tivities like the Karaga, Annamma Jathre, St Mary's Feast or the Kadalekai Parishe which are so unique to this city, have no relevance or importance just because they have not been catalogued and documented in colonial literature. Whereas the dominant and recurring theme in the book is the historical fact of the city's bifurcation into the Cantonment and the Pete, its linkage to the harsh reality that Bangalore has erased memories of its past has not been analysed or correlated. After all, all the cities in British India then, including Calcutta and Madras had their Black Towns and White Towns to separate the British populace from the 'dark-skinned natives'. On comparative terms, why is it then that while contemporary Chennai and Kolkata continue to celebrate their past heritage despite this bifurcation (sometimes even trifurcation), Bengaluru (despite its name change) has not? This question remains largely looming and unanswered. Even if the Cantonment part of the city sought to obliterate the Kannada culture of the Mysore state, why are there no manifestations and memories of this in the Pete area too today? Why has Bangalore taken such a surge forward where its past has been struggling and unable to keep pace with the march of the present and the future? While the authors rationalize this by saying that 'all through Bengaluru's tumultuous history, the dominant groups have had little reason to celebrate the past', this is not a Bangalore-specific syndrome where groups have displaced others. So one wished these vital questions that determine the very spirit of the city had been dwelt in more depth and convincing viewpoints brought out.

But these flip sides apart, the book is largely fascinating and scholarly, and a timely addition to the existing meagre literature that exists about the city. Bangalore stands today at crossroads in the course of its long and eventful existence. The very identity of the city and what defines being a 'Bangalorean' has perhaps never had as many versions and conflicting answers as we find today. Linguistically, culturally and ethnically, the tussle between Bangalore and Bengaluru has been accentuated in this globalized world, where the term 'Bangalored' has assumed different ramifications to different groups world over.

History is often described as a mirror in which we recognize ourselves as a people, as a nation. It is a different

matter that a modern Bangalorean would in that case barely be able to recognize what she sees in this skewed mirror that is occasionally held up to her! In such despairing moments of 'rootlessness', efforts like this book backed with immaculate research become extremely vital and necessary. Using the past to build a bridge to the present and a roadmap for the future, as encapsulated in the book, is definitely how the history of any city needs to be written, read and understood.

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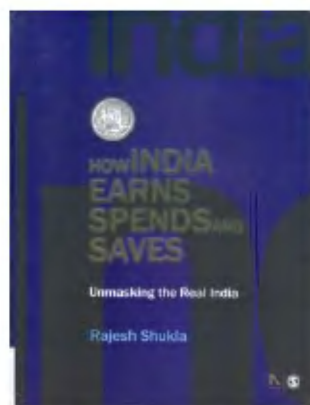
How India Earns, Spends and Saves: Unmasking the Real India. Rajesh Shukla. Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, B1/I-1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044 and NCAER-CMCR, Parisala Bhawan, 11 IP Estate, New Delhi 110 002. 2010. 202 pp. Price: Rs 1500.

In asking the apparently simple empirical question of how India earns, spends and saves, Rajesh Shukla and the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER), New Delhi are entering the minefield that Indian economic statistics has now become. This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the estimates of persons who live in poverty. The Arjun Sengupta Committee placed the figure as a high 77%; the N. C. Saxena committee put the figure at 50%, the Tendulkar Committee said it was 37%, and some

earlier optimistic estimates by supporters of liberalization had insisted that the figure had come down below 20%. When the estimates of poverty can vary anywhere between a fifth and nearly four-fifths of the population, the credibility of economic statistics is certainly not at its peak.

This credibility crisis has at least three sources. Ironically enough, the one with the greatest impact is the closer relationship that has emerged between policy and poverty statistics. Built into the poverty line is the difficulty with cut-offs. Those just above the poverty line are not all that much less poor than those just below it. This difficulty did not matter a great deal as long as the poverty line was only a matter of academic debate. But once those below the poverty line received greater benefits in the Public Distribution System, it meant those just below the poverty line received a number of benefits that were not available to those just above it. This disparity between two sets of people facing not too different conditions was politically explosive. And politicians responded by simply raising the effective poverty estimates to a level where those just above it would not be keen to be considered poor. Thus, in some states the percentage of the population eligible for Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards could be as high as 80%.

The second source of variation in data on the income status of the population is the simple fact that those using these statistics are not always talking of the same thing. The basis for defining the poverty line can itself vary a great deal. The poverty line in India was based on a family having enough resources to buy food to meet its essential calorie requirements. There is now a move to increase the parameters that need to be considered. People interested in international comparisons tend to favour more easily recognizable criteria, such as those with incomes below a dollar a day. Even here there is no great sanctity about the line. Some would like it to be raised to more than a dollar a day. And we have to keep in mind that the value of the dollar itself can vary a great deal.

Determining what people mean can become even more complicated, when we look at economic statistics other than poverty. Commonly used terms can mean different things in different societies. The term 'middle class' in India reflects a very different level of income than it

does in the United States. Some companies paid a high price for failing to recognize this distinction. Soon after liberalization there was widespread talk of the Indian middle class covering a population of 200 million. This number saw a rush of foreign companies that catered to the middle class in countries like the United States – Nike, McDonald's and the like. Once they set up shop in India, they realized that what they sold to the middle class in the United States was only affordable by the better-off in India.

The third source of the distortions in economic statistics is the scientific one. Collecting data on income comes up against a host of non-sampling errors. People tend to have different ideas of what constitutes income. Not everyone, for instance, includes the interest earned in an odd bank deposit as their income. If the questionnaire does come up with an exhaustive enough list of sources of income, it is not likely that the respondent will remember all the details. And to top it all, there is always the possibility that people will tend to exaggerate their income just that little bit when talking to a stranger.

The National Sample Surveys try to overcome this problem by focusing on expenditure data. This is based on the argument that a precise question about particular expenditures over a fixed and relatively recent period would provide more accurate answers than a general

question on income. A substantial amount of analysis could be carried out on the basis of groups classified according to expenditure. And, if required, income estimates could be generated on the basis of other information on the relationship between expenditure and income.

Shukla is aware of these pitfalls, but does not provide the detailed explicit discussion that can be expected from the somewhat ambitious claim in the subtitle of the book: 'Unmasking the Real India'. The book under review is, in the main, a compilation of data collected in 2005–06 by the NCAER through its National Survey of Household Income and Expenditure. And the responses to the three main sources of diversity in income statistics are more implicit than explicit.

It is quite evident that the study addresses the marketing professional rather than the social scientist. The questions it raises are designed to capture market features rather than social dimensions. It has, for instance, a chapter on the income pyramid, but does not find it necessary to enter the debate on poverty line. When it looks at information on land distribution, its primary interest is on the impact that land ownership has on spending. Given this focus it would perhaps be unfair to expect the study to even suggest answers to questions plaguing the social scientists, such as, does the income distribution pattern mirror the patterns of Naxalite violence.

When seen as a backgrounder for marketing professionals the vast amounts of data provided in the book should be of use. The data on the spending patterns of Indian households should at least confirm what marketers may well have guessed, such as the fact that more urban households have a colour television than a radio, whereas the reverse is true in rural areas; a greater proportion of rural households own a bicycle than their urban counterparts, and so on.

But even marketers must find the absence of a geographical pattern in the analysis of data disconcerting. When grouping states, Shukla prefers to classify them into high income, middle income and low income, thereby clubbing together states from very different parts of the country. This does not help a marketer looking for information to help her make a regional strategy.

Shukla's work adds to the growing volume of data being generated about the Indian economy. There may however be rather more skepticism about whether it does the same to the knowledge about the Indian economy.

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