

FOREWORD

Paul Streeten

A cartoon in *The New Yorker* showed two cows standing on the side of a highway. A giant truck passes. On it is written in large, colored letters: “pasteurized, rehydrated, bio-dynamic, reinforced, homogenized, vitamin-strengthened, reconstituted, purified milk.” One of the sad-faced cows turns to the other and says, “To think that all this comes from us!” The cartoon illustrates the relationship between the practical, down-to-earth, pragmatic field workers and the grand, if not grandiose, writers in the development industry. A. H. and Geeta Somjee are, if they will forgive the comparison, like these two cows. They keep their noses well to the ground and gather the basic material that is then processed, and sometimes misinterpreted, into grand theories. And it is not a coincidence that their work has been concerned with the milk cooperatives of the poor in India.

The Somjees tell the fascinating story of the growth of Anand in the state of Gujarat, now the center of the Indian dairy cooperatives. The Amul (Anand Milk Union Limited) dairy covered almost all the thousand villages in the district by the mid-70s. It is an outstandingly successful marketing cooperative of small farmers and landless laborers, whose growth has been well documented by Geeta Somjee and A. H. Somjee. The Anand pattern was later replicated in other states of India under the name of Operation Flood, with the organizing genius of Verghese Kurien and his colleagues. It covered 75,000 village cooperatives, benefiting more than 55 million small and poor farmers and landless laborers, many of them women and members of lower castes. The Somjees’ conclusion is that it is from experiences such as these that the lessons for development practitioners should be drawn, not from the arid models of some academic theorist.

The widening and deepening of the concept of poverty to include dimensions of deprivation in addition to income poverty owes much to the work of the Somjees. These include social inferiority (social exclusion), isolation, vulnerability, powerlessness, and humiliation. In this attractive and elegantly argued book, A. H. Somjee and Geeta Somjee present a convincing picture of the links between poverty, gender, participation, and human development. And they thereby contribute to the fight for the reduction of poverty in all its dimensions.

Paul Streeten is Professor Emeritus of Boston University. He was a Professor of Economics and the Director of the World Development Institute at Boston University, and he has been a Professorial Fellow at Balliol College, Oxford and Warden of Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford. Dr. Streeten has worked closely with the World Bank and the Ministry of Overseas Development in the U.K. His ideas have influenced a large number of scholars in developed and developing countries, and a number of international development agencies around the world.