

Institutions of Social Change

Surjit Singh and Varsha Joshi (Eds)

Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2003, 333 pp, Rs.650

This collection of essays is edited by two eminent scholars Surjit Singh and Varsha Joshi. Given the academic credentials of most of its contributors the papers are of generally high quality. In a short review, it is not possible to give a detailed account of all the papers - nevertheless they are largely informative and offer fresh insights into the functioning of Indian Society.

The Structuring of this volume reflects three different concerns. Section I deals with issues of institution, heritage and tradition in general. Environmental issues have aroused a great deal of academic and political interest. Section II covers issues concerning people, environment and changes. Section III deals with gender issues in the domain of health, development project and widowhood.

Aravindh Kumar his paper on 'Global Truth and Local Realities' has argued that traditional village councils are retained and strengthened in North Indian villages. These institutions continue to serve valued ends in ways that are understood and appreciated by ordinary villagers. These institutions have been modified further with democracy and education. The village councils have become more egalitarian.

K.N. Joshi's Paper "Ecological Challenge in Rajasthan" reviews in detail the ecological situation in Rajasthan and suggests measures to control the already degraded environment. Ann Grodzisn Gold and Bhoju Ram Gujar in their paper "Of Gods, Kings and Government servants" describe three modes of tree Protection in Rajasthan, divine royal and bureaucratic. Surjit Singh's paper "Tourism in a traditional Society" is an attempt to understand the informal tourism sector in Jaipur - the traditional city founded by Maharaja of Kushawa dynasty The analysis is based on primary survey, interviews and discussions.

Frances Tafts paper on 'Heritage Hotel in Rajasthan' traces the development of heritage hotel from palaces and castles. This paper discusses the impact of heritage

hotels and what the future beholds for them. Alcia Ory De Nicola's paper on Meditating Design Manufacturing tradition and innovation in Bagru's Handblock's . Printing Industry focuses on the particular narrative of "tradition and innovation" popular among exporters, designers and NGOs who are working to assist local printers in reaching a global market.

The paper by Maya Unnithan Kumar on "Reproductive Health Services and Medical Pluralism in Rajasthan Forward looking strategies "critically evaluates the existing reproductive health services for poor women in Rajasthan. Leena Parmar looks at the empowerment that has taken place due to the flow of financial resource to the Kargil Widow. The study concerns 55 of the 1999 Kargil war from Rural Rajasthan. Given the traditional control over women by patriarchy, one feels that new status of Kargil war widows may wither away. These women need education, awareness and guidance along with counselling training and self sufficiency

Dalbir Singh's study shows that irrigation schemes have played an important role in improving the economic conditions of household. The literacy levels have gone up, dependency ratio has gone down and employment opportunity in farm and nonfarm sectors have increased. Irrigation has improved the economic conditions of the household and the living conditions of women more comfortable.

Alternative Conceptions of Civil society.

Simone Chambers, Will Kymlicka (Eds)

Princeton, Oxford, Princeton University Press 2002, 237pp, \$19.95

The Chambers/Kymlicka anthology traces intellectual roots of the concept of civil society and examines their links with economic liberalism, Natural Law, feminism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Conflucianism. The major concern of the Work is to see whether the civil society concept has the potential to deliver interculturally accepted norms for a pluralistic, tolerant coexistence of the world's cultures under the conditions of globalisation.

The starting point is locke's normative concept of civil society. In the tradition of the enlightenment, he interprets the emergence of civil society as the human transformation from the feudal natural state into the civilised social contract. On this basis the authors seek to track down, from an ethical or moral - theological perspective,

elements of tolerance and plurality in the system of thought of the world religions. Using the example of the politically charged subject of Islam, Hasson Hanafi points out that there are also currents in Islam's intellectual History that are compatible with the norms of tolerance and plurality. The articles are largely informative and give insights into the current mix of sociopolitical discourse.

Pritha Dasgupta
Department of Sociology
Christ College