India is a poor country. It is not because, it is less endowed in terms of physical resources, nor because that the environment is less suitable for hardwork by the people, as has been argued by a host of Anglo-Saxon anthropo-geographers in support of the perpetuation of the Empire (i.e. environmental determinism); The root lies in her heritage of century old slavery and the history of unimpeded exploitation. It is also, imbeded in the methods of exploitation over centuries, i.e. the unequal terms of trade. The roots of poverty also lie in the nature and character of the socio-economic system which was ushered in, implanted in the soil of the country and was nourished. One may agree, one may not agree but the truth remains unchallenged in the continuing miseries of the people. As R.C. Dutt says, "There is a verdict on the conduct of great rulers which is more true and more abiding than that of historians and that verdict is the verdict of the people."*

However, poverty of people is not only confined to their individual realm but is also, manifested in the areas/regions they live in. Unfortunately, the academic interests in the study of people, as manifested in the character of their regions, are of relatively recent origin and particularly so, from the point of view of the discipline of geography. As evident from studies of Myrdal and Hirschman,** not only inequalities between the standard of living of people in different regions of a backward country is more glaring than a developed country but, such inequalities tend to increase over time. The limited

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studies which could be examined point to no clear conclusion, as to whether in the process of planned development in India the levels of regional inequalities are declining or accentuating. It need not be emphasised further, that the reduction of such inequalities have remained one of the major objectives of the national plans, right from its inception in 1951. On the other hand, these studies are inconclusive in terms of the root causes of such inequalities.

The aim of the present study is limited. The objective is very specific. It tries to explore, systematically the process of regional inequality in India at various regional levels, over a period of eighteen years. From the beginning of the third Five Year Plan to the end of the Fifth Five Year Plan (1960-61 to 1978-79). The choice of the period of the study is important in light of the fundamental structural changes in the spatial economy of the country, i.e. the beginning of the era of Green Revolution or, its ramifications in terms of the 'capitalist development' of agriculture in certain pockets of the country. It is expected that a few of the issues can be probed into and a still fewer can be answered. A lot shall be left for others to judge.

In Chapter-I the main issues are raised, the problem identified and the objectives pinpointed. Additionally, some of the controversial issues, e.g. the role of a geographer in the social context and the 'region' have been tried to be defined.

Chapter-II deals with a systematic critique of the related literature. Needless to say the literatures available are vast and only, a very limited number of books and articles could be surveyed in a selective manner. In Chapter-III, a systematic study has been attempted in elaborating and selecting official and private information and data to be used in the empirical analysis of the problem.

In Chapter-IV a detailed discussion of the methodology has been carried out. This Chapter is broken up into
three sections, dealing with three different empirical levels of the study, i.e. (i) per capita income at the national and state levels, (ii) per capita agricultural income at the level of districts and natural regions and (iii) study of the intra-regional inequality of socio-economic criteria with relation to a specific region i.e. Madhya Pradesh.

Chapter-V deals with the analysis of statewise net domestic products and per capita income from 1960-61 to 1978-79 and the process of regional inequalities over the period of the two decades. An attempt has also been made to introduce a new algorithm of measuring spatial inequalities in this Chapter. In Chapter-VI an analysis of per capita income and inequalities has been attempted in their sectoral compositions. Chapter-VII deals with a disaggregated analysis of the inequality of per capita agricultural income at the district level for two points of time, one prior to the Green Revolution, i.e. 1962-65 and the other at a reasonable peak of it, i.e. 1970-73. In Chapter-VIII, some tentative answers have been provided to a number of issues, raised in the preceding chapters. This chapter is largely, supportive and the arguments put forward are based on some of the findings of the author and in the studies of other scholars.

The last empirical section of the study (Chapter-IX) deals with the specific, intra-regional issues of a case region, i.e. Madhya Pradesh. The method used is deductive to a certain extent. Some of the issues thrown at the national level, in the preceding chapters are verified at the specific level of a region. On the other hand, in this chapter a detailed study is attempted over a continuous length of the period, from 1960-61 to 1972-73.

As has been pointed out earlier, the aims and objectives are limited to the scope of a dissertation and it is only hoped that a few of the questions are answered to some satisfaction and a lot more issues are raised for others to explore.

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SHILLONG

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