

Surinder S. Jodhka (Ed.) *Agrarian Change in India (Readings on the Economy, Polity and Society)*. EPW and Orient BlackSwan, 2022, ₹1425.00. ISBN 978-93-5442-228-7.

Eminent sociologist Surinder Jodhka has brought together a collection of 23 articles, in a new book, ‘Agrarian Change in India’ with the aim to analyse and discuss the debates and concerns around agricultural transition and social transformation, mediated by global forces and intervening institutions. This collection contributes to the extensive literature on agrarian change on key concerns such as land reforms and property rights, class and non-class aspects of social differentiation, labour relations, green revolution, agrarian distress, peasant politics, migration, social programmes and environmental deterioration. This timely edited volume consists of five sections. Some of the chapters have been published earlier in the *Economic and Political Weekly*. The range of topics covered in the book span decades, subjects and theoretical perspectives. The authors are diverse in terms of disciplinary commitments and provide a unique diagnosis of agrarian crisis causation and possible pathways for resolution.

Section I foregrounds the need to design contextual policies of re-agrarianisation by attending to new concerns such as land grabs, gender equity and ecological sustainability. Section II discusses the changing trends in land relations such as the shift towards small-scale family farming with the advent of the Green Revolution and how even the successful state land reforms left numerous poor peasants and landless labourers with ‘too little land and too little work’. In Section III, the authors advocate new types of supply chains for marketing agrarian produce that reduces the role of middlemen and how decentralised public procurement, direct selling and open auctions may shift intensive production to non-green revolution regions. Section IV discusses labour relations, from expansion of labouring opportunities during the green revolution, inability of equity laws to protect the land of disadvantaged groups, to the continued influence of dominant social groups on agrarian politics. Loss of livelihood opportunities for landless women with shift in cropping patterns and the rise of farmer-entrepreneurs seeking a consumption-leisure-based urban living are other emergent issues. The concluding Section V examines the nature and direction of

agrarian distress and collapse, in drought-prone, rain-fed farming, as well as core green revolution zones through farmer indebtedness. The suggested routes of resolution are radically different, from the regeneration of sustainable and traditional farming systems to creating agrobusiness. Migrant and informal sector work and state welfare increasingly contribute to the reproduction of rural households, raising the spectre of a post-agrarian epoch.

The book raises some important questions about the nature, extent, direction and effects of agrarian change in India. It advocates for rejuvenating interest in 'in-depth research' on agrarian concerns that has been waning since the 1980s. Unresolved debates from historical agrarian studies not only acquire new significance but provide the foundation for building conceptual edge and empirical efforts, as agriculture takes new turns under neoliberal, hyper-nationalist and climate change-induced transformation. The articles gathered in this volume provide signposts to these multiple contours of change. If social differentiation along class, gender and caste among the smallholders and middle farmers continue, what direction would agrarian movements and politics take? How would the 'pluri-active' smallholding rural households (Levien et al., 2018) reproduce themselves in a context where public investment is shrinking? How should we understand new zones of surplus production as the shine fades from Green Revolution core areas? Shall we witness newer forms of land grabs and contentions over rights and claims? Questions about the agrarian transitions, both classical and novel (Byres, 1986), remain valid but require empirical engagement even as the 'multiple determinations and contingencies of world capitalism' collide with the specific conditions of agrarian capitalism and politics (Levien et al., 2018).

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