

Vision 2020

Social Dimensions of Long Term Growth

- *M C Verma*

Economic growth in itself can not be considered the be all and end all of development. By its very nature however, it may lead to improvement in social conditions, social justice, reduction of inequality, gender equity, and inclusion of all sections of society in the process of development. That is why the UNDP in 1990 started releasing the Human Development report to give comparative picture of different UN members countries on various aspects of human development. The social dimensions of Structural Adjustment have been studied in various institutions like World Bank and UNDP for at least 10-15 years. The appearance of shorter and shorter spans for reaching a certain level of economic prosperity in the countries during the second half of the 20th century gives the impression that more rapid economic development is feasible within a generation itself. Therefore, several Visions of a relatively better society have been prepared in various countries within a short span of only twenty years. This paper focuses on the possibilities of social development in India over the next twenty years under various facets and what should be the Vision for different components. Therefore, this will cover multiple variables with gainful employment, on the one side and social defence as well as protection of vulnerable groups on the other.

It is important to understand that every society has not one but a series of goals which it wants to achieve within a certain time span. Some of the goals within social development need not be fully supportive of each other and in fact, there could be some contradiction in the series of targets or goals which the society may lay down for itself. However, revolutionary strides in technology and rapid development of the Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) has necessarily changed the perspectives of societies and the participants living there. Since information on what other societies have been able to achieve is now readily available by a click of a button, the goals or targets which each society may like to give for itself have tended to converge. For example, Universal Elementary Education could have a target laid down to be achieved within the

next 50 years say, of the promulgation of the Constitution of India. It would be difficult to convince the public at large and the civil society to wait for 50 years now at the end of 2001. Similar hurry can be noticed in the demand for achievement of targets for replacement level of population, Health, for all, Rehabilitation facilities for the disabled, Empowerment of women, total elimination of child labour and Protection of all types of minorities. While in the past centuries even the enlightened persons would have been willing to wait for a long time for achievement of such targets, this is no more so. The dangers of environmental degradation, the horrors of terrorism and those of the first and second world war including the nuclear holocausts, more or less make it imperative for national governments and policy makers to try to evolve a path of vary rapid social development.

One of the most serious problems of the 20th century was rapid population growth all over the world but even more so in already populous countries like India. The availability of various technologies to regulate human reproduction is rather recent and so is the situation about many other social components of development. Fortunately, India has been aware of major developments in each of these areas and all the developments of the newer technologies for the service of humanity. It has also tried through its Five Year Plans, at least half-heartedly, to utilize all such technologies, methodologies and ways of organizations of human society during the last 50 years. But it has become clear for some time now that the existing modes of operation and utilization of technologies are not good enough and would not be able to satisfy the urges of ordinary persons and of course, the enlightened sections of Indian society. Therefore, it has become necessary to not only look at what was attempted during the process of planned development but also critically examine what was attempted during the process of planned development but also critically examine what was not achieved despite promises. This makes it even more important that targets of development of different components of social justice are not only revisited but also cross checked with the reality of non performance under various social heads. Simultaneously, it has become necessary to integrate such goals, targets or larger visions in the process of planned economic development. This paper critically examines each of these components of social development with reference to what has

been achieved so far against what was expected and what should be the minimum goals to be achieved over the next 20 years to make sure that citizens of this country at least reach a minimum decent level of social development, social justice or whatever other phrases might be used for judging the performance of a society in the long term.

Demographic factors – their impact on Social Development

One of the basic paradigms of development in Indian context is the vision of small families for a healthy and wealthy society and achievement of replacement level of fertility as early as possible, in pursuit of population stabilization thereafter. The data from the 2001 census, though not yet available in sufficiently disaggregated forms can be considered both positive and negative for Indian social development – positive in the sense at that the rate of growth of population has certainly declined more or less in line with expectation generated by the earlier surveys about fertility and other basic demographic variables. Though the 2001 census data has not been fully digested in the sense of throwing up definitive future projections, say for the year 2021, it does give the impression that the TFR has declined significantly. In the negative sense, the 2001 census figures do not validate all the assumptions and expectations enshrined in the population policy 2000 (NPP 2000). The population figures for 2001 are certainly more than what would have been considered decent by the population policy makers or the national population commission. It was always difficult to believe that all the demographic goals set in the population policy would be achieved without major interventions from the government, the civil society or forces of nature or the three together.

Unlike many other countries, however, the Indian public is not unaware of the environmental degradation, which have already taken place and the difficulties of eking out a living in environmentally difficult tracts of the country. Since in quantitative and percentage terms the levels of migration in India from state to state are not very high for our larger size, the individual families are becoming more and more aware of difficulties generated due to shortages of various environmental resources and other factors which

have also suddenly come up on the surface e.g., the awareness of likely HIV/AIDS disaster which has now been accepted as a strong possibility by the enlightened public and the civil society. Therefore, the 2001 census figures should be considered in balance, to be more on the positive side than on the negative and it can be expected that the demographic goals set out for the country as a whole and shown as achievable in a couple of states can be considered as feasible within the other states as well. In other words the demographic transition in the BIMARU States is not an impossibility in the medium to long term.

Trends in Fertility, Mortality, Nutrition and Health indicators have been studied in India for a long time. Indian demographers have been valued abroad for their expertise in the art and science of population projections. The same is true about Indian Population Census, which has shown remarkable continuity in the Census operation for almost a century. However, the processing of Census data, especially at the State and lower levels, takes a long time and adjustments to the census raw figure have to be made, in any case, for under-enumeration etc., like everywhere else. Therefore, the Government also undertakes sample surveys to understand family health and other characteristics. These are the nature of sample registration system, RCH rapid household survey, ICMR surveys and of course, National Family Health Surveys, (two rounds already). From this wealth of data it appears that based on 2001 Census provisional results and assuming the same trends in fertility in the future, the population of the country could grow up to 1409 million by the year 2026 and 1345 million in 2021, also utilizing Tim Dyson's projection on life expectancy etc on account of HIV/AIDS etc. Under this assumption, the four BIMARU States of UP, Bihar, MP & Rajasthan alone would continue to increase their population until 2051, out of the 15 larger states examined in detail by the Population Foundation of India. All other major states would show decline and the group which would start earliest by 2031 will be that of three best performing southern States of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. There could be other assumptions for making alternative projections of the Population, including one based on the NPP 2000 and State Government policies announced by several of them but we do not propose to give all such alternative projections here.

One of the immediate consequences of continuing growth of population linked with reduced fertility rates is increased proportion of older persons 65+ who constituted just 4.5 % in 2001 in the country as a whole. This proportion could rise to as much as 7.8% in 2026 (6.7% in 2021) as per the assumption utilizing NPP 2000 but it could remain as low as 7.4% in 2026 under the first assumption of same trends infertility rate etc. (6.4% in 2021). In this respect, use of alternative assumptions for making projections of population does not make too much of difference to the total population of the older persons in the country as a whole but the situation would differ from state to state and on the basis of different assumptions. This is one category of people who need to be looked after by the society and if their proportion increases too fast, there would be excessive pressure on the working population to share their income with the very old and look after them in respect of health, disability, nutrition and other parameters of good living. On the other hand, if the fertility declines faster as per the assumption under NPP 2000, there would be decline in school going population with the consequent necessity of closing some primary/middle school and reduction in employment of teachers at the school stage as has already happened Kerala & Tamilnadu.

The 2001 Census results and other data from other surveys, mentioned earlier, throw light on the demographic behaviour of population in greater depth. The last NFHS survey indicated in details the demographically weak districts, mostly located in the BIMARU States plus Orissa, though there are some weak districts in other States as well. If the government intervention in this rather private behaviour pattern could be effective, as it is assumed to be so far, there is every reason for major government interventions in such demographically weak districts i.e. utilizing the base district unit for intervention rather than the state as a whole. With the break up of Bihar into two States, Jharkhand also has sufficiently large number of such weak districts to attend to along with J & K and the North-Eastern States. On the assumption that continued relatively good growth itself would partly reduce fertility levels in association with growth of literacy, our vision of 2020 should include a rapid decline in fertility in these states associated with reduction in illiteracy and increases in the proportion of older persons. To what extent the Central Government could enforce this change of demographic behaviour and to what extent the State Government and civil society and the already educated persons could do so is a

matter of details. The additional and new factors arising out of HIV/AIDS pandemic is also a matter of operational details to be worked out between the Central Government, on the one side and the other change agents, on the other. However, rising levels of literacy do not have that direct a correlation with reduction in HIV/AIDS as they have with levels of fertility. Therefore, much more efforts would be required to control the HIV/AIDS pandemic and rising rates of mortality associated with the same. The vision for 2020 would include control over further HIV/AIDS infections and utilization of national and international medical knowledge to provide treatment to those already infected, through use of not only existing 3-drug therapy but also utilisation of traditional knowledge, on the one side and foreign technical inventions, on the other.

Employment Perspective:

Unemployment has been a cause of worry in India for a very long time. However, unemployment is a derivative from the variables Labour Force and Employment. The Planning Commission has had the objective of removing unemployment and severe under-employment right from 1977-78, spread over a period of ten years. This has not happened so far though the National Development Council in September 1992 meeting approved the strategy for removal of unemployment and severe under-employment over the next ten years. Recent evidence from NSS surveys indicate that this was not achieved. On the other hand, the 55th round data from the NSS indicates slight increases in the rate of unemployment both for the urban and rural area over the previous survey conducted in 1993-94. The rate of unemployment on the basis of Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status used by the Planning Commission has varied over the years and was perhaps at the highest in the year 1987-88, a drought year. The growth of labour force, on which basis rate of unemployment is calculated, has also varied from survey to survey and was the highest in the initial survey years of 1972-73 to 1977-78. The distribution of employment by industry however, shows considerable evolution over the last 27-28 year, from 1972-73 onwards to 1999-2000. At this stage, the most important indicator of change in the industry distribution is decline of agricultural employment from 74% to around 62% in the latest survey year.

The distribution of employment over different economic activities is generally based on growth of different sectors of economy which is never the same from year to year or from survey to survey. Thus, it is largely but wholly dependant on intra sectoral growth of different sectors. Alternatively or in contradictory terms, employment in national as well as international economies is affected by distribution of labour force by its age-sex-education-training levels. For example, if India did not have a reasonable surplus of educated and trained persons in the IT area, the IT component of the services sector would not have gone up rapidly, seen recently. It could not have also spared lakhs of personnel for employment abroad in the same field. Furthermore, if certain sectors of the economy are not perceived to be doing well the labour force likely to go to those sectors could possible change their educational/ skill composition or improve upon the previous base. The inter-play of growth in the various components of labour force is best demonstrated from the experience of urban females' entry into various types of employment in the new economy and thereby raise the labour force participation rate of the urban females as a whole. In this dynamic situation the past rate of unemployment of different sub-categories can at best be considered an approximation to the likely future behaviour of individual components of labour force, broken up by age, sex, residence, education/skill levels.

Since it is expected that much larger proportion of labour force would be residing in the Urban area by 2020 and since a large majority of them would have attained educational levels of primary and above, the dynamic behaviour of different components of labour force, mentioned above, would be even more difficult to project over the 20 years, in advance. Already the proportion of educated (matric and above) job seekers through the employment exchanges has gone well beyond 50% and could go even up to 80%, if the experience of metropolitan cities like Delhi can be considered pointer to the future. The recent decline in the observed rate of labour force between 1993-94 and 1999-2000 to as low as 1.03% p.a. may not be terribly accurate but is definitely a pointer to a clear decline in the growth rate. It appears that the Planning Commission is not very sure of this low growth rate and is likely to utilize growth rate of 1.8% p.a. for the purposes of projections of labour force in the Tenth Plan. At this stage, there are no known definite reasons for such a major drop in the growth of labour force in the recent

five year survey period and till these factors are fully analyzed and understood, it could only be said that increase in the number of years spent in the educational institutions is a very likely causative factor. Considering that India still has a very low average number of years of education per capita as per the latest HDR, the effect of higher and greater use of educational/skill opportunities is likely to remain with us all through the period up to 2020.

The growth of labour force in the age group 15-29 has to be watched very carefully since the members of this age group display and have displayed in the past rather high rate of unemployment. There is a hypothesis with international experts that unemployment rate continue to grow from the level of illiterates to the level of education below university and it decline thereafter i.e. there is an inverted U curve to display the pattern of unemployment rate. There is a parallel with the labour force participation for the same educational levels but this is better represented by the U curve. Recent evidence of unemployment of the educated above secondary level i.e. degree holder, technical diploma holders and above is quite disconcerting. The technical diploma holders and above are displaying almost the highest rates of unemployment, which are potentially unsustainable. There could be various factors to explain this strange behaviour but non-collection of cost and other expenditure from the beneficiaries of such education from public institutions could certainly be one of them. The other factor of relatively low quality of degree level/technical personnel from most of the institutions is also at work but both the parents and students suffer from what is called 'diploma disease', otherwise explained as paper qualification syndrome. The holders of paper qualifications compete for a limited number of jobs in the market organized labour since the Government sector is already showing a decline, this leads to competition for displaying a bigger/higher ability by individual job seeker to the potential employers. There are already a large number of personnel with degree/diploma and the employers are utilizing the certificate basically as a screening mechanism. Therefore, if everyone in the labour market raises his educational profile one notch, the employers remain as uninformed of the potential ability of the candidates as before. The only solution to this syndrome would be to raise the private cost of higher education to the beneficiaries so that every one does not want to accumulate more certificates as a tool of competition for limited jobs in the formal

labour market. Most countries, including some developing countries, are moving in that direction and there is no reason to doubt that India will also move in the same direction though with a time lag.

Another factor in a liberalized and pre-dominantly service economy is the share of female employment in the total work force. With continuous decline of employment in agricultural/ farming, there is evidence of increase in non-farm sector even in the rural areas/labour force. This tendency of the non-farm sector to grow has been studied for some time and there is no doubt that like in other countries, non-farm sector both in terms of output and employment is growing in our rural areas. An important issue therefore, is quality of work likely to be available in rural areas when the increased availability of education and skills is going to raise the expectations of individual females for better quality work not merely tending of animals, forestry and other traditional occupations other than agricultural. If the economy continues to grow at 6-7-8 % p.a. it is likely that the diversification of rural economy would generate a lot of employment opportunities, especially in the Service sectors. Since creation of social infrastructure is an accepted goal, both for urban and rural areas, females, especially educated females are likely to get the benefit of the maintenance of social infrastructure, be it health, education or social work, care of aged and disabled and so on. Therefore, there are reasons to believe that the gap between the rate of participation of labour force between sexes would decline overall and more so in the younger age group. The males on the other hand, would have to compete with educated females especially in the service sector and within the sub-sector of 'Community, Social and personal' services. This is also because females are likely to accept part-time jobs while males prefer and need full time jobs of a more regular type to be able to support dependents on a sustained basis. The worldwide experience however, points to significant reduction in manual jobs, a typical preserve of males. The trends are also pointing against any further increase in blue collar jobs of manufacture/ transport & related sectors. The livelihood is therefore that of more and more under-employment for the male who would complain and demand a better job whereas the female might not do so aggressively. Many of these hypotheses are based on experiences of economic growth of difference types of economies/countries. Since India is practically open to all new technologies and has voted for ICT's, the direction of

growth in India cannot be very different from the emerging market economies like Korea, Malaysia and the industrialized parts of Greater China.

Another macro factor to be taken into consideration is whether the recent reversal of growth of labour force below that of the population would continue all through to 2020 or would it revert to the previous pattern of the labour force growing faster than population. Based on the latest available growth rate of 1.03%, it would be difficult to assume that in the future also there would be much lower growth rate of labour force than population. In fact, the two growth rates might converge closer by the year 2020, as has happened in many developed countries. The other macro factors relate to need for 'Decent work' on the one hand and remunerative work for older people (older than 60 as a general rule), on the other. The ILO has recently examined the issue of quality of work at the international level and has recommended to all ILO members the need to emphasise on better quality work than available so far to the masses. India is expected to fall in line with this emphasis and try its best to provide better quality work to the majority of population over the next 20 years. This would obviously imply better occupational safety and health and less accidents all the work places. This would naturally include the major occupation of agriculture and related activities where the current Indian work force does not seem to be bothered.

Child Labour

This implies elimination of child labour. Since by its very nature, child labour cannot be decent work. The ILO studies in many places have indicated that replacement of child labour by the adult labour could possibly increase the final cost of product by about 2% but up to a maximum of 5%. Given the fact that the cost of labour as a proportion of total cost of a physical product has continuously fallen while the share of other intermediaries has arisen, on pure economic grounds there is not much justification for continuance of child labour. Over and above the lack of economic rationale expect for isolated groups of families in special circumstances, there is also the need for providing the basic factors of growth of the child, both physical nutrition and intellectual stimulus. The country has already passed a law for making elementary education a

Fundamental Right for all children in the age group 6-14 years, as already laid down in the Indian Constitution. As the law starts getting implemented, more and more children would be withdrawn systematically from the labour force and brought into school education. Our Vision of the next 20 years could obviously include total elimination of child labour and their participation in elementary education fully. In terms of employment planning, such total elimination would not change the total volume of labour force since by definition the labour force has already eliminated child labour in official calculation. However, once a child reaches Grade 8 or so, the curiosity generated by the educational programmes could possibly push him to go to higher grades and to that extent also reduce the participation rate in the labour force in the higher age group 15-29 years. The Vision 2020 should accommodate such changes in the behaviour, of adolescent aged, 15 and above.

Older Persons

The question of older persons' participation in work is far more complicated since the life expectancy now is around 64 years and the number of persons above 60 years has already reached 75 millions. It has to be analysed whether all of them are resting or a large proportion is engaged in economic activities. The worldwide projection of persons above 60 years is around 600 millions which could rise to 1100 million by 2025. In India the proportion of older persons i.e. above 65 years is shown to be between 6.4 and 6.7% . In many countries people continue to work till the age 65 and in the Indian rural areas and even in the urban informal sector, there is no retirement age as such. Therefore, a significant proportion of persons above 60 years is already working and, over the next 20 years, this is likely to rise further, implying the need for focusing all the efforts more on the older group of 65+, rather than 60+. The current estimates made by several knowledgeable persons/organizations indicate that the situation of even the 60+ is rather hopeless, with 40% living below the poverty line, 73% illiterate and 12 million i.e. 16% are blind for want of cataract operation. Over and above the bland figures, is the change in the social system with extended family breaking up into nuclear families. However, the positive picture lies in the fact that almost 80% of the current 60+ are in rural area where

the extended family is breaking up more slowly. The problem could however, become acute over the next 20 years even in rural areas if current trends persist and no major interventions take place.

By the year 2020, even if we take the lower figure of 6.4% as the proportion of 65+, the total number is going to be rather significant i.e. over 80 million as against the current year estimate of 75 million of 60+. With continuous degradation of environment and shortages of clean air and water and other environmental resources, it is obvious that this group of over 80 million persons would need special attention, both from the Government and the Civil society/younger members of the family. Given the fact that there are no private retirement pension plans and the existing efforts to start them are developing rather slowly, major interventions from the society are required for the benefit of 65+ by 2020. Some points made by the experts are the following:

- Research into the capabilities/disabilities of all such persons
- Holistic health including development of new disciplines like geriatrics
- Training of carers, setting up of old age homes and half-way homes etc.
- Organisation of older persons to enable them to demand better facilities
- New avenues of engaging older persons, whether on payment or as voluntary workers with minimum support and pre-retirement training to assist this programme
- Effective awareness campaigns to prepare the society to up keep the older persons and reduction of direct government hand-outs etc.

Some of the recommendations made above are based on experience of Western countries where old age home is the accepted model of delivery of Government-funded health care and other facilities. The cost calculations made by other experts however, indicate that the western style of old age home is beyond the means of Indian economy even by the year 2020 and that the community-based approach is likely to be the cost effective alternative. Even in some developed countries like Japan, the older persons are linked up with very young children which is likely to be more satisfactory than plain dependence on the income earning of the young people through the mechanism of old age homes etc. Since the Indian traditions of Vanaprashtha and Sanyas are not really functional

any more in the sense they were visualized, the Government can not possibly withdraw from the care of older persons but our vision of 2020 should tilt the balance of care to the community and NGO's with whatever tax benefits feasible, and less on direct dependance on the Government itself. However, not enough research and hard data is available to indicate the shares of costs to be borne between the Government and the civil society.

Gender equity

Another issue relating to employment as well as Human development is that of gender equity. It is well known that women suffer from discrimination in the work place whether in the organized or the unorganized sector. It is also well known that within the various occupations and economic activities available, women tend to concentrate on the traditional occupations or those which require less/new technologies and less manual work. The rates of participation of women in the labour force are already much lower in practically all age groups, especially if we focus on main workers. However, in terms of marginal workers women out-number men significantly but even more than this is the fact that a lot of work done by women is invisible to the accountants of GDP. While many efforts have been made to bring on the surface different types of work which is of economic nature even in the household, the overall GDP figures still do not reflect the true contribution of women to the output of goods and services. However, this is so not only for India but also in most countries, even more in the developing world. At one time, some studies were organized to identify what was called women-prone occupations which showed that in a large number of manual occupations women constituted the dominant proportion, especially coal mining and construction work. Therefore, the picture of developed world about women- related occupations is not true of India now and might not be true even by the year 2020. Unless there is major shift of work force from out of farming/agriculture to non-farm occupations the continuing discrimination against women in the work place is detrimental to their health needs, apart from educational and personal care needs. It is difficult to visualise to what extent the quality of life for an average woman, leaving aside the matric and higher educated, would improve by the year 2020. It is however, very clear that without massive doses of

education and skills and improvement in their ability to control reproduction, these improvements would be only minor.

It is already known that intra-family nutrition distribution is against women and children or women and girl children, as against males. The earning male member obviously and naturally, gets higher food intake and better care and so also the male child. This discrimination can perhaps be removed without much economic cost in view of the fact that total nutrition availability in the country has surely improved. It is expected that by 2020 the nutritional availability would further improve and therefore, without much economic costs the intra-family distribution of nutrition should also improve. Logically this should lead to lower proportion of low birth babies, lower birth related problems for women, less anaemia and possibly better ability to master new skills, so far kept by the males for themselves. Better regulation of environmental factors and higher availability of better fuel in the rural/poor family, should also lead to less pollution related difficulties for the women working in the kitchens. Better fuel availability should in fact, also reduce the number of hours spent on fuel collection & combustion and therefore, leave more time personal care/health care. Further, availability of birth attendants for every single birth, registration of births and deaths and child care through the ICDS route should also, help in reducing the drudgery and quantity of physical work for women and thereby allow them to participate in better quality work within and outside the household.

While considering the questions of gender equity, one cannot forget the stark differences, which has already come up between states. The gender development index prepared by the UNDP places India at the 108th rank amongst 174 countries. However, using the same methodology if similar indexes are prepared for different states, one finds Kerala to be similar to medium-development countries while the BIMARU states are similar to LDCs in the UN ranking. This means that no simple strategy of development will work for all the states together. One of the important components of the Vision 2020 has therefore, to be reduction of the disparities in the HDI/GDI of different states, which in itself would go some way to reduce discrimination against women in the country as a whole. It has been repeatedly mentioned by experts that priority of planning should be on providing basic infrastructures for life including food/nutrition security, drinking water,

sanitation, other basic needs like health and education and of course, security of life/respect for human rights. The process of awareness generation and education are essential for any efforts towards gender equality. This would for example, include campaign to reverse the low sex ratio in most of the country which is based on gender discrimination at birth or even before birth. Integration of health services in a more coordinated manner would also help in this process towards reduction of anaemia, better nutrition and provision of good health care and feeding practices. In fact, one of the factors working against good nutritional status is the fact of poor food preparation practices which lose a lot of nutrition in the very process of food preparation. Literacy for women is a very important component of all these efforts and happily, there is a good chance that very soon there would be no district with less than 50 % female literacy, which appears to be a very important mile stone.

Vulnerable groups, including the disabled and crime prone

Every democratic society has to cope up with the care of those who cannot care for themselves un-aided. These include a whole range of people for example, the handicapped persons either due to visual or hearing or speech or orthopaedic problems and those who are mentally challenged. Another way of looking at the vulnerable sections of society is to examine the whole group of Scheduled Castes, STs, socially and educationally backward classes and minorities. The last group is that of the crime prone persons or sections of society including groups of families in some parts of the country. While some data is available on the SC and ST groups of population as a result of considerable work over the last century, not much data is available on the persons handicapped due to other factors. Similarly, not much data on the motivation of the crime prone individuals, family or groups is readily available. This shortage of data or poor quality data makes it difficult to develop dependable projections up to 2020. But the Government of India already has a number of institutions and departments whose job it is to analyse the situation of each such group or section of individuals.

The Ministry of Social Justice along with the Rehabilitation Council of India and several other organizations is the most important single ministry to assist in the process of

main-streaming the disabled of various kinds, into normal life and participate in all types of activities of a normal society. Over the 1990s the Government of India have enacted new laws and strengthened the legislative frame work for assistance to persons with disability, along with specific rehabilitation mechanisms. It is too early to say whether these mechanisms and law/regulation are sufficient for the purpose of main-streaming persons with disability into normal life. But it is already well known that only a few buildings and some transport/ public facilities are actually accessible to the disabled persons. It is obvious that creation of non handicapping physical environment is an absolutely basic requirement for assisting such persons. Even more, the central initiatives do not get translated well into the state governments' actions and even less at the operational level of districts. For example, rehabilitation services as per the relevant Act should have been able to reach each district through 'district rehabilitation centre' which must work as a single window facilitation center for all requirement of persons with disabilities. The percentage of persons with obvious disability has been estimated at about 5% by the NSSO/Central ministry but at the junior school level, in most of the European countries, children with this disability are known to be around 8% of total students. It must also be mentioned that though 'integrated education' has been the favourite theme at the school level for a couple of decades, the actual number of students who are able to take advantage of integrated education is much less. There are cultural factors at work against persons with obvious disabilities in a tradition-ridden society like India which might explain the relatively lower number of persons picked up in the NSS survey in 1991. Even worse, many parents would not like to admit that their wards are disabled. There are now newer afflictions at work also, including HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and road accidents, which are likely to increase continuously. Finally, mental illness is hardly diagnosed in a traditional society whether rural and urban, and mental disorders tend to be ignored even by the educated persons for a long time.

The Vision for 2020 for the disabled is obviously that of creation of an environment where preventable diseases and disability are prevented while those which are not preventable, are handled with sensitivity, sympathy and best available medical knowledge. From this angle it is clear that India has a very long way to go since we have serious problems due to various diseases, lack of sanitation, poor drinking water, poor

care of expectant mothers including poor nutrition and bias against those born with a disability and against the girl children. As regards attention to persons already suffering from disability including self-made disability arising out of drug abuse, the institutional care available is very minor and does not really reach the remote parts of even normal districts. Over and above the cultural factors and in-appropriate traditions, there is a problem of finding sufficient funds for looking after the disabled persons, despite a variety of organizations and ministries/departments in various governments. It has been suggested that at least 5% Plan outlay should be earmarked for expenditure on such disabled persons, national or state level. It has also been visualized that there would be a single window delivery system up to 'Gram Panchayat' level and convergence of various ministries/department looking after the disabled persons, one way or the other. The system of special school, clinic, home based learning, institutional care for the drug-dependents, and so on, is obviously too costly for a country with our per capita income and therefore, alternative modes of delivery of care have to be developed through the community NGOs and even Gram Panchayats but under the overall scientific and technical guidance of the state level apparatus.

Other Vulnerable Groups

As for the groups of SC, ST and OBCs, considerable work has been done by various government organizations and various Commissions have been set up under the Constitution to supervise all such government funded actions. However, it has to be admitted that most of the benefits of development out of government funds have not spread widely across the entire spectrum of SCs or STs and of course, OBCs (action in their regard has been relatively recent). It has also been recognized by now, right up to the level of Supreme Court that a lot of benefit of reservation of jobs and facilities or school places has been appropriated by the creamy layers of such groups. The development of SCs, STs and OBCs has therefore, to be seen in this larger context of a huge variety of situations under which individual castes or tribes might be labouring. However, it is difficult to work out separate caste or tribe-specific operational strategies since this could be struck down in the Courts. A number of studies have been made on what type of castes or tribes have been left out from availing the major benefits flowing

from central Government funds and it is possible that some non-justiciable interventions could be made in their favour, in comparison to other castes/ tribes also covered under the heading SC-ST. As regards the OBCs, the experience available is not good enough to demand any major change of government approach to their development but it must be noticed that the demands to be categorised as OBC in the hope of government employment is now self defeating in a liberal or liberalizing Indian economy. This is because most of the wealth formation is now expected to take place outside the Government and in fact, at the national level the number of government jobs is now on a declining trend. Even if some of the states are not yet on this trend, they are most likely to be so by 2020 and therefore, such states have also to find other means of assisting the individual SCs, STs and OBCs.

Minorities

The government also has the responsibility of assistance to the minorities including Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Zoroastrians. They together account for 17 or more percent of national population and there are 142 districts in the country which have in their population more than 20% minorities. In a liberalizing economy the government has not too many intervention mechanisms to assist them economically but they can still be assisted through various programmes like:

- area intensive programme for educationally backward minorities
- financial assistance for modernising the Madarsa education
- community polytechnics in minority concentration area
- setting up of a corporation – NMDFC
- coaching classes for competitive exams.
- setting up the Maulana Azad Educational Foundation with a corpus

The current government thinking is to assist the minorities through education including technical education, special attention to their health and housing needs and priority sector lending in their favour etc. especially to artisan and handloom weaver etc. where the minorities have concentration in many parts of the country. The Vision for 2020 in respect of minorities therefore, has to be almost total equality of opportunities in

education, technical/vocational training, coaching for employment, health and family welfare, PDS, other components of minimum needs/poverty alleviation programme and finally, confidence building to make them equal members of a multi cultural, multi-religion country. Since Government intervention mechanisms are limited in a liberal economy, it is obvious that Vision 2020 would assign greater responsibility to the civil society, NGOs and to the already existing public institutions in the field of human development.

Social Defence:

Though India is not a high crime society and respect for law in the general public is still high, there is a rising trend in various type of crimes, practically all over the country. However, the reported crime numbers or crime rates always remain much lower than the reality and over and above this is the failure of the criminal justice system to track down crimes firstly and then to give them proper punishment in good time so as to act as a deterrent to other criminals. It is feared that with the spread/availability of ICTs and rapid economic growth, organized crime could acquire a more volitional and disruptive form, along side emergence of terrorism, environment crimes and now cyber crimes. It is also feared that rapid economic growth in many parts of the country could create imbalances and disparities between the rich and the poor. The growth of slum and unauthorized colonies in practically all the cities and un regulated urbanization itself tends to encourage a smart persons with criminal tendencies to develop crime in an organized way, be it drug trafficking, prostitution or trafficking in women and children. Therefore, the potential of growth of crime and criminals in India by the 2020 is truly high. Given the fact that India is considered to be a poorly governed or at least a soft state, organization of crime or crime syndicates appears to be easier than before.

The existence of stark poverty in many groups of society, the patent discrimination against SCs and STs and other lower castes is itself a factor for growth of crime. While we have a whole range of civil society group, NGOs and human rights activities, the basic component of social justice are still not fully in place. The feeling of discrimination is further aggravated by ability of the relatively rich to avoid taxes and

commit other economic offences without commensurate punishment. The economic and social marginal of poor also adds to the growth of disaffected children, adolescence and young adults who are frustrated with their lot. There are however, a number of new laws to protect against the atrocious on the vulnerable sections of society and children and happily, the upper judiciary is proactive in enforcing the provision of such laws and regulations.

In the back drop of a rapidly changing crime situation experts feels that a correlation strategy, widespread reform in the prison system and that of Juvenile justice are not only required urgently but could be even useful in improving modification for good economic growth. However, it is also realize that the system incarceration of individual, young or adult, is to costly for a country with low per capita income. Therefore, non custodial measures have been recommended for the significant component of offenders facing criminal justice system and courts. It is also noticed that public participation in prevention of crime as well as in treatment and rehabilitation of offender is highly desirable. In the light of low per capita income, this is perhaps more effective than the Western style major for increasing and reforms of the prison system and similar other facilities. The United Nations has given a lot of thought and made recommendation toward utilizing the non-custodial system for the purpose where the civil society, relevant NGOs, community policing and voluntary efforts would play a much higher role than before. It is however, distrait to note that very few organization are active in the work of main-streaming of social deviants/criminal. The vision for 2020 shas therefore, to include large scale involvement of the civil society through tax incentive on the one side and technical/judicial support from the other. This would be in addition to raising the number of judges and speeding criminal judicious system by provision of additional funds, utilization of IT and of course, widespread reform of the existing system prison/ correctional home etc.

Concluding remarks

The examination of various social dimensions in the light of expected rapid growth of the economy must be seen the large context of a relatively secure society and

peace at the national border. India with its vast land and maritime borders, is already committed to additional resource for national defence. This is become urgent in the light of terrorist attacks of 11 September which has bought turbulence and instability closed to our hilly borders and perhaps, to the entire country. The government is already redefining its approach in the light of these developments but it is difficult to cover in this short paper the lightly scenario for national defence in the year 2020 to ensure peace and all over borders. It is however, necessary to point out that human development in all its dimension should continued to remain highest strategic priority in the forcible future.

This paper utilize the materials and analyses contained in the following papers presented in the various meeting of the Group on Vision 2020.

- 1. Population projections of India and the larger states based on 2001 census results by K. Srinivasn*
- 2. Child Labour by Swami Agnivesh*
- 3. Vision 2020 Older persons*
- 4. Issues concerning vulnerable groups by H. S. Saksena*
- 5. Social defence by Dr. Hira Singh*
- 6. The profile of the empowered woman by Dr. Sarala Gopalan*
- 7. Vision of Peace for 2020 by Air Commodore Jasjit Singh*
- 8. Employment Perspective by LEM Division, Planning Commission*
- 9. Population Growth in 21st century by K.S. Natarajan*
- 10. Disabled persons by Gauri Chatterjee.*
- 11. Trends in Fertility, mortality, nutrition and Health indicator by Dr. Padam Singh*