

Anisur Rahman
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Development, Governance and Gender in South Asia

Perspectives, Issues and Challenges

 Springer

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ISBN 978-981-16-5108-3

ISBN 978-981-16-5109-0 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-5109-0>

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The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

Dedicated to

Late Dr. Nabila Sadiq

one of the authors in this book

who left this World for her heavenly abode

on 17th May, 2021 due to COVID-19

Preface

South Asia is one of the most promising regions in the World. The geographical location of South Asia makes it geopolitically relevant in the world politics. South Asia was an epicentre of attraction for Europeans during colonial period due its strategic location and natural resources. South Asian countries share socio-cultural and historical legacies as well as commonality of interests. Even today, it is considered to be one of the most viable and important regions from an economic, political and social point of view. This region has in fact enormous potential that can generate opportunities and careers for the people of the region if it is governed efficiently. There are several challenges that region is facing such as mass poverty, unemployment and corruption that need to be fought collectively. Although, South Asia is seen to be well-compact region geographically, historically and geopolitically, but its internal divisions and deep mistrust among its states are significant factors that create impediments from realizing its potential of economic development, political empowerment and the cultural enrichment of its citizen. There is a need to draw a roadmap in order to achieve common economic frameworks that should be capable enough to eradicate poverty and hunger. It is equally important to formulate the viable strategies to utilize regional resources in a sustainable and equitable manner that could enhance better growth and development of the region.

Keeping all the above-mentioned scenarios of South Asia, this book has been conceptualized to identify the building blocks as well as stumbling blocks in the South Asian region's development trajectory. It offers a fresh, multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach to understand the trends and issues of governance, human development and regional cooperation in South Asian region. The variations and remodelling in social, economic, political and cultural life in this complex and dissimilar region have been explored in the context of governance, human development and regional cooperation. The number of literatures dealing with the status of governance and human development in South Asian region are limited. The reason could be interlinked to the fact that most of the literature, focussing on this region, moreover deals with the economic regionalism or with the political dynamics of this region in general. This book attempts to identify the factors and patterns behind

the region's persisting sluggish performance on good governance and human development indicators. It also provides country-specific and intra-country variations in particular, along with explanations and interpretations. It is evident that nearly one-fourth of the global population lives in the region of South Asia. Imagining a better future for the region is the need of the day. For this, South Asian unity is necessary which is quite possible if concerted effort is made in this direction. It is also important to give primacy of human rights, democracy and governance for the establishment of a just society in the region. These institutions such as democracy and governance are interconnected and reinforce each other. Governance is understood as the instrument of the effectiveness of a society's institutions. Good governance implies that problems and challenges are managed effectively, efficiently and in response to vital needs of society.

The prime part of this book deals with the new conceptual and theoretical perspectives to understand the trajectories of social and economic development in South Asia. The part consists of papers that question the very premise of Development and Post-Development narratives in South Asia. Succinctly, the articles in this book broadly cover almost all relevant issues and perspectives on contemporary South Asia. The state, civil society, social movements, various forms of media and its role in the formation as well as deconstruction of power structures in this region, trajectories of economic growth and socio-political changes, etc., have been discussed in detail.

This volume is in fact the outcome of few selected papers presented at the International Seminar held at Jamia Millia Islamia in April, 2017. This was organized by the UGC Human Resource Development Centre, JMI, in collaboration with the Institute of Kashmir Studies, University of Kashmir. I am grateful to Dr. Muslim Jan, the Coordinator of MA programme, that was running at the UGC HRDC on account of MOU between Jamia Millia Islamia and the University of Kashmir. She was in fact the main person who deserves credit for holding the international seminar. We are also thankful to all scholars who thoroughly revised and updated their paper for this volume. I also extend my special thanks to Prof. Abdul Rahim P. Vijapur who provided all possible help in bringing out this volume. My sincere thanks and gratitude are due to Prof. Najma Akhtar, Vice Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, for promoting her faculty by giving more freedom to do more academic work so that Jamia Millia Islamia could excel nationally and internationally. We are thankful to HRDC staff members who helped us a lot in bringing out this volume. Ms. Shahla Tarannum and Mr. Faisal Farooqui deserve special appreciation who provided all support whenever required. Dr. Ansari P. A., PDF scholar, Mr. Waseem Ahmed and Naziya, Ph.D. scholars, West Asian studies, deserve special thanks and acknowledgement for their support and cooperation. I also would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my colleagues, friends and well-wishers whose name has not been mentioned here, but they helped me in this academic endeavour. We will fail in our duty if we do not mention the name of Dr. Rushda Siddiqui who helped us in many ways to complete this volume.

Finally, Springer Publications, New Delhi, deserves appreciation for bringing out the book entitled *Development, Governance and Gender in South Asia: Perspectives*,

Issues and Challenges for the benefit of all stakeholders, especially South Asian scholars.

New Delhi, India
Saidabad, India

Anisur Rahman
Niharika Tiwari

Introduction

South Asia consists of eight countries that are in close geographical proximity. These countries share socio-cultural and historical legacies as well as commonality of interests. The eight countries that constitute South Asia are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It sprawls over 5.2 million km which is 11.71% area of the Asian continent. The region is also an epitome of unity in diversity. The geographical boundaries of South Asia are constituted by the Indian Ocean in the south and by Himalayan mountain spurs, Karakoram, and Pamir mountains on the north. The Arabian Sea borders India and Pakistan to the west, and rest of the Western boundary shares borders with Iran, and the Bay of Bengal embraces India and Bangladesh to the east. The region has variety of climate zones, rainforests, deserts, grasslands, river systems and plateaus. Broadly, South Asia is made up of three topographic regions that are: The Himalaya, Karakorum and Hind Kush mountain ranges, The Indo-Gangetic plain and The Deccan Plateau. Major river systems in South Asia like the Ganges, Indus and Brahmaputra are considered as the economic, cultural and civilizational backbone of South Asia. The region is a connecting link between West Asia, Central Asia, East Asia and South East Asia.

The geographical location of South Asia makes it geopolitically relevant in the world politics. South Asia was a centre of attraction for Europeans during colonial period due its strategic location and natural resources. Now, the USA is immensely interested in the region in order to balance rising China. Similarly, Afghanistan, the backyard of erstwhile USSR, was made a strategic base by the USA during the Cold War era, and now, Afghanistan is a tipping point for the American projection of power in Eurasia (Kaplan, 2010). In contemporary international scenario, USA is trying to strengthen its position in South Asia in order to manage China. Similarly, China is strengthening its strategic ties with Pakistan and other South Asian countries seeing it as a priority zone. It is evident in the form of China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that is an essential part of China’s Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI). Many other such developments, viz a viz Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, are also existing. Added to this, Indian Ocean, that surrounds South Asia, also has

its strategic importance. Activities by the world powers in this ocean affect the intra-regional politics as well as political alignments beyond the region. According to Cohen (2013), 'Under the Raj's system of direct and indirect governance, South Asia became a strategically coherent region. It served as an important commercial and military gateway to East and Southeast Asia; then as a source of capital, technology, manpower and investment for Britain's African and Mideast possessions; and later as an imperial police force in two world wars'.

Keeping all the above-mentioned scenarios of South Asia, this book has been conceptualized to identify the building blocks as well as stumbling blocks in the South Asian region's development trajectory. It offers a fresh, multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach to understand the trends and issues of governance, human development and regional cooperation in South Asian region. The variations and remodelling in social, economic, political and cultural life in this complex and dissimilar region have been explored in the context of governance, human development and regional cooperation. The number of literatures dealing with the status of governance and human development in South Asian region is limited. The reason could be inter-linked to the fact that most of the literature, focussing on this region, either deals with the economic regionalism or deals with the political dynamics of this region in general. This book attempts to identify the factors and patterns behind the region's persisting sluggish performance on good governance and human development indicators. It also provides country-specific and intra-country variations in particular, along with explanations and interpretations.

It is important to understand that no concept that we deal with in the contemporary world can be studied in isolation. If the world wars were a factor in sucking the world into an armed conflict, contemporary civil rights movements and conflicts have drawn governments into an integrated world. To understand contemporary issues, scholars have either compared and contrasted multiple cases across the world or dug into the history of another part of the world for precedents. This book embroiders some of the underlying debates, related to the governance, human rights, human development, human security, regional cooperation, media, literature and gender, etc., in South Asia. There is a series of research papers on subjects that have been analysed by policy makers and civil society movements. Some of the issues are topical, but most deal with the problems of narratives spun by policy makers and state authorities to ground realities.

Added to this, what differentiates the collection of essays in this book from other books that attempt to analyse socio-political and economic developments in South Asia, is the perspective adopted by the chapter contributors. Through deconstructive and post-modernist approach, the scholars have attempted an objective analysis of concepts, developments and impacts of various issues. The socio-economic exclusion of people on the basis of gender, ethnicity and religion has also been dealt within this book. The book is in fact an outcome of few select papers presented in the international seminar on Governance, Human Rights and Regional Cooperation in South Asia: Opportunities and Challenges of Globalization, conducted by the UGC–HRDC Jamia Millia Islamia, in collaboration with UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Institute of Kashmir Studies, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, at Jamia Millia Islamia,

New Delhi. Though the seminar saw a vast number of scholars presenting different viewpoints on various subjects, select papers have been included in this book that have discussed pertinent issues, contemporary challenges and new perspectives to the narratives of South Asia. Few invited papers were also added in the book in order to capture more suitable picture for our comprehensive understanding of South Asia.

However, changes in South Asia have managed to make inroads in policy making on a global level. At the same time, developments in other parts of the world have left a mark on the socio-economic and political developments in South Asia. Economic, political, strategic, environmental and demographic developments have changed development trajectory in the region. Looking a little deeper into history, we realize that global and local factors have shaped the changes in the region. South Asia, as a region, has witnessed crucial changes in last decades as the countries known for their authoritarian regimes have opted for the process of democratisation. Similarly, some strong civil society-led movements also have come into existence. Beginning with decolonization to the post-Cold War liberalization, with the rise and growth of neo-liberal economies and regionalism, the region has been at the centre of regional as well as global dynamics.

South Asia as a region needs to be explored academically because it can be seen vividly that regional cooperation has not only emerged as a reality, but also is irreversible. As an offshoot of globalisation, it has re/deconstructed the entire development paradigm. Now sovereign states, with geographical proximity, are realizing the need of a commitment to a greater regional integration in order to enunciate a system of good governance to provide better opportunities for human development. Governance and human development are the notions that work in a close symbiosis. Participatory, democratic and transparent governance can be ensured only when citizens are educated, proactive and well aware of their rights and duties. Similarly, only an inclusive and participatory political establishment can ensure an egalitarian socio-economic and political system to its people.

It is further observed that along with religious diversity ethnic diversity is also prevalent in South Asia. India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka all have been struggling with ethnic conflicts of different magnitudes. The ethnicization of politics and politicization of ethnic differences is one of the common phenomena in South Asia. Ethnic dissonance has its roots in the ill-perceived colonial policies and continued to post-colonial South Asian states because institutions of governance in post-colonial South Asia followed discriminatory policies and certain ethnic groups were deliberately side lined by those who are the de facto owner of the power. Colonial master's top priority was to exploit available natural resources, and, in this process, they drew borders without giving a serious thought to it and also displaced people and implemented official policies in such a manner as conflict emanated out of it. The ethnic conflict between Tamil and Sinhala in Sri Lanka is the glaring example of this. Partition of India in 1947 into two sovereign states India and Pakistan and in 1971 when Bangladesh was carved out of Pakistan on the basis on language are also the outcome of divide and rule policy implemented by the British.

Moreover, India has been facing secessionist movements in its North-East area, and Tamil issue had been prominent in the past that culminated into the death of

Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. Pakistan has also witnessed several ethnic conflicts, and the country is still facing ethnic conflicts, particularly in the province of Baluchistan. In Bangladesh, Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) conflict is another example of ethnic dispute in South Asia. The CHT (consisting of Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari districts) has been home to eleven ethnic indigenous communities, namely Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya, Mro, Lushai, Khumi, Chak, Khiyang, Bawm and Pangkhua.

In Afghanistan, age-old political power struggle between the country's dominant ethnic community, the *Pashtuns* and the other ethnic groups: *Uzbeks*, *Hazaras*, *Tajiks*, *Aimaqs* and a modicum of other small ethnic groups is still continuing. Historically, Pashtuns have almost always been at the top of political power, despite of the fact that they constitute less than half of the total population. *Madhesi* vs *Pahadi* dichotomy is clearly visible in Nepal. In the 1990s, Bhutan expelled the Lhotshampa, an ethnic group with its origins in Nepal. Maldives is the only country of South Asia where no ethnic conflict has been officially reported so far. Added to this, South Asian countries have also witnessed intra-ethnic conflicts. Since most of the South Asian countries share border with each other, ethnic conflicts often cause spill-over effects.

In South Asia, regional cooperation has been confined to formal declarations and summits. However, gradually, it is being understood that there are certain socio-economic and political issues like governance, human trafficking, environmental challenges, terrorism and other non-traditional security threats that spread beyond the boundaries of the sovereign nations and cannot be resolved by a state single-handedly. Therefore, the countries of a multicultural region like South Asia have no other option but to cooperate with each other. The sooner countries of this region realize this fact, the better it would be. The formation of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985 and later on SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) and South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), although not very successful, can be seen as a positive step in this direction.

Similarly, the amount of intra-regional trade of South Asia is very small. According to World Bank,¹ intra-regional trade accounts for barely 5% of South Asia's total trade, compared to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region where intra-regional trade makes up 25%. Trade among South Asian countries currently totals just \$23 billion—far below an estimated value of at least \$67 billion. Border challenges mean it is about 20% cheaper for a company in India to trade with Brazil instead of a neighbouring South Asian country. Trade has been limited by several factors such as inadequate road, marine and air transport. Other constraints include protective tariffs, real and perceived nontariff barriers, restrictions on investments and a broad trust deficit throughout the region.

Regarding South Asia, Human Development Report South Asia (2015, p. 205) analysed that 'The region has adequate knowledge, ability, resource, technology, political strength and institutional capacity to create a fairer society'. This report has further identified seven areas which have sign of hope for this region. These are high

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/south-asia-regional-integration/trade>.

sustained and broad-based economic growth, renewed attention to poverty reduction, improvement in human development, commitment to gender equality, restructuring and reforms of institutions of governance, role of technology for people's empowerment and strengthened role of civil society.

Human Development Reports have also highlighted that gender inequality is rampant in South Asia. Women are often treated as second citizen and face several restrictions on the name of religion and traditions; such as child marriage, female feticide, dowry system, son preferences, high-school dropout rates and limited access to health facilities. Patriarchy is deep rooted in the policy formulation and implementation in the countries of this region. Socio-economic fabric of South Asia is not favourable to women living in this region. This book is an effort to understand the nuances of patriarchy resulting into gender inequality in South Asia.

Social and Economic Development

South Asia is also one of the world's great cultural heartland where countries share their societal and cultural values. Almost all the South Asian countries except Nepal witnessed colonial past characterized by domination and exploitation. The colonial society was not just vertically differentiated; it was characterized by horizontal divides based on caste, religion and ethnicity. These divisions got transmitted from the colonial to post-colonial social system in South Asia. Since South Asia is a multi-ethnic society, an array of post-colonial political conflicts came into existence; therefore, struggle among ethno-linguistic groups also increased. However, the fact cannot be denied that due to the multicultural fabric of South Asia the way was paved for the coexistence of democracy with the strains of authoritarianism. Since, political leadership and society of the region believed that constitutionalism and rule of law are the only mechanisms to minimize ethno-religious differences.

It is also true that South Asia is the region where adherents to every major religion and followers of different languages live together making this region a glaring example of pluralism. People in South Asia are multilingual and speak at least twenty major languages, and if one includes the more important dialects, the number goes up to over two hundred (Bose & Jalal 2018, p. 4). Due to this richness, South Asia has contributed immensely to world literature from ancient to modern times. Multiplicity of religion and secular traditions provided fertile ground where different arts, musics, theatres and dance traditions could flourish. For example, Sufi tradition is present in entire South Asia. Likewise, principles of aesthetics and gesture languages in Indian dance forms like *Bharatanatyam*, *Kathakali* and *Kuchipudi*, a classical dance forms, are found throughout South Asia. Kandyan dance of Sri Lanka is famous everywhere. Similarly, *Bhangra*, *Jhumar* and *Giddhaare* are the most famous dance form in both India and Pakistan. Thus, classical dances, musics and languages are the bedrock of shared socio-cultural values throughout the South Asian region. That is why whenever Track one diplomacy seems to be failed Track two is adopted by heads of the states of this region to develop people-to-people contacts.

Furthermore, religious pluralism of South Asia is unique and syncretic in character. This region is blessed with rich and dynamic religions. Almost all religious groups and sects are presented here. People believe in religion and are guided by religious teachings.

It is the source of two of the world's great religions and the home to more devotees of a third than either the Middle East or Southeast Asia. Hinduism, with its ancient roots, modern transformations and multiple interpretations, plays a vital part in the culture and politics of the subcontinent. Hindus form the majority of India's population, but are distinguished along lines of languages and caste. While the formal adherents to Buddhism may have dwindled in the land of its birth, it continues to flourish in Sri Lanka and the Himalayas as well as in East and Southeast Asia. Some of the greatest cultural and political achievements of Islam have taken place in the subcontinent, where more than half a billion of the world's 1.65 billion Muslims live today. Each of the three most populous countries in South Asia- India, Bangladesh and Pakistan- has over 175 million Muslims, next only to Indonesia as the largest Muslim countries in the world. South Asia also has significant Jain, Zoroastrian, Christian and Sikh minorities. (Bose & Jalal 2018, p. 4-5)

There has been positive as well as negative outcome of this religious diversity. For instance, since all religions teach humanity, people have lived together understanding the importance of religious values that teach the lessons of togetherness. However, in South Asia, religion has often been appropriated by the politicians to fulfil their vested interests within their country that sometimes destabilizes regional stability as well. Sometimes, secular disputes are interpreted through religious lenses. Religious feeling of the common people is incited by politicians to have political leverage. Consequently, this region has witnessed many communal riots and killings.

One important feature of South Asia is that it is both the most populated and the most densely populated region of the world. UNFPA's *State of World Population Report 2019* illustrates that India is the most populated country of South Asia with 1368.7 million, followed by Pakistan with 204.6 million, and third position is occupied by Bangladesh with 168.2 million. Rest of the countries have relatively lesser population, viz. Afghanistan 37.2 million, Nepal 29.9 million, Sri Lanka 21 million, Bhutan 0.8 million and Maldives 0.5 million. Bangladesh is the second most densely populated country of the world after Singapore. Thus, South Asian countries have huge differences on the basis of geography and population both. However, the population growth on South Asia is facing steep decline and may turn negative in future.

While South Asia faces many socio-economic challenges owing to its huge population, according to UNFPA (2019) report data, South Asia seems to have the advantage of 'Demographic Dividend'.² As per this report, more than 55% people of all the eight countries of South Asia come under 15-64 age group. The highest position is of Maldives with 72% population, and the lowest is of Afghanistan with 55% population coming under working-age group. In South Asia, 65.25% (average)

² According to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), demographic dividend means, 'the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working-age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older)'.

population comes under working-age group that can boost up the economic growth of the region. Demographic dividend can be converted into demographic opportunity if good health, quality education, decent employment and many other capability enhancing supports are provided to the people.

Due to the population pressure, poor as well as archaic system of governance and lopsided development, this region has been listed at the top of the extremely poor economic regions' list. Per capita income (in current US\$) of South Asia is lower than other regions of the world. GDP per capita income³ of South Asia, as per World Bank data based on 2018 is: 1902.8 (current US\$). It is the lowest when compared with other regions as enumerated by World Bank (2018 data). For instance, East Asia and Pacific have (11,142.5 US\$), Middle East and North Africa (8044 US\$), Europe and Central Asia (25,130 US\$) current US\$. It is evident that all of the regions classified here enjoy better position than South Asia.

The data provided by World Bank in 2018 demonstrate that GDP growth (annual %) of South Asia⁴ has been 6.7%. In 2011, it was 5.1%. However, the country-wise GDP growth rate (2018) has significant variations. For example, Afghanistan has 1.0%, Bangladesh 7.9%, Bhutan 3.0%, India 6.8%, Maldives 6.9%, Nepal 6.7%, Pakistan 5.8% and Sri Lanka 3.2% GDP growth. Recent COVID-19 catastrophe has negatively affected the entire world economy; consequently, South Asia will also get badly affected by it. It is projected that the GDP growth in South Asian countries would likely go downward.

As far as country-wise GDP per capita is concerned (current US\$, 2018); Afghanistan has 520.9 US\$, Bangladesh 1698.3 US\$, Bhutan 3243.2 US\$, India 2010.0 US\$, Maldives 10,330.6 US\$, Nepal 1033.9 US\$, Pakistan 1482.4 US\$ and Sri Lanka 4102.5 US\$. Due to this ordinary GDP per capita, South Asian people have faced vicious circle of poverty despite of several efforts made by the governments for poverty alleviation. There is a unique paradox whereby even after enjoying upward economic growth, since last few decades, the region continues to have a large number of poor people.

As per Multidimensional Poverty Index⁵ of Human Development Report 2019, 31.0% population comes under multidimensional poverty in South Asia. Region-wise South Asia is at second position, and the first place is of sub-Saharan Africa with 57.5% population facing multidimensional poverty., whereas merely 1.1% of population of Europe and Central Asia, 5.6% of East Asia and the Pacific, 7.5% of Latin America and the Caribbean, 15.7% of Arab States are multidimensional poor. The situations get alarming due to a very large number of children facing severe poverty. According to UNDP (2019:07).⁶

³ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=8S>.

⁴ https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=8S&name_desc=true.

⁵ The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is published by the UNDP's Human Development Report Office and tracks deprivation across three dimensions and 10 indicators: health (child mortality, nutrition), education (years of schooling, enrolment), and living standards (water, sanitation, electricity, cooking fuel, floor, assets).

⁶ http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/mpi_2019_publication.pdf.

In South Asia 70 million children under age 5 (42.8%) are stunted or underweight. Intra-household disparities in deprivation in nutrition among children under age 5 in the region are stark. Some 22.7% of children under age 5 live in a household in which at least one child is malnourished and at least one child is not. In Pakistan over a third of children under age 5 experience intra-household inequalities in deprivation in nutrition. Across South Asia 36.7 million children do not attend school through grade 8. Some 32.3 million (88.0%) out-of-school children live in multidimensionally poor households.

Deverajan⁷ has observed that South Asia has one of the worst levels of human development deprivations. Child malnutrition levels of India are nearly double those of sub-Saharan Africa; similarly, one in ten Pakistani children die before their fifth birthday. Added to this, the gap between enrolment and completion in primary schools remains wide in South Asia. Government programmes to alleviate poverty are more often than not driven by political patronage rather than universal service provisions. This is evident from the fact that social schemes and its funding keep on changing with the change in political party in power in the South Asian countries. This fact cannot be denied that without healthy and educated workforce South Asia will not be able to sustain current levels of economic growth. Without substantial reductions in child mortality and the number of out-of-school children, it will be very difficult to end poverty in this region.

Despite of several socio-economic and political constraints and limitations, South Asia has multiple global effects, and therefore, it remains a centre of academic as well as political attraction despite of being marred by turbulences time and again. It affects the dynamics of international affairs and gets affected by it. Since South Asia is world's most poverty-ridden region, it attracts many funds spent by international organizations and gets benefitted by international poverty alleviation programmes initiated by the world Bank and UNDP, etc. International peace-keeping agencies and forces are also actively involved in this region. Afghanistan is the region where US forces have been involved since long back. Added to this, the South Asia has been perceived as breeding ground for international terrorism. Owing to this, almost all the major powers of the world believe in focussing on South Asia. Therefore, South Asia as a region has been gaining worldwide attention both strategically and academically. Nuclearization of South Asian region has also made it a priority zone in international politics because two nuclear powers, India and Pakistan, are often in strained relationship with each other.

However, in a more optimistic context, South Asia provides a big and diversified market that attracts big economic giants. Apart from this, it provides relatively cheap labour to the Gulf countries and other regions. Succinctly, according to ILO Report (2018) *International labour migration statistics in South Asia*, collectively, there were over 38 million South Asian nationals living outside of their countries of origin in 2017. South Asia is rich in terms of natural resources like forest covers, hydropower and other sources of energy. Big river basins make the region fertile. Moreover, strategically, India is being considered very crucial in this region due to its location in Indian Ocean as it occupies a central position. Now, it depends on the bargaining

⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/can-south-asia-end-poverty-generation-more-inclusive-growth-and-faster-human-development-are-key>.

power and diplomatic efficiency of India to get benefitted out of its strategic location. USA wants India to balance China, as China's ambitious BRI initiative has enhanced the tension of USA. Consequently, the strategic importance of South Asia in general and of India in particular has increased. In contemporary world, a kind of quadrilateral system has evolved in this region where China and Pakistan are trying to balance India and USA. Now, the question is whether South Asia will be able to harness its strategic location or it will succumb to interests of the external powers. As argued by Stephen P. Cohen in terms of South Asia:

The positive scenario for South Asia is that when regional integration and cooperation increase, connectivity will improve, restrictions on trade will be reduced, landlocked countries will be given full access to markets, energy shortages will be eased, and growth and investment will rise. It is widely assumed that this bottom-up approach would help improve the environment for regional politics, increase welfare, and promote peace and stability. In the real world, however, this scenario's arrival date is always in the future. (Cohen 2013:19)

The first part of this book deals with the new conceptual and theoretical perspectives to understand the trajectories of social and economic development in South Asia. This part consists of papers that question the very premise of development and post-development narratives in South Asia. In this context, the parameters of modernity and emerging threats for the people beyond development have been questioned in this section. The perspective of human development and its dimensions have been analysed. The status of human development in South Asia by analysing the conditions of health, education and living standards of the people of this region has been explored. This part highlights the major challenges faced by South Asian countries while ensuring human development. Added to this, repositioning of South Asian States in terms of governance for human development has been analysed as a type of paradigm shift.

Research papers in this part outline the arguments related to the discourse of the market and the state policies. It elucidates that the modern-world view has largely failed to understand the tribal world view. Apart from this, while discussing about debt, deficit and economic growth in South Asia, a larger picture has been drawn by comparing South Asia with East Asia in general and China and Japan in particular. Migration and in-flow of remittances has emerged as an exclusive characteristic of South Asian economic system. Therefore, South Asian migration to the Gulf Region has been examined as the best strategy for reducing poverty and inequality in the region. Skill development has emerged as a cardinal discourse in the South Asian development model. The theoretical findings on the subject are supplemented with the results of a primary survey on India, while exploring about the skills expected for employability and development in South Asia.

Governance and Human Rights

Governance and human rights both are complementary to each other; however, it has been widely observed that while following the process of governance the human

rights of the people, especially of those who are at the margins, gets violated by the state agency in South Asia. Because, more often than not, the principles of good governance are not followed and consequently, development process remains quantitative denying the idea of human development. Human rights violation is very much prevalent in case of South Asia where Rohingya issue, Kashmir issue, plight of the people, especially women in the prisons, killing of rationalists and media persons, etc., are rampant in South Asia. In South Asia, state agency either violates the human rights of the people or remains a mute spectator. Apart from this, human rights of the people are also undermined due to deep-rooted foundations of structural violence and vicious circle of poverty.

The notion and status of human development and governance (now understood as good governance) provide insights to comprehend the regional cooperation in South Asia. The human development approach to development was put forward by the economist Mahbubul Haq, and it was further elaborated by the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen in his human capability approach. Freedom of choice is central to this approach. In order to quantify a country/region's human development status, this approach uses three basic dimensions that have been further elaborated in successive human development reports. These dimensions are longevity, knowledge and decent living standards. On the basis of these, three dimensions human development Index, Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index, Multidimensional Poverty Index and Gender Inequality Index have been enumerated. Human development approach to development provides a parameter to evaluate the programmes and policies of the governments beyond the economic growth-oriented paradigm.

Likewise, the notion of good governance has been accepted by the policy makers across the world to develop a transparent, accountable and responsible system of governance, wherein people are considered as an active agent of socio-economic and political change. Delving into the evolution of the concept of good governance, Henk Addink (2019) says that the international and European developments started at the end of the twentieth century. In the beginning of the 1990s, international organizations in the field of development aid and finance started to develop good governance norms to make sure that financial assistance is properly directed. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) were quite active in these fields. Not all international organisations have started with the same topics; global financial organizations have been more focussed on macro-economic reform, whereas political organizations sought a connection with human rights and the rule of law. It seems like there is now a growing consensus on the specification of good governance norms. Even the international organizations themselves have been reformed because of the need to abide by standards of good governance. The good governance is not only about appropriate use of the institutions of governance, it requires guarantee for the security of people and society to manage public sector in a transparent and accountable manner and to promote socio-economic development of the country in a democratic manner.

Governance and human development are complementary to each other because both the perspective keep people at the centre stage. Moreover, a transparent, accountable and participatory governing system is required for the judicious allocation of the available resources in a country. Likewise, people with better human development conditions can work and think about their country's multipronged development and fellow citizens' well-being. Democratic values can be cherished only when a dynamic symbiosis between good governance and human development is established. The issues that are at the core of the concepts and process of governance and human development have points of convergence as well; for instance, both the notions consider human beings as an active agent of multidimensional changes. Therefore, it is imperative to comprehend the theoretical and conceptual interlinkages between governance, human development and regional cooperation in South Asia.

It is noted that all South Asian countries have made efforts to establish democratic institutions and processes. They have succeeded to a certain extent in achieving procedural democracy, but substantial democracy is still a distant dream in case of South Asian nations. Despite of several claims made by the politicians to brand them as welfare states, South Asian States are institution-centric states and their policies revolve around traditional security threats instead of non-traditional ones. Therefore, dissenting voices of the citizens are often branded as traitors in South Asia due to authoritative and bias nature of the state apparatus. However, the recent rise of student's movement and other social movements are strengthening the democratic institutions in this region. Ayesha Jalal had observed the nature and repercussions of people's dissent in South Asia long before:

Though not unique to South Asia, the assertion of distinctive identities by variously defined social groupings has come to pose the biggest challenge to the dominant idioms deployed to sustain and legitimize post-colonial state structures in the subcontinent. In certain regions where clashes between dissenting social currents and state authority are especially acute, a key defining feature of the modern state has been seriously undermined its monopoly over the instruments of coercion. With identities spilling across porous frontiers, the acquisition of sophisticated weapons technologies by disgruntled segments of civil society are resulting in stronger linkages between domestic dilemmas and international tensions than ever before. (Jalal, 1995:02)

One of the important features of South Asian states is that there is an ongoing struggle between dominance and resistance. Democratic politics and groups are struggling in almost every state of South Asia against the authoritarian state. However, a unique feature has been observed by recent researches done in the field of democracy in South Asia. It has been found that people tend to support authoritarianism over democracy.

In 2017, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) report on 'The State of Democracy in South Asia' showed that the percentage of the interviewees who supported democracy has dropped from 70% to 63% between 2005 and 2017. The 2017 Pew report reconfirmed the trend: 55% of the respondents backed 'a governing system in which a strong leader can make decisions without interference from parliament or the courts', while 53% supported military rule. Commenting upon this result, the Pew team added: 'Support for autocratic rule is higher in India than in any other nation surveyed', 38% in total, and India

is 'one of only four nations where half or more of the public supports governing by the military'. (Chatterjee et al. 2019, p. 07)

The reason behind this appears to be the role of post-colonial states and leadership in South Asia that left a large number of people disgruntled compelling them to develop a sort of apathy towards democratic institutions. This is so because the old colonial model of administration is still continuing in South Asia in the name of democracy. There is a need to think of bringing change in several ongoing colonial institutions which impede democratic functioning and spirit.

As far as the political process in South Asia is concerned, political parties, the cardinal medium of political socialization, do not enjoy intra party democracy because parties are either dominated by dynasties, religion or such groups that claim to be apolitical, but they tend to control and dictate political future of the country. According to Paul Brass (2010), in India, there was one party-dominated congress system for a long time; in Pakistan, military has been a predominant force on politics; in Bangladesh, there has been predominance of bureaucracy in policy making, and similarly, Sri Lanka has been an illiberal democracy. Brass has further argued that in South Asia political process has been occupied by dynastic competition among prominent families, and in none of the countries of South Asia, despite bows to secularist ideals, there has been a separation between religion and politics. Chatterjee et al. (2019, p. 1–2) have also observed this, 'The vision of a Hindu majoritarian polity held by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) combines cultural nationalism and political strategies aiming at flagrant social dominance by the upper castes, rapid economic development, cultural conservatism, intensified misogyny and a firm grip on the instruments of state power'. It seems that in South Asian countries, non-state actors and groups have a greater say in the functioning of the government, for instance RSS in India and military in Pakistan.

However, the highly fragmented political parties have gradually instilled democratic values in the political system of South Asian states. Brass has shown his optimism by observing few developments in positive direction. He says that 'Nevertheless, the predominant pattern of shift over the past half century has been towards pluralism, regionalism, and decentralization' (Brass 2010, p. 8). This trend is prevailing due to the strong historical roots of this region that is embedded in the values of diverse but common cultural ethos.

Nevertheless, South Asian countries have shown a strong desire for democracy, institutional reforms, poverty alleviation and human development. There has been a long tradition of civil society movements that are active towards a democratic system in South Asia. These movements involve activists, social workers, people of religious organizations to affiliates of political parties, development professionals, mass media and common people endorsing variety of causes for bringing vibrant social changes in South Asia.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank, etc., also have reached the conclusion that political structures and forms of governance of a state are directly linked to the human development of a country or a region. It has been vividly recognized that the state is responsible to provide basic conditions that enable

people to enhance their right to choose that subsequently ensures their 'right to life with dignity'. Therefore, it is inevitable to find out the structures and narratives, within and outside the state, that are inherently exclusionist and undermine the dignity of human beings in South Asia.

The second part of this book discusses the dynamics and equilibrium between governance and human rights. From a scenario building exercise that tries to delve into how governance in South Asia could trigger better human rights to the citizens in South Asian perspective, the section focuses on the shortcomings of traditional models of governance. This section tries to figure out better yardsticks to the contemporary issues concerned with governance in South Asia. Issues of citizenship and governance have been discussed to comprehend the governance and capabilities within governments. The plight of religious minorities and the rights of people belonging to them in India and Pakistan has been analysed under the broader framework of human rights and governance. Significantly in this part, in a chapter on struggle for human rights in a south Asian periphery, the importance of call for the better corporate governance laws in the South Asian countries has been discussed. The need of democratic form of government and its normative analysis of good governance and human rights in South Asian countries, which stands unique from the Western notion of human rights and governance, have been delved into by the contributors. Principles of governance, human rights and regional cooperation in the post-globalized world have been used to contextualize the issues. The impact of perceived security threats that motivated India and Pakistan to develop nuclear bombs has been analysed in this book to find out the ways and means of enhancing the nuclear stability in the region.

Media and Literature

Media is considered one of the strongest pillars of democracy, and literature is a medium to empower and enlighten the people. However, scholars like Michel Foucault have rightly pointed out the inter-linkages between knowledge and power. Likewise, in his famous work, *Manufacturing Consent* Herman and Chomsky have argued that media houses are regulated and influenced by powerful and those who are in the power because media houses are profit-oriented leading to the elite domination of the media and marginalization of dissenting voices. However, there are certain media groups and writers who keep on raising voices and work in an objective manner for those who are not the part of the mainstream society. Herman and Chomsky have identified the essential ingredients of propaganda model or set of news 'filters': (i) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (ii) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (iii) the reliance of the mass media on information provided by government, business and 'experts' funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (iv) 'flak' as a means of disciplining the media; and (v) 'anti-communism' as a national religion and control mechanism'. If South Asian media is

put into this context too, we can see that media is often governed by the ruling party and elite domination is very much there.

Similarly, there is a relationship between literature, the individual, and its social, historical and cultural context. There is always an element of power in the literature as well that justifies the wrongs of the powerful. Nevertheless, the myths, realities and imaginations of literary works are not far from the real world. They either narrate the reality or provide a perspective to comprehend the socio-economic and political incidents that unfold in particular contexts. In South Asia, secular, religious and mythological all kinds of literature is there. There is a dominant as well as subordinate literature. However, in contemporary South Asia, the literature has been deconstructed and new streams like Dalit literature, women's literature or subaltern literatures are coming into existence.

Media and literature are such mediums of communication that creep into the minds and psyche of the people. In South Asia, media and literature both have played crucial role in strengthening as well as weakening the efforts made for regional cooperation. Media and literature can be a medium for conflict management, or they can instigate the conflicts. In South Asia, media and literature has defined the issues such as conflicts, war, gender, minority and nationalism. Thus, both the medium work in close coordination with each other. Movies are produced on the basis of literary works to narrate the way events got unfolded during the partition in 1947 and again when Bangladesh came into existence in 1971. Similarly, the great literary works on women are often represented through films and shows.

Therefore, the third part of this book emphasizes on the importance of media, literature and its changing dynamics in South Asian region. Media and literature are considered one of the most powerful mediums to portrait the society; influence the psyche of the people and the process of governance. This part unfolds the way media and literature narratives are created and marketed in South Asia. The part also deals with the power dynamics and socio-political narratives that work from behind the functioning of the media houses. Contributors have come up with research papers that describe the history of a language of those who are in conflict management. Special attention has been paid to comprehend the development narratives in South Asia, in terms of the print media. The unique feature of this part is that it discusses about Urdu historiography and country-specific analysis to recognize the role of the literature in nation building. The contribution of Arabian Nepali Literature to 'New Nepal' software building has been exclusively dealt with in this part. The Representation of Literature through Media in South Asia has been discussed in the context of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* and its film version *Earth* directed by Deepa Mehta.

Gender and Development

Due to the rampant corruption, poverty, structural violence and deeply rooted discrimination, the status of women and human development has not been very praiseworthy in South Asia. The trajectory of development has been gendered and lopsided in this

region. It has not been able to include women, third gender, minorities, tribes and all those who are at the margins of the society due to discriminatory social norms and traditions. For instance, people migrate from this region in order to find better livelihood opportunities in other parts of the world. Likewise, human trafficking is also a big challenge before the countries of this region making women and children the worst sufferers.

Human development report (2019) states that South Asia was the fastest-growing region in human development progress with 46% growth during 1990–2018, followed by East Asia and the Pacific at 43%. On the Human Development Index 2019, out of 189 countries, Afghanistan was ranked 170, Bangladesh 135, Bhutan 134, India 129, Maldives 104, Nepal 147, Pakistan 152 and Sri Lanka 71. This ranking of the South Asian countries, although quantitative, reflects the lower level of human development in this region.

Similarly, in Gender Inequality Index (GII), gender bias is very much visible in the region. 17.1% women held parliamentary seats, whereas in Sub-Saharan Africa its 23.5%, only 39.9% women have reached at least secondary level of education as compared to 63.3% of their male counterparts. In labour force participation, only 25.9% female are there as compared to 78.8% of male. These data illustrate that despite of being the fastest-growing region in the world in terms of human development, deep-rooted inequalities based on social discriminations and political and economic marginalizations of women and other relatively weaker sections of the society still sabotage the realization of human development in this region.

In several parts of South Asia, gender discrimination begins before birth and continues till a woman is alive. It starts from family and continues to almost every sphere of life, viz. politics, employment and law, etc. Therefore, the fourth part of the book exclusively deals with gender and its changing scenario in the South Asian context. Gender plays an important role in representing the demands in an unconventional fashion to improve the overall development pattern of democracy and development in the region. Women and children represent not only a demand but also a human need for growth and development of society. Addressing their needs is a test of governance and competence of the governments in power. This part deals with the various dimensions and manifestations of gender discourse. Gender stereotyping is investigated in the light of recent cases of killing of women in the name of witch craft in India and other nations and situates the question of human rights and gender justice against a backdrop of history and the present times. The part describes the changing narratives about South Asian women in terms of strategic de/reconstruction of gender in the fiction of south Asian women writers. A comparative study of the major works on feminism starting from Simone de Beauvoir to Anita Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri has been made. The ‘Third Space’ of feminist sensibility in South Asia Diaspora Literature has been analysed. Likewise, male migration and its impact on women in Bangladesh have been given special attention. The part also covers the debate surrounding the political representation of women in South Asia with special reference to India. The idea of breaking the glass ceiling for women in politics has been contextualized.

Succinctly, the articles in this book broadly cover almost all relevant issues and perspectives on contemporary South Asia. The state, civil society, social movements, various forms of media and its role in the formation as well as deconstruction of power structures in this region, trajectories of economic growth and socio-political changes, etc., have been discussed in detail. The authors have argued that in order to make this region's development process more inclusive and participatory, we should focus on two factors, i.e. economic growth as well as development with a humanitarian approach, and this can be achieved only when the region is able to develop people-centric institutions of governance.

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Social and Economic Development

Analysing the Status of Human Development in South Asia



Niharika Tiwari

South Asian region is full of similarities as well as variations. Countries of this region have age-old bonds of common history and culture, for instance, the atrocities of colonialism have been faced by almost all of them. The ethnic composition of the countries is also connected. According to the Global Shapers Community at World Economic Forum, the top four issues for South Asia are; equitable growth, livable and suitable cities, education employment and entrepreneurship and regional collaboration. Added to this, it has been argued in Human Development Reports that socio-economic structures and the political system of a country/region are considered the major determinants of human development. As far as South Asia is concerned, according to world bank(2020) data, 'In line with a global downward trend, growth in South Asia is projected to slow to 5.9% in 2019. A slight rebound in investment and private consumption could jumpstart South Asia's growth up to 6.3% in 2020 and 6.7% in 2021'.¹ Similarly, the political structure of the countries of this region also played a very crucial role in determining the status of human development in the South Asian region. Moreover, the ongoing conflicts in this region have hampered the entire socio-economic and political structure of this region. Before we enter into the analysis of the status of human development in South Asia, it is required to discuss the concept of human development in brief.

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The Concept of Human Development

The concept of human development is multidimensional and dynamic. The first Human Development Report (1990) introduced a human development approach to development discourse. It is about expanding and enhancing the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy. Thus, it focuses on people, their choices and the opportunities available for them.

Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self-respect—what Adam Smith called the ability to mix with others without being “ashamed to appear in publick”. (HDR1990, p. 10)

Noble laureate Amartya Sen has also interpreted the concept of human development in his '*Capability Approach*'. According to him, “*the goal of human development should be to expand the capability that people have to enjoy as Valuable being and doings*”. According to HDR (2019), capabilities evolve with circumstances as well as with values and with people's changing demands and aspirations. Today, having a set of basic capabilities, those associated with the absence of extreme deprivations, is not enough. Enhanced capabilities are becoming crucial for people to own the “narrative of their lives”.

The concept of human development is different from other similar concepts: like the concept of the basic needs which unlike the human development approach focuses on the fulfilment of the basic need of the people only. Similarly, human resource development focuses on investment in the education and health of people as a means of accelerating growth. Human development is a broader concept; it does not regard people as passive beneficiaries of services given to fulfil basic needs, nor does it focus on the expansion of the skill and health of the people to increase economic growth. Instead, people are seen as active agents of change.

Moreover, the HDR-2002² has added a new dimension to the idea of human development, i.e. promoting participation through democratic governance. It encourages participation through collective as well as individual aspects. For example, collective action through social and political movements has often been acknowledged as a mechanism of progress for issues central to human development such as environment protection, promoting gender equality and fostering human rights. In addition, people's participation and other aspects of human development gains can be mutually reinforcing. With political freedom, people get the opportunity to claim their