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BOOK REVIEW

Diversification of Rural Non-farm Employment: A Geographical Analysis of Haryana by Narinder Kumar

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In the wake of intensifying pressure on agriculture and saturation level of agricultural production having been reached in the dream revolution states, it is obvious both people and planners are pinning their hopes on the explosion of non-farming activities in the rural areas. This book focuses on this crucial theme in the context of the state of Haryana. It is essentially the author's Ph.D. dissertation suitably, though minimally, modified for publication in the form of a book. As noted in the foreword and later elaborated in the introduction this exploration was triggered by a set of research questions which include investigation into changes in non-farm employment during 1971-1991 as reflected in the changing composition of determinants of growth and diversification of rural non-farm employment in Haryana. It is organized into 13 chapters which contain 27 maps and 31 tables and a comprehensive bibliography.

Chapter 1 introduces the theme in terms of essential concepts relating to rural non-farm employment it also covers a penetrating review of relevant social science literature and makes a strong care for looking at the micro realities from a geographic perspective. The hypothesis proposed herein relates rural non-farm employment with agriculture, rural-urban linkages, literacy and caste. We are informed

about the data base and the specific primary sources of data. Happily the limitations of data and practical difficulties in handling the data have been clearly explained which is a very important issue but one which is often not given due consideration in many a research investigation.

In the subsequent chapters changes in rural workers in livestock, forestry, mining and quarrying, household industry and in manufacturing, construction, trade and commerce, transport, storage and communication and workers in other services have been discussed. In chapter 11 a synthesis of changes in workers in all the non-agricultural activities has been presented. Areas witnessing significant increase in non-farm workers have been distinguished from those which have seen only moderate, low or very low increase. Interestingly quite a few tehsils (8 in all) in Haryana continue to be predominantly agricultural and have in fact experienced decrease in the proportion of non-farm workers. This study has revealed the overall sluggish pace of diversification of the rural economy with exception of the areas in close proximity of the National Capital Region.

An important contribution of this book is the inclusion of six case studies where changes in individual occupation (rather than industrial categories) have been investigated on the basis of primary information collected from the field. Proximity to fast growing urban centers, changing local requirements, weakening hold of castes on occupation and the attraction of tertiary activities (services of all kinds) emerge as significant trends in these case

studies. As I was approaching the concluding chapter, I was reminded of hypotheses stated in the introduction and a natural anxiety was to see as to how some of the hypotheses stand validated or otherwise. In the true spirit of hypotheses as signals directing research it was encouraging to note that the present study did not lose track on the way and tried to match its findings against the propositions most of which stood validated.

However, there appears to be a mismatch between observations valid at the macro level and those emerging from the village level studies. While in the former the data pertained to the period 1971-1991 (pre-globalization) for the latter the field work was done in the new millennium and the villages/respondents have been impacted by the new policies. Naturally when the author suggests that the government needs to “make efforts to disperse industries in rural areas..... subsidies to household industries..... need for establishing training institutes..... “the author seems to have closed his eyes to the market forces and the new policies of jobless growth and marginalization which is now the current and prevailing reality. This might become a challenge for a new study to cover the post 1991 period.

On the whole the painstaking efforts of the author as reflected in this book deserve a pat and warm complements.

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