

Possibly the significant essential shift in the government's policy perspective, as reflected in the Tenth Plan document, is ever-greater reliance on the private sector.

The document hopes that the government will be able to 'motivate the private and corporate sectors to invest in the welfare and development of weaker sections and thus fulfil their social obligations and responsibilities.' But there is no attempt to provide any grounding for such a hope. And where has the private sector fulfilled its 'social responsibilities' on any significant scale to address the basic needs of the economically and socially disadvantaged sections? Is it the case that the government is washing its hands off what are primarily its own responsibilities and imagining that the private sector will do all the things that it has been grossly inadequate in addressing for more than five decades? Sure enough, private and corporate sector must be included in facilitating affirmative action for hitherto deprived groups, for which an appropriate framework in terms of incentives, legislations, enforcement, etc.

need to be spelt out and the Tenth Plan document shies away from that, but it would be sheer wishful thinking that the market can be a substitute for the state in these areas.

To the extent that one can treat the plan document as the policy framework for the five-year span (i.e., 2002-07), it seems that government is not even willing to engage in any serious manner with the most pressing economic problems of almost the bottom half of Indian society, such as not enough food, unaffordable healthcare, too few jobs etc. On the contrary, often it does not even recognise the problem. For instance, the document does not see access to food as a major problem, even through it is clear from the NSS data that there has been a very large decline in per capita calorie consumption of the poorest 40 per cent of the population over the past decade. Worse still, the relevant proposals in the document may lead to a further reduction in the Public Distribution System, as well as public provisioning for other basic needs as has been indicated earlier.

A Concluding Remark

In the opening section of this part, it was argued that in terms of its Constitutional mandate and through international declarations, India has committed itself repeatedly to a development paradigms that would ensure access to basic needs for all its citizens. Provisions for most of these have been acknowledged as enforceable rights to development by the Indian judicial system.

Nonetheless, the worst manifestations of poverty continue to afflict large sections of Indian population, which has been the gravest failure of India's development strategy since independence. It also

appears that the currently ascendant neoliberal globalisation agenda is making the material and social conditions more difficult and fragile for the underprivileged economic and social groups, thus making it even for difficult for the much cherished, promised, and even constitutionally and sometime legally mandated rights to development to be realised. But then, the right to have rights (as Hannah Arendt once put it), is never given on a platter, and the history of how such rights were realised in different societies can be quite instructive in this regard. The current economic policy regime in India does not inspire the confidence that we are on the right track.