshpande, R. S., K. V. Raju, S. M. Jharwal and D. Rajasekhar

Development Windows: Essays in Honour of Prof. V. M. Rao

by L. Venkatachalam