

BOOK-REVIEWS

Indian Geography : Recent Indian Contributions

Edited by JAYMALA DIDDEE

Institute of Indian Geographers, Pune, 1990, pp. 165 + xii, Ra. 186.

Key words : methodology, Indian Geography.

The Institute of Indian Geographers has decided to come out with a series of texts reviewing the progress and current state of Geography. The first volume in the series, *Recent Indian Contributions*, has already been published in 1990. It is a collection of eleven original essays presented by eminent scholars as key-note lecturers at the 11th annual conference of the IIG at Bangalore in February, 1990. The book is expected to provide a reference point for future developments in Indian Geography.

According to Jaymala Diddie, the editor of the volume, the book is committed "to provide a broader interpretation of what is happening to Geography in India, the grey areas of Indian Geography, and how Indian Geographers are facing up to the major challenges posed by the theoretical and methodological debates to effect radical changes in the subject." Such academic stock-taking from time to time is a welcome step.

Edited by a geographer with multi-faceted interests, the book is more than a simple recent history of the discipline in India. The editor's interpretative exercise is demonstrated in her analysis of the book. It is a scholarly summing up of

the various themes discussed in these papers; a thorough and carefully integrated effort revealing the interconnectedness of the themes of various articles. Cover to cover reading of the book could be made difficult by the fact that different authors writing on diverse subjects to different audiences. The editor has, however, compensated for the different styles and depths of treatment through explicit editorial link.

The volume is dedicated to Professor N. B. K. Reddy in appreciation of his commendable contribution for the promotion of Geography in India; a fitting tribute to a person who has devoted much of his academic energy in modernizing Indian Geography. *Recent Indian Contributions* is not a hefty volume, taking up only about 165 pages plus xii page matter containing the introduction by the author.

K. R. D'kshit in the first article stresses the need for strengthening physical geography in Indian universities as it has declined steadily — a fact that is clearly exhibited by any survey of recent research. He identifies research patterned after basin and network analysis, morphometry, interpretation of aerial photo-

graphs and the application of numerical methods — reflecting a preoccupation with data-compilation and data processing. He suggests a qualitative improvement in the teaching faculty, equipment and the syllabi. The second article of the collection is by A. R. Subramaniam. It draws attention to the important role of agro-climatic studies in the development of Indian agriculture. Subramaniam mentions several techniques to classify and assess regional climatic information. He points out the possible frontiers of research in this line.

The vision and promise of a singular integrated theory of landuse has appealed the Indian Geographers for a long time now. Jagdish Singh discusses the various aspects and principles of the concept of optimum landuse. He views optimum landuse within the agro-ecological framework with special consideration to land capability and accessibility parameters. He tests his model in the context of Uttar Pradesh.

As if on cue to Subramaniam, Bireswar Banerjee's article, after considering the relevance of the various models of agricultural development to the Indian context, focusses on the failure of Green Revolution and stresses the need for improving production efficiency without causing major damages to the environment alongwith a diversification of the agricultural base.

According to Satyesh Chakraborty resource appraisal, done in terms of regional units, is the most useful application that geographers — practicing both social and physical groups of the subject — could engage themselves in. He recommends two exercises : the first around the conceptual frame of land capability assessment and the second is to assess the impact of

technology on the natural environment. Dinanath Singh points out the vast gap between urban and rural India, and outlines the literature on the developmental problems of the latter. P. D. Mahadev, in his study of the Tungabhadra Command Area, shows how regional planning measures fail when they do not take into consideration the people. S. C. Gupte points out the hangover of colonialism in the study of village societies and highlights the areas of future research for a better understanding of the Indian rural milieu. Political geography, according to R. D. Dikshit, has suffered neglect in Indian geographical research. With the worldwide revival of this branch of our discipline in 1970s, it has made several important steps forward in India too. The potential for research in political geography lies in several frontiers with issues ranging from the local to international levels.

'What Ails Indian Geography?' by A. B. Mukherjee begins with a historical profile of the subject as an university discipline but goes on to point out that the imported concepts irrelevant to Indian situations led to a degeneration of research. This dependence on borrowed concepts and theories resulted also in a **sterility of intellect and a consequent failure to innovate methodology** rooted in Indian milieu. C. D. Deshpande visualizes Indian geography in the 21st century in the perspective of major trends and tasks engaging the attention of the geographers of this country. He highlights the quality of the syllabi and text books of college and university levels, and reviews the role of professional associations and their contribution to Indian geography.

The volume accomplishes its goals and purposes completely and thoroughly, and

is a useful addition to the Indian literature on geography. The book is a major contribution and the editor is to be commended for her well-coordinated efforts. It has minor shortcomings such as the occasional printer's devil popping out of apparently innocuous lines, or the extremely limited discussion of social/cultural geography. However, the paper and other aspects of production are of a

high quality. The price too is not beyond the reach. It is unlikely, however, that this otherwise comprehensive volume will find much use as a text. The book will be helpful to a wide range of academicians and policy-makers concerned with solutions to pressing developmental problems related to space. But perhaps the greatest value of this book is that it raises many questions suitable for follow-up research.

Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, Department of Geography, The University of Burdwan, BURDWAN
7131, W. Bengal.

"Climatic Change in the historical and the instrumental periods"

Edited by RUDOLF BRAZDIL

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DM 60. pp. 362.

The book contains the proceedings of the international conference "Climatic change in the Historical and Instrumental periods" held in Brno during 12-16 June 1989. The papers that are published do not take cognizance of the sweeping changes that have taken place in Europe, subsequent to 1989, especially the unification of Germany. The official name of Czechoslovakia has been changed to Czech and Slovak Federative Republic (CSFR).

The volume contains Part I, II, III, IV, V and VI. Part I deals with Climatic change — Global view. Consisting of ten contributed papers. Part II consists of four papers on Impacts of Climatic Change. Part III is on Indirect and Historical Data sets with nine research papers. Eight papers are presented under part IV. Instrumental Data sets and Methods of Analysis. Part V is the most contributed section of the book; it re-

lates to Regional Climatic changes — Europe with 37 papers. The final Part VI Regional Climatic changes — Regions other than Europe with four papers.

According to the Editor the published contributions were not referred or corrected for their language. However, most of the participants are well known researchers and hence the contributions are of significant importance.

The papers are all contributed by the members of the Study Group on Recent Climatic Change of the International Geographical Union under the Chairmanship of Prof. M. Yoshino, University of Tsukuba, Japan. The members are drawn from all over the world. Thus the proceedings of the conference includes problems of climatic change in a broad perspective — from global problems to typical case studies with the time scale covering on the one hand instrumental