

Review of
Development & Change
Volume IX Number 1, January - June, 2004

A Moral Critique of Development: Ethics, Aesthetics and Responsibility

Ananta Kumar Giri, Philip Quarles van Ufford

Abstract

The discourse and practice of human development has been subjected to fundamental restructuring and criticism in recent years. While restructuring has involved a continuing shift from state to market as the main actor of development, deconstruction of it has led to a critique of development as hegemony and domination. In this context the paper submits that neither a one-sided valorization of development in terms of being a slave to the market nor an essentialist abandonment of development as domination is helpful at the contemporary juncture. The urgent task now is to come to terms with the calling of responsibility which calls for a multi-dimensional approach understanding the simultaneous significance of self, social movements, state and market. Responsibility involves both capacity to look up to the face of the other and self-cultivation-both ethics and aesthetics. In this way the paper presents the outline of a moral critique of development.

* * *

Housing Problem and Public Action: Continued Incompatibility Experience from a South Indian State

M. Mahadeva

Abstract

Ever since the declaration of the year 1987 as International Year for Shelter for the Homeless, there has been an increasing concern to address various forms of housing deprivation. Like any other developing country, India too is yet to adequately respond to this concern. At regional levels also, there is a lack of adequate understanding of the housing problem. Karnataka is one such state whose fundamental housing problems are yet to attract a serious public concern. This paper analyses the nature and distribution of the housing problem in Karnataka and examines how the state has addressed this issue. In particular, it considers the strategies adopted during the 90s and identifies a number of failures including the Task Force on Housing. Some of the major weaknesses, pertaining to incidence by types and by rural-urban areas, on approaches, on financial requirements and issues of development and re-development are examined to propose alternative policy strategies to effectively address the housing problem in the state.

* * *

Plant Biotechnology and the Emerging Scenario

N. Chandrasekhara Rao

Abstract

This paper looks at the potential of plant biotechnology, fears associated with the technology, empirical evidence on the impact of BT cotton and the controversy on its commercial cultivation, and the emerging scenario due to the developments in transgenics. Plant biotechnology has the potential to reinvigorate agriculture. However, fears regarding bio-safety and environmental risks cannot be ignored altogether. Commercial biotech products have improved traits like herbicide tolerance and pest resistance. However, its impact on environment and bio-safety needs to be studied with a medium-term perspective. The multinational biotech companies have been acquiring seed companies and are in the process of gaining oligopoly in many countries including India. The

biggest risk of plant biotechnology is that technological development may bypass poor people. The developed (temperate) countries may evolve substitutes for imports from tropical (developing) countries with the help of biotechnology. In India, these technologies may benefit high value crops in irrigated areas and those farmers who can afford to use the high priced biotech seeds, may be beneficiaries. The entry of the public sector in the development of transgenics is likely to change the scenario to the benefit of small farmers.

* * *

Doctoral Work

Child Labour in India: 'Visible School-ness' and 'Invisible Work'

C. Antonyraj

Abstract

A large number of children are reported by the official data generating agencies as 'non-workers not attending school'. School attendance being a regular activity it could be easily identified. For this reason, one could take it to be certain that children classified as 'non-workers not attending school' are actually not in school. In other words their 'school-less-ness' is visible. However, it is hard to believe that children of this category are 'idle'. It is likely that a majority of them are engaged in activities that contribute to the survival of their families, but their activities are not 'recognised' as work, so probably their work is 'invisible'. However, there is hardly any information available that would throw light on the nature of their activities so that the numbers of child workers in the country are more precisely estimated. Since the information on the activities of these children is not available, in this thesis children classified as 'non-workers not attending school' are treated as 'invisible' workers; and they are included in the 'liberal' count of child workers. This count may overstate the true magnitude of the problem, as some of these children considered as 'invisible' may indeed be 'idle'. But, it is safer to err on the side of caution than on the side of complaisance. An attempt to identify the activities of those who are 'neither in school nor in the workforce' appears to be extremely important.

* * *