

Indian Sociological Society

**XXXVI All India Sociological Conference
27-29 December 2010 at Ravenshaw University, Cuttack.**

Theme: "Development, Polity and Social Tensions"

INDIA is a shining Asian tiger that is surging ahead with a renewed sense of confidence, as a democratic polity, having a large young educated and skilled population. The country's GDP has grown with liberalization of its economy since the early 1990s. Economic growth rate of India has been hovering around nine per cent per annum, and the middle class with impressive purchasing power is increasing in size with attendant institutions of consumer culture. Rapid urbanization, increase in literacy, access to information and communication technology and the growth of the fourth estate are signs of positive development. But the other side of the picture is challenging. Poverty, hunger, destitution, homelessness, disability, unprotected children and women are about 15 per cent of the population, and rising in metropolitan cities as are crime and corruption. It is, as it were, a different world yet existing within the shining India. High levels of inequality are not just economic but also in other sectors like health while India is emerging as a roaring medical tourist destination. Institutions of marriage, family, and caste and community are experiencing hitherto untoward changes and challenges. Technology, be it the gun or the new reproductive technology, is used to eliminate undesired family members without remorse, while food producers and farmers commit suicides. While the civil society highlights these issues, the civic and responsible governance questions come to the fore as intense social

tensions within and outside the home and the family make regular news. The State's role in the welfare of the citizen is critical to good governance and social good.

Questions of effective governance arise in view of the above, and also in view of the political turmoil in several states in the North, North-east, Central and Eastern parts of the country. While there are social tensions of ethnic and communal conflict in some cases, others are seen as emanating from economic policies-- both national and multinational-- and poor, short sighted governance. Naxal and Maoist conflicts with forces of the State, terrorism and protests against SEZs, chemical and mining industries, causing havoc with millions of people's health and ecologically sensitive livelihoods, are common happenstances along with the India that is shining. The contrasting social, cultural, educational, and economic parallel worlds in which Indians inhabit are not unknown to each other. The politics of development and deprivation ensures, among other things, a range of social tensions. Revisiting development discourse in the present context is called for. How do sociologists analyze and put forth their interpretation of this complex development that Indian society is going through? The conference will address some of these issues at various Symposia and Research Committees (RCs) during the XXXVI AISC at Cuttack from 27-29 December, 2010.