

BOOK REVIEWS

Environmental Geomorphology A Study of Trans-Yamuna Region

By Alok Dubey

314 pp., Figures, Plates, References, Index
Inter-India Publications, New Delhi (1990)
Rs. 695.00 (Cloth).

The present volume is an outcome of Dr. Alok Dubey's D. Phil. (Doctor of Philosophy) work done under the supervision of Professor Savindra Singh of Allahabad University. One main purpose of this book is to analytically describe and critically interpret the morphological features produced in Trans-Yamuna Region through inter-linked morphodynamic processes. The subject is presented into seven chapters besides an introduction at the beginning and summary and conclusions at the end. The first chapter which constitute about 20% of the bulk, the author has dealt with broad aspects of Physical Environments. Broadly, the work can be classified into three aspects:

- (a) areal parameters/attributes (chapters 1 to 3) in terms of physical character of the area
- (b) temporal variation (chapters 4 and 6) in Hydrologic behaviour and
- (c) morphodynamic processes (chapters 5 and 7)

Landform is the products of the physical environment and processes operating over it. The author has investigated relief slope and ruggedness apart from the structure, physiography, soil and climatic components for the study area and recognized morphological units which facilitates appreciation of related processes and intensity. He grouped into two the terrain attributes:

- (i) relief (absolute and relative slope) and dissector index and
- (ii) drainage (density, texture and stream frequency) to bring out a quantified summary. He made use of these groups for regionalization on the basis of Principal Component Analysis.

Dr. Dubey aptly highlighted the hydrological behaviour as well as other data and discussed water budget and ground water. Discharge of rivers, floods and damage due to flood in Trans-Yamuna region has also been dealt. He further deals with "geo-cycle" system which includes the subsystems of tectonic hydrologic lithologic and geochemical cycles. The last chapter is directed to the dynamic process like fluvial system shifting of channels, rivers capturing etc.

While the authors by and large shows the basic understanding of the problem, his language at places is rather highly inadequate to communicate what he wants to tell. At a number of places grammatically wrong sentences and spelling adversely affect the reading. Often the sentences are so lengthy and complex that makes the reader feel void of what the author wants to say. For example, three opening sentences of the book in introduction (page 21) runs into 117, 137 and 78 words respectively. Likewise the summary and conclusions in the second chapter does not seem to be rightly placed. Besides. It has got some discrepancies also. Neither the content is concerned with this chapter nor it has been discussed at all.

Word by word summary and conclusions from page 208 to page 215 is reproduction of what is given from pages 51 to 58. Same is true for the

Appendices at pages 216 to 226, which are brought from page 65 to 76. Unfortunately, the figures for Beyora for dry deciduous scrub in the former is 24.5 and in the latter it is 24.0 yet the total in same 3881.4 with all other figures also same. Small repetitions however may be noted at several places. Similarly no explanations is offered in the text for same statistical parameters (reference tables 2.8 and 2.9)

Notes and reference are given only at the end of first chapter. No uniformity is maintained and in some cases the same is not complete. There are some more but relatively of lesser magnitude, errors and omissions.

Nevertheless, the book is helpful in bringing out the environmental conditions of Trans-Yamuna regions and the operational process which contribute towards landforms developments.

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Essay in Social Anthropology

By Vinay K. Srivastava
218 pp., References, Institute of Social Research
and Applied Anthropology, Calcutta (1990).
Rs 150.00 (Cloth).

The volume under review contains four interesting essays, three of which are revised versions of articles, published during 1984-89. The major essay, "Social Anthropology : Past and Present" is written primarily for the new comers into the discipline of anthropology. Briefly but skillfully it covers the whole gamut of complexities in social anthropology. Elucidating the origin and dynamics of anthropology, the essay critically presents the diverse theoretical perspectives in social anthropology including evolutionism, diffusionism, structural-functionalism, structuralism and Marxism. While dealing with the scope of social anthropology, its uniqueness is lucidly outlined and distinguished from other related sub-

jects such as ethnology, sociology, history, psychology and others in terms of the subject matter, methodology and levels of abstraction. The acrimonious debate on whether anthropology is a science or not is touched upon and the artificial dichotomy between the social and cultural anthropology is reprobated. Relevance of anthropological knowledge for sister disciplines as well as the developmental process is concisely articulated.

Needless to reiterate that the primary objective of the essay has been achieved and the students are initiated to the complex scenario of social anthropology. By the way, one hopes that the students will not misconstrue that social anthropology concerns with human males only. Despite the long drawn women's movements, the anthropological scholarship has deliberately of otherwise failed to opt for a gender neutral concept in place of its overtly male chauvinist term, "the study of man". Of course, it is no reflection on this particular essay alone. Another general problematique is the defining of crucial terms in a manner as if that constitutes the only comprehensive description. Truth however is that each of the keywords in social sciences carries a multiplicity of meanings. Hence choosing one from the several meanings *ipso facto* ignores or undermines the other dimensions of the concept. The commonly adopted semantic approach to conceptual and terminological clarification, cannot overcome the ambiguities. The recently developed onomantic approach, i.e. instead of starting with terms to be defined, one starts by describing ideas for concepts to be named or proposes new terms, appears more promising. Especially for the students, an exposure to diverse meanings and perspectives of the important concepts will encourage creativity.

The second essay is a critical review of Malinowski's little read posthumously published volume entitled, *Freedom and Civilization*. This book simultaneously establishes a continuity and a contrast to his earlier writings. It is the nature of culture which determines the freedom as well as the denial of freedom. And as the cardinal yearning of individuals is to achieve freedom,

within of course the socially established constraints, they tend to fight against the denial of freedom by the vested interests. The problem however is how does a culture is so transformed as to contribute to the rise of fascism, totalitarianism, was and other obstacles in the human civilization? Besides freedom is not merely the absence of interference but also removal of obstacles to human emancipation through collective efforts. Thus it is crucial to unravel the socioeconomic conditions that generates the instruments for thwarting of freedom, and without a full comprehension of that, any attempt to develop a genuinely alternative culture seems to be a mere clutching at straws. Anyway despite the weaknesses, the study does provide insights into the processes of denial of freedom for large majority of people in the contemporary world and thus worth reading.

The penultimate essay is on the anthropology of development where the author convincingly argues that given the crises in the current model of development the focus ought to be for resurrection of indigenous models, which should be holistic, self-sustaining, and culturally rooted. This would also contribute to the fundamental axiom of unity in diversity. Supporting D.N. Majumdar's endogenous approach to tribal development to bring them to the mainstream, the author illustrates the case of a nomadic pastoralist community of Rajasthan, the Raika. The present strategy of development has created inequality, increased dependence and vulnerability, led to environmental disasters, impoverished scarcely populated areas and undermined the cultural diversity of the people. A meaningful reorientation for egalitarian development can only be initiated by the victims of the current development who should rely on their own territorially and culturally specific resources and strength to the greatest extent possible. In other words the fundamental prerequisite is the control of one's own situation, where the identity and self-esteem of distinct communities are respected.

The last piece deals with another topical issue, national integration. Largely focusing the tribal problematique, the author stresses that national

integration, in the true sense of the term, is possible only with a balanced economic development with an equal dispersal of gains to different quarters, political modernisation and secularisation of every sphere of society, including a secular set of knowledge.

This comprehensive and professionally sympathetic volume deserves a wide audience among the students and researchers in anthropology and sociology.

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Coping With Seasonality and Drought

By Martha Alter Chen
254 pp., Tables, Maps, Photographs, Bibliography
Sage Publications, New Delhi, Newbury Park,
London (1991) Rs.225.00 (Cloth).

Over the past three decades, Gujarat experienced widespread drought every eight years and localised droughts every year. Martha Chen's study of the village of Maatisar (pseduo-name) began when the state of Gujarat was suffering a severe drought, Maatisar lies in a relatively drought - prone region and has been severely affected by droughts every fifth year. Rural households, routinely plan for and manage the uncertainties associated with regular seasonal fluctuations and periodic drought-induced crises. These uncertainties pose particular hardships for the poor who are extremely vulnerable in terms of their access to resources. This study describes and analyses the strategies adopted by different types of households to cope with seasonality and drought in a village in a semi-arid region of Gujarat state in western India. Monsoon crops are still grown under rain-fed conditions and remain, therefore, highly sensitive to variation in rainfall. The area under irrigation for winter cultivation is sensitive to shortfalls in rainfall as ground-water aquifers needs to be regularly recharged. The other major sources of income are animal

husbandry and wage labour. Because of these and other factors, the local economy remains vulnerable to the vagaries of the weather.

Dr. Chen examines the range of coping strategies adopted by rural households, focusing on the differences between seasonal and drought-induced strategies, and the circumstances that influence the choice of strategies. Harsh ecological conditions make fuel and water scarce, its search often dominating rural women's life. Dr. Chen has given particular attention to the significance of women's work and of gender as a basic variable in understanding household behaviour, and the centrality of non-market resources, relationships, and institutions in the struggle for survival. In analysing the village, its history, its resources, its people, the practical problems that dominate daily life, Dr. Chen has done a commendable work, in fact, a tool for social change. At the time of drought, the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was engaged in relief work, providing employment to the villagers. Some of the SEWA's projects worked, some did not. Although this study is not a study of SEWA's role in the village, Dr. Chen's observations have led to a sea-change in SEWA's understanding. It has helped SEWA plan its development schemes and strategies. The data has helped SEWA to understand how people behave during droughts, and the occupations and resources that are most affected. As a result, it has been possible to 'drought proof' by developing fodder farms, by water-harvesting and using latent resources even during good rainfall years. Such studies are valuable for grassroot organisations for planning relief work.

The book is divided into three parts and conclusion. Part I 'The village' describe the region, the village, political and economic changes over time and patterns of mobility. Part II 'coping with seasonality' explores seasonal strategies and institutions which govern excess to resources. Part III 'Coping with drought' discusses household responses to drought often involve intensifying or modifying regular seasonal strategies. Dr. Chen explores the spatial and temporal dimensions of the drought, the impact of drought on

different occupational groups, and both community and official responses to the crisis.

The book will be of interest to all those interested in women, poverty and rural development.

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Ecology and the Politics of Survival: Conflicts over Natural Resources in India

By Vandana Shiva

365 pp., Tables, Figures, Bibliography, Index.
United Nations University Press, Sage Publications,
New Delhi/Newbury Park/London (1991).
Rs. 250-00 (Cloth).

The title of the book, 'The ecology and politics of survival: conflicts over natural resources in India' is self explanatory. It explores the ecology movements that have emerged all over the world in recent years for protecting nature and to strengthen people's collective rights to common resources. Vandana Shiva, a feminist ecologist in association with J. Bandyopadhyay, Pandurang Hegde, B.V. Krishnamurthy, John Kurien, G. Narendranath, Vanaja Ramprasad and S.T.S. Reddy have analysed ecology movement in contemporary society from a Third world perspective and show that development not only generates conflicts over vital natural resources but also transforms commons into commodities to satisfy the needs of the market economy. Though the book relates to societies the world over, its emphasis remains on the conflicts over natural resources that are emerging because of developmental programmes in India. Science and technology are central to these conflicts because through scientific knowledge man utilise these resources, sometimes at extremely high rates.

This book consists of an introduction and two parts dealing with natural resources, forest policy and water resources development in India. The themes of science, technology and development have been projected by case studies by the

authors who have proposed a theory of political development that encourages sustainable and equitable development and view development from the perspective of the marginalised groups. The book includes bibliographical references and index. It is further supplemented by three annexures dealing with (i) Submerged Villages Project: Details of Submerged Villages, (ii) Lands and Houses Acquired by the Government and Compensation Paid and (iii) Rehabilitation Cash Grant (RCG).

This is a first book to deal with ecology movements from a third world perspective and proposes a theory on ecological issues. It will be of interest to ecologists, development experts and activists, economists, agricultural scientists, planners and policy makers.

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Tribal Culture and Change

By R.S. Mann and K. Mann
vi + 295 pp., Bibliography, Index.
Mittal Publications, New Delhi (1989).
Rs. 250-00 (Cloth).

The profiles of tribal change that emerge from the essays presented in this volume are varied. In comparison to Mina and Bhil, the two major tribes of Rajasthan, the Seharia habitations pose for a micro-geographical setting where forces of change have pauperized the tribe. "They are sunk in poverty, ignorance, illiteracy and backwardness". The Garasia who stand third numerically among the scheduled tribes of Rajasthan have been differentiated through a slow process of transformation coupled with a "mental unpreparedness". The poor among the Gamit of Gujrat are tradition-bound so that they stagnate more than the better off in the tribe. The progressives among them monopolise innovations and benefits of development.

The religious cosmology of the Ladakhi, very poorly explored, hangs like a pall of meanings

blurring the road to development. The respondents relate the havoc created by the evilspirits. During the construction of Leh air strip the rocks that were removed to level the runway released these spirits. The spirits caused an air crash and threatened harvests. The wrath of the supernatural is a tangible social reality for the Ladakhi. Anthropologists are forced to recognize that it is a rocky road to progress.

The Hakkipikkis are a semi-nomadic tribe of bird trappers who invest their ecology with religious and symbolic meanings. The main deities and the satellite gods preside over daily life, regulate emotions and sentiments. Their world-view does not easily lend itself to planned development. The process of Hinduisation is of course a double edged sword. Its negative aspects are brought to sharp resolution in the Hinduised tribal women who might have traditionally enjoyed certain autonomy. Matriliney among Garo of Western Meghalaya provides a unique instance to reconstruct the trajectory of gender. One wishes the essay on the Garo was more rigorous and informative. Space should have been allowed for the changing balance of power between the genders. The relationship between matriliney and patriarchal power of the males remains a black-box.

The theme of change runs through most of the sixteen essays presented in this volume. Some have already appeared in print. Explicitly or implicitly, the illustrations drawn from as wide a spectrum as the Bhils on one end and the Hakkipikkis on the other, attempt to comment on change. But what are the cultural implications for the tribes people? How exactly can they intervene into the process of transformation? The book fails to adequately pose such questions relating to change.

One obvious reason is the horizontal spread of the research which willy nilly suffers from superficial reportage. The other is theoretical bias. A functionalist anxiety to relate the "interconnectedness" of the reality of tribal existence, culture and material life fails to recognize the fractures caused by forces of change. It is only when such fractures paralyze existence that developmentalists wake-up. The contradictions

and the consequences of change as they unfold both in time and space can scarcely be undermined.

There is no doubt a burgeoning market of printed material on Indian tribes. The monographs of the past have more or less become antiques. Change has reduced the past into fragments of memory. The miscellaneous tribal picture does not match the manner of monographs. Apart from a sense of obsolescence, what piques professional ethics is the rapid demolition of a subject matter upon which monographs were written. Therefore anthropologists will always be in continuous arrears to the haunting theme of change.

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Issues in Social Demography

By A.K. Sharma
xii, 190 pp., Figures, Tables, Index.
Mittal Publications, Delhi (1989), Cloth

The stated objectives of this book are (a) to define and develop the subject matter of social demography chiefly in the Indian context, and (b) to examine population related issues of poverty, urbanization and migration and, population management from sociological perspective. Scholars from India and abroad have already extensively dealt with these themes of greater complexity and Dr. Sharma's book deserve's welcome adding some more light to that stream of thought.

Of the seven chapters including the introduction in this book, the first three deal with an appraisal of definition, theory and methods in social demography. The last three chapters take up the population related issues of poverty, management and urbanization and migration. The fourth chapter provides some baseling information on population in India and can be considered as a buffer between the theory and practice of social demography in Indian context. Thus the author broadly speaking achieves the objectives

set for this book atleast in the distribution of its contents.

However, carefully reading through the book, one finds that whereas several existing view points in the literature on population are well summarised and very often but not always coherently presented, there is little reflection of 'sociological perspective' not only in the formulation of issues in social demography in India but also to the proposed resolution of these issues. As a matter of fact, one wonders what according to the author clearly constitutes 'sociological perspective' and what is the difference in this perspective which has not been taken note of in the studies in social demography already done?

Perhaps an attempt to formulate sociological perspective by Dr. Sharma lies in pointing out the well and not so well recognized reciprocal relationship between demographic and social factors (pp.3-5) or suggesting some sociological theories appropriate to deal with the social demographic problems (p.6). These theories labelled as 'schemes' (Table 1.1) are elaborated in the first chapter in an attempt to show that both sociology and demography can gain from each other.

For the development of social demography as a self-sufficient discipline, 'insaan' (p.1), Dr. Sharma raises an interesting question - is there gain in studying social demography from sociological perspective rather than demographic perspective (p.24)? At the outset the question itself is inappropriate. If social demography has to develop as an independent discipline as Dr. Sharma seems to aspire, it must have its own perspective rather than depend on the perspective of either sociology or pure demography. However, having raised the question, the author answers this in the second chapter of the book by comparing the works of Donald Bogue and P.A. Sorokin, the two representatives of demographic and sociological perspectives respectively. Conclusion drawn is that social demography should base 'works on Sorokin's theory of society than on socially abstracted theory of Bogue (p.41)'. One does not clearly understand why Bogue's contribution has been undermined for the devel-

opment of social demography.

Various techniques used in social demographic studies have been identified and briefly explained with their advantages and limitations in the third chapter. The author suggests the usefulness in combining the quantitative and qualitative methods for social demographic inquiry. A broad demographic profile of India's population based on census data upto 1981 has been presented in the fourth chapter to show the demographic complexity of this society. One wonders why these chapters were necessary the way these have been presented in this book as most observations are already too well known to students of social demography.

The next three chapters are devoted to the issues relating to consequences of population growth. Each one of these is independent of the other. By and large a standard format is followed in organising the material in these chapters. Each chapter begins with general theoretical review of literature followed by description of trends in Indian context and later development of model or suggestions of strategies for policy initiatives and/or academic research. Dr. Sharma shown greater familiarity with the published literature in the issue areas which he extensively uses in each chapter, but is not able to articulate the population related issues quite clearly. For example, on the basis of critique of various antipoverty models in the chapter on poverty and population, although he clearly points out that there is a poverty of theory of poverty yet he neither suggests a framework to study poverty nor clearly makes explicit the relationship between population and poverty. Even the new contextual model of family planning proposed by Dr. Sharma (p.102) is quite general and does not appear to have any

context of poverty at all.

Similarly in the chapter on social issues in population management, after lengthy discussion it is pointed out that economic development and education are most important policy measures for fertility control (p.139). Who does not know it? In fact problem lies in finding appropriate strategies to deliver goods in Indian context given its social structure, economic conditions and political regimes! Further in the chapter on urbanization and migration after a great deal of data based discussion a very significant statement is made - let us do some introspection (p.181). Having read this book carefully, I think it is time to do precisely that and express feelings to summarise my overall view of this book.

Dr. Sharma feels uncomfortable with the hegemony of non-sociologists in the field of population studies particularly in India and wishes to introduce sociological bias for the development of social demography as an independent discipline. In this book he begins with that ambition and carries it along to some extent. But midway while raising the issues in social demography in India or even suggesting resolution to these questions rather than the issues raised in this book, the sociological perspective somehow appears to be running out of Dr. Sharma's thought. However, his contribution is very useful provoking new ideas to students of social demography in India.

One would have wished a fewer typing/printing errors and affordable price of this book.

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