

India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity

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Abstract

This book presents analysis of endemic deprivation in India and the role of public action in addressing the problem. The analysis is based on a broad view of economic development, focusing on human well-being and 'social opportunity' rather than the standard indicators of economic growth. India's success in reducing deprivation since Independence has been limited. Recent diagnoses of this failure of policy have concentrated on the counterproductive role of government regulation, and on the need for economic incentives to accelerate the economy. Professors Dreze and Sen argue that an assessment of India's failure to eliminate basic deprivations has to go beyond this limited focus, and to take note of the role played in that failure by inadequate public involvement in the provision of basic education, health care, social security, and related fields. Even the fostering of fast and participatory economic growth requires some basic social

change, which is not addressed by liberalization and economic incentives. The authors also discuss the historical antecedents of these political and social neglects, including the distortion of policy priorities arising from inequalities of political power. Following on from this, the book considers the scope for public action to address these earlier biases and achieve a transformation of policy priorities. ` ... a fine account of India's achievements and failures ... written throughout in a fine style ... it will be a starting-point of subsequent discussions on social life in India.' Partha Dasgupta, Times Higher Education Supplement

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