

easily carries readers away from its epic setting than into it, and the story of Nala and Damayantī, which is typically, though erroneously, presented and enjoyed as a recreational episode detached from the main epic story.

This fine book is a welcome addition to the developing wave of Western interest in the *Mahābhārata*. With just a few exceptions, any dissents or objections I have to Johnson's work are matters of intramural discussion. If space allowed, I would take issue with some points in his introduction and annotations—I am less persuaded than he by some of Biardeau's interpretations—and in particular I think the contemporary understandings of *dharma*, which Johnson reflects, are seriously incomplete. The translation is careful and thoughtful and its English verse is often pleasing. At times, however, Johnson's verse is, to my ear, unnecessarily exotic, and in general—perhaps because of his versification—his renderings are a little more free than what I would offer. These points are matters of taste and judgment, however, not suggestions of inaccuracy. (I do think, however, that “arose” is not accurate for *tasthau*, at 5.38, which is simply “stopped” or “stayed put;” that “pent up” for *vṛtaḥ* at 11.28 is an error—Bhīma has “elected to,” is “bent on” killing Droṇa's son; that *sānubandbasya* at 15.8 must refer to the unfortunate shooter's “retinue,” not his “belongings;” “unskilled” in 17.2 must be based on a misreading of *akliṣṭakarman*, “tireless,” as *akṛtakarman*; finally, the *iṣṭkā* at 13.17 is just “a reed,” not “stalks,” and the title of part 2 of book 10, *Aiṣṭka*, is just “*The Book of the Arrow*.”) This volume is a solid and interesting contribution that should open the *Mahābhārata* to many new readers.

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*Pragmatism and Development: The Prospects for Pluralist Transformation in the Third World.* By MURRAY J. LEAF. Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 1998. xiv, 229 pp. \$59.95 (cloth).

*The Development Dilemma: Displacement in India.* By S. PARASURAMAN. With an Introductory Study by Michael M. Cernea. New York: St Martin's Press, 1999. In association with the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. xx, 299 pp. \$72.00 (cloth).

These two books analyze why the development process in India has repeatedly generated self-sustaining poverty rather than self-sustaining growth. Murray Leaf focuses on what he feels to be one of the most important modernizing technologies, notably canal irrigation, and its impact in six Indian states. S. Parasuraman evaluates the impact of displacement caused by six major development projects in India and the factors that explain why, in each of his project case studies, rehabilitation and development of displaced people has been (to use his own words) “difficult and unmanageable” (p. 47).

The authors share some common ground in their explanations for why development planners have failed so frequently to improve living standards for India's poor. Too often, they both conclude, development policies have been “imposed from above,” devised and implemented through “top down” structures and are synonymous with large, expensive projects that are far removed from the needs and expectations of those they are intended to benefit. Beyond this, however, Leaf and Parasuraman

differ substantially in their research foci and in the manner in which they frame their research agenda.

Indeed, *Pragmatism and Development* provides a tight and informative empirical study of canal systems in Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan (chapters 4–8). However the volume is striking particularly for its trenchant criticisms of economic planning in chapters 1 and 2. Leaf argues that development planning in the “Third World” has been dominated for the last fifty years by proponents of closed economies and authoritarian control who have given low priority to the development of democratic institutions or basic rights. Without such control, planners claimed, it would be impossible to achieve a rate of growth higher than the West, thereby closing the “development gap.” In practice, however, Leaf finds that development gap generally did not close; instead it widened. This was so, even though India and other poor nations invariably had the material resources necessary to maintain living standards comparable to Europe. The problem, for Leaf, is to explain why.

The answers, the author argues, are preeminently organizational. The failings of development in certain states in India derive principally from a mode of organization that he labels “authoritarian imposition.” This leads to development failure for two key reasons. First, government’s efforts to control people’s economic options have limited people’s ability to form productive associations, thereby inhibiting their productivity. Second, governments have refused to recognize that the logic of social relations is fundamentally reciprocal and purposive. Consequently, governments have produced demands that their own administrative officers cannot fulfill and created policies and rules that the public will not accept.

Leaf’s solution to this problem—in India and elsewhere—is the extension of “pluralism.” He concludes, rather grandly, that “pluralism and pragmatism can replace third world authoritarianism just as they replaced European authoritarianism” (p. xi). Further, he argues that there are no significant constraints on pluralism’s ability to function effectively across the developing world: “pluralism, where it does exist in India, works precisely as it does elsewhere —there is nothing about India or the third world that changes its basic logic” (ibid.).

Whether pluralism really does work in precisely the same way in India and everywhere else is surely open to question. Further, one wonders how well the pluralist content of Leaf’s postauthoritarian European exemplars really measures up against the evaluation criteria that he advances. To what degree has the replacement of “European authoritarianism” by the pluralism that Leaf triumphs genuinely brought an end to the creation of policy demands that administrative officers cannot fulfill, and policies and rules that the public will not accept? And how far do citizens in these pluralist systems genuinely have the means to secure significant organizational change in these areas?

Proof, for Leaf, of the advantages of pluralism over dirigiste systems is provided by the success of the Marshall Plan. “Empirically,” he notes, “there is no doubt that pluralism and development occur together or that Japan and the countries that participated in the Marshall Plan have done far better over the past 50 years than those that have adopted dirigisme” (p. 4). In reality, however, there is considerable doubt about the degree to which we can establish a firm empirical link between pluralism and development. That Japan and other countries that participated in the Marshall Plan “have done far better” than those adopting dirigisme must be explained (if we are to accept this statement as true—one that presumably depends on which value systems we use to measure “better”) in terms of a number of explanatory

variables; and the impact of political liberalization in this process has been difficult to isolate empirically. In theoretical terms, Leaf's efforts to justify the superiority of pluralist ideology adopt a dubious teleology: "the Marshall Plan worked and dirigisme does not because the pragmatic theory that underlies the former holds itself strictly accountable to what is observable and the theory that underlies the latter does not" (p. 17).

*The Development Dilemma* is a stimulating piece of action research that examines the impact of selected development projects in India and the implications these have had for persons displaced by these projects. The volume is the product of ten years of research, begun initially when the author was asked to undertake a monitoring and evaluation study on population and relocation caused by the Sardar Sarovar dam on the Narmada River in western India. The book opens with a long introductory study by Michael M. Cernea. Parasuraman's first three chapters explore the historical background of displacement in India and outline the methodology used in the study. Part 2 details the empirical findings, with one chapter dedicated to each of the six case studies—notably a study of displacement caused by the Durgapur steel plant in West Bengal, the Jawaharlal Nehru port in Maharashtra, the Maharashtra II Irrigation Project, the Bolani iron ore mines in Bihar and Orissa, the Upper Krishna Irrigation project in Andhra Pradesh, and the Sarvar Sarovar project in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Three concluding chapters explore the implications of displacement for women, lessons from the Narmada movement, and general policy implications from this comparative study.

Parasuraman's conclusions are critical of project planners in both government and private sectors. He argues that public sector industries often acquired land well in excess of requirements for project construction. Compensation money given to displaced families in each of the studies was used almost entirely to meet immediate consumption needs and to pay for the costs of rehousing: households had virtually no money left over after these costs were met that could be invested in new sources of livelihood. Although industries were commonly instructed by government to provide at least one job per household to displaced families, this instruction was often ignored in practice. Although industries often had adequate financial resources to provide effective resettlement and rehabilitation (R and R), they regularly lacked the vision or interest to do so and also lacked staff with training or experience in rehabilitation work. However, the state in India was also far from blameless: "it is obvious," Parasuraman argues, "that state and national governments lack the willingness and capacity to properly resettle and rehabilitate people displaced by development projects. . . . Even in situations where some form of legal framework to rehabilitate the displaced exists, most people among the vulnerable groups end up poorer than they were before displacement" (p. 258). Overall, the book is written with a clear and accessible style that will make it appropriate for specialist researchers and for graduate and advanced undergraduate students. Although the take-home messages are bleak, this book provides a fine introduction to the politics of resettlement and rehabilitation in India.

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*Untouchable: Dalits in Modern India.* Edited by S. M. MICHAEL. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999. xii, 183 pp. \$47.00 (cloth).