

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Health Care Planning in the Developing World* - edited and published by Jayati Hazra, Calcutta, 1994, pp. 203+iv, price Rs. 250/- (U \$ 15).

This is a collection of papers - more essays than research papers - presented at the seminar organized under the aegis of the IGU Commission on Health and Development by Jayati Hazra, the editor and publisher of the volume. The seminar does not focus on any specific theme and the contributions range from 'Primary Health Care Programme in Nigeria' to 'Rural Health Care and Sanitation in some West Bengal Villages' to 'Geographical Inequalities of Mortality in China'. The two studies from China are particularly instructive to Indian planners; the one by A. K. Dutt and others on 'Pattern of Medical Facilities in China which concludes that the medical facilities in China's cities have a general characteristic of more placement in smaller cities to underscore the disadvantage of rural and minority ethnic areas, and of more placement

in higher mortality cities to achieve a balanced development; and the other on 'Mortality in China' by Fang Ru - Kang, which among other things concludes that after 1949, the mortality began to decline, and in 1988, it was 6.58/1000, one of the lowest in the world.

Besides the paper on 'Epidemiological transition' by David R. Phillips which cautions developing countries to plan for changing nature of diseases with greater industrialization and an apt epilogue by Bireswar Banerjee, there are a number of interesting case studies of medical facilities available in specific areas or specific community groups.

The book contains readable material on some aspects of medical geography.

K.R. Dikshit

*Environment and Development : Views from East and West* - edited by Amitav Mukherjee and V. K. Agnihotri, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussorie, 1993, pp. 587, price Rs. 750/-.

The volume puts together twentyeight papers presented at the fifth Indo-British seminar held at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussorie, in April, 1993. Divided into 8 parts, it has seven papers written by British geographers and the remaining contributions, with the exception of the editor and a couple of others, come from Indian

geographers. The editors at the outset have drawn attention to the differing perception and the approaches adopted by North and the South to the solution of environmental problems and development. The debate they have initiated remains, sadly, confined to their views, as the contributions in the following sections are more pre-occupied with specific case studies,

sometimes representing a very small segment of India's landscape.

The first three papers talk of concepts perspectives and emerging paradigms, related to ecosystem and development. Sustainability is the common refrain running through these papers having taken cognizance of Bruntland's reports. Our common future. The four subsequent case studies including one on 'Energy consumption pattern in Rashmi taluka of Chittorgarh district in Rajasthan, make us acquainted with a variety of conditions that govern energy consumption in a rural setup. 'Safeguarding the land' by Thomas, discusses the segments of landscape and slope and the past history of different deposits, more or less a schematic structure of quaternary changes. 'National resources have been managed better in countries with a longer cultural tradition that in the areas which are recently pioneered is shown by Morgan, and Singh and Mehr demonstrate the effectiveness of local participation in the success of a development programme in their study of Sukhomajri village, in the Siwalik region of Punjab.

The part discussing river valley environment talks of the impact of dam and reservoirs, positive and negative. Sita, Phadke and Rao, in a study of Koyna catchment draw attention to the evacuation and displacement of village communities, following the building of the dam, who develop a sense of alienation from the main stream development process. The most significant contribution in this section comes from Graham Chapman who in his paper 'Environmental Myths as International Politics : the problems of the Bengal delta ' almost debunks the contention of the authorities in Bangla Desh, echoed even in the publication of scholars who put all the blame on Faraka barrage and in turn on India for all the catastrophic events in Bangladesh, more spe-

cifically, siltation and rise of river bed, leading to floods, decreased soil moisture, increased salinity, leading to desertification decreased water level, decreasing upstream flow leading to saline incursions in the coastal areas. The culprit seen in singular terms is the upstream management, in this context India. He finally concludes - 'simplified myth propagation will not help any one - to generalize from one tangible case to make India a scapegoat for all other environment ills is not useful. Quite clearly, the manifold problems of Bengal cannot be blamed simply and only on India's and Nepal's upstream behaviour. A very objective research, Chapman's findings should be taken note of by those who argue India's case in India - Bangladesh negotiations related to the management of Bengal rivers.

In a command area study of Sriramnagar, Ram Mohan Rao and his colleagues have not discovered any negative impact of irrigation on soil conditions, but admit an increase in the incidence of malaria. Their conclusions, however, are sermonisingly simple and prescriptive, not confined to the findings of the study.

Two related papers, one on 'Environmental Value ' by Philip Sarre and the other on 'Environmental Ethics' by R. P. Misra make interesting reading.

Sarre, discusses value system in the philosophy and religion of the East and West, and arguing out of a genuine concern, to define value system concludes that an effective value system, to be performing, according to Kant, in relation to pure reason, practical reason and ethics has to be consistent with science, to generate ethical principles and practical policies. Misra's approach less philosophical but more tradition bound, admits that 'traditional values have to be debated in the context of scientific knowledge, a great asset of modern society, and the survival of environmental val-

ues cannot be at the cost of scientific rationality. Romance of remoteness in British culture by Pomela Smith, though only indirectly related to the theme of the eminar is immensely readable and suggests that the attitude to remote places is emotional rather than rational. These, to quote the author, become the depository for fantasies about escape, utopian living, heroism, freedom ... and further, remoteness is endowed, not an inherent characteristic, associated with highly imaged deep rural places.

The other two papers which can be paired, viz. Environment and Development Theme by Andres Blowers and the other 'the State, Business, Diplomacy and Environment' by C. P. Singh, share the editors' concern, the former pointing out to the contrast in the perspectives to development vis-a-vis environment, tempered as they are by national interests, and the latter giving a contemporary picture of international deplomacy where business interests get primacy over ideological values. A down-to-earth study of urban environment seen in the dysfunctioning of drainage, sanitation, supply of potable water in Trivandrum and Delhi, the two Indian Capitals demonstrates the pathology of Indian cities. Urban expansion and damage to ecology, the case of Jaipur by Sharma and Nathawat and the difficulties encountered in urban planning illustrated with the case study of Visakhapatnam by Sheema Asthama have dicussed the problems of urban planning.

In talking of rural landscape, village develop-

ment and micro level planning, Mukerjee emphiases the varying nature of concerns shown by different village communities, where the appraisal of resources and environmental problems could be realistically assessed with the participation of the people, and appropriate development promoted. To fulfil this task R. B. Singh and S. K. Chattopadhyya have drawn attention to the need for indepth understanding of local problems through large scale mapping of village resources.

From the tenor of the papers what is clear is an overall acceptance of the philosophy of sustainable development - a key word like 'Limits to Growth' - which figures in most papers. Being geographers, the contributors have concentrated on land related problems, rural and urban; but some of the important facets of the problems like climate change, flood and drought, biological diversity and forests, erosion and sedimentation demographic pressure, damage to the environment in the coastal and highland areas, and above all pollution and degradation of the resources - air, water, soil, and vegetation -are virtually ignored.

A few papers certainly stand out as contributions to the subject yet the volume remains thematically weak. The case studies provide illustrative material and some of them even an insight into what is happening at a village or town level. The book contains enough readable material for a selective reading.

*K. R. Dikshit*

*Geography of India* - by Prithvish Nag and Smita Sengupta, Concept Publishing, New Delhi, 199.

Any addition to the literature on regional geography of India is welcome, if only because of the changing socio-economic scenario and the consequent regional contrasts that follow. The

present book has taken cognigance of the changes and offers additional material on India.

The authors have started with a brief historical