

BOOK REVIEWS

A. Pasricha, 2000, *Gandhian Approach to Integrated Rural Development*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications pp. 184, Rs. 450/-

The book under review has grown out of a Ph. D research undertaken by the author at the Department of Gandhian Studies, Punjab University, Chandigarh. The Department of Gandhian Studies is propagating the ideology and philosophy of Gandhian approach for the development of rural India and in that context, the present book is a modest contribution.

The book comprises six chapters and five annexures, which includes information on various strategies adopted for rural development after independence. The chapters cover the themes of 'Rural Development: Historical Background'; 'Organisation and Working of Integrated Rural Development Programme'; Gandhi's Approach to Rural Development Programme in the District: Theory and Practice'; and 'Building India from the Bottom: Conclusion'.

According to World Bank's estimation, around 800 million people, over 40 per cent of the population of developing countries, live in "absolute" or relative poverty. About three-fourth of them live in rural areas of developing countries of Asia alone. The phenomenal increase in poverty in India over the years is not due to natural growth of the population but due to "well-thought out" planned programmes of the government, the author remarks in the preface. Hence, the author emphasises heavily upon the Gandhian approach for development of rural India. Villages are soul of India. Gandhiji had commented that if the villages perish, India would perish too. So, the destiny of India lies in the villages. Gandhiji did not approve of the western urban civilization for the entire world. He said that "A big country with a teaming population with an ancient rural tradition which has hitherto answered its purpose, need not, must not copy the western model. What is good for one nation situated in one condition is not necessarily good enough for another differently situated" (p. 6).

In Gandhiji's scheme, the structure composed of innumerable villages life is not like a pyramid with apex sustained by the bottom. But it is like an oceanic circle, whose centre is an individual,

always ready to perish for the village and the latter ready to perish for a circle of villages. Gandhiji hoped "the individual being pure, sacrifices himself for the family the latter for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province, the province for the nation, and the nation for all; a hope in consonance with his notion of oceanic circle. Gandhiji also emphasised that rural and urban areas are need not to be looked as separate but their relationship is complimentary to each other (p. 72).

Hence, Gandhiji wanted to turn the villages from "dung heaps" into "model villages" or into "tiny gardens of Eden" (p. 73). Gandhiji ceaselessly insisted on a pattern of village life wherein the quality was the crux. My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. There will be neither plague, nor cholera, nor smallpox, no one will be idle, and no one will be allowed to live in luxury. Everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labour (p. 73).

Gandhiji while drafting his constructive programme of rural development, took care of social, economic, political and moral aspects of development. His approach to constructive programme can be classified into five segments, viz; economic, educational, social, environmental and political. The constructive programme as revised has eighteen items with one more addition, i.e. improvement of livestock. These include (1) communal unity, (2) removal of untouchability, (3) prohibition, (4) khadi, (5) other village industries, (6) village sanitation, (7) new or basic education, (8) adult education, (9) women, (10) provincial language, (12) national language, (13) economic equality, (14) kisans, (15) labour, (16) adivasis, (17) lepers, (18) students and one more to be included, (19) improvement of live stock (P. 76).

Within the given back drop, in the present study the author has tried to examine the contribution of rural development programmes launched in the Karnal District of Haryana State, which is known far and wide as a place of "Green Revolution". Categorically the author has selected the samples in two blocks of Karnal District, where scheduled caste population is domi-

nantly present. The beneficiaries are small farmers and own less than a hectare of land, poor base, low literary and massive unemployment, the incidence of poverty is clearly visible amongst this class of population. Majority of them live in abject poverty conditions. Thus, she justifies why she confined her sample alone among the scheduled caste population. She quote "Gandhi has sought to build India from the bottom, that is from the poorest and the weakest" (p. 138). These category of people remained deprived of their rights.

The empirical data reveals that the Integrated Rural Development Programme has made some positive impact in reducing poverty in all the income groups (p. 135). The findings further reveal that 88 per cent of the beneficiaries are using the assets for generating additional income. The above fact is unique in nature. Many studies on IRDP reveal that assets distributed among the beneficiaries hardly remained with them for a longer period of time. In this case, the external help has made some improvements in their standard of living but the author cautions that crossing the poverty line will not be realistic (p. 133).

At some space, the author expressed disillusionment regarding the implementation of IRDP. It seems IRDP is politician's necessity than a thoughtful concept. And therefore its needs to be amended and the benefit should flow to the real beneficiaries. It's proper implementation need constant vigil and any kind of irregularities should be dealt with law of the land. The author quotes "Gandhiji lived and died for masses. He fought against injustice and exploitation. Any programme connected with rural development must focus its attention towards the welfare of the common man, specially the weakest in the society (p. 140).

In this book, the author has confined her observation only to the economic impact of IRDP on scheduled caste population. She has not made any efforts to analyse the social, political and moral aspects of development of rural population, what Gandhiji wanted the rural development should accomplish. In this context, the title of the book "Gandhian Approach to Integrated Rural Development", needs serious justification. The style of presentation lacks clarity at many places and even not lucid. Serious spelling and

grammatical mistakes are noticed in several pages. This could have been evaded, had the author taken personal care at the level of editing the manuscript before sending it to press.

Despite of all others lacunae, the book is welcome addition to the studies on Rural Development in India. The planners, social scientists and development action groups who are involved in the Rural Development activities should read this book.

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M.K. Bhasin and S.L. Malik (Eds.). 1998. Contemporary Studies in Human Ecology. Delhi : Kamla - Raj Enterprises. pp. XII + 379 Rs. 550/- US\$ 60/-.

It is crucial to protect global biodiversity and traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of people with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity which is of utmost urgency in the current globalisation context. Because the genetic resources are expropriated, the natural ecosystems are destroyed faster than ever resulting in environmental degradation impinging the rights of the present and future generation. Thus the need of the hour is an alternative proposal based on the principles of sustainable development of the people and their environs.

The book under review is an outcome of National Seminar on Human Factors, Resource Management and Development jointly organised by the Indian Society for Human Ecology, New Delhi and the Institute for Bio-Social Research and Development, Calcutta, in 1996. The joint venture was to analyse man-environment multifactors in bid to involve solutions from multi and interdisciplinary dimension "to consider the role of human factor in resource management and human development". There are as many as thirty one papers from different disciplines together shaping the book and is presented in honour of Prof. Indera P. Singh, Founder President of the Indian Society for Human Ecology as well as Founder Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Human Ecology*.

Whether we wish or not the society is under-

going rapaid changes due to unprecedented industrialisation and advancement in communication technology that directly influence the people and the environment. Precisely as the environment is the sum total of socio-economic and biological conditions which influence the biosphere in various ways. Wide ranging topics encompassing human-nature relationships like bio-cultural adaptation, participatory approach in development, tribal development, forest policy, ecology and plantation, environment and subsequently an appropriate title for the book.

To begin with Bhattacharya's interesting paper on Ecology and Development sets the motion in the volume as he analyses social complexities and its relationships with state and ecology with a historical frame work. The author argues that the depletion of natural resources has reached a critical stage and subsequently there is a need to change our cultural parameters. This is followed by Mehta's convincing paper on Micro Politics, the politics of control and co-optation particularly in rural areas. The author rightly argues that democracy in India displays a few paradoxes (if not more) in the context of development. In this connection the author evaluates the role of NGOs critically in developmental activities. By and large in the same wave length Kashyap's paper also opines that the development model adopted in India is unilateral based on rational-utilitarianism and suggests an alter-

native model based on the philosophy of Indian and other third world cultures. Bhasin describes in greater detail the way of life patterns of the Buddhist Changpas, the pastoral transhumants of Ladakh..... The author maintains that this tribal community still retains their ethnic identity despite the intrusion of modern economic systems. None the less the study reveals that the "traditional social and environmental balance is being disturbed by the promotion of new economic opportunities" (p 214) particularly tourism industry. No doubt this paper is rich with ethnographic accounts of the Changpas and is interesting.

Besides there are another thirteen papers dealing with varied themes with a stress on the relationship with ecology that binds the volume on the whole. However, one loses the track of continuity towards the end. Notwithstanding the minor weaknesses, the book is certainly useful for environmentsalists, activists, planners, social scientists and researchers. Precisely as there is growing concern to wage a counter globalisation struggle from below against global forces which are depriving us of our basic right to human development.

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