SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE AND THE BROAD-BASING PROCESS IN INDIA

Edited by
M. V. Nadkarni
This book offers a new concept of inclusion of the marginalised in India – the Broad-Basing Process. The author examines how through this process increasing numbers of marginalised social groups can enter into the social, political and economic mainstream and progressively derive the same advantages from society as the groups already part of it.

The book critically reviews how the Broad-Basing process has worked in the past in India both before and after its independence. It examines how social groups like Dalits, Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Muslims, women and the labour class have fared, and how far economic development, urbanisation, infrastructure development and the digital revolution have helped the marginalised and promoted Broad-Basing. It also offers mechanisms to speed up Broad-Basing in poorer economies.

A first of its kind, this volume will be useful for scholars and researchers of political studies, sociology, exclusion studies and political economy, and also for general readers.

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This is a collection of articles on an important social process in India, which I have called ‘Broad-Basing’, the idea of which was first advanced by me in an article in Economic & Political Weekly in 1997 (Nadkarni 1997). Broad-Basing is a process by which more and more social groups that were formerly marginalised or deprived enter the mainstream of social, political and economic life to derive the same advantages as the group already in the mainstream. It also means that the social basis of the power structure widens, and in the process it becomes more inclusive. It is distinguished from similar other related processes like social mobility, ‘trickle down’, empowerment, integration and democratisation. Broad-Basing need not be an automatic or preordained process, and certainly not the result of ‘charity’ of the powerful. It occurs as the result of conscious efforts on the part of the deprived social groups and their visionary peers to improve their status. The state and its policies too are an important determinant of the process. The book critically reviews how the Broad-Basing process has worked in the past in India both before and after its independence. The 12 essays in the book by competent scholars – both senior and young, describe how different social groups like Dalits, Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Muslims, women and the labour class have fared, and whether and how far economic development, urbanisation and the digital revolution have helped the marginalised and promoted Broad-Basing.

The Broad-Basing Process is receiving a probing, comprehensive and critical attention for the first time here. The contributors are drawn from economics, sociology and political science, and view their topics in an interdisciplinary way. They include eminent seniors as well as young, bright and very promising scholars. The book does not stop with rigorous analysis alone, but also points the way forward.

I may also point out that the book takes a balanced view of the process of economic growth and development in India with an open mind, and not an ideologically prejudiced view. Quite a few social scientists, including particularly economists, write as if economic growth has nothing good to offer for the poor and the downtrodden, and its only consequence is that such persons will be ‘ground down by growth’, as the title of a recent book
suggests (Alpa Shah et al. 2018). The focus of such thinkers has been only on what marginalises, but attention to what promotes good in society, what has reduced inequality and inequity, is lacking — often deliberately due to ideological fixations. The result is a partial or truncated view, not a holistic view. There is no doubt that reckless development, without regard to whether it has the effect of causing deprivation of vulnerable sections of people, is deplorable and should be avoided, even if the deprived constitute a minority and the beneficiaries of development form a majority. The deprived have to be duly compensated, rehabilitated and resettled, with no one becoming worse off. This book tries to present a holistic view. It is not that the book glorifies economic growth ignoring its marginalising processes. An objective academic view should take note of both Broad-Basing, or inclusive, and the marginalising processes and probe into the net outcome. That is what this book attempts.

I thank all the contributors profusely for their valuable articles. In spite of their very busy schedules, they spared their time for me out of love and regard. They have given me the benefit of their expertise, deep thinking and commitment. I thank Subhashree Banerjee for spotting a few mistakes and correcting them and neatly arranging the draft typescript for publication. I am grateful also to my daughter-in-law Amita for help in overcoming computer glitches whenever they emerged and in preparing the finalised version for publication on the computer. I am indeed grateful to Dr Shashank Shekhar Sinha and his Routledge team for processing and publishing the manuscript in good time. Last but certainly not the least, my hearty thanks to the publisher’s anonymous reviewer for very constructive and valuable suggestions which have contributed to further enriching the book.
The introductory part of the book, which is Chapter 1, explains the concept of Broad-Basing and its working. Briefly, Broad-Basing (or mainstreaming) is a process through which an increasing number of social groups enter the mainstream of social, political and economic activities and progressively derive the same advantages from the society as the groups already in the mainstream. Broad-Basing occurs alongside and often in response to the challenge of the opposite process of marginalisation, the two processes operating at the expense of each other. Broad-Basing is distinguished from similar other processes like social mobility, Sanskritisation, ‘trickle-down’, empowerment and integration. The close mutual link between Broad-Basing, democratisation and civil society activism is discussed. Though conceptually different, all these processes generally contribute to Broad-Basing. After independence, judicial activism has been playing a constructive role in promoting social justice and hence Broad-Basing. Character of the state and its changes therein are also critically discussed from the four angles of caste, class, political parties and decentralisation, respectively – all of which have a great influence on Broad-Basing. Religion though considered, is held as not relevant in this process.

A historical review of the Broad-Basing process is an interesting part of this chapter. Broad-Basing as it operated in the past is also discussed, since it is not a totally new process. It was in operation even in the distant past in India, by which outstanding poets in Sanskrit like Valmiki, Vyasa and Kalidasa had emerged from lower castes, enriching India’s literature and culture in spite of the caste system. In the medieval age, the Bhakti movement further contributed to the process under which many saint-poets from downtrodden castes came into prominence, whose followers came from all classes and castes. During the British period, both marginalisation and Broad-Basing were in operation with renewed intensity, the former prevailing over the latter till at least the beginning of the 20th century. Marginalisation took place during this period through the bulk of artisans losing their jobs and many small farmers losing their right to land due to the introduction of the Zamindari system. On the other hand, English education and its spread helped inculcation of democratic and humanistic values of
particularly equality and human dignity. It made many intellectuals sit up, introspect on the state of our society and introduce social reforms which strengthened Broad-Basing. Movements by Jyotirao Phule, Periyar E. V. Ramaswamy, Narayana Guru and Dr B. R. Ambedkar, who came from the lower castes, attacked the prevailing caste system and its unjust hierarchy and played a prominent role in accentuating Broad-Basing. After India’s independence, the process got a significant boost by the Constitution of India, the policy of positive discrimination or reservation, and initiation of planned economic development. The Ambedkar movement operated with renewed vigour for the uplift of Scheduled Castes (SCs) after independence. However, the acceleration of economic growth widened inequality in wealth and incomes, but all social groups gained significantly in absolute terms by it, though unequally. Under new forces of capitalist economic growth, the main factors which had structured the feudal caste system were very much weakened. Thus the old forces of feudalism gave way to new forces of capitalism. This has complicated the Indian society and polity, because even before the old caste system disappeared, new forms of inequality and marginalisation emerged. The main theme of the volume has to do with the question of whether the process of marginalisation, which was dominant under colonial rule, has clearly given way to a Broad-Basing process in the 70 years after independence.

Among the rest of the chapters, we first take up those which deal with Broad-Basing in relation to relatively marginalised social groups – Dalits, OBCs, Muslims, women and the labour class. Then follows Broad-Basing among regions or states within India. This is followed by chapters dealing with different processes and how they have affected Broad-Basing – economic development, urbanisation, infrastructure development, the digital revolution and policies and practice of environmental conservation.

Chapter 2 by M. V. Nadkarni, on ‘The Broad-Basing Process and Dalits’, focuses on the changing social, political and economic status of Dalits. Indicators like poverty ratios, literacy rates, employment status, wage ratios and proportion of graduates in the population show that Dalits still lag behind the general population, though showing significant improvements in absolute terms. Dalits now are definitely a part of the mainstream of the polity and society, though less so of the economy. They cannot any longer be taken for granted. Though atrocities still take place against Dalits, they generate instant and widely publicised protests and their incidence is lower than the general crime rate. The chapter concludes that Broad-Basing has been having a tough fight with the forces of marginalisation even with state help for the former. It is evident that the long-term tendency has been for Broad-Basing definitely to win, but its victory is rather slow even if significant, and yet to show results adequate enough to end social disparities.

Chapter 3 by Manohar Yadav, titled ‘Whither the Dalit Movement in Karnataka? Its Achievements and Challenges’, traces the course of Dalit movements in Karnataka – one of the states where the movement has been
strong and sustained. To some extent at least, this is an insider account since the author was a leading participant in it since his student days. Yadav traces the origin of the movement to Basavanna (12th century), who fought the caste system and for social justice till the end. However, the movement could make an impact only after Dr B.R. Ambedkar came on the scene. Yadav acknowledges the contribution made by Periyar in Tamil Nadu to the anti-caste movement by fighting the hegemony of Brahmins in public life, which influenced Karnataka too. However, the anti-Brahmin movement in old Mysore brought more benefits to the OBCs than to Dalits proper. It was Dr Ambedkar’s impact which made a huge difference, as Dalits in Karnataka too fell under his spell; it was his concerted efforts focusing on Dalits which contributed to their rise. In the post-Ambedkar period, Yadav traces three phases of the movement: mobilisation and organisation of Dalits under Shyam Sunder in the first phase, the forceful push to the movement by Basavalingappa in the second phase after a lull, and further widening of the movement under Karnataka Dalit Sangharsha Samiti (DSS) in the third phase. All three phases contributed to raising Dalit consciousness and the struggle for their rights. The emergence of Dalit literature in Kannada by eminent Dalit poets and writers like Devanoor Mahadeva is an important achievement of the movement showing the creativity of Dalits. Dalit movement in Karnataka also fought social evils like the Devadasi system and nude worship of the Yellamma Goddess. Dalits also launched struggles to secure land for the landless agricultural labourers with some success. In spite of these achievements, Yadav feels that the success of the movement has been limited, and the challenge continues to be difficult. For example, though having competent Dalit leaders, Karnataka could not so far have a Dalit chief minister. Dalits’ stride in the economy is very inadequate, and prejudices against Dalits in the society and polity have far from vanished. What is sad, as Yadav rues, even before the goals are achieved, the Dalit movement has splintered. Its future is not clear.

Next to SCs and Scheduled Tribes (STs), the most deprived sections of India’s population were what are officially designated as the ‘Other Backward Classes’ (OBCs). Chapter 4, contributed by Anil Kumar Vaddiraju, is on how the Broad-Basing process has affected these classes. The OBCs constitute about 52% of the country’s total population but there has been no clarity, precision or unanimity about exactly which communities form them. A few communities previously considered as OBCs were later included among the SCs or STs. Because of the preponderant size of OBCs, their level of human development has had a defining influence on the development of the country as a whole. The Bhakti movements in the medieval ages contributed to their rise in the culture and society of the country, while the land reforms after independence raised their economic status in the rural society, with several communities assuming the status of what M.N. Srinivas called the Dominant Castes. Their rise in the politics of India’s states has been one of the most conspicuous developments in Indian politics. As Anil Kumar Vaddiraju notes,
this has also brought them into conflict with Dalit aspirations. They have also not been very helpful in the emancipation of women. Child marriages still take place in some of their communities in villages. Unfortunately, in several cases (particularly in northern states of India), some of the OBCs have been a factor in obscurantism and orthodoxy, illustrated by the influence of Khap Panchayats, and have hindered the process of democratisation and Broad-Basing. Also, while their rise in politics has helped quite a few among them to gain enormously in power and wealth, the majority of OBCs have still remained backward in human development. Yet several famous writers and poets have emerged from these communities, and so have eminent political leaders. OBCs are not, therefore, amenable to easy generalisations. In a way, they represent the complexity and paradoxes of the country as a whole.

Muslims are easily recognised as numerically the most important among religious minorities in India. Chapter 5 in the volume, by Khalil Shaha and S. Yogeshwari, is on ‘The Broad-Basing Process in India and Muslims’. They show that there has been a process of Broad-Basing or convergence across socio-economic and religious groups in terms of indicators like poverty, literacy, education and even employment, but the rate of catching up of the marginalised groups with the rest has not been satisfactory enough. Disparities in particularly income are rising. However, there has been a faster decline in poverty rate among Muslims than among the rest. The preponderance of the informal economy into which most of the Muslim workers are caught, their lower representation in higher education and gender biases are major stumbling blocks in the progress of Muslims, according to these authors. The lower work participation of Muslim women is a significant factor in Muslims lagging behind others in employment. There is particularly a need to ensure increased participation of Muslim women in education and employment through affirmative policies. A clue to the economic backwardness of Muslims – at least of a majority of them – is provided by Chalam (2011: 104–113). He observes that a majority of the Muslim converts in India are believed to have come from the lower social groups, particularly from the artisan castes. But rural artisans have suffered from several disabilities both during the colonial period due to liberal low-priced imports of manufactured goods from England, and also subsequently after independence due to the rise of modern industry, which had the same impact. Most of the artisans were reduced to the status of agricultural labourers. Economic and technological development bypassed them. Economic reforms since 1991 increased the size of the informal sector, which had the same impact. Most of the artisans were reduced to the status of agricultural labourers. Research and development activities have not contributed much to modernising the skills of and markets for rural artisans. This is so in spite of the setting up of a separate Khadi and Village Industries Board. Thus the destiny of Muslims in India is tied up to a great extent with the destiny of workers in the informal sector, and their Broad-Basing can be promoted with the improvement in the conditions and status of the informal sector.
The book does not cover other religious minorities in India like Christians, Jains, Sikhs and Farsees (Zoroastrians). This is not because they are not important; they certainly are also citizens equal in rights to the followers of other religions. They are playing an important role both in the polity and economy, and society too, in spite of the fact that compared to Muslims they account for a much smaller proportion of the total population. But unlike Muslims, these minorities do not have significant marginalised sections and are much better integrated with the mainstream without discrimination. In fact on the average, their human development levels are higher than that of Hindus.

Chapter 6 is by Lavanya Suresh on ‘The Broad-Basing Process in India and Women’. She begins by observing that one section of society that constantly had to fight for their rights was women, and that one reason why such a hard-fought battle has still not been won is that gender is culturally and socially constructed. Women are not a homogeneous single category. They are also divided into castes and classes like men, and often these identities dominate over gender among women. The way gender is articulated is determined by the patriarchal system of social structures and practices in which men dominate. Patriarchy exists through articulation of class and caste that intersect to create further forms of discrimination. Work is an important way through which women are discriminated against by being sidelined in paid work, although they do a tremendous lot of unpaid work. Labour force participation of women is not only low already, but it is declining further in India. Ownership of means of production is also adverse to women. Seventy-four per cent of rural women are agricultural workers, but only 9.4% own land. Less than 9% of firms have a female top manager. Lavanya takes note of the number of steps the Indian state has taken to uphold the constitutional rights of women to equal treatment and to prevent crimes against women. Half of the total seats in local bodies are reserved for women (raised from the earlier one-third), though such a step is yet to be taken at the national level in the Parliament or even at the state level. Nevertheless, the significant reservation for women in local bodies has helped them to get into public life, face-to-face with men. Many women have become chairpersons of local bodies. Women have taken significant strides in education and governance of the country. However, prejudices against having a girl child still persist, in spite of a number of incentives for having and educating a girl child. In respect of health, however, there have been significant gains for women. Maternal mortality rate has significantly declined, though it is still higher in India than in China. Though there has been improvements in absolute terms, India is still behind many other countries in the Gender Gap Index. In 2017, India ranked 107th among 144 countries, having declined in rank from 87 in 2016. The sex ratio is still adverse. Lavanya concludes, however, by observing that there is now much greater social awareness about the rights of women. This is a source of some optimism.

Chapter 7, by Vinay Kumar, is titled ‘Whither Workers in India?’ Its focus is on non-agricultural, mainly urban workers. The situation of
agricultural workers is dealt with in the next chapter here, though as a part of a larger theme. According to Vinay Kumar, industrial workers in India, though much better off than agricultural workers, have never been in a dominant position either in the economy or polity. While ascendency of public sector and nationalisation in 1960s provided them social, economic and political respectability, this declined in the post-liberalisation 1990s. A vibrant private sector superseded the public sector and contract workers gradually replaced regular workers. Informal employment became a reality of the industrial landscape. Initially, contract workers went unheeded by stakeholders (employers, state, and trade unions) and deprived of basic requirements. But the necessity of industrial growth and peace compelled stakeholders to pay attention to their plight. This chapter argues that workers were empowered in the 1960s and 1970s, marginalised in the 1990s and again empowered after 2000, mainly through their own efforts at mobilisation, thanks to India’s democratic setup.

Chapter 8 by Malini L. Tantri and Shruthi Mohan Menon raises the question, ‘Is There a Broad-Basing Process in the Indian Economy?’ They answer it with the help of three criteria: food security, poverty and unemployment. Thanks to the economic reforms, economic growth in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) has certainly been significant in the last two decades, and the Indian economy has a noteworthy position in the global economy. Unfortunately, however, the achievements on the fronts of food security, poverty reduction and employment growth have not been equally impressive. The increase in food production has not resulted in wiping out nutritional deficiency among the poor. Infant mortality and under-5 mortality rates and prevalence of anaemia are still high among SCs and STs, though declining. The poverty rate has sharply fallen especially between 2004–05 and 2011–12, but 1 in 5 Indians continued to be poor even by 2011–12, which is a high incidence of poverty compared with other countries like China. The SCs and STs have higher rates of poverty. The states which have high levels of poverty are also showing a slower decline in poverty than others. Overall, however, the number of the poor is declining in absolute terms, though still high. Employment growth is taking place mainly in the non-farm sector, being 3.49% per annum during 1993–94 to 2004–05, but it is much slower in the farm sector where it is a mere 0.40% per annum. But it is in the farm sector where there is a crisis, and both agricultural labourers and farmers are migrating from rural to urban areas in large numbers in search of more remunerative employment, which they do not get within agriculture. Viability of agriculture is declining, and agricultural labourers are now outnumbering farmers. Even within the non-farm sector, informal employment is increasing more than formal employment. Ironically, even within the formal sector, non-formal employment is increasing at the cost of the formal. Thus a large portion of the workforce – in agriculture and also non-farm sector – does not have job security, paid sick leave, medical reimbursement and retirement benefits. The conclusion of the authors is that
though growth of GDP is good and has to continue to be good, it has not brought the marginalised into the mainstream of the advantaged. To solve the problem, they recommend greater stress on employment generation, skill creation, boosting the education and health sectors ensuring benefits to the marginalised, and a massive push to the village economy.

Chapter 9 is by R.S. Deshpande, on ‘Is the Indian Digital Revolution Broad-Based?’ He observes that India is now among the world’s leading countries in digital knowledge creation and dissemination. There has been unimaginably fast progress in the growth and spread of digitisation. The country now stands shoulder to shoulder with developed countries in this regard. He says that there are many sectors in India where one cannot proceed without some basic understanding of digital technology. Deshpande traces the brief history of the progress of the digital revolution. The most important digital application was in the field of communications. The author is critical of ‘techno-phobia’, an irrational fear of new technology which is oblivious of its vast benefits. But he also raises some basic questions and answers them cautiously. Are the digital technologies accessible to all in this country of wide differences? Will their spread create problems for the economically weak groups? The author discusses technical and economic barriers to the spread of digital technology. Digital technology appears to have boosted the growth of India’s GDP. But has it also slowed down job creation in the economy? It may be argued that such an adverse effect may be in the short run, but we may always be in the short run, and the long run may never come! In any case, the author’s conclusion seems to be that digital technology has a vast potential for Broad-Basing (apart from mere growth), but there are barriers to be overcome, and imaginative and constructive policy is needed in the interest of Broad-Basing the benefits of the technology. Incidentally, Deshpande welcomes demonetisation and the drive to a more cashless economy, since it has the potential to compel tax compliance and check black money.

Chapter 10 by Kala S. Sridhar is on ‘Urbanisation in India: Is It Broad-Basing?’ Urbanisation has the potential of being liberating for the rural masses under the shackles of feudal oppression. It can offer new opportunities for coming into the mainstream. But how has urbanisation actually fared in India? This is the question that the author poses in this chapter. Unfortunately, the growth of urban population has shown a sharp deceleration after 2001, though increasing steadily in absolute terms. The official policy has been to ‘control’ urbanisation to make it more evenly spread and to promote ‘growth centres’ in economically backward regions. Urbanisation has surely helped the rural economy. An important way has been through remittances by migrants to cities to their relatives in villages and extending help in developing rural housing and infrastructure. Urbanisation is important in achieving diversification of the national economy, boosting human development, and improving overall infrastructure in the country. The author points out that female literacy is higher in states that are more
urbanised. The sex ratio is better in rural areas because there are cities to migrate to for more men in search of work. The author concedes that living conditions of the urban poor are much less satisfactory than their rural counterparts. But she quotes Glaeser to say that the poor migrants’ lives are not made worse by the city, but the city attracts poor migrants with the hope that it will improve their lives one day. Further, she notes a number of ways in which urbanisation has helped the poor. Urban poverty has declined faster than rural poverty, and there has been a significant and faster reduction in the proportion of slum population in India over the years, bringing it down below the world average. There has also been a decline in the proportion of urban households living in ‘dilapidated’ dwellings, which stood at only 2.9% in 2011–12. The author notes that the proportion of casual labour in urban India has declined from 18% in 1999–2000 to 15% in 2011–12. Even the urban unemployment rate has declined, though it continues to be higher for women. On the whole, urbanisation has been beneficial according to the author, contributing positively to the Broad-Basing process. However, its spatial distribution is uneven, and large cities are growing faster both in number and population. Caste-based spatial segregation has persisted, but this is more in small and medium-sized cities. So is the case with caste discrimination against the marginalised. The author feels that the disparities between cities in respect of infrastructure and amenities need to be addressed seriously.

Chapter 11 is by Sunil Nautiyal on ‘Post-independence Conservation Policies and Implementation in India: A Socio-economic and Ecological Appraisal’. He starts by stressing that India is a mega-diverse country, and has at least two global biodiversity hot spots: the Himalayas and the Western Ghats. It is India’s sacred responsibility to conserve and protect them. Biodiversity supports ecosystems that sustain human livelihoods and its protection is of vital importance in ensuring the survival of humankind. A number of laws have been passed and institutional structures have been erected to protect this biodiversity. But this can run into conflict with the livelihoods of people living in and near forests, unless managed imaginatively caring for both biodiversity and human livelihoods. Have the conservation policies and their implementation managed to do this in India? This is the theme of this chapter. It is a challenging task to reconcile both objectives, which the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 aims to achieve. A difficult feature of the forest situation in India is that a significant number of people still live in and near forests and depend on the forests for their livelihood. They constitute the most marginalised section of people, who hardly have the benefits and amenities of civilisation like school education and health care. Yet, in their effort to eke out a livelihood, the existence of a large forest-dependent population poses a threat to conservation of wildlife and biodiversity. It is neither possible nor desirable to forcibly evict such a huge number from the forests, but ultimately in the interest of their own future a good proportion of them have to be encouraged to resettle outside forests with all amenities of civilisation provided, but
permitting those who are interested in continuing in forests to stay there. As yet there has been no coherent policy addressed to this problem. The author does not raise the question of inducing forest people to resettle outside but reviews the decade-long experience of implementing the FRA. His considered view is that there has been success neither in the task of conservation nor in satisfying tribal claims to land. The failure is particularly conspicuous in satisfying the claims of tribal communities who move from place to place, which is common with them. So only a minority of these people who have settled for at least three generations and can prove their cultivation of fixed pieces of land for so long can benefit from the act. The protected areas put serious restrictions on human settlements and livestock grazing, which tend to limit livelihood opportunities. In spite of this, that many of these people still continue to live in or near forests shows that they prefer even this kind of fractured livelihood to the uncertainty of life in the event of resettlement elsewhere. Nautiyal points out, however, that with all the restrictions on the forest people, the forest authorities have not succeeded in the task of protecting biodiversity. There has been invasion of exotic weed species like \textit{Lantana camara} and \textit{Eupatorium}, which threaten biodiversity. The potential of tribal settlements in fighting the invasion of such exotic species and in general taking care of both biodiversity and their own livelihoods does not seem to have been realised. Both the people living in the forests and the Forest Department are still looking for viable solutions to resolve the conflict.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 12 by M. V. Nadkarni and Subhashree Banerjee, is on ‘The Way Forward’. The gist of almost all the chapters is that the Broad-Basing process is certainly in operation but is not adequate. The socially disadvantaged groups are bypassed in sharing equitably the benefits of economic development. The chapter discusses what is the way forward, given this fact. It argues that economic growth in the last two decades has been significant and has yielded enough resources for the state to end deprivation of the marginalised. India has to actively play the role of a welfare state which its constitution has entrusted to it. There has to be universal health care, food security, universal and free primary and secondary education, unemployment insurance, and an old age pension for the poor. There is scope to tax the rich for raising resources for the purpose. By these measures, extreme inequality and marginalisation would be moderated, and Broad-Basing promoted.

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Notes

2. According to Bibhu Prasad Nayak, Priyanka Kohli and J. V. Sharma, the estimates of people dependent on forests for livelihood vary from 275 million to 400 million in India. See www.moef.nic.in/sites/default/files/redd-bk3.pdf (downloaded on 23 April 2018). Thanks are due to Sunil Nautiyal for this reference.
1 The Broad-Basing process in India

An introduction\textsuperscript{1}

\textit{M. V. Nadkarni}

\textbf{The concept of Broad-Basing and related processes}

In an article in the \textit{Economic & Political Weekly}, I had advanced the concept of a Broad-Basing process, applying it mainly to Dalits (Nadkarni 1997). Broad-Basing (or mainstreaming), however, is a wider process by which more and more social groups that were formerly deprived or marginalised enter the mainstream of social, political and economic life to derive the same advantages as the groups already in the mainstream. It also means that the social basis of the power structure widens, and in the process it becomes more and more inclusive. Sometimes inclusion can be undesirable or adverse when it is very exploitative. By Broad-Basing, we do not mean such inclusion. Evidently Broad-Basing and development, especially desirably inclusive and democratic development, would go in the same direction. Though economic growth is an inevitable part of development because the former fuels the latter – at least in developing countries if not the developed or advanced – mere economic growth in terms of increase in gross national product (GNP) by itself will not cause Broad-Basing. It will cause it only if the income growth is shared so well with people at the bottom of the society that poverty and absolute deprivation are wiped out and significant gains occur in their levels of living. Though equitable sharing of growth is more desirable, which should indeed be the policy goal, and it would indeed be effective and real Broad-Basing, it may rarely take place in most countries. If, however, even absolute gains do not take place significantly and, poverty and absolute deprivation are not wiped out, then it is not a case of Broad-Basing at all. Under moderate Broad-Basing, the lower half of the population may not share the growth in income more than or even to the same extent as the upper classes, but they should at least be significantly enough better off compared to the past to be able to enjoy decent if not lavish standards of living with adequate education and good health for all. A more real Broad-Basing occurs when even relative disparities in income and levels of living are significantly reduced. Broad-Basing occurs alongside and often in response to the challenge of the opposite process of marginalisation. The two processes operate at the expense of each other. Broad-Basing operates to widen the power base, with the number of the marginalised