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Title of Thesis: Cultural Values and Development: A Sociological Study of Five
Communities in Okhla, Delhi

Abstract

While in the past economists have integrated culture in their development analysis
(Smith, 1759; de Tocqueville, 1851; Weber, 1904; Polanyi, 1944; Banfield, 1958;
Gramsci, 1971; Singh, 1973), the cultural dimension has suffered "comparative
indifference" in the last forty years (Sen, 2004, p. 37). As a result, three gaps exist in the
field of culture and development studies in India. First, no tool exists to study the
relationship between culture and development in the Indian context. Second, no academic
forum specialises in culture and development studies for the Indian context. Third, there
exists no interdisciplinary field of transformative learning in India, to inform how one
might address the cultural dimension in development from an integrated perspective.

These three gaps in the field of culture and development studies inform the three research
questions driving the study: (1) What cultural factors, if any, have been identified by
scholars and practitioners as barriers to development in India? (2) How are practitioners
attempting to address cultural barriers to development? What do they (and research)
recommend as effective ways to address cultural barriers to development? (3) What is a
viable methodology for studying the relationship between the cultural values and

development levels of a particular community in the Indian context?

The research questions are explored within the context of the Indian Constitution's Preamble, which acts as the values base for cultural values (equality, liberty, fraternity). The theoretical framework of this study is Critical Realism (CR) applied to a study of cultural values and development (CV&D) in the context of India.

Regarding barriers, equality, liberty, and fraternity still seem to matter most, as they did in 1950. According to twenty-five social development practitioners, the top three cultural barriers restricting India's development today – across the five communities – are the lack of human dignity (juxtaposed against equality), fatalism (juxtaposed against liberty of thought and action), and materialism (juxtaposed against fraternity).

Regarding strategies to instill Constitutional values, nine strategies emerged from the practices of social development practitioners: socialisation, modeling, transformative learning theory, transformative leadership, metanarrative, spiritual authority, philosophical reasoning, values education, and policy. However, despite decades of experience, most practitioners limited themselves to one or two strategies in their interventions.

Regarding the survey tool, the chief investigator recommends turning the initial fifty-four question survey into a nineteen-question survey, focusing on the three constructs that emerged from research question one: fatalism, materialism, human dignity. This will increase the usability of the survey and integrate the values of the Indian Constitution (equality, liberty, and fraternity) into India's development analysis.