

enhance the capacity of individuals to use those services appropriately (pp. 7, 47).

Given this apparent reluctance to acknowledge behavioural differences in individuals and populations, a serious difficulty arises when apparently similar levels of participation in family planning practices produces different results.

Although increases in contraceptive prevalence were the main reason for the decreases in fertility, the authors assert at the conclusion of a set of country case studies, the comparison among the five countries underscores the possible variation in total fertility rates, even when rates of contraceptive prevalence are comparable.

So, in a rather plaintive observation, they have to add:

People can and do influence their fertility in many ways, some of which can offset or complement the fertility-reducing effects of increases in contraceptive use. (p. 63).

The predisposition to adopt a particular perspective on the issue of fertility reduction results in a strong emphasis on World Bank and similar sources and omission of a substantial literature on Asian fertility. The demographic literature *per se* is only lightly drawn upon, and the extensive discussion of Asian population issues appearing over the last decade in journals such as the *Population and Development Review* and the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* (in which the overwhelming majority of articles are on fertility and family planning) does not rate a mention. Even on such demographically fundamental matters as the determinants of fertility, the brief evaluation of the literature reflects a consistent viewpoint based on a particular value judgement.

On the determinants of fertility, the literature generally consists of statistical analyses involving individual, contextual and policy variables. The best of these studies offers insights into the responsiveness of fertility to specific intervention. When combined with cost information, the results can guide the design of appropriate policies to influence fertility (p. 2).

Perceptions of the effectiveness of this study

will largely depend on the extent to which this approach accords with readers' own views. In the areas of the subject which the volume addresses, the treatment is both competent and comprehensive. But for those who view the populations concerned as active participants in the process of change rather than merely respondents to institutional management of their fertility there remains a substantial world unrecognised by this analysis.

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***Singapore-India Relations: A Primer*. Edited by Yong Mun Cheong and V.V. Bhanoji Rao. Singapore: Singapore University Press, National University of Singapore, 1995, Pp. xvii, 299.**

This volume is a thematic compilation of 10 articles on the historical, political, social, cultural, economic and legal dimensions of Singapore-India relations authored by contributors forming the Study Group on Singapore-India Relations (SGSIR) in the National University of Singapore. It seeks to present a multi-disciplinary framework to study the multi-faceted Singapore-India linkages and interactions right from the point of the founding of modern Singapore in 1819 unto the present times and the prospects of enlarging and strengthening those relations in the future. Aptly titled as a primer, it grew out of a conference held in Singapore in 1994 titled "Singapore-India: Gearing up for the 21st Century" under the sponsorship of SGSIR. The diverse topics covered by the contributors are thematically introduced by the editors in the introductory chapter, and the eleventh chapter, the

last one, contains the concluding observations of one of them, which provide the agenda for future research in this field.

The book purports to “serve as an introduction to those interested in India in a general way and in particular to those contemplating entry into the Indian market” in the context of the so-called “India fever” gripping Singapore after the flurry of exchange of investment missions, commercial delegations and ministerial visits between the two countries in the post-cold war era of the early 1990s as well as a visit by the Prime Minister of Singapore to India as the chief guest at the Indian Republic Day celebrations of 1994. The approach of the book, as claimed by the editors, is to explore the multi-dimensional relations at proper depth and with sufficient breadth of the field covered.

Modern Singapore was founded in 1819 as a strategic foothold of the British East India Company along the Straits of Malacca for safeguarding the Company’s empire in the Indian sub-continent. It was under the direct control of the Bengal Presidency of the East India Company from 1826 to 1851, and then placed under the direct supervision of the colonial governor-general of India till 1867, when the Straits Settlements including Singapore were brought under the control of the British Colonial Office in London. Along with the British rulers came their Indian subjects to the strategic British trading and military post of Singapore throughout the colonial era unto 1947 as sepoys, lascars, convicts, domestic servants, clerks, coolies and indentured labourers, traders and merchants, police and civil servants; and they were joined by their families. This colonial heritage of Singapore lies at the root of the formation of the sizable Indian community in Singapore, which presently forms Singapore’s third largest ethnic group with about seven per cent of the population. The linkages between India and Singapore became somewhat weaker after the emergence of the independent India, but the flow of migrants from India to Singapore continued as immigrants’ family formation, migration of traders, merchants, labourers and professionals. After Singapore achieved internal

self-government in 1959 and, subsequent to a brief merger with the Malaysian Federation (1963–65), full independence in 1965, the dynamic transformation of Singapore into a modern city-state in the last three decades has significantly added to the economic importance of this global entrepôt in the Southeast Asian region. Consequently, Singapore-India relations have emerged as a crucial development issue for both the countries in the backdrop of the increasing pace of globalization of the world economy in the 1990s. In this scenario, therefore, the book can be considered a pioneering information guide as well as a core analytical exercise on the topic.

The first article by Tan Tai Yong and Andrew J. Major titled, “India and the Indians in the making of Modern Singapore”, provides an excellent review of the history of modern Singapore from its founding in 1819, and provides historical evidence regarding the role played by India and the Indians in building the multi-ethnic society and polity of modern Singapore. The authors rightly argue that India was the reason behind the founding of Singapore as a British colonial post. Then they describe the administrative connections and influences of the Indian colonial government based in Calcutta and later in Delhi in the affairs of Singapore until 1867, and also analyse the growth of a subaltern Indian community during that period of direct Indian rule. In the third section, they trace out the course of expansion of the Indian merchant community in Singapore in the British colonial era. The last section of the article gives a brief resumé of the Indian community in Singapore after its independence in 1965 till the present. This article sets a fitting canvas for the articles to follow.

In the second article titled, “The Evolution and Growth of India-Singapore Relations”, Kripa Sridharan analyses the relationship of the two neighbouring independent states of Singapore and India during the last three decades. She identifies four phases of this relationship: in the initial phase, soon after the secession of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965, the leaders of Singapore were eager to establish close ties with India, and the efforts were duly appreciated by the other side.

The second phase is termed as the challenging phase by the author when some thorny issues affected the bilateral ties significantly. In the third phase, both countries realize the need for fostering closer ties. The author terms this phase as the promising phase, which has laid the ground work for the current phase of warm relationship. In the current phase, the two countries are working as “partners in progress”, the author claims. She correctly identifies the major turning points of the Singapore-India politico-diplomatic relations of the last three decades, but seems to be somewhat over-optimistic in characterizing those relations as the harbinger of an era of heightened interactions and cooperation. Rather, I tend to agree with her “cautiously optimistic view” regarding the future shape of these relationships.

The third article authored by Ishtiaq Hossain remains true to its title, “Singapore-India Relations in the Post-Cold War Period: A Singapore Perspective”. Here, the author highlights the Singaporean interests in the three major areas: economic, human resources and cultural, in fostering closer ties with India in the context of the current economic reforms in India and Singapore’s strategy of regionalization of its investment interests. The author believes, “The framework of a good, stable relationship between the two countries is already in place. It needs to be nurtured, and groomed for the mutual benefit of both countries”.

The fourth article, “Culture and Complementarities: Implications of the Singapore-India MOU on Culture, Heritage and the Archives”, is deliberately designed as an overtly theoretical piece of sociological punditry. It does not make for good reading, but it may add to the academic theorizing in the field.

V.V. Bhanoji Rao’s article titled, “Indian Economy: Past Progress, Recent Reforms and Medium-Term Potentials”, is an excellent review article on the Indian economy, which is very much in consonance with the declared objectives of the present compilation of the articles in the book, but the author concentrated his sole attention to the Indian case. The book does not present an article of similar stature on the economy of Singapore,

which I consider as a weakness in the design of the compilation.

However, the next article jointly authored by Mukul G. Asher and Ramkrishna S. Rajan titled, “Singapore-India Economic Relations: Exploring Synergies for Mutual Benefit”, tries in a big way to fill up this gap. In light of the analytical detail and empirical evidence presented, this article should be lauded for its depth and rigour.

The seventh article on the Indian Financial System written by Mohamed Ariff analyses the recent financial sector reforms undertaken in India, and tries to make a good case for Singaporean investment in India in these circumstances.

The article, “Geomorphic Environmental Problems in Tropical Cities: Examples from Singapore and India”, does not particularly fit in with the theme of the book. It is a remote cousin of the other thematic articles included in the compilation. The editors should have been more careful about this particular selection.

G. Shantakumar’s article, “Human Resources Complementarities between Singapore and India: Formulating Strategy for a Win-Win Situation”, correctly highlights the opportunities for Singapore and India to co-operate vigorously in exploiting the complementarities in this field. This is an excellent primer for interested readers.

L. Rao Penna’s article, “Legal Framework for Doing Business in India”, is a necessary piece to provide completeness to the theme of the book. The absence of the Singaporean case tells of the editors’ asymmetric expectations regarding business prospects of the Indian businessmen in Singapore, though.

A critical aspect of the whole exercise is revealed here. The book gives somewhat lopsided attention to building up an attractive investment profile of India for the Singaporeans. There is nothing wrong about that, but that kind of bias speaks of a “sales campaign” overtone, which hampers the readability of the book.

Nevertheless, I submit that this volume serves the purpose of its initiators quite creditably. It will be a core source of information for the interested readers in spite of the varied quality of the contributions included, especially because of the fact

that it includes some truly praiseworthy analytical endeavours.

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People's Initiative for Sustainable Development: Lessons of Experience. Edited by Syed Abdus Samad, Tatsuya Watanabe, Seung-Jin Kim. Kuala Lumpur: Asian And Pacific Development Centre, 1995. 470 pp. ***Seeds 2: Supporting Women's Work around the World.*** Edited by Ann Leonard. New York: The Feminist Press, 1995. 241 pp.

Both books reviewed here share a common theme: the practical strategies for successful development. They both use international case studies to evaluate the factors critical to the success of development efforts. Not surprisingly, they find much common ground, notably in stressing local self-initiative and self-financing, economic viability and the necessity of shifting decision-making as well as clearly defined responsibilities to the community level. The book titles seem to reflect a difference in focus, the environment and women respectively, but a closer look reveals that any assessment of development strategies has to include both these issues simultaneously.

The first book resulted from a project by the Asian and Pacific Development Centre (APDC) "Building Operational Strategies of Sustainable Development Upon People's Initiatives". The volume is divided into four parts. Part I contains case studies from seven Asian countries — Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. All seven papers follow the same structure with sections on resource management and conservation, people's initiatives and participation, human resource development, institutional arrangements and policies and scope for scaling up.

The common headings and uniform structure in the first seven chapters facilitate the comparison and emphasize the points shared by all seven

papers. Unfortunately, some authors are unable to present their findings within this framework. The results are all too often contents that do not match the respective headings, repetitions and obvious attempts to fill given sections. It does not help that the first part lacks editing as it contains serious grammatical errors, frequent spelling mistakes and in some parts even unintelligible English, most notably in the papers on Nepal and Sri Lanka.

It is a pity that these avoidable flaws detract from the valuable lessons presented in these seven case studies. They show that successful resource management is based not merely on the involvement but on the initiative and strength of local communities. Development agents, notably non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies and donors, should refrain from trying to implement their own agendas and focus on their role as catalysts, morale boosters and providers of bottleneck resources such as health care, basic education, training and initial credit. Programmes that rely on permanent external aid are doomed to failure. The authors share the view that external financial resources could serve as a starting point for revolving funds or other development schemes but that local financial resources have to be mobilized by encouraging internal savings schemes to make programmes self-sustaining.

The success of the projects presented in this book can be attributed to the people's ability to build strong institutions with clear rules regarding decision-making, sharing of benefit/burden and conflict management based on participation, transparency, accountability and discipline. Group formation as well as its functioning is facilitated if the members of the community concerned are homogeneous and therefore share not only established forms of communication and decision-making but also common interests. Project size is therefore critical: on the one hand, groups must be small enough to allow full participation and ensure democratic decision-making and efficient management, but they also have to correspond with the boundaries of the critical natural resources, for example a watershed. As the case from Thailand shows, resource management is a