

BOOK REVIEWS

Panchayats and Building of Model Villages, 2013, Edited by M.V. Rao and E. Venkatesu, Published by Rawat Publications: Jaipur, pp. 336, Price: ₹ 950.

The book under review is an edited version of the papers which were presented in a national seminar held at National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad. It deals with the idea of model village and various approaches or strategies of transforming this idea into reality. The book contains 27 chapters (including the editors' introduction). In the introductory chapter the editors discuss five approaches to building of model villages, namely, Panchayati Raj Institutions Model (PRI Model), Prime Minister Adarsh Gaon Yojana Model (PMAGY Model), Provision of Urban Facilities in Rural Areas Model (PURA Model), Spiritual Model [Art of Living Model], and Non-Governmental Organisation Model [NGO Model]. In the light of these models, the remaining 26 chapters deal with the problems and prospects of building model villages in India.

Most chapters of the book deal with the PRI model where the challenges of empowering Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas remain central concern of the contributors. For instance, the second chapter by Mahi Pal and the 26th Chapter by Aditi Jha et al deal with the problems and promises of Gram Sabha. The fourth chapter by E. Venkatesu highlights some achievements in the areas of sanitation, poverty reduction, drinking water facilities etc., under the PRI model. The chapters 5, 7, 9, 10, 16 and 19 highlight Gram Panchayats' best practices under the same model. The third chapter by Neelam Yadava and the 22nd chapter by R.R. Prasad deal with conceptual aspect of model village and then discuss the PRI model and the PMAGY model, respectively.

The 13th chapter by Sindhu Thulaseedharan discusses how the Gram Panchayat of Cherianad in Kerala was transformed into the first litigation-controlled and legally literate Panchayat in India. This case highlights the fact that synchronisation of conventional wisdom with 'modern' legal knowledge can produce satisfactory service delivery results in the area of justice at village level. The case of Cherianad is instructive to the followers of khap Panchayats in Haryana who have been struggling to cope with the problems posed by the gap between the principles of 'modern' laws and conventional wisdom.

The sixth chapter by Yatindra Singh Sisodiya is a comparative analysis of implementation of PESA in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. The chapters 8, 14 and 15 highlight best practices of participatory mode of community development. The chapters 11, 17 and 18 are concerned with the issue of improving Panchayat Service delivery. The chapters 20 and 21 focus on some best practices of public-private partnership aimed at village development. The chapters 23, 24, and 25 highlight the benefits of PURA model, the Art of Living model and the NGO model, respectively. The last chapter deals with the issue of cooperation and coordination among NGOs, PRIs, Self-help Groups etc., in building an 'informational and data infrastructure' in order to inform the local decision-making leadership.

The book brings together various practices of participatory development and democratic governance at village level. There is an agreement among the supporters of various models regarding the idea of a model village. Accordingly, a model village is the one the people of which have the capability of making use of indigenous as well as technological

knowledge and resources at hand, and have opportunities of equal access to basic material and spiritual needs. Capability of the people of such a village includes their skills of transforming formal institutions such as Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas as well as other informal institutions of self-governance into enabling institutions of democracy at local level.

While sailing through the papers the reader comes across a commonality in various approaches to building model villages: Model villagers' collective awareness about self-responsible and accountable citizenship and their willingness to initiate—and participate in—various practices of village development. From this it follows that it is possible to build model villages through community led programmes and that heterogeneous or homogenous identity of a village can be utilised in evolving diversified ways of democratic village life.

The idea of model villages that emerges from this book successfully appears to be free from the trap of tradition-modernity dichotomy—the contributors do not find tradition and modernity inconsistent with the idea of model villages. Given, model villages can be seen as a trend of synchronising traditional and modern technology in order to deepen democratic village life. Anticipated by scholars such as Rajni Kothari such trends represent a paradigm shift in the discourse on development and democracy at grassroots level. The trend of building model villages by synchronising traditions with technology is consistent with the demands for “larger citizen involvement in new variants of old institutions like the gaon sabha which can combine older forms of informal consensus-making mechanisms with the more formal, institutionalised and legal forms decreed by legislation” in order to maximise the responsibility and accountability of formal institutions of self-governance and to minimise the politician-bureaucrat nexus (Rajni Kothari 1988:196). The book is a significant attempt in

bringing together the people who are actively engaged in improving living conditions of human beings in rural areas in order to bridge the gap between rural and urban India.

*Ramesh Kumar
University of Hyderabad*

Reference

Kothari, Rajni, (1988), *State Against Democracy: In Search of Humane Governance*, Delhi Ajanta Publications, p.196.

Rethinking Planning and Development – The Indian Context : Tribute to Tarlok Singh by Yogesh Atal, 2013 Published by Indian Association of Social Science Institutions, IIPA, Indra Prastha Estate, Delhi – 110 002 in association with MANAK Publications Pvt Ltd. B-7, Saraswati Complex, Laxmi Nagar, New Delhi – 110 092, pp. 260, ₹ 1200 (Hardback).

This volume is a tribute to Shri Tarlok Singh – a distinguished Civil Servant (ICS of the British times) and the founder Chairman of the Indian Association of Social Science Institutions (IASSI)- who worked closely with India's first Prime Minister, in promoting planned development of the Indian Economy. IASSI has decided to institute a Series of Tarlok Singh Memorial Lectures to Commemorate and pay tributes for his contributions in social sciences. This volume comprises two parts. The first part carries a selection from the tributes paid by his friends and admirers. Second part reproduces the first six memorial lectures delivered in his honour.

First chapter signifies the contributions and achievements of Shri Tarlok Singh. Author Jaideep Singh has brought out every event of his father and his vision in building social sciences as an institution. Shri Tarlok Singh has built two institutions, the first institution was Committee on studies for Cooperation in Development in South Asia (CSCD) in 1978 and second institution that he has conceived and actualised is Indian Association of Social Science Institutions (IASSI).