

Shorter Notices

M. Monto, L. S. Ganesh, and Koshy Varghese. *Sustainability and Human Settlements, Fundamental Issues, Modelling and Simulations*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. 2006. 211 pages. Hardbound. Indian Rs 495.00.

Urbanisation at a breakneck pace is a fact of socio-economic life in modern India. High population densities are very common in cities like Mumbai, Calcutta, and Chennai. The issues of space for settlement and sustainable livelihood are the key concerns of planners and urban geographers throughout the rapidly urbanising developing world. M. Monto, L. S. Ganesh, and Koshy Varghese have addressed these issues through a very intelligent, scientific, and a uniquely Indian approach. Through their field research in Chennai, they have developed very interesting and accurate models about urban settlements that can be used for planning and forecasting in other cities as well. Their approach has been multidisciplinary as they have addressed almost all the aspects of modern urban life in a developing country. They deal with areas ranging from water management, housing, living conditions, and community attitudes to waste disposal. The authors of the book have backgrounds in sustainable development, management studies, and civil engineering. They have made an extensive and effective use of the geographic information systems for their models. Application of the latest sustainability theories to the Indian urban scene is an interesting aspect of their approach. They are keenly aware of the tremendous stress that the high rate of urbanisation is putting on densely populated places in the Indian cities. Rapidly shrinking space for settlements, environmental pollution, and abuse of resources in such areas are their key concerns. The models they have developed are an effective tool to study modern cities, making forecasts about their short- to medium-term future and making urban planning strategies accordingly. This book opens an interesting chapter in the scientific study of modern South Asian cities in the light of sustainable settlement / development research. The book is indispensable for South Asian urban geographers, scholars, urban planners, development practitioners and sustainable development studies students. Conservation and environmental activists and the academia too will find it of use. (*Fawad Javaid*)

Neera Burra, Joy Deshmukh-RanaDive, and Ranjani K. Murthy (eds.). *Micro-credit, Poverty, and Empowerment, Linking the Triad*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. 2005. 369 pages. Paperback. Indian Rs 395.00.

There is a strong link between poverty and vulnerability to human rights abuses. Poverty alleviation tools can go a long way in shielding groups from violations of human rights. In India, poverty as well as human rights violations have a feminine face. Six governmental and non-governmental organisations working in peninsular India have been attempting to eradicate poverty and protect the human rights of some targeted groups through micro-credit programmes. This volume is an anthology of eight research papers based on the findings of development practitioners, scholars, and the governmental and non-governmental organisations that have been studying micro-credit programmes in the five states where these governmental and non-governmental organisations have been

working. The findings offer interesting reading on the mechanisms of community mobilisation, banking at the micro-level within the community, organising of women's groups, and the impact of these activities on the power relations at the community and locality levels. Empowerment through organised social mobilisation and economic emancipation is the main theme explored. It is often found that organised mobilisation through strategic action by organisations results in social and economic empowerment. The socio-economic power, in turn, offers an effective shield against human rights abuses. Women are often the best beneficiaries. This book offers insights into community mobilisation and empowerment through micro-credit tools at the community level. Development practitioners, activists, scholars, as well as feminist researchers will find these studies to be highly useful. (*Fawad Javaid*)

M. Dinesh Kumar and O. P. Singh. *Groundwater Management in India: Physical, Institutional, and Policy Alternatives*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. 2007. 354 pages. Paperback. Indian Rs 480.00.

Water stresses have been a common hazard in the arid and semi-arid regions of India. Rainfall, including the monsoons, is not reliable in the western parts of the country. Much of the surface water drainage is fed by rains; drought-like situation prevails in these areas. The use of groundwater is the chief remedy for communities in such situations. The advent of modern technology for pumping out groundwater has revolutionised the use of groundwater by communities in these regions. These new-found technologies have affected the economies, the environment and ecology, and the communal life in general. The chief challenge for the communities as well as policy-makers in the regions is the efficient and sustainable use of the groundwater resource of these areas. Both the authors are researchers at the South Asia regional programme of the International Water Management Institute, India. A special strength of the book is its multi-disciplinary method. The researchers address the socio-ecology, economics, and institutional matters related to groundwater management. Northern Gujarat is the focus area of this research, but its interesting findings have a relevance to almost all the dry lands and semi-arid regions in the developing world; and even for the developed countries for that matter. The relation of the groundwater use to agriculture, livestock rearing, and dairy farming is another interesting subject discussed. (*Fawad Javaid*)

Cecilia Ng and Swasti Mitter (eds.). *Gender and the Digital Economy Perspectives from the Developing World*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. 2005. 262 pages. Hardbound. Indian Rs 540.00.

Twelve researchers with a strong background in development studies have explored the impact of the information and communications revolution on the lives of women in the less developed / developing countries, and Cecilia Ng and Swasti Mitter have compiled their papers here in one volume. The chief finding of the researchers has been the fact that the information and communications technologies have worked to empower women in the developing countries even when the spread of development was sketchy and limited in the societies otherwise. The findings are based on case studies from the developing south, i.e., from Latin America to Africa

to Asia, and are revealing about the potential and promise that the information and communications technologies (ICT) hold for women in the developing countries. Also explored is the impact of the arrival of the digital age on the power relations between groups / countries in the international arena, as well as between groups and individuals within countries. However, the researchers forewarn, at the beginning, against any optimistic expectations about radical changes in the asymmetrical power relations between individuals and groups solely because of the arrival of the digital age. Unless intelligent fore-planning is done at the grassroots level, the ICTs might even exacerbate the prevailing inequalities and asymmetrical power relations in the societies. Women are more vulnerable to such an outcome because they are more disadvantaged than anybody else in terms of access to information and communications technologies (ICT). The experiences of women in Morocco, Argentina, India, Malaysia, and the Philippines, however, suggest that given some intelligent planning in advance, the ICTs can go a long way in empowering women in the most remote and backward areas of the world. (*Fawad Javaid*)

Signe M. Spencer, Tharuma Rajah, S. A. Narayan, Seetharaman Mohan, and Gaurav Lahiri. *The Indian CEO: A Portrait of Excellence*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. 2007. 205 pages. Paperback. Indian Rs 295.00.

This book is the result of a research effort that stretched over almost five years under the auspices of the Public Enterprises Selection Board. It was carried out by top executives associated with *Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd.* and the *Hay Group*, the sponsors of this study. The authors are specialists in their fields.

Its fourteen chapters have been divided into four parts. It is an effort to highlight the traits required for Indian-based CEOs to manoeuvre their businesses or enterprises successfully in the swiftly changing socio-economic environment of today. The interviews with influential corporate leaders provide a base to derive effective behavioural approaches to decision-making and various business situations in India. The research methods adopted in this study, like sampling, interviews, conceptual framework, analysis, and validation of data, were developed at the McClelland Centre for Innovation and Research at Boston. "The Indian CEO Competency Model" discussed in this book is the *sine qua non* of leadership for Indian corporate managers. The major arguments are largely based on adaptive thinking, team leadership, empowerment, accountability, organisational awareness, inner strength and executive maturity. The charts and graphic illustration of various competencies of CEOs are also quite helpful in understanding the different business strategies and approaches. Although this book analyses the key characteristics of a successful, CEO it envisages these, however, within the Indian set-up. This narrow approach may limit the readership of this book outside India. One may conclude that this is a predisposed effort to endorse the Indian way of doing business while marginalising the other contemporary models / approaches for business strategies and endeavours. (*Muhammad Imran Chaudhry*)

Michael J. Pap, Wendy H. Papa, and Arvind Singhal. *Organising for Social Change: A Dialectic Journey of Theory and Praxis*. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd. 2006. 297 pages. Paperback. Indian Rs 360.00.

Divided into six parts, the case studies in this book are aimed at developing various instruments, such as social justice, academia, and the corporate world to encourage social change. These case studies are based on both developing and developed countries in the process of and transformation. The authors recognise four dialectic principles in order to strengthen the basic argument of the book because social change emerges in a dialectic and in a non-conventional process of struggle between competing poles of action. These dialectic tensions that are central to the process of organising for social change are: control and emancipation in Bangladesh's Grameen Bank (to examine in-depth the dialectic tensions in the Grameen Bank's efforts at organising for social change in Bangladesh), oppression and empowerment in India's Dairy Cooperatives (to scrutinise the dialectic tensions in National Dairy Development Board's social change efforts at empowering women dairy farmers in India), dissemination and dialogue in rural India (to study the dialectic tensions in community organising sparked by Entertainment-Education media initiatives in India), and fragmentation and unity in rural Appalachia (to examine the dialectical tensions in organising the poor and the homeless through community suppers in the Appalachian region of the United States). These investigations suggest that many dialectic tensions surface as a group of disempowered people attempt to change their thinking and behaviour with or without the assistance of external agents. The book also admits that contradictory tensions can and do co-exist. The methodology used in this exercise is the case study method, which is appropriate for exploratory and descriptive analysis to generate and test theory. The graphic and boxed case illustrations make complex economic concepts and social issues easier to comprehend. This volume has useful information and insights for development studies, community mobilisation, social work, and public health. (*Muhammad Imran Chaudhry*)

Mridula Mukherjee. *Colonialising Agriculture: The Myth of Punjab Exceptionalism.* New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd. 2005. 209 pages. Paperback. Indian Rs 420.00.

This volume is part of Sage's series on Modern Indian History. The book primarily focuses on a major Indian province, Punjab, its agrarian economy in the colonial period under British Imperial rule, and the economic and social conditions of peasants. The book debates the role of peasants in the Indian anti-colonial national revolution, and raises certain questions regarding the Marxist perspective about the peasantry. A comparison is made between Punjab and other regions of colonial India. Although the agrarian system in colonial Punjab displayed features which were outwardly different from the underdeveloped agrarian systems of eastern India, the province was equally constrained with little potential for self-sustained growth; there was stagnation of productive forces, forced commercialisation, and lack of capital investment in agriculture. The author argues that the areas known as canal colonies, which she calls "The Myth of Punjab Exceptionalism", might have added advantage, but even then inflated water rates could skim off their growth and income. In sum, the book states that the impact of colonialism on Punjab agriculture was by no means such as to create an idyllic land of well-off peasant owners. This is a fresh perspective on colonial agrarian culture, but it makes no reference to any links between the colonial era and the Green Revolution of the 1960s, which may bring into focus the role of the state after the transfer of power in Indian Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh. This is surprising because in some ways this

book supplements the author's other publications such as *Peasants in India's Non-violent Revolution: Practice and Theory*, *India's Struggle for Independence*, and *India after Independence 1947–2000*.

Still, the present book is based on vast information collected through newspapers, pamphlets, posters, private papers, village surveys, farm accounts, land records and other contemporary reports of the Indian and British governments. It would be of substantial interest to students of colonial and contemporary history, economics, and development studies in particular. (*Muhammad Imran Chaudhry*)