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BOOK REVIEW

Punjab and Haryana: Annals of Development

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The title of the book 'Punjab and Haryana' proclaims that it is a story of two twin brothers. That is actually what these two states are. Both were born in their present form on November 1st, 1966 as a consequence of reorganization of the former Punjab on linguistic lines. Punjab emerged as a Punjabi majority state and Haryana a Hindi majority one. The two differed in their physical and human resource base, with Haryana lagging behind on development ladder. The two were not expected to follow a similar path of development, though in constant competition with each other. This is the tale which the present book tells.

One peculiarity of human mind is that it lingers on with inherited spatial framework of political territories even though they may have undergone a change. This is true of Punjab and Haryana. They are still perceived as two components of a former bigger whole. They appear together on mental template with a curiosity to know as to how they are doing vis-a-vis each other. The present work is to be seen in that light.

The book sets forth its objective as an analysis of comparative development experience of Punjab and Haryana since their formation in 1966. A holistic view of development was taken by taking into account its

diverse dimensions. These included agricultural, industrial, infrastructural, human resource and social parameters. The critical component of per capita income was, of course, given a special place.

Guided by considerations of data availability, the actual analysis was subjected to the period 1970-71 to 2010-11. The effort was to trace the development trajectory of the two states in a comparative mode. For this purpose, data on 19 indicators, under the banner of five identified dimensions of development, were harnessed. To obtain a spatial picture in geographic spirit, these data were further fabricated for 20 districts of Punjab and 21 of Haryana, as existing in 2010-11. This was a humungous task. A variety of quantitative techniques were put in service to obtain authentic results. An equally commendable endeavour was made to produce and reproduce an elegant series of maps and diagrams.

The research findings are effectively put forward by way of describing, analysing and interpreting the scenario as it had evolved by the end year of 2010-11. These inform that while Punjab was ahead of Haryana in industrial, infrastructural, and human resource development, it lagged behind in agricultural and social development. These findings are startling but can be appreciated in the light of

higher degree of mechanization of agriculture as also a greater frequency of cities, health centres and educational institutions in Haryana. The per capita income of Haryana was also higher than that of Punjab by about 30 per cent in 2010-11. This can be attributed to its bigger accruals from trade, transport and real estate sectors. A twist in this scheme of things is introduced by a further rigour in analysis of data. We are informed that the overall level of socio-economic development is higher in Punjab than that in Haryana. This is explained primarily by the superior infrastructural base of the former. A critical message that emerges from such a tendency of research results is that it is not enough to rely on an aggregate picture; a scrutiny of the component parts is equally essential.

Such a powerful presentation of research findings would have acquired an additional strength if composite indices of various components of development would have been worked out also for the base year of 1970-71. This would have helped in directly assessing the relative development performance of the two states over the given period. Somehow this was missed. True it is that the decade-wise trends in growth behaviour of some of the indicators, such as level of agricultural productivity and frequency of educational institutions, registered medical facilities, commercial banks and power connections, have been traced for the period 1970-71

to 2010-11, but these are a poor substitute to a composite picture. Here is one inadequacy of an otherwise extraordinary work. Perhaps, the author reserved such an assignment for future when she would come out with the second edition of the book updating it till 2020-21.

Evidently the book belongs to the genre of select research efforts that deal with development experience of newly organized states in India. It puts in place a sound conceptual base and appropriate methodology for conducting such studies. The findings are interesting, authentic and impactful. All this is presented in a simple, lucid and coherent literary style.

Research students will find a lot in this book in terms of theory and practice of geographic research on the theme of regional development. The book should be of no less value for all those who feel concerned about the evolving scene and well-being of Punjab and Haryana. Policy makers may construct their strategies in consonance with findings of this research which confirm that infrastructural facilities and quality of human resource are the primary drivers of development process. The book certainly offers something for every mind eager to learn.

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