

DJA and BJA vis-à-vis NJA and upholds the superiority of the socialist ideal of justice.

DJA has several problems. It assumes that the individual is ontologically prior to the social. It emphasises on consumption and the principles of contribution and need are deployed for the purpose. However, DJA is not sensitive to the limitations of the principles of merit and need. NJA, on the contrary, redrafts distribution principles to include the idea of equal conditions of freedom and distribution of goods according to need (p 150). It stresses on productive activity pursued for its own sake, community and relative abundance.

BJA claims that the society that overcomes the problems of scarcity and conflict is not in need of justice. Therefore communism is a form of society that transcends justice.

However, NJA argues that this is not the case. Although communism will put an end to class-based conflicts, other conflicts will remain. The distributive issue expressed in contribution/need, the ideal of self-realisation, maintenance of just distribution etc., call for the continued salience of a conception of justice. Although Marx did not spell them out, some sort of judicial and non-judicial institutions are necessary too in a communist society which could uphold such an order. In this context the author contrasts the notion of community upheld by Marx against the communitarians.

This is undoubtedly a major attempt to formulate a theory of justice by taking the issue of class-based exploitation under capitalism seriously in the context of the new issues in the horizon where old certainties can no longer call the shots.

The study has involved wading through a complex body of social and political theories in relation to which Marx's conception of justice has been formulated and defended. Further, the work has involved a rational scrutiny of Marx's position, sorting out the defensible from the indefensible and, sometimes, taking up very bold stand against the tide.

The study also avoids the 'catch all' approach whereby Marxists advanced an uni-causal explanation for everything under the sun. The author does not hesitate to suggest that Marx's theory of justice, as she has formulated, holds good only to situations of capitalist class-based exploitation and not to all situations of injustices. For instance, she feels that Marx's theory of justice cannot respond to the issues raised by the new social movements and gender injustice.

This work also presents many problems some of which are just indicated here: The concern with the discrete and the palpable, a legacy of analytical Marxism, makes the author to not engage with larger issues and relations. The relation between classes and the state which would have helped to relate issues of justice and exploitation is simply side-tracked. The state figures in only when the narrow boundaries of distribution have to be transcended. This sidelining of the state also leads the author into major traps such as the inability to relate exploitation of the workers with other oppressed sections and overtly emphasise on production, without seeing production, circulation, exchange and distribution as different moments of capital. While the study is full of references to Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, it is not

surprising that it does not refer at all to the worker-peasant alliance which Marx suggested there. Further, she does not think that the non-proletarian bloc of the oppressed needs to be disaggregated. There are some forms of oppressions, to use her term, that are closely interwound with class exploitation, particularly given the expanding horizons of capital, while the other forms are not so.

The above failure to grapple with complex relations and mediations, and perceive their linkages with the political is called *economism*, in the good old language of Marxists. One of the crudest manifestation of *economism* is an attempt to explain social processes by confining oneself to the factory floor of production. The author makes a promising beginning against such a tendency when she attacks the Justice Thesis and highlights the salient features of the Injustice Thesis. However, there is no evidence to show that the ensemble of a social formation as a whole with their autonomous trajectories and reinforced insinuations holds aloft the author's imagination. In a lighter vein, can one say that the pursuit of the non-judicial has led to the erasure of the superstructures?

There are several issues on which the work does not offer adequate clarity. Why not attempt to construct a theory of justice linking it to alienation as suggested by Lukes? The relation between values and norms on one hand and science on the other is not clarified adequately although it is important to the sustainability of the work as a whole. There seems to be a lot of arbitrariness and ad-hocism about what are the defensible interpretations of Marx and what are not, and which passages of Marx have

to be shelved and which should not? If that is all there is to it, why invoke Marx at all?

The study has a big problem about handling human agency and rights, the great issue that Rawls attempts to come to terms with in *Political Liberalism*. Marxism highlights a conception of the good, however hedged in it might be, by taking into account a myriad of other considerations. What warrantee is there that self-realisation, a central feature of the theory she unfolds, should necessarily be in congruence with such a good, particularly in the longer run?

Converting large issues and great theories into scarecrows may not payoff. Can Rawls be said to be upholding juridical approach to justice or even Dworkin for that matter, although the latter works much more within the framework of jurisprudence? Does mainstream communitarianism subscribe to 'gender-coded, race-coded and class-coded' communities? To what extent is an unqualified statement, such as "Marx does not view loyalties, or communal attachments, which identify individuals as members of a class, sect or community as surviving in any form under communism" (p 182), tenable? Analytical Marxism may like to shed its attachments to lineages of thought. However, can Marxists afford to say that let Hegel and Aristotle be with communitarians and Kant with Rawls and Marx alone suffices for us? Conversely, can one seriously engage with Marxist theory of justice without bringing to the fore issues that Rawls and the communitarians raise?

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Participation is today an oft-repeated terminology in development circles. It has come to represent anything and everything from empowerment of disenfranchised people to a cliché necessary for development funding. The number of books in the market on this topic is amazing since its circulation among professional developers seems to far exceed its practice in spirit. Much of this proliferation is perhaps well intended. However, it is important to note the ideological assumptions that drive such essays on participation. For instance, there is no denying that communication is essential for any form of participation, but is it sufficient as the book under review claims? If only we could solve or ignore so easily the entrenched historical, political and economic power and politics that pervades societies!

Shirley White's edited collection on the art of facilitating participation begins attractively with a foreword by

Book review

Participatory Communication as Panacea

THE ART OF FACILITATING PARTICIPATION:
RELEASING THE POWER OF GRASSROOTS COMMUNICATION.

Editor Shirley White, Sage Publications, New Delhi.
1999. 367p. Rs. 445 (cloth), Rs. 250 (paper)

one of the pioneers of participatory research, Robert Chambers. He points out four aspects of good facilitation: 1) being sensitive to who participates, 2) willingness of the facilitator to unlearn, 3) giving up control or letting go, and 4) personal commitment, appropriate attitudes and behaviours. While these terms or notions are found in all the essays in this book, the practical utility of these essays ranges from dismal to excellent. The notion of 'community'

is often used uncritically in many essays of this book, and the 'deep divisions' noted by Chambers in the foreword are ignored for the most part. Where they are recognised, the good intentions of the facilitator and good communication tools seem sufficient to overcome these divisions. Essays in the book that are based directly on a particular field experience, where the authors share the mistakes they have made and the lessons learnt from

failures, are brilliant. But the majority of the theoretical essays abound in rhetorical clichés and problematic assumptions. I will first point out some examples of the latter and then focus on the few chapters that are most useful.

The assumption linking many of the articles in the book is that "communication is the foundation of participation" (p 18). This collection of nineteen essays explores the art of facilitation from three points of departure: activation (six chapters), technique (eight chapters) and community building (three chapters). These are also seen as a series of phases in the process of participation, where people are activated in the first phase, various techniques or approaches are employed to enable participation in the second phase, and the third phase is that of community-building.

Shirley White and K. Sadanandan Nair put forth the idea of a catalyst

communicator. They provide ideas for facilitation without fear, although it is still unclear who fears what or whom given the state of current development hierarchies. In the last chapter, White provides an explanation for this noting that people retreat to an authority position and dictate terms because of feelings of fear or inadequacy. She conveniently ignores the advantages and benefits of power and control. White and Nair also claim that participatory development communication reduces the dominance of power holders. Applying this to rural India, it is unclear how the dominance of the upper caste/class urban English-educated professional whose monthly/weekly consultant fees is often more than ten times the annual income of a landless labourer is reduced through communication. Or for that matter, how the power of politically powerful zamindars or bureaucrats acclaimed for their corruption is reduced through such communication.

Similar problematic assumptions are evident in the chapter by Anyagbunam et al. discussing Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal (PRCA) experiences. "In the context of development work, this view assumes that communicating partners are equal" (p 209). After participation in a PRCA, people are empowered and capable of identifying and analysing their own problems, needs, and capabilities (p 212). PRCA methods would thus be useful where people's development is hindered by their inability to identify and analyse their own problems, or where the basic problem of development is methodological.

Simone St Anne stresses the importance of creativity to the facilitator. The chapter reads like a new age self-help piece and asks us to play, to meditate, to awaken the creative self and release the creative spirit (pp. 75-76). There is also a mention of the chemistry of mind and body, but the role of creative and sexual energy that the author describes is incongruous when applied to the context of a village development group meeting in rural India.

While many pages are devoted to emphasising the wisdom of local people, the need to listen to them (the poor) and to change ourselves (the developers), the ultimate goal of development is still to transform the thinking of the poor. The idea that the poor themselves (their illiteracy and ignorance, their inability to understand their own situation, their inability to communicate their problems to us, and their unwillingness to work together) are responsible for their wretched existence continues to plague

development thinking, although these ideas have been critiqued for over three decades now. Some examples from this book: The role of the catalyst communicator is to transform the way they (poor) look at themselves, the way they view their community, etc. (p 40); Do they know what they will have to do to get what they want...? (p 339); Are they willing to modify their lifestyle to reach out to others?; Do they have the desire to build trusting relationships? (p 340). This is in contrast to Jim Lees and Sonali Ojha's advice in the same book to challenge our own assumptions, to respect and listen to local people and their wisdom.

A few other chapters in the book are somewhat relevant to practitioners. For instance, chapter eight is an interview with Orlando Fals Borda on Participatory Action Research (PAR) by Ricardo Gomez. Borda reveals his perceptiveness by recognising both the use and misuse of the notion of participation and PAR. He also advises that there is no universal formulae to PAR: "Decisions have to be based on the particular circumstances in which work is being done, on the nature of the pressures that are perceived locally, and on the degree of support of the local people" (p 155). Josh Galper's piece on the participatory use of economic indicators is interesting, although its actual implementation presumes that communication is a primary cause of maldevelopment. Linking this with the wider debate on the politics of economic indicators (for instance the debates about cost-benefit analysis in the Narmada movement or the GDP alternatives devised by the UN) will provide a useful context. Don Richardson's chapter based on field experience in accessing internet services for development is appropriate for those working with poorer communities in more developed societies where basic education and electricity are available. In such a specific context, the article is useful since it provides specific advice. Marilyn Hoskins' description of her experiences with the Forestry for Local Community Development and the Forest, Trees and People Programs provide useful pointers for encouraging participation of various national and regional organisations in large scale projects.

Finally, three pieces stand out in this book for their clarity, usefulness, and down-to-earth candidness. Koniz-Booher's "confessions of an outside facilitator" is remarkable for the author's analysis of failures and perceptive insights into the world of consultant driven development. The author points out how theoretical training at the most famous institutes did not quite prepare her for the reality

of working in a different culture, under different sets of cultural and professional norms (p 95). The author also shows a rare sensitivity to historical, economic, and political power relations between donor countries, donor organisations, consultants, local governments, non-government organisations and local people. The role of humility, consensus and coordination between organisations, especially donors and implementers, for the success of development, which is rarely ever discussed in print, is lucidly brought out in this essay. This chapter stands out for its sensitive portrayal of the realities of working in the development sector and has practical pointers for success on the ground. The advantages and disadvantages that an outside facilitator brings with her/him described by Koniz-Booher is a must read for those entering this sector.

The chapter by Jim Lees and Sonali Ojha is again outstanding for the sensitivity, care and humility displayed by the authors in the field. The same issues of respecting people we work with and the need to listen to them are brought to life through their description of their work with street children. It is important to note the rare courage the authors show in questioning and re-examining the assumptions of their employers. Continuously challenging their own assumptions, recognising and respecting the vulnerability and wisdom of the children they work with, and refraining from falling into the moralising advisor mode are important practices that are to be learnt.

The third piece that stands out in the collection is also directly based on a field study in Nepal. Meredith Fowle's insights on linking the scientist and farmer provide valuable lessons to scientists and experts, especially in third-world conditions. The author underlines the established scientific knowledge-power hierarchies that exist, and the inferiority-complex prevalent in many third-world societies about their own capabilities. Also avoiding the trap of romanticising indigenous knowledge, the author suggests a mutual partnership in linking the scientist and the farmer.

This book thus provides examples of both critical understanding of development experiences as well as rhetorical clichés on the elusive 'power' of grassroots communication. A few essays from this book are on my essential reading list, but most of the other chapters are better left on the shelf.

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