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Towards A "Humane" Development Report

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Ever since UNDP, under the leadership of Mahbub ul-Haq, launched its *Human Development Report*¹ in 1990, it has become an annual feature. It has also set in motion similar reports prepared by national governments. The Planning Commission of India has also come out with a *National Human Development Report 2001*². Several state governments in India have also published such reports. All these reports follow the pattern of UNDP's report with some modifications.

There is no doubt that these reports bring together a mass of data and make available even to the lay reader a snapshot picture of 'human development'. However two questions arise in this context: (1) Who will use these reports and for what purpose? (2) Do these reports present a balanced view of human development or is it likely that in view of the non-availability of reliable data on a large number of indicators, we are in danger of projecting an unbalanced view of 'human development'?

The UNDP's Human Development Report (HDR) may satisfy international as well as bilateral donor agencies in deciding their priorities while doling out funds; but it seems doubtful whether national governments will be practically benefited from such reports. Take for example, UNDP's HDR 2001³ where India ranks 115 and the HDR 2002⁴ where India ranks 124! Despite this, HDR 2002 reports that the Human Development Index (HDI) has been *improving* in India! The catch

here lies in differences with regard to the number of countries included in the two reports. Every year, some new countries are added to the list. In HDR 2001, 162 countries were covered while in the 2002 report, 173 countries were covered. Anyone who is not aware of this will conclude that India is sliding down on the human development scale. It is not surprising under these circumstances that the Government of India is rather critical of this Report.

Things are even worse when we consider the theme of this year's HDR 2002: *Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World*. The Report presents considerable data on "subjective" and "objective" indicators of governance, but in the actual calculation of the HDI, no note has been taken of these indicators.

It is strange that India, with a record of an unbroken series of general elections, an independent and powerful Election Commission, a written Constitution, an impartial Supreme Court, a free press and a vibrant democracy gets a rank of 124 in UNDP's Human Development Report which has as its central theme 'Deepening Democracy'! If population size and democracy parameters in HDR are taken into account in computing an index giving equal weights to population and democracy, India may rank first. India is indeed the world's largest democracy but, unfortunately, India's rank of 124 in the UNDP Report on 'deepening democracy in a fragmented world', gives a highly misleading picture.

A careful look at the tables reveals that the **Polity Score** (which ranges from minus 10 to 10) gives 10 points to Norway, which has the *first* rank; and India, which gets 9 points, ranks 124 on the HDI score! Pakistan's score is minus 6. As regards **Political Right** (the scores are 7 to 1, lower the better), Norway's score is 1 while India's is 2. Pakistan's score is 6. These important data which are germane to overall human development are not captured by the HDI rankings.

In fact, Fukuda-Parr, Director and head author of UNDP's *Human Development Report 2002* is aware of this when she says:

"Ironically, the human development approach to development has fallen victim to the success in human development index (HDI). The HDI has reinforced the narrow, oversimplified interpretation of the human development concept as being only about expanding education, health and decent living standards. This has obscured the broader, more complex concept of human development⁴..." If this is so, why should we continue to rank countries according to HDI as based on HDR criteria?

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TABLE 1
Some Indicators of Democracy

HDI Rank	Countries	Democracy				
		Polity Score (-10 to 10)	Civil Liberty (7 to 1)	Political Rights (7 to 1)	Press Freedom (100 to 0)	Voice and Accountability (-2.5 to 2.5)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Norway	10	1	1	5	1.58
89	Sri Lanka	5	4	3	74	-0.23
96	China	-7	6	7	80	-1.11
124	India	9	3	2	42	0.66
138	Pakistan	-6	5	6	57	-1.43
142	Nepal	6	4	3	57	-0.006
145	Bangladesh	6	4	3	60	-0.20

Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 2002, pp. 38-41.

Concept of human development:

In preparing such reports there should be considerable thinking on the concept of the term "human development". The concept should not be wholly conditioned by availability of data. If easily quantifiable data are not available on indicators which we consider as important for human development, we should adopt a non-statistical approach to fathom human development. We should turn to social sciences – social anthropology, social demography and social ecology – to make in-depth case studies, prepare field reports and develop a methodology to highlight the process of human development.

It will be difficult to concede, as has been claimed by these reports that Kerala and Punjab are the 'best states' in India from the point of human development. The high HDI accorded to these states in these reports runs counter to the high rates of unemployment and suicides in Kerala, on the one hand, and the failure of the cotton crop (because of pests), the increasing number of suicides of farmers and the declining sex ratio (F/M) in Punjab on the other. Likewise, we will also fail in assessment of 'human development' if we do not take into account the adverse impact on the people of 'development projects' such as big river valley dams, or the destitution caused by natural disasters such as drought and floods. Human development must reflect human happiness and deprivation more meaningfully. The index of 'deprivation' in the reports is inadequate. If instead of being guided purely by manageable

statistics, we wish to confront real issues of human development, we will have to turn towards "**Humane Development**".

In this context, a Report specifically focussing on South Asia, namely, *Human Development in South Asia 2001* devoted to globalisation and human development (published by the Mahbub ul-Haq Human Development Centre, Islamabad) is relevant. Chapter 7 of this Report is titled "Towards Humane Globalisation". In her Foreword, Khadija Haq, referring to her late husband Mahbub ul-Haq's thoughts on globalisation says: "If globalisation was superimposed on a poorly educated and poorly trained labour force with poor systems of governance and infrastructure, it would not lead to growth nor reduce poverty". She pleads for policy and institutional changes required to achieve humane globalisation in South Asia.

HUMANE DEVELOPMENT

The concept of 'humane' development can be applied not only to globalisation but also to the entire spectrum of development. The problem that one will be confronted with will be in respect with meaningful indicators of 'humane development' and the type of qualitative and quantitative data we would require.

Humane Development Indicators: Conceptualisation of humane development, at least in the Indian context (and in the context of most developing countries), should encompass the following:

- Coping with daily life and reduc-

tion of misery in respect of basic needs such as food, nutrition, water and shelter and, in particular, the quality of education and health care.

- Skill formation in a knowledge-based society and a concern for youth and liquidation of unemployment.

- Adverse impact of globalisation and economic growth without increasing employment and concern for equity and social justice.

- Adverse impact of corruption in all walks of life. HDR 2002 does refer to the Corruption Perception Index on a 0 to 10 scale and Graft (corruption) on a scale of -2.5 to 2.5 scale. It is necessary to identify all forms of corruption affecting the life of the common man as also the impact of mindless consumerism and wreckless advertising on social values.

- Leakages in the development pipeline on account of red tape, an insensitive bureaucracy, bureaucratic delays and above all, corruption which deprive people of the benefits promised in numerous anti-poverty programmes.

- Growing insensitivity in society as a whole, which permits an increasing incidence of crime against women. In particular, issues such as female foeticide, female infanticide, dowry deaths, bride burning, rape and domestic violence deserve high priority in any attempt to assess humane development.

- Coping with man-made disasters caused by development plans, deforestation and other environmentally unsound projects such as construction of big dams displacing population, as also the impact of communal riots, other forms of conflict and violence, the displacement of people, the influx of refugees and so on. This should also include the adverse impact of illegal migration on the economy and society in the place of destination. On the positive side, the impact of out-migration and emigration, remittances home and the improvement in the standard of living should also be considered.

- Impact of natural disasters such as drought, floods, earthquakes, cyclones, etc, which are almost a "normal" phenomenon in countries like India and Bangladesh. The recent cyclone in Orissa and the earthquake in Bhuj are examples of such disasters. It is most unfortunate that donations for relief were not properly utilised

because of inefficiency and widespread corruption.

- At the family and community levels, the extent of sharing and caring and, in particular, the attitude towards female children, the elderly and investment on their well-being including social security in old age.

- A humane system of justice meted out by the judiciary. If a wrongfully dismissed employee has to wait for 10 years to get justice, or a tenant or landlord has to wait 10 to 15 years for justice, surely, the system is not humane.

- Reduction in stress at the individual, family and community levels. Without mental peace there can be no humane development.

A Humane Development Report should concern itself with all these issues. In this context the overriding goal of liquidation of poverty must be kept in mind. The objective will not be to achieve in one shot a **composite index**, but through a **Humane Development Report** which will address major issues affecting the daily life of the common man, and, in particular, the population below the poverty line.

There is a need for devoting attention to developing a methodology for preparing **Humane Development Reports**, which will serve the *practical* purpose of identifying specific areas and regions for attention. There may be a series of perception surveys to ascertain what the common man in different regions of India thinks about human development. An HDR based on preconceived notions by external experts, which do not take into account the common man's viewpoint, can serve no useful purpose.

APPENDIX

Household Misery Index (HMI):

To be practically useful to the administrators in developing countries, it may be important for national bodies to develop not only state-level data but also district-level data, which will help to identify the most vulnerable districts in the country. In this context, reference may be made to the attempt made by the author to develop a **Household Misery Index (HMI)** based on five variables for which 1991 Census data were available at the district and state level separately for

rural and urban areas. This HMI permits one to identify the most vulnerable districts in all the states of India. Such an exercise will serve the practical useful purpose of identifying areas which require priority attention.

The report⁵ of the Independent Commission on Health in India (1997) did make use of these data in identifying vulnerable districts. The National Human Development Report 2001² of the Planning Commission, unfortunately, makes no use of district level data. This exercise is left to the states. Rajasthan, for example, has produced a fairly detailed report giving district-wise data⁶. Very soon, we will have such reports for almost all the states of India.

The 1991 Census of India gives valuable data at the household level (rural as well as urban) on housing and basic "amenities" such as availability of safe drinking water, toilet facilities and electricity. Data are also presented for the first time on the type of fuel used for cooking (cowdung cake, wood, coal, charcoal, kerosene, cooking gas, electricity, etc). The housing data classifies houses as *pucca*, *semi-pucca* or *kutcha*.

On the basis of these data, we constructed a Household Misery Index (HMI), which reflects the extent of deprivation of basic needs at the household level, like *pucca* housing, safe drinking water, toilet facilities and electricity, and also the availability of suitable fuel for cooking. The HMI was calculated separately for rural and urban household of **each district and state**, and a **composite weighted index** worked out (weighted by the proportion of rural and urban households). The five indicators of misery chosen were:

- Households without *pucca* housing,
- Households without safe drinking water,
- Households without toilet facilities,

- Households without electricity, and
- Households using cowdung cake and wood as cooking fuel.

To simplify matters, these five indicators were given equal weights though in a sophisticated index, one can assign different weights to these indicators. But these are the minimum basic needs, which the Census chooses to call 'amenities'. All of these are important for life support. To compute the index, the scale used was 0-5 for rural and urban areas and 0-10 for the combined figure (unweighted). The composite weighted index had a scale of 0-5 for each district/state. For the sake of simplicity, in the final tables, the scale was 0-100. All the states/districts were arranged in descending order, which determine their HMI rank. Space does not permit us to give the detailed calculations: we present the main findings.

It must be kept in mind, however, that these figures are indicative rather than definitive. The ranking of districts is according to the extent of misery, rather than in terms of absolute values. Because of the limitations of Census data, one must interpret these figures with caution. A close examination of the data reveals that there may have been considerable subjectivity in classifying houses as *pucca* or *semi-pucca*. In some districts, the figure for *semi-pucca* houses is very high while that for *pucca* houses is low. Curiously, in some districts which are supposed to be more advanced, the proportion of *pucca* houses is less than in backward districts. Further, Census instructions may not have been properly followed in Kerala, where the data reveal abnormally low figures for safe drinking water at the household level (in Kerala, the Census figure for households with safe drinking water is only 18.9 per cent compared to 46.3 per cent in Andhra Pradesh and 67.0 per cent in Tamil Nadu).

Depending on the value of HMI

TABLE A1
Most Vulnerable States

Orissa	
<i>BIMARU States</i>	: Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (and the three new states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal)
<i>North-East India</i>	: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura

TABLE A2
Most Vulnerable Districts in Each State

● Andhra Pradesh	: Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Adilabad, Prakusam, Muhbubnagar
● Arunachal Pradesh	: All districts
● Assam	: All districts
● Bihar	: Gumla, Palamu, Lohardaga, Godda, Dumka, Sahibganj, Nawada, Munger, Madhepura, Deoghar, Paschimi Singhbhum, Jehanabad, Gaya, Aurangabad, Bhagalpur, Saharsa, Purbachamparan, Nalanda, Hazaribagh, Vaishali
● Goa	: Nil
● Gujarat	: Dangs, Panch-Mahals, Banas-Kantha, Sabar-Kantha, Valsad, Bharuch, Kheda, Surendra Nagar, Amreli
● Haryana	: Jind, Kaithal, Rohtak, Hisar, Bhiwani
● Himachal Pradesh	: Kangra, Kinnaur, Lahul and Spiti
● Jammu & Kashmir	: No data available for 1991 Census but all districts should be considered vulnerable
● Karnataka	: Raichur, Bijapur, Uttar Kannad, Kodagu, Bellary
● Kerala	: Wayanad, Idukki, Malappuram
● Madhya Pradesh	: Panna, Rewa, Rajgarh, Sidhi, Balaghat, Sarguja, Bastar, Shahdol, Mandla, Chhatarpur, Rajnandgaon, Satna, Seoni, Vidisha, Bilaspur, Tikamgarh, Raipur, Guna, Rajgarh, Bhind, Jhabua, Mandsaur, Damoh
● Maharashtra	: Gadchiroli, Sindhudurg, Bhandara, Yavatmal
● Manipur	: All districts, in spite of having the lowest level of infant mortality
● Meghalaya	: All districts
● Mizoram	: All districts
● Nagaland	: All districts
● Orissa	: Phulbani, Balangir, Kalahandi, Koraput, Sundargarh, Kendujhar, Mayurbhanj, Ganjam
● Punjab	: Sangrur, Bhatinda, Faridkot, Gurudaspur, Ferozpur
● Rajasthan	: Barmer, Banswara, Jalor, Dungarpur, Jhalawar, Tonk, Jaisalmer
● Sikkim	: All districts
● Tamil Nadu	: Ramnathpuram, Tiruvananamalai, South Arcot
● Tripura	: All districts
● Uttar Pradesh	: Hardoi, Budaun, Sitapur, Pratapgarh, Fatehpur, Sultanpur, Banda, Barabanki, Rae Bareilly, Unnao, Hamirpur, Bahraich, Ghazipur, Mainpuri, Kheri, Sonbhadra, Jaunpur, Mirzapur, Farrukhabad, Gonda, Shajahanpur, Etah, Lalitpur, Faizabad, Jalaun, Azamgarh, Siddharthnagar, Basti
● West Bengal	: Puruliya, Jalpaiguri, Kochbihar, Medinipur, Bakura, Darjeeling, West Dinajpur, Maldah, Birbhum, Murshidabad

we have classified districts as most vulnerable, vulnerable and less vulnerable. Despite our serious reservations about the Census figures for Kerala, our exercise, based on Census data, does give an idea of the lack of basic needs at the district level (and helps in identifying the most **vulnerable** districts in each state). It may be noted that even developed states have vulnerable districts, while most underdeveloped states have a few districts which are moderately vulnerable.

The HMI values indicate the most vulnerable districts in each state of India. To validate the results, a comparison has also been made with the estimates of fertility, mortality and infant mortality for 1981 for each district, as presented by the Office of the Registrar General of India (GOI 1994).

In short, having taken note of the environmental factors (measured by the five indicators of 'misery'), health and demographic factors (total fertility rate, crude death rate and infant mortality rate), we arrive at the results presented in Table A1 and A2.

Finally, it must be noted that we do not suggest that these five indicators of deprivation are the only meaningful indicators. We have a data constraint. Our exercise is limited to the data available at the district level from the Census of India, 1991. The 2001 Census has many more indicators, which could be utilised to construct a Household Misery Index.

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