

Lokniti

Programme for Comparative Democracy



Lokniti Newsletter
(For Private Circulation only)

September 2006



Photo Essay- Movement for Democracy in Nepal- 2006 (1)

Photo Courtesy: <http://nepalinfo.civiblog.org/blog/Photofeature>

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From the Editor's Desk-

Namaste!

It's the season of farewells in *Lokniti*. This month we said adieu to SriRanjini who has joined *Goa University* as a Political Science lecturer. We wish her the best in all things to come.

August was a busy month for *Lokniti*. *The Hindu- CNN-IBN, CSDS State of the Nation* survey was conducted and completed in the first two weeks of the month. Some interesting discoveries were made regarding the inclinations and the beliefs of today's youth.

The second big event on the list was the KAF-CSDS Youth Study first coordination committee meeting. Participants from all over the country discussed basic concepts and survey methodology over two days. The resident representative of KAF also attended the meeting.

Lokniti also organized two book discussions last month. The first one was on *Of the People* a book by Biswarup Sen, in which he tries to understand Indian popular culture through the tools of sports and entertainment. Aseema Sinha also made an insightful presentation on her book *The Regional Roots of Developmental Politics in India: a divided leviathan* in CSDS.

Thank you all for appreciating last month's newsletter. I look forward to continued interactions and feedback in future.

For detailed information on *Lokniti* and the projects mentioned here, kindly log on to our website <http://www.lokniti.org>.

Regards,
Reetika Syal

Events Organized-

The Hindu- CNN-IBN, CSDS State of the Nation Survey-

The State of the Nation survey was carried out in August with a sample size of 14680 in 19 states. The findings were televised on CNN-IBN and Channel 7 and detailed newspaper reports carried out in *The Hindu*. The survey was divided into four main categories of Government and Politics, Security, Food habits and Youth. Some excerpts from the survey are mentioned below. For detailed reports, log on to www.lokniti.org.

Government and Politics- According to our survey, if an election was conducted in the first week of August 2006- the BJP would have shown its worst performance since 1989 and the UPA, its best since 1991. Three factors seem to be working for the Congress right now- first, the rising popularity of Mrs. Sonia Gandhi and Dr. Manmohan Singh; second- a nationwide shift from the regional to the national parties and third- incumbency favoring the Congress.

Security- In the wake of the terrorist threats and activities in India and the World, the respondents were asked questions on whether they felt safe in their locality/ country. 75% of the respondents felt completely safe in their locality and only 25% felt less safe than they did a few years ago. However all of them in general felt that national security had deteriorated in the last two and half years since the UPA came to power.

Food Habits- The figures of our survey show 60% of Indians are Non-Vegetarians, 96% of urban and 63% of rural people consume tea/ coffee everyday and 44% urban and 20% rural population consumes soft drinks regularly. These figures show a definite rise in the urban/ global style of living of Indians. But the ground reality remains that about 33% Indians faced hunger during the last year.

Youth- A special questionnaire was designed for 22 % of our respondents who fell into the category of youth. Unlike the West, the youth in India is a less homogenous category with only one out of every six owning a cell phone or a two-wheeler. Their access to goods and technology is strongly determined by location and economic conditions of the family. Almost 33% could not say what the day 15th August was, 40% did not know the year of independence and 75% had never heard of the Emergency. However, the youth icon remains the same over the years- Mahatma Gandhi. The rural and urban poor totally rejected giving up Indian citizenship for that of the US. There is continuity of beliefs and values across generations and the youth are very optimistic about the future of the country.

- On Tradition and Modernity
- On Democratic and Authoritarian systems
- On Social Justice and Inequality
- On Development and its Discontent
- On National and Global processes
- On Present and Future for the youth
- On Means and Ends, and
- On Diversity and Identity

The survey will be conducted with a national representative sample of about 4000 youth spread across almost the whole of India. The study will use a combination of research tools such as cross-sectional surveys, dialogues, and case studies.

KAF-CSDS Youth Study-

CSDS hosted the first coordination committee meeting of the *Konrad- Adenauer Foundation (KAF)- CSDS Youth Study* on 25th and 26th August 2006. Prof. Peter deSouza, (co-director, *Lokniti*) briefed the session regarding the proposed study. Mr. Jorg Wolff (resident representative to India, KAF) spoke about the Shell Youth Survey of Germany as the basis of doing a similar Youth study in India.

The main points discussed in this two day meeting were- how to identify who the Youth are (age group); the broad ‘lines of Enquiry’ within which the questions would be framed; and possible areas of case studies. To have special representation from some groups like women and the Northeast India, Prof. Yadav (co-director, *Lokniti*) proposed the strategy of a booster sample, which would be selected from the main sample itself.

The rubric or ‘lines of Enquiry’ would be in terms of the following for all domains with which the youth have attitudes, values and perspectives stretching from the personal to the political-



Movement for Democracy in Nepal- 2006 (2)
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Book Discussions-

Of the People- Biswarup Sen

On 8th August 2006 Biswarup Sen discussed his book *Of the People* where he understands Indian popular culture through sports and entertainment. He argues that the industrial capital phase led to the emergence of entertainment and art, which influenced and shaped Indian social reality.

Focusing the discussion on sports Sen explained that in contemporary India the ‘Trinity’ of sports (Football, Hockey and Cricket) no longer exists, although we had achieved success in hockey and football much more and much before cricket. It was the

Parsis who first took to cricket and made it into an elite game. India's obsession with cricket was linked to it being a "means to modernity".

The rise of cricket led to the decline of hockey and football. Although football was taken up strongly by the Bengalis, it became regionalized and reflected the communal state of affairs. As a result, football came to be identified with only Goa and Bengal.

Clarifying the use of the song and dance routine in the Hindi movies, Sen says it performs a function to enhance the content of the film. He expertly highlights the importance of popular culture as a means to understanding change and stability in India.

Biswarup Sen received his doctorate in Communication from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He taught for several years at the Department of English, SUNY-Binghamton. He currently teaches courses in mass communications and popular culture at the University of Oregon.



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The Regional Roots of Developmental Politics in India: a divided leviathan- Aseema Sinha

Aseema Sinha made a presentation on her recent book *The Regional Roots of Developmental Politics in India: a divided leviathan* in CSDS on 18th August 2006. She was a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (2004-05)

and is an assistant professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

In the book, Sinha compares the industrial growths of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat and inquires why despite similar colonial experiences and central policies, the three have had divergent growth patterns. There has been a significant difference in political and economic policy strategies of the three states. The central policy processing agency at the state levels were porous and vulnerable to influences. There were also variations in organization of institutions of these states. All these should be taken into account while estimating the state's progress.

Gujarat has been the most successful in capturing industrial investment mainly through political help (bargaining, lobbying). In contrast, the industrial growth in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu fell prey to sub-nationalist mobilization and political opportunism. She stresses upon India being a 'divided leviathan' with a variety of regional development patterns within common central policies and national political institutions.

"In the line of Research..."



In this section you get the opportunity to write about your current research paper/project (preferably not more than 400 words) and get inputs from our readers for suitable readings, objectives and other focus points. Through this we hope to forge a link between the various scholars who are working on democracy and contribute to the knowledge pool.

Suggested Reading-

Sengupta, Arjun, Negi, Archana and Basu, Moushumi (eds.), 2005, *Reflections on the Right to Development*, Delhi, Sage Publications-

The Right to Development is a new and highly contested right. Its emergence is linked to the demand for a 'new international economic order' by developing countries. Composite in nature and integrating civil and political rights with economic, social and cultural rights, the RTD approach underscores participation, a fair sharing of benefits, transparency and non-discrimination. This book explores the theoretical and practical aspects of RTD as an alternative to existing approaches to development. It does so with the help of empirical studies and application of social change theory that throws light on various aspects of RTD.



Movement for Democracy in Nepal- 2006 (4)
Photo Courtesy: www.flickr.com

Research Output-

Prof K.C.Suri, *Lokniti's* state coordinator for Andhra Pradesh had compiled papers for a special issue of EPW. An article written by him *Political Economy of Agrarian Distress* in the said issue, elaborates on the reasons for agrarian distress in India that lie in the conjunction of the changing nature of agriculture and democratic politics. With cultivation becoming an unrewarding occupation, the growing disparities of wealth between the rural and urban areas, the inability of farmers to unite and bring pressure on the governments and a disjuncture between the interests of the farmers and those of the political representatives, have all led to the neglect of agriculture and deterioration in the condition of farmers.

Prof Suri considers that the "...Farmers' interests matter very little any way to the national ruling elites. Although agriculture and irrigation is a state subject...the state governments do not have sufficient resources to spend on agriculture. The policies relating to imports and exports and trade tariffs are in the hands of the union government, where the voice of the peasants is the weakest.... The autonomous space for the union government to make policies has also shrunk in the changed international economic scenario, where the policy priorities and decisions are worked out by the global financial agencies. One criticism against successive union governments was that they did not make timely interventions to adjust the tariffs to arrest the falling prices in the face entry of multinational companies.

"If nothing positive happens in Indian agriculture in the coming years and if farmers continue to be squeezed by the global and domestic markets as well as the rentier classes..." a horrifying outcome might be that they will "...either abandon agriculture or rebel against governments." And the spate of suicides will continue to haunt the country.

Articles Written-

- Sanjay Kumar, Rajeeva Karandikar and Yogendra Yadav, Rise in Popular Support for Congress and UPA, *The Hindu*, August 13, 2006.
- Sanjay Kumar and Yogendra Yadav, What explains the rise of the Congress, *The Hindu*, August 13, 2006
- Yogendra Yadav and Sanjay Kumar, The Food Habits of a Nation, *The Hindu*, August 14, 2006.
- Yogendra Yadav and Sanjay Kumar, How India Thinks About Security, *The Hindu*, August 15, 2006.
- Yogendra Yadav and Sanjay Kumar, The Youth: Their Thoughts and Aspirations, *The Hindu*, August 16, 2006.
- Sanjay Kumar and Harishwar Dayal, Moond Sarkar ki Lokpriyata me Bhaari Girawat, *Prabhat Khabar*, August 24, 2006.
- Praveen Rai, Jharkhand me 83 Fisdi Log Khud Ko Surakshit Mahsoos Kar Rahe Hain, *Prabhat Khabar*, August 26, 2006.
- Praveen Rai and B.K. Sinha, Jharkhand me Khadya Suraksha ki Sthiti Sudhari Hai, *Prabhat Khabar*, August 27, 2006.
- Sanjay Kumar and Rakesh Ranjan, Nitish ki Lokpriyata Rating Barkarar, *Prabhat Khabar*, August 30, 2006.
- Md. Sanjeer Alam, Bihar me 90 Fisdi Log Surakshit Mahsoos Karte Hain, *Prabhat Khabar*, August 31, 2006.



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Next Issue-

What do you see in the photographs through the Democracy Lens? Please send us your inputs on the photo essay and newsletter on or before 30th September 2006.

The next issue of the *Lokniti* newsletter will be published in October 2006.