

A Study on Limitations and Potentialities of People, Forests and Agriculture in the Eco-Development of Sikkim Himalayas, India

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ABSTRACT The present study deals with analyses of Sikkim Himalayas with respect to population groups, forests and agriculture. The population groups include Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese, the latter being divided into a number of castes. With uneven topography, the state presents four distinct ecological zones - Lower hills, Mid hills, High-hills and Very High hills. Tree composition of forests at various altitudes differ significantly. Thus, lower hill forests are composed of *Shorea robusta*, *Terminalia crenulata*, *Terminalia chebula* and *Schima wallichii*. Middle hill forests harbor *Castanopsis tribuloides*, *C. indica* and *Engelhardia*. At upper hills *Michelia excelsa* and *M. cathartii* occur. At still higher elevations, Conifers, Rhododendrons and alpine pastures occur. Human activities, with regard to their dependence on forests and also agricultural practices are detailed for few crops. This paper presents the inherent problems and potentialities associated with agriculture. Some specific problems associated with various crops are also highlighted. As the area is divided into distinct ecological zones comprising different population groups with related economic activities, it is viewed; the solutions are to be traced zone wise to achieve sustainable development in the region.