

Review of  
**Development & Change**  
Volume IV Number 1, January - June 1999

**Dalit discourse and the evolving new self: contest and strategies**

*Sanal Mohan*

**Abstract**

Modernity had propelled social movements, that helped to reconstitute the identities of the communities/social groups. Equality, social development and salvation, both material and spiritual, were aimed at in this process. The emergent social groups - Dalits in this instance -had to engage with various dominant actors in the Kerala society to achieve it. This is not considered here as a finished project. The field of power thus constituted had several contradictory pulls. The paper tries to situate the experience of Dalit movements in Colonial Kerala in this context. We consider here the discourses of missionaries, social reformers, the state and similar agencies to unravel this process. The paper deviates from the usual pattern of historical discussion of missionary activities or social reform. At the same time it anchors on the empirical details that history intimates. The questions of reform and agency are considered here in a detailed manner. The paper attempts to analyze the development of Dalit Movements in Kerala. Early Dalit movements in Kerala are considered here as an integral part of the social movements that changed the structure of the Kerala society. It remains as a realm of socio-political practice important in the context of colonial modernity, awaiting inquiry. Our project is to objectify the struggles of Dalits in Kerala Society, to analyze the mechanisms of social change that are centered in the above mentioned struggles; to bring out the emancipatory potential of such movements; and to draw certain broad parallels with the ideological orientations of Dalit movements today.

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**India's trade links with G-7: an analysis in the context of globalization**

*Bhaskar Majumdel*

**Abstract**

The New Economic Policy (NEP), 1991, and the associated trade policy changes declared by the Government of India following NEP were essentially aimed at open-door industrialization. In this paper we concentrate on India's trade links with the seven Major Industrial Countries (G-7) in the world. We try to link India's trade-structure with the falling value of her currency vis-a-vis the currency of each country in G-7 and examine the possibility of attaining competitiveness as understood by export promotion. The time frame for this analysis is half-a-decade following NEP in the context of the 1980s. This paper tries to show that a structure of commodity production that cannot escape from the long-term practice of relying on colonial division of labour cannot attain competitiveness in the trade sector, trade-structure being a direct corollary of tradable product structure, the latter being manifestation of command over technology. The paper concludes that devaluation, administered internally or imposed from outside, cannot promote trade-linked industrialization. To ensure industrialization, this paper argues, what India needs is adoption of hard internal decisions to build up national power and soft diplomatic relations with her neighbours.

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## **Common property studies and the limits to equity: some conceptual concerns and possibilities**

*Ajit Menon*

### **Abstract**

Common property regimes/resources have received a great deal of attention within the recent discourse on natural resource management. The main reason for this has been to counter Hardin's 'Tragedy of the Commons'. An equally important, but less explicit reason, has been to highlight the positive distributive impact of the commons. This paper focuses on the latter concern, namely distributive equity and common property regimes/resources. We argue that there are inherent limits to the equity discourse within 'common property studies' due to prior more dominant concerns such as efficiency, sustainability and the need for collective action. These concerns have not only severely limited the conceptual rigour in which equity has been problematised but also undermined the importance of non-common property solutions to questions of distributive equity. After elaborating on these claims, an attempt is made to put forward a rights based approach which could serve as a more useful framework for addressing distributive concerns with regard to resource endowments.

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## **Commercialising road projects: lessons for India**

*N Lalitha*

### **Abstract**

The Government of India is embarking on a new planning strategy for developing and strengthening the road network, namely commercialising the road projects. Going by the experience of other countries it is observed that the Government of India and the Government of Gujarat, by providing government guarantees and by laying down policy guidelines have tried to minimise the risks associated with such projects and make the concept of commercialisation an attractive proposition for the concessionaires. In India, introduction of economic reforms and the fiscal situation of the central and state governments have required a review of the role of the government in certain sectors which have been the monopoly of the government. This has resulted in the Government of India (GOI) resorting to a new planning strategy of developing the infrastructure such as roads, power, ports, and telecommunications through privatisation and commercialisation. While the term privatisation is well understood commercialisation in the general parlance refers to levying of user charges for a service. In that sense infrastructure provided by both public and private could be on commercial basis.

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## **Extent and nature of fertility decline in Tamil Nadu**

*K Nagaraj*

### **Abstract**

The rapid decline in the birth rates in Tamil Nadu from around the mid-eighties appears to have caught the demographers and the social scientists off-guard, as it were. Tamil Nadu cannot boast of the basic pre-conditions - like high female literacy, low infant mortality etc. - for a rapid decline in fertility of the order it witnessed, as say Kerala can; and yet Tamil Nadu today has a birth rate almost as low as the rate for Kerala. Predictably, such a phenomenon has given rise to a considerable

amount of debate, particularly on the factors responsible for the rapid decline in fertility in the state. A number of issues have to be dealt with in a comprehensive study of Tamil Nadu 's experience of fertility decline: (a) the extent, nature and manner of the decline; (b) the factors underlying this decline; (c) the consequences of the manner in which the decline of fertility has taken place particularly for mother and child health and (d) the sustainability of this process of decline over time. This paper deals almost solely with the first of the issues noted above, viz., the extent, nature and manner of fertility decline in the state. The manner of fertility decline has had important - and often, negative - consequences for mother and child health in the state. We propose to deal with this issue in a later paper.

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### **The struggles of liberation theology for a new paradigm: any lessons for social sciences?**

*Felix Wilfred*

#### **Abstract**

Transgression of disciplinary boundaries is a creative and innovative process, and it should be normal rather than an exception. Any discipline that wants to throw light on the human plight today needs to interact with impulses and insights springing up, no matter from which quarter, and that applies as well to the social sciences. With this in mind, the article explores the developments and struggles that characterized the emergence of liberation theology. The birth of this theology in the Third World societies, particularly in Latin America, has challenged the traditional presuppositions of epistemology, hermeneutic, and methods of theology, prevailing since medieval times. By focusing on praxis as the locus of truth and realizing the importance of channeling all knowledge to the cause of emancipation (knowledge from being a means of domination to be a 'weapon of the weak'), this theology has become an ally in the struggles of the marginalized peoples. Besides exercising an ideological critique of traditional theology, from an epistemological point of view this brand of theology challenges the pre1umed neutrality. If at all there is objectivity, it can be only a 'positional objectivity' (Amartya Sen). The position to understand social reality, according to liberation theology, is to view it from the perspective of the under-privileged or the marginalized, for, there is an epistemological privilege of the margins. Quite aware that theology and social sciences have their own assumptions and methods, the writer, nevertheless is of the view that social sciences themselves are in a similar struggle like liberation theology, to free itself from the classical conceptions, parameters and paradigms. Today, the traditional canons of truth and objectivity in social sciences need to give place to a practice of social science impregnated by humanistic and ethical concerns – something to become evident in the study, analysis and interpretation of such issues as poverty, human development, economy, history, etc. This implies greater attention to the contextual social reality and not any surrender to 'rootless universals' (Zygmunt Baumann) in order to claim 'scientific' character for the social sciences. Further, social sciences today need to regain the emancipatory potential of knowledge and are not to sacrifice truth on the altar of science. It would be expected from the social sciences that their practice be such that they bear responsibility to the transformation of the present order and to the creation of a humane society. In this sense, we may speak of liberative social sciences.

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