

Studies in Indian Agriculture: The Art of the Possible by Gilbert Etienne, translated from the French by Megan Mothersole. University of California Press, 1968.

This book is a unique example of research on Indian agriculture that begins at the village level and works upward and outward to the development block, the district, and ultimately the state. It is based on the author's own field work in four Indian villages, in Utter Pradesh, Madras, and Maharashtra, where he and his family lived during 1963/64. Utilizing his ability to talk to ordinary people in Hindi, relying mainly on such first-hand sources of information as village land records, block and district plans, and minutes of local councils as well as interviews with farmers, the author attempts meticulously to reach conclusions based on the knowledge of what is practicable in the rural economy of India.

As the title of the book suggests, this work by Gilbert Etienne, Professor of Development Economics at the Graduate School of International Studies in Geneva, is a study in the art of the possible in the economic development of Indian countryside. The book is, in a sense, a plea directed to policy-makers and economists, who too often underestimate agriculture and have nothing to do with it, to *i*) organize agricultural development by concentrating resources in terms of men and capital on the decisive points, and *ii*) ensure that it is done by taking as one's maxim the "art of the possible" in rural development. Economic planning is the art of the possible in the given environment, calling for the sense of priorities and concentration on essentials. Planning does not accomplish the impossible immediately [3]. Given that the "art" is to choose and organize for the realization of the possible, being aware of the myriad of contradictions between what is desirable and what is practicable. If this is so for the general economy, it is no less so when applied to agriculture.

In broad terms his conclusions can be summarized as follows: the particular structural form and practice of government administration in use is less important than realistic, pragmatic policies that assure the farmers resources that increase agricultural production, such as minor irrigation, high-yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and better credit facilities¹. The practice of the Panchayati Raj, cooperative farming, and the multipurpose approach in community development are all given poor marks. Preference is given to concentrating attention to organizing the essentials for quick increases in agricultural production.

With the benefit of hindsight, we may say that his conclusions are nothing revolutionary. Both in India and Pakistan, particularly in the latter, the continuing foodgrain deficits and the burden of defence expenditures associated with the

¹It is interesting to note that Dorris D. Brown reaches the same conclusion [1].

1965 War forced the respective economies to revise drastically the strategy of economic development. By necessity, the agricultural sectors in both countries were given top priorities in the respective five-year plans. In agriculture, more and more emphasis has been given to measures aiming at quick and sure results. An increasing number of economists have been emphasizing the need for a strategy of agricultural development which concentrates on divisible, yield-increasing ("biological-chemical") technology. Elsewhere the present reviewer has made the same plea in reference to the agriculture of West Pakistan [2].

In addition to economic aspects on which the author centres his attention, the book is full of acute observations, gathered with scholarly objectivity, on the socio-cultural and political life of Indian villages. Certain inescapable similarities of these aspects in both sides of the border make this book and its messages particularly valuable to the students of Pakistan's agriculture.

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REFERENCES

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2. Kaneda, Hiromitsu, "Economic Implications of the 'Green Revolution' and the Strategy of Agricultural Development in West Pakistan" in this issue of the *Review*.
3. Sovani, S.N., "Planning and Planners in India", *Indian Economic Journal*, No. 4, January-March 1966. Quoted by Etienne in the book under review.