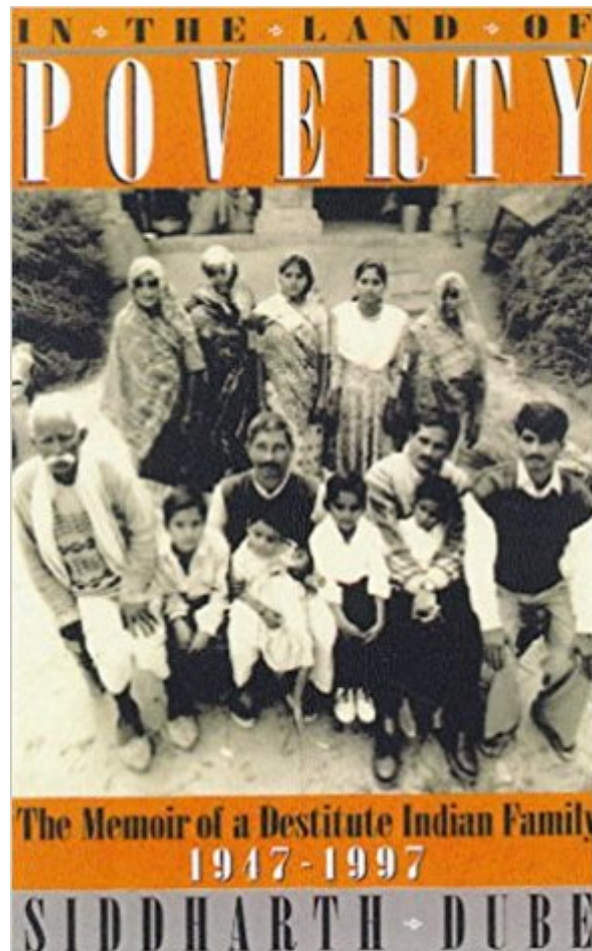




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In The Land Of Poverty: Memories Of An Indian Family, 1947-97



Synopsis

On August 15, 1947, the day of India's independence from Britain, Ram Dass and his family were Untouchables--lowest of the low in an apparently unchanging caste system, landless serfs bonded to a feudal village lord in a remote part of Uttar Pradesh deep in the heart of Hindu India. Fifty years later as the country celebrated its half-century of independence, Ram Dass's family still suffered poverty and oppression--this despite their efforts and despite the changes which have transformed the face of independent India. This book is their story, and the story of modern India. Told through the voices of several generations, it takes the reader on a journey into the reality of Asian poverty--the powerlessness, the sickness, the illiteracy and all the other deprivations which enmesh the poor. Gradually we learn to understand not simply the human reality of what it means to be poor, but also the central paradox of modern India: half a century of democracy, economic growth and constitutional commitment to social justice has not lessened the acute, mass poverty of the country. This vivid account draws its readers into an unforgettable understanding not just of the personal experience of poverty but of the intractable reasons for its continuance.

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Zed Books (December 15, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1856495981

ISBN-13: 978-1856495981

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #543,874 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #111 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Asia > India & South Asia](#) #569 in [Books > History > Asia > India](#) #738 in [Books > Business & Money > Economics > Development & Growth](#)

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This is a book about how India works. Siddharth Dube's argument is relentless, like the poverty he describes. Arundhati Roy, author, *The God of Small Things* "A deeply illuminating study of poverty in India, seen in concrete detail and made vividly real by remarkable descriptive skill."

AMARTYA SEN, Nobel laureate in economics --Professor Amartya Sen, Harvard University "An extraordinary study of the human dimensions of poverty and development." SHASHI THAROOR

--Shashi Tharoor This is a book about how India works. Siddharth Dube's argument is relentless, like the poverty he describes. Arundhati Roy, author, *The God of Small Things*

Siddharth Dube worked for the health divisions of UNICEF in New York and the World Bank in Washington before moving to New Delhi where he is a writer and a health policy analyst.

This book deals with a problem--persistent rural poverty and the tenacity of caste discrimination--that gets increasingly ignored amidst the current focus on India's high-tech modernization. The book is especially effective used in undergraduate teaching because its life stories personalize the issues of poverty and discrimination across the generations, offsetting the stereotypical undergraduate view of India as a land of Bollywood glitz and call centers. I urge everyone to read it, and urge publisher to keep it in print.

This is a work in the genre of Orwell's "Down and out in Paris and London." Immensely readable, despite the very serious nature of the work, this book is a must-read for anyone interested in development issues, untouchability and in learning about how it must be to live in abject poverty. Kudos to the author for this fine contribution to the few works that exist on the subject.

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