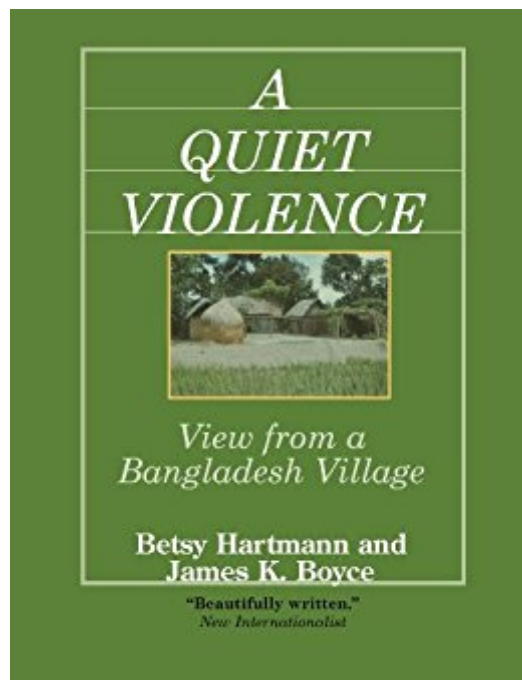




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A Quiet Violence: View From A Bangladesh Village



Synopsis

A quiet violence today stalks the villages and shanty towns of the Third World, the violence of needless hunger. In this book, two Bengali-speaking Americans take the reader to a Bangladesh village where they lived for nine months. There, the reader meets some of the world's poorest people - peasants, sharecroppers and landless laborers - and some of the not-so-poor people who profit from their misery. The villagers' poverty is not fortuitous, a result of divine dispensation or individual failings of character. Rather, it is the outcome of a long history of exploitation, culminating in a social order which today benefits a few at the expense of many.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A young American couple go to Bangladesh, in the 80s, and live in a village for 9 months. Their plan is to not interfere in any way, not to give charity, but just to learn Bengali and observe and learn about life in the village, and then to write a book about it. The result is fascinating and moving. Each chapter is dedicated to a particular person or situation, and the dynamics and different constraints are carefully described and explained. Sometimes, the stories are quite confronting - one story is about a very poor family who sell everything they own and can't get enough work, and slowly starve

to death. A strong theme in the book is that some of the very poor people in Bangladesh are in a situation that they can't get out of. Even if they are smart, even though they work to their maximum all day every day, circumstances mean that they often slip further into poverty and starvation. They also do a nice job covering the different roles and experiences of men and women, hindus and moslems, and rich and poor. Hartman and Boyce always try to be objective and just. The last few chapters are an analysis of the economic situation in Bangladesh. They write very well. I picked up this book reluctantly because I am going to Bangladesh and feel obliged to read about it. I could barely put the book down. I strongly recommend it to anybody who is interested in different cultures and, in particular, in the balance of wealth and why it is that the world ends up so unequal and so full of poverty. Just a little note: since this book was published, other schemes have taken off in Bangladesh, including the microlending scheme to women. Perhaps the view is a little bleak now? I'm not sure.

I read this book in a class on the economies of "developing" nations. The authors actually lived for a while in a Bangladeshi village, and report very well on the social and economic issues present. Contrasts between religious groups, the few rich and the many poor, and gender roles are observed in detail and thoughtfully analysed. One of the last chapters offers very interesting solutions and suggestions for more efficient and fair use of World Bank funds, based on the authors' first-hand experiences.

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