Chapter Eight

Developmentalism in a Democracy

"At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity." – Jawaharlal Nehru.

"... I believe that there are three major reasons why Indian planning needs to be discussed seriously... The first reason has to do with the nature of the 'structural break' that planning represents in India's development experience. The second reason has to deal with the 'analytical' ideas underlying Indian plans as contributory factors to the growth of 'development economics' as a field of enquiry...." – Sukhamoy Chakravarty.

"A development ideology then was a constituent part of the self definition of the postcolonial state" - Partha Chatterjee².

Developmentalism

Development in the colonial period represented a host of strategies (discussed in the previous chapter) that the colonisers utilized to exploit and extract profit from the colonies. In a way the euro-centricism inherent in ‘development’ could translate in the Indian context to mean that the colonisers were ‘helping’ in our development assuming that India would not or could not develop on her own. The anti-colonial national liberation struggles that shook the colonial world during the 1930-40s changed the discourse of development – the colonised were asserting their right to develop themselves instead of being ‘helped’ by the colonisers to develop. It was in this backdrop (around

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¹ See Chakravarty (1987), Development planning The Indian Experience.
² See Chatterjee (1993), Nation and its Fragments.
1945)\textsuperscript{3} that Latin American theorists coined the term "desarollismo" or "developmentalism" to describe this nationalist ideology. Developmentalism entailed protection of infant national industries, import substituting industrialisation, forced savings to help the nation develop. National development was thus the stated objective which independent India would undertake. The task of planning development was entrusted to the Planning Commission. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister was also the chief architect of Indian Planning - a tradition (i.e. the prime minister as chairman of the planning commission) that continues till date.

The promise of a new India which would elect its own representative leaders who would in turn serve the people was enshrined in the constitution. The birth of Indian democracy took place with the declared objectives of being a socialist, democratic republic. The responsibility of planning the developmental trajectory was given to the Planning Commission. ‘Planning’ didn’t start at the moment India gained independence – it had already begun evolving from the 1930s. In 1938, Subhas Chandra Bose\textsuperscript{4} spoke about a “Planning Commission” in the Haripura Congress meeting, which would advise the national state (to be) on the developmental path to be adopted. The Wardha meeting of the Congress Working Committee had earlier adopted a resolution to appoint a group of experts who would find solutions to the problems facing any program of nationalist reconstruction and planning. A fifteen member\textsuperscript{5} National Planning Committee was formed in due course with Jawaharlal Nehru as chairman. This Committee however got dissolved in the early 40s. There remained a perennial tension between Gandhi and his followers and the 'modernizers' – Nehru, J.R.D.Tata etc. on the question of development especially regarding industrialization. The ‘Bombay Plan’ drawn up by Tata in 1944 was a blueprint for industrialization – large scale industrialization which was opposed by the Gandhian faction which laid emphasis on small scale handicraft and village based development. None of these ‘plans’ however got to see the light of day though the

\textsuperscript{3} See Wallerstein (2005) for the origins of developmentalism.

\textsuperscript{4} See Chatterjee (1993), Chapter ten for a detailed history of the planning process – its inception, composition, ideology etc.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid. I reproduce the list Chatterjee has provided – four merchants and industrialists (Purushottamdas Thakurdas, A.D. Shroff, Ambalal Sarabhai and Walchand Hirachand); five scientists (Meghnad Saha, A.K.Saha, Nazir Ahmed, V.S.Dubey, J.C.Ghosh); three economists (K.T.Shah, Radhakamal Mukherjee, M.Visvesvaraya); the rest were invited on their political credentials – Gandhi, N.M.Joshi, J.C.Kumarappa.
exercise itself provided the soon to be independent leaders and policy makers a blueprint for nationalist development.

It was post 1947 that the Planning Commission got institutionalized and legitimized by the democratic structure. The Planning Commission comprising of experts who would plan development were legitimized by the parliamentary democratic structure but were safeguarded by the very same democracy of a vital democratic feature – accountability. In other words the developmental path planned by successive elected national governments was prepared ‘from above’ by people who couldn’t be held accountable for the outcome of such development. India gave itself a representative democracy where the people had, at least theoretically, a say in the functioning of democracy. Thus a non-performing government can be voted out by the electorate. A certain system of checks and balance is inherent in democracy and electoral competition (I analyse the contours of electoral democracy in the next section). The same however cannot be said of development.

Since this work is concerned with backwardness, I study development and democracy in the context of backwardness. I return to the quote used in the first chapter “On Backwardness” as a starting point.

“The root of the problem lies in the lack of clarity on the concept of backwardness and its relevance for the processes of planned development. In multi-tier democracy it is also necessary that there should be some degree of consensus behind the specific definitions used to make the concept operational.” - Report of the National Committee on the Development of Backward Areas, 1981.

There are three components which clearly are important – the definition of backwardness (which I studied in the first chapter), planned development and multi-tier democracy and the question of consensus. First I look at planning and the notion of backwardness. In the first chapter I showed how all the plans till date have looked as backwardness as areas left behind in the march of progress. In other words these areas haven’t developed as fast as the other areas of the national economy.
According to Chakravarty (1987) the two major reasons which merit a serious study of Indian planning are the following – planned development represented a major 'structural break' and the symbiotic rise of development economics and the 'analytical' frame underlying planning. I take up the second reason first, i.e. the role of development economics and the underlying frame used by developmental experts. Development economics as a field gained currency around the same time that India’s planning process was taking shape. Chakravarty has pointed out that “Almost all major contemporary economists who took an interest in problems of development had occasion to interact with India’s planners and policy-makers in the fifties and the early sixties. Several of today’s Nobel laureates in economics were among them, as well as many other distinguished theorists.” He goes on to write that “Dominant ideas of contemporary development economics influenced the logic of India’s plans.” In fact development economics was grappling with the problem of underdevelopment and industrialization especially in the wake of decolonization. This is where I come back to the first reason underlined by Chakravarty – i.e. planning representing a ‘structural break’.

A structural break would imply that India was breaking out of colonization and centralized planning (with stated socialist ideas) was the instrument through which this was to be achieved. It is curious to note that the architects of India’s early plans (with socialist ideals) were ‘helped’ by none other than an expert group from MIT with an ex-CIA director Max Milligan as the head of the MIT-India planning unit. While it becomes suspect how much of a structural break was achieved in general, it becomes even more clear when we see how backwardness was dealt in particular. At the administrative level of the state, backwardness continued to be dealt with by a developmental administration put in place by the colonizers. In fact modern India retained most of the archaic colonial laws along with introducing many progressive ones. The top-down approach to developmental planning at national/state capitals are mirrored by the delivery mechanism.

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6 See Rosen (1980) for a lucid description of how MIT helped India and Harvard University helped Pakistan to formulate its developmental path. The Harvard group had to leave Pakistan first after regimes changed. While in India MIT team had to leave around 1967 after an expose by a socialist magazine called Now (published from Calcutta) brought to public notice the hand of the United States in developing India’s plans albeit on ‘socialist’ ideals.
at the ground. The district administration, block level development officers, forest officers, police, military all retain the colonial structure of organization and rules.

These institutions were essentially created by the colonial state to be able to rule and extract from these agrarian systems and in times of rebellion rely on these very structures to quell such opposition. The planning process from the five year plans to block level development plans have been ones which involved relatively fewer number of officials/experts who were not accountable to the majority of people who were benefiting from such development. With the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions the numbers of people involved have gone up significantly. But the effects of decentralized democracy on development cannot yet be stated in unambiguous terms. Thus in Jharkhand panchayat elections have not taken place for over two decades – this is an example where people do not have a say because of non-existent democratic structure. While in other places there have been widespread opposition to developmental projects which have alienated people from their lands – a lot of these cases have also involved bypassing of decentralized decision making structures.

The colonial state altered agrarian relations (as I have outlined in the previous chapter) and was a major contributor to the contours of agrarian backwardness. It is difficult to conceptualise how the Indian state was structurally breaking with the past when it came to displacement in the name of development. Thus I would argue that the process of colonization which the national liberation movements in the country had fought against and bitterly opposed continued in independent, democratic India in a subtler form. Centrality of socialist ideals in the making of the early plans to idea of inclusive growth of the current plan share a commonality across 61 years – a patriotic, pro-poor, pro-marginalised objective on paper and a non-accountable developmental process on the ground.

Thus for the adivasis in say Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa (or areas which fall in the category of special extraction zones7) - the colonial administration and

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7 Discussed in details in the previous chapter and chapter three, Modes of Extraction.
the national administration have meted out similar treatment in the name of development. The costs and benefits of development especially the path of industrialization and big development which was relied upon continued to uproot people (often without compensation or meager measures of rehabilitation) in the name of national progress. The role of the state in the initial years after independence was steeped in ‘nationalist’ ideology. Developmentalism till the 1980s was backed by a nationalist ideology which extolled some to bear costs for the ‘benefit’ of the nation.

There are major differences in terms of whose class/caste interests were being represented by the state. The extraction during colonial times was often met with stiff local resistance and the district administration and police/army was deployed to re-establish law and order. Much the same pattern continues even today (e.g. Kalinganagar, Narmada). The result of course is the continuation of conditions achieved under colonization especially in the tribal areas. Developmentalism underwent a change with the advent of liberalization, privatization and globalisation. The state today does not invoke nationalism in its call for development but rather actively stands by a protector of multinational blueprints for development.

Hegemony in the current context of developmental planning is being carried out not only under diktats of these imperialist institutions but by their own people. The chief architects of the (I-p-g) model of development which is prevailing now are back in the key decision making arms of the Indian state. The “representativeness” of our political democracy and the current trend of coalitional governments ruling have given rise to this peculiar condition – key decision-making posts which affect the lives of millions are being occupied by persons who never get themselves even “voted by the people”. Also, India is a democracy at the lowest per capita income (Bhadhuri). These two when seen in consonance, point to the contradictions in the working of a democracy. The current era of finance capital has its own people at the helms of the Indian economy along with the complete dominance of neo-classical economics as the ideological apparatus to see the economy with. Hence the deflationary policies specific to our context are being carried out under the “invisible hand” of the imperialist institutions by their representatives.
Coercive regimes of accumulation are being legitimized by the “consent” of our representative democracy.

The obtuse nature of such developmentalism had a repercussion on Indian democracy. Increasingly discriminated marginalized social groups turned to political representation as the only available option to benefit from developmentalism or at least have a voice in its making. In the following section the contour of representative democracy is traced and its implications for backwardness are discussed.

**Contours of Representative Democracy**

While disadvantaged groups had little or no say in the developmental path to be undertaken the constitution mandated political representation for them. This route of recognition and reservation was however a direct outcome of what is interestingly termed ‘Backward Class movements’. Backward Class movements have their origins in the Southern states of India. The common feature of the backward class movements was their non-brahminic core. This is not surprising since most of the leaders of various backward class movements like Guru, Iyothee, Periyar among others were trying to challenge Brahminical hegemony in totality. A particular aspect of their opposition lay in the racial division between Dravidians and Aryans which was the basis of Brahminical hegemony. It was not just a difference of race (Dravidians as dark, indigenous people and Aryans as fair skinned invaders) but also manifested in calls for separate nations (a separate Dravid nation which would consist of the southern states as opposed to a Hindi speaking upper caste dominated Indian nation). The backward class/caste movements often saw Brahminical hegemony as a bigger enemy than anyone else. Phule allured to this when he observed ‘just as India went through a phase of British colonization, it had passed at various stages of its history through Brahminical colonialism’\(^8\). The backward class movements challenged Brahminical dominance in various ways from temple entry, to women of lower castes wearing breast cloth, to backward castes wearing the sacred thread (a defiant kind of sanskritisation in which depressed castes publicly flouted caste

\(^8\) Quoted in Mani (2005), pp. 299.
norms as an assertion) refusal to do begar (forced labour) to getting educated. In fact education was central to most of the leaders of the backward class movements. It was during the colonial period that lower castes challenged the historical denial of access to education. Education especially English education was also influenced by the spread of Christianity and the policies of the British colonial state. The divide and rule policy of the British hinged on creating a local administrative apparatus who would help them rule. The advantages of such a policy generally were cornered by the upper caste who became clerks and lower level officers of the British administration. The access to education (alongwith the social reform movements) gave an opportunity to the backward castes to enter a domain which was strictly denied to them. In the previous chapter we outlined how the listing of castes had given rise to status claims by groups to claim benefit. Caste sabhas started being formed during the early years of the twentieth century to lobby for reserved status. In 1902, Chatrapati Sahuji Maharaj, Maharaja of Kolhapur in Maharashtra introduced reservation (50%) in favour of backward classes through a notification. The State of Kolhapur comprised a very large area which included the Presidency areas and the Princely States south of the Vindhyas. This notification is considered to be the first known instance of reservation for depressed classes. The backward class movement had a strenuous relationship with the nationalist movement led by the Congress. In fact one of its leaders, Periyar left the ‘brahminic Congress’ to start the Self – Respect movement in the first half of the twentieth century. By the time India got Independence the mobilization of backward groups to demand recognition of their status and hence representation had firmly entrenched itself in the working of the polity.

Thus representative democracy in Independent India further solidified this process of recognition and representation. Dr. Ambedkar (the author of the constitution and also a leader of the anti-caste movement) ensured that the constitution mandated political representation to the backward classes/castes. The electoral process gave the disadvantaged groups a chance to further the interest of their groups.

Voting models in economics have often pointed out how there is a convergence of economic ideology in electoral competition. In other words the developmental path
undertaken by the Indian state does not undergo drastic changes with change of
governments at the centre. Currently coalitional blocks coming to power at the centre also
aid this convergence further. There are of course exogenous reasons (like being members
of WTO, having to follow IMF-World Bank guidelines etc.) which help in maintaining
centrists policies. Our concern in this section is with Indian democracy.

Political reservation gives disadvantaged groups the chance to influence policies in their
favour. Thus we can imagine two kinds of policies that can occur. One is the policy of
redistribution (class based transfers), the other in the Indian context is the policy of
recognition and reservation (caste based transfers). The history of India’s representative
democracy clearly shows certain patterns.

a) unless represented disadvantaged groups get no benefit.

b) The electoral process is such that it is difficult for the poorer sections within
groups to get elected – in other words electoral system of representation has a
hidden class bias. Of course the distribution of population and inequality within
groups / parties affect the extent of class bias. What emerges is that more
homogenous groups corner of higher benefits.

Rohini Pande (2003) shows that mandated political representation increases policy
influence for disadvantaged minorities in India. Pande uses utility maximizing framework
to get these results. We do not use the utility framework to derive the conclusions stated
above. Instead I develop an index of backwardness first to get a clearer idea of
disadvantages that are faced by marginalized groups in the Indian context. Then
democracy leads to either policies of redistribution and/or policies of recognition and
reservation. Thus we can examine the question of backwardness with regards to the
policies of reservation and redistribution.

Index of Backwardness

Below I construct an index of backwardness which would reveal what percentages within
each social group suffer from multi-dimensional deprivation. E.g. what percentage of
dalits are landless? Thus for each of the dimensions of deprivation (by this I mean
deprivations which can be numerically represented) we would get a scale of deprivation (in this index it is in the interval \([0,1]\)). I have defined the scale of deprivation \((a, \beta \text{ etc.})\) to assign higher scores for higher deprivation. To continue with the example of landless dalits we would find most dalits are landless so on that scale of land-deprivation they would have a score close to 1. This then is multiplied by the percentage amongst dalits who are landless. This would give us a comparable numerical value for each kind of deprivation. **Index of Backwardness** = \(a\).Labour-exploitation\(^9\) index + \(\beta\). Land-deprivation index + \(\gamma\).indebtedness-index + \(\delta\).Education-index + \(\varepsilon\).Unemployment-index + \(\phi\).Wage-index

Labour-exploitatio Index: \([0,1]\). So not-exploited - 0 and bonded labour - 1
Land-Deprivation Index: \([0,1]\). Landless - 1 and landed - 0
Indebtedness-Index: \([0,1]\) Debt bondage - 1
Education-Index: \([0,1]\). Illiterate - 1
Unemployment-Index: \([0,1]\). Unemployed - 1
Wage-Index: \([0,1]\). Lowest wages - 1

\(\beta\) (as an example) is the percentage of landless within a group. Hence higher landless amongst dalits would result in a higher index of land alienation. Similarly for the others.

Lets take an example to illustrate how this index works. Say a dalit who is a bonded labour, landless, indebted, illiterate and mostly unemployed, receiving very low wages for labour will have a score of

**Index of Backwardness (Dalit Male)** = \(a.(1) + \beta. (1) + \gamma. (1) + \delta. (1) + \varepsilon.(1) + \phi.(1) = x\) (say).

Similarly, the **Index of Backwardness for Rajput Male who is landlord.** gives credit to workers, educ, not unemployed and has higher return in terms of money will come to say \(y\). We can assume that on an average \(x>y\). Also less deprivation would tend to pull the

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\(^9\) See Patnaik (1987) labour-exploitation Criterion for peasant class differentiation, Chapter 3. The basic idea of my index is from Patnaik's (1987) seminal study on peasant class differentiation, where she draws on Lenin and Mao's methods of differentiation and constructs this criterion.
scale of the privileged towards 0. Similar thing can be done for female, muslims, adivasis etc. Also we can add the Index of Backwardness over time to get a cumulative index.

Now we can say that each distinct social group can be assigned a distinct value $\theta$. Lets say lower caste groups are denoted by $\bar{\theta}$ and upper caste groups by $\bar{\bar{\theta}}$. We can imagine the caste system as a continuum of types $[\bar{\theta}, \bar{\bar{\theta}}]$. Further each group $\theta$ can be ranked by the index of backwardness. But for the lack of exact data which can be used to construct the index at present and also for the sake of expositional simplicity we can imagine that each group $\theta$ consists of say two income groups - rich and poor. Taking income to be a proxy for class is done for simplicity though this can be criticized and has been done by Marxists. The basic idea for this frame comes from Bhaduri\(^{10}\) (in a yet unpublished paper) where he shows interlocked inequalities in class and caste. Thus we can say that for upper caste group $\bar{\bar{\theta}}$ there is R (rich) and P (poor). Similarly for lower caste group $\bar{\theta}$ there is r and p to denote the same.

What is of significance for this work is to look at the policies of redistribution and recognition through this frame. We can conceptualise this as follows. A general redistributive frame would mean that the transfer occurs from rich to poor irrespective of caste. This would imply the direction of transfer is from (R, r) $\rightarrow$ (P, p), i.e. pure redistribution from richer class to poorer class. However, this general redistribution could (theoretically) end up transferring from rich lower caste to poor upper caste. The obtuse nature of developmentalism generally does not take this route. The other route would be recognition and reservation or in other words targeted redistribution. This would imply transfer from upper caste to lower caste, i.e. from $\bar{\bar{\theta}}$ $\rightarrow$ $\bar{\theta}$. Again theoretically this route could turn into a transfer benefiting only the rich lower caste. This in common and legal parlance is the creamy layer argument – the benefits of such policies would go only to the richer sections amongst the lower castes at the cost of the ‘deserving’ upper caste poor. I discuss this issue in detail in the next section. However what clearly stands out is that

The Question of the Creamy Layer

In terms of the schematization outlined above this implies $r \theta > P \bar{\theta}$. Thus the argument against the creamy layer is that the benefits do not reach the poor (class category) but are cornered by the rich amongst the depressed castes. The landmark judgement of the Supreme Court is reproduced below which asked the State to ascertain criteria for specifying backwardness so as to facilitate benefits flowing to “the really needy people of other backward classes”.

“The Supreme Court of India in its landmark judgement dated 16.11.1992 (Judgement Writ Petition (Civil) No.930 of 1990 – Indira Sawhney and Others Vs Union of India and Others) has directed the Government of India, State Governments and Administration of UTs to constitute a permanent body in the nature of Commission or Tribunal for entertaining, examining and making recommendations upon requests for inclusion and complaints of over-inclusion and under inclusion in the list of OBCs. Government of India was also directed to specify the basis for applying the relevant and requisite socio-economic criteria to exclude socially advanced persons/sections (creamy layer) from other backward classes so that this become a means of ensuring flow of the benefits of reservation to the really needy people of other backward classes.”

All castes in a capitalist economy can have rich people. Creamy layers can be found present among OBCs as well as upper castes. In this regard it would be interesting to consider the verdicts of the courts as a starting point. I reproduce the contradictory views below in full:

“The correct criterion for judging the forwardness of the forwards among the Backward Classes is to measure their capacity not in terms of the capacity of others in their class, but in terms of the capacity of the members of the Forward Classes, as stated earlier. If they cross the Rubicon of backwardness, they should be taken out from the Backward Classes and should be made disentitled to the provisions meant for the said classes” - judgement of Hon'ble Justice Sawant (paragraph 522 Judgements Today Vol. VI No.9 30th November, 1992)
“Hence while determining the criteria of exclusion we have kept in mind the guiding principle laid down by the Hon’ble Court as mentioned above. However, if economic betterment flows from social and educational advancement, then this also has to be taken note of.” – National Backward Classes Commission, 2004.

“Hon’ble Mr. Justice Pandian does not subscribe to the “creamy layer” theory. Dealing with the oft-repeated criticism that the reserved posts are lapped up by the socially advanced (“creamy layer”) among the socially and educationally backward classes, Pandian J. has quoted with approval the observation of Chinnappa Reddy J. in the case of Vasant Kumar. The relevant passage is given below:-

“...That a few of the seats and posts reserved for backward classes are snatched away by the more fortunate among them is not to say that reservation is not necessary. This is bound to happen in a competitive society such as ours. Are not the unreserved seats and posts snatched away, in the same way, by the top creamy layers amongst them on the same principle of merit on which the non-reserved seats are taken away by the top layers of society. How can it be bad if reserved seats and posts are snatched away by the creamy layer of backward classes, if such snatching away unreserved posts by the top creamy layer of society itself is not bad?”

I am using the court’s judgment to bring out the two conflicting ‘opinions’ of the Government regarding backwardness. These opinions stem from two inter-related questions – what is the criteria used to define backward groups and when does an individual member of such groups cease to be backward?

I have demonstrated in a previous chapter (Chapter Two: On Backwardness) that there are different criteria used by the state to identify backwardness In terms of categories in social sciences these criteria belong to two distinct categories - caste and class. Part of the confusion stems from the state’s interchangeable use of caste and class to define backwardness. Thus for the state ‘socially and educationally backward classes’ are the backward groups. Lower castes are considered for inclusion in the list of OBCs (Other Backward Classes) in the Indian context. I have shown in the course of my thesis that backwardness results from an interlocking of caste and class inequalities in Indian agrarian systems. The answer to the first question ‘who are the other backward classes?’ would lead to an identification of which caste is backward. The state identifies backward classes on the basis of social and educational backwardness and then lists them by caste names (e.g. Yadavs, Jats etc.)
This leads us to the answer the second question - i.e. when do individual members of such groups cross "the Rubicon of backwardness". The current criteria of defining creamy layer is the income criteria of Rs. 2.5 lakhs/annum and kind of jobs done by parents. Thus the argument is that class mobility can outweigh caste disadvantage and occupational mobility of parents would grant enough access to the child to cross the Rubicon. Hence the state uses the income or class criteria to determine who is ineligible. The point remains however that in a society running on capitalist principles there is bound to be a minority of rich people who could belong to any social group. What then should be the principle for determination?

The creamy layer criterion (Indira Sawhney and Others Vs Union of India case) stresses income and occupational mobility of parents as the determining feature for exclusion. The reason for is that economic mobility or occupational mobility moves members of backward groups out of backwardness. This point of view implicitly assumes that there is a network advantage (benefits accruing to group members) that exists with occupational mobility and higher income and an entry into these categories will end the historical discrimination. Given the history of India’s caste system this is true – the upper castes as a group control most of the governmental employment or ‘higher status’ occupations. They also have higher incomes and are in the most crucial (political, economic, social) posts of the state. Thus the same route would help individual members of erstwhile backward groups cross over.

The other view wants a comparison between forwards among forwards and the creamy layer of the backwards. Does this view violate the principle of fairness? I had stated this principle in the converse. I wanted to enquire into the backwards among the backwards and hence my principle of fairness (Chapter Two, On Backwardness) was the following question: Whether on an average, a lower class-upper caste is better off than a lower class-caste? My enquiry on backwardness demonstrates (in Chapter Five: Social Groups and Hegemony) that if we are to understand backwardness as a group phenomenon, then for the majority (I mean numerical majority) of dalits, adivasis, muslims, OBCs and women within these groups the interlocked inequalities of caste-class-gender still operate
with a vice like grip. I have argued how backwardness is a group phenomenon which affects members of such groups. Since backwardness is a group phenomenon, individual members crossing the Rubicon does not alter the status of the group’s backward status. Since backwardness is a relativistic concept, should the principle also rely on a relative frame – i.e. should the correct comparison should be between the ‘creamy layers’ of the forward castes and the ‘creamy layer’ of the backward castes. The multi-dimensional index of backwardness I have (theoretically) constructed would help scientifically assign a comparable numerical value to each caste. The calculation of such an index of backwardness would require governmental statistics by caste groups, which was last done in 1931. The Census of 1931 done by the colonial state is the last accepted information regarding distribution of population by caste groupings. It is true as I have argued in the previous chapter that the colonial state’s census served their purpose of divide and rule.

The nationalist discourse looked upon caste census as divisive – at least that is the argument why the secular independent Indian state does not do the caste census. But the Government of India still continues to have a Census every ten years which involve enumerators going house to house collecting relevant information. The lack of official data on this compelled me, like many others, to cull out caste data from governmental statistics. A concrete example is the reliance on NSSO 61st Round data which can reveal the distribution of most indicators by caste. If the point of contention is about data, then it should be very easy for the State to collect information by caste. And since most surveys in India (especially in rural India) which rely on household questionnaires11 ask the respondents about caste, it should not be difficult to ascertain numerically. I have demonstrated in the course of this thesis that a few ‘creamy layer’ persons would hardly alter the backward position of a caste group. The same would reflect in my index of backwardness, which would require data by caste. The distribution of wealth and jobs for all caste groups would clearly reveal that backward groups are still suffering from a high degree of inequality on these counts too.

11 The questionnaire used during the primary data collection is in Appendix 5.
Conclusion:

This chapter demonstrates clearly the role of the state in perpetuating backwardness. The obtuse trajectory of developmentalism followed by independent India did not make a structural break with colonization. On the contrary, I have demonstrated how historically marginalized groups still face structural exploitation as a result of such developmentalism. The only acceptable route which the marginalized groups can take is to represent themselves in the decision making process. The contour of representative democracy has put into motion a process where groups claim backward status to be recognized by the state. This recognition leads to representation (through the democratic structure) so that these groups can put forward their own interests, probably for the first time in history. The policies of general redistribution (class based transfers) are antithetical to the very nature of developmentalism in India. Hence the policy of recognition and reservation (caste based transfers) appears to be the structurally defined route taken by social groups to cross the Rubicon of backwardness.