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REVIEWS IN BRIEF

The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt, Malcolm Lyall Darling, Reprinted with a new introduction by Clive J. Dewey, Manohar Book Service, New Delhi, 1977. Pp. xviii+xxvii+277. Rs. 60.00.

First published in 1925, this classic study had run into four editions, the last edition having been published in 1947. As the blurb rightly notes: "The reason why this book should remain in print is that it is still the most brilliant study of debt in peasant society. It has not been superseded, only supplemented, by more recent research." This reprint includes all the 14 chapters of the fourth edition and a new introduction by the editor, Clive J. Dewey. The introduction presents a brief biographical sketch of Sir Malcolm Darling, embodies a critical appreciation of his studies and in particular provides a perspective overview of the book, highlighting the contribution made by the author to the development of economic thought. The central theme of the book is the connection between prosperity and debt in the peasant society of the undivided Punjab. It examines the extent of agricultural indebtedness and the factors influencing the variations in its incidence in that Province. Dealing with the economic factors, it examines the effect on debt of the size of holdings, irrigation facilities, the yields of crops, access to markets and the trend of prices, economic opportunities outside agriculture and the willingness of the peasantry to migrate. Then it probes into the social factors bearing upon indebtedness—the power of the landlord and priests, and of the institutions of the moneylender and the local value system prevalent in the rural society. The role of the co-operative movement in the scheme of rural credit is critically discussed. The main conclusion of the study was that the "indebtedness of the Punjab peasant was more directly related to his affluence than to his poverty. It was the ability to borrow...rather than the need to borrow...., that accounted for the magnitude of a peasant's debts. Fluctuations in peasant prosperity, then, were responsible for the great cycle of indebtedness through which the Punjab peasantry passed in the first half of the twentieth century." The only lasting remedy for this most vital problem which the author had suggested was the organization of village co-operative societies. The book provides many insights into the various aspects of the peasant society in the Punjab in the first half of this century. The editor and the publisher need to be congratulated for bringing out this new edition of the book which has provided inspiration to students of rural economics since it was first published.

Manpower Development in Rural India: A Case Study, Institute of Applied Manpower Research; Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi-2, 1977. Pp. xiii+107. Rs. 25.00.

This case study examines the role of manpower development in overall rural development strategy in the Hissar region of Haryana. It makes an

attempt to assess the impact of rural development programmes on the demand for skills and on the pattern of skill utilization, to examine the adequacy of the existing skill development systems to meet the rising demand for new skills and to determine the nature of skill development processes required in areas where particularly the requisite skills are not generated. The intensive study is confined to an analysis of the problems of skill formation and utilization of existing skills in the rural areas, covering a sample of 120 farmers, 67 rural artisans and 57 agro-industrial units selected from three blocks of the old Hissar district. The study has highlighted the fact that lack of adequate skills and facilities for training has greatly hampered the development of a large majority of rural workers, particularly small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers and rural artisans. Even in the case of large farmers, the majority of them did not possess the basic know-how about modern farm practices. Even after two and a half decades of planning, the existing facilities for imparting technical/vocational education have not proved effective in the context of changing skill requirements. It is revealed that rural artisans were not able to avail of the opportunities thrown up by recent rural development activities largely due to lack of skills needed for adopting to new situations and partly due to lack of finance and inadequate education. Another disconcerting fact brought out by the study is that the pattern of entrepreneurship was not encouraging because a large majority of the entrepreneurs were drawn from the rich trading caste groups, who did not have either institutional training or prior experience. Moreover, the employment market conditions were not conducive to the promotion of the employment of institutionally trained persons. A review of the existing skill generation processes disclosed that informal skill development processes such as on-the-job training and in-service training constituted the best strategy for manpower development in the rural areas. In the context of renewed emphasis on integrated rural development, this pilot study provides valuable insights into the problem of skill formation and utilization of skills in the rural areas. The book will prove useful to those entrusted with the formulation of policies which have a bearing on rural manpower planning and development.

Sources of Economic and Social Statistics of India, Edited by Moonis Raza, Shafeeq Naqvi and Jagannath Dhar, Eureka Publications, New Delhi, 1978. Pp. xx+451. Rs. 80.00.

The rationale for bringing out this volume, according to its editors, "is rooted in the need of our young researchers not for a *better* book but for a *different kind* of book on the sources of Indian data." It is designed to help the research scholars in identifying the sources of data in the fields of social sciences. Its primary aim is to bridge the communication gap between the producers of data and their users. It also makes an attempt to evaluate the data in terms of the conceptual frame and the consequent definitional categories, on the one hand, and in terms of the actual format within which the data are available, on the other. Divided into 14 chapters, the first chapter

describes the statistical system in India and the States since the British period and considers the nature and content of data that are available in published form, particularly from official sources. The subsequent chapters deal respectively with the sources of data relating to the diverse aspects of the Indian economy, *viz.*, natural resources, demography, agriculture, industry, infrastructure, trade and commodity flows, employment and labour, prices, wages and profits, national income, finances of government and local bodies and national, district and area planning, and social aspects of development. Another chapter describes the activities of the National Sample Survey Organisation. The last chapter highlights the sources of different types of maps, their salient features and their use for a proper understanding of the spatial dimensions. Each chapter (with the exception of Chapter 7) includes one or more appendices which either outline the format for the collection of socio-economic data and/or list up the sources of reference material relating to the different aspects of the Indian economy. The editors recognize the limitations of this volume arising from weak evaluation of available data (*e.g.*, as in Chapters 9 and 11), unequal treatment of the subject matter and duplication of topics covered in certain chapters. In Chapter 6 which deals with infrastructural facilities, the editors could have taken cognizance of recent studies made by the Reserve Bank of India relating to the structure of cooperative credit, differential interest rates, etc. A reference could have also been made in Chapter 9 to the constitution of an Expert Committee on Consumer Price Index by the Government of India in 1977 with a view to suggesting improvements in the collection of consumer price data. The editors could have also brought out the limitations of agricultural wages data put out in official publications. A number of papers on both these and other aspects covered in this volume have been published in some of the reputed economic journals in India from which the editors could have drawn useful information for their write-up.