

Book Review

Tariq Banuri, Shahrukh Rafi Khan and Moazam Mahmood (ed.), *Just Development: Beyond Adjustment with a Human Face*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1997. Pp. 207. Price not mentioned.

The Oxford series of books published on the occasion of the golden jubilee of Pakistan's independence constitute a welcome and high quality addition to material on various facets of life in the country. "Just Development" reviews Pakistan's development from the human angle and looks at the structural adjustment programme, debating whether it is possible to have "adjustment with a human face".

Perhaps the most enduring element of our development strategies has been the relegation of social objectives to low priority and the consequent neglect of social sectors. This has been as true of decades of high growth – 1960s and 1980s – as of those of low growth – 1950s, 1970s and 1990s. Why?

The average citizen would have a ready answer. The government is to be blamed as the bureaucracy and the ruling elites tend to expropriate all resources for their own limited benefit. Dr. Tariq Banuri, in the introduction to this slim volume, uses a wider angle lense and raises the question as to why the society is "incapable of organising collective public action to pursue its valued goals". The state, as he sees it, is viewed as just "one possible institution for collective decision making, albeit the most significant one." Underdevelopment thus turns out to be "a form of social helplessness".

The search for answers, in such a broad context, takes the three editors, along with A.R. Kemal, Khawar Mumtaz and andrea Cornia, to look at the economic sectors, human resource development, poverty and policy, the policy framework and structural adjustment, and an agenda for institutional reforms for human development. The state, it appears, is omnipresent and simply cannot be avoided. Even in the last chapter on NGOs in Pakistan, "the government" and the NGOs are expected to develop a harmonious working relationship.

As society seeks development with justice (hence, the title "Just Development") "the most significant obstacle to the pursuit of social objectives" is "the crisis of governance". All characteristics of such a crisis can be observed in Pakistan. The answer lies in not only improving the working of the government but also the strengthening, restoring and nurturing of participatory institutions. The NGOs, community based organisations, the judiciary, democratic institutions – all have roles to play

in ensuring the judicious use of our resources and promoting justice and development simultaneously. The most telling lesson to be learnt from the simplistic 1960s model of growth, and its inevitable collapse, was that “develop now and seek distribution and social justice later” is not a viable proposition.

Pakistan has paid the highest price that is, dismemberment, a country could pay. This book, edited by three of our most perceptive social scientists, represents a realistic view of our current milieu and ways to understand it.

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