

KRISHAK

ANJA BOHNHOF



One third of all working people around the world are engaged in the agricultural sector. In Asia and Africa millions of small farmers produce the majority of all the food consumed, mostly working on very small pieces of land. This is in stark contrast to the parallel development towards ever larger energy- and resource-intensive forms of cultivation that are supported globally by open markets and targeted subsidies.

The term 'non-simultaneity' coined by the philosopher Ernst Bloch means that not all the milieux and sectors of a society undergo modernisation processes and achieve comparable levels synchronously. In India, known as a country of contrasts and extremes, Bloch's non-simultaneity can be seen, experienced and felt everywhere. The subcontinent has long since opened up to compete on the global market and therapidly increasing prosperity of its upper and middle classes contrasts with the way of life of the majority of the population, whose daily life largely consists of often fruitless efforts to satisfy the most basic needs.

India's rural areas – particularly outside high-yield regions like the Punjab – are frequently characterised by a very simple, almost archaic way of life. Small farmers, in particular, do not have the option of achieving improvements in yield through the capital-intensive use of machines and fertilisers and are unable to extend their basis of production by purchasing land. In Bengal too, not far from the megacity Kolkata, rice is still grown and harvested just as it has been for centuries. The harvesting of rice plants and the threshing of the panicles is done almost exclusively by hand. People carry the harvest to the threshing floors in the village on their heads or transport it using bicycles or ox carts. At first sight, there is little to be seen here of the rapid pace of India's dynamic economy.

The photographs give an impressive and visually intense view of life on the land, while at the same time reflecting the toughness of a farmer's daily life, a life that not only seems to be stuck in a time warp but also illustrates a global issue: What should sustainable agriculture look like in the fraught nexus of ecological and social demands?

West-Bengal, India, 2018

© Anja Bohnhof, 2018, all rights reserved

Assistants: Katrin Eichler, Sumit Mitra,

Koushik Mukherjee, Mahendra Tiwari

62 photographs, 65 x 50 / 90 x 70 cm

[*Krishak: bengali term for farmer]