

NIRAJA GOPAL JAYAL & SUDHA PAI, eds., *Democratic governance in India: Challenges of poverty, development and identity*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001. 264 pp. Tables, notes, references, index. Rs. 495 (hardback)

The concept of governance is relatively new and increasingly popular. Talking in terms of governance replaces a more narrow focus on government, as the editors argue in their introduction. Governance is wider, as it includes spheres of regulation outside the realm of the state, namely those related to the market and civil society. This immediately points to the wider context in which we have to locate the conceptual shift: it is related to the fact that the state is losing, or has already lost part of, its privileged position and that the market and civil society become more prominent. It is against this background that the book claims to focus on challenges of development, poverty and identity.

No doubt an ambitious and also very worthwhile endeavour. Seen from this perspective, however, the book as a whole disappoints somewhat. The main trends outlined in the (first part of the) introduction do not come sufficiently back in the individual papers. The book misses a red thread that would bring unity in the collection. Looking at the papers individually, however, the book is an interesting collection with many papers that are worth reading.

The book consists of two parts. Apart from the introduction by the editors, there are four papers in the first part on 'Governance, Poverty and Development', and five papers in the second part on 'The Politics of Identity'. Despite the introduction emphasizing the difference between government and governance, three of the four papers in the first part privilege the state in their discussion on governance. The exception is the paper of Bob Currie, which is a rather philosophical treatment of politics, governance, civil society and participation. Currie argues that, in order to understand under which political conditions one can expect poverty reduction, one has to move beyond frameworks of (good) governance or simple beliefs like 'the more participation the better', but rather one has to look at political cultures. The article is not about India, which I personally found a pity, especially since Bob Currie has done very interesting earlier work on public action and the persistence of hunger in Orissa. The other three papers of this first part of the book are all mainly about government, and, seen from the overall theme outlined in the introduction, it is a pity that no papers are included on other forms of

governance or public action, and their relationship to poverty and development. Niraja Gopal Jayal discusses six different models that challenge the state at present, varying from proposals to roll back the state, to attempts to control it (as the Bahujan Samaj Party aspires in Uttar Pradesh), to initiatives to partner the state (as in Joint Forest Management projects), to decentralize it. Kuldeep Mathur discusses two different ways in which the developmental role of the state has been given concrete shape, in India but also in other parts of the developing world. In the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis was on strengthening a technically oriented, professional and ideologically neutral development administration. The present discourse, however, emphasizes 'state capacity' and 'good governance', as a way of converting a predatory and non-developmental state into a more developmental one. What I found interesting is that in different periods of time, the same international actors (Ford Foundation, UNDP, international donors) were involved in promoting these different models. The paper focusing most concretely on India's development and poverty problems is the one by Utsa Patnaik and Prabhat Patnaik. The issue of governance, in their paper, is dealt with in their discussion of the 'dirigiste' regime. Although this regime has its shortcomings, in their view it is not the main culprit of India's poverty and food insecurity, for which they point at the absence of an effective redistributive land reform.

The second part of the book has five papers on the politics of identity, i.e. Dalit identity in four papers, and Oriya identity in one paper. Effectively this means that one of the main challenges to democratic governance in India, that of an increasingly assertive Hindu identity formation and mobilization, is not discussed in the book. The papers are, again, quite diverse. Three papers are very broad in scope (although not all of them equally ambitious): Eleanor Zelliot on possible sources of Dalit pride, Ghanshyam Shah on limitations of the Dalit movement, and Aditya Nigam on the radical challenge of parts of the Dalit movement, in the sense that this movement does no longer accept the conventional leftist 'priority of evils' in which imperialism came first, and which tended to accept that the nation state is/was the best platform from which to fight imperialism. Two papers in this part of the volume discuss very concrete processes of identity formation in particular historical circumstances: Sudha Pai's paper on the BSP in UP and Jayanta Sengupta's paper on Oriya identity. Both are interesting and the latter one is a welcome addition to the collection, since it focuses on elites, who, although they perceive themselves in this case as backward, form as much a challenge for democratic governance as the

subaltern groups. So, given the main theme of the book, there are several missed opportunities, but there is enough substance in the papers to make it a worthwhile and interesting collection.

Jos Mooij

Centre for Economic and Social Studies

Nizamia Observatory Campus

Hyderabad 500016

Word count: 917