

Financial services are very unlike physical products in their potential for customisation and malleability. Financial services must help a household to manage and increase its consumption smoothly and fully utilise its human capital, financial capital and other resources to improve its well-being. Inter-temporal consumption smoothing can be provided either through savings or loans, with or without collateral. A loan can involve weekly repayment or bullet repayment; a loan when combined with rainfall insurance can allow for skipping a payment when the monsoon fails; a remittance inflow can be swept instantaneously as an account balance into a money market mutual fund. This malleable feature of financial services is what makes them so important for enabling people, particularly those who have low income, to be financially included in formal systems.

This book is a collection of essays contributed by colleagues and key partners of the editors. The authors have successfully assembled the ideas from a vast variety of sources into one cogent and accessible volume. Chapterisation of the book and sequencing of the articles is very apt. The book has 14 chapters that have been segregated into four separate sections. The first section has a lone chapter which highlights key conceptual issues in providing universal access to finance. It gives a good background to appreciate the idea of Financial Engineering for Low-Income Households (FELIH) which is believed to be building expertise for providers of financial services.

The second section titled 'Building Blocks of Financial Engineering' consists of four chapters. Some of the chapters in the second section have reviewed the essentials of financial engineering so as to develop necessary background to appreciate more application oriented sections. The treatment of each of the topics is at a basic-to-intermediate level with references provided for those who want to access more advanced treatments of the topics.

The third section with the title 'Applications of Financial Engineering' has eight chapters and discusses the basic risk types that need to be understood in order to develop financial products and to provide wealth management advice to low-income individuals and households. The focus was on understanding the basic ideas and on working through simulations and problem sets in order to develop a full understanding of the nature of the underlying risks that individuals, households, and enterprises face. The chapters in this section also explore the different types of products that could be offered to individuals and households as a part of an integrated wealth management service. A discussion has also been offered on where and how, on a stand-alone basis the products could be offered to the low income communities.

The last section of the edition presented a case study of a household along with a comprehensive financial plan that could help professionals working in domains as diverse as banking, insurance, pensions and mutual funds.

This book will be invaluable for students, researchers and practitioners interested in the design and delivery of financial services to low-income households.

*Dr. G.V. Krishna Lohi Das*

**Those Who Did Not Die – Impact of the Agrarian Crisis on Women in Punjab** by Ranjana Padhi, Sage Publication 2012; Pages 183, Price ₹ 650.

We are learning to live in the midst of many harsh realities, each unique in its own way, of untold human suffering and indignity. Perhaps the most bizarre is how this country's food producers are seeking pesticides or the noose to end their own lives. They are the producers of the food we daily consume. The spate of suicides by small and marginal farmers in several states of India reflects the crisis in Indian agriculture, unprecedented in post - Independence India.

The quarter million suicides recorded so far call serious attention to the reality of lakhs more peasantry, especially agricultural labourers, on the brink of devastation in this country. The suicides of agricultural labourers continue to go unreported in almost all studies or news reports on peasant suicides.

Studies on peasant suicides and indebtedness continue to render invisible the family and the household, with the agricultural labourer or farmer viewed solely as a producer of food, selling his or her labour or produce. Yet a peasant – male or female – does not enter debt for the sake of agricultural inputs alone. Those dependent on agriculture depend on it to fulfill several needs even as they produce food for society at large – food for their own families, education or jobs for their children, marriage expenses, health care, along with dreams of a more dignified life for their near and dear ones.

This book is an attempt to bring to the fore the subjectivities of the survivors of “suicide families”, as they are called in the Punjab. The tyranny of statistical data, of realities depicted in tabular format, renders individuals invisible, while the fetish of narratives, images and voices that soars high in popularity often obliterates socio-economic contexts. The author has successfully sequenced the facts from a vast variety of sources into one cogent and accessible volume. The book has six chapters and chapterisation of the book and sequencing of the articles is very apt.

The author’s analysis manages to capture the subjective experiences of women and thereby refuses to turn the suicides into mere statistics erasing the realities of lived experiences. So, among the many strengths of the book is its powerful documenting of women’s lives, its incredible archival value for history, even as its own stated focus is to find way to struggle against the agrarian crisis in the Punjab where too many have killed themselves and others desperately try and resist death.

This book will be invaluable for students, researchers and journalists interested in probing the genesis of the peasant misery in Punjab and other similar States.

*Dr. P. Kesava Rao*

**HIV / AIDS Patients and Their Rehabilitation** by Dr. Shekh Belal Ahmed, Department of Sociology & Social Work, AMU, Aligarh, Published by Serials Publications, 4830/24, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi – 110 002. Price ₹ 495.

The author makes a very profound statement in the preface that 95 per cent new HIV cases occur in developing countries which are least equipped to cope with. In the past we have seen celebrities like Rock Hudson (Hollywood Actor) and Magic Johnson (Basket Ball Star) contracting this. But now good awareness of this disease is preventing new cases in the West. The author must be congratulated for writing this book. The author is very correct that this problem is not the responsibility of Health Sector alone but it should be tackled by a multi-sectorial approach.

The authors’ statement on gender inequality is true that the women are supposed to be innocent, passive and economically dependent which makes them vulnerable. The author’s opinion on Poverty and Aids needs more authentication. Also he says that the school enrolment has fallen 365 per cent in Switzerland, I think it should have been Swaziland, an African Country where AIDS is rampant.

The author correctly pointed out the impact of economic burden for AIDS as it not only puts more burden on the government to treat the opportune infections but also reduces the working force as many would die by 40. The write-up on AIDS impact on health care workforce is very neatly done (P 24). The increased risk for women in African countries who sell beer to male customers who may be