to as the ratio of the number of males to females (‘sex selection will lead to much higher sex ratios’) but the official Indian definition of ‘sex ratio’ is the number of females per thousand males¹, that makes it a ‘falling sex ratio’. The author could have researched and highlighted the specific regions (states or districts) within India where this situation exists; it does not prevail throughout India. There is repeated usage of terms and the text is verbose.

It was interesting to learn about the historical perspective to ethics. This has been, no doubt, dealt in detail throughout the book. Furthermore, medical interventions like genetic counselling and testing, and euthanasia are rightly taken into account. Chapter 3 ‘Issues concerning health and biomedical innovations’ presents ethics arising from techniques and therapies such as organ transplantation, stem cell therapy, cloning, patenting of genes, DNA fingerprinting and gene therapy. Before highlighting their ethical principles, the author has detailed the principle behind the techniques and therapies. Various organizations, working throughout the world, that deal with such debatable issues are named. Two terms whose usage I am uncomfortable with are ‘baby hatcheries’ and ‘body selling’ in the context of surrogate motherhood. The author has succeeded in explaining cloning, but its ethical implications are discussed only minimally. While stating ethical concerns arising from the Human Genome Project, it would have been better if the author had included a sentence or two on the budget involved in studying the ethical, legal and social issues (ELSI) arising from the availability of genetic information (The Department of Energy and the National Institutes of Health devoted 3.5% of their annual Human Genome Project budgets... This represents the world’s largest ethics program... a model for ELSI programs around the world).²

The chapter ‘Genetic engineering, biosafety and experimentation’ provides an overview of how ethics have given rise to controversies over the use of genetic manipulation. Few examples have been cited in this context. However, the need for addressing the controversy surrounding genetically modified crops remains. There is no mention of the recent furore over Bt Brinjal in India that would interest the readers. Overall, this chapter is informative and lists the approval committees and guidelines for genetic manipulation. Again, the author has not included examples of microorganisms along with their risk group classification. The section entitled ‘Experimentation in Humans’ demands a mention of some incidences that occurred in the past (for e.g. the death of 49 children³ in six clinical trials at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences). Ethical issues in biodiversity (chapter 5 – Biodiversity, intellectual property rights and environment) are minimally described. The chapter also lists legislative measures pertaining to protection of environment. The author has cautioned against the use of plastic: ‘A plastic may be useful just for five minutes but it will remain in nature for five hundred years’. He also highlights the Gandhian approach to solve problems of the utilization of resources.

The book under review has rightly focused on ethics in light of religion, as ethics are born from religion. There are certain repetitions, omissions and typographical errors that can perhaps be taken care of in a second edition. Overall, observation is that Indian or Asian context is rarely exemplified (book under review is targeted to Indian-subcontinent readers, according to the marketing rights notification stated on a sticker over the cover page). Majority of the examples cited are from the Western countries. Notwithstanding the drawbacks and inadequacies stated here, the book is useful for beginners and simple for a layman to grasp. The bibliography provided at the end of the book adds value.


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The book under review addresses issues concerning construction industry and sets newer targets to be achieved in the coming years. Construction industry comprises essentially civil engineering construction. The book edited by Asis Kumar Pain contains two sections, one having eight articles dealing with current scenario and the other having five articles dealing with initiatives and experiences. The articles are written by different authors. Interestingly, the book starts with a mention on the importance of construction industry and how it markedly contributes significantly to the world economy. It is true that the construction industry is at its peak particularly in our country and many other developing countries due to increasing demand on infrastructure including housing. The challenges facing the industry are enumerated. It is well said that the construction work force is getting demoralized due to increased automation. Nevertheless, work force will be in greater demand although supply may decline in the years to come. Therefore, strategies have to be adopted to sustain the work force which in turn will sustain the industry.

It is only quite recently we have heard of terms like Build-own-transfer (BOT) and Build-own-operate and transfer (BOOT). They have come into vogue because of increased interest in private entrepreneurs to fund major projects. Lack of funds from the government for such projects also is one of the reasons. In fact, schemes such as BOT and BOOT...
have increased the efficiency and quality of the construction. The well-known examples are the Golden Quadrilateral, North–South and East–West corridors which were major projects completed well and also within time. The article on ‘Government roles in BOT projects’ highlights the advantages. In fact, we in the city of Bangalore have witnessed a sudden boom in the Civil Engineering construction widely visible on roads. Almost every part of the city is dug up either for the construction of a flyover or an underpass. Ours is no doubt a developing nation but racing quite fast to catch up with any other developed nation in terms of cash flow and material acquisitions like apartments, cars, TVs and all the other electronic gadgets. The West is getting its mega jobs done in our country by outsourcing our technical personnel.

The book goes on enumerating the changes the construction industry is bringing about in terms of land use, building pattern and more importantly global climate change. More automobiles and those particularly stuck in a traffic jam mean more carbon emission. More concrete structures mean more cement and thus more CO₂ emission.

Supply chain and total quality management (TQM) are the other aspects the book brings about. Most often we have heard of time and construction overruns in all our infrastructure projects. They can be attributed mainly to the improper supply chain. The bad quality which is observed in all such big projects is due to lack of total quality management. The book highlights their importance along with the problems we face to put them in order.

There is also a mention of green buildings and sustainable construction not only in our country but also in USA. It is time we make most of the facilities like housing, transportation and entertainment greener. The book mentions about latest technologies which are more sustainable and also result in lower carbon emissions.

On the whole, the book on construction is quite timely and stresses on current needs and the challenges we face. However, the list of references at the end of each of the articles could have been much longer. Particularly, in the 13th article, on use of cost-effective construction technologies in India, there is no mention of soil-cement or stabilized mud blocks, rammed earth and filler slabs developed in India, particularly at the Department of Civil Engineering and Centre for Sustainable Technology (formerly ASTRA), Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

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