

## BOOK REVIEW

*Gender in Agrarian Transitions: Liberation Perspectives from the South*, Edited by Dzodzi Tsikata, Archana Prasad and Paris Yeros, Tulika Books, New Delhi, India, 2024. Pp.xvi+299.

This edited volume results from research collaboration within the Agrarian South Network (ASN). The fourteen articles in the book represent the geographical spread and perspectives in the diverse tri-continental network, i.e., Asia, Africa and Latin America or the Caribbean. The book advances contemporary debates on agrarian transition, gender relations and women's struggles. It locates these struggles within the structural changes in the world economy marked by the uneven advance of corporate capital in the countryside and the accelerated growth of urban centres. The book addresses contemporary theoretical debates on the character of agrarian transition and the struggles of our land, labour, and social reproduction across the rural-urban divide.

The book is structured in three parts. The first part addresses some main connections between agrarian crisis and agrarian transitions; the second examines feminist struggles over land, labour and social reproduction; and the third turns to women's resistance and popular movements. In the first part, Archana Prasad and Paris Yeros provide evidence and theoretical reflection on the massive growth of labour reserves across the south, its challenges for social reproduction, and the struggles of women and working people today. Dzodzi Tsikata examines from a historical perspective how gendered land tenure systems have contributed to shaping, and in turn have been shaped by, agrarian production and reproduction systems in Africa and how this worked to the disadvantage of women in terms of their livelihood choices and outcomes and their positions in agrarian societies. Utsa Patnaik re-examines the concept of social reproduction by elucidating Marx's notion of 'necessary labour' and contends that since colonial times, women's labour has to be contextualized in capitalism's logic of denying workers the wages that help their families survive. Two other chapters also focus on women's employment and income issues.

The second part provides diverse perspectives on the character and causes of the contemporary crisis of social reproduction, particularly under neo-liberal policies in different historical contexts. The five chapters together draw attention to the centrality of social reproduction for the capitalist enterprise as it extracts super profits from the exploitation of unpaid reproductive work usually done by women. Gertrude Dzifa Torvikey illustrates the changing character of social reproduction in the light of increasing corporate land grabs through an analysis of Cassava production in Ghana. Namarata Daniel brings focus to human trafficking in India by linking the trafficking of women to unwaged and forced labour and to the conditions of agrarian distress and dispossession of marginalised communities. The other three articles focus on social and economic issues related to women in Argentina, Zimbabwe and Brazil.

The third part elucidates both historical and contemporary trajectories of struggles for women's liberation in diverse contexts. Archana Prasad explores questions arising from recent debates on patriarchy and capitalism and focuses on the role of women in communist-led peasant movements in India and the implications of such struggles on the project of women's emancipation. Lyn Ossome examines, in the historical course of the agrarian transition in Africa, how feminist concerns have shaped, driven and defined the social and political parameters of agrarian movements in Africa. Flavia Rios and R. Maciel investigate the transformation of black feminism in Brazil for three generations of activism. Clera Bellamy explores the strategies used by Zapatista women in their struggle for particular demands specified in the Revolutionary Women's Law, especially the collective struggles for obtaining rights to land, participating politically and organising them in the armed struggle.

Further, the issue of sexual exploitation of women in rural areas of India has been explained in detail by Prasad (pp. 220-222). An example has been given through the Warli movement, where intervention by the peasant organizations freed women and men from debt slavery. Furthermore, the opposition to other forms of oppression also meant that peasant women were no longer required to visit the landlord for sexual purposes on a rotational basis. Another example was the Telangana struggle to liberate women from the *Adi Bapa* system, akin to the concubine system. When a landlord married a woman, his bride was accompanied by a young girl who was often from a family in debt bondage. The work of the girl was not only to serve her mistress but also to provide sexual services to the master, i.e., the landlord. The Telangana movement of the class struggle contributed to women's emancipation from sexual oppression in quite a significant way. The author's academic work regarding women's liberation vis-à-vis peasant movements in India is worth appreciation. Similarly, young females in Africa faced various unethical problems highlighted by Ossome (pp. 237-38). The author has elaborated on the female circumcision crisis in Central Kenya in detail. Typically, female academicians do not report such issues on a large scale in their published academic work. The book is an excellent research work by different contributors from three continents. The book will be useful to teachers and post-graduate students of social sciences.

Overall, we can conclude that no developing country can become economically strong if its women are socially and economically weak. All the contributors from different developing countries deserve appreciation for their excellent academic work.

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