

WEEK 6

Fictions and Realities

The Indian Dream

A. Set of documents

Document 1

How India remains poor: Has poverty become 'hereditary'?

Millions of Indian households transfer poverty to the next generation, making poverty eradication nearly impossible

Something that has haunted me through my 22 years of reporting the rural India is how some people in certain regions always remain poor. I have visited them multiple times for various assignments but have always found them talking about poverty.

Like me, they too always wonder: "Why do we remain poor?"

I have mostly reported the country's 200 poorest districts, now called "aspirational districts". These have been the beneficiary of expansive poverty eradication programmes since 1951, when the first Five-Year Plan came into being.

These districts have since become the focus of all development plans in India. In each of them, on an average, 195 development programmes – everyone with an anti-poverty component – have been implemented.

The image of a chronic poor household became starker when I started revisiting them, though not planned but as part of various assignments. A curiosity to know why they remain poor turned into a serious enumeration effort.

In small samples of households across these districts – to name a few Kalahandi and Nuapada in Odisha; Jhabua and Tikamgarh in Madhya Pradesh; Gumla and Khunti in Jharkhand; the Bastar region in Chhattisgarh; and Ananthapuramu in Andhra Pradesh – I started inquiring about the economic conditions of their next generation. Are they also poor?

That is when the disturbing reality of India's poverty getting concentrated and chronic emerged.

The next generation of most poor households are also poor; in fact, the intensity and distress is greater. Also, the new generation is without access or with restricted access to livelihood resources such as land, forest and water.

With an apology to biologists, poverty has arguably become genetic. If caste and religion were two default hereditary burdens, poverty is the next.

Cut to 2020

In the next two years, poverty would be eradicated, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised. That would be eight years before India's global commitment of eradicating poverty by 2030 as mandated by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No.1

Modi made the promise on September 25, 2017 at a national executive meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party. This was at the centre of his promised "New India".

Ironically, his government doesn't know exactly how poor India is.

In November 2019, the Union government stopped the release of a consumption expenditure survey that would have indicated the exact level of poverty in the country.

The 75th round survey of the National Statistical Office – done every five years – on consumer expenditure was leaked to the media. Officially, India would have its next headcount of the poor only in 2023, a year after Modi's promised poverty-free India.

The survey report exposed exactly what we have been experiencing. A rise in India's poverty, but mostly among the traditionally poor communities in traditionally earmarked geography of the poor, eg: the districts of Jhabua, Khunti, Nuapada and the Bastar region.

Going by the leaked NSO survey report, consumption expenditure declined 10 per cent per annum in rural areas and 4 per cent / annum in urban areas. Consumption expenditure is used as a proxy for income in India, in turn forming the basis for measuring poverty.

"The immediate implication is that poverty headcount ratios would, in all likelihood, have increased between 2011-12 and 2017-18, against a sharp decline between 2004-05 and 2011-12," said Himanshu, an associate professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, who analysed the leaked survey report.

That the reduction in poverty hasn't been impressive has also been pointed out by an assessment released in January 2020 by government think-tank NITI Aayog. Going by the states' progress on poverty reduction, India is far behind the 'zero poverty by 2030'. States rather slipped in their efforts to reduce poverty in 2019, in comparison to 2018.

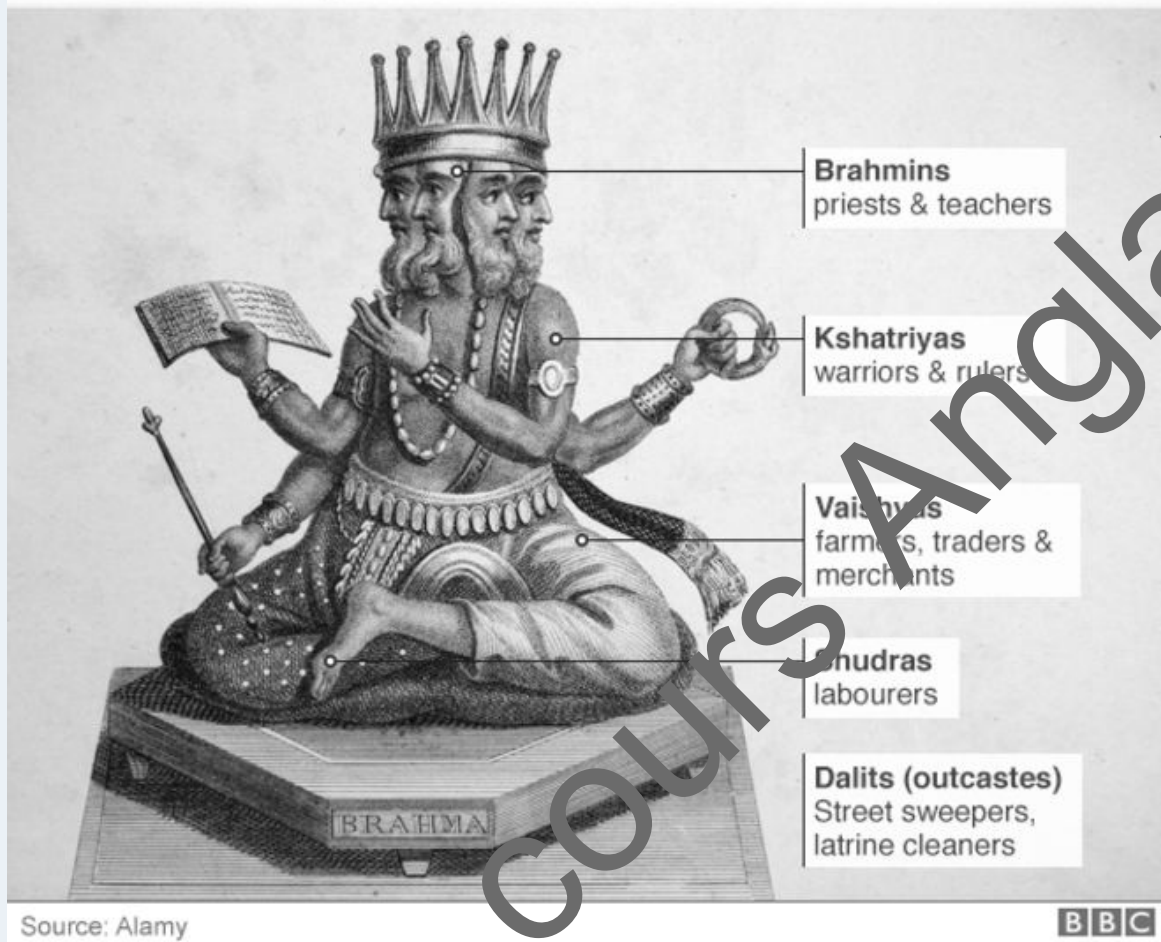
Those are the states that have been traditionally marked as the geography of poverty in India. Ironically, they also host India's richest mineral resources and forests and have plenty of the country's water resources.

How India remains poor: Has poverty become 'hereditary', January 14th, 2020.

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/economy/how-india-remains-poor-has-poverty-become-hereditary--68790>

Document 2

Brahma and the origins of caste



Teachers*: academics

Document 3

Video: India, A nation of many extremes,

<https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2017/10/world/i-on-india-income-gap/>

B. Exercises

Document 1

Exercise 1:

Answer the following questions :

- a. What does « aspirational districts » mean?
- b. What are the three burdens of Indians?
- c. Define « chronic poverty »

Exercise 2:

Translate the following words in French :

- a. Household
- b. Starker
- c. Component
- d. Distress
- e. Livelihood
- f. Burden
- g. Release
- h. Expenditure
- i. Survey
- j. Leaked
- k. Headcount
- l. Earmarked

Document 2

Look at the picture, explain what you understand about the Indian's caste system.

Document 3

Explain the title of the document.



Envoyer le devoir à soumettre n°2

