Poverty and Indo–Norwegian Relations

Abstracts

Amitabh Behar, ‘The Role of Civil Society Coalitions in the Fight Against Poverty’

This presentation discusses how civil society coalitions and networks in India work to fight poverty and discrimination, and to demand accountability of governance. It also discusses the role of global civil society coalitions and international actors in adding value to these national campaigns.

Rajshree Chandra, ‘Traditional Resource Rights — ‘There and Yet Not There’ — Pushing It Forward Through ‘Disclosures’”

Till recently, prior to the biotechnological boom, genetic resources and their knowledge have been assumed to be part of the global commons and common heritage. This has led to piracy of genetic resources or biopiracy. The central criticism in the biopiracy literature is that the big corporations are freely appropriating bio-diversity and ethnobotanical resources and traditional knowledge bases of the people generally by means of patents, without compensation to the indigenous groups who originally developed such knowledge and sustained the resource. Critics argue that if patent, copyright and trademark infringements are acts of intellectual piracy, then so is the failure to recognize and compensate the intellectual contributions of traditional peoples and communities who are the primary innovators.

This has become the background for varying claims most of which rhetorically are claiming space for traditional resource rights within the TRIPS framework. The only specific demand, however, has been the insertion of a “disclosure” clause within the TRIPS framework which becomes the premise on which benefits and a share in profits can be claimed by the indigenous, farming communities. Proposals for a disclosure requirement in patent applications are viewed as one mechanism of ensuring legal and transparent access to genetic resources and a fair and equitable benefit sharing process. This amendment and the disclosure clause is being strongly supported by developing countries like India, Pakistan, Thailand, Peru and the African Group. Their proposed amendment recognizes the sovereign rights of states over their natural resources, and includes forfeiture of patent rights as a penalty for noncompliance. However, many industrialized countries like the USA and Japan question the need for such amendment. In contrast, the EU, Norway and Switzerland are supportive of establishing disclosure of origin requirements at the international level, but not necessarily in the framework of TRIPS. This paper seeks to advance a case for the insertion of the disclosure clause on which the entire claim of indigenous communities rests and foresees a role that the developing countries can play in future negotiations.
Agriculture plays a key role in the Indian economy. Still more than 57 per cent people are dependent on agriculture. Majority of them now face pressures of various kinds, which emanate from the global policy specific asymmetries. This has stressed farmers to no end.

Along with a large number of Asian countries, India has implemented her commitments as per the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) of WTO. The major commitments were the conversion of quantitative restrictions into tariff (tariffication); replacement of non-tariff barriers by bound tariffs; rationalizing of subsidy programmes and disciplining of most trade distorting support.

However, even now the total support to agriculture by OECD countries is more than US $ 1 billion per day and frequency and coverage of SPS/TBT measure usage has gone up many times. The G-20 has come up with concerns for food security but can we really achieve it if we lose agriculture, which is directly contributing to rural poverty. International regimes play an important role in what we see at local levels. There is great need for Norway and India to work together to address some of these concerns in the agricultural sector. It highlights the importance of current state of negotiations especially the importance of agreeing on agriculture modalities.

D Jayaraj, ‘Economic Growth, Agrarian Distress, Casualisation of the Workforce and Family Migration in India’

Progress in quality of life in a society is often measured in terms of economic growth or the expansion in resources at the command of the society. Certainly, economic growth is an important determinant of expansion in human capabilities and hence wellbeing of a population. However, there are other important determinants of quality of life or wellbeing status of a population. For example, Dreze and Sen (1995) in their book India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity, state, “...there are many influences other than economic growth that work in that direction [in the direction of expansion of human capabilities] ...”. They also point out that, “…the impact of economic growth on human capabilities can be extremely variable, depending on the nature of that growth ...”. One particular aspect on which the impact of economic growth or expansion of human capabilities is likely to be reflected is migration of population and workforce across space. The content or nature of such expansion in the form of migration is captured in two aspects of migration: tenure of employment and tenure of stay in a place of residence. Short term employment opportunities and consequent migrations of short durations bring in instability in the lives of migrants.

Family migration assumes particular salience for it entails foregoing all benefits arising from social networks created by long years of association with the society in which the family had been living (see, in this connection, Shields and Shields (1989)). It is important to note here that social networks may play
important role in childcare, care of the elderly and in management of financial crisis. It may take considerable time for a migrant family to get assimilated into the new village/urban society into which it moves. Moreover, it may be hard for a migrant family to claim equal access to common property resources and infrastructural facilities created by the local administration in the new location. Children of a migrant family are likely to face problems in the process of socialisation. These problems faced by migrant family members increase with short duration (which involves change of residence more than once in a year) family migration as the family is unlikely to get the opportunity to create social networks in places where it lives for short durations. For this reason, an attempt has been made to study the extent, nature and causes of family migration in India.

India’s economic growth has been high since the 1980s and impressive since the mid-1990s. This growth should be expected to have opened up new opportunities for employment and an inducement for both individual and family migrations. Against this background, an attempt is made to analyse family migration—a relatively under-researched issue—in India at four different points of time 1983, 1993, 2002 and 2008. The analysis of the data provided by the National Sample Survey Organisation on the causes suggests that while family migration in India is largely ‘pull’ induced, it is significantly induced by ‘push’ factors as well. The analysis also indicates that the trend growth rate of the economy, which is pleasing, hides a great deal of inherent instability in the economy. This instability is also reflected in the increase in temporary or short duration family migration in India over time.

**Ole Koksvik, ‘Do Norwegians Have a Responsibility to Fight Poverty in India?’**

I argue that Norwegians both have a general responsibility to fight poverty much more than we do, and that we have a particular responsibility to help the poor in India. We have a general responsibility to help the poor because we can do so at very low cost. And we have a particular responsibility to help the poor in India, because the existence of poverty in India helps to ensure the profitability of investments owned by the Norwegian people.

**Ajay Mehta and Neelima Khetan, ‘Poverty Alleviation: Aid, Autonomy and Ethical Agency’**

This paper is about Seva Mandir discovering the true meaning of development work. It is about those people and partners who made it possible to braid an ethical content to Seva Mandir’s vision and every day actions as a development agency. Like many voluntary agencies, Seva Mandir’s goal is to improve the lives of deprived people, but what it has learnt over the years is that the means to this goal are what matter most. Without having a clear idea, Seva Mandir began to gravitate to the idea that development is about enabling the poor, and those who work with the poor, to experience true dignity in their lives.
These people could not be seen as objects of development but they had to be the agents.

Testing and realizing this idea in practice has been a long, expensive and difficult struggle - it has been a journey that needed donors capable of exceptional empathy, trust and, perhaps most importantly, patience in their partners. It needed donors who viewed development not merely in physical, political or social terms, but understood it to be ultimately about the human soul, and its core need for dignity. The paper is about this shared vision of development, and Seva Mandir’s journey, which became possible due to some extraordinary cross-border partnerships.

The paper will also touch upon the changes in such philanthropic orientations that we have been witness to over the last 40 years, and where these stand now.

Shashi Motilal, ‘The Nature of Moral Obligation and Duties to the Distant Needy’

Is there a moral obligation on the part of the affluent of the world to help the needy poor?

Drawing on the relation between a moral obligation and a moral right, one view is that if there is a moral obligation to help the needy/poor of the world (something that cannot be denied even in a weak sense) then we can say that those afflicted by severe poverty have a moral right (human right) to be free from severe poverty (HRP). But being an example of a socio-economic right, it is writ with problems leading some philosophers to doubt that there is such a right. On the other hand, many attempts have been made to justify such a right. The paper looks at some attempts that have been made to justify the existence of such a right and the scope of the moral obligation it entails. If there exists a HRP then is there a moral obligation to help the ”distant” needy also? What are the implications of this and how does it affect the existence of the right as such, are issues taken up by the paper.

Gerhard Overland, ‘Global Poverty: Duties of Assistance versus Duties of Contribution’

Philosophers who have argued that affluent people in the developed world have responsibilities to help protect the global poor have usually invoked one (or both) of two main principles. The principle of assistance - invoked by Peter Singer - states that because the poor are in severe need, and the affluent are able to alleviate such need at ‘some cost’, they have responsibilities to do so. The principle of contribution - invoked by Thomas Pogge - states that the affluent are required to alleviate severe need suffered by the poor in developing countries because they have previously contributed or are still contributing to it.

It is widely accepted that the normative characteristics of these two principles differ quite significantly. All other things being equal, contribution-based duties are viewed as much more stringent - in the sense of being constraining and demanding. Ex-ante contribution-based duties are constraining: one must
bear significant cost in order not to contribute to the severe need of others. **Ex-post** contribution-based duties are demanding: one must bear be significant cost in order to alleviate the severe need of others that one has contributed to.

In this paper I argue that, given the way in which affluent people are said to contribute to global poverty, and the way in which affluent people fail to discharge their assistance-based duties, the demandingness of the two principles is not very different. My argument has two strands. The first makes assistance-based duties more demanding. *Pace* Singer, I start out with a moderate principle of assistance. I then point out that affluent people massively fail to comply with even such a moderate demand. This failure ensures that their duties to assist the global poor subsequently become considerably more demanding. The second strand of my argument makes contribution-based duties less demanding. I argue that the type of contribution that seems to be of most consequence for global poverty is not a type of contribution with normative characteristics, as in simple cases of doing harm. *Pace* Pogge, I suggest that this type of contribution is better understood as exploitation. And while exploiting people is often morally wrong, I question whether exploiting people in need gives rise to more demanding duties than failing to assist them.

**Sanjay Reddy, ‘Threshold Theories of International Obligation’**

Threshold theories of international obligation hold that a country with a higher per capita income has a distributive obligation to a country with a lower per capita income only as long as the lower per capita income is beneath a certain threshold. What are the conditions under which such a theory might be accepted or rejected? Can our answer be used to illuminate a specific empirical case (e.g. that of the relation between Norway and India)?

**S Subramanian: ‘Global Poverty, Inequality, and Aid Flows’**

How one measures poverty and inequality has implications for a variety of policy interventions relating to fair allocation in a number of institutional settings. The distribution of international aid is an important case in point. This essay reasserts the importance of certain old-fashioned questions relating to international aid: what is the quantum of aid available in relation to the need for it? How may patterns of allocation, at both the dispensing and receiving ends of aid, be determined so as to take account of both poverty and inter-national inequality in the distribution of incomes? Can some simple and plausible rules of allocation be devised? If so, what correspondence does reality bear to such rules? The questions are addressed with the aid of some simple analytics relating to optimal budgetary intervention in the alleviation of poverty. The ideas discussed are clarified by means of data employed in elementary empirical illustrations.
Ratna M. Sudarshan, ‘Tackling Poverty Through International Connectedness?’

This presentation will start by very briefly reviewing the extent of, and broad trends in, poverty and inequality in India, the dominance of informality in the economy, and the increasing ‘openness’ of the economy, by way of setting the context.

It will then argue that the current approach to poverty eradication in India is one of enabling high rates of economic/industrial growth so as to allow some redistribution to the poor. However such an approach does not enable participation in production and growth by the poor - it is not in that sense inclusive.

It will then suggest that trade/aid primarily enhances production levels through outward expansion of the production possibility frontier, or directly enhances government revenues, so the effect on poverty would be exactly that of the existing national policy: with the same achievements and challenges. It cannot be more transformative or lead to any structural changes in the organization of production (i.e. there is no impact on the overall development paradigm).

However there is another form of international connectedness that has greater transformative potential: through ideas. The example of the discourse around informality is given to show how a large body of statistics and empirical data has been generated that allows more coherent discussion on informality and establishes the fact that what is needed is to change the nature of the formal, not think in terms of an expansion of the formal as we know it. This discourse has been deeply enriched by the international networks and connections that have been built up. It cannot be said that it has changed the thinking of mainstream economists as yet. (WIEGO, SEWA, informality and precarious work). Other examples include the nuancing of gender equality discourse and the debates on ecological approaches to development.

So in sum the paper will argue as follows: Trade or aid within the existing development paradigm will not change the understanding of how poverty and informality are sustained and perpetuated international connectedness that can lead to better understanding and new ideas around development have the potential to change the terms of policy discourse and hence over time be transformative.