

RATH, GOVINDA CHANDRA (ed.). *Tribal development in India: the contemporary debate*. 340 pp., maps, tables, figs, bibliogr. London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006. £15.99 (paper)

Tribal development in South Asia links economics with the politics of recognition, and can co-opt preservation and heritage movements or campaigns for affirmative action or reservations. This collection of thirteen essays, carefully edited and introduced by Govinda Chandra Rath, adds to this often heated debate.

The 83 million tribal peoples of India make up 8 per cent of the country's total population, and belong to 461 officially recognized groups. Divided into four sections, this volume deals with the various approaches to tribal development since Indian independence, in particular: the crises of the welfare state; tribal autonomy movements which have emerged in reaction to centralized planning models; land alienation among tribal communities; and social opportunities and policy successes in tribal affairs. In his introduction, Rath concludes that 'the mainstream development model has limited impact on the people living at the periphery, specifically on tribes' (p. 57), a failure all the more tragic given that it is precisely these marginalized citizens who have been the target of elaborate tribal welfare programmes.

The editor's chapter, on Nehru and Elwin's perspectives on India's tribes, draws out the commonalities and differences between these two seminal figures. One of the paradoxes of history is that 'Elwin [had] wanted to keep the tribes in isolation, but now the tribes themselves claim their isolation in terms of socio-cultural identity and political sovereignty' (p. 89).

Barik reflects on the contradictions of and challenges to Indian policy-making with reference to the rehabilitation of refugees in the Koraput district of Orissa, and the failure of a project to resettle 35,000 displaced and 6,000 tribal families. In Barik's evaluation, this resulted in greater alienation through tribal-settler conflict. While the 'positive trend in the case of Koraput is that the tribes have faith in the democratic process', it is also the centralized planning initiatives that are 'greatly responsible for the woes of the tribes' (p. 107).

The contribution by Fernandes is based on studies of development-induced displacement in Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Orissa, and West Bengal, with a particular focus on tribal women. Rehabilitation, he argues, means 're-establishing

the livelihood, culture and the remaining social inputs' (p. 129), an agenda all too often forgotten in development initiatives. Basu's paper assesses how far the aspirations of tribal people were fulfilled by the creation of the state of Jharkand in November 2000, and suggests that a form of 'ethno-development' based on cultural pluralism, internal self-determination, territorialism, and sustainability should shape future interventions. In conclusion, the author raises a fundamental question: '[C]an tribal development be achieved within the existing non-tribal state system?' (p. 150).

Sarkar's contribution on the Rajbhanshis of north Bengal illustrates how their isolation from the development process coupled with their peripheral social status has driven them towards a movement for political autonomy. In this paper, in common with others in the volume, there exists a sense that tribalism is in some form antithetical to the development agenda. In a similar vein, Shankar's article is a narrative on post-independence transformation among the Kol tribe of Uttar Pradesh, culminating in their eventual alienation from forest land. Shankar is avowedly interventionist: '[I]f the government can set apart even 1% of its budget every year towards the acquisition of good quality land for tribals, it would invariably help in bringing about a qualitative improvement' (p. 180).

In their paper on tribal movements in Kerala, Chathukulam and John suggest that agricultural settlers have been the direct beneficiaries of alienated land. The solution, they argue, is that tribal development must 'proceed in a manner befitting the ethos of the people in an environment in which their development becomes their own responsibility' (p. 197). Kumar's contribution on tribal land alienation in Andhra Pradesh reveals how the migration of plains-dwelling non-tribal men to tribal areas has changed the structure of land relations. Saravanan discusses the tribal economy of Tamil Nadu from 1947 to 2000 and shows how the position of tribes as cultivators has over time been downgraded to that of agricultural labourers.

The remaining articles on development and social organization are more quantitative in style and address education, health, and development among India's Tolchha Bhutias, tribals in Orissa, and the Car Nicobarese. The final contribution ends on an intriguing note befitting this collection: '[M]odern development has received wide acceptance among the tribal people despite its intrinsic nature of generating inequality among them' (p. 320). In short, then,

this is a helpful and diverse collection on a very timely topic.

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