

## **Book-Review**

### **Readings in Population, Environment and Spatial Planning**

by

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K. D. Sharma, H. S. Mangat & K. Surjit Singh (eds-2013) "eadings in Population, Environment and Spatial Planning"- published by the Institute of Spatial Planning and Environment Research (ISPER), Panchkula, Haryana (India) pp.xxxiii +434, price - not stated.

This volume is a Festschrift in the honour of Professor R. C. Chandna, a distinguished professor of Geography, superannuated from Punjab University, yet actively contributing to the advancement of geography through his researches and writings. The volume running into 434 pages, and divided into three parts, contains 39 research articles, written on various aspects of population, environment and spatial planning. A large part of these contributions comes from Prof Chandna's former colleagues, students and admirers.

The book opens fittingly with a short life sketch of Prof. Chandna, drawn by Prof. Manjit Singh, the founder President of ISPER. It may be mentioned that as an ode to Prof. Chandna, Manjit Singh calls him 'A swan of geographical fraternity' and recounts his achievements including the authorship of 24 books and a large number of research papers.. This is followed by four of Chandna's recent key-note addresses -'City Regions: Perceptions, Politics and Practices - A Paradigm shift', 'Sustainable

Management of Land Resources in India, 'Mountain Environment and Natural Resources Management' and 'Environmental Awareness and Management Status of Geography in Present Perspective'. These set the tone of the essays in the volume, heightening simultaneously the expectations of a reader. Very thoughtfully, the text is divided into three parts – Population, Environment and Planning, representing not strictly a causal sequence but the level of emphasis and the preference of contributors.

It is difficult to review the papers individually in such a large volume, as it would need another booklet, a concise version, to summarize all the articles. Here a broad overview is attempted to give the readers some idea about the book, recording the impression of the reviewer in the concluding paragraph. The emphasis in Dickason's paper on importance of population mapping especially the changes is a familiar though important aspect of population geography. This is followed by a well-illustrated case study of Dhangars from Western Maharashtra and the age-long practice of transhumance that they practice by Jayamala Diddee. The transhumance follows here a rhythm of rainy-non-rainy regimes, quite different from winter-summer regimes of pastoralists in North India. The spatial organization of settlements in Carpathian

region by Wilhelm and his colleagues from the University of Pecs (Hungary), represented by elegantly drawn digital maps, hinges around natural environment and the facets of landscape, like flood plain and the mountainous terrain. The impact of Indira Gandhi Canal in Rajasthan, by M.S. Jaglan and Sunil Kumar is informative and readable. An interesting paper by Victor R. Savage throws light on 'Humanities as relevant to Modern Education'. Dwelling on the importance of humanities and defining it after several authorities, he sees humanities as the instrument of artistic articulation of human genius. K. D. Sharma, in his study of the organization of settlements in the hilly Chamba district of Himachal (India) clearly demonstrates the impact of a feudal system on the hierarchy of social groups and their settlements. An interesting study with a wide scope is the one by A.K.M. Anwaruzzaman on 'Fertility and Age at Marriage: A Cross Religion Analysis' in the sub-Himalayan region of Darjeeling. The study shows an inverse relation between the two variables appearing in the title. The picture is not complete and a causal relation is not established. A set of other variables have to be brought into the picture to eliminate or establish the role of other factors besides 'the age at marriage'. A number of papers, by young geographers, discussing various demographic attributes including growth, age-sex distribution, literacy and health, fertility and demographic transition in different parts of India, complete the section on population.

The section on Environment opens with an evaluation of the concept of sustainability and its link with population. The accent appears to be more on economic development and its disastrous consequences

on resources and less on conservation, the core idea of sustainability. Gopal Krishan in an exploratory paper talks of 'Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Development'. While suggesting a 'Research Agenda for Geographers' for studying sustainable development, he lays stress on the fact that sustainable development is a more comprehensive term than eco-development and should ensure not only ecological security but also eradication of poverty, decline in socio-economic disparity, stabilization of population size, reform of consumption pattern and above all decentralization of power to the people. S. L. Sharma in his paper 'Sustainable Development in an Unsustainable World Order' finds the prospect of collective action for sustainability bleak, and talks of socializing the resources. He draws his inference from the consumerist attitude and behaviour of the present generation. L. J. Nagpal, in his idealistic tone pleads for the adoption of a principle he calls 'ecological humanism'- a very laudable objective indeed. The reviewer found the paper by Kim Sung-Kyun on the *PUNGSU* system, a friendly environment system, very fascinating, as the author compares it with the modern ecosystem theory. *Pung* means wind, and *su* means water, and the system is meant to conserve water by lengthening the flow of water in a curve. The lengthening of water flow in a curvaceous route for recharging ground water appears to be a sound principle that could be adopted with modification anywhere. The paper titled 'Patterns of Distribution of Land Holdings by Social Groups in Punjab' by Dhian Kaur and Sucha Singh, is a very enlightening paper on distribution of land resources in different social groups. Surjit Singh

evaluates the pre-eminent role of water in siting of settlements, gives a brief review of the events that finally led to the selection of Chandigarh as the site for a new capital, and discusses at length the plans for water supply to the city. There are, in addition, a number of interesting studies focusing on individual cities, especially Mumbai and Chandigarh.

This edited volume is thematically too inclusive with dispersed focus on population, environment and planning, but the theme being interlinked, this could as well be a strength of these readings. The organization of the text and the quality of printing and paper can be compared with the best in the field. The editors deserve our congratulations for bringing out this Festschrift in the honour of Prof R.C. Chandna who is admired by geographers of

all shades for his dedication to geography. The publishers, the Institute for Spatial Planning and Environment Research, deserve special thanks for the initiative to take up the publication of this volume and bring it out successfully.

In an overall assessment, the present reviewer thinks that the present volume, with several significant, conceptual papers and factual case studies, has achieved its objective of providing readings in the realm of population and environment, and has posed many new questions related to the oft-quoted phrase of sustainable development, almost like a cliché. Students of population and environment will find it a useful reading and the book should find a place in most libraries that cater to population and environmental studies.