

**Political Participation Contrasted in India: A Contextual Comparison
between Kerala and Bihar**

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ABSTRACT

State processes and programs are often constructed and implemented with the intention to ameliorate the lives of the inhabitants living within those borders. However, in order for citizens to benefit from these programs and processes, for example, anti-poverty programs and decentralization projects, their participation is a necessity. But societal contexts in which citizen participation occurs vary to great extents. It is important then to investigate these differences so as to further our understanding of the workings of participation. This research conducts a comparative analysis between two states in India, Kerala and Bihar, of contextual factors impacting participation. It shows that both trust in the state as well as formal education affect the level of participation of the population. This research engages with and attempts to add to the literature of participatory development by analyzing and explaining some of the impact that context has on participation of inhabitants.

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CHAPTER ONE: SETTING THE STAGE

India is a tremendously fascinating country filled with both a rich history and an ever-transforming contemporary political life. There exist endless avenues by which to begin exploring the continuously changing diversity in Indian society; culture, religious beliefs, societal norms, cuisine, traditions, and particularly its transition from a colonial state to an independent one. India's adoption of democracy upon Independence (1947) brought with it certain expectations by its citizens as well as by the rest of the world. Democratic practices have shown much progress within India; however, as in all democracies, there is always room for improvement. For example, a fundamental element to its style of governance promises equality of all citizens within the political boundaries. However, it is important to consider the complications that inevitably arise in implementing a system based upon equality within a society where significant structured inequality between citizens is present. Considering the size of India (1.1 billion people), as well as the immense heterogeneity within and between its political borders, it is worth trying to begin untangling the intricacies of what goes on and why inside its borders.

Of course, this will never be possible to an extent that we can hope to find any kind of ultimate, end-all 'Truth' in answering research questions that are taken into consideration; however, such are the perils of engaging in social science research in which people are largely the focal point of interest. People and societies are ever changing, unpredictable and there are limitless paths that can be taken, or fallen upon. To borrow an idea from Jessica Allina-Pisano with a slight modification, the best that we can perhaps hope to achieve through this research is the understanding and formulation of small 't' truths through the processes of research. To illustrate, she makes note of the idea of 'peeling the onion' (Allina-Pisano 2009, 54). The idea is

not to uncover the diamond in the rough, or even necessarily to assume that a diamond exists, but rather that researchers can help elucidate certain aspects that they wish to investigate about social and political life. It is this ‘peeling of the onion’ approach that is taken in this research, with a slight modification. It is argued here that onions should not necessarily represent societies, questions or any other black box that is looked to be opened up and discovered, but rather that each individual’s investigation of whichever black box they deem to be important is represented by their own onion (or multiple onions). Essentially, it is argued that there is an infinite number of onions (which can even change through time and space) in the social and political worlds, none of which hold answers at the end of their peelings, but rather hold the individual understandings of those that hold their specific onion at that time. Therefore, this illustration is an attempt to demonstrate the end-product that this thesis has become, and that is an effort to put into words the onions that I have held during my investigation and analysis of India.

FAILED STATE POLICIES: VARIATIONS WITHIN INDIA

The present research began with a three month-long internship from January to February 2009 at the Human Rights Law Network (HRLN) based in New Delhi, India. One of the projects that was undertaken was an investigation of the functionings of the Right to Food initiative in the tribal areas of Jharkhand (or, for the purposes of this research, Bihar, as its political borders existed before the split in the year 2000). The goal of this project was to gather information through surveys investigating the implementation of different government schemes such as the Targeted Public Distribution System, the Integrated Child Development Program, Food for Work and others. The result was that hundreds of surveys that we worked together to analyse, interpret and compile into reports were sent to the High Court of India; our project asked that those

beneficiaries who were mandated to receive benefits, but who had not yet begun receiving them, be immediately remunerated. The catalyst for the organization to initiate this study in this area of Bihar originated from reports that had been made of some villagers having died from starvation¹ a few years before². I worked with a team of lawyers and other volunteers, both Indian and non-Indian, tribal and non-tribal members of Indian society, to formulate these data into a report which was sent to the High Court of India. The project is still ongoing by the organization.

During my time spent engaging in this research, as well as after having completed my role in the project, I was left wondering why these poverty alleviation programs had been so unsuccessfully implemented in this area of India. Why was it that there was so much frustration by the volunteers and inhabitants in the ‘malfunctioning’ tribal areas of Bihar? I couldn’t help but ask myself whether, even if the High Court of India indeed granted our request in deeming that the list of beneficiaries start receiving their entitled benefits, these individuals would actually ever end up receiving them. I made several humble observations during my time researching in this project regarding the structures on the ground that seemed to play a role in inhibiting the proper functioning of the programs. Through a review of the literature, I noticed that there were many *variations* between states in India with respect to the success of state programs and processes. Therefore, it was a logical conclusion that it would be valuable to undergo a comparative analysis between two states in India, Bihar and Kerala. Although authors tend to describe this method as looking to uncover what ‘India can learn from India’, I see it as more what we, as researchers, can learn from India by studying India.

EXPLAINING PARTICIPATION

² Reasons for the delay of the investigation (being years later after receiving the reports) were due to elements such as manpower, resources and priorities with other projects that were already begun.

As this research progressed it was clear that a main factor of interest for researchers of Kerala lay in participation of its population. Therefore, combining this finding with observations of lack of participation on the ground in Bihar in development programs, both by beneficiaries and by those that were in charge of implementing the programs (such as state officials and ration shop owners), I decided to focus this research on investigating structural factors that impact levels of participation in state programs and processes. Why is it that the level of participation in Kerala was at such a high rate and seemed to be at a much lower rate in Bihar? From this point on, the present research will only be investigating the levels of participation of inhabitants, as opposed to focusing on the functioning of anti-poverty programs. Considering that Kerala has been termed as a potential ‘model’ for the rest of India to follow, this encourages the focus upon the elements that have allowed it to be as effectual to the extent that it has at ameliorating the quality of life of its population. The element therefore to be investigated is participation.

This is an important topic to study since, much like HRLN’s motivations for initiating the Right to Food investigation, suffering in the world, such as dying from starvation, is very difficult to ignore. Thus it is important to undergo analyses in attempting to further the understanding of why certain societies are able to maintain a higher quality of living, with respect to meeting basic needs, than others. Participation is an element that is agreed upon by many authors (which will be drawn upon in the theoretical chapter of this study) that brings with it an ameliorated situation for inhabitants to live. This is argued to be so since a main point of agreement among theorists is that participation means the inclusion of locals in decisions and processes that impact their lives.

Therefore, bearing in mind the potential benefits that can be brought to Keralan society due to the high level of participation of its citizens, the intention of this research is to investigate

how and why Keralans have been able to engage in participation to the extent that they have. In order to do this, the approach taken here is to investigate contextual factors that can impact Keralans' abilities to manoeuvre within their state and achieve the act of engaging in participation. The choices made of contextual factors to be focussed on in the present study have been derived from several influential aspects. Firstly observations made during ground research under the auspices of HRLN mentioned above, secondly through empirical investigations conducted by other researchers that discuss participation in Kerala and Bihar, and thirdly through theoretical research which finds certain elements essential to a society that allow participation to flourish. The two contextual factors that I have deemed to be most appropriate to investigate, as well as most influential (from my perspective) upon the levels of participation are (1) trust in the state, and (2) education. Other factors are certainly playing a role too, but these two are particularly significant.

The main research question for this thesis is “what contextual factors impact the level of participation in Keralan and Biharan societies?” The two working hypotheses are (1) Trust in the state is a contextual factor impacting participation; and (2) Education is a contextual factor impacting participation.

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS: TRUST IN THE STATE AND EDUCATION

The first contextual factor, trust in the state, will be defined more thoroughly throughout the research; however, for the purposes of clarification, a brief preview will be helpful. Essentially, in narrowing down what is meant by trust in the state, help was taken from the concepts discussed by several authors such as James C. Scott, Stuart Corbridge, Glyn Williams, Akhil Gupta, Robert Putnam, Lily Tsai and others. A brief explanation of the definition used is

that trust in the state firstly consists of a macro vision developed by a population through interactions with the state. Secondly, narrowing down this vision further, two elements determine the trustworthiness of this vision: first, whether the state is seen as reliable or unreliable by its population, and second, whether the state is seen as a source of protection, or whether it is something to be feared. Essentially, the more a population sees its state as reliable, and the more it sees it as a protector, the more its population considers the state to be trustworthy.

The second contextual factor, education, will be more thoroughly discussed as this research progresses; however, for now the following discussion is intended to suffice to give an idea of what is underway. From a macro perspective, education will be investigated as an element that provides ‘capability’ to inhabitants. This concept is discussed through the works of Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, Jean Dreze, Wiebke Kuklys, Stuart Corbridge and others. This overall idea of education providing capability is investigated through two different channels of focus. The first is looking at how education has acted in the two states to facilitate the population’s ability to participate in decentralization efforts. Secondly, education as a capability will be investigated with respect to the equalizing effects that it has on a population, thus being argued to facilitate the participation of those that had been traditionally marginalized from state processes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTS

While contrasting the level of participation in two societies, as well as deeming contextual factors to be influencing that level, it is necessary to touch upon elements of both structure as well as agency during the investigation. A heavier emphasis on the role of structure is employed during this study, since context is largely drawn upon as a facilitator and/or inhibitor

of *allowing* inhabitants to engage in participation. However, there is most certainly an element of agency that is drawn upon as well, especially with respect to the role that choice plays in this discussion impacted by these structural factors under investigation. Also, considering the heavy focus that is placed upon the *interactions* between the state and society throughout this research, this renders the actions taken by agents, due to their subjective views of the state, significant. Thus, these points of emphasis render the macro approach of neo-institutionalism to be an appropriate theoretical point of departure for this research, which will be thoroughly drawn upon during the theoretical chapter of this thesis.

Given that this thesis investigates variation in levels of participation, as well as its relation to development, it will draw extensively upon the participatory development literature. Again, the theoretical chapter of this thesis will provide a more thorough critical discussion of this literature and how this thesis is situated within it, however a brief overview will be given here to provide some context to which the reader can get familiarized.

The idea of including some form of citizen participation in processes and decision making relating to development is nothing new. Approaches and tactics have been deliberated for decades, at least since the 1940s (Hickey & Mohan 2004, 6-8). However, it was not until the 1990s that there was an actual calling for participatory methods (Hickey & Mohan 2004, 9-10). Considering that new styles and attitudes towards participatory methods are increasingly transforming, often due to failures of development projects, it is not surprising that it is a field of literature that maintains a high level of both self-criticism and caution in making definitive claims. Robert Chambers (2005, xii) prepares his readers in his preface of this very sentiment:

“The ideas here are directions not destinations. Some may lead to false trails. Let me hope that some at least will serve as provocations, signposts or springboards leading to action, reflection, learning and good change. In development, we will always live in flux. We will always need to learn and unlearn in order to do better. We will always travel and never arrive. Ideas for

development will always be creatures of their time and context.”

Transformations in approaches and points of discussion have accordingly been engaged with and deliberated. The field itself has been criticized for its lack of cohesion in theory and strength of usage of concepts, such as power and citizenship, which will be discussed further in the theoretical chapter. Accusations have also seeped through the literature that increasing participation in societies has been seen as tyrannical. It was argued by these authors (Cooke & Kothari 2001) that participation should not automatically always be seen as something that is necessary for all societies in order to develop, and that a more critical approach to participation was needed. The calling within the literature that will be addressed in this thesis, however, is an increased understanding of context. More micro-level research is called for so as to further the understanding of local conditions in which participatory development methods are being implemented (Cornwall 2002, Gaventa 2004, Chambers 2005). This research is essentially a response to this calling through comparing the contextual factors in Kerala and Bihar. Implementing participatory development efforts into different contexts will undoubtedly result in different outcomes. It is the goal of this research to shed light on certain aspects of contexts that can hopefully help explain, at least in part, these differences in outcomes. Trust in the state and education are seen here as two important structural factors to consider when studying participation and participatory development efforts in different societies.

LIMITATIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

While it would be nice to be able to discuss all aspects that are related to the topics in this research, unfortunately some boundaries must be set. Three main limitations will be briefly mentioned here so as to prepare the reader through clarifications of what exactly will be analyzed in this research. Firstly, some mention will be made of the limits of the scope of participation that will be used here. Secondly, the two contextual factors under observation will be flushed out. And thirdly will follow a few words on the limits of the approach and intentions of this research.

Although participation is a concept that can take on many different forms in practice, as will be further discussed in the theoretical chapter, the type of participation that is being investigated here is one that is aligned with state processes and intentions. In other words, although inhabitants can perhaps participate quite extensively in other actions, such as mobilizations to keep the state away, or participate in actions that are aligned with anti-state groups, these are not the types of participation that are the points of focus for this study, although they will be analyzed for the purposes of evidence towards other avenues of research.

Secondly, it is important to mention a few words on some limits of the contextual factors being investigated. First, it is acknowledged that trust in the state is an aspect of context that cannot be easily measured or defined. It is largely a subjective structural element that can be argued to change from individual to individual. Also, the more narrow notions that are drawn upon to define trust, being reliability and source of protection, could also be easily represented through other terminology. However, it is intended that through the literature review and program analyses that this contextual factor will prove to be a significant point of entry into furthering the understanding of local conditions. Second, I focus mostly on formal, state-led education. It is not the intention to discount the value and significance of other types of

education, which will be further discussed later, such as religious education, emotional awareness, farming techniques, cooking, cleaning, and countless others. However the discussion on education in this paper, for the most part, stops at the boundaries of formal education.

Thirdly, it is not my objective, by any means, to suggest that either society (Bihar and Kerala) under observation is ‘better’ than the other. It is also not the intention of this work to propose that participation is even necessarily a ‘good’ thing in all cases. The goal is merely to critically analyze why participation occurs more strongly in one state than another. If this research advocates for anything, it would be, simply, that context matters. It is the intention here to support the idea that participatory development practitioners, theorists, governments, NGOs and others should always expect different outcomes from efforts to increase participation considering the heterogeneity of structures in which the programs and policies are implemented.

STRUCTURE OF THESIS

This thesis will consist of five chapters including this introduction. The second chapter will consist of the critical theoretical discussion on participation and participatory development. It will also contain theoretical discussion of the contextual factors, providing a base to depart from during the analysis. The third chapter will include a mix of empirical research as well as some brief theoretical discussion on the first contextual factor under investigation, trust in the state. The fourth chapter will be much like the third, with the exception that the discussion will entail the second contextual factor, education. Finally, a conclusion will follow as the sixth chapter tying together different concepts that were worked with and what can be learned from the observations and analysis made in this study.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL BASES AND PARTICIPATION

Participation in state processes has shown to provide the foundation for a more democratic and fair environment for citizens. One example of that is participation of citizens in decentralization projects that look to increase the amount of local knowledge in policy planning. Another example is participation in the election of representatives who, in theory, will work towards meeting the needs of those within the state boundaries. Finally, it can also mean participating in various development projects, both by the recipients in collecting their benefits, as well as the non-recipients in allowing the processes to function properly. The breadth of the concept of participation will be further discussed later on, however the aim here now is to illustrate the potential that is seen within it for societal change by government officials, academics and practitioners.

Various efforts have been undertaken in order to increase participation in countless societies, largely under the label of ‘participatory development’. However, some societies have shown to have been more successful than others at increasing participation levels. This research will focus on comparing two states in India that have demonstrated dissimilarity in their levels of participation aligned with state processes. The first will be Kerala, which has shown to have a high level of participation; the second will be Bihar, which has shown to have a lower level. The goal of this comparison is to further the understanding of why levels of participation in state programs and processes differ between societies. More specifically, how do the contexts affect the participation of the inhabitants? It is important to emphasize here that this investigation rests mostly with participation levels in *state* processes and programs, as opposed to, for example, participation against, or without the involvement of, the state. In other words, the Keralan and

Biharan contexts will be contrasted to further understand the impact that they have on citizen participation aligned with the state.

Through a review of the literature, program evaluations and field research with a team in Bihar³, it was found that two contextual factors impact the level of participation in Kerala and Bihar. Those factors are ‘trust in the state’ and ‘education’. In the exploration of this question, it will be useful to draw extensively upon and engage with the literature in participatory development. This will provide a framework for this research to situate itself in and also to limit the scope of concepts to engage with. This will be more thoroughly discussed below, however first it is necessary to present briefly a broader perspective of neo-institutionalism that this research begins with.

NEO-INSTITUTIONALISM: A POINT OF DEPARTURE

The general macro theoretical point of departure in this research will be one of neo-institutionalism. Also called new institutionalism, this research is concerned not only with the impact of institutions upon individuals, but rather the interaction between the two (Lowndes 2002, 91). While understanding that actors influence context and at the same time their choices being constrained by it (Hay 2002, 116-7, van de Walle 2009), this thesis will also pay attention to the change of institutions. Rather than focusing on grand, seemingly catalytic transformations of institutions, it is intended that this research look closely at the gradual, unfolding changes since they can be hugely consequential as causes of other outcomes (Mahoney & Thelen 2010, 3). Two examples are, firstly, the evolution of state policies and the impact they have had Biharans’ ‘vision’ of the state, and secondly, the transformations in Kerala society due to

³ Bihar is considered in this research as the state as it existed prior to the formation of the new state of Jharkhand in late 2000. In other words, for the purposes of this research, the term Bihar refers to the state as it existed in the 1990’s when it included the region of Jharkhand.

changes in education. These elements will be argued to significantly impact participation in the respective societies.

More specifically, this research draws on the perspective of historical institutionalism. Since this investigation has taken into account the transforming levels of participation, it is fruitful to consider the temporal element of the context. This research plans to draw upon Mahoney's nuanced ideas of the idea of gradual change (Mahoney & Thelen 2010, 6-7), taking into account both exogenous and endogenous sources (Engerman & Sokoloff 2008, 124-5). To clarify, exogenous sources refer largely to the aspects of participatory development efforts, in other words attempts that have been made by outside sources upon a society to increase participation. Endogenous sources refer to the existing contextual factors within the societies being investigated which foster an environment conducive to participation. The goal is primarily to investigate the latter statement, which is how the contextual factors impact participation, or in other words, how the existing structure impacts agents' level of participation. But it is also to understand the interaction between the endogenous and exogenous sources, in other words how the contextual factors would impact participatory efforts and outcomes.

The two structural elements under observation, trust in the state and education, are seen as informal and formal institutions, respectively, or structures, that impose both constraints and opportunities on Keralans and Biharans who have to work within them. The investigation will be trying to understand the types of constraints these institutions impose upon citizens within the two states, the differences between them and how agents have used, or failed to use, these structures to increase their participation in the political arena, thus resulting in institutional change. There is the element of rational choice that is also focused on in this approach, since several of the conclusions that are argued involve, to some degree, the element of choice by

individuals. Essentially, where Katznelson and Weinsgast (2005, 1) see an erosion of boundaries between historical institutionalism and rational choice, is where some of this research will be situated. This is particularly the case with respect to the chapter on ‘trust in the state’, since it will be argued that the vision that citizens develop of their state makes a significant impact upon their choice of engagement in participation. The authors explain that questions such as “how institutional situations shape and help constitute and induce preferences people use to make judgments and choices about the present and the future at particular moments in time” nicely demonstrate the blurred boundary between the approaches. The idea is that there is a shared interest between the two approaches in how institutions “stimulate and help generate preferences at particular times and places” (Katznelson & Weinsgast 2005, 2).

It is this broad framework that provides an entry point into the investigation of the differing levels of participation between Keralans and Biharans. It will provide a lens to analyze the workings of participatory development methods and the contexts in which they are situated. To narrow down further the theoretical framework that will be worked within, this research will now turn to the concepts of participation and participatory development. First will be some discussion on the more general concept of participation. Several authors will be presented whose work and research will be used to analyze the contextual factors that impact participation. The goal will be to use these authors’ ideas to shed light upon certain aspects of participatory development efforts.

PARTICIPATION

Participation has been widely used to describe and refer to a vast number of actions and ideas. It can be understood as a blanket term which holds with it a broad array of ideas.

Participation has brought its users criticism due to this very vagueness and breadth. It is impossible to derive a definition which would envelop the entire meaning which participation holds, as John Zerzan (1999) reminds us of the limitations of expression through language regardless of the ideas we are trying to convey. However, it is necessary here to acknowledge these limitations and attempt to craft an understanding of it for the purposes of this research.

Robert Chambers (2005, 104) understands participation to vary between types and degrees. He demonstrates the ambiguity of the term by describing it as having “no final meaning. It is not a rock. It is mobile and malleable, an amoeba, a sculptor’s clay, a plasticine shaped as it passes from hand to hand...each generation, each group, each person, should puzzle out what they think it should mean and how they can best give it expression.” He also notes that even though he is using the term, participation can largely refer to human relationships anywhere such as at home, the workplace and within social groups.

Considering that the concentration of this research is participatory development, it is helpful to look at how public organizations who implement efforts in this regard define participation. The first definition is that used by the UNRISD (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development) research programme on popular participation in the late 1970s, “...the organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations on the part of groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control” (Pearse and Stiefel, 1979 (in Chambers 2005, 103)). Secondly, DFID (the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development) defined participation as: “...enabling people to realize their rights to participate in, and access information relating to, the decision-making processes which affect their lives (DFID, 2000 (in Chambers 2005, 103)).

As we can see, for both organizations, the definitions presented are somewhat vague and silent on certain terminology used (not unexpectedly). One example of this is, for example, the use of the term ‘resources’ the first definition which cannot possibly mean all resources available in the country or state. Similarly, ‘decision-making processes’ in the second definition cannot mean all decision making processes directly, since this would simply take too long to have every individual in the state involved in every single decision. Also, both definitions refer to participation through the enabling by and organized efforts of *outsiders* of some sort. It suggests, implicitly so, that certain individuals external to the process of participation are to use their power to increase the role of non-participants. In other words, the definitions refer to exogenous efforts that would result in the increased participation of those that are less privileged. Therefore, the meaning of participation for these two sources, as well as for Robert Chambers, does not focus on the idea of participation occurring endogenously, without outside influence, and without the ‘privileged’ *allowing* non-participants to act. This aspect of participation will be examined as this research progresses.

This thesis seeks to critically engage with the realm of literature dedicated to the field of participatory development which is discussed below through the analysis of its origins, some main concepts as well as main criticisms against it. Following discussion on these elements will be an explanation of how this literature will be used in this research, and finally, an introduction to the two case studies will be presented.

PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT: ORIGINS AND GOALS

Participation is referred to here in the context of participatory development. This body of literature is an interesting point of departure considering the wide debate regarding its usage in

practice, conceptual understandings and overall relevance in the world of development. International and domestic development, in general, has taken on many different forms over past decades. The practice itself, like many other political practices, evolves on a trial and error basis – optimistically undertaking new approaches and perspectives, often met with disappointing results, followed by new reformulations of ideas and perspectives. Realizing the potential to actually worsen the situation that development policy-makers and practitioners work to ameliorate, a more cautious outlook to international development projects is often embraced.

The idea of including participation and input by those whose situations are being ‘developed’ is an approach that has been engaged with and transformed through other forms of development since at least the 1940s⁴, several of which emerged out of panic of previous failures (Hickey & Mohan 2004, 9-10). However, Nelson and Wright (1995, 3) explain that it was not until the 1990’s that there was an actual calling for participatory development methods. This followed discussion in the 1980’s regarding the failure of technocratic, top-down development practices of the past thirty years, largely attributed to alienation of the ‘beneficiaries’, marginalization of women and the agenda of the post-colonial state. There are different variations of meanings of what is meant by participatory development, which will be outlined below.

In their critical review of participatory approaches, Cooke and Kothari (2001, 5) understand the discipline’s “‘ostensible’ aim as to make ‘people’ central to development by encouraging beneficiary involvement in interventions that affect them and over which they previously had limited control or influence”. Similarly, Guijt and Shah (1998, 1) posit that “the broad aim of participatory development is to increase the involvement of socially and

⁴ For a comprehensive table outlining the various forms of participation used in development since the 1940s please see Hickey and Mohan (2004, 6-8).

economically marginalized peoples in decision-making over their own lives”. Cooke and Kothari (2001, 5) note the quick adoption by individuals and organizations of this method that looks to increase the presence and influence of locals’ perspectives, knowledge, priorities and skills into development efforts. This was thought to provide an optimistic alternative to the traditional donor-driven and outsider-led approaches. Although there is a diverse usage of terminology used in these definitions such as involvement, presence and influence, for the purposes of this study they will all be considered as synonyms to participation, since they are used as such by the authors as well.

Despite the variations in the definitions of participation and participatory development, there are broad general ideas that are consistent between authors. The most important aspect of participatory development is the *inclusion of locals* (knowledge, priorities and actions). Of course this previous interpretation is aching with ambiguities as it begs certain questions such as how much inclusion? Which locals? What counts as development? However, in the interest of space as well as the consideration of the ever-changing meanings of the terms used, this research will move on with the above-noted interpretation of the prioritized meaning of participatory development, that being the inclusion of locals.

To illustrate the value of researching participation in societies in general, Drèze and Sen (2002, 9) insist upon the importance of people’s abilities to participate in social decisions as a determinant towards a good functioning society. They maintain that participation is closely connected with demands of equality and that it can greatly influence government agendas and priorities. In another study, Drèze and Sen (2002, 27-8) assert the connection between participation through public discussion and participatory interaction in that people gain more interest in each other and learn more about each other’s lives. This in effect results in more

awareness of problems that should be politicized and addressed as well as an increased caring amongst citizens for each other. Eventually, this increased participation then can lead to increased efforts at alleviation from suffering, such as hunger. This goal has seemingly been at the outset of engaging in participatory practices, that being the opening of avenues for the inhabitants whose situations are in need of being ‘developed’. For example in the act of deciding how and what changes should and could be made, largely through the empowerment of those whose voices traditionally been silenced. However, criticisms have since poured through the literature accusing participatory development strategies of exacerbating these very aspects that were intended to be ameliorated. In other words, participatory development strategies set out to avoid top-down development tactics, increase the level of local knowledge in development planning and reduce the impact of unequal social status within societies. However, it is argued here that outcomes have shown little success with respect to these goals. Essentially, these practices have resulted instead in congruency with top-down approaches (Mosse 2001, 17), has paternalistically influenced what *counts* as local knowledge (Cooke and Kothari 2001, 15), and has often accentuated inequality within the societies (Chambers 2005, 93) where projects are being implemented.

ROLE OF POWER IN PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

An important concept within the field of participatory development which deserves brief discussion is power, including linked notions such as empowerment and power relations. Below will be some discussion of the role of power as understood by Robert Chambers. Following this will be some critical reflections upon his arguments by Uma Kothari, while drawing briefly upon other authors’ ideas.

Chambers (1995) discusses power in the context of its need to be shifted from one location to another. He argues that there has been a paradigm shift in the previous two decades (preceding his publication) in the field of development, one that shifted focus from ‘things’ to ‘people’ (Chambers 1995, 32). He insists that this attention on ‘people’ has brought with it many other changes – being that “top-down becomes more bottom-up...uniform becomes diverse, the simple complex, the static dynamic, and the controllable uncontrollable...the future becomes less predictable” (Chambers 1995, 33). He then notes that this shift in paradigm is an empowering process moving power to those who are local and poor, and thus implies a loss of power by the powerful.

Chambers (1995, 33-4) divides human society in this context into ‘uppers’ and ‘lowers’ in effort to describe the vertical power relationships between people within them. For Chambers, individuals are not assigned one static label from birth, but rather each person are multiple uppers or multiple lowers and these statuses can change depending on the situations. He explains that empowerment through participation weakens the ‘magnetic field’ between uppers and lowers, resulting in a change in role of the dominant uppers in which they ‘hand over the stick’, sit down, listen and learn from the lowers (Chambers 1995, 34). Although Chambers (1995, 35-7) believes that participatory approaches to development are an avenue by which the shift in power can and has occurred, he also acknowledges problems within this approach, such as the potential for ‘mutual deception’ by uppers and lowers as well as visitors and villagers. Chambers (1995, 41) notes different reasons that ‘lowers’ might rationalize to speak things other than the truth which can be taken by ‘uppers’ and/or outsiders as representing reality. Nonetheless, he

argues that methods such as PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal)⁵ can reduce the distorting effects of power relations.

Kothari (2001, 151-2) questions the idea of power being necessarily centralized in certain locations, for example, solely among the elite. She argues that understanding power as being dichotomously distributed between social groups precariously oversimplifies the element of power relations within a society and results in the further concretizing of social inequalities, and can even exacerbate them. By insisting upon the binary between ‘uppers’ and ‘lowers’ there is an implication of assigning what is considered morally ‘good’ from morally ‘bad’. Thus participatory development looks to adopt a framework in which the “micro is set against the macro, the margins against the centre, the local against the elite, and the powerless against the powerful” (Kothari 2001, 140). Instead though, Kothari argues that we should turn towards a more Foucauldian perspective on power, and understand it as something which circulates, or something which functions as part of a chain (Foucault 1980, 98 (in Kothari 2001, 141)). In so doing, Kothari (2001, 141) notes that it shifts our understanding of power from concentration at the centre and national institutions which allows us to explore more local and micro-points of power. This is necessary, she argues, since power is everywhere, of which all individuals are vehicles of, and we should analyze it through the creation of social norms or customs that are practiced throughout society. She argues that rather than seeing ‘local knowledge’ as a “fixed commodity that people intrinsically have or own...instead ...knowledge is culturally, socially and politically produced and is continuously reformulated as a powerful normative construct (Kothari 2001, 141). Knowledge is thus an accumulation of social norms, rituals and practices

⁵ Robert Chambers (2005, 116) explains PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) as having been described as a “family of approaches, behaviours and methods for enabling people to conduct their own appraisal, analysis, planning, action, monitoring and evaluation. It often includes activities in small groups and showing things visually.” For historical detail, see Chambers (1997, 102-129)

that, far from being constructed in isolation from power relations, is embedded in them (or against them) (Kothari 2001, 141).

Considering this more 'complex' (according to Kothari) understanding of power relations, the author notes that the discussion of power in the dichotomous sense (ie. between the haves and the have-nots) forces us merely to focus on material realities as representing power, This is in contrast to social and political discourse or as embodied practice (Kothari 2001, 141). She notes that participatory approaches "can unearth who gets what, when and where, but not necessarily the processes by which this happens or the ways in which the knowledge produced through participatory techniques is a normalized one that reflects and articulates wider power relations in society" (Kothari 2001, 141). She argues that even the "local knowledge" itself which is being sought out by PRA practitioners is embedded in power relations and thus greatly affects the processes and findings of participatory research (Kothari 2001, 152).

Some preliminary thoughts regarding Kothari's interpretation and critique of Chambers's understanding of the dichotomous distribution of power between the 'uppers' and 'lowers', can be understood, it is argued here, with the help of Amartya Sen's conception of 'capabilities' (Nussbaum & Sen 1993, 31). If we replace the idea of power represented through 'material realities' (which is Kothari's understanding of Chambers' conception) instead with 'capabilities of individuals', there is perhaps less tension between the different conceptions. Although Kothari appears to be referring more to entities which can be seen or touched, this research also considers intangible entities, as opposed to solely material realities, such as education and health⁶ to be also included in this dichotomous distribution of 'power'. Capabilities can be considered as contributing to localizations of power, since they enable individuals to act in ways that they could not act without them. Like Chambers insists, individuals' rankings change depending on

⁶ Examples of Amartya Sen's capabilities

who they are with and what situation they are in (consider, for example, how level of literacy between those in a given group would affect the distribution of power in a conversation about literature). Thus, perhaps the analysis of capabilities, (or this ‘dichotomous understanding of power distribution’), cannot necessarily help us to understand the processes by which these capabilities are in fact gained (or perhaps sometimes they can), they do play an important part in power distribution within a society after they are in fact possessed by the individual. Perhaps, therefore, both of these conceptions of power could play an important role during the research analysis, since they do not necessarily need to be thought of as mutually exclusive from each other.

PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT CRITICISMS

Participatory development has undergone much scrutiny and critical analysis by practitioners and academics since its inception. Considering the goals that its practitioners set out to achieve through this approach as well as the criticisms against other forms of development that had already been acknowledged, critics were meticulous and comprehensive in their evaluations of participatory development project outcomes and approaches.

Henkel and Stirrat (2001, 168) argue that even though a ‘participatory’ approach has been adopted widely within the world of development, including by the majority of practitioners, that there remains a lacking of ideology within this new orthodoxy. They argue that it is but a “loosely connected set of ideas and approaches developed in response to what its proponents see as an older misguided orthodoxy of development” (Henkel & Stirrat 2001, 168). Cooke and Kothari (2001, 5) divide the criticisms between those focusing on the “re-examination of the methodological tools used, for example in PRA and those that pay more attention to the

theoretical, political and conceptual limitations of participation”. They also acknowledge, though, the wide criticisms that come from within the ‘orthodoxy’. One example is described by Chambers (1997, 32 (in Cooke and Kothari 2001, 5)) as an ongoing “self-critical epistemological awareness” which the authors explain is considered important in the discipline to act as a check on ethical practice and to constantly allow evolution when it is needed to ensure the best practices (Cooke and Kothari 2005, 5).

The authors explain that these types of critiques focus mostly on definitions and debates regarding the role of participation, for example whether it is a means or an end, as well as questioning what tools are used and how to achieve the goals (Cooke and Kothari 2005, 6). The authors also point out criticism that the field has received regarding usage of terms, such as discussion relating to power, as noted in the previous section. Other disputed terms are also criticized, for example Guijt and Shah (1998) have warned against the usage of the term ‘community’ in PRA discourse as being used too simplistically, since it implied the homogeneity within communities and not sufficiently considering the existing power relations within them. A similar criticism is also referenced by Williams (2004, 92-3), that by treating communities as unproblematic as they are, that a veil is pulled over repressive structures such as those relating to class, gender, caste and ethnicity. Finally, Cooke and Kothari’s (2001, 5-7) work entitled “Participation: the New Tyranny?” set out to question and critically analyze the politics of the discourse of participatory development, since they believe it is necessary to question whether participation itself is necessarily always a ‘good’ investment.

This research intends to engage with the discussion of these criticisms that have been addressed in the field of participatory development as the research unfolds such as by addressing concerns with terminology (ie. power and participation) and questioning the participatory

approach in general. It does not, however, look to analyze the discourse of participatory development, but rather to analyze the feasibility of its implementation considering the heterogeneity of contexts in which it immerses itself.

SITUATING THIS RESEARCH IN PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

Much of the debates about participatory development practices tend to be on what is being done *unto* a society/community/group of people *by* outsiders. It is taken for granted that participation of the locals, (whatever is meant by participation in that given context) can and should happen in every single society⁷. The concentration is on figuring out a way to make participation happen, rather than what conditions allow it to happen freely in the first place. In essence, I am arguing for an increased focus on existing endogenous factors that encourage or facilitate participation. To illustrate the justification for this point of departure further, some examples are provided below. They are intended to demonstrate the current focus of participatory development practitioners and scholars, that being on factors relating to the outside efforts being done *unto* a community.

The first example is one focal point concentrated on by Robert Chambers (2005, 59), being on the practitioners themselves who engage in participatory practices upon communities. He sees the improvement of management procedures to be essential to ameliorating the discipline. He also conveys the concern of the silence of three terms, which he calls, the ‘cinderellas’ of words in development. These are commitment (ie. to an ideal, program or policy), continuity (of time that is spent by staff in their specific posts), and irreversibility (ie. of actions that are carried out in the name of development) (Chambers 2005, 25-6). These terms, for

⁷ Although there is some recent discussion on this point which is discussed throughout this thesis (Cook & Kothari 2001; Hickey & Mohan 2004).

Chambers, implicitly originate with the practitioner and their approach to participatory methods. Therefore, a main concern for participatory development practitioners, as Chambers demonstrates, is what we can learn and change about the *methods* and *practitioners* engaging in this discipline, rather than what we can learn about the *societies* in which these practices are being undertaken. In other words, again, I am arguing for more focus to be placed upon the societal differences in which these methods are being implemented and where the practitioners are working.

Another example as mentioned above is Cooke and Kothari's (2001) focus on the idea that participation has become universal in its usage within development discourse to the point that they polemically describe it as a 'tyranny'. They are looking to investigate the politics of the discourse itself and although they deny supporting an anti-participation movement in the discourse of development, they do suggest the importance of acknowledging the possibility that participatory development should not in fact be saved (Cooke & Kothari 2001, 13 & 15). The frustration that seeps through the book regarding the failures of participatory development maintains a focus on just that, what is being done in the discipline and how it is talked about, rather than a questioning of what role the actual societal factors within each context had potentially played. They also pay much less attention on the context in which the practitioners are working. In other words, I argue that it is fruitful to dig deeper into learning to work with what exists already, and that the heterogeneity of the makeup of different societies can potentially play an enormous role in how participatory practices are planned and implemented⁸.

⁸ Although it should be noted that two of the three 'cinderella' terms outlined by Chambers, including continuity and commitment are insisted by him as important, partly because this would allow the practitioners to develop a greater understanding of the local conditions in which they are working. However, his focus begins with and remains on the *practitioners* rather than the *societies*.

Mohan and Hickey (2004, 65) seek to broaden the discussion on participatory development to include concepts that would capture wider aspects of popular agency, such as citizenship. They explain that “relocating ‘participation’ within citizenship analysis situates it in a broader range of sociopolitical practices...through which people extend their status and rights as members of particular political communities, thereby increasing their control over socioeconomic resources” (Mohan & Hickey 2004, 66). The authors note that there is a necessary shift in participatory efforts when citizenship is considered; enhancing the ‘competency’ of participants becomes important. However, they argue that it is necessary to consider notions of citizenship beyond legal definitions, since this judicial understanding does not always take into account sociological realities on the ground. They note that it is important to consider certain barriers such as inequality of decision-making capacity (Stewart 1995, 74 in Mohan and Hickey 2004, 66).

Similar to the concern of sociological realities, Gaventa (2004, 25) argues that only under *certain conditions* can we expect democracy-building and pro-poor developmental outcomes by bringing more empowered forms of participation into the local governance sphere. He concludes that “simply creating new institutional arrangements for participatory governance will not necessarily be more inclusive or more pro-poor. Rather much will depend on the nature of the power relations which surround and imbue these new, potentially more democratic, spaces” (2004, 25). Therefore, the opening of the ‘black box’ of the intricacies within the societies/communities in which participatory development efforts are being undertaken, as well as those where participation appears to occur from within, has most certainly begun. This research is an attempt to isolate certain societal factors between two communities and try to

further the understanding of what impact these factors have, or would have, on the participation by inhabitants.

CALLING FOR A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL CONDITIONS

Andrea Cornwall calls for a nuanced approach to participatory development. As she argues: (2002, 28): “more micro-level research is required if we are to understand which forms of participation work in which kinds of spaces to provide people with opportunities to realize inclusive, active citizenship”. She insists power relations are never absent from any spaces of participation and therefore could result merely in a reproduction of dominant knowledge (Cornwall 2002, 8-9). She then argues that “more understanding is also needed of the preconditions for engagement (or participation) in particular places, moving away from the one-size-fits-all best practices paradigm towards strategies that take account of cultural, political and historical contexts” (Cornwall 2002, 28-9). Similarly, Gaventa (2004, 31) considers the potential that creating new spaces for participatory governance holds for positive transformative change with respect to ‘democracy’-building outcomes. However he notes that the results are largely dependent upon certain conditions. He argues that more focus should be placed on the preconditions that are necessary to move towards more pro-poor governance, such as “awareness building on rights and citizenship; building civil associations and social movements engaged in governance issues; and strengthening institutions of governance, both at the local and central levels” (Gaventa 2004, 33).

Robert Chambers also acknowledges the need for more understanding of local conditions by practitioners in order to increase the likelihood of reaching goals set out in participatory development projects. Chambers (2005, 17) demonstrates this when he questions how a foreigner

could “be engaged in sensible policy dialogue without knowing and understanding a country?” Although the focus begins and remains with the practitioner, rather than the society, Chambers nonetheless does call for more understanding of local conditions.

Finally, let us turn to Amartya Sen’s capabilities approach to understanding poverty, which centres on how varying structures in different societies impact the abilities of agents to act freely within them. For Sen, a person’s well-being and standing in society should be evaluated to one that is based on their “capability to achieve valuable functionings⁹” (Nussbaum & Sen 1993, 31). Different spaces contain and impose varying structures on the agents within which they are situated. These are essentially the contexts which are being investigated, that is, the facilitators and restrictors that impact the agent’s capabilities to act, or more specifically, to engage in participatory practices. Nussbaum and Sen’s understanding that individuals hold capability sets, and that they differ between each other, tells us that abilities of locals to participate in development efforts would differ between and within societies.

This research is a response to the calling by these authors for a greater understanding of the societal complexities in which participatory efforts are implemented. To do so, this research looks to engage in a comparative analysis between two different settings, the states of Kerala and Bihar. Before justifying this case selection, it is necessary to delve into explanation of why India is an important region to study with respect to participation.

⁹ Functionings are defined as “the achieved states of being and activities of an individual, e.g. being healthy, being well-sheltered...or being well-nourished” (Kuklys 2005, 5).

CASE STUDY

India

India is a fascinating country considering the diversity of its population, the richness of its history and culture, and its rapidly transforming way of life (ie. through urbanization). It is also one of the most robustly charged developing economies in the international scene today. However, despite having the fastest growing gross national product (GNP) in the world, as well as having adopted a liberal democracy after Independence, it retains a high level of poverty and inequality within its society (O'Malley 1974, Desai 1984, Pick & Dayaram 2006, Chalam 2007). The Government of India as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) implement various development policies and efforts to reduce poverty levels (Dhesi 1998, Radhakrishna & Ray 2005), such as those pertaining to Labor Migration (Staples 2007), Immunization (Varma & Kusuma 2008), Child Development (Gupta 2001), and Right to Food (Government of India). Legislation has also been passed in effort to give the poor a voice and resolve by creating reservations in seats of power for under-represented social groups such as women, dalits (formerly untouchables), and adivasi (tribal) members. However, these programs and legislation have been met with varied success.

Given the demographic and political size of India (1.1 billion people), a more nuanced and comparative approach is needed to delve into the kaleidoscopic elements of the country. In effect, if we narrow down our focus and look at the twenty-eight states that constitutes the Indian Federation (plus seven Union Territories), we notice that certain states in India have been more successful than others at achieving the intended results of certain programs and processes. This research conducts a comparative analysis between Kerala and Bihar investigating the different contextual factors impacting the population's level of participation in these state programs and

processes. Considering space constraints, this study will not investigate the relationship between poverty alleviation and participation, but rather focus solely on the societal features impacting participation.

Kerala & Bihar

This study plans to follow authors such as Varshney (2002), Desai (2003), Wilkinson (2004), and Sinha (2003), who have analyzed the “Puzzle of Subnational Variation within India” (Sinha 2003). They all have conducted comparative analyses between Indian states, which allowed them to contrast and explain variations of socio-political dynamics among Indian states. In line with this methodological approach, this thesis contrasts Kerala and Bihar. Kerala has undergone a fascinating transformation with respect to alleviation of poverty when compared with most other states in India, which is why it is sometimes referred to as a potential ‘model’ for the rest of its country. What is often attributed to this success, and what is of interest to this research, is its rich history in political action and post-independence political decisions made by the state government (Drèze & Sen 2002, 100-101). Though Kerala did fail in some sectors (i.e. high suicide rate, stagnant domestic economy, etc. (Drèze & Sen 2002, 97-99)), much can be learned through the success of Kerala considering the rapid increase in literacy rates, life expectancy at birth and emancipation of lower castes since independence. Although no recipe can fit all Indian states, there are elements to Keralan society that can be further investigated as having some possibility of being eventually replicated to some extent in other societies. In contrast to Kerala, Bihar is a state where efforts of participatory development approaches were mostly undertaken by outsiders; participation efforts are mostly exogenous to the society (Williams et al. 2003; Veron et al. 2003; Kumar & Corbridge 2002).

There are two structural elements to the societies in Kerala and Bihar that tend to shine through the literature which will be argued affect the level of participation of Keralans. These include the role of trust in the state and the role of education.

Therefore, the broader research question which is being investigated is ‘what specific factors explain the greater level of participation in Kerala as compared to Bihar?’ The more specific research question this paper seeks to investigate is ‘how do ‘trust in the state’ and ‘education’, as contextual factors, impact participation in Kerala and Bihar The working hypotheses are as follows:

- (1) Participation in development has been less prevalent in Bihar due to a lack of formal education, literacy and spread of information amongst the population, whereas in Kerala, problems relating to education have been largely overcome (Drèze & Sen 2002; Williams et al. 2003; Fischer 2006; Radhakrishnan 2005; Brush & Burton 2009¹⁰).
- (2) Whereas Keralans hold a certain level of trust in state powers, this element is lacking in Biharan society, thus resulting in less participation in state programs and processes (Corbridge 2002; Shah 2006; Williams et al. 2003; Brush & Burton 2009¹¹).

The subsequent sections will explore these questions and test the hypotheses presented. However, first will be an overview of the theoretical bases for these contextual factors.

¹⁰ Based on observations during research in January-February 2009 under the auspices of the Human Rights Law Network.

¹¹ Based on observations during research in January-February 2009 under the auspices of the Human Rights Law Network.

THEORETICAL BASES FOR CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Trust in the State as a Contextual Factor

The first contextual factor that will be analyzed in this study with respect to its relationship with participation is ‘trust in the state’. Various authors will be drawn upon below that generate discussion relating to the role of ‘trust’ and how it can be understood. There are two main themes that will be focused on here which will help narrow down what is meant by ‘trust in the state’: first, reliability versus unreliability, and the second, the state as a protector versus the state as a threat.

To begin the theoretical discussion on trust in the state, it is useful to turn to Scott’s (1998) analysis of “Seeing like a State”. Scott argues that states develop mechanisms to make their population legible. He defines a legible society as one that orders a space through grid lines, roads and right angles, creating a “God’s eye view, or the (ideal) view of an absolute ruler” (1998, 57). The act of crafting a state in modernity, Scott explains (1998, 65), began with the administrative simplification¹² of nature (he uses the example of the forest), and space (land tenure). He argues that the last grand step is the invention and ascription of surnames – thus administrative simplification of the people within the boundaries of the state. Although in Western developed countries, individuals tend to take for granted the necessity of surnames, given names and social insurance numbers, Scott reminds us of the enormous control that is acquired by a state over its population through making its people legible (such as through photographs, fingerprints and DNA (1998, 71)). Without some sort of legibilization of space and people, the state would not be capable of interacting with its territory and the people within it. Scott posits (1998, 77) that making its space and people legible permits either discriminating

¹² For clarification of what is meant by this term, please see Scott (1998, 81).

interventions, such as the identification and arrest of Jews in 1941 Amsterdam, or the ability of a state to improve the quality of and even save lives.

Setting aside for a moment the intentions and motivations of a state to keep track of its population, whether it be to increase access to and exploit resources, provide services to the people, or to collect taxes, what concerns the present research is the idea that a population and their space can be known and crafted to some extent. If we understand this ‘God’s eye view’, to be essentially a *vision* created by a state of its population, it is equally important to consider that through these relations, the population also develops an understanding, or a *vision*, of its state in return (Corbridge et al. 2005). In other words, this research looks to, in a way, reverse Scott’s focus, and investigate how a population understands, or sees its state. This vision that is held by the population of its state is argued to be an important contextual factor that impacts the level of participation in a society.

Corbridge et al. (2005, 8) seek to understand how the state is ‘seen’ in India by the population through their interactions. They agree with certain authors in their insistence that “the ways in which technologies of rule are made flesh will depend on the manner in which they are interpreted and put into play by lower-level government workers, elected representatives and others” (Corbridge et al. 2005, 7; See also Veron et al. 2003, 4). Gupta (2001), I believe, would agree with this approach in that during a study in Uttar Pradesh, the author found that the implementation of the Integrated Child Development Program largely depended upon the interpretation and reformulation of it by all those it impacted (ie. workers and beneficiaries). Corbridge et al (2005, 8) also insist that the sightings of the state are never straightforward or unitary in both civil and political society, especially by the (rural) poor. The authors also agree that an individual’s vision of the state is always influenced by others’ visions, past memories, as

well as how we see others being treated by it (Corbridge et al. 2005, 8). Similarly, Hansen (2001) argues in his study regarding the 1992-1993 bloody riots in Mumbai between Hindus and Muslims that the vision of the state by the inhabitants was continuously transforming. How they saw the state, or parts of the state, shaped their decision to avoid it or to seek protection from it. This was occurring through the interactions with and sightings of the state during and after the times of those riots. This resulted in a transformation of actions undertaken by inhabitants due to their interactions with the state.

One major argument here is that the population's vision of the state, how it represents the state, derives significantly from government actions *at the local level*. This argument is similar to Corbridge et al.'s (2005, 8) call for an analysis of actual government practices: "how government business is transacted, how it reinforces or undermines local ideas of hierarchy, (and) how it deals with the question of participation..." (Corbridge et al. 2005, 11-12). Although the authors do not pay much attention to the idea that the state could be something that is feared, their study does investigate the reliability of the state which will be useful in the analysis of trying to understand this aspect of the population's vision. To help provide guidance in interpreting how 'trustworthy' a population sees its state, as well as why it is important, Robert Putnam's discussion on social capital will be a useful starting point.

Putnam (1993) undergoes a comparative analysis between two regions in Italy investigating, broadly, what conditions are necessary for creating strong, responsive, effective representative institutions. He sees the development of social capital as a key ingredient to the strong functioning of formal democratic institutions. Putnam (1993, 167) defines social capital as "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions...it is productive, making possible the

achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence...”. The author places a lot of emphasis on the importance of trust between individuals in a society¹³, which he notes is driven by cooperation and reciprocally powered again through trust (Putnam 1993, 171). He then clarifies, however that “the trust that is required to sustain cooperation is not blind. Trust entails a prediction about the behaviour of an independent actor.” In other words, there needs to be some reliability between the actors with respect to being able to predict each other’s actions. Although the idea of ‘trust’ is focused mostly by Putnam as being necessary to exist between members of the community, the present research will argue that it is also necessary for it to exist between the people and the state. The idea of reliability as a characteristic of trust will play an important role when investigating this factor during the empirical section of this study. Given Putnam’s conclusion on the importance of trust between individuals in a society in order to develop strong social capital to produce well-functioning formal democratic processes, this research will argue that it is also an important factor when analyzing participation of a population in state processes.

Similar to my focus in some ways is Tsai’s (2007) conclusion with respect to the importance of state-society synergy in her analysis of state-society relations in China’s local districts. Tsai (355 & 370-71) argues that what explains the variation in local governments’ provision of public goods provision is not a function of formal democratic and bureaucratic institutions of accountability. She argues that “local officials may still have a strong incentive to provide public goods when citizens award them moral standing for doing so” (Tsai 2007, 356). In other words, even though government officials are not working within official structures in which they are accountable, there are still informal institutions of accountability that impose

¹³ He also discusses the significance of cooperation between different sectors of society, including a brief mentioning between the government and private sector (1993, 170),

obligations upon them. Tsai argues that this can largely be achieved through the existence of solidary groups who are both encompassing (open to everyone under the local government's jurisdiction) and embedding (incorporate local officials into the group as members). Tsai's argument is important for this research in the sense that it highlights the significance of trust (implicit in her idea of reliability), as well as the importance of trust between the society and the state, as opposed to Putnam's focus as largely localized between societal members. In other words, reliability of state officials reinforces citizens' trust in the state. Her approach is also helpful in providing a base for this research in that she focuses on informal institutions, which will be drawn upon in my work as well, as opposed to Putnam's focus on the functioning of formal ones.

Education as a Contextual Factor

The second contextual factor that impacts participation in state processes is formal education. Given the breadth of this element it is necessary to narrow down the focus of how this factor could shed light on the field of participatory development. The macro approach that this analysis uses sees education as a *capability*, which impacts individuals' ability to participate.

This conceptualization of 'education as a *capability*' derives from the capabilities approach, as theorized by authors such as Sen and Nussbaum. According to Martha Nussbaum (2000, 124), the capabilities approach is one that "provide[s] the philosophical underpinning for an account of basic constitutional principles that should be respected and implemented by the governments of all nations, as a bare minimum of what respect for human dignity requires." And she argues that "the best approach to this idea of basic social minimum is provided by an approach that focuses on human capabilities, that is, what people are actually able to do and to be

– in a way informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being”. More broadly, Nussbaum and Sen (1993, 31) believe a person’s well-being and standing in society should be evaluated to one that is based on their “capability to achieve valuable functionings”. Functionings are defined as “the achieved states of being and activities of an individual, e.g. being healthy, being well-sheltered...or being well-nourished” (Kuklys 2005, 5). Drèze and Sen (2002, 35-6) explain that:

“ the life of a person can be seen as a sequence of things the person does, or states of being he or she achieves, and these constitute a collection of ‘functionings’ – doings and beings the person achieves. ‘Capability’ refers to the alternative combinations of functionings from which a person can choose. Thus, the notion of capability is essentially one of freedom – the range of options a person has in deciding what kind of life to lead. Poverty of a life, in this view, lies not merely in the impoverished state in which the person actually lives, but also in the lack of real opportunity – given by social constraints as well as personal circumstances – to choose other types of living”.

This research understands education as a ‘capability’ that facilitates a person’s achievement of the ‘functioning’ of participation in state processes. Corbridge et al (2005, 3) note that “it is one thing to provide institutions to promote accountability and decision-making at the panchayat, Block and District levels, and quite another to produce men and women who are able to participate effectively in these new or revamped structures”. Although education is not the only capability that would enable this achievement, it is considered here to be an important factor nonetheless.

Education is also broadly seen by several authors as a mechanism to establish feelings of citizenship and political belonging amongst a population. Nussbaum (2000, 112-13) discusses the relationship between education and citizenship, which is a fundamental element in establishing an informed electorate. For example, education raises a population’s level of awareness of the benefits that can be gained through participation (Saito & Kato 2008, 110; Ramachandran’s 1997, 255). Drèze and Sen (2002, 143) also strongly argue for the importance of education and literacy as a means of empowering inhabitants. They describe literacy as a

source of protection. They explain, “An illiterate person is significantly less equipped to defend herself in court, to obtain a bank loan, to enforce her inheritance rights,...to compete for secure employment,...to take part in political activity – in short, to participate successfully in the modern economy and society” (Drèze & Sen 2002, 143).

For practical and empirical reasons, this ‘education as capability’ concept will be narrowed down further in two ways: first, I look at how education of the population provides citizens with the capability to engage in and be involved in *decentralization processes*. Second, I take education as a factor that generates *equalizing effects*. Certain social inequalities within Indian society act as inhibitors in allowing individuals to participate in state programs and processes. But formal education is a way of closing the gap of these inequalities. In the empirical chapters that follow, I will investigate how education plays a role in the workings of decentralization processes in Kerala and Bihar. Secondly, I will analyze how education acts as a capability by encouraging marginalized groups to participate, thereby generating equalizing effects amongst the population (Saito and Kato 2008, 108; Ramachandran 1997, 271).

The theoretical foundations of this thesis have been exposed. However I will now briefly re-iterate the main authors and works that will be guiding this research. First, this thesis is a response to Andrea Cornwall’s (2002, 28-29) calling for a nuanced approach to participatory development. Cornwall advocates for an increased focus on micro-level research and one that takes into account different contexts. Although other authors were mentioned to have addressed similar concerns, such as Gaventa (2004, 31), Chambers (2005, 17) and Nussbaum and Sen (1993, 31), Cornwall has been the most explicit with respect to support for investigating the questions this thesis proposes. It is in this gap that I wish to leave my contribution. In other

words, I am trying to provide an in-depth analysis of two different contexts to demonstrate the ramifications towards participation.

Second, I use several authors in the field of participatory development to provide a base of definitions and concepts to work with while investigating the contextual factors during my research. Namely, Hickey and Mohan (2004) and Cooke and Kothari (2001) provided this research with an overview of the evolution of participatory practices and where it currently sits in academia. This discussion aided my decisions in avenues of research to take while investigating the main research question of this thesis. It also helped determine what would be left in and out of the thesis in that definitions were provided of what constitutes participatory development. And finally, several authors are drawn upon to discuss the criticisms within and surrounding participatory development. This discussion was to demonstrate that I plan on being sensitive to the criticisms and look to address some of them throughout the research. The main one under consideration is that more attention needs to be paid to the societal and communal intricacies and how this can affect participation. Namely, Williams (2004, 92-3) argues that by treating communities as unproblematic as they are, a veil is pulled over repressive structures such as those relating to class, gender, caste and ethnicity. I intend in this thesis to be sensitive to these very factors, those being individual AND? societal complexities in the case studies under observation.

The analysis will now turn to the empirical investigation of the two case studies. The next chapter will analyze how and why trust in the state impacts on participation in Kerala and Bihar. It will then be followed by a chapter that studies the impact of education on participation.

CHAPTER THREE: TRUST IN THE STATE

The first contextual factor that will be analyzed with respect to its impact upon participation in Kerala and Bihar is trust in the state by its population. The notion of a population trusting its state stems from the broad idea, firstly, that a population can be envisioned by its state, for example through making it legible, secondly, that a state is envisioned by its population, largely through state-society interactions. The approach that is taken by a state in order to make its population legible is intricately connected to the vision that is developed by the population of the state. These interactions also have long term ramifications, lasting through generations. Hence, it is important to not only consider the recent interactions, but also the gradual transformations of interactions throughout history and how this affects the current relationship between a state and its society. Considering the breadth of the concept of ‘trust in the state’, it is necessary to narrow down the focus and create a more precise working definition for this research to begin with. Essentially, the main ideas that will be considered, and further explained later on, are two overlapping spectrums that will define this factor. The first is whether the state is considered reliable versus unreliable by its population. Second is whether the state is considered to be a source of protection, or conversely, something to be feared.

The first section to follow will discuss what is meant by a state creating a vision of its population, and vice-versa. The following section will review briefly theory on trust which was discussed in the theoretical chapter. Following this will be an empirical analysis comparing Kerala and Bihar, seeking to understand what can be learned about participation by isolating the contextual factor of trust in the state. As mentioned earlier, the two points of entry that will help channel the focus of trust will be drawn upon separately, that is the element the state’s reliability, followed by the element of the state as a protector.

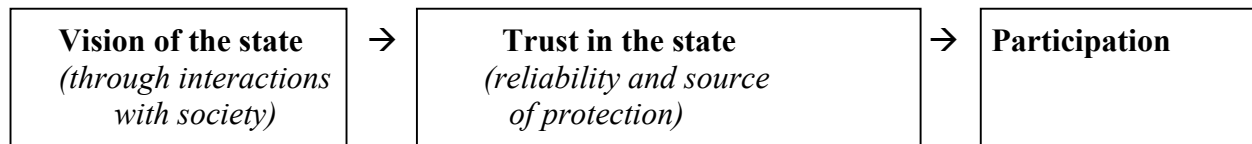
TRUST AS A CONTEXTUAL FACTOR

State and Society: Envisioning Each Other

As explained in the theoretical section, the concept of trust in this thesis is based upon the foundations of Scott's notion of a state creating a vision of its population. However, the focus is reversed by examining the vision that is developed by a population of its state. It will be argued below that interactions between a state and its population result in certain sentiments by a society as a whole, which creates this vision. One clarification will be made regarding the two broad actors envisioning each other, followed by an explanation of the sentiments comprising trust for this thesis.

Scott's understanding of the state and the population as dichotomous entities, to some extent, as discussed in the theoretical chapter, provides a base for this research to begin with, especially since the participatory development literature necessitates this distinction. This is not to say that at times distinguishing individuals between these categories (state versus population) could not enter gray area, especially since individuals in a society act as state officials, individuals' status can change depending on their working hours, and that representatives of the state can also be beneficiaries of state programs at the same time. There are also official and unofficial representations of the state. Unofficial representatives of the state can be, for example, those acting in the implementation of development programs such as ration shop owners or immunization workers. It is assumed here that all individuals within Bihar and Kerala can be categorized as embodying one or both of the descriptions (state versus population). The ambiguity here is less important than are the overall ideas that are trying to be conveyed through this research, and in the interest of simplification, it is helpful to divide individuals within the two states as such and work from this starting point.

This thesis will focus on two points of entry characterizing trust when a population develops a vision of its state. Through both ground research as well as reviewing program evaluations and other literature on state-society relations in Bihar and Kerala, the two main characterizations that have been concluded to define trustworthiness are: the spectrums of seeing the state as (1) reliable versus unreliable; and (2) a source of safety versus a source of danger. To help illustrate the relationship between the terms discussed in this section, please see the diagram below.



RELIABILITY OF THE STATE IN KERALA

State-Society Synergy

The nature of the relationship between the state and society in Kerala is one that is more integrated and unified than in Bihar. In the language put forth by Tsai (2007), we can say that the state is both encompassing and embedding in Keralan society. In other words, the state of Kerala is argued here to be one of inclusiveness, as opposed to something to be evaded and worked around such as is often the case in Bihar. The level of state-society synergy in Kerala results in a greater level of transparency and accountability, and thus as something that can be relied upon. As Putnam insists (1993, 174), in order for trust to be developed, there needs to be predictability of behaviour between the actors involved. In Kerala, the population sees the state as a reliable institution that has successfully played its role as a provider of social and economic services.

What can explain this situation? First, the Communist party influence in politics is an important contribution to state-society synergy in Kerala. Williams (2009, 115) analyses the

efforts to deepen socialist practices by the CPI(M) by encouraging the influence of civil society over the state, its institutions and the economy. In essence, it has worked to shift power from the state to the people. However, this approach is not one that can be easily replicated. This is demonstrated through a study by Manali Desai (2001) where the author analyses the differences in party formation in the Communist-influenced states of West Bengal and Kerala. He found that the Communist-influenced parties had stronger ties with society in Kerala on a wider-spread basis than in West Bengal. He also noted that they were more successful at implementing far-reaching social policies. The CPI(M) in Kerala also inherited an ongoing movement for caste or social reform that they could capitalize on and carry further its radicalization (Desai 2001, 52). This played a large role in the unity that could be formed both within society as well as between society and the CPI(M), since the distrust and suspicion between castes was much less of an issue. Desai's study demonstrates the synergy, thus transparency and reliability, that exists between individuals in society, as well as that between society and political parties, at least with the CPI(M).

The cooperation and collaboration between the state and society in Kerala, especially the CPI(M), is demonstrated again through the People's Campaign. This program was implemented by the ruling coalition government in 1996, the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF). This was a direct effort by the state to decentralize certain policy planning, allocate funds and responsibilities to panchayats (local) governments, and encourage participation of Keralans (Fischer 2006, 26-8). The author notes that the idea was to ensure the contribution of inhabitants' input into the Ninth Five Year Plan which would be sent to New Delhi. The goal of the project was essentially to facilitate a democratic deepening in Kerala (Heller et al 2007, 628). The People's Campaign began with the LDF's proclamation to have 35-40% of the Five Year Plan

formulated from below and to have the resources allocated where it was necessary to accomplish this (Fischer 2006, 28). The author explains that citizens were brought together with government officials, the latter of whom were instructed to decentralize their planning responsibilities. Both groups of people were offered extensive training programs on how to improve effective cooperation¹⁴.

The LDF sought to involve the population by educating them on the importance and benefits of participation in these processes using techniques that they thought the population could relate to. For example, implementing similar efforts that were used during the successful Total Literacy Campaign, they “held dances and local festivals sensitive to the local cultural milieu to...encourage citizens to take part” (Fischer 2006, 28). The author then notes that there was an extensive usage of a range of other audiovisual cultural approaches based on folk arts. The choice by the LDF to utilize these techniques specific to the culture and society illustrates the extent to which the state knows, sees and lives Kerala society. It shows that at least certain representatives of the state see it an important task to work to understand each other so as to entice genuine engagement. The findings by Heller et al. (2007, 642-4) show that the campaign was successful in creating new participatory structures that were not there before, that civil society’s input in the final output of budgetary allocations was used, and that a more socially inclusive environment was created, especially regarding the role of SCs and women¹⁵.

Therefore, state-society synergy in Kerala has proven to be one that is strong in the sense that it is highly inclusive and interactions are transparent. The distinction between the state and

¹⁴ The People’s Campaign did suffer some criticism, as noted by Fischer (2006, 29), most notably, those that questioned the political manipulation of the people as well as who (in demographic terms) in fact was participating most. However, the author also points out the well-noted successes of the Campaign as well, such as the opportunity for people to contribute to policy planning and the level of participation of women (Fischer 2006, 30).

¹⁵ For a comprehensive understanding of the results of the 1996 People’s Campaign for Decentralized Planning, please see the study by Heller et al (2007).

society is less visible since there is a lot of effort by the state to include inhabitants in decision-making processes. Therefore, state-society synergy is evidenced to be strong in Kerala firstly through the efforts by the CPI(M) in shifting power from the state to the people, secondly through the success of the People's Campaign to increase decentralization, and thirdly through the specific techniques taken by the state to increase participation in Keralan society. I argue that this synergy positively contributes to the level of reliability that Keralans envision in their state. This is because along with the close relationship brings increased mutual understanding, transparency and accountability.

Functioning of Anti-Poverty Programs in Kerala

Anti-Poverty programs (ie. relating to education, food distribution, healthcare, etc.) in Kerala have nurtured the population's positive vision of the state due to the reliability of their functioning. Kerala has been widely labeled by academics as a success story with respect to alleviating poverty and closing the gap on economic inequality within its society. This can be demonstrated through some general statistics on the overall descent of poverty levels since the 1970s. For example, in 1973, 59.8% of Keralans were considered below poverty line (BPL), which was almost at par with Bihar who was at 61.2 % and was even higher than the all-India average of 54.8 % (Sandbrook et al. 2007, 69). However, by 1999-2000, the proportion of Kerala's population sitting at the BPL level dropped to 12.7%, which was the lowest of any major Indian state and less than half of the all-India average of 26.3%. Given the success in the state of Kerala with respect to these factors, it is often considered to be a model for other Indian states to follow (Drèze & Sen 2002, 101). An important contributing factor towards the general reliable functioning of poverty alleviation programs in Kerala is that they carried out in a manner

that is “comparatively corruption-free” (Sandbrook et al. 2007. 73). This will be shown later on to be in stark contrast to the situation in Bihar. The authors also note that the strength of the functioning of the programs has been a “response to broad-based support across all major political parties for the extension of social rights”. This demonstrates the state’s priorities and commitment in poverty alleviation in Kerala society. Two specific programs will be mentioned below to demonstrate the reliability of the functioning of programs in Kerala.

The performance of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) in Kerala (which has been highly successful in its implementation) is the first program that will be briefly examined. The TPDS was developed under the Right to Food initiative in India which can be understood as according to the Indian Constitution, namely the Directive Principles of State Policy (Drèze 2004, 1723). Although there are other understandings that can be derived from the Right to Food initiative¹⁶, this one allows the analysis from the point of departure that the right to enough food is an Indian constitutional right. According to the Department of Food and Public Distribution¹⁷, the TPDS began first as simply the Public Distribution System (PDS) in the 1960s and was looking to control the scarcity of food through making certain foods available at subsidized prices. This later led to the adoption of the TPDS in 1997, which was intended to specifically target the poor. Sandbrook et al (2007, 70) draw upon Kannan (2003, 192-3) to demonstrate the success of the subsidized food shops through their wiping out malnutrition¹⁸ by covering 97% of households and accounting for two-thirds of the total rice purchased by the

¹⁶ For example, it can be thought of through the lens of international declarations and conventions on this matter, for example the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Secondly, the right to food can be thought of as a social and moral right, he argues, as independently of all these documents.(Drèze 2004, 1723).

¹⁷ Government of India:

<http://fcamin.nic.in/dfpd/EventDetails.asp?EventId=26&Section=PDS&ParentID=0&Parent=1&check=0> accessed on February 7, 2011.

¹⁸ It should be noted here that usually PDS systems distribute rice and wheat, which do not provide all of the nutrients necessary for a healthy diet to combat malnutrition. Therefore, it is assumed here that what the authors mean by “wiping out malnutrition” is that Keralans would have been able to use their income that they would have saved from purchasing the rice and wheat at subsidized prices on nutritional foods.

poor. The universal coverage of the TPDS provides Keralans with a security blanket to their livelihood, which I argue results in a feeling of trust through the reliability of these state-run programs. Comparing these results with those of the TPDS discussed below (in the section on Bihar), especially considering the element of being corruption-free, it can be concluded that Keralans participate in these programs because they are confident in the results it will bring to their daily lives. This is in contrast to the unreliability of the results that would be expected for Biharans.

The second program under analysis, also under the Right to Food initiative, is the Integrated Child Development Program (ICDP). This program has shown similar results to the TPDS in its successful implementation on the ground in Kerala. Gupta (2001, 69) explains that the program, launched in 1975, has been developed through other initiatives¹⁹. It was primarily concerned by the sudden awareness of (or attention on) India's particularly high rates of infant mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and rates of maternal mortality during birth, compared to the rest of the world. The author explains that the goal of the program was to provide services that consisted of supplementary nutrition for pregnant women and young children, education, immunizations, and preventive medicine for poor and lower-caste children²⁰. Unlike the choppy implementation of this program in Bihar, there is a much higher success rate for the ICDP in Kerala. The Anganwadi²¹ Centres (or childcare centers) are noted to be very common in Keralan villages. They are also successful in promoting gender advances in society (Swain 2010, 69). The author explains that mothers have been able to take up jobs more easily since Anganwadi centers in many parts of Kerala have essentially taken up the responsibility of taking care of

¹⁹ After the formulation of the National Policy for Children (Gupta 2001, 69).

²⁰ For more information on the functioning of the scheme, see Avsm, Gandhi, Tandon & Krishnamurthy April 1995 "Integrated Child Development Scheme and Nutritional Status of Indian Children *Journal of Tropical Pediatrics* Vol. 41 pp 123-128.

²¹ These are the centres in which the services are rendered to the beneficiaries.

children in the pre-school period. This development program thus proves to be reliable in its functioning from the perspective of Keralans, and considering the health benefits that it renders, can also overlap with the second focus of trust, being seen as a source of protection.

Therefore, the widespread success in poverty alleviation programs in India, specifically under the Right to Food initiative, such as the TPDS and the ICDP discussed above, have resulted in evidence towards the reliability of the state in Kerala. Considering the extent to which these programs improve upon the livelihood of beneficiaries, as well as their universal and comparatively corruption-free distribution, these programs can play an important role in the lives of Keralans. Their proper functioning thus results in the population participating in and benefitting from the programs in Kerala. Let us now compare the situation in Kerala with that in Bihar.

(UN)RELIABILITY OF THE STATE IN BIHAR

State-Society Disconnect

In contrast with Kerala, I argue that the synergy between state and society in Bihar is much weaker. As Putnam (1993) would see it, there is much less room for predictability between the two entities, often resulting in disconnect, uncertainty and opaqueness. This results in a sentiment of unreliability by Biharans and thus negatively impacts the trust that is placed in the state by the population. There are two aspects that will be examined that help explain the reason for this disconnect. They both centre on the state of Bihar's highly problematic 'politics of categorization'. This is a logical place to begin with since in Bihar, as well as in other poorer areas of India, the state's actions in categorization are a main point of interaction between the state and society (Corbridge et al 2005, 75). This interaction, as the authors note, is a key period

in which the state is sighted by the inhabitants. I argue that these actions by the state in Bihar play a vital role in the level of reliability that is understood by the population of its state. The two points of entry into this analysis will begin first with the dysfunction of the state's efforts to categorize according to economic statuses, and the second will be the intricacies involved in making the tribes legible.

The state's efforts at categorizing Biharans according to their economic status largely stem from the necessity of doing so to determine who should benefit from poverty alleviation programs and how²² (such as the Right to Food initiatives discussed above). The three main labels that will be discussed in this thesis include: below-poverty line (BPL), above poverty line (APL) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY).²³ The frustration due to politics of categorization of people was observed during a fact-finding mission in the tribal areas of Bihar. It was clear that for some of the inhabitants, they were discontented by the status that they had been deemed since they believed they should be considered under a different category. Thus they found that the state-constructed categories of this manner were foreign to them, resulting in a feeling of disconnect from the state. For example, during our research in Bihar, we found that out of the three districts that were surveyed, less than 14% of families entitled to BPL status had actually been distributed cards that demonstrated so by the state. Similarly, less than 22% of families entitled to Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) status had possession of cards to determine it²⁴. A lot of the incongruity between the categories people were ascribed versus those they felt they belonged in resulted from corruption during the ascription processes due to competing interests on the ground. This in turn impacts the people's participation and cooperation in, for example,

²² For example, beneficiaries of different categories receive different amounts of subsidized food in the TPDS.

²³ For explanation of these three, see the Department of Food and Public Distribution at: <http://fcamin.nic.in/dfpd/EventDetails.asp?EventId=26&Section=PDS&ParentID=0&Parent=1&check=0>

²⁴ Please see Appendix for a presentation of the data collected and being interpreted here.

the gathering of information by the state to be categorized as well as their participation in programs that require their being labeled in a state-constructed category. Therefore, it is argued that the state's actions were considered unreliable partly due to instances of mis-categorizing the population from the inhabitants' point of view. This will be elaborated on in discussing the dysfunction of antipoverty programs below.

The second point of entry, examining the complications in the state attempting to make the tribes legible will now be addressed. Bihar is particular for having a higher level of tribal population in India, largely located in the south (now Jharkhand). On its own, Jharkhand's Scheduled Tribe distribution amongst its population is 26%, (while in the rest of Bihar, it is 0.91%)²⁵. This is in contrast to Kerala's proportion of tribal population which is 1.1%. It should also be noted here that Bihar's population (including Jharkhand) is three times greater than Kerala's. Like the other constructed categories noted above, the state's attempts at creating a category of 'tribal' have also proven to be difficult. The act of defining what is "tribal" has been criticized since it can be argued that there is such little commonality between tribes, thus grouping them altogether in one category is both untruthful and unfair to the tribes themselves (Corbridge 2002, 65). The idea here, then, is that harm can come unto tribal peoples through the official insistence upon them as being one community. This results in inhabitants being labeled under a category to which they do not personally adhere to, resulting again in a feeling of the state being foreign. In addition, like the constant threat of the criteria of the economic statuses changing at the will of the state, it is a similar case for that of the definition of 'tribal'.²⁶ Thus the number of tribal peoples in one area can change according to the convenience of the government if it should so desire. I argue that the uncertainty that is experienced by inhabitants in Bihar with

²⁵ <http://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/mainlinkFile/File894.pdf> Last accessed April 30, 2011.

²⁶ For more census statistics on the changing number of tribal peoples according to the changing definitions, see Corbridge (2002, 65).

respect to their categorization by the state, whether it be their economic status or their categorization as being 'tribal' or 'non-tribal', results in an unreliability of state actions. Thus there is a lower level of trust in the state by Biharans.

(Dis)Functioning of Antipoverty Programs in Bihar

Turning now to the effectiveness of state-run anti-poverty programs, this analysis intends to demonstrate that this is another area of state action that derives with it a sentiment of unreliability from Biharans. Policies created on a macro scale originally formulated by the state to improve the livelihoods of inhabitants are often implemented in Bihar in a choppy, unequal and erratic manner which results in their unreliability by the population. The same two poverty alleviation programs will be analyzed as in the section on Kerala that are under the Right to Food initiative. This is to demonstrate the wide differences between the reliability of the programs in the two states. The first program under analysis is the TPDS, followed by the ICDP.

The TPDS, which was adopted in 1997, requires that inhabitants of a certain economic criteria are to receive ration cards which guarantee them a certain amount of subsidized wheat and rice per month. Our ground research in Bihar, however, found that the distribution of these cards (which are separate from – although related to - the categorization of economic statuses noted above) was choppy, to say the least. Our data collected shows that out of thirty-nine hamlets surveyed, including 2221 eligible families, only 816 of those families were in possession of a ration card (37%)²⁷. Drèze (2002, 1727-8) takes special note of the report of an astounding 80% of grain in Bihar meant for the PDS ending up on the black market. This finding is supplemented by our observations during ground research in that some inhabitants told us that shop owners would intentionally record false information in the beneficiaries' ration cards. Due

²⁷ Please see table in Appendix.

to the illiteracy of many of the beneficiaries, the food distributors would need to record the monthly distributions into the cards which are kept by beneficiaries. However, this power of literacy allowed the ration shop owners to distribute a lesser amount of food than they recorded; often it was about 2/3 of the amount that was entitled. The advantage to engaging in this corruption was that they could increase their profits on this subsidized food by selling the remaining food at the regular rate to non-ration card holders.

Another prevalent observation regarding the dysfunction of the ration shops in Bihar were their distance from the villages and their non-functioning in the area that was being surveyed. Ration shops were required by the scheme to be not more than a certain distance for its beneficiaries (three kilometers), since often the inhabitants are travelling by foot or bicycle. However, our team found that out of forty-four hamlets that were surveyed, 56% of the ration shops were at a greater distance than mandated for. On top of that, 79% of ration shops that were used by these forty-four hamlets were reported as non-functioning. It is important to note that 'functioning' is determined by whether or not ration card holders were receiving the correct amount of rice and wheat at the correct price, as per their entitlement according to their determined status, as well as whether the benefits were being received regularly.

The second state-led program under evaluation in Bihar, the ICDP, has also proven to render less than reliable results for the intended beneficiaries. Although the ICDP (mentioned above in the analysis on Kerala) has led to an improvement in child nutrition on an all-India macro-scale (Avsm et al 1995), the ground research by our team in Bihar found it to be largely unreliable from the perspective of the intended beneficiaries. For example, out of the thirty-nine hamlets that were surveyed, twenty-eight²⁸ of them were sharing an Anganwadi center²⁹ with a

²⁸ There are two elements in the data which are important to mention regarding the level of accuracy which remains unanswered. The first is that four of the hamlets surveyed were recorded by number of families that resided in the

population of more than three hundred which was therefore over the maximum number of people that were mandated to benefit from a single centre (maximum is three hundred). To illustrate the severity of this particular defect in the program as a whole, one case showed that a combined population of five thousand people was sharing a single Anganwadi center. There were also two hamlets that reported they did not have any anganwadi center available to them. Although it was not part of this particular mission by HRLN to enquire about the actual in-depth functioning of the anganwadi centers, it is clear that these 28 hamlets³⁰, out of 39 that were surveyed, were left with less than sufficient resources to carry out the ICDP.

I argue that the choppiness and inadequacy of implementation of the TPDS and the ICDP in Bihar, evidenced largely through the data collected during our ground research in Bihar, demonstrates the unreliability of the state from the perspective of Biharans. The choices made by the inhabitants in whether or not to participate in the programs has been negatively affected by these realities on the ground. It is not motivating for inhabitants to participate in state-led poverty alleviation programs, such as these two discussed here, when the inhabitants have a strong suspicion that they would be wasting their time in trying to receive their benefits. This results in a precarious relationship between the population (beneficiaries) and the state and thus negatively impacts the trust that people hold within their state.

hamlet, rather than number of individuals. The team interpreting the data judged that the number of families in these four hamlets would have counted towards the populations being more than 300. Secondly, another potential flaw in the data is that the questionnaire did not in fact ask whether or not there was only one single anganwadi center, but rather whether or not there was one available. This could cause problems in interpretation of the data, for example, with the example used in the text regarding the hamlet which has a population of over 5000 using one single anganwadi center. However, it was decided upon by the researchers after compiling the data that it would appear in respect of each single hamlet with a population of more than 300 (Table 6A) and each combined set of hamlets with a population of more than 300 that named the same anganwadi center (Table 6B), they do indeed only have access to a single anganwadi center.

²⁹ These are the centres in which the services are rendered to the beneficiaries.

³⁰ 30 including the two that were without an anganwadi center at all.

THE STATE IN KERALA: A SOURCE OF PROTECTION

The Strength of Democratic Institutions as a Source of Protection

The functioning and breadth of democratic institutions in Kerala render the state to be considered a source of protection by the inhabitants, relative to Bihar, which will be evidenced below. Two broad points of entry will be undergone in this analysis. Firstly, Kerala's relatively strong legal system as well as the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force is argued to produce a feeling of protection by Keralans. Secondly, the state is seen as a source of refuge for the inhabitants due to the large number of social protections available as well as the high presence of unions which are intricately connected to the state.

While comparing the different degrees of democracy in India, Heller (2000, 497) attributes Kerala's scope of public legality as a solid reflection of the effectiveness of democratic institutions. He notes that if we use Weberian terminology, we can say that "the rational-legal authority has displaced traditional authority in the regulation of public life" (Heller 2000, 497). The state's legal system is seen as something that renders justice, as opposed to former traditions that would determine guilt, for example caste. To evidence this point, it is noted that Kerala ranks first among all states in the rule of law (Sandbrook et al. 2007, 71-2). The authors note that traditional forms of social authority and clientelistic dependencies have been essentially eliminated in Kerala and have been replaced with an extension of both public legality and public services.

Heller (2000, 500) explains that, unlike in Bihar, class conflict has not produced the armed Naxalite or other revolutionary groups (which will be discussed in the section on Bihar). He also notes that any militant unions that have been produced in Kerala have not resulted in

organized violence and criminal networks that would threaten the inhabitants as in other parts of India. Similarly, the state is not involved in practices that are seen as threatening by Keralans. Overall, in postcolonial Kerala, the state is seen as a source of protection through its legal system which facilitates its maintenance of the monopoly over the legitimate use of force. Therefore, Keralans are more likely to participate in state processes to find justice, since it is considered the fairest avenue to do so, and it is also the only option available for Keralans to pursue.

Secondly, the state is seen as a protector in Kerala through its strong state-sanctioned policies and programs. Sandbrook et al. (2007, 66-7) explain that no other state in India has been as consistently pro-poor or as successfully redistributive. Aside from the reliability of the food distribution system as was noted in a previous section, basic services other than food are enjoyed by large sectors of the working population, including those relating to health, and education which are provided on a universal basis. Aside from the reliability of these services, the idea that different forms of basic services exist in plenitude, I argue, renders the state a general source of refuge when inhabitants are looking for basic needs. Protection of Keralans was also gained through the 1970 land reforms whereby landlordism was essentially abolished, poor tenants were transformed into small property owners and landless laborers were conferred homestead plots (Sandbrook et al 2007, 69).

Labour protection is also enjoyed by Keralans through the state. Sandbrook et al (2007, 69-70) note the protection gained by two million landless laborers, most of them being from the “untouchable” castes, through the introduction of the 1975 labor legislation. The protection this provided came in the form of “regulated workdays, minimum wages, collective-bargaining rights, and job security” (Sandbrook et al 2007, 69-70). Labour unions in Kerala are widespread as Sandbrook et al (2007, 71) note that Kerala retains the highest levels of unionization in India

which extends both to the formal and the informal sector of the economy. Another point made by Sandbrook et al (2007, 71-2) is that unions in Kerala are “almost all tied to political parties, they are also highly professionalized and characterized by a broader, less militant, and more programmatic outlook than most Indian unions, which tend toward economism and are often little more than vehicles for local powerbrokers”. This provides evidence towards Keralans’ finding trust in the interactions between the labour unions and the state, especially considering Keralans’ comfort with the attachment of the unions to a political party. Therefore, the state in Kerala is seen as a source of refuge by the inhabitants. They can find justice through the legitimate legal system, seek basic needs from the state through programs and be protected through labour unions which are embedded in their cooperation with the state.

Protests and Extraction of Resources in Kerala

Keralans have shown over the past few decades to engage in peaceful demonstrations and protests, as well as utilize other methods to have their voices heard, that suggest their high level of trust in the state. Even though the population, at times, speaks against governing parties, they do so in a way that evidences their security that action will be taken by the state in response to their efforts. Keralans’ avenues of protesting, some of which will be outlined below, indicate that the state is seen as a source of protection. This form of political action that is taken by inhabitants to voice discontent and to demand change is often met with compliance and/or compromise by the state. I argue, therefore, that inhabitants in Kerala enjoy protection from the state by engaging in the ever-open avenue available to them, political action. To illustrate this point, below will be some examples of protests by Keralans that are intended to demonstrate the general relationship between the inhabitants and the state. This analysis reveals that Keralans

find protection in the state through engaging in protests. This sense of protection is revealed through the predictability that voiced concerns will be heard and dealt with by the state through engaging in political activism.

There have been several uprisings and periods of high mobilization, for example during the 1960s and 70s where there were the highest number of strikes in the industrial sector in India (Sandbrook 2007, 72). The authors note how this contributed to the short lived coalition governments and even resulted in bringing them down. What is interesting here is that although Keralans will mobilize against their governments to the point of even bringing them to their defeat, it is done in a fashion that further establishes democratic practices through non-violent protests and strikes. These are followed by Keralans' peacefully accepting new parties in government to improve upon the actions of the last. In Kerala, the protests can be characterized as the people versus the state looking to force change through the means of the democratic system, in essence, trusting that they can change the behavior of those acting on behalf of the state.

There have been several successful engagements in protests by Keralans that have resulted in the change and/or abandonment of plans by the state to exploit resources. One civil society group in particular that has been instrumental in activism related to anti-dam movements (among other fields of human endeavor), which is the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP).³¹ The group has taken a unique avenue to encourage the engagement of inhabitants of Kerala. It has taken the route of using scientific arguments (such as ecological impacts of dams) to

³¹ The KSSP, according to their official website, it is described as: "Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad is a People's Science Movement of Kerala, India. Founded in 1962. It started its works at the science society interface with about 40 members as an organisation of science writers in Malayalam. Over the past four decades it has grown into a mass movement with a membership over 40,000, distributed in more than two thousand units spread all over Kerala... it has also expanded its fields of interests and activities to almost all fields of human endeavor. The KSSP is involved, broadly in three types of activities: educative, agitate and constructive, in areas like environment, health, education, energy, literacy, micro planning and development in general." For more information, please see their official website at: <http://www.kssp.in/content/kssp> (last accessed 28 April 2011).

convince Keralans of the importance to become active in anti-dam movements. Protest movements in India over the past two decades have resulted in the authorities being forced to take into account the social and environmental cost of dam projects (Swain 2010, 63). The author explains that in 2001, only 9 out of 28 dam projects that were planned in Kerala have so far succeeded in being built. Dam projects in the 1970s, such as the Kuttanad Development Project were researched and halted due to efforts by this civil society group (Swain 2010, 61). In 1978 the Silent Valley Hydroelectric Project is another that was researched and opposed to by KSSP. They lead a movement against this project as well as gained the support of the population through publishing a report outlining arguments both for and against the plan. They were also joined by various other voluntary organizations as well as enjoyed the support by the state political parties (Swain 2010 61-2). The authors also mention that this became a mass movement and was joined by the support of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the International Union of Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). Eventually, Swain explains that in 1980, the central government of India abandoned the project, rendering the protests a success.

Another mass movement that has been successful in Kerala in opposition to the exploitation of resources has been one against the multinational corporation Coca-Cola. The company had built a plant in Kerala which was creating water shortages for the inhabitants since it was using ground water for the production of its product (Swain 2010, 66). This caused mobilization both by local groups, primarily by tribal women, who Swain explains staged a sit-in in front of the gates of the plant. The author also explains though that representatives of the state were also instrumental in this protest, for example in 2004 the Chief Minister of Kerala ordered the closure of the plant, and in 2005, the state government challenged Coca-Cola's right to use Kerala's ground water to the Supreme Court.

These episodes of uprisings, combined with the often successful outcomes, demonstrate the expectation by Keralans that their voices will be heard through taking THE avenue of protest. Engaging in protests is seen by the inhabitants, as well as including, at times, government officials, as a mechanism by which to ensure that the voices of the people are listened to. Keralans appear to be confident that the state will take into account their concerns and desires if they undertake certain practices. This is in contrast to the population in Bihar, which tends to take the route of evading the state which will be shown in the subsequent section.

THE STATE IN BIHAR: A FRACTIONED SOURCE OF PROTECTION

The Naxalite Movement: An Alternative Source of Refuge

Relative to Kerala, Bihar's reach of democracy is more uneven and scattered. Heller (2000) argues that this is partly caused by the lack of authority that is held by the state in certain areas. He notes that "the permeability of state authority is most dramatically exposed by the existence of private caste armies (especially in Bihar) and elite control over local police forces" (Heller 2000, 493). Kunnath (2006) provides some context when he explains the difficulties in class struggles in Bihar throughout the twentieth century. The two main forces in struggle are on one hand, the repressive forces of the state (the police, judiciary) in alliance with the rural rich, and on the other hand, poor peasant share croppers and agricultural labourers (Kunnath 2006, 91). The author notes that since the 1960s, this movement has become more widespread and has now become known as the Naxalite movement.³² Shah (2006) undergoes an analysis of the blurred boundary between the state and the 'terrorist' in Jharkhand (southern Bihar). He explains, firstly, that the (so-called extremist) Naxalite movement is "an armed peasant and

³² For a more thorough historical, geographical and ideological background on the formation of the Naxalite Movement, please see Kunnath (2006).

worker uprising against landlords and capitalists, inspired by Marx, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung” (2006, 297). Shah notes that since 1967, the movement has declined and factionalized along ideological, organizational and geographical lines. He also notes that the Naxalites have been banned by the Biharan state and had been deemed an ‘extremist’ or ‘terrorist’ problem after an incident in 1984 where Yadiv caste supporters of the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) branch killed 42 Rajput caste members (note that both Yadiv and Rajput belong to the ‘upper caste’ of Kshatrya). Shah explains the Naxalite goal as one that seeks to create a liberated territory from Nepal to Andhra Pradesh, and in the late 1990’s Jharkhand became an important territorial link.

Considering that the Naxalite Movement is seen as an alternative source of protection in which to lend loyalty, Kunnath (2006) underwent ethnographic research to investigate the reasons behind choosing this movement over the state. Since the 1970’s, Kunnath (2006, 92) notes that Jehanabad district in Bihar (where he was situated) has been a region in which there has been rural violence and social unrest. He notes that between the period of 1976 and 2001, there were 90 recorded incidents of local massacre, while 22 of which occurred in Jehanabad, which resulted in the death of 816 people. He explains that this violence has deep socio-economic roots, and is largely based upon access to or separation from land that governed class location, political power, and social prestige (Kunnath 2006, 92-3). He notes that this is partly due to the large dependence upon agriculture for livelihood in the region. The author also explains that even after the abolition of landlordism in the early 1950s in some parts of Bihar, harsh working conditions and low pay persisted for Dalits (or SCs). Since the 1970’s Naxalite organizations have acted as expressions of this discontent (Kunnath 2006, 93), as well as a reaction against other structures of oppression and exploitation, such as “caste, bonded labour, tenancy, low wages, rape/abuse of women, landowner violence against women, (and)

murders/beatings in the hands of police” (Kunnath 2006, 114-15). Thus, the Naxalite movement is seen in Bihar as a source of protection against landowners and their allies in the state apparatus for the socio-economically disadvantaged sections of the population.

In competition for the centralized legitimate use of force, Shah (2006) discusses his view of the MCC’s approach to enticing the population to seek protection through its forces. Shah (2006, 298-9) cites the idea first put forth by Leach (1977, 27), that there is a continuity between the ‘terrorist’ and the state, and that “the deviant characteristics of the hero (the state) and the criminal (terrorist) are essentially the same”. Shah questions this boundary between the MCC and the local state in southern Bihar. He argues that the Naxalite movement should not necessarily be considered as the poor versus the state. Rather, it should be highlighted that the movement is dependent upon the rural elite being intimately connected with the state, and it is noted that it also sometimes works in collaboration with state officials. Shah argues the MCC takes on the role of protector in its involvement in controlling access to the informal economy of the state, and also a protector from the possibilities of its own activities (racketeering). Suykens (2010, 158), not surprisingly, points out that Shah’s description of the Naxalites has been condemned by one of his Naxal informants, since this informant sees the Naxalite movement as protecting people mostly from Forest Department officials, contractors and money lenders, rather than from itself. Therefore the situation on the ground is convoluted as to how both the Naxalites are viewed as well as the state, however evidence suggests that loyalty is very much divided between the two entities by the population.

It is argued that this blurriness of the spectrum between the state and the terrorist in Bihar results in confusion of where loyalty should or could be lent. There is no centralized entity that maintains the legitimate use of force. There are multiple pseudo-sources of protection that could

be sought after in Bihar, the two main ones are the state and the Naxalite Movement. There are also other sources of protection that can be sought after, such as through landowners by poor peasants, however the main ones from the macro-state perspective are the two noted above. This results in inevitable deficiency in the abilities of both the state and society in creating a clear vision of each other. This thus affects the structures that inhibit and facilitate individuals' choices and abilities to participate in state programs and processes.

Extraction of Resources: Reason to Fear the State

The history of extraction of resources and forced relocation of people due to policies by the state of Bihar has resulted in a sentiment of fear by Biharans. Evidence suggests that the priority of the state in Bihar lies with the exploitation of resources as opposed to the livelihood of the inhabitants. Both historical and contemporary examples presented below will show that engaging in protest by Biharans does not provide the same level of protection that is found in Kerala. First will be a brief historical overview of the state's efforts to engage in the exploitation of this area and the impact it has had on the inhabitants. Second will be an example of contemporary protests by Biharans that have not resulted in compromise by the state. Rather it will be shown that despite activism and discontent demonstrated by the people of Bihar, that the state continues its efforts without consideration of the impact on the livelihoods of the people in these areas.

There has been considerable effort by the federal state of India to exploit the resources that are present in the resource-rich eastern states of India (including the state of Bihar). These include through dam projects, mining and relocation of the vast numbers of people to work in tea gardens (Corbridge 2002, 61-2). Swain (2010, 11) discusses some of the most detrimental

implications of a state engaging in these efforts in general. For example, he notes that while dams, canals and groundwater withdrawal is usually intended to increase water supplies, there is much human loss that is sacrificed along with it. He notes that inhabitants, usually poor and rural people (millions of people to-date world-wide), are forced to leave their homes due to these massive projects. This is particularly frustrating for the inhabitants since the projects are often intended in the first place to benefit distant cities by storing water to provide irrigation and electricity for them.

Corbridge (2002, 64-5) notes that between 1915 and 1925, almost 100,000 acres of land in south-west Singhbhum (Bihar) passed into the 'public domain' for quarries and their housing compounds and roads to support them. Some inhabitants were essentially forced by the state into the coal mines of Dhanbad and Hazaribagh, and into the iron ore and copper mines of Singhbhum District due to the loss of their lands under the terms of the Land of the Acquisition Act of 1894 (Corbridge 2002, 64-5).

One of the implications of the state's efforts has been large numbers of migration by Biharans. In effect, many Biharans had to migrate because of the government's policies, whether forced by the state in order to make room to extract resources (ie. concerning mining) or due to the state's mismanagement of public resources that prevented people from sustaining themselves. For example, Corbridge (2002, 62) explains that the first thirty years of the twentieth century found many tribal (and non-tribal) families needing to make use of the forest to make ends meet, and that many of them resorted to migration to the Assam tea-gardens region to work (307,000 migrants coming to Santal Parganas and Chota Nagpur, and 947,000 leaving the region). Some were also forced by various Jharkhandi governments to migrate to other areas including into West Bengal, Andaman, and the Nicobar Islands, Bhutan, Burma and as mentioned earlier,

Assam (Shah 2007, 135). The implications of migration upon the lives of inhabitants would at times result in stressful life situations. For example, some families were forced to integrate into a society of a different culture and were not always accepted by the existing population. As some families of migrants recounted during our team's research in Bihar,³³ for some there are even cases, still up until this day, that houses of migrants have been burned multiple times due to the rejection from the society in which they had migrated to.

Another implication upon the lives of inhabitants due to the efforts relating to the extraction of resources, particularly reforestation projects, is the destruction of traditional lifestyles. Swain (2010, 27) makes note of this potential destruction and the elimination of choice of inhabitants during a specific reforestation program in Jharkhand (part of Bihar at the time) by the central government. The state's intention was to "convert the mixed natural forests into a plantation of commercial tree species". The author explains that this would have resulted in the planting of commercial trees which would have only provided timber and profits for industries and rich farmers. This would have simultaneously deprived the locals of mixed-tree forests that provided inhabitants with resources used in daily life. However, tribal people in Bihar have been successful in resisting the state's efforts at commercial plantation in the forestlands and have now begun to campaign against a dam project in Bihar under the banner of *Jharkhand Visthapish Mukti Sangh* (Swain 2010, 46).

Despite mobilization by the tribal peoples of Bihar, and their success at times in halting the state's efforts, evidence shows little concern by the state that would cause it to cooperate or compromise. Reforestation and mining projects by the state continue, even in areas that have been officially deemed 'no-go zones'.³⁴ For example an article published on March 27, 2010 by Daily News and Analysis

³³ Based on observations in Jan-Feb 2009 during ground research in Bihar under the auspices of the Human Rights Law Network.

³⁴ For some recent examples, see

reported that a joint study by the environment and coal ministries has found that “as much as 35% of coal mining areas across the country are located in ‘no go’ zones, where environmental clearances cannot be given”³⁵. The article explains that a ‘no go’ zone is a densely forested area where mining cannot be allowed. It was specified that a major portion of coal mining areas in ‘no go’ zones is in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand (Bihar), Orissa and Singrauli in Madhya Pradesh. However, another article published by the Press Trust of India on October 29, 2010³⁶ reported that the central government of India indicated a potential coal shortage in the country. It reported that:

“Coal minister Sriprakash Jaiswal said... mining should be allowed in 90% of the areas classified as no-mining zones by the environment ministry and a proposal will be tabled before cabinet soon after ascertaining the views of different ministries. “We have circulated a cabinet note on the possibility of mining in 90% of the forest area of the country. This excludes the 10 per cent dense forest area,” Kaiswal told reporters here.”

The article continues to note that as many as 126 blocks that were labeled as ‘no-go’ areas are down from 203 earlier. Therefore, even though there are areas that have been deemed as sheltered from mining and exploitation through state policies, this has not been a source of protection for the inhabitants. The priority of both the central and state governments in Bihar show to remain with the extraction of resources rather than with the livelihood of the inhabitants. Therefore, even when Biharans try to engage in activism against these projects, it cannot be taken as a given that the state will in fact listen to their concerns and thus compromise. The state is not considered an entity that can be sought after for protection when inhabitants have concerns about certain issues.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/No-go-zoning-plan-on-GoM-menu/articleshow/7471754.cms>

³⁵ http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_35pct-of-india-s-coal-mining-areas-are-in-no-go-zones_1363884

³⁶ <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Allow-mining-in-90-no-go-zones/Article1-619206.aspx>

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON TRUST IN THE STATE

Investigating the contextual factor of trust in the state in Kerala and Bihar has revealed that it has potential to significantly impact the level of participation of a population. All interactions between a state and its population impact the vision that is developed by one to the other. The vision that is held by a population of its state determines the general overall sentiment that a people would have in participating in processes, programs and policies that are affiliated with it. Although dividing up the idea of trustworthiness into two categories, levels of reliability and source of protection has, at times, overlapped, it nonetheless provides a more simplified view of ways to understand how much a population trusts its state and why.

In Kerala, the state has proved itself to be more reliable through its actions than in Bihar. This has been shown through the synergy that is present between the Keralan state and its population, which is reflected by the widespread societal inclusiveness in state processes and decision-making. The state party CPI(M) has shown to be active in ensuring the cooperation and collaboration with Keralan society which has resulted in a more transparent and accountable state government. There is also much reliability that is enjoyed by Keralans due to the far-reaching success of implementation of development programs. Keralans can feel secure about participating in state programs and policies due to the reliability of state actions.

This is in contrast to the disconnected relationship between the state and society in Bihar. There exists more uncertainty and opaqueness for the inhabitants of Bihar with respect to state actions. This is demonstrated through the inhabitants' rejections of categorization efforts by the state. Evidence suggests that there is much less awareness of Biharan society by the state. The categories that are formulated thus are seen as something foreign and incongruent with identities on the ground. Even when inhabitants are deemed certain categories, programs that they are

supposed to benefit from, according to these statuses, are often dysfunctional. The choppy implementation of the programs, which is evidenced through uneven ration card distribution and dysfunction of rations shops and Anganwadi centers. Therefore, there is much less incentive for Biharans to participate in state processes and programs since there is a feeling both of alienation from the state and there is no predictability of what results participation will bring.

When comparing the visions that are developed in Kerala and Bihar with respect to whether the state can be seen as a source of protection, it was found that this was much more the case in Kerala than in Bihar. In Kerala, it was found that the state is the only entity with the monopoly over the legitimate use of force. The legal system is seen by the population as legitimate and fair. Social protections are also enjoyed through other programs such as universal education and healthcare. Unions are also widespread which provide labour protection for Keralans, and in addition to this, the unions are even affiliated with state parties. Extraction of resources has been largely protested against in Kerala and the state has taken an interest in finding common ground and cooperating with the population. Therefore, Keralans can seek out the state as a source of protection with the secure feeling that their voices will be listened to and addressed when they engage in political action.

Bihar, by contrast, retains a situation in which there is more reason to fear the state than in Kerala. Firstly, there is not one entity with the monopolization of the legitimate use of force. Loyalty is divided between localizations of power in Kerala. The main non-state actor which acts as a protector in certain areas usually provided by the state is the Naxalite Movement. Evidence was also provided which demonstrated the state's lack of priority of the livelihood of Biharans, at least when it came to its efforts at exploiting the natural resources in the region. Even when there have been incidences of protests, there is not the same cooperation and collaboration

between the state and inhabitants as there is in Kerala. In addition, extraction of resources for decades has resulted in the uprooting of Biharan's lives such as through migration and destruction of traditional lifestyles. This has resulted in a situation in which the state cannot be sought after for protection, not even through engaging in protests, as in the state of Kerala.

Therefore, I argue that considering these differences of sentiments that exist between the state and society in Kerala and Bihar, that these have enormous implications in how and when the population would choose to participate in state processes. The more the state is seen as reliable and a protector, as is seen in Kerala, the higher potential there is for participation by the inhabitants. The more unpredictable and foreign a state is seen, the more unreliable its actions are to the inhabitants, as in Bihar. This situation combined with an overall sentiment of fear and divided loyalty between other sources of protection, results in less participation in the state of Bihar.

CHAPTER FOUR: EDUCATION AS A CONTEXTUAL FACTOR

The next contextual factor impacting participation that will be analyzed is education. The wide gap between the populations of Kerala and Bihar, with respect to the levels of education, makes this an interesting aspect to explore. Also, there is much importance placed upon education in India by several thinkers, such as Drèze & Sen (2002) and Radhakrishnan & Kumari (1989), since it is argued to increase opportunity for people to help them positively impact their livelihoods. The famous Dr. Ambedkar is an excellent example of someone who was emancipated from many of the restrictions his ‘untouchable’ caste placed upon him through the benefits of education. He also seized upon the opportunity this freedom gave him to help empower the ‘untouchable’ castes in India, partly through participating in government processes (Jaffrelot 2005, 3-6). Given the wide variation of rates of education between Indian states, it is argued that this renders it a valuable contextual difference to analyze in how it impacts the levels of participation of a population. In order to help narrow down the focus of the impact of education upon Kerala and Bihar, as mentioned in the theoretical section, a general macro framework will be employed. This is the perspective of the capabilities approach, first developed by Amartya Sen. Essentially, a review of the literature as well as program evaluations will help to highlight ways in which education in Bihar and Kerala can be understood as a capability, and look at the impact it has on participation.

Education in this research will be investigated from the starting point of it being considered an element that adds ‘capability’ to individuals of a population. Below will be a brief overview of the theoretical framework that was discussed previously. The focus will be narrowed further again into two channels to help add clarity during discussion. The first will be an analysis of education as a capability that facilitates individuals’ abilities to participate in decentralization

processes. The second will be examining education as an equalizing agent, resulting in the emancipation of the traditionally marginalized, allowing them to participate in state processes.

Accordingly, if we consider education to be a capability, facilitating participation by a population in state processes, the structures in which agents are working within can be affected depending on the level of formal education of the population. Before probing into this investigation however, it is first necessary to provide a brief review of how this thesis will utilize the theory on capabilities. This will be followed by a section on the workings of formal education in India, specifically comparing the contexts of Bihar and Kerala. Finally, the two areas of focus mentioned above, regarding decentralization efforts and education as an equalizing agent, will be analyzed.

CAPABILITIES AND FUNCTIONS

As explained in the theoretical chapter, this analysis of the role of education and its impact on participation begins with the lens of the capabilities approach. To review briefly, Nussbaum and Sen (1993, 31) believe a person's well-being and standing in society should be evaluated to one that is based on their "capability to achieve valuable functionings". And functionings are described by Kuklys (2005, 5) as "the achieved states of being and activities of an individual, e.g. being healthy, being well-sheltered...or being well-nourished". Understanding education as essentially a capability that provides inhabitants with more opportunity to engage in the function of participation is foundational to this chapter.

There are two points of entry that will be explored. Firstly, considering that efforts in participatory development predominantly concern the increased inclusion of locals (their knowledge, priorities, and actions), as mentioned in chapter one of this research, it is a logical

step to analyze the effects of education in state decentralization efforts. Secondly, considering the concern of critics of participatory development efforts of *which* locals should be included, it is not far-fetched to look at the role of education with respect to its increasing the capabilities of the marginalized. For example, this can include the empowerment of women, SCs, STs and others. Therefore, the analysis of this second point of entry will see education as an ‘equalizing agent’ through its increasing the capabilities of the marginalized.

BACKGROUND ON EDUCATION IN INDIA: A POINT OF DEPARTURE

Ensuring universal education in India has proven to be a difficult goal to obtain. Programs and policies relating to education developed at the macro state level often do not render the intended results due to unforeseen differences between societies at the micro-level. Corbridge et al (2005, 80) outline the official intentions of the state of India with respect to ensuring the education of its population. For example, they note that in 1950, the Constitution of India directed that ‘the State shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years...free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years’. The authors note that this goal was restated in 1968 in the National Resolution on Education and again in 1986 in the National Policy on Education. Yet, Corbridge et al (2005, 80) point out that India, as a whole, has essentially failed with respect to this objective and a lot of attention has been paid to these failures, particularly through the work of Amartya Sen in the 1990s.³⁷

However, on a macro scale, India has undergone improvement with respect to the school attendance and literacy rates of its population since the 1990’s. Drèze and Sen (2002, 151) explain that this progress is a continuation of trends in earlier years, however, specifically since the 1990’s there has been an acceleration of improvement, when compared with earlier decades.

³⁷³⁷ As Noted by Corbridge et al (2005, 80), see Sen (1985) and Drèze and Sen (2002, Chapter 5).

The authors note that according to the second round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-II) in 1998-9, school attendance in the age group of 6-14 has risen to nearly 80 per cent. They also add that there is a narrowing of gender gaps in school attendance due to the increase in female school enrolment (from 59 to 74 per cent between 1992-3 and 1998-9 in the 6-14 age group).³⁸

By the same token, Drèze and Sen (2002, 152) warn their readers to take caution against concluding that India is close to reaching its constitutional goal of universal education until the age of 14 due to the imprecise nature of measuring education levels. Firstly, they insist that there is still reason for concern due to the persisting low school attendance rates of some states. They note for example that in Bihar there is about one third to one half of all girls in the age group of 6-14 that are still out of school. Secondly, they explain that even in states where there are higher levels of children recorded to be 'attending school', due to the limitations of the surveys, this sometimes indicates only the number of enrolled children, rather than their frequency of attendance at school. The authors are also concerned with the reporting of literacy rates, since they argue that literacy figures from NFHS-II as well as the 2001 census could be "swelled". This is because there is a reporting of certain inhabitants to be literate, when in fact they only have very basic literacy skills, such as the ability to write their name.

Even considering the above-described limitations, a comparison of statistics between Bihar and Kerala helps to better measure the wide gap between the rates of education and literacy. This paper will draw upon the tables in Drèze and Sen (2002), which were collected from 2001 data by the Government of India to paint a picture of the relatively recent comparison of educational statistics in the two states under observation. In effort to make the comparison

³⁸ For a discussion regarding the credibility of the source of this data, see Drèze and Sen (2002, 151).

more comprehensible, below are the numbers compiled into tables. Following this will be a description in text form.

Literacy Rates – Aged 15-10 (1998)		
	Female (%)	Male (%)
Kerala	98	99
Bihar	49	73

Proportion of persons aged 15-19 who have attained grade 5 level (1992-93)		
	Female (%)	Male (%)
Kerala	93	95
Bihar	34	67

Proportion of persons aged 15-19 who have attained grade 8 level (1992-93)		
	Female (%)	Male (%)
Kerala	77	73
Bihar	26	52

Proportion of children aged 6-14 attending school (1998-99)		
	Female (%)	Male (%)
Kerala	97	97
Bihar	54	71

Proportion of never-enrolled children aged 10-12 in rural areas (1992-93)		
	Female (%)	Male (%)
Kerala	1	1
Bihar	63	32

Proportion of never-enrolled children aged 10-12 in urban areas (1992-93)		
	Female (%)	Male (%)
Kerala	1	2
Bihar	31	12

In Bihar, the literacy rate of females aged 15-19 in 1998-9 is 49 per cent, while for males it is 73 per cent, whereas these percentages in Kerala are 98 and 99 respectively. The proportion of females aged 15-19 who have attained a grade 5 level in 1992-3 in Bihar is 34 per cent and 67 per cent for males, whereas in Kerala the percentages are 93 and 95 respectively. The proportion

of females to reach a grade 8 level in Bihar, surveyed in the same year, was 26 per cent and 52 per cent for males, while for Kerala the numbers are 77 and 73 per cent respectively. In 1998-9, the proportion of female children attending school in Bihar was 54 per cent and 71 per cent of male children, while the respective percentages in Kerala were both at 97. And finally, in Bihar, the proportion of never-enrolled female children in the 10-12 age group in 1992 in the rural areas was 63 per cent and 12 per cent of male children, while in Kerala, the respective percentages were both 1. The same criterion except in the urban areas of Bihar was 31 per cent for female children and 12 per cent for males, while in Kerala the respective percentages were at just 1 and 2.³⁹

Though we must always be cautious with any statistics, it is apparent that Kerala consistently ranks at a considerably higher percentage than Bihar with respect to the attendance of school as well as percentage of literacy. This is especially evident when we compare differences between genders as well as urban versus rural.

It should be acknowledged here that education itself is something that can take many different shapes and forms. Formal education is difficult enough to measure, and it becomes even more convoluted when we think about measuring informal types. The subjective value of formal education and literacy within different societies and contexts adds another layer of complexity to this question. Education of children in lower castes can sometimes cause friction within the families and it can lead to a process of alienation, for example due to new conflict in respecting family traditional ways of life (Radhakrishnan and Kumari 1989, 71). Another example would be a situation where it is more beneficial *not* to send a female child to school due to fear that she would become more educated than a potential husband, possibly rendering her undesirable for

³⁹ For a breakdown of Bihar's literacy according to district according to the Government of India's census data from 2001, please see <http://gov.bih.nic.in/Profile/CensusStats-03.htm> (last accessed 28 March 2011)

marriage. This would result in the devaluing of education for female children in such a society. Especially if the child is within a family who depends upon the connections made through marriage between families for their livelihood⁴⁰. Other considerations would be the impact on the family's reputation, or the concern with traditional values. Thus, from some perspectives, due to differences between societal norms, traditions and values, there are perhaps times when the choice to refuse education would be considered a greater opportunity in life than the alternative.

Bearing in mind variations in value judgments in the role of education in life as well as the subjectivity of whether it is considered an opportunistic element, these are essentially questions that will not be addressed throughout this research. The goal is not to understand why education would be a chosen avenue in the lives of the inhabitants in the two states being analyzed, or to argue for which avenue is a better choice. Rather, the point is to understand the impact that formal education has on participation. Again, it is acknowledged that informal education, for example, religious education, cooking, farming, artwork, emotional awareness, and countless others, are understood here to be as valid of education as formal schooling; however, it is not the type of education that is focused on in this study. Moving now to a brief, yet more precise evaluation of the status of education since this is specifically looking at a comparison between the two states under observation.

NATURE OF EDUCATION IN KERALA AND BIHAR

Before moving on to evidence of education impacting participation, it is necessary to take a step back and examine some of the recent background as to the origins of education in the two

⁴⁰ This point was collected through a conversation with an interlocutor recounting his current personal life story in India (Agra) in March-April 2009.

states under comparison. This examination will begin with that of Kerala, followed by that of Bihar.

As was outlined in the overview of education above, Kerala is a particular success story within India when considering its level of literacy rates. It has achieved what UNESCO calls ‘total literacy’, or a state of society in which more than 85 per cent of the adult population is literate (Ramachandran 1997, 256). The strong formulation of public opinion and participatory democracy in Kerala has been largely attributed to the dissemination of information within its society. This is accomplished largely through written communication, for example in the widespread usage of newspapers (Ramachandran 1997, 260), which could not be achieved without inhabitants gaining the capability of literacy.

Ramachandran (1997, 266) outlines the broadening of education in Kerala, beginning in the eighteenth century where two modern schools were first established by Christian missionaries and, later, by the state. The author notes that there were two streams of missionary activity, Roman Catholic and Protestant, the latter of which were the pioneers of modern school education. Ramachandran (1997, 266-7) explains that there is one event in particular that carried great influence in the region, and that was the missionary activity of both the London Missionary Society and the Christian Mission Society. Although the author explains that the main motivation was to evangelize the people of Travancore (a princely state that now comprises part of Kerala), in practice their activities largely impacted educational and social reforms.⁴¹ One last important point that will be made here and elaborated upon later is the efforts by the missionaries to include the oppressed castes in their efforts to spreading education. Mission schools were the only new-style schools to which the people of the oppressed castes had access (Ramachandran 1997, 267). Despite these efforts and achievements, Kerala still did not achieve mass literacy at

⁴¹ For more on the history of education in Kerala, please see Ramachandran (1997).

the end of the nineteenth century (Ramachandran 1997, 270), but rather came later on in the mid-twentieth century. This research will now turn to a brief analysis of some particularities important to mention regarding education in Bihar.

In a study done in 1976 investigating what the author argued to be main sources of poverty in Bihar, G.B. Rodgers (1976, 267) correctly posited that at the rate that education was being increased, (which was considered to be a cause of poverty) Bihar would not achieve its Constitutionally-assured universal access to education in the near future. Although the literature thus far is much less generous with respect to the analysis of education in Bihar than it is for Kerala, a few points can be drawn upon to provide a brief background of the nature of education in this state.

Bihar has been regarded as one of the most educationally backward states in the Indian Union (Chauduri & Roy 2009, 216, Radhakrishnan & Kumari 1989, 22). The relatively low level of education that is obtained in Bihar, as demonstrated above through the presentation of overall statistics, largely corresponds to the unequal social status structure, which will be discussed more below. Briefly though, considering the relatively high population of SCs and STs in Bihar, as well as the socio-economic disparities between SCs and non-SCs, including education and literacy levels (Radhakrishnan & Kumari 1989, 25), as well as between STs and non-STs (Agrawal & Agrawal 2010, 75), it is evident that there is a relative lack of education in Bihar especially when compared with Kerala.

EDUCATION AND DECENTRALIZATION IN KERALA

Political decentralization is a mechanism by which to increase local participation in state processes. In India, these efforts are initiated through the creation of the Panchayat Raj, which is

a local governing system. Investigating the functioning of this form of local governance enables us to better grasp some of the underlying conditions that either facilitate or undermine participation in this local political arena. It will be demonstrated below that certain elements within a society are necessary in order to facilitate the performance of decentralization processes. Some of the main aspects that have been argued to be fundamental to a society are the flow of information, political awareness of inhabitants and a critical awareness of the importance of participation. The following analysis will begin first with a brief explanation of how the panchayats system works. Second will be a presentation of studies that deem the above-noted aspects vital to the functioning of decentralization. And third will be an evaluation of evidence suggesting that these elements are present in Kerala due to the high level of formal education within its society.

The functioning of the Panchayat system in India is analyzed by Gaiha and Kulkarni (2002). Firstly, the authors acknowledge that although there are different ways that decentralization could be interpreted,⁴² for the purposes of their research, it is understood as devolution. This refers to the “transfer of political, fiscal and administrative powers to lower level authorities, which are largely or wholly independent of higher levels of government” (Gaihi and Kulkarni 2002, 40). This system of governance stems from several attempts that have been made by the Government of India, since Independence, to increase the level of local participation through decentralization (Bryld 2001, 155). Bryld explains that in 1992, the 73rd Constitutional (amendment) Act was passed which reinstated the panchayats in rural India. It was “an important landmark, as it provides for a uniform three-tier structure of the panchayats – specifically at the district, block and village levels – mandatory elections after five years, proportional

⁴² See Gaiha and Kulkarni (2002, 40) for an explanation of four different types.

representation of the SCs and STs, a quota for women, (and) periodic auditing of accounts...” (Gaiha & Kulkarni 2002, 47).⁴³

Gaiha and Kulkarni (2002) undergo a comparative analysis of the functioning of the Panchayat system in three states in India, including in Kerala. They conclude that some general overall obstacles arise from decentralization efforts. For example some potential difficulties with respect to the incompatibility between central intentions and local implementations are noted as “conflicting objectives of local governments, lack of information on costs and population characteristics and different political ideologies of central and local governments” (Gaiha and Kulkarni 2002, 42). The authors also bring attention to the notion that communal differences, such as the nature of socio-economic inequalities and illiteracy can be impeding factors towards the Panchayat’s success at alleviating poverty (2002, 43 & 70). In this respect, the authors point out that there could be mistrust and/or suspicion between different groups, such as between castes, or also the barrier of political apathy.

Considering these barriers noted above, including conflicting objectives, lack of information, socio-economic inequality and political apathy Gaiha and Kulkarni conclude from their study with some proposals that they found would help to enable panchayats in general to service better the poor. These include “political legitimacy of and a constituency for decentralization, greater fiscal devolution combined with more stringent accountability of local governments to both higher authorities and village communities, strengthening capacities of local governments, building of trust...social cohesion and strong coalition of the rural poor” (2002, 72). Essentially the authors are arguing for more political awareness (since this would enable political legitimacy amongst the population), an increased flow of information (to allow

⁴³ For a comprehensive description of the Panchayat Raj structure, please see Bryld, E. (2001, 155-6).

more accountability of local governments as well as foster communication between villages), and overcoming unequal social structures.

In another study, Saito and Kato (2008, 109) engage in a comparative analysis between Kerala and Karnataka (a neighbouring state) with respect to the effects of the devolution of powers to panchayats. Similar to the previous study discussed, as well as the present research, they find that it is useful to undergo a comparative analysis between two Indian states to further the understanding of how context affects the implementation of similar efforts between them (2008, 93-4). They conclude that Kerala has shown to have been more successful than Karnataka in decentralization efforts. Through their comparative analysis, Saito and Kato find that a crucial foundation to realizing decentralization is the critical awareness of the importance of participation by individuals. More specifically, all individuals and parties concerned, including the marginalized who have been excluded from development activities, “become aware of the importance of participating on their own initiative, and consider how to enhance their ability, and take public action...(which acts as the) foundation of the capability of civil society...to solve their common problems” (Saito & Kato 2008, 110). Therefore, this study adds to the conclusions by Gaiha and Kulkarni the importance of political awareness, especially that with respect to the benefits of participation.

Considering the very high level of education and literacy in Kerala, its societal contexts provides for a much more suited environment to engage in decentralization practices. This can be supplemented with Ramachandran’s (1997, 255) insistence that literacy is foundational to Kerala’s political culture since it is integral in the creation of public opinion, and more importantly here, that it is essential to the consciousness of individual political rights. Along with an increase in literacy, it is argued, brings a much greater potential for an increase of flow of

information through mediums of communication such as newspapers. Anderson (2006, 44) brings particular attention to this when he discusses the importance of print languages (combined with capitalism) in how they act as a unifying agent between inhabitants in a given territory. Printed texts have the potential, it is argued by Anderson, to act as a medium of exchange between people that previously were subject to barriers, or even found it impossible, to communicate before. An increase of flow of information also necessitates a high level of comprehension between inhabitants, which can be more easily facilitated through a unified language, such as in Kerala. Looking at the formation of the Keralan state with respect to geographical borders, it is noted that the boundaries of the state were decided largely upon linguistic grounds. Mathew (1999, 2819) explains that “after Independence, the princely states of Travancore and Cochin were integrated to form the Travancore-Cochin state on July 1, 1949. The present state of Kerala was born on November 1, 1956 as a result of the reorganization of Indian states on linguistic lines”. The author specifies that the “Tamil-majority taluks of Travancore-Cochin were lost to Tamil-Nadu, and the Malayalam-speaking Malabar region was added to Travancore-Cochin to form the new state (of Kerala)”.

Kerala boasts a relatively high level of flow of information. This could be understood as a natural extension of the high literacy rate and common language (Malayalam) within the society. To illustrate, Kerala retains the largest consumption of newspapers, magazines and books per capital in India (Parayil 1996, 943). In fact, although the largest circulation of newspapers in India as a whole are English and Hindi, due to Kerala’s high literacy rate, the third largest are those written in Malayalam, spoken by only 3% of the population of India as a whole (Saito & Kato 2008, 104). This demonstrates the ability of Keralans, especially relative to the rest of India, to develop a connection with fellow Keralans, from one end of the state to the other

without necessarily coming into contact with each other. It allows people to be aware and understand issues across the state. Ramachandran (1997, 260) asserts that this combination of literacy and dissemination of information through written word “goes much deeper in Kerala than elsewhere in India; (and) this has important implications for the quality and depth of public opinion, and of participatory democracy in the state”.

In sum, the high level of formal (thus standardized) education of Keralans and the wide-spread literacy rates propel the extensive flow of information between inhabitants within the state. This environment has fostered political awareness and has resulted in a capability to produce wide-spread public opinion. The concept of critical awareness necessitates to some extent certain aspects that can only come with education, such as the accumulation of knowledge and the ability to communicate it effectively with others. An awareness of the importance of participation has shown to be present in Kerala and promotes the critical engagement in decentralization processes. The authors have also placed much importance upon the feature of accountability, which can only occur in a context, such as Kerala’s, in which there is a population that is aware of political issues and government processes that are occurring around them. Communication between villages, even across states is more easily achieved in this context, which has been argued above to be an integral feature of ensuring the functioning of local governments. These features in Keralan society provide the inhabitants with the necessary capabilities to engage in decentralization processes. The authors argue that an increase in literacy amongst a population can act as a capability that would allow the overcoming of these communal obstacles (Gaiha & Kulkarni 2002, 70). This latter point will be addressed in a following subsection, regarding the equalizing effects of education in Kerala. First though, the role of education in decentralization processes will be analysed in Bihar.

EDUCATION AND DECENTRALIZATION IN BIHAR

Decentralization processes in Bihar have been much less successful in their level of functioning than in Kerala. The main lesson that was learned through the section on Kerala is that certain societal aspects are necessary to foster an environment in which decentralization efforts can be successfully executed. The case of Kerala demonstrates that high levels of formal education and literacy rates amongst the population propel a high flow of information. This snowballs into the ability of inhabitants to develop strong political awareness as well as sound communication between villages and across the state. These features are largely lacking from Bihar and will be demonstrated below to negatively impact the functioning of decentralization processes. This analysis will begin first with a discussion on the nature of these decentralization processes in Bihar. Second will be some examples of processes that have been affected by a lack of flow of information. Third will be a demonstration of how the relative lack of education and literacy has impacted the functioning of poverty alleviation programs in Bihar.

The panchayat governing system in Bihar has shown to perform at a much lower level than in Kerala. This can be demonstrated through the poor functioning of elections at the local government level in Bihar. Elections were held in 1978, then went through a rather long political hibernation (23 years) (Pankaj & Singh 2005, 411; Drèze and Sen 2002, 361; Corbridge et al. 2005, 199), and were not held again until 2001. During this period, Pankaj & Singh (2005, 425-26) note that there were changes in the political landscape in Bihar. Although political empowerment of Other Backward Castes (OBCs) occurred at the state-level, upper castes have maintained their control over the local power structure of the Panchayat governments in this state. The authors explain that the lower statuses of OBCs, SCs, STs and women were at the periphery of political power and they remained so even in this phase of the democratic upsurge

in 2001 (when the elections were finally held). Particularly striking is the very low representation of women in the Panchayat system in Bihar, despite the 33 per cent reservation in membership for women in panchayats (except for the executive heads) (Pankaj & Singh 2005, 425). The authors note that only one per cent out of 7,892 mukhias (leaders) were represented by women.

Compared to Kerala, the flow of information is more scarce and choppy in Bihar. Given that there is no distinct unified language that is practiced by all Biharans, this renders the act of information dissemination more difficult from the perspective of a state-wide analysis. Bhatt and Bhargava (2006, 393) bring attention to the low level of communication experienced in Bihar between municipalities, often due to the very poor road conditions. They go as far to characterize that communication and transportation as sometimes being virtually impossible.

To illustrate the implications of the lack of flow of information in Bihar, two projects will be mentioned. Two governmental development activities intended for development purposes were investigated by Williams et al (2003), entitled the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) and the primary education provision through the Bihar Education Project (BEP). The authors assert that “most EAS open meetings existed on paper only...and the village education committees were unclear about their membership, roles and responsibilities. Many of these failures resulted from information bottlenecks: innovations were stymied because the intended beneficiaries were never made aware of their rights” (Williams et al 2003, 164). For example, it is noted by the authors that less than 10 per cent of respondents in the Bihar Districts of their study knew that unemployed labourers have the right to demand work, which was particularly disappointing by the authors since this is one of the main provisions of the program. poor information dissemination is also noted by the authors to be due to various states of

reinterpretation when programs would reach the Block Development Office from New Delhi, as well as competing interest to suppress information.

Other forms of low levels of communication have been observed in Bihar. Williams et al (2003, 164) found that finding appropriate media and mechanisms for informing the public about development initiatives have been a low priority, and that alternative mechanisms for information flow were lacking. This poor dissemination of information was not only present between the state and the population, but also amongst NGOs working in the area (Williams et al 2003, 164). The authors insist that their observations lead to the conclusion of the critical significance of flow of information when the object is to empower the people through knowledge and development of public opinion.

One final point that evidences the impact of education on participation is through a brief examination of certain malfunctions of decentralized poverty alleviation programs in Bihar. Education has shown to be a necessary capability for inhabitants to benefit from these programs. The two development initiatives that will be discussed here are Immunization Programs as well as briefly, the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). With respect to Immunization programs, a study by De and Bhattacharya (2002, 49) found that the major socio-economic barrier to achieving universal immunization coverage in Jharkhand (for our purposes, southern Bihar) was education and literacy obtained by the parents, particularly mothers. Secondly, during ground research in Bihar in 2009 under the auspices of the Human Rights Law Network, our team found that a common barrier to the proper functioning of the TPDS system was illiteracy of the beneficiaries. In essence, ration shop owners had much more opportunity for corruption since the beneficiaries relied on them to fill out their ration cards upon receiving their entitled benefits. A common complaint from the inhabitants was that ration shop owners would intentionally fill

out incorrect information on their ration cards, such as recording a greater amount of food given than actually was taken, so that the ration shop owners could sell the remaining amount of food at a higher price to other inhabitants who were not beneficiaries of the TPDS. In sum, taking lessons from societal aspects that appear to facilitate the functioning of decentralization efforts in Kerala, I argue that the case of Bihar further demonstrates the necessity of these very features.

EDUCATION AS AN EQUALIZING AGENT IN KERALA

The nature of participatory efforts in Kerala, in that they are intended to involve all Keralans equally, is argued here to be largely facilitated through the education of the traditionally marginalized. It is evidenced below, like in other sections of this research, that Kerala enjoys a strong state-society synergy through a recognizable partnership between local government and civil society. Saito and Kato (2008, 108) insist that “the government neither implements...activities alone nor out-sources them to NGOs. All citizens are encouraged to participate in these activities.” The key point to highlight in this idea of a strong linkage between state and society is that it is *all* citizens, including the traditionally marginalized, that are actively encouraged to participate in these processes of interaction in Kerala. Evidence below suggests that education provides marginalized individuals with the capability to participate in political society in Kerala. It also shows the impact of civil society as a whole by making it stronger through a greater number of people able to participate within it. The following discussion will begin with an overview of Kerala’s overcoming of caste and gender barriers which has been facilitated by education. Then will be a presentation of evidence demonstrating that the traditionally marginalized in Kerala have been emancipated to some extent through education, thus allowing them to participate in state processes.

Ramachandran (1997, 271) explains that mass education could not have occurred without overcoming the great barriers of gender and caste discrimination. With respect to the question of caste, he notes that in Kerala, before the spread of mass education, beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, some of the worst forms of untouchability and distance pollution were practiced. Some examples of this are that untouchables were considered to be ‘unseeable’ and lower-caste women were forbidden to cover their breasts (Heller 2000, 501). Ramachandran (1997, 271) notes that a major reason for one district of Kerala (Travancore) pulling so far ahead of another (Malabar) with respect to literacy was the spread of education among people of the Izhava caste. This is the upper tier of Kerala’s (roughly speaking) two-tier system of untouchability in the 1920s. Ramachandran continues that in 1920s and 1930s there was a “rapid expansion in school enrolment, in educational investment, and in affirmative action (in the form of scholarships, fee concessions, and unrestricted access to primary schools), that consolidated the basis of mass education”. The author also points out that despite favourable conditions, mass female literacy is also something that is new to Kerala, which begun in the nineteen sixties. Therefore, the purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate that it is a relatively recent phenomenon in Kerala that there has been an emancipation of the traditionally marginalized, which corresponds to the same timing of the increase of education in the state as a whole.

An important driving force in the expansion of literacy was through a social organization, the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP). This organization had more than 40,000 members throughout the state, and it sometimes acts in collaboration with the state of Kerala to encourage the development of literacy (Saito & Kato 2008, 105). One particularly important project through efforts of the KSSP is the Total Literacy Campaign, which began in the 1980s in effort to achieve total literacy in Kerala. Between 20,000 and 30,000 volunteers in each district were

involved in the campaign, and the KSSP assumed the responsibility of organization, adjustment and training (Saito & Kato 2008, 105-6).

Recalling the discussion from the third chapter regarding the People's Campaign from 1996 in Kerala, it is important to note that the Total Literacy Campaign predated these efforts. This provided a model for the People's Campaign to work with (Saito & Kato 2008, 105). As was noted earlier, this was an effort to decentralize certain policy planning, allocate funds and responsibilities to Panchayat governments, and entice participation of Keralans to contribute their input into what they thought should be included in the Ninth Five Year Plan to be sent to New Delhi (Fischer 2006, 26-8). This campaign had led to the social inclusion of women and SCs (Heller et al 2007, 644).⁴⁴ I argue that it is a significant step that the Total Literacy Campaign would have played into the effectual functioning of the People's Campaign of 1996. It helped guide a population through increasing their literary capabilities as a whole, particularly the traditionally marginalized, so as to allow them to participate in the decentralization project of 1996. Education and literacy act as capabilities that allow the traditionally marginalized the opportunity to capitalize upon the flow of information that is so prevalent in the state of Kerala. This has increased their level of participation, as was evidenced through the People's Campaign of 1996. The key in this subsection is that education in Kerala has acted as an equalizing agent between people of different social statuses. Therefore, while participatory development efforts are concerned with who is considered to be included in the state processes, *universalized* education has shown in Kerala to provide capability especially to the historically marginalized social groups present in society enabling their participation.

⁴⁴ For a comprehensive understanding of the results of the 1996 People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning, see this study by Heller et al 2007.

EDUCATION AS AN EQUALIZING AGENT IN BIHAR

In contrast to Kerala, Bihar faces many more obstacles, including the ability of the upper castes to maintain their control over local politics, the treatment of some of the poorest areas through lack of attention paid by the local government (ie. through lack of roads), the increase in caste conflict succeeding the elections of 2001 and the absence of female representation in local government. In this context, what would an increased level of education and literacy have on the inhabitants of Bihar? In effort to demonstrate the role that education would play in Bihar in closing the gap on inequalities due to social status, three main points of discussion will be addressed. Firstly the role that these inequalities play in the performance of panchayat governments will be addressed. Secondly, the structural barriers due to societal inequalities will be analyzed. And finally, some findings from a study will be evaluated that demonstrate the potential that education has shown in Bihar thus to increase participation in political processes.

Societal inequalities have shown to impact the mal-functioning of panchayat governments in Bihar. Corbridge et al. (2005, 198-99) bring attention to the large role that caste still plays in local politics in this state. They also note that the elections from 2001 have exacerbated this role which resulted in increased conflict in political society. The authors point out the weak functionings of the state for the poorest, which is even sometimes physically visible through the absence of roads in particular areas. They give one particular example of villagers they spoke with that did not see it as possible to go directly to speak with their Block Official for help, considering their illiteracy (Corbridge et al 2005, 212-13). However, despite these less-than-inviting conditions that inhabitants have to work within, there is still a sense of citizenship that emanates through the population. For example, this is seen through the frustration of the

swindling of funds by official or unofficial (ie. middlemen) panchayat representatives, since it is argued that this shows the feeling of entitlement to public funds (Corbridge et al 2005, 212).

Kerala has shown to produce an equalizing effect throughout its population and has resulted in an increased percentage of the population's voices that can now be heard. However, there remain structural barriers on the ground in Bihar to allowing the increase of education and literacy amongst the marginalized. For example, Chaudhri and Roy (2009) found that caste is itself a barrier to graduation rates in Bihar. Therefore, if caste is impeding Biharans' abilities to get educated, in the state-organized sense, but education is shown to remove caste barriers, we are left with a catch-22 situation on the ground in Bihar. This is not to say that the prospects for an increased level of education and literacy in Bihar is hopeless by any means, especially considering there has been some increase over the past decades, but it is rather to say again that, even more micro researched needs to be done in order to further understand the barriers that allow the marginalized in Bihar to enrol, attend, and graduate school.

Gradual increases in education in some parts of Bihar have shown to impact the ability of movement of the traditionally marginalized within its society. Sengupta et al (2008) conducted a study in Bihar in which they found a slow-moving transformation of the ability of women to move within their societies through an increase in education. The authors found that traditions and social norms largely inhibited the movement of females outside of their homes and this extended to their inability to be educated. However, little by little, women have been becoming educated which is resulting in the allowance of more women to be educated and thus increase their abilities move within societies (Sengupta et al 2008, 290). It is argued here that this study demonstrates the importance that literacy and education hold in Bihar for women and other marginalized groups to have the capability to participate in state programs and processes.

Without the freedom of movement, combined with illiteracy and lack of education, communication would be very difficult with other ‘citizens’ outside of the home of the woman. This renders the ability of the marginalized in Bihar to engage in public opinion and converse critically on political questions to remain at the status quo. Therefore, without an increase in education, power relations seem to remain stagnant between the marginalized and those in power, resulting in a stagnant level of participation, perpetuating the stronghold of political processes in the hands of elites.

Given the role that education and literacy has played in the emancipation of the traditionally marginalized in Kerala, the case in Bihar has demonstrated a contrasting case. The lack of prevalence of these societal features has resulted in a relative stagnation of the status quo with respect to societal inequalities. The low level of formal education and literacy in Kerala leaves Biharans, especially the marginalized, with little opportunity to engage in political processes. Without the capabilities derived from education, there is much less opportunity to develop a critical understanding of political processes in Bihar, especially from a state-wide analysis. Flow of information between inhabitants is also difficult since there is much less of an opening for communication between villages and across the state, thus becoming informed on state-wide issues remains difficult. Education and literacy act as empowering agents, not only for the importance of awareness, but also to build the confidence that inhabitants need to carry through requests and concerns in order to receive their entitlements.

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON EDUCATION

Investigating education through the lens of the capabilities approach has helped shed light on how this contextual factor impacts participation on the ground. If we understand

education as a capability, evidence points towards at least two ways that this factor plays a role in the lives of inhabitants of the two states under analysis. The first is that education provides inhabitants much more opportunity to participate in decentralization projects since it fosters an environment in which inhabitants can become more informed of issues that affect them and their state, public opinion can blossom and critical awareness of the importance of participation can flourish. Secondly, education has been shown to be an equalizing agent in that it helps to close the gap of inequality between inhabitants. In a country that is known for its relatively rigid social stratification (i.e. the Indian caste system), this allows for a more even opportunity for *all* locals to participate, and can therefore shed some light on the discussion raised by the literature on participatory development mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis regarding the concern of *which* locals are included in participation.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

PARTICIPATION AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

India has proven to be a gripping case study in which to investigate the element of participation within its society. The kaleidoscopic elements embedded within and across its societies provide a fascinating palette to engage with and maneuver within. Even after narrowing down the focus in comparing just two states within the country, as well as just two contextual factors within those states, further amplification of the density of Indian societies has been illuminated. Of course the limits in scope could be reduced even more which would no doubt result in an illumination of other factors that are not as visible from a more macro approach to observation. Nonetheless, each approach nicely identifies different aspects of importance that help to continue peeling the endless pile of onions that comprise India and the role of participation within it.

If there is one take-home message that is hoped to be drawn from this thesis, it is that in the realm of investigating participation in a society, *context matters*. The comparison between Kerala and Bihar is intended to demonstrate the complex heterogeneity that exists between societies and communities in India. By drawing upon contemporary studies as well as touching upon some historical examples of participation in the two states, it highlighted the transformation aspect through time and space. Reiterating a quote used in chapter one by Robert Chambers (2005, 104), this research confirms that participation has “no final meaning. It is not a rock. It is mobile and malleable, an amoeba, a sculptor’s clay, a plasticine shaped as it passes from hand to hand...each generation, each group, each person, should puzzle out what they think it should mean and how they can best give it expression.” It is for this reason, that participation envelops endless variations and transformations, that it cannot be precisely defined in an all-encompassing

manner. I argue that the intricacies of context, as well as its continuous transformations, significantly impact this constantly transforming concept of participation as well. Context then, has shown to be of great importance when analyzing participation, and thus, should be considered as an unavoidable aspect to planning participatory development programs, policies and processes. This confirms the suspicions of authors mentioned in other sections who have called for a greater understanding of local conditions such as Andrea Cornwall, Stuart Corbridge, Robert Chambers, and Amartya Sen.

ROLE OF CONTEXUAL FACTORS INVESTIGATED

The specific contextual factors that were investigated in this research in chapters three and four, trust in the state and education, have shed light on certain aspects that I argue impact participation levels in Kerala and Bihar. Through the guidance of the macro-theoretical point of departure, neo-institutionalism, emphasis was placed on taking into account the structures that are both facilitating and inhibiting the movement, choices and actions of agents. Some concluding remarks on the impact that these structures have had on participation of inhabitants will now be addressed.

Trust in the State

The concept of trust in the state is understood in this thesis to be derived from a vision created by the population. It was argued that this vision is developed through interactions between the two entities. This notion was reduced further into two streams of thought, being the spectrums of reliability versus unreliability, and the state as a source of protection versus a source to be feared. Focusing on the first stream, reliability, allowed the illumination of

sentiments that appeared to impact the participation of individuals in the two states under observation.

In Kerala, it is argued that there is a comparatively higher level of trust in the state, as its citizens represent the state as both a reliable institution and as a protector. Firstly, the strength of state-society synergy has provided an avenue with which to demonstrate the reliability that inhabitants see within their state. The more integrated and unified relationship between state and society in Kerala has resulted in a situation in which the state acts in a more transparent and accountable manner. This has allowed for Keralans to see their state as something that is more predictable, and thus in Putnam's view, allows for more trust to be held between them. This synergy can be evidenced largely through the Communist party influence within Keralan society, for example through its many efforts to act in conjunction with civil society groups in Kerala to promote decentralization of state processes. The state has also been evidenced to be much more reliable in Kerala than in Bihar through the strong functioning of poverty alleviation programs. Participation in these programs in Kerala has rendered predictable outcomes for Keralans, thus the choice to participate in them by the inhabitants is natural. Secondly, the state in Kerala is seen as a source of protection which is evidenced through the strength of democratic institutions. One example given was that Kerala rates the highest among all Indian states in the functioning of the rule of law. Social protections and basic services are also largely enjoyed by Keralans, as well as very successful labour unions which are almost all tied to political parties. The state therefore in Kerala is something that can be sought after for protection, essentially through participating in the programs that it offers, as well as through protests and activism in conjunction with state processes. It is argued through the evidence presented in the third chapter then, as well as briefly mentioned here, that according to the definition used for this section,

there is a higher level of trust in the state by Keralans, resulting in a positive impact upon the level of participation.

Bihar, by contrast, has shown to hold a comparatively lower level of trust in the state by the population. The representation of the state, as seen in Bihar, is impaired by decades of mismanagement, inefficiency, as well as violence. Firstly, the disconnect between the state and society was demonstrated through the evidence of difficulty that the state endured when trying to make its population legible. James Scott would not have been surprised by these results, being that inhabitants too often were unattached to the status that they were deemed, and therefore did not always hold meaning for them. This generates a sentiment of 'otherness' and 'foreignness' experienced between the two entities. This was compounded by the intricacies of power relations on the ground during the processes of making the inhabitants legible. In addition to this, the rampant dysfunction of poverty alleviation programs as well as the corruption associated with them rendered the participation of inhabitants, at times, useless since they would often not receive the benefits that were entitled to them. Secondly, the blurred boundary between the state and the terrorist in Bihar, primarily evidenced through the heavy influence of the Naxalite movement in the area, who has taken on some duties normally undertaken by the state, has impacted how the population sees the state. Essentially there is a divide between two localizations of power, the state and the Naxalites, to which the population can seek protection from. Finally, the historical and contemporary efforts by the state in Bihar to extract and exploit natural resources in the area has brought distress, to say the least, to the population affected in this area. It is argued that this has rendered the state of Bihar as something to be feared by the population. Thus, considering the evidence presented towards this two streams of thought affecting the vision of the state, I argue that there is a relatively lower level of trust in the state by

Biharans which has resulted in a much lower incentive for the population to participate in state processes.

Education

Turning now to the second factor that was under analysis, education, it is important to recall that the macro framework starting point was understanding education as a capability. Education was then tied to two specific political dynamics: political decentralization and social equalization. Considering that the goal of decentralization efforts is to increase the inclusion of locals in state processes, it was a logical step to examine how education as a capability impacts decentralization, best observed through the panchayat governments. Considering India's highly hierarchical and rigid social stratification, the second focal point of concentration analyzed the equalizing effects of education, thus creating an environment in which capability of the traditionally marginalized were more capable at participating.

It was argued in chapter four of this thesis that the comparatively higher level in education in Kerala has resulted in a higher level of capability for the population to participate in state programs and processes. It was evidenced that important elements to be present among a population to ensure the functioning of decentralization include largely a critical awareness of the importance of participation, as well as literacy and flow of information to enable to creation of a rich public opinion. These elements were shown to exist in a comparatively higher level in Kerala than in Bihar, resulting in a higher level of capability of Keralans to participate in decentralization processes. With respect to the second focal point, investigating education as an equalizing agent, it is argued that education has provided capability of the traditionally marginalized to participate. Considering the importance that participatory development theorists

and practitioners place upon the question of *who's* participation ends up being increased, emancipation of the traditionally marginalized becomes an important issue. The gap on economic and social inequality has largely been overcome in Kerala due to education which is argued to increase the capabilities of the traditionally marginalized to participate.

Decentralization efforts in Bihar have been comparatively less successful at functioning than in Kerala. This is largely evidenced through the barriers that remain in Biharan society between castes. For example some inhabitants found it to be inappropriate to speak with local government leaders due to their status of being illiterate. The issue of illiteracy was also shown to be an obstacle of the functioning of decentralized development programs, such as the TPDS. Considering the much lower level of education in the state as a whole, as well as literacy, capabilities of communication between inhabitants has been more difficult to establish. Given the findings in Kerala that education capabilities result in critical awareness of the importance of participation as well as the creation of a rich public opinion, it is not surprising that there is a weaker functioning of decentralization efforts in Bihar considering the lower education levels and rates of literacy. The second point of focus, education as a potential equalizing agent, has shown to impact Biharans' capabilities to participate, particularly the marginalized. Evidence was presented through a study by Sengupta et al (2008) that the gradual increase of education of women is having a strong impact on their ability to move within society outside of the household. Caste has also been evidenced as a barrier to education, although it was also noted that education has been shown to impact the removal of caste barriers. Thus is a catch-22 situation on the ground in Bihar which appears to require some kind of external force in order to influence change at a faster rate than what is occurring now, as seen through Sengupta et al's (1998) study.

ANALYTICAL CONTRIBUTION

I will now sum up the analytical contribution of this thesis. As was discussed in the theoretical chapter, there has been a calling in the participatory development literature for more focus on differences in context (Cornwall 2002, Gaventa 2004, Chambers 2005, Nussbaum & Sen 1993). This thesis looks to add to this discussion by shedding light on two important contextual factors when thinking about participation and participatory development. Therefore, I argue that theorists and practitioners should always take into account the variations between contexts when thinking about participation. This thesis investigated only two of the numerous factors that could be taken into consideration. Of course it would be impossible to ever analyze all of the factors impacting participation in any given situation, it is important nonetheless to consider the wide variation that exists between different societies due to different structures that agents are working within.

Firstly, trust in the state held by a population was demonstrated to impact participation in Kerala and Bihar. Authors such as Scott (1998), Corbridge (2005) and Putnam (1993), each in their own ways, provided meaning to the concept of trust in the state, and thus their works was a good starting point for this thesis. This research has shown that, in response to the calling for more contextual understanding of participation, this factor has shown to be an interesting consideration when thinking about participation. In Kerala, the vision developed by the population of its state was one of reliability as well as one of a source of protection, contrasted with the situation in Bihar where the vision developed was less reliable and more based on fear. The findings in this thesis have shown that this vision that is developed by the population of its state impacts the level of participation, or more specifically, participation in conjunction with state processes and programs.

Secondly, formal education levels within a population were shown to impact participation levels in the two states under observation. The theoretical chapter outlined certain authors that helped to discuss the role of education in participation. Nussbaum and Sen (1993) aided in narrowing down the focus of seeing education as a capability. Dreze and Sen (2002) shed light on presenting education as an empowering agent. This research has shown that in response to an increased understanding of the role of context in participation studies, education, from the perspectives of these authors, can be considered as a factor that sustains higher rates of societal participation. In Kerala, where formal education was at a much higher rate than in Bihar, Keralan inhabitants were more equipped to engage in participation in state processes and programs than Biharan inhabitants. In addition to this, Keralans also benefited from the equalizing effects that education brings upon a population, which incidentally contributed to the discussion in the participatory development literature in regards to the question of *who* participates in state programs and processes. Education was shown in Kerala to impact the level of participation not only of the population as a whole, but also specifically of the traditionally marginalized sections of the population due to the equalizing effects of education.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although I did not have the resources to undertake extensive research in India, my thesis is able to point at a number of critically important political dynamics. This being said, this project raises many questions that further research projects could address. First, researchers should examine the different types of existing participation. In this thesis, I had to limit the investigation to participation as aligned with state intentions and processes. However, this is not the only type of participation that is engaged with, as was especially seen in Bihar. For example,

in a way that echoes James Scott's work on 'weapons of the weak,' Shah (2007) conducted a study in Jharkhand who found instances where the people would use state encounters in acts of manipulation. Shah demonstrates that the participation in elections in the society being studied, was in fact in effort to keep the state away, rather than participate in its functioning as is typically thought of in democratic societies. Shah concludes (2007, 143), "(The) Munda (tribe's) imaginings of the state ...were a product of their relationship with the rural elite, their historical experiences of state officers, as well as their vision of an alternative form of politics indivisible from a spiritual realm. And it was these imaginings of the state that guided Munda participation in the democratic process to keep the state away". Essentially, through partly the encouragements (and/or exploitations) by state representatives (Munda elites) who were running for election for the Members of the Legislative Assemblies (MLAs), which are the most local-level elections in the area⁴⁵, villagers feared state infiltration and favored their own spiritual form of politics which represents "unity, inclusion, lack of self-interest, and amicable resolution of disputes" (Shah 2007, 130). The villagers saw their participation in the elections as protecting themselves from state processes and infiltration by electing an MLA to handle all communication with the state.

There are other examples that demonstrate Biharans' acting together in opposition to the state, such as seeking access to the informal economy through the Naxalite movement (Shah 2006), or looking for support from the transnational sphere for official indigenous recognition rather than from the state (Ghosh 2006). I am suggesting that it is these endogenous acts of participation that could perhaps tell us much more about why and how Biharans participate. If

⁴⁵ According to Shah's (2007, 143) endnote, "India is a federal union and the *Vidhan Sabhas* are directly elected bodies set up to carry out the administration of the government in the states. Members of the *Lok Sabhas* in the parliament at the centre, MPs are also elected by the people. These elections, however, cover larger areas, and because the Tapu MP is in Ranchi and not in Bero, they are almost insignificant in Tapu. Village-level *panchayat* elections have not taken place since 1978."

we essentially take the concept of the state out of the equation, perhaps this could help us, as researchers, see further outside the box. In other words, perhaps it could help us uncover different onions that we could not see with the state in the way.

A second avenue for research, which will require extensive fieldwork, has to do with how citizens actually 'see' the state. This would expand upon the work of Stuart Corbridge and Glyn Williams which has been drawn extensively upon in this research. It would be a helpful expansion to explore this question of 'seeing the state' in other areas in India, other than primarily in the Eastern part. Here the goal would be to undertake ethnographic research to map out what is probably large and complex spectrum of '*visions of the state.*' Certainly, how one represents the state is a function of one's religious background (being a member of the Muslim minority vs. a member of the Hindu majority), caste (e.g. Brahman vs. dalit), occupation (landless peasant vs. rich absentee landowner), etc. But language, everyday interactions, gender, and other factors less often analyzed must play a role as well.

Finally, researchers with more resources should analyze with more scrutiny the historical dimension of participation, trust in the state and education. This thesis did address the time variable, but inevitably more research is required here. How do different time periods *within* each of our case studies compare one with another? What explains the specific shifts in Kerala? Why the relative regularity across time in Bihar? To what extent does the rise of information technologies impact on education, on the flow of information, and, ultimately, on participation? The latter point is extremely important, not simply because India is at the center of the new economy of information technology, but also because this factor to have played a role in recent elections in India.

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APPENDIX

Right to Food

Survey done on 30th January 2009 to 8th February 2009

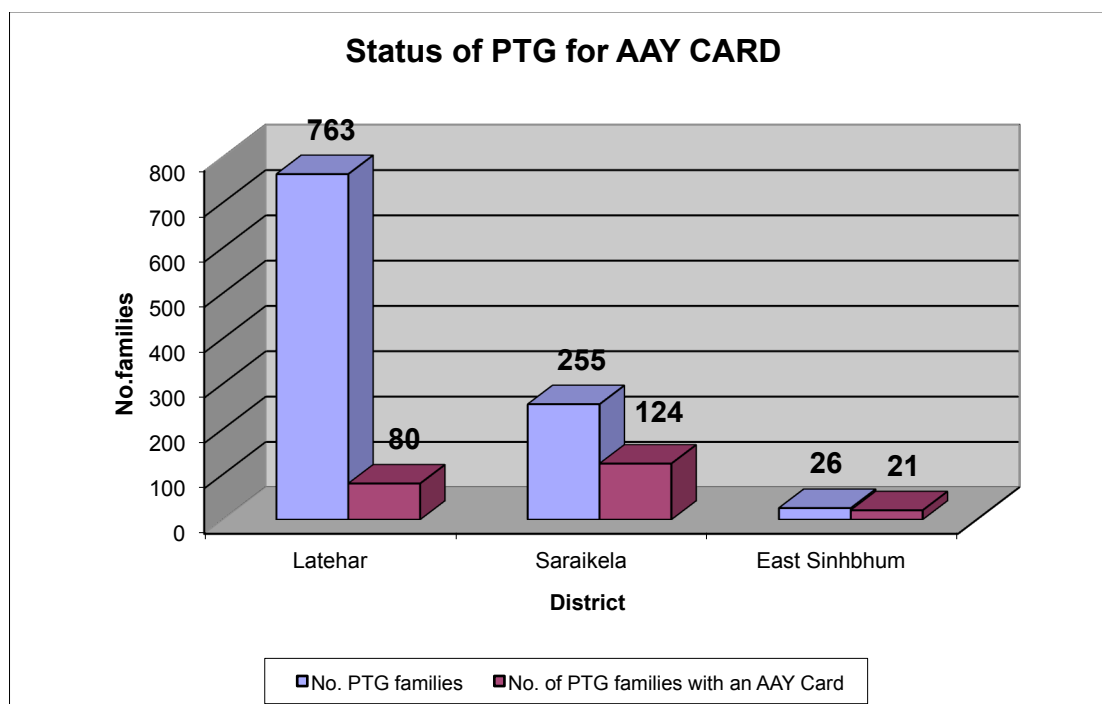
Field Survey Analysis

Table No.1

District	Survey Areas	Total No. of Families	Total No. of PTG Families Entitled to an AAY Card	Total No. of Entitled Families with an AAY Card	Total No. of Entitled Families without an AAY Card*	% of AAY Card Distribution
Latehar	1 Block, 4 Panchayat, 7 Village, 24 Hemlets	908	763	80	683	10.48
Saraikela	3 Block, 8 Panchayat, 14 Village, 14 Hemlets	1253	255	124	131	48.63
East Sinhbhum	1 Block, 1 Panchayat, 1 Village, 1 Hemlets	60	26	21	5	80.77
		2221	1044	225	819	21.55

Source: Field survey in Jharkhand held on 30 January to 8 February 2009

* Those entitled but without an AAY card are listed in the annex below



Right to Food

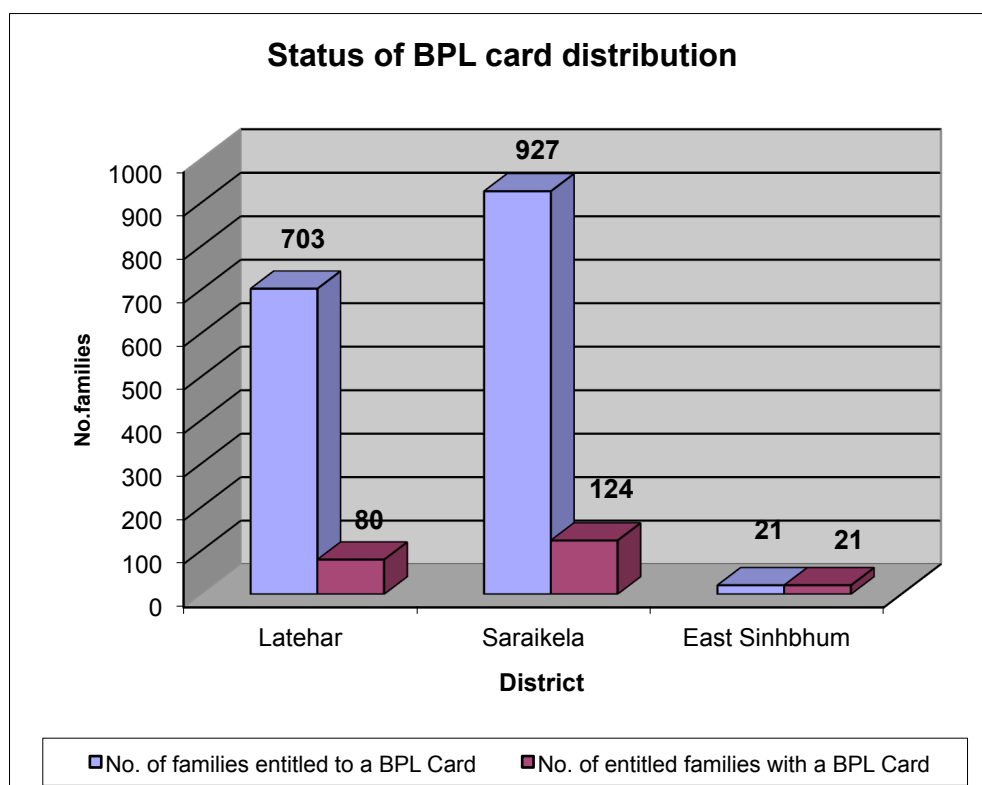
Survey done on 30th January 2009 to 8th February 2009

Field Survey Fact Sheet

Table No.2

District	Survey Areas	Total No. of Families	Total No. of Families Entitled to a BPLCard	Total No. of Entitled Families with a BPL Card	% of BPL card distribution
Latehar	1 Block, 4 Panchayat, 7 Village, 24 Hemlets	908	703	80	11.38
Saraikela	3 Block, 8 Panchayat, 14 Village, 14 Hemlets	1253	927	124	13.38
East Sinhbhum	1 Block, 1 Panchayat, 1 Village, 1 Hemlets	60	21	21	100.00
Total		2221	1651	225	13.63

Source: Field survey in Jharkhand held on 30 January to 8 February 2009



Right to Food

Survey done on 30th January 2009 to 8th February 2009

Field Survey Fact Sheet

Table No.3

District	Survey Areas	Total No of Families	Total No of Families with a Ration Card (AAY, BPL or Annapurna)	% of Ration Card Distribution
Latehar	1 Block, 4 Panchayat, 7 Village, 24 Hemlets	908	582	64.10
Saraikela	3 Block, 8 Panchayat, 14 Village, 14 Hemlets	1253	189	15.08
East Sinhbhum	1 Block, 1 Panchayat, 1 Village, 1 Hemlets	60	45	75.00
Total		2221	816	36.74

Source: Field survey in Jharkhand held on 30 January to 8 February 2009

