CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1. Major Findings

7.1.1. Dynamism of the Poor and Their Engagement with Life
7.1.2. Using Bodily Labour to Using Body Itself
7.1.3. Poorest Themselves Hate Poverty
7.1.4. War against Poof is the Order of the Day
7.1.5. People in poverty need Movements and Organizations for and by poor
7.1.6. Need for Creating Mediating Institutions to Prevent the Impact of Oppression
7.1.7. The Extreme Intensification of Vulnerability of the Poorest
7.1.8. Poor people have positive regard for NGOs
7.1.9. Poorest demands recognition of their Creativity and Agency

7.2 Suggestions

7.2.1. Absolute and Relative Poverty
7.2.2. Body and Psychic Damages
7.2.3. Heightened Irresponsibility and Decreasing Compassion of the Social Institutions
7.2.4. The Centrality of State in the Imaginations of the Impoverished
7.2.5. Development Sector as an Ally of the Poor
7.2.6. Retrieving the Affirmative Character of the State
7.2.7. Strengthening People’s Institutions
7.2.8. Critical Alliance from NGOs
7.2.9. Value Engineering
7.2.10. The Global Citizen

7.3. Conclusion
From the analysis of the stories of the poor and marginalized and from the interpretations of the stories, the following major findings can be reported. These findings are derivatives from the analysis done in the last two chapters. These can be best taken as trends and may be subjected to further enquiries.

7.1. Major Findings

7.1.1. Dynamism of the Poor and Their Engagement with Life

One is struck by the continuous engagement of poor persons with their life sustaining processes. We may have to give up our habits of measuring useful life in terms of its involvement in production, as capitalism-promoted industrialism has taught us all along. The poor often demand us not to judge them lazy because they are not participating in productive activities that result in proportionate amount of resources generated. Indeed their dynamism evidences itself both in terms of degree and intensity of engagement with life as well as in their desire for participating in productive work, if available. Throughout the stories one sees the agility of the poor in their perennial mobility from one place to another all through the year; their versatility in doing multiple activities; resilience to toil for long duration of hours against all odds. The women and men along with their children walk long distance in search of work, water and food in many of the stories. There are many beggars, domestic servants, bonded labourers and rag pickers who spend nearly 12 hours of a day searching for livelihoods - all while crossing long distances in inclement weathers. If the wider society and the market forces in it have been organised against the poor in such a manner that their lifestyles, traditional skills and wisdoms are being de-legitimised and devalued and that it pushes them to pursue works that are declared as non-productive, then the fact that they are seen as lazy because they are non-productive is the problem of the perspectives rather than reality being such. Therefore working towards the restoration of higher exchange value for the wisdom and skills (for example of the small farmer, fisher folk depending on simple technologies against giant industries and machines) of the impoverished communities is a crucial strategy among many others.
7.1.2. Using Bodily Labour to Using Body Itself

Since the running thread throughout this study is the centrality accorded to human person - her experiences, and perceptions, it brings out in vivid details the impact of poverty on individual body and soul. Over a period of time as impoverishing processes become most oppressive, one notices a gross reduction of poor to their mere working bodies. Here one sees the most alarming trend of extreme poverty pushing the poor to move from exchanging the labour of the body at the cheapest rate to exchanging/risking the body itself for survival. The higher incidence of sexwork, bonded labour, persons selling their body organs, beggars’ deliberate deforming of the body to extract sympathy from the public, many poor boys resorting to drug usage and other addictions etc. are example of this alarming trend. This body-dependent existence is very demeaning for the poor and it has devastating effects on the body and soul. This is the reason why even the ones, who make reasonable amount of money to meet their basic needs more than adequately, still regard themselves as severely impoverished, namely beggars and sex workers. This is because of the compulsion to live a body-dependent existence wherein they are seen only as working bodies without any of the attributes of human life accorded to them. That is why there is this perennial attempt by the sex worker to see her as a wholesome person, expressed in the form of her choosing to live as a wife and beget children, as any other ‘normal’ women, against being treated as an object of consumption by the clients. Her choice is made even if it means having to live with inadequate money and resources.

7.1.3. Poorest Themselves Hate Poverty

There is this striking display of hatred for poverty by the poor. Somehow we have been given to understand hitherto that the poor themselves like to mire themselves in poverty and that it is the business of the non-poor to detest and eliminate poverty from the world. The poor both at the individual and collective levels detest poverty with more intensity and show efforts to move out of it. They have evolved significant strategies and methods by which they can move out of poverty. It is expressed more at a personalised level than collective levels due to their immediate concern for survival. For all those development thinkers who reserve and attribute the feeling of hatred to poverty and the resolve to eliminate it from the planet only to themselves, it should come as a shock that the poor hate poverty more than them. This
should result in the poor participating in policy making and organisation-management rather than just in having a say and being involved in the delivery of existing programmes and determination of needs.

### 7.1.4. War against Poor is the Order of the Day

There are clear evidences from the stories that the war against poverty is turning out to become a war against poor. This is confirmed by the fact that poor people’s life choices are criminalised at an increased degree and intensity more than ever and more number of poor people is being custodialised than before. It is not that the poor are engaged in criminal activities voluntarily and willingly. It is just that the definition of what constitutes crime has become dangerously expansive to encompass most of the life-sustaining strategies adopted by poor which were not criminal before. The firewood collector who depended on forest produce for survival for generations is a criminal now thanks to a new forest policy; the fisher folk who survived on the amount of catch from their nearby river are criminals once the dam is built and trespassers are prohibited. The beggars and squatters are treated as eyesores and nuisance to the vision of the city planners and therefore are thrown out of the boundaries of the cities, if not into prison-resembling homes and even prisons. There are many instances like these. Unfortunately both the state and the public opinion tend to not only perpetuate the definition of criminality but even go to the length of evolving laws, programmes and strategies to punish the poor and throw them away from the visibility. One can see the accompaniment of criminalisation and invisibilisation of the poor as part of the war against the poor here.

### 7.1.5. People in poverty need Movements and Organizations for and by poor

Poor people have less and less structures and sources for associational life. There is this increasing atomisation and individualisation of poor. Even the individual families are breaking into form mutually competing individuals who threaten the life chances of each other. It is linked to another new trend namely, the increasing geographical mobility of poor. The poor these days travel far more distances than just two decades ago. And more number of poor is mobile geographically than before. This increasing mobility of the poor and their constant migration from one place to another reduces possibility of associational life among the poor to strengthen solidarity and nurture organisation among them. Thus the stories record rare instances of poor forming interest or pressure groups.
Chapter 7: Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion

7.1.6. Need for Creating Mediating Institutions to Prevent the Impact of Oppression

The gradual (and even deliberate) withdrawal and retreat of intermediate structures/institutions/organisations (from family to state) that had negotiated the shocks and jolts of rapid changes and sudden falls, has meant that the poor are directly impacted by oppressive and exploitative forces as individuated units. While this has rendered already impoverished people poorer, even the non-poor are also being rapidly plunged into poverty. The exploitative tendencies of globalisation processes are directly flowing into local domains where we have the most vulnerable poor, totally individuated and bereft of cementing and protecting collective units. In this context, the state has failed to be on the side of the poor. Thus the state is conspicuous in the lives of the poor only by the degree of damage it caused through its acts of commission and omission and by the extent of betrayal when people looked up to it for solidarity and help. It must be stated however that, in spite of all these the poor still vest their faith in the state apparatus for rescuing them from poverty.

7.1.7. The Extreme Intensification of Vulnerability of the Poorest

The stories abundantly demonstrate the increasing vulnerability of the poor. It is a truism that the forces that exploit the poor as well as render them dispensable to the smooth functioning of the wider society (thanks to information revolution and increasing technologisation), have become more extensive (from local to global) and intense. These compel the poor to resort to risky, hazardous and collusive-with-criminals means of survival. Because of these, they have failing health, higher possibilities of abuse and become easy prey for custodialisation. These are happening notwithstanding the prevalence of many rights and rights-protecting institutions. The poor have found the latter highly irrelevant and unrealisable in their immediate life circumstances. This is due to the hidden and overt cost and the expertise they demand for invoking and handling them respectively. Instead the poor have found many of their traditional associations and social units more just and protecting their interest. In times of crisis they often resort to these immediate institutions - such as family, kin groups, peer groups, secret societies, religious association, traditional arbiters and even local money lenders. All these appear more “humane”, “responsive” and “prompt” in the eyes of the poor.
7.1.8. Poor people have positive regard for NGOs

The poor in most of the stories have only modest expectations of NGOs. They do not have great deal of faith in their emancipating prowess. At best, they expect them to help them tide over immediate crisis. At worst, they regard NGOs as inconsistent and intermittent in their support. However, in the midst of all the unresponsive modern institutions, they treat NGOs as one modern structure that is responsive and as a good ally in their life struggles. While they welcome the NGOs’ openness to involve the poor in planning the need and evolving programmes and policy influencing, they want the NGOs to play crucial role in ensuring proper implementation of programmes and laws that the state evolves for their welfare.

7.1.9. Poorest demands recognition of their Creativity and Agency

However in the face of all these soul-crushing tendencies and processes, there is this astounding creativity of mind and demonstration of the power of human agency of the poor. Even in the midst of all these debilitating effect of impoverishing processes, one is struck by the aliveness and continuous exercising of human agency of the poor. Their strategies of organising meaningful social universes are many and immensely creative. The sexworker, the beggar boy, and the scavenger woman who rename their works as “fieldwork”, “going to earn” or “municipality work” respectively; the homeless persons who etch out well-marked rooms and kitchen out of pavements; the beggars who busy themselves by moving from one railway station to another for bathing and alms collecting purposes are creatively engaged in giving meaning, dignity and deep sense of purpose to their lives. However all these they do albeit their inability to bring about structural transformation leading to a just and equitable social order. This is because they are discrete individual acts of coping and meaning-making. In fact the constant debate over whether moving out of poverty is an individual or a collective effort is addressed by the poor themselves—and the conclusions are startling. The poor themselves need opportunities and expanded choices for exercising agency—the power to act—individually. But it is only by acting in concert with others that they can definitively make a difference. The stories all narrate individual attempts at coping. To move out of poverty, such effort is clearly not enough. Indeed, even coping at the present levels of acute poverty is possible only by the collective effort of the entire family. This is because the poor are operating under conditions and relations beyond their control. Their immediate demand is for a
sensitive response from the wider society which does not criminalise their life-affirming strategies. From all other set of actors who have been vested with responsibilities, either voluntarily or contractually to create better world, they expect recognition of their agency, rights and absolute solidarity in their struggles for expanding choices for a dignified living.

7.2. Suggestions

What is clear is the growing intensity of poverty in their lives across generations. Although the poor and the marginalized make their own weak efforts to stay afloat, as argued in the previous chapter, that still does not diminish the virulence of poverty in their lives. Particularly in the third world countries like India, the situation is grim for the poor, as they have become poorer and more marginalized both absolutely and relatively. The absolute poverty is due to the gradual reduction in the livelihood opportunities available to poor to earn enough to give themselves food, health care and any sort of security. The absolute poverty is what is visible to the analysts such as economists, sociologists and their ilk. The relative poverty is the result of increasing widening of the gap between the rich and impoverished and the resultant sense of incompleteness and inadequacy felt by the latter. The relative poverty phenomenon is what is felt and visible to the poor themselves. The latter is extremely devastating as it breaks down the stoicism that ironically characterised the poor.

If it is construed from the above that absolute poverty is not as debilitating as relative poverty it would be grossly unfair. Both in condition of absolute poverty and relative poverty the same degree of social and psychological disabilities and lack of economic resources are experienced by the poor. But as noted in the agency chapter, the conditions in which those individuals and families themselves have come to perceive themselves as poor, they feel more broken down and devastated. Their strength to find meaning for their lives and add significance to them is demonstrated with miraculous amount of resilience only till they hope that they would become better-off one day. But the increasing awareness that being better-off has only one model and that too is many removes away from their reach tires them and kills the very spirit of their agency. Many poor only had silence as a response to offer when asked of their future strategies to get out of poverty. Tragically these moments are what break down the courage to narrate their lives into stories.
7.2.1. Absolute and Relative Poverty

In the collection of stories in our hands we find the weight of the silence and hopelessness in the narration of poor. This is due to the increasing awareness of their relative poverty and the widening distance between themselves and their ambitious position out of poverty. This truth is becoming very forcefully evident to the poor. This is further aggravated by the logic of globalisation that has accelerated the conditions that lead to concentration of not only wealth in the hands of few marginal sections of the society, but also, more dangerously, the freedoms and rights. If many of the poor this research listened to, feel more impoverished, it is not only because they possess less economic resources in comparison to their own parents and grandparents, but also because they feel more deprived of many of the rights and freedoms than what was available to the their counterparts in their previous generations. These feeling are more sharply felt, despite the availability of rights and freedoms that make sense and realisable only in complex and broader public spheres. These spheres are not visited and significant to many of the poor. But in those spheres they operate in their vicinity and proximity they feel their freedoms and rights have been more deprived than was before. The loss of dignity and ability to see their selves as organised wholes cause more anguish and resignation than sheer reduction in economic resources.

7.2.2. Body and Psychic Damages

Combined with the bodily damages caused by the newer set of relationships emerging between the poor and non poor, are the whole array of psychic damages whose lethality has only become more acute. Echoing this Jones and Novak write “Poverty is a corrosive which acts not only through the effects of malnutrition and unhealthy living and working conditions, but also through those social relationships which depict poor as worthless. Surviving poverty is thus not only a matter of trying to balance an inadequate budget. It also has to deal with the social and psychological stress, with insecurity, social isolation and the often thinly disguised contempt of the more powerful.” (Jones, D and Novak, 1999. Pp 29,30) Indeed in many instances of the study the poor valued being respected and treated with dignity higher than having more income. (Chambers, 2000)
Chapter-7: Findings Suggestions and Conclusion

723. Heightened Irresponsibility and Decreasing Compassion of the Social Institutions

The situations that contribute to the progressive loss of dignity and self-worth of the poor and concentration of rights and freedoms in the hands of few get further complicated by two important forms of irresponsibility evinced by two separate but related quarters. They are the state and wealthy sections of the populations. The nexus that is developing between the two has been engineering the invisibilisation of the poor from the moral and physical landscapes that have become already colonised by the rich and the powerful state respectively. While the rich seem to want to have little to do with the poor and exile them from their very moral universe, the state wants to make the process perfectly complete by transporting them from the rural and urban landscapes and dump them in walled off zones now proliferating at ever faster pace. There is this ironical strategy followed both by the state and the rich in eradicating the poor with out eliminating poverty. To the state and the rich, poor and poverty raise morally embarrassing questions and demands ethically redeemable positions to be taken in relation to them. But now with globalisation and information revolution, it may soon become the reality that the wealth of the nations and the rich in it do not need the labour of the poor. With higher percentage of wealth in the last decade having been generated from information economy which did not substantially did not involve the labour of the poor, the unskilled and body dependent poor may soon become dispensable for such kind of economy. This will throw them further into invisibility. Writing about the banishing and death of the poor but not that of the poverty, Bauman writes, “The old rich needed the poor to make and keep them rich. They do not need the poor any more. Since time immemorial the conflict between the rich and the poor being locked for life in mutual dependency and dependency meant the need to talk and seek compromise and agreement. This is less and less the case. It is not quite clear whether the new globalised poor would talk about why they would feel the need to compromise and what sort of agreed modus coexistendi they would be inclined to seek. The globalising and localising trends are mutually reinforcing and inseparable, but their respective products are increasingly set apart and the distance between them keeps growing, while reciprocal communication comes to a standstill.” He goes on to add, “The rich who happen to be at the same time the resourceful and the powerful among the actors of the political scene do not need the poor either for the salvation of their souls or for staying rich and getting richer. The poor are not god’s children on which to practice the redemption of charity. They are not the reserve army
Chapter-7: Findings Suggestions and Conclusion

of labourer, which need to be groomed back into wealth production. They are not the consumers who would be tempted and cajoled into giving the lead to recovery [of the economy]. Whichever way you look at them the poor are not of use.

“The unity/dependency which underlay most historical forms of the rich/poor division used to be in all times the necessary conditions of that - however residual - solidarity with the poor, which inspired the - however half-hearted and incomplete - efforts to relieve the poor’s plight. It is that unity which is now missing.” (Bauman, 2002) With the cleansing of the moral floor of the rich of the presence of the poor, the rich have saved themselves from the compulsions to develop and demand both spiritual and sociological solutions and strategies to eradicate poverty. Now they have to be removed from the vicinity of the places lived and visited by the rich. Here comes the state to the rescue of the rich. In the name of creating investor friendly climate for the foreign investors and other rich population it is trying to create landscapes free from the irritating presence of the poor.

The death of compassion from the repertoire of emotions in the resourceful population combined with the demise of concern from the state have forced the poor to depend on the body-dependent existence and suspend the use of agency as the monstrosity of the conditions and forces arranged against them are numerous. (Das Klein and Lock, 2000) It calls for a different set of strategies to stall the on-march of these tendencies. Allied to the irresponsibility of the state and the rich in the society are the whole array of structures, forces, institutions and organisations that they could co-opt and manage to convert into carrying their visions and agenda. The destruction and discrediting of those people, who resisted such exercises, promoted alternative worldviews or did not fit into the scheme of things have been already elaborated in the previous chapters. We have no known structures and institutions standing on the side of the impoverished population. The semblance of loyalty and solidarity shown by the development organisations and NGOs though encouraging is yet to be stated clearly at least to the very people they aspire to stand by. But at the moment it is unclear as to what extent their solidarity-showing stance will go. Their definition of whom they stand against is also very obscure. More clarification is needed on the organisational mode they would evolve and foster to fight impoverishment of the poor and restore the dignity to them.
7.2.4. The Centrality of State in the Imaginations of the Impoverished

Yet there seems to one predominant perception both among the development agencies and even among the poor, that state is a critical agency in terms of ensuring better living conditions and livelihood opportunities as well as assuring social justice. Though it has largely failed in these endeavours does not require obituaries to be written on it. There are many who have become utterly disappointed with the state apparatus for its wholesale failure to live up to the promises it held when its first arrived. In India, the state entered the nation with promises of equality and prosperity for all and sundry. In the initial phase of their consolidation it had the larger consensus of their respective citizenry, which believed that nothing could go wrong with the State, which, by and large, enshrined their collective aspirations. But emergency in India, subsequent military rule belied their expectations and marked the growing discontent with the state in Indian Society.

On the part of the states too, the lack of consensus for their continuous pertinence in the lives of the citizens forced them to evolve repressive measures by which the discontent was managed. This also rendered these states weak in the international arena both economically and in terms of the strength of its diplomacy. It thus had to become amenable to the machinations of the international powers and their powerful agencies such as IMF and World Bank. This further eroded its legitimacy in their domestic front, forcing it to become even more a penal state than it was before. And as we argued above, globalization has only worsened the situations for the poor.

In India the initial period of enthusiasm and promise had vested the state apparatus with untrammeled power to systemically discredit and bring down the traditional institutions, their respective practices and the residing wisdoms. This was strongly opposed by Gandhiji, who called for dissolution of the state apparatus itself. In many occasions it happened with the endorsement of the concerned social actors themselves, for they firmly believed that what was good for the state was good for them too.
Intriguingly, the phase of discontentment with Indian state and the popular attempts at reclaiming the lost intermediate organisations (that had the potential to check and balance the self-aggrandizing state apparatus) were to occur at a time when the Indian State had already realised the vast extensiveness of its powers, either through the imposition of emergency in India. The state has become extremely intolerant of attempts to weaken its base and challenge its legitimacy. Thus the efforts at rebuilding the intermediate structures that existed in pre-modern times or at strengthening such intermediate structures that modernity itself bred were viewed with suspicion and severely restricted, perhaps less obviously in India.

However the endeavours in strengthening the society so that the state can be made accountable to its populace and express the collective will and aspirations of majority citizenry are being intensified since the era of discontent with the states had begun. It is just that they are sporadic and fragmented and yet to mobilize the masses that matter on a lager scale. There is a lot of promise for what such mobilizations of the masses could achieve. The limited success of some such attempts should encourage the advocates of such strategies to take inspiration out of them. Definitely the state has become very repressive even as it has become indifferent towards such mobilization efforts. It continues to rationalize its irresponsibility to the vast chunk of its citizenry who are the most impoverished in one way or the other, both through its act of commission and omission.

The growing disillusionment with the state has forced many of them to distrust the very forces of modernity itself (Kothari, 1988). They hold that these modem forces have the tendency to grow larger than their lives and assume monstrous proportions, unless they are contained by the popular resistance and made accountable to the very people who accord them the legitimacy. However they do agree that the state can be beneficial and useful entity if it is organized effectively, justly and democratically. But such positive functions off from the state demands stronger civil society. There are two types of responses as to how to go about building the civil society on the basis of what these stories themselves suggest. This first is to locate the civil society organisations in the traditional sectors. The civil society organisations are to be built along the lines using the traditional resources that sustained some of the organisations including caste associations, ethnic associations,
religious groups, families, village panchayats, neighbourhood organisations, youth groups etc. The overriding principle in them should be their commitment to democratic values and egalitarianism. There are other groups of votaries of civil society organisations who retain their faith in modern agencies and institutions that could play the watchdog role vis-a-vis the state; they wish to strengthen those organisations that are the product of modernity itself. They refer to trade unions, media groups, neighbourhood committees, NGO sector, people’s movements/organisations, civil liberty organisations etc. Though there is a clear-cut rural bias in the former and urban bias in the latter the need for combing these two and evolving a model that includes both strands of the arguments cannot be overstated.

There are lessons to be learnt from both camps. The fundamental belief in the fact that the State needs to play a critically mobilizing role is held up both by those, who meticulously record the destructive and damaging role played by the state on society and also by those who put their faith in other modern civil society organizations. In a similar vein, despite all the grievances against the state on all its fronts, the people, whose stories we have recounted here, vest tremendous faith on the state and look to it for releasing them from the shackles of poverty. Commenting on this Amartya Sen in his foreword to the book *From Poverty to Power*, writes, “In bringing about these changes [like removal of poverty], the state obviously can - and does - have an important role to play ...” (Green, Duncan. 2008 p. xiv)

And in a newly emerging situations the state itself need to reinvent its relevance in ways not explored fully before or not explored at all. Particularly in a time when the market forces run roughshod over other forms of collectivities including the nation-state, the state itself has to build new alliances. But how the state is responding to these new challenges is a serious cause of concern.

The only factor that differentiates the state apparatus from market on the one hand and development sector represented by NGOs and INGOs on the other hand is the compulsion of legitimacy that the state has to subject itself vis-a-vis its people. The state in India has to renew its pact with its citizenry, through its promises of expressing and realizing the collective aspirations of the citizens. But experiences in the last few decades at the global level suggest that most nation-states have resorted to
Chapter-7: Findings Suggestions and Conclusion

pernicious shot-cuts and brutish methods of acquiring legitimacy for itself. As we had seen above in many states we have focused on in this study, the destruction of traditional intermediate organizations, collectivities and institutions has ensured that the state does not get challenged by myriad of interests and pressure groups. Similarly the states in these countries have co-opted variety of institutions into furthering the state’s own aspirations rather than the reverse. There are other modes of ensuring legitimacy for it by manufacturing consent through its alliance with media forces that float the desirable model of citizens in ways decided and constructed by the state (Uberoi, P 1999).

Even in these situations in which the state has bred many forms of collectivities, associations among people and collectivities organized along clear-cut contractual basis the state has managed to eliminate critiques of its modes of governance by repressing and de-politicizing them. This is more acutely evident in the recent decades.

Throughout these periods of resorting to shortcuts to ensure legitimacy for itself, the state has gradually moved away from forging alliances with its citizens and intermediate organisations formed by them towards building collaborative relationship with the market forces thereby transferring the legitimacy earned from its people through its manipulative strategies to the market forces. This compounds the situations for the poor in these countries. While the emerging rich classes look to profitable possibilities arising out of the state's restructuring its ties away from its people to market forces, the poor find themselves further abandoned into deep gorges of poverty.

As we have elaborated above the coincidence of death of compassion of the resourceful towards the poor, increasing penalization of the poor by the state and state’s alliances-building ambitious with the market focus (and its immediate beneficiaries namely the rich) inaugurate harder times for the poor. Under these circumstances the progressive depoliticisation of the public space of the wider society and most crucially the poor in it, has become more or less complete. With this the state has minimized the threat to its enjoying of continuous legitimacy. The depoliticisation of public space, is paralleled by the tendency of the state in all the countries to reward only those forms of public action that are apolitical and in the long run and beneficial to its own well-being and the market-focus with which it has built alliances with in recent times.
7.2.5. Development Sector as an Ally of the Poor

The reward it has for the poor for their political inaction is the promotion of social and symbolic capital. The advancement of self-help groups in India and various training programmes offered by the state, though ensure certain degree of associational life for the poor, and invest them with certain stalls and competencies, they are largely apolitical and in the ultimate analysis beneficial to the market-focus. Observing this to be ‘anti-politics’ strategies through which the state strips the new modes of human associations of what John Hariss calls “the inconveniences of contestational politics and ideas which are necessary part of democratic politics” (Harris. J 2002). These anti-politic strategies of the state, he adds “hold out the prospectus of democracy in ‘civil society’ without the inconvenience of politics and of the conflict of ideas and interests that are essential part of democracy.” Therefore the anti-politics of the state that rewards non-political associations and invest them with symbolic capital only ends up constituting preconditions for capitalist accumulation by the market focus.

Very ironically even development sector (both voluntary organizations and NGO’s and INGO’s) has been co-opted into the same anti-politics mission of the state in India, as much as other countries. The depoliticisation of most civil-society organizations happened at rapid pace in the last 20 years. The spurt in politically vibrant organisations of the civil society in the period immediately after emergency in India proved to be short-lived and lost their steam in the period thereafter, both because of the repressive and discouraging measures by the state as well as by their own unresponsiveness to changing times.

The development sector that grew in the period following this phase had to operate on a non-political mode by mostly substituting the state in providing welfare, without ever engaging with the state critically. The fact that they need not have to seek the legitimacy for themselves through their promise of mediating popular will placed them conveniently in the anti-politics wings. While many of the people’s movements that were under the compulsion to earn the consent of the masses they represented, were themselves facing repressive responses from the state, the development sector as a whole did not aspire to become politically vibrant forces. They, in their drive to make up for the lapses of the state, substituted it in whichever
zones the state had failed to deliver goods to the people it sought legitimacy from and in those areas in which it could not reach. This only contributed to the increasing irresponsibility of the state towards its citizenry, even as it benefited from such noble deeds of NGO’s by consolidating itself in spheres that mattered - military and market spheres. The bargaining power that state could acquire through such consolidation aided unwittingly by the NGO sector, only contributed to increasing the state’s right and audacity to negotiate with the arriving market forces. It conducted those negotiations and reaped great benefits for itself and those who acceded to its vision, namely, the rich and the powerful. The containment of dissent and management of challenges unknowingly effected by the ameliorative works of the NGO’s, helped the state to promise a conducive society for the increasing assertion of market forces, even as the state never sought consensus for such extension of welcome to market forces from the large sections of poor.

Unfortunately even as the NGO sector contributed to the increasing irresponsibility of the state to the poor, it also failed to mobiles the intermediate organisations and collectivities earlier discredited and systematically turned into its proxies by the state (Harris, B, 1999 & 2009). This entailed a situation in which both state as a modern form of collectivity, and traditional organisations and institution such as family, caste association, traditional occupational groups etc. were simultaneously becoming less and less responsible to their members. All these have contributed to increasing impoverishment of the poor.

However many conscientious groups including the NGO sector, and first world organisations, apart from the movements participated and infrequently led by the poor themselves have managed to highlight the increasing irresponsibility of various collectivities, ranging from the state to families. They have managed to problematise this with limited success, could centrestage this in the international and national arenas. Now many of the organisations that either work closely with poor people such as NGOs, or have to depend on them for their legitimate existence such as nation-state are being forced to restructure and re-orient their strategies in ways that would positively change the life circumstances of the poor and stall the proliferation and solidification of impoverishing processes, without resorting to earlier forms of shortcuts.
This introspection is very promising, though voluntary on the part of NGOs and forced on the part of the states. Particularly for the latter such introspection is necessitated by the increasing belittling of it by the market forces on the one hand, and the sudden withdrawal of the NGOs sector from playing the substituting and state-extending role they played in areas unreached by the state. Now that the discontent and dissent of the poor are not moderated by the NGOs and more importantly the poor themselves have become discontent with NGOs and are beginning - just beginning - to hold the state directly responsible for their impoverished conditions, compel the state to become seriously concerned with its eroding legitimacy from both fronts - market and people.

7.2.6. Retrieving the Affirmative Character of the State

That the state has become more repressive and penalizing is just one immediate response. This makes the task doubly challenging for the increasing assertion of people’s movements and even NGOs that have decided to take the sides with the poor - this time to hold the state responsible. The approaches adopted by the various conscientious and aggrieved groups may be different. As argued above there are those who aspire to reinvent the critical political energy of the traditional organisations and institutions; similarly there are others who wish to regenerate the political energy in modern forms of civil society organisations. But both these groups are aiming to do these exactly to hold the state accountable to and largely expressive of the collective will of the people.

They wish to create checks and balances so as to ensure that state remains a pro-people (read, pro-poor) entity. Observing that the state continues to engage political visions of the poor despite their larger disappointment with its functioning in the decades gone by, John Harris (2002) observes “the state in India [as elsewhere in the other countries selected for the study] might indeed be rotten, but it is not accurate to say that ordinary men and women have lost faith entirely in the idea of the state” (page 2-3). Even others who are severely critical of the state agree that the state is still a critical mobilizing agency (Dipankar Gupta, 2002 & 2010) and is yet to exhaust its possibilities for releasing the poor from the poverty.
Primarily taking cues from both traditionalists and modernists, we may have to ensure that the affirmative character of many of the modern and traditional institutions and structures must be recuperated. It must happen with the recognition that all these institutions, whether modern or traditional, originated in the aspirations of the interacting social members to realise their full potentials as humans and to establish a sense of connectedness to each other as well as to the cosmos they belong to. The mutual dependency and collective spirit fostered by traditional institutions and the spirit for equality and fraternity, even among strangers promoted by modern institutions betoken of their affirmative character to begin with. But a complex of factors and historical shifts across time and space denuded both these sets of institutions of their affirmative character. At the present juncture, both retain a great deal of exploitative and repressive potentials that are essentially their residual qualities. The part played by ever-aggrandizing modern institutions in bringing about this cannot be overstated. Together these institutions have largely reduced possibilities for exercising the inner-directed agency and permitted mostly inward-directed agency for the poor. At best they have allowed the realization of other-directed agency and preserved the surviving drives of the poor, through rare it is to locate in the collected stories.

The task before us is to re-credit the wisdom of the traditional institution and use them as organizing principles for formation of collectivities. Earlier forms of collectivities such as families, communities, and ritual associations etc., which stand destroyed, need to be rebuilt. Here one has to achieve a creative union between modern institutions and traditional institutions. It is proved time and again that despite the exploitative and discriminatory potential of these two, they also foster certain higher human values - the values for autonomy and equality in modern forces and mutual trust, dependency and essential connectedness of humans in traditional forces. It is these values that are going to guide us in rebuilding both modern and traditional institutions, which appear both distorted and discredited respectively. Having realized the limitations and strength of both kinds of forces from the stories of the people, we may have to regenerate the affirmative character of these institutions guided by affirmative values specified above.
Recuperation of affirmative character does not mean just returning the social capitals to the poor alone. It should also mean reinvesting the ‘political’ in these institutions so that they mould individual into political humans who aspire for their own well-being both as economic opportunities for bodily well-being and rights to be dignified parsons at that. Thus social capital should be enhanced in close tandem with political capital.

This requires the strengthening of the morale of the traditional institutions on the one hand without sacrificing the cardinal values of autonomy, equality, mutual trust and dependency of their members. To do so, their pride in their residing wisdoms must be restored even as we release them from the co-option into the self-aggrandizing ambitions of the modern state apparatus.

Families, community groupings, clans and ritual associations should be facilitated to function as well-being seeking structures that they essentially ought to be. At the same time they should be enabled to play the political functions - meaning they function as not only seekers of well-being of the members, but linking that well-being with becoming critical political humans.

Similar change should happen to modern institution as well. They, for a variety of reasons, have stopped moulding their members into critical citizens. Just as traditional institutions, they have been co-opted by the state and market apparatus so much so that they have begun to engage in producing conforming citizens. More importantly they have confined their membership only to those who meet certain disciplinary regimes, such as education, proficiency in handling modern institutions, urbanized lifestyle etc. They have excluded the masses that mattered the most - the poor. Thus the poor, having lost the traditional collectivities to the bulldozing effects of the state and denied membership in the modern collectives, still remained largely unorganized. The sporadic attempts at forming working formers movement, construction worker movement etc. have exerted great deal of pressures on the state and have managed to extract concessions from the state.
7.2.7. Strengthening People’s Institutions

Instead of mass movements across vast spaces, what need to be aspired are critical citizen collectives. This, as suggested above, is impingent upon investing ‘political’ in otherwise social formations; thereby they became debating clubs and pressure groups. In India we have two such social collective turned into political groups. They are caste groupings and gender-bonding among women. These social collective have converted themselves into political gatherings of the members and have successfully negotiated with the state for power sharing and asserted their presence in the respective political arenas they have operated. Though the women groups are yet to become fully successful, widespread and inclusive of poorer women, they offer themselves as very fertile terrains for tuning into political groupings. In the west we think of even environmental, peace-loving grouping becoming more political, than just life style gatherings.

Very interestingly we have many such prevailing formations among poor, but badly wounded, destroyed and discredited by modem forces. We need to restore their confidence back and turn them into profitable social formations that can contain ‘political’ in them. Old women gathering, caste groups, youth gatherings, friendship networks, kin-based groups in tribal belts, worshippers community in all religious groups and various other traditional forms suggested by the life histories are few such instances, that can be turned into play the rights-ensuring roles for their members.

When we talk of adding political character to social collections, we do not mean their participation in electoral politics. Indeed this may not be possible in societies in which democracy is yet to mature into a complete political style. But we are talking of them in the sense Habermass (1981) talks about public sphere operating collectivities that are debating clubs, critical opinion makers, least controlled by sentiments and bonded by the desire to evolve public opinion- from below.

Though Habermass saw such opinion-making potentials lying in mostly modem organisations and collectivities, the scope for traditional organisations, even families, playing the role of producing and moulding critical citizenry can never be more. But even as we are recalling Habermass we could also confirm the fact that the stories of the poor do not indicate the prevalence of critical-opinion-making groupings. Therefore there is an intense need for both increasing such criticai-
opinion-making collectivities using both traditional and modern forms and resources. Many of the modern forms of collective coming together and critical-opinion-making activities should be revived, made accessible to the poor by purging them of the disciplinary regimes that have got sedimented in them.

7.2.8. Critical Alliance from NGOs

Development sectors, particularly NGOs have to become both essentially the very forms of such critical-opinion-making and citizenry building collectives, as well as the agents of promoting the same in traditional forms of coming together and modern collectivities. It is in being so only their affirmative character resides. They may have to radically reorient themselves to do that.

NGOs have not only to protect themselves from being co-opted by the state and market forces, but also prevent the same from happening to many collectivities among the poor. They have to graduate from the delusion of state substitutions, and instead campaign for expanded state responsibilities towards the well-being of the poor. The NGOs have to restore people’s faith and hopes in their own collectivities and modern groupings, both must be organized along the cardinal values specified above.

7.2.9. Value Engineering

This is one of the more critical suggestions we offer for radically changing the conditions of poverty the poor have been trapped into. This solution will enable and transform many of the punishing relationships fostered by both traditional and modern institution into affirming relationships. Most of the punishing interactions that have rendered the poor impoverished have been conducted under shadow of the value systems cultivated systematically by modernity and promoted enthusiastically by modern forces. We have already elaborated about the ways by which the glorification modem values engendered destruction of the traditional wisdom, demolished the pre-modern structures, privileged the rest and impoverished the most. Therefore, the punishment for those who could not afford to meet the standards set by the modern forces.
Chapter 7: Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion

Now that we realize that certified knowledge of the modern forces has not solved many social problems and in its stead has only worsened inequality and violence, the time has come for breaking the neat-fit between certified knowledge and distribution of social rewards. NGOs can experiment with this short of break down of value association at micro level and demonstrate their efficiency for replicating it at wider level. Through the promise for wide spread up scaling of such experiments calls for a radical restructuring of social order itself, experiments can begin indeed such experiments have already been conducted in many parts of the selected countries, yet they have to become the ways of life of their very functioning of these NGO’s, themselves. We will consider two such value associations to evolve solutions.

The first value association is the certified knowledge of the modern forces and linking it with distribution of social rewards. By associating the value accorded on education and apprenticeship in only certified manners and institutions with positive distributions of resources of the society, modern forces have legitimized their own relevance as much as they justified the whole array of disciplinary regions they entailed. This has excluded a large chunk of masses from accessing social rewards, either because they could not afford to use the services of certified and certifying institutions. The certified knowledge offered in the portals of these institutions might be less relevant for the needs of the wider society or even one person’s life, whereas the wisdom earned through living might be capable of being tremendously relevant to their felt needs yet, it is the certified knowledge that prevails upon the wisdom of experiences. This has bred unprecedented in equally and poverty to the poor as it justified in equal distribution of resources to the poor.

Another important value association that has to be broken is the neat-fit between health and Biomedical solutions, as we have reiterated above poor people’s trust with poverty begins at those moments of encounter with accumulating symbolic capital to engage with modern forces the poor stand punished for no fault of their own. In many situations the punitive relationship itself has caused unprecedented poverty to the poor. It has to actively engage in investing ‘political’ in ‘social’ and demonstrate it by transforming themselves into such institutions with ‘political’ in them. It has to use its resources to demolish the existing forms of conceptual
associations between ‘health and biomedical model’, ‘modern education and social rewards’, ‘access and disciplined self’ etc. It is these associations that have caused intense poverty to poor and wealth to rich. Since the state and market forces in their drive towards capitalist accumulations would not wish to experiment with value engineering, the NGO sector may have to experiment with value-engineering at micro-level and demonstrate their efficiency and ability to cause larger public good.

This is one of the few radical steps NGOs could do in ensuring responsibility of the state and other structures. Just as the NGO sector itself is realizing their new set of responsibilities in new circumstances, it has to work actively for bringing about conditions and mobilize pressures for turning every form of human social collective into becoming responsible for the promotion of the larger welfare of the humanity (Dreze and Sen 1999), even as they aspire for the well-being of their own immediate members. All collectives that have immediate relevance for the poor should be strengthened, their morale restored, wisdom re-valued and turned into responsible structures for the well-being of their members, governed again by the cardinal values.

The cumulative energy of those collectivities at various levels would hold the state accountable to the popular will of the poor, as they are the majority population in all the five countries. Once becoming accountable and responsible to the poor, and their well-being, the state itself will seek to build new forms of alliances with its people, predominantly the poor and that will become the only way by which it can acquire its legitimacy from the people and achieve its relevance even in a globalising world where various forces conspire to override the existence of the state.

If the state has been compelled to realize its relevance in the terms of its accountability and responsibility to poor, then they would cease to be the penalizing structures that they are increasingly becoming now.

7.2.10. The Global Citizen

With the arrival of the new millennium, the notion of global citizens has become stronger. The digital revolution of the past few decades has made it possible to create a global consciousness. However determining the direction of this
consciousness has been restricted only to a few elite sections who now consider it their due to access resources from within other spaces by alienating those who live within them.

Within this notion of a global citizen lie the seeds of a joint humanity. However, for these seeds to grow, it is important to include more and more people not as victims or aggressors but as autonomous actors capable of honest self-reflection, and self-regulation. This inclusion must spring from the understanding that all people have the equal right to author their histories and future. This is not possible unless the powerful human institutional processes lay aside their masks and subject their values and ethics to a critical and transparent assessment. And then show preparedness to act peaceably to restore values of equity, justice, dignity, autonomy, decentralisation, frugality and conservation of resources into the consciousness of joint humanity. Foremost amongst these are the assessment and transformation of intimate social relations within the family and community, with a view to nurture all its members, irrespective of age and gender. State institutions must transform itself to concern with the well-being of its citizens rather than consolidating and protecting private interests and protecting territory through violent means. What is very essential to this process is create the security within homes, communities and countries to live with each other without violence. This requires involvement and committed engagement with these issues as relevant and life sustaining. In this vision of global citizenhood arising from joint humanity, the nation-state will not be erased out of existence but will become part of the fabric of the planet in providing institutional care to its citizens, without promoting conflict with each other.

Within this notion of joint humanity, there is a need to look at enabling all people to exercise their agency in determining the kinds of relations and processes that they are influenced by. What these stories of the poor clamour for, is the restoration of dignity to those people who have been made vulnerable and impoverished. This restoration of dignity will have to acknowledge the commonality of human experiences and the innate rights of each person.
7.3. Conclusion

This restoration of dignity has to occur at all the levels - family, community, nation, and globe. Within each level there are recurring reflections of inequitable and homogenizing relations that build on each other. These relations have to be changed one by one through daily transactions and negotiations that each of us is engaged with. This process of transformation need not be violent or guilt-ridden. It is possible to look for creative and celebratory ways of allowing through and drawing forth this dignity in the social, political and economic relations. Neither are these changes likely to happen through miracles, but through step by step painstaking reversal and damage-restoration to regain trust.

Yet, how strong enough this new fabric of society, based on complex understanding of difference and equality, will be to withstand and subsume oppression and violence in the society remains to be seen.