

BOOK REVIEW

P C Deogharia (Ed). WTO Trade and Development, Shree Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2009. ISBN: 978-81-8329-318-1. Pp v+383. Hardbound. Rs 1200/-.

Trade and Development from the stable of Shree Publishers and Distributors, edited by P C Deogharia, is an anthology containing twenty well-informed essays by academicians, bureaucrats and economists on the topic indicated in the title. The work is an attempt to unravel the complexities associated with the movement in India's perspective. Deogharia writes in the preface, 'It is expected that the book would not only add value to the existing discourse on trade and development but also highlight the interest of the underdeveloped countries in a cogent manner.'

The first paper, 'WTO and Underdeveloped Countries' by P C Deogharia talks of the multilateral negotiations under the WTO and the possible roadmap indicating neo-liberal paths. Globalization has opened up and linked the world markets, production sectors and workers in a progressively intense manner. However, the evolution that should have been the share of the underdeveloped countries has not been genuinely accrued in the economic domain. The writer has pointed out rightly that the wage concessions dictated by the developed nations to produce and manufacture with higher profit spinoffs has worked to the detriment of the wage earners. The paper throws ample light on agriculture subsidies, non-agricultural market access, the services sector, TRIPS (Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) and biodiversity to offer an optimum analysis of the problematic.

Amalendu Shekhar Mitra's research paper titled 'WTO and India's Foreign Trade' concerns itself with the country's export performance. The author points out that the fantasia of foreign trade performance has not been realized by India. Initially, it was expected that the WTO would help India in acquiring a highly positive trade balance but somehow, it did not happen. The preparatory measures, it appears, have been missing, so has been the delivery system. The author suggests the remedy of diversifying export basket, buoyancy, consistency and expansion of exports. Mitra has also touched GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) and Regional Trading Agreements. The future prospects have been discussed with the endnote that political exigencies and economic imperatives have to acquire a wholesome blend of positivity to reap the benefits of the WTO fully.

'Indian Agriculture under WTO Regime: Challenges and Opportunities', jointly authored by S P Singh and M R Behara, begins on a cautionary note – domestic and external challenges have to be met to achieve high growth and productivity. The various governmental and non-governmental agencies have been remiss in the execution of their responsibilities leading to the ineffective implementation of Agreement on Agriculture. The paper also endeavours to measure India's performance in international agriculture trade. The duo has advised a concerted pressure by the developing countries on the developed countries for reducing protectionist tendencies in production and export subsidies.

Shishir Choudhary's 'Impact and Implications of TRIPS for Underdeveloped Countries' is an eye opener on IPRs (Intellectual Property Rights) after the establishment of the WTO in 1995. Since many of the developed and also underdeveloped countries have been taking advantage of the grey areas, the super players are insisting on the implementation of the provisions of TRIPS in developing countries. The valid argument of the developed nations is that a focussed and territorialized IPR regime will boost inventions and innovations at a faster pace and work in favour of the developing nations.

The fifth research paper, 'WTO and Trade in Financial Services' is a mature survey of the performance of the services sector in the world trade perspective. The writer stresses the fact that the East Asian and the South Asian economic crises are a direct consequence of an emaciated financial sector. He asks nagging questions regarding the Indian banking sector and the financial system. The doubts also converge on the dilemma of the WTO objective – whether it is leading towards a self-priming world trade or is it a managed affair? A fair, equitable and law based multilateral trade system is the architectural platform required to control volatility and instability.

Vineeta Rani Ekka and Chaitali Adhikari have dealt with the PRs (Performance Requirements) and screening mechanisms in their paper 'Trade Related Investment Measures and Performance Requirements' with competence. They believe that the PRs are highly relevant in spite of the altered scenario consequent to the compliance necessary for the TRIMs. It has worked to the detriment of the developing nations. The PR operative safeguards the interests of the developing countries. The writers hint at the possibility of PRs becoming an important yardstick in the future.

'Environmental Implications in Post WTO Regime' by P K Mishra underlines the massive environmental downside of the industrial revolution – demographic explosions, habitat annihilation and loss of species. Technological progress has left in its wake ecological crises of various hues. Sustainable development would entail 'economic efficiency, social equity and environmental protection'. It is a comprehensive paper offering evaluations of the CBD (Convention of Biodiversity), conflict areas between trade and environmental concerns, and portending means of conflict management such as education of industries on this vital hub.

The eighth paper is Naresh Kr Ambastha's 'WTO and Human Rights'. It explores the connection between food security, labour standards and rights in underdeveloped countries in the WTO regime. The author arrives at the conclusion that '[T]he type of development that is taking place in Jharkhand or in India is determined by the interest of the ruling capitalist class.' He is of the opinion that liberalization, privatisation and globalisation have proved a curse for the hungry masses because the state is turning away from its avowed goals of a welfare society.

'WTO and Underdeveloped Countries' by Md Mokhtar Alam and S K Agrawal also reiterates the divide between the developed and the developing countries. The authors argue convincingly that the WTO framework has been ideationally hijacked by the developed countries and they are using it to further their interests at the cost of the less privileged nations like India. Alam and Agrawal have also recounted the reasons behind the truncated authority of the developing nations – dependent economies, small technical resources, inadequate legal expertise etc.

R S Deshpande's 'WTO and Agricultural Policy State Perspective: Case of Karnataka' concentrates on this Indian state in the perspective of GATT and the WTO. Deshpande locates the initiatives of Karnataka which has helped it emerge as a leading player in agriculture trade. He also puts into perspective the hurdles like the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee, frequent power cuts, infrastructural bottlenecks and the information gap between the world market and the local exporters. Deshpande has suggested stout measures for overcoming these problems.

Dr P C Deogharia's research paper focuses on agriculture – 'WTO and Its Implications for the Indian Agriculture Sector'. He implies that the post WTO regime in the world market would be free of negative pulls and lead to healthy competition. He assesses the WTO effect on Indian agriculture. Deogharia points out that the developing countries are righteously insisting that the 'critical gaps and unevenness in the existing agreements' should be addressed first rather than going for new negotiations. His appraisal of the scenario is authentic and extensive.

Another essay in the agriculture segment is 'Impact of WTO on National Agriculture Policy' by Subhash Sharma. It is a critique of the NAP by positing agriculture as a source of livelihood, social security and as a culture. WTO has influenced the NAP in large measures as globalization has converted it into an 'international agricultural policy of India', leading to unfortunate penalty by freeing the markets. Developing countries have to unite to make the agenda favourable for them.

'External Trade of India in Agriculture and the Tariff Lines – A Study from the WTO Perspective' by Godhuli Mukherjee has a disclaimer tag line that the views are entirely her own, not of the Indian government she works for. It offers the argument that the IPR 'administers the implementation of a set of agreements, or rules, which include enforcement of rights and disciplines on government'. The analysis is strongly supported by opulent data and tables. The final conclusion is that the trade balance scene on the agricultural front, on the whole, is encouraging.

The fourteenth research paper, 'WTO and Agriculture Exports: Integrated Strategy for the New Millennium' by Navin Kumar analyses the subject with a similar conclusion as drawn in some of the previous ones, that the WTO provisions will bring gains as well as loss to India. It calculates the export performance as well as the principal markets for Indian agricultural products. The AOA (Agreement on Agriculture) has also been discussed in the paper. The writer suggests an integrated approach to meet the challenges.

'WTO and Second Green Revolution' explores the prospects for the incumbent agricultural swell in India. Pushpa Kumari too talks about its various components like market access, export competition and the amber, green and blue boxes of domestic support. The paper projects the requirements of the country in agriculture products and marks the areas in which scientific research and enhanced food production have to be undertaken – pulses, edible oils and coarse cereals especially.

Sujeet Ranjan has undertaken to review a different sector in his paper, 'Non Tariff Barriers and NAMA'. The non agricultural market access has a twisted negotiation agenda, he says, i.e. the NTBs. The discussion proposes homogenisation and regularisation of the tariffs, tabling three sectors for vertical negotiations, including export interest of the developing countries and that of the developed countries. Multilateral sector initiatives have also been taken up in the study.

Amar Kr Choudhary's 'TRIPS: Emerging Challenges for Pharmaceutical Industry' moves to the IPRs as applicable in the globalised context. The author defines the industrial concern of the industrialised nations in the wake of the adoption of new technological and technical initiatives by developing countries. Hence, the protectionist policy espousal by the developed nations in diverse pharmaceutical fields. The existing form of TRIPS, when the paper was written, indicated that India would have to build a pool of new drugs as evident in the predictive context.

Seema Kumari assesses WTO's impress upon the industry in India in her paper 'First Decade of WTO: Impact on Indian Industry'. She begins with the flip side, reciting the failures at Seattle and Cancun Ministerial. But the Doha Ministerial was a signpost of the establishment of a new regime, catalysing Indian industry through competitiveness. She recommends superior interaction between the governmental agencies and Indian industry for alleviation of poverty in the country.

Sanjay Prasad is more specific in 'First Decade of WTO and Indian Software Industry'. He, at first, talks of the digital divide that may lead to a piquant situation for the underprivileged sections as they are deprived of access to the expensive tools of digital action. The situation is compounded by the costly licences for the use of different kinds of software as it involves IPR. The legal opinion is clear – it is mandatory for regularisation and trade benefits.

The last essay, 'WTO and the Indian Service Sector', by Vinod Narayan, looks at India's role in the services sector in the WTO perspective. India has a very competent service sector with vigorous growth trends. The Uruguay Round emphasized the role of the service sector, especially in finance, insurance and maritime transport. A coordinated movement of the services is required to safeguard the interests of India and other developing countries.

The book is helpful in understanding the complex between the WTO provisions and their impact on the different sectors of Indian economy. However, a more careful proof reading would have helped in raising the standard of the hardback further. The print quality is good and the index at the beginning certainly helps even the raw economy enthusiast in grasping the current acronyms and abbreviations. It is a crucial venture on the part of the editor, despite the steep price tag, to bring together diverse views on WTO in one volume.

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