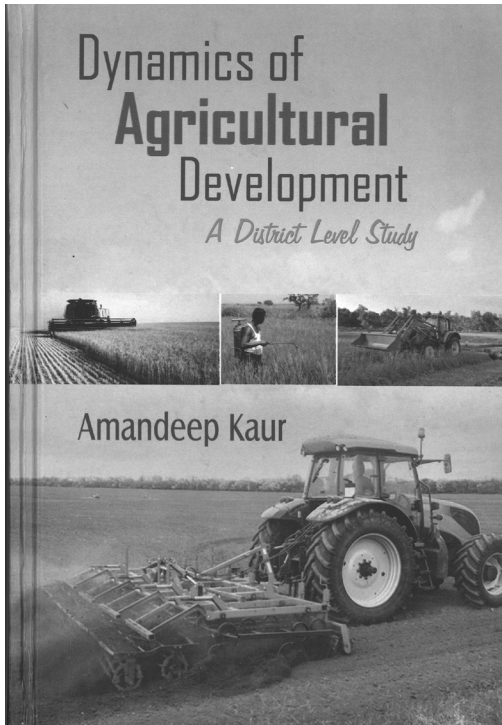


Book Review - 2

Dynamics of Agricultural Development- A District Level Study by Amandeep Kaur.
Concept Publishing Company Private Ltd.



This book deals with the temporal variations in agriculture in Uttar Pradesh for a period of 50 years from 1960 to 2011, as well as the spatial variations in agriculture district wise for the same period.

The book is divided into nine chapters. The first, an introductory one, includes a brief agricultural history as well as the objectives of the study and the proposed methodology. The second chapter reviews the existing literature on the subject and identifies areas where more detailed work

needs to be done. The third chapter is devoted to the temporal dynamics of agricultural performance in Uttar Pradesh in different phases such as the Pre-Green Revolution, the Initial Green Revolution, The Mature Green Revolution, The Initial Post- Reform and the New Millennium. The fourth chapter describes the spatial pattern of agricultural growth for the same period. The fifth chapter looks at the spatial patterns of agricultural development. The sixth chapter is devoted to a rigorous examination of the convergence/divergence of the inter district disparities in the state. Chapter seven examines the temporal and spatial patterns of the labour productivity of the workers engaged in the agricultural sector. Chapter eight attempts to identify the sources of agricultural growth and productivity differences across regions/ while chapter nine gives the summary and main conclusions.

The book starts off on a very promising note. The introduction gives a good idea of the need and importance of the study and clearly states the main objectives of the study, the hypothesis and the research design. The second chapter gives a fairly comprehensive review of the literature available on the subject, deftly categorizing it into international, national, state and regional studies/ highlighting the work done so far and identifying the gaps which the author proposes to cover.

Chapter three to eight have specific objectives stated at the beginning of each chapter. Most of them also have clearly stated hypotheses which the author intends testing, as well as the methodology used. Together it covers a whole range of issues related to temporal and spatial growth and development. In several cases multiple methods have been employed to come to conclusions and a wide range of statistical techniques used which is commendable.

The book is an interesting perspective by an economist in spatial and temporal studies - an inter disciplinary area also studied by geographers and the latter can get some new insight into the subject matter.

The author has put in voluminous work. She has relied on secondary data mainly compiled by the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, and Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Uttar Pradesh. She has also taken information published by the Directorate of Land Records, Uttar Pradesh as well as publications of the Census of India and the Fertilizer Association of India. The number of districts increased during the study period and the new state of Uttarakhand was formed. But since past information was not available for these new districts the author converted the new 72 districts into the old 42 districts for spatial comparison. There is clarity on the work done. The language used is simple and lucid and the book is a must read for research scholars looking to analyse temporal and spatial trends. It provides a road map for them to follow on the research path with no short cuts.

However, in spite of all these positives there are a few lacunae. The most striking

one is that the author has not realized the value of maps and diagrams for complementing the written matter. These maps, which could have gone a long way in describing the spatial differences between regions, are unreadable. The shading for the high and low, two contrasting areas, is indistinguishable and the diagrams are only a tad better. This is a drawback in the study of spatial differences.

Secondly the author has not fully analysed all the information collected by her. A case in point is the interesting chart given at the end of the book in Appendix 9.4 on districts in four categories with high and low growth and development. A map highlighting these four regions could have helped the author while identifying the problems of the developed regions and the laggard regions. However, this is sadly absent.

Moreover, in the fifth chapter the author has identified agricultural development only on the basis of the value output of crops. Development is more complex. Various developmental variables could have been taken - a mix of monetary and non monetary variables and a weighted composite index of development could have been developed. In several studies this is not done due to the non availability of data. However in this study data has been collected like fertilizer consumption in kilograms per hectare, tractors per thousand hectares of net sown area, cropping intensity, irrigation as a percentage of net sown area, just to name a few, for all the districts for all the time periods. It is used later for analyzing agricultural performance, but it could have been used here to give a more realistic picture of agricultural development which is now very lopsided.

Chapter eight which deals with the impact of differences in physical and human resource endowment on interregional disparities is not comprehensive. Important factors like soil and relief have not been considered, the analysis of which would have gone a long way in explaining the differentials in agricultural development.

The author has rightly stressed the importance of micro level studies. She could have included a micro level study in a laggard area. This could have served a dual purpose. Firstly it could have helped for ground truthing since the study is completely based on secondary data. Secondly it could have helped in initiating a discussion based on ground realities, which would be realistic.

There should have been a separate chapter on government policy, both central and state, covering specific issues like policy governing credit.

The concluding chapter is disappointing for various reasons. Firstly, there are no concrete answers to whether the hypotheses put forth in the various chapters are upheld or not. Secondly and most importantly the policy implications is the weakest section. The rest of the work is based on the rigorous analysis of data and here suddenly there are sweeping generalizations based on inadequate data. The author suddenly seems to be in a hurry to wind up, which is a pity as it has just begun to get interesting, all the preparatory work of the earlier chapters having reached fruition. Suddenly many conclusions are based on some Appendix, which have not even been mentioned in the earlier chapters. A case in point is that there is no study of why the per hectare credit supply is low in the state. There is not

even the hint of a discussion on whether the region has a bad history of farmers reneging on the repayment of loans resulting in poor credit.

In the initial chapters comparisons of agricultural production are made with the neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana, with an explanation of why this was necessary. Suddenly, in the concluding part there is a comparison with Gujarat and Tamil Nadu regarding information access, with no explanation offered whatsoever. Even the topic of information access should have been given more serious thought by the economist. After all dissemination of information is not proved to be better in advantageous areas as compared to backward areas. A lot of fresh information based on the Appendix is only mentioned in passing in the conclusion and not analyzed.

In spite of these shortcomings it is a book worth reading and the author needs to be complimented on her patience in analyzing voluminous data and not tiring of using multiple techniques to highlight even minor details.

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