

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF POVERTY
DISCOURSES OF POVERTY AND THE PRACTICE OF
POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN INDIA

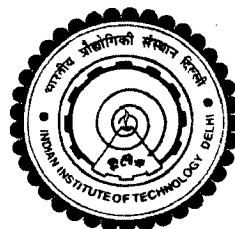
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Submitted

In fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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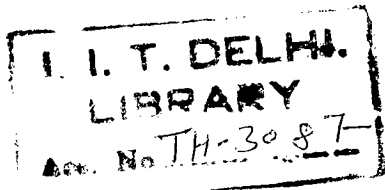


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CERTIFICATE

I am satisfied that the thesis entitled "**The Social Construction of Poverty: Discourses of Poverty and the Practice of Poverty alleviation in India**" submitted by **Ameeta Motwani** is worthy of consideration for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** and is a record of the original bonafide research work carried out by her under my guidance and supervision and that the results contained in it have not been submitted in part or full to any other university or Institute for award of any degree/diploma.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to understand the social construction of poverty by studying various discourses of poverty and its interaction with the practice of poverty alleviation in contemporary Indian society. Studying the several discourses of poverty – academic, official and of international agencies, allows us to unpack and understand poverty as a social object.

The study explores the relationship between academic research; evolution of policy; implementation of policy; and construction of common sense knowledge about poverty in India. It questions the Weberian notions of a rational and impersonal bureaucracy and reveals the social embeddedness of the bureaucracy.

By observing government's initiatives to alleviate poverty and provide education and health facilities to its citizens, the study brings out the importance of the agency of the state actors and the community. It shows that the poor are not merely passive actors but need to and do access the state in various ways. In the process, lower echelons of government bureaucracy and the 'official' poor, appropriate and transform the meaning of poverty. The study reveals that the village level workers play a decisive role in determining (a) how these initiatives are implemented and (b) who benefits from these. The study shows how the discourses of 'participation' and 'empowerment' get transformed in practice at the village level.

Besides the written discourses of academics, officials and of donor agencies, there is the oral discourse: the discourse of the people. Academic, official and popular discourses interact with the practices of poverty alleviation to constitute poverty as a social construct.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADC	Assistant District Commissioner (He/She is in charge of the development activities in the district. In some states he/she is called the Chief Development Officer CDO)
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
APL	Above Poverty Line
AW	Aanganwadi (ICDS center)
AWW	Aanganwadi Worker
BC	Backward Caste
BDO	Block Development Office(r)
BDO SSP	Business Development Officer, Swa-Shakti project
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CHC	Community Health Center
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DAVP	Department of Audio Visual Publicity
DPAP	Drought Prone Area Programme
DPM	District Project Manager
DRDA	District Rural Development Agency
EAS	Employment Assurance Scheme
FCI	Food Corporation of India
FGT	Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (Index)
GDI	Gender Development Index
HCR	Head Count Ratio
HDI	Human Development Index

HDR	Human Development Report
HPI	Human Poverty Index
IAY	Indira Aawaas Yojana
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
JGSY	Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana
JRY	Jawahar Rojgar Yojana
MPCE	Monthly Per capita Consumer Expenditure
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NAS	National Accounts Systems
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NPNSPE	National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education
NREP	National Rural Employment Programme
NSS	National Sample Survey Organisation
OBC	Other Backward Caste(s)
PAP	Poverty Alleviation Programme(s)
PDS	Public Distribution System
PHC	Primary Health Center
PL	Poverty Line
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal(s)
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
RLEGP	Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme
TPDS	Targeted Public Distribution Programme

SC	Scheduled Caste(s)
SDP	State Domestic Product
SGRY	Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana
SGSY	Swarnjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana
SHG	Self Help Group
SSP	Swa-Shakti programme (Programme for Empowerment of Rural Women)
ST	Scheduled Tribe(s)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VLW	Village Level (extension) Worker
WDR	World Development Report

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