

Overflowing Granaries, Empty Stomachs

Data available show that food grain stock in India has reached 51 million tons on 1 June 2001 and that with the ongoing procurement processes, the stock is expected to touch 60 million tons by July. The irony is that in this very land there are 330 million people living in malnourishment. The issue is indeed complex.

The questions of poverty amidst plenty should become a central agenda in social science, particularly in the development discourse. Specially so in the context of a globalised, market-driven, neo-colonial society. It is a welcome sign that such discourses are not left to certain disciplines alone, rather a multi-disciplinary approach is being adopted by most social scientists. However, far more needs to be done in understanding and tackling this phenomenon.

Poverty, seen as severe deprivation in access to basic services like education, health care, drinking water, sanitation, affordable transportation, judicial services, policing, security, in short, basic human rights, needs to be highlighted by all concerned. A wide range of theoretical paradigm now guides the debates: for instance, the role of the culture of poverty, exploitation, technological lags, differential power distribution, caste-class, and primarily economic theoretical explanations. The need of the hour is a multi-disciplinary approach to exploring issues of food scarcity and poverty in general.

The present issue is a mix of papers of varying interests, ranging from primary data-based exploitation to personal reflections. Two papers supplement the earlier issue on water. The exploration of agricultural labour cooperatives in Andhra Pradesh, resource-use conflict in Uganda and mobility are particularly interesting. The reflections of a veteran researcher and mentor, calling on the readers to come back to Gandhian ideals, probably is the 'eternal, timeless and universal' solution to the puzzles of development.

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