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and are constantly under pressure by farmers in the surplus-producing states who withhold their grain to obtain private benefits. Third, the role of the unofficial agencies was crucial, as Singh willingly admits. The most important Indian agency was the Bihar Relief Committee, begun and held together by the skill of Jayaprakash Narayan. Without such a legitimating, charismatic figure, relief donations may not have flowed so readily, and agreements among warring political groups to suspend electioneering antics in favor of cooperation may not have been secured. On the other hand, the international relief groups brought into Bihar more than sixty percent of all the relief distributed in 1967-68 (estimated value—about Rs. 2.2 billion: table 29). The US role, while very great, was also very grudging (see pp. 189-98). This suggests that the state of India's foreign relations is a crucial factor; if we add to this the relative lack of food surpluses in the seventies, a doubt arises whether India would ever again be aided on such a scale. All these factors suggest that the success of the relief effort in 1967 resulted in large part from a favorable conjunction of events within and outside India, just as the disaster of the Bengal famine of 1943—when at least 1.5 million perished—resulted from an unfavorable conjunction of internal and external events. Thus the major premise, that famine relief can be modernized to the point of sure effectiveness, seems uncertain. Relief *is* effective when there are resources, food, and organized cooperation; but even then the cost of success seems high. For one thing, massive relief wrecks the developmental plans carefully laid by the planners, while indebting India further to the suppliers of foreign aid. The solution desired is a modernization not of relief but of the Indian economy.

The reader should be warned that an unnecessarily large number of typesetting errors appear in this volume, which become particularly irritating when one is trying to puzzle out the numerous tables that support the author's text. Percentages often do not total to 100, which produces a small frenzy in this reader.

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Indian Women. EDITED BY DEVAKI JAIN. New Delhi: Government of India, 1975. xxii, 312 pp. Tables. \$4.50 (Dist. through Inter-Culture Associates)

This collection of twenty-two essays was commissioned to update a 1958 government publication (*Women of India*, edited by Tara Ali Baig), and to respond to contemporary women's liberation movements in the West and their interest in the progress of Indian women. Most of the essays are concerned "to see if the Indian experience has anything specific to add to the discussion on the role of men and women in societies and on the issue of equality." The contributors are "persons who have views and ideas for policy," so the book "does not claim to be . . . research but a collection of reflections" (p. xiv). This is an accurate assessment, and with a few exceptions, this volume does not add significantly to knowledge and analysis of women in Indian society. It is, however, interesting for the overall impression of ambivalence it conveys about the changing status of women in India.

The editor, Devaki Jain, selected the writers and topics. She is unhappy with the Western "imitative march towards equality," which ignores physiological differences and the attributes which make women in some respects "superior" to men. Stating that "it is recognition of the distinctive features of womanhood, an identification of its advantages, and the exploitation of those by women that will give them status," she represents many of the contributors as believing that "the tolerance, self-sacrifice, acceptance of roles by them have sustained a certain harmony and beauty in Indian life" (pp. xv-xvi). Were they stated by feminists, such beliefs would reflect cultural or radical feminist ideology, which postulates a female culture that is caused by physiological factors and/or social conditioning and which differs qualitatively from male culture. Characterized as creative and nurturing, this female culture should be preserved and elevated to a leading role in modern society. But these contributors, unlike cultural feminists—who often appear to be building a separatist movement with their emphasis upon services and institutions by and for women—envision Indian women always within the contexts of family, home, and nation. The question implicit in many of these essays is whether or not Indian civilization has the potential—perhaps even the demonstrated capacity—to grant equality to women without experiencing the divisiveness, the conflict of sex and/or class that they see in the women's movement in the West.

The contributions are uneven in quality and rather unsuccessfully organized in two sections of

eleven essays, each titled "Background" and "Focus." The essays in the second section focus on women from particular communities, geographic areas, and professions, but most are written at a very general level. In contrast, two articles in the first section provide very specific information. Shyamala Pappu assesses current legal provisions concerning women, and points to further legislative reforms and implementation necessary to remove women from the category of dependents. Ashish Bose, with thirty-nine tables compiled by Jatinder Bhatia, presents demographic evidence of persistent problems for women in the areas of health, education, marriage and family, and participation in public life. Four other essays in the first section merit attention, those by Romila Thapar, Ester Boserup, Andre Beteille, and Veena Das. Thapar provides an excellent overview in the volume's first essay, ranging from ancient Indian history to the nationalist movement in a knowledgeable and well-organized analysis of the many variables governing the position of women in Indian society. Her perspective is basically a Marxist one, emphasizing the development of private property and the family as crucial to the oppression of women. However, she notes that legally women were an undifferentiated class, equated with Sudras and always subservient to men. Boserup gives a general and comparative explanation of differential male and female participation in the labor market, with implications for economic development policy. Beteille skillfully outlines the ways in which women can be categorized and analyzed in Indian society, and argues that their position has changed little, since the conditions of agricultural and industrial work have changed little. Das analyzes the low status of women through correlations with marriage and kinship norms and practices in different regions and communities.

In the second section, the contributions by Quratulain Hyder, Gita Aravamudan, and Imtiaz Ahmed raise important issues and include informative material. Hyder argues that distinctions of religion and gender are insignificant compared to the inequalities of class; hers is the only explicit statement of a socialist feminist position on women in this volume. She includes valuable details, particularly on women participants in Urdu literary and Muslim educational activities. Aravamudan, starting with the hypothesis that the matriarchal Nair kinship system encouraged women in Kerala to become nurses and nuns, finds instead that

service ideals of Christianity, the operation of the dowry system, and family pressures account for most of these professional women. Ahmed, somewhat like Beteille, outlines the questions a systematic analysis of women's participation in Indian politics should answer; but he goes on to present some case studies and tentative propositions emphasizing the limited nature of women's political participation. He somewhat oddly concludes that women are characterized by a "passive political orientation," which he then attributes to Indian social structure (p. 312).

The remaining essays are less successful. In the first section, they include an essay on female socialization and the life cycle by Margaret Kalak-dina, essays by Lakshmi N. Menon and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay lamenting the decline of selfless and vigorous work on the part of women in women's activities and national life today, and essays by Ashok Rudra and M. A. Sreenivasan invoking Hindu goddesses as cultural models that transcend social reality. In the second section, the pieces by Olivia Stokes, Susan Mody and Sharayu Mhatra, and Parvathi Aiyappan consist largely of interviews—of women in rural Bihar, in a Bombay slum, and prostitutes in a Rescue Home respectively: though they all emphasize poverty, they include little or no analysis. Mina Swaminathan sketches an affectionate portrait of an orthodox, upper-class South Indian Brahmin woman; Renana Jhabvala and Pratima Sinha contribute a slight, glib categorization of Delhi college girls; and Kapila Vatsyayan discusses women in the performing arts. Finally, essays by Verrier Elwin on tribal women (reprinted from the 1958 volume) and G. Morris Carstairs on village women in Rajasthan help perpetuate the stereotype of robust country women whose "gusto" and "temper," as Jain remarks in the introduction, suggest equality with men (p. xx).

Jain is not unaware of the conflicting evidence and interpretations in this volume, and she warns against "change without design or ideology, . . . breakdown of tradition without a substitute ideology" (p. xx). Yet the volume succeeds in doing little to clarify the problems of women or to develop ideological models for women and social change in India.

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Language, Religion and Politics in North India. BY PAUL R. BRASS. Cambridge: