

organisation can benefit from valid and purposeful use of Assessment Centre feedback data. The author concludes with an argument that various costs associated with installation and running of Assessment Centres are more than compensated for by the benefits, both tangible (like avoiding the financial costs associated with wrong selection) and intangible (like, better match between the person and the role), that they bring to the organisation.

The author, who is an ex-Armed Forces Officer, had the opportunity of working in the field of competency assessment in a number of leading private sector organisations - after retiring from the Armed Forces where he was involved in a similar role. His long experience in the field has helped him to cover the entire gamut of activities relating to Assessment Centres with great clarity. His enunciation of the concepts are theoretically accurate, precise and at the same time easily comprehensible. His hands-on experience lends a high degree of authenticity to his description of the process of implementation. All in all, a very competent effort to popularize an important concept in Indian context.

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Tirthankar Roy, *The Economic History of India, 1857-1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 318 pages. Price Rupees 395.

The Cambridge Economic History of India, Volume II (CEHI, 1983) edited by Dharma Kumar has been an invaluable reference work for students and researchers alike. However, its exhaustive coverage and detailed analysis has meant that most undergraduate and postgraduate students of Indian history have found the volume unwieldy. They have had precious little choice though. While there have been innumerable books dealing with the minutiae of the evolution of the Indian economy under British rule, most deal with specific periods, sectors, or regions, and fail to provide a broader perspective.

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In his preface to his book Tirthankar Roy says that it is a “textbook on the economic history of colonial India”. According to Roy, the book “aims to be no more than an updated and shorter version” of the *CEHI* and “tries to be comprehensive in content, but as simply and easily written as possible”(p.vii). Roy succeeds in achieving both these objectives. For undergraduate and postgraduate students of history the book is heaven sent.

As a textbook on the economic history of colonial India there is much to commend in this book. Concise, and lucidly written, the book covers all major aspects of the evolution of the Indian economy in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. In terms of coverage of various sectors of the economy, the different chapters discuss agriculture and common property resources (Chapter 3), small-scale industry (Chapter 4), large-scale industry (Chapter 5), plantation, mines and banking (Chapter 6) and population and labour force (Chapter 9). There is also a discussion of the background to the evolution of the Indian economy during this period in one of the early chapters (Chapter 2) as well as an analysis of the macroeconomy (Chapter 7) and the role of the government (Chapter 8). The various chapters are an excellent introduction to the topics that they cover, providing both relevant information as well as cogent analysis. They also cover a lot of additional information and research that has been emerged since the *CEHI* was published. The book discusses not just new themes such as small-scale industry and common property, but also provide insights into old themes that researchers in other disciplines would find useful. The discussion of management in the chapter on large-scale industry, for example, would be of interest to those studying corporate governance practices in Indian firms. The tables and maps that have been provided are particularly helpful for comparing the evolution of various sectors of the economy over periods of time, as well as understanding regional variations.

To be effective a textbook has to fulfil two criteria. It must provide a broad perspective on the subject matter that it deals with, giving the reader both information as well as contextual analysis. However, it must also provoke a student’s intellectual curiosity in the subject and stimulate further study and

research. It is the latter task that Roy performs admirably. The various chapters are not mere facts and figures presented in chronological order with some analysis provided in between, as most history textbooks tend to be. They discuss various debates and controversies that have arisen over the causes and consequences of economic growth and decline in India under colonial rule. Roy not only introduces the reader to the controversies that have arisen over the interpretation of existing evidence, he jumps headlong into the debate himself. Particularly interesting is Roy's critique of what he calls the 'left-nationalist paradigm'. Here he refers to the views of various Indian historians regarding the effects of the commercialisation of agriculture on growth in the Indian economy under colonial rule. This view holds that the Indian economy declined during this period and that this decline can be attributed to the deliberate commercialisation of Indian agriculture under colonial rule. Commercialisation was forced on the peasantry who had to shift from subsistence farming to production of cash crops in order to make high revenue payments that were demanded under colonial rule. Commercialisation inevitably increased the debt burden on peasant farmers, because the cultivation of commercial crops did not always generate a profit after revenue demands had been met, and also because they were exposed to the risk of famine when the monsoons failed. Increasing debt burdens inevitably led to a vicious cycle where farmers were forced to sell land to moneylenders and become tenant farmers, and moneylenders, not having an interest in increasing productivity failing to make the investments that were necessary to increase agricultural productivity. When combined with the imports of manufactured goods into India that destroyed traditional industries and handicrafts this had the effect of decreasing both production as well productivity in the Indian economy leading to its relative decline under colonial rule.

Roy argues that this analysis fails to explain variation in growth rates across time and between regions. This explanation, he argues, cannot explain stagnation after the 1870s, when real revenue burden was decreasing. It also does not explain why agricultural production did increase significantly in some regions despite commercialisation. Roy suggests that the 'left-nationalist

paradigm' pins too much blame for the relative decline of the Indian economy on colonial rule and fails to adequately explore other, indigenous, factors that might have played a part. He identifies three in particular: resource endowments; class and caste structure; and the high-risk nature of Indian agriculture that, in the absence of effective hedging or insurance mechanisms, discouraged additional investments.

Discussing differences in resource endowments Roy analyses the impact of the availability of water, land and labour on agricultural productivity. He points out that certain regions of the country became relatively more prosperous because of better resource endowments such as the availability of irrigation and rail links to ports (pp.96-100). He explains why the Tanjore and the Godavari-Krishna delta were commercially more successful (availability of irrigation and low population density) than Bengal, Bihar and eastern India (negatively affected by increase in population density) and Konkan and Assam (poor transport infrastructure). His analysis of the impact of the class and caste structure on economic growth also demonstrates its usefulness in explaining difference in economic growth between regions (pp.100-102). He contrasts the economic impact of upper caste oppression under the *zamindari* system that led to persistent poverty and stagnation with the effects of the *ryotwari* settlements that provided greater incentives for private investments in productivity improvement. Roy also points out the negative impact of climatic risk and income uncertainty that discouraged savings and investments (pp.240-43). Whatever little savings there were was held mostly in the form of unproductive gold and silver holdings. A banking sector that catered primarily to the formal industrial sector dominated by European firms compounded these problems. The arguments that Roy sets forth do not prove the 'left-nationalist paradigm' wrong. To be fair to him that is not his intention either. What he does is point out inconsistencies in the argument and in some cases [as in his discussion of the 'drain theory' associated with Dadabhai Naoroji (p.241)] serious flaws in the basic assumptions underlying some of these arguments. He also suggests that there are other important factors that might explain stagnation and poverty to which researchers should not be blinded by an excessive preoccupation with

colonialism. Roy's arguments are strengthened by the fact that public policy has not effectively addressed some of the problems that he discusses even to this day, more than five decades after liberation from colonial rule.

There are two other aspects of the book that students and researchers would find very useful. The first is a list of annotated readings given at the end of each chapter. Divided into sections they contain not just material on the subject matter that is covered by particular chapters but also on other major themes that have a relevance to the topic. The second is a list of research questions given in the Conclusion (Chapter 10). This should be of considerable interest to doctoral students looking for research topics. These questions are grouped into four major areas (agriculture, industry, the macroeconomy and population and labour force). Though most of these questions find a mention in relevant chapters as areas about which not enough is known to reach any definite conclusion, the collation of these questions is useful nevertheless. The book should be required reading in all undergraduate and postgraduate history and economics courses in India. A complementary volume dealing with the evolution of the Indian economy between independence in 1947 and liberalisation in 1991 would be immensely helpful to both students and teachers.

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Creating Performing Organisations edited by Biswajit Pattanayak and Vipin Gupta along with Phalgu Niranjana (Response Books – A Division of Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2002. Price not mentioned)

The knowledge and skills required to face business challenges in the 21st century have changed dramatically because of the complexity of the issues we face. As we enter a new millennium, organisations are continually confronted by broadening competition, shorter product cycle times, old