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Postcolonial geographies of development:
introduction

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DEVELOPMENT**

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merger in 1980 of 'Nantah', the Chinese-language Nanyang University, in Singapore with the English-medium Singapore University to form the present National University of Singapore. Wang had in 1965 chaired the Nanyang University Curriculum Review Committee that recommended *inter alia* diversifying Nantah's languages of instruction and curricula, while also urging acceptance by the institution of students from all language streams in the country.

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The Graying of India: Population Ageing in the Context of Asia Rajagopal Dhar Chakraborti. Sage Publications India Pty Ltd, New Delhi, 2004, 467 pp (ISBN 0-7619-9802-0) (hbk).

The increasing proportion of elderly in the age structures of Asian populations has created additional planning implications and the need for new infrastructure, including those for geriatric care mechanisms and elderly care systems. It is in this context that this monograph discusses the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of ageing in India and investigates the socioeconomic planning implications of relevant future scenarios.

Chapter 1 presents a broad overview of population ageing phenomena in different regions of the world as well as in different countries in Asia. The intergenerational balance of selected regions and countries of the world is investigated, using mainly published data from the United Nations encompassing the period 1950–2050. A demographic profile of older populations in Asia as well as trends in ageing are presented to establish that 'feminisation' is indeed a major demographic trend. Furthermore, with regards the socioeconomic characteristics of the elderly in many Asian countries, the author notes that their well-being depends largely on labour force participation, literacy, marital status and health status.

The second chapter highlights the causes of population ageing and discusses variations of time dimensions in the demographic transitional process in countries of Asia. Fertility and mortality trends are specifically assessed for their contribution to this. Migration patterns are also discussed to further understanding of the internal and external flows of Asian people, as well as the effects on the age structures of Asian countries.

Chapter 3 reviews the different measures of ageing adopted to examine the status of the aged; definitions of population ageing in the context of different cultures and societies and encompassing both traditional and new measures, are explored. Chapter 4 examines the major sociodevelopmental linkages between ageing and development, highlighting indicators such as labour supply and productivity in characterizing this relationship. It is hypothesized that the labour market adjusts itself to the ageing process; for instance, when the labour supply of aged workers declines, the scope for women and the youth to be employed increases. The author also argues that there is a positive relationship between healthcare costs and population ageing. Unlike in most developed economies, including Japan where healthcare is subsidized, healthcare programmes for the aged in the developing economies of Asia have yet to be developed. Therefore, the author emphasizes, there is a pressing need for detailed and careful economic analyses of population ageing if inefficient and costly policy interventions are to be avoided.

The main objective in Chapter 5 is to attempt a computation of an elderly status index (or ESI, parallel to the United Nation's HDI or human development index) for India, which could be used to establish and comprehend how the status of the elderly has

changed over time and enable international comparisons of trends. Estimate ESI are computed for the major Indian states using data from the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO). Evidence showing a declining quality of life among the aged in Asia is particularly visible from the Indian data. The rural–urban composition of the elderly, gender dimensions of rural ageing, the single elderly, living arrangements of the elderly and ownership and management of property and financial assets of the elderly are also analysed. One of the author's hypotheses that there is an inverse relationship between modernization/industrialization levels and the status accorded to the aged, however, is not supported from the analysis of data from India and other Asian countries.

The last chapter is devoted to socioeconomic problems associated with ageing, ranging from stagnating economic growth to intergenerational conflict. It advocates 'graceful ageing' as a process of optimizing opportunities for physical, social and mental well-being throughout life, in order to ensure a healthy, independent, qualitatively superior life in the older ages. The importance of using a combination of different tools such as effective health policy, the financing of geriatric healthcare and economic support to enhance the health-related quality of life of the elderly is emphasized. In reality, however, a large proportion of the elderly in the developing economies of Asia do not have sufficient or regular sources of income. Women also have lower retirement ages despite the fact that they generally live longer than men and may spend more years of old age without employment or financial support from a spouse. Thus, graceful ageing policies must intersect with poverty eradication and employment protection policies. It is no easy task to develop and implement effective strategies that foster graceful ageing as capacities for implementing programmes vary widely and political considerations may rule out otherwise attractive options.

The Graying of India is an attempt to add to the existing quantum of knowledge by analysing the Indian experience of ageing on the basis of the theory of demographic transition. The intergenerational balance of populations, the consequences of the feminization of greying Asia and the determinants of well-being of the elderly are some of the major issues where important contributions to existing knowledge have been made.

The book, however, does suffer from a few shortcomings. As the author has largely drawn from published data from international and national sources for India, the conclusions are based on generalized rather than primary sources of data. Furthermore, while new definitions of population ageing have been proposed, the author uses the traditional 'proportion aged' to measure the ageing phenomenon. Also, as only Indian data have been employed in computing the ESI, international comparisons of greying in India cannot be attempted. The development of a composite alternative measure of ageing such as an ESI with clearly ascertained choices of relevant variables to be included has yet to be undertaken.

The volume does, nevertheless, serve to encourage further research. Several themes such as labour market adjustment to the ageing process and the social implications of the changing balance between age groups are potential areas for investigation emanating from this monograph.

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