(_____) is

'When the minister assures us that in near future we would chat with the American farmers about our crops he seems to have lost both his head and the pair of feet to new technology. He has lost his thinking capacity and cannot stand on the ground of his society.' (a farmer-respondent in India)

The fact of the matter is that Information Technology (IT) has come to stay and shape our life in an unprecedented way. It is hardly possible to think of any other phenomenon that has such a formidable, lasting and profound impact. The coming of the Information Revolution, with IT as its infrastructural backbone, has been characterized by the steady

understanding facilitate

consent, that more and more IT will

Interestingly, in what may not be a coincidence Yunus's IT imaginary comes extremely close to that of Negreponte, formerly of the MIT Lab, but better known for his promotion of IT-driven society. Negroponte's great dream is to equip each child in the third world with a laptop as this is supposed to be a means of education, entitlement and empowerment. If Yunus had Rahman as his 'adversary', Negroponte has Winston (2007: 170) who wryly states:

> I would suggest that here Negroponte becomes a Marie Antoinette, but, instead of advising the French 18th century poor to eat cake as a substitute for bread, he proposes letting the South's huddled masses have little computers rather than life's other more obvious necessities.

These debates may occur in specific locales, be it Bangladesh or the USA, but they have great relevance for any developing society. Let us substantiate the point using a specific instance. In India, the publicity-blitz of so-called e-governance in the Indian federated state of Andhra Pradesh was orchestrated by the former chief minister, 'cyberdreamer' Chandrababu Naidu, while the state remained in the lower rung of the human development index.

privileged segments. The publicity-blitz associated with the promotion of the state capital Hyderabad as the 'IT hub' of India left the rural areas largely alienated. As one analysis (Yahya, 2009: 388) of Naidu's decline notes, '[t]he consequences of building Hyderabad into an IT hub have proven financially costly and eroded the support...in rural areas'. Naidu was banished from power. At least to date he shows no sign of regaining it. In Yunus's case, the Bangladesh continues to be far from

superordinate-subordinate relationship based on ‘

The NISP it identifies a number of key areas in which government-to-people interactions are to be encouraged. They are: expansion of e-commerce, promotion of small and medium

to information literacy and digital inclusion. It follows that in the world's largest democracy, which claims to be making a transition from the representative variety to the participatory variety, there is little sign of debate on how IT is 'talked about'. It is precisely because of this that a repositioning of social scientists, not the least from the developing world, becomes extremely significant – a point I shall take up subsequently.

Can IT contribute to economic development? In an essay critiquing public policy and the academic literature for frequently touting 'substantial progress' in bridging the digital divide, Gillis and Mitchell (n.d.) argue that if increased IT deployment leads to greater digital opportunities, including economic and human development, it can be framed and applied as a potent tool in reducing poverty, extending health services, expanding education opportunities and improving the quality of life for many of the world's disadvantaged. But they qualify this

Panchayats

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