

Shorter Notices

S. M. Michael (ed). *Dalits in Modern India: Vision and Values*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998. 353 pages. Hardbound. Indian Rs 425.00.

One of the profound changes in contemporary Indian society has been the emergence of a new sense of identity among the Dalits. The Dalit movement not only rejects the very ideas of pollution, impurity and 'untouchability' but in the process is forging a new vision for Indian society which is different from that espoused by the higher castes. This volume explores the social, economic, political and cultural content of the Dalit articulation and its relevance for the nation, both today and in the future.

Axel I. Mundigo and Cynthia Indriso (eds). *Abortion in the Developing World*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998. 498 pages. Hardbound. Indian Rs 595.00.

Comprising twenty-two case studies from developing countries around the globe, this important volume presents the views of women and providers on induced abortion, often in contexts where the practice is illegal or unsafe and thus dangerous to women's health and survival. The unique feature of the collection is that it focuses on the first-hand experiences of women who, when confronted with an unwanted pregnancy, terminated it by recourse to abortion.

Using primarily qualitative data (while not ignoring the statistical), the contributors explore the motivations, the decision processes and the socio-economic circumstances which cause women to opt for abortion. They also discuss situations where the practice is legal (such as in China, Cuba and Turkey) and discuss various issues including method failure, motivation, poor use of contraception and quality of care.

Including the viewpoints of married and unmarried women, of adolescents and of service providers, the overall objective of this collection is to explore a fundamental question: why do women opt for abortion to regulate fertility, even in contexts where family planning is widely available? To answer this question, the volume has been organised around the following major themes: the relationship between abortion and contraception; the quality of pre- and post-abortion care; adolescent sexuality, sex education and abortion; and attitudes towards abortion. The last part of the book draws lessons from the case studies including both methodological and policy aspects.

Robert U. Ayres and Paul M. Weaver (eds). *Eco-restructuring: Implications for Sustainable Development*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998. 417 pages. Hardbound. Indian Rs 495.00.

This volume is a significant contribution to the literature on sustainability. It identifies on a sectoral basis the critical issues facing the world as a whole, and the technical feasibility of addressing them. A new paradigm of eco-restructuring for sustainable development is introduced, involving shifts in technology, economic activities, and lifestyles needed to harmonise human activities with natural systems.

The contributors analyse a number of sectors and technological fields which are involved in the search for sustainable patterns of industrialisation. Each technology chapter presents, in a self-contained and comprehensive manner, the state of the sector, the primary issues that concern the sector's sustainability, and the technical means for achieving sustainable outcomes. Comprehensive coverage is provided on various energy technologies and futures, tropical land use, materials, transport and industrial space use, ecological process engineering, and agro-engineering. The volume also contains chapters on systems views of the broader eco-restructuring concept, including its biophysical basis, global eco-restructuring and technological change, and national and international policy instruments and institutions.

Set forth in this way, the book breaks new ground in the understanding of sustainability as a multi- and interdisciplinary area.

Kanchan Chopra and Gopal K. Kadekodi. *Operationalising Sustainable Development: Economic-Ecological Modelling for Developing Countries.* New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999. 301 pages. Hardbound. Indian Rs 395.00.

The concept of sustainable development has long been a focus of debate in the social and natural sciences. The debate currently rages principally between environmentalists who plead for resource sustainability, and economists who favour sustainable incomes and consumption levels.

According to the authors of this cogent volume, equitable and sustainable development is possible only if ecological constraints are internalised in the technological and institutional framework. Economic-ecological modelling, such as that undertaken here, endeavours to come to terms systematically with the complexity of interactions at the interface between society and the environment. With an emphasis on ecology, the authors develop a model for operationalising sustainable development in the context of Palamau district in Bihar, one of the most underdeveloped regions in India.

Perhaps the first of its kind anywhere in the world, the detailed modelling approach adopted in this book comprises a significant methodological advance in giving shape to the notion of sustainable development. Bringing together ecological and economic data from a wide variety of sources, this valuable contribution will be of interest to those engaged in environmental economics, ecology and environmental studies, development economics and resource management as well as to planning and financial agencies, policy analysts and NGOs.

Barry Herman and Krishnan Sharma (eds). *International Finance and Developing Countries in a Year of Crisis.* New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998. 143 pages. Softbound. Indian Rs 165.00.

The international financial and currency crisis that suddenly hit many Asian economies in mid-1997 has raised important questions regarding the impact on developing countries of powerful transnational forces of globalisation and liberalisation. This volume of essays by experts in this field examines the international financial crisis, reviews the deliberations of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the financing of development, and makes available the perceptions and analyses of external experts who contributed to the General Assembly's 1997 session.

The book begins with an in-depth analysis of the financial crisis in some of the emerging market economies of Asia, with a special focus on Thailand, and its implications for policy-makers. The following chapters emphasise the importance of the UN's contribution to international policy for development; the need for improving current account positions and strengthening the financial sector rather than merely boosting growth in developing nations; the necessity to manage the volatility of capital flows to emerging markets; the benefits of capital-market liberalisation accompanied by proper infrastructural development; and the techniques of attracting external financial resources and their effective absorption. The final chapter advocates an intergovernmental conference on finance and development and argues that the current system of global economic governance does not adequately represent developing economies.

Takashi Kurosaki. *Risk and Household Behaviour in Pakistan's Agriculture.* Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1998. 165 pages. Hardbound. Price not given.

Subject to great vagaries of weather, millions of farmers grow crops and raise cattle and buffalo on land irrigated by the waters of the Indus River. This millennial picture of rural Pakistan has been transformed in this study into a microeconomic analysis of risk and farmer behaviour. Based on his own fieldwork, the author has applied theoretical modelling and empirical testing to agricultural households in Punjab to find out how the characteristics of households affect their production choices and to understand the relationship between their individual decisions and the incompleteness of the rural market structure. These issues, which have generated strong interest in the contemporary microeconomics of development, are the focus of this study.

When faced with substantial income uncertainties, the sample farmers in this study were unable to share risk efficiently with the outside world, and therefore had to diversify risk through individual means such as crop choice and livestock management. As an empirical study of development economics, this work demonstrates the effectiveness of modeling households in a theoretically consistent way. As an applied study on Pakistan's agriculture, it sheds new light on the positive role of livestock in enhancing the welfare of rural households, especially in the case of smallholders. This is the first part of a comprehensive study of risk in Pakistan's agriculture and its incidence in the household economy. Its findings have significant implications for rural development policies in South Asia.