

## Book Review

### **Dynamics of Rural Transformation in India (Essays in Memory of Professor G. K. Chadha) Edited by M. R. Khurana; Studera Press, New Delhi, 2018, pp 578, Price Rs. 1995.**

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This book is an anthology of essays compiled and edited by M. R. Khurana whose chief objective is to express his profound gratitude and reverence that emanate from his deep love for Professor G. K. Chadha.

India, being a very largely dominant agricultural country, must attend urgently to the issues and challenges being faced by the agriculture sector and resolve conflicts of interests for the country's social and economic well-being. This sector is also presently afflicted with very serious crises and the learned scholars have frankly and honestly enlarged upon. Green Revolution, White Revolution and Blue Revolution and the subsequent eras of Reforms for inclusive growth, no doubt, ushered in a new era of agricultural growth and prosperity which completely transformed the socio-economic pattern of rural life in India. However, following the successes came up fresh challenges prompting the governments at the center and the states to initiate bold measures through their commissions, committees, agencies, agriculture universities and professional experts to provide relief and assure scientific growth for

positive healthy future transformation and innovation.

In this anthology, the learned scholars have shown an in-depth and exhaustive study into the diverse areas of urgent and immediate concern to agriculture today with a focus on the dynamics that is working for the rapid and radical transformation of rural India. In this process, they have scrupulously shown the disheartening, despairing and dismal situation also. The common mass of Indian populace is witnessing and helplessly watching the sorry mess in this highly significant sector of India's economic growth and ecology. The scholars have used their known expertise in studying, analyzing and suggesting some possible solutions to buffet across the turbulent waters directly or obliquely.

The essays in this anthology acquaint the reader with labor market dynamics in the economic diversity in rural India, non-farm employment (trends and growth in different regions), impact of liberalization and the inclusive growth, working of services sectors and micro-enterprises, rural land acquisitions and leasing benefiting the corporate houses at the cost

of the farmers and causing insecurity to the agricultural tenants, agricultural debt (debt waivers and debt relief schemes) and the agricultural practices and transformation in different regions of India, the growth of agro-based industry to tide over the crises of rural joblessness and the government undertakings for production, procurement and marketing and the role of the private players and agencies to provide relief to boost the agriculture with the sole purpose of improving the lot of the farmer.

The topics of these essays are self-explanatory. T.S. Papola has done well to study the conspicuously important changes that have occurred in the rural labor markets along with the changes in the occupational patterns of rural workers, in the context of trends in supply and demand. Biswajit Chatterjee and Aparjita Dhara have earnestly worked on the data-based trends of rural non-farm employment and discussed the pull and push factors in the employment of workforce there. Surya Kant too undertakes a meaningful study of the rural non-farm employment and its regional patterns in India. There are serious reflections on the contentious issues pertaining to land acquisition in direct conflict with the owners, government and the corporate houses. These issues have been well understood and explained by Sucha Singh Gill. Similarly, B. S. Ghuman has also traced the growth of agriculture to Rights-based rural employment-generation and poverty-alleviation through decentralized and participatory policies and programs. Interestingly, Sankar Bhaumik has chosen to add a detailed note on what

is fashionably called inclusive growth in common parlance. There is a comparative study of working of the services sector as an engine of economic transformation in India and South Korea in the expertise of Inderjeet Singh and Lakhwinder Singh.

H.R. Sharma, Kamal Singh and Shakir Hussain have undertaken a joint exercise in explaining the factual functioning of micro-enterprises in India and answering whether these are really distress-driven. The role of micro-finance as the dynamics of rural transformation in Haryana has been looked into by Varinder Pal Goyal and M. M. Goel. There is an exclusive study of the dimensions and insecurity of agricultural tenancy in Andhra Pradesh by A. Venkateswarlu and the impact of the debt-waiver and debt relief schemes by Dnyandev Talule in the case of farming households of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Both the researchers have taken up the related issues with great sensitivity and they sensitize the reader too in ample measure. G. M. Bhat and Showkat Anwar have highlighted the agricultural transformation in the state of J&K. The progress and aftermath of the widely-publicized Green Revolution have been taken up by H. S. Shergill and Varinder Sharma. The reader learns about the agro-based industry as a panacea for jobless growth from Nitin Arora and Rupinder Kaur.

The editor of this memorial academic venture is himself at pains in his outlining a potential strategy of agricultural development in the case of Punjab-once labeled as the throbbing heartland of

India's Green Revolution. The book ends with the editor's Postscript wherein he has attempted to provide an intensive, in-depth, exhaustive and insightful explanation of the dynamics of rural transformation in India over its post-independence decades and, as such, also forms the central focus of the main thesis of this edited volume. In particular, this Postscript has the brilliant reflections of Khurana on a number of allied issues like rural non-farm enterprises (RNFES), inventions and innovations in the evolving technologies, institutions and infrastructure, poverty alleviation, population policy, human capital formation, revamping the financial institutions and market, and most importantly, policymaking to remove inequalities and empowering the disempowered. As the reader reaches here with a conclusion, there is a great sense of satisfaction in the teasing and tactical socio-economic and socio-political situations and the saner dynamic approach to balance the imbalances in the dynamics of rapid and radical transformation.

To the present reviewer, the book under review has, on its flip side, quite a few weaknesses. First, the volume covers only a limited number of aspects of rural transformation in India to the neglect of many important aspects like dairy farming, institutions, infrastructure, etc. For instance, it skips the prevailing class relations in the Indian countryside, which still continue to hold their sway there in one way or another in matters of social and economic interests of the countryside people. Second, the book is silent on political space to the socially and economically most deprived people in the countryside- a politi-

cal challenge of the present times. Third, notwithstanding the quality inputs that have gone into its making, the book being a bit highly priced, is likely to make it out of the bounds of common researchers, whose number and interest in rural transformation issues in India and elsewhere are bound to swell in the times to come.

As against what has been observed above, the book under review commends itself on several important counts. First, the main strength of the book under review is that it is alive with various aspects of the dynamics of rural transformation in India. Second, the conclusions emerging out of the analysis done in various papers included in the book are informative as well as insightful. For instance, the thrust towards diversification of production base and employment and earning opportunities for the workforce in the countryside, human capital formation, etc., speak of the timeliness of the book. The idea that the countryside economy in India, in spite of its experiencing a deepening crisis, still has a lot of potential which can be unlocked through a well-conceived and equally well-implementable strategy that encompasses in its fold, technological, institutional, infrastructural, environmental and human factors, is deftly conveyed in the volume. To put it pithily, what this book seeks to convey in more unambiguous terms is that improvement in the lives of people in the countryside in India can be brought about by boosting and diversifying agricultural activity away from the existing wheat-paddy dominated cropping pattern, im-

proving healthcare and educational facilities both in quantitative and qualitative terms, promoting sustainable farming techniques, modernization and diffusion of cost saving technologies, development of the required infrastructure and challenging the retrogressive, regressive and exploitative institutional set up that have held back, nay, strangled the progress through their resistance to the much needed meaningful change in the Indian countryside in the past. Third, the clarity with which the learned experts have understood, explained and dealt with the highly relevant issues and challenges in the thematic contexts of this anthology deserves high appreciation. All their contentions are fully supported and authenticated with relevant data and the laws of assumption have been consciously given a go-by. Lack of obscurity in the contents and the spirit is its chief forte and enhances thought-provocation. This is what makes it a mini-encyclopedia of the dynamics of rural transformation in India. Fourth, the editor and his team of diligent and visionary contributing scholars have done their best to humanize the significant and most urgent economic issues and challenges in the agricultural sector in the present-day India and going through this anthology is an amply rewarding intellectual exercise. The editor has scrupulously indexed tables and figures and he has carefully explained the acronyms and abbreviations used in the text of the essays. Finally, even the publishers have shown great professional aesthetics and ethics in bringing out this edition-with printer's devil missing and the

solemn appeal of the commemorative volume.

The volume under review, to the present reviewer, is, on balance, a value addition to the burgeoning literature on the theme of rural transformation in India and deserves serious attention by all concerned. It is useful for those who are grappling with diverse set of issues pertaining to the rural transformation in India and elsewhere in likewise situations. It reminds us that it is not possible to achieve the much-touted objective of inclusive growth in the absence of sustainable development of the countryside in India. It also suggests that a drastic revamp is needed for empowering the masses in the Indian countryside. And this is what makes this volume a must read for all practitioners, including rural planners and policymakers, researchers, consultants and those monitoring rural institutions – i.e., those who feel genuinely concerned with issues pertaining to the dynamics of rural transformation in India and elsewhere in India-like situations. In conclusion, it can be maintained that, though the country is awash with studies on the challenges facing the Indian countryside in respect of the dynamics of rural transformation, but more independent work based on rigorous research is needed on a continuing basis to enlighten meaningfully the concerned planners and policymakers to arrive at more plausible solutions. Accordingly, we look forward to future breed of researchers to feast us with a variety of academically high rewarding perspectives concerning the theme under reference, both in India and abroad.

While this excellent and ambitious anthology will hopefully be of profound and wide use to those involved directly or indirectly in treating the currently ailing rural economy with healthy inputs and meaningfully concrete output, the reviewer, nevertheless, cannot but sum it up by recalling lines from Oliver Goldsmith's "*The Deserted Village*" wherein he made a sound prediction with a sound warning to all the countries and,

this prediction, particularly seems more true now in India-

*"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills  
a prey, Where wealth accumulates and  
men decay."*

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