

BOOK - REVIEWS

Himalayan Environment; Man and the Economic Activities

edited by J. L. RAINA

Pointer Publishers, Jaipur, 1992 in 2 volumes, pp. 513, price Rs. 750/-.

The two volumes of the book are a collection of thirty-six essays (nineteen in the first and seventeen in the second volume) written in the honour of Professor A. B. Mukerji. Most of the papers with barely half a dozen exceptions are written by geography teachers, stationed in, or close to, the Himalayan region. The volumes have no introduction whatsoever. The editor's contribution seems to be the collection of papers and a one-page preface which does not say anything about the content and organization of the volumes. One would be disappointed if one is looking for an integrated view of the Himalayan Environment and its economic activities. Yet, there are some good papers, like 'soil genesis in Jammu and Kashmir Himalayas, by R. D. Gupta or another on a similar theme in Himachal sector by Kayastha and Gupta. The geotechnical appraisal of the Himalayan dams (Shandilya) and Management and Planning of Forest Resources in the U.P. Himalayas (Teli) make interesting readings. 'Ecological problems of grazing in U.P. Himalayas and intensity of grazing' (Bhatt and Bhatt) in different altitudinal zones gives a descriptive analysis of grazing in the area based on the author's clear perception. Devi Dutt's micro study of a village in the U.P. Himalayas at an altitude of

1400 m. brings out the landuse in a Himalayan village. There are quite a few papers on Jammu and Kashmir region, including one by the editor himself on the Eco-system and agricultural productivity based on the sample survey of seven villages.

The volume restricts itself to environment and economic activities and the papers, though disjointed, certainly give an idea of the different aspects of the economy, particularly agriculture, in the Himalayas. The omission of themes like climate, glaciers, lakes, wild life and high altitude pastures with their transhumance, is striking. The editors, of course, did not contemplate inclusion of history, religion, culture and cults, migration and transmigration, the more fascinating aspects of the Himalayan history and geography.

The production of the book is reasonably good. The text is well printed, almost error-free, though more careful handling was required in the reproduction of maps and photographs. The volumes give some idea of the soils, agriculture and forests in some segments of the Himalayas, and provide some useful data to the scholars interested in Himalayan studies.