

Reviews

KHAWAR MUMTAZ/FARIDA SHAHEED (eds.), *Women of Pakistan. Two steps forward, one step back?* London/New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1987. xi, 196 pp., £ 8.95

This important book is both an excellent introduction to Pakistani politics, focusing on Islamisation and its effects on women, and a well-balanced critical assessment of the development and strategies of women's groups in Pakistan, which have gone beyond traditional social work activities to provide increasingly public opposition to a male-dominated system of gender oppression in the name of Islam.

Thus, an important question that the authors had to grapple with was the role of women in Islam, both traditional and modern. Though we do not find a detailed study, the major issues and conceptual problems are succinctly presented. Above all, the book brings out very clearly that unfettered Islamisation appears to have the effect of 'giving everyone the licence to pass judgement on the 'morality' of people in public places, the prime indicator of which seemed to be women's apparel and presence' (p. 72). The Iranian experience clearly looms large here.

Prevention of such street-level terrorism in the name of religion is clearly not only an issue for women's rights, but for human rights generally. After an initial reaction of private indignation, women activists in Pakistan have now learnt to counter such attacks on individual freedom. The book recounts how the major women's organisations of Pakistan have grown out of manifold reactions to unacceptable limitations of a discriminatory nature. Consciously operating within an Islamic framework, and quite aware of their class bias, these women's groups have nevertheless scored some major victories. Progress, then, may be painfully slow, but not to act would leave the initiative to obscurantist forces that continue to threaten the civil liberties of women in Pakistan.

Opposition against the imposition of a plainly unjust criminal law regime that led to such abhorrent cases as Safia Bibi (punishing a helpless rape victim, while letting the offenders off), shows that women in Pakistan are not alone in their struggle against state lawlessness.

This book was written just before Benazir Bhutto arrived on the political scene. She is assessed as not very active in feminist issues (p. 159), a view that I found confirmed by leading women activists in Pakistan while she was in power. More recently, new developments in the public law field, partly inspired by the Indian strategies of public interest litigation, are also holding out some hope for the redressal of Pakistani women's grievances.

The book is very well produced and written in a clear, unpretentious style. It falls into nine major chapters and includes some detailed appendices with relevant legislation and other material, as well as a very useful bibliography. Here is a field of study that warrants more detailed research, which should be culturally sensitive, yet alert to the issues that concern Muslim women today, not only in Africa and Asia, but in Europe too.

Werner F. Menski

WERNER DRAGUHN (Hrsg.), *Indien in den 90er Jahren. Politisch-soziale und wirtschaftliche Rahmenbedingungen*. (Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde, 175). Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde, 1989. 191 Seiten, DM 26.-

Dieser von W. Draguhn herausgegebene Sammelband umfaßt insgesamt neun Vorträge, die im Rahmen einer wissenschaftlichen Tagung - veranstaltet von der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Asienkunde (DGA) im Herbst 1988 in Bonn - gehalten wurden. Nach einer allgemeinen Vorbemerkung des damaligen Ministers für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit, Hans Klein, gliedert sich der Band in drei große Teile.

Teil I stellt die politisch-sozialen Rahmenbedingungen des indischen Staates in vier Aufsätzen dar: Dieter Braun widmet sich der Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik, Dietmar Rothermund den regionalen Disparitäten Indiens. Dagmar Gräfin Bernstorff untersucht die neuen Entwicklungen im indischen Parteiensystem und Citha D. Maaß analysiert das innenpolitische Konfliktpotential subnationaler Bewegungen.

Teil II beinhaltet die wirtschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen. Hans Christoph Rieger geht auf die aktuellen Trends in der indischen Wirtschaftspolitik und Wirtschaftsentwicklung ein. Jürgen Wiemann prüft daran anschließend Stand und Perspektiven der technologischen Entwicklung des Landes, und Helmut Tischner befaßt sich zum Abschluß dieses zweiten Teils mit den indischen Außenwirtschaftsbeziehungen.