

tainty. Acceptance of uncertainty will result in acceptance of a plurality of ideas and the democratization of institutes. Unfortunately, as a former Planning Commission member, he valorizes this as the process that the Planning Commission actually takes! There is thus a subtle attempt to defend the indefensibility of many Planning Commission documents.

Partha Chatterjee while accepting that Enlightenment instated the normative idea of a secular democratic state, like Baxi and Shah, goes on to question this normativeness. The law-enforcing state today begins to look like the state which favours the rich. He thus calls for a rereading of the aspirations of the poor for justice and their espousal of violence. Pratap Bhanu Mehta's article develops this further to examine what a politics of social justice might mean in a democracy.

At the theoretical level, most of these papers are framed by a post-modern reading that tends to constitute development as a hegemonic discourse that leaves very little space for ambiguity and engagement by the poor. In this sense it is in continuity with the way TDD framed development. Contemporary development studies as informed by the work of scholars like Anna Tsing², Donald Moore³ and Michael Taussig⁴, have begun to examine the complexity and fissured character of these discourses. The poor can use these in strategic ways to enable outcomes that are not always predicated on these hegemonic discourses. While this kind of engagement does not result in the pure revolution of the Marxian kind, it still leads to more empowering outcomes.

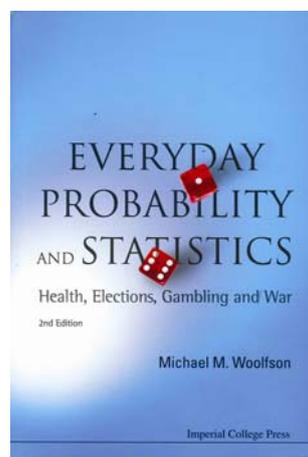
As the book is a collection of talks, and not a commissioned book, it does not cover every important substantive issue, a notable omission being agriculture, food and the introduction of genetically modified seeds. Another lacuna is that we are not told the dates on which a particular paper was presented. For instance, I noticed that Dipankar Gupta's paper⁵ has already been published in the *Economic and Political Weekly* in 2005. Dates would have given the reader a sense of the historical context in which the article is framing its debate and would allow us to examine how contemporary academia has developed the debate further. Each of the papers has been presented by an eminent scholar, hence its quality is good and yet it

retains a simplicity of style. Thus FIC is a rich treasure trove of the development debates that have taken place in Indian academia. It would hence be a useful text for any beginner student in development studies and social sciences. Scholars in development studies could use this as a ready reference for issues in Indian development discourse. I would highly recommend it as a must have for all university and college libraries.

1. Sachs, W. (ed.), *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (Indian edition), Orient Longman Limited, New Delhi, 1997.
2. Tsing, A. L., *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2004.
3. Moore, D. S., *Am. Ethnol.*, 2000, **26**, 654–689.
4. Taussig, M. T., *My Cocaine Museum*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2004.
5. Gupta, D., *Econ. Polit. Wkly*, 2005, **40**, 751–758.

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Everyday Probability and Statistics: Health, Elections, Gambling and War. Michael M. Woolfson. Imperial College Press, 57 Shelton Street, Convent Garden, London WC2H 9HE. 2012. 2nd edn. x + 278 pp. Price not mentioned.

It is sometimes argued that in addition to the 3 'R's (reading, writing and arithmetic), in modern times, one needs basic familiarity with statistics. Who exactly

says this? Is it statisticians interested in furthering their own importance? And why is this numeracy needed? The present book argues, rather well, that the skill may be useful in making many a choice in daily life.

Books on statistics come in two main forms – theory and cookbook. The former type develops the analytical description/justification of statistical tools. The latter type is 'How to' books for users. A rare third genre of books is one that tries to explain to laymen the rationale behind statistical methods. Two classic books, belonging to the last category, are *How to Lie with Statistics* (by Darrel Huff) and *Facts from Figures* (by M. J. Moroney). Many a student in the earlier generation has read these and enjoyed a few precious moments in which one appreciates the logical elegance of statistics unfettered by the drudgery of formulas and number-crunching. The book under review is also of this type.

The book begins with coin tossing (2 outcomes) and dice throwing (6 outcomes), but points out that there can be experiments with any number of possible outcomes and shows figures of 4-faced and 12-faced dice. Of course, these are just pedagogical devices. Perhaps the most significant practical situation involving counting and probabilities is in genetics. The book introduces this application without hesitation.

There are the mandatory graphs and photographs of scientists and roulette wheels, etc. and a few caricatures as well (e.g. p. 60 and p. 76). But the caricatures are nowhere as good as in Darrel Huff's book.

One irritating aspect of statistical reasoning is that the same set of circumstances may not always lead to the same result. Breast cancer has a strong genetic element. But not all female offspring of a patient of breast cancer will develop it. Smoking causes cancer, but Winston Churchill could get away with endless smoking of fat cigars. The author calls this the smoking lottery which is an attractive appellation (p. 195). But then does it mean that all the talk of using information on risk factors to give a prognosis is not meaningful? Quite to the contrary! In fact, there is evidence that given enough background information, statistical prediction comes out to be better than a clinician's informal prediction. (See *Clinical versus Statistical Prediction: A Theoretical Analysis and a*

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Review of the Evidence by Paul E. Meehl, University of Minnesota Press, 1996.)

As the book proceeds, surveying different aspects of statistics, sometimes one encounters unexpected nuggets of information. 'During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the idea was prevalent that smoking was, in some way, beneficial to health – perhaps because the smell of tobacco was preferable to the prevailing smells of the time' (p. 191). If you knew that good sewage disposal systems were a rarity in Europe till late 19th century and British Parlia-

ment suffered so much from the smell of raw sewage deposited in the Thames that they protested and demanded action, the remark would seem rather expected!

A plus-point of the book is discussion on statistical aspects of some contemporary concerns such as issues of global warming or risk associated with a nuclear power plant or problems with pension systems. However, the discussion is not uniformly enlightening or readable. I found the material related to climate change quite interesting. But this is a matter of opinion. What can be

firmly stated is that discussion of chaos is educative.

A readable style, many examples and useful sets of illustrative problems make this book a good candidate for the shelf of potential users of statistics.

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