

BOOK REVIEWS

Electoral Geography of India by S.K. Dikshit, Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, VARANASI,
1993, pp. 136, maps & appendices, price Rs.250/-

The book is an admirable effort by the author to examine the voting preferences in parliamentary elections of India as an electoral response to Socio-economic attributes of a region, related to the composition and quality of its electorate.

The three introductory chapters, viz i) Geography of Elections, ii) Political Geographical Background, and iii) Constituency and Party system, are a useful prologue to those not quite conversant with Indian electoral system and provide the background and set the tone of the book.

Taking parliamentary constituencies as spatial units, Dikshit has analysed the results of the sixth & seventh Lok Sabha elections in terms of the seats won and lost by different national and regional outfits which are explained correlating them with the demographic attributes of the population. In so doing, the author has adopted a simple correlation technique, regressing one dependent variable, i.e. electoral performance against a single independent variable. This raises many questions, the most

significant of which is the assessment of the relative importance of each variable and the extent to which it explains the variance. A factorial analysis should have proved more rewarding.

The book contains a lot of statistical information and the approach is essentially statistical, where an extremely elongated scatter in a narrow vertical band makes the results suspect and the plotting of residuals less meaningful. The reviewer is of the opinion that an outright discarding of the qualitative process oriented historical approach has detracted from the quality of the work. An exhaustive bibliography and the listing of constituencies will be of use to the researchers who are working in the area of electoral geography.

In an overall assessment, the book is a sincere effort and carries the stamp of dedicated hard work of a young geographer. The book will be undoubtedly useful to those who would like to be introduced to parliamentary elections in India.

Dryland Farming in India : Constraints and Challenges(ed) J. L. Raina, Pointer Publishers
Jaipur, 1994 pp.34. Price Rs. 500/-.

The book has resulted from putting together of sixteen essays, more than half of which are written by geographers. The book opens with the essay 'Dry land farming in India : Past, Present & Future' written by R.P. Singh. The

paper talks of many things & virtually equates Dryland farming with rainfed or non irrigated farming. A.K. Gupta focusses his attention on the perception of the scientists and the constraints of dryland farming. The paper

discusses in detail the management of research. A paper on geography & dryland farming in an arid environment is more focussed & talks of how the agricultural land in the arid region could be managed. Then there are some case studies of the areas in Kumaon Himalayas, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, the last one talking of climatic water balance. The lauduse problems of 'Karewas' of Kashmir is a brief yet informative paper. The essay of S.K. Choudhary recommends

sericulture as an alternate crop system for dryland regions.

The book may be useful as a background reading for those interested in dryland farming, whatever the term may apply. The price of Rs. 500/- is not justified either by the content or by the size of the volume.

The Title of the book lacks clarity, perhaps the author meant 'Human Dimensions of drought & its management ...'

Human Dimensions and Drought Management in India, by V.S. Katiyar Pointer publications, Jaipur, 1993 pp 212 price Rs. 300/-

This is a book wherein the author thinks of drought as a 'Social Problem of poverty and dearth, rather a natural hazard. The book is divided into three parts of which part first, in the opinion of the reviewer, is concrete and useful. 'Man with drought' the largest chapter in the book, gives an account of the specific

areas in different states suffering from droughts. The rest of the book is incoherent and talks of themes like afforestation, national water policy, waste water recycling and many others as extension of the main theme. Details of droughts in specific region are quite informative.

Physical Geography by B. S. Negi, S. J. Publications, Meerut, Fourth edition, 1993, pp 577 Price Rs. 75/-.

The book first published in 1981, is a text book for degree classes in Indian Universities. Like many other text books in India, the present one mixes the time-worn hypotheses with modern theories and is likely to cause confusion in the minds of young students. The history of ideas as they developed, could be important in certain specific contexts, but in a text book for degree classes, it may lead to confusion. The sequence of chapters in such a large text book could have been thought of more carefully, dividing the book into several parts. There is so much material compressed in the book that often the text appears like an inventory or a classificatory note. No theme is properly introduced and the chapters end abruptly.

The book has no references; the figures, even though borrowed, have not been acknowledged and the entire volume appears like the lecture notes of a teacher. Even the contents of the book are not properly listed. The publishers have not bothered about the quality of printing, let alone the aesthetics of publication. There is no index at the end.

On the positive side there are enough examples from India and the book is low priced and quite affordable.

This is a shoddy production, notwithstanding its several editions. Such a book in the opinion of the reviewer will neither promote an understanding of the subject among the students nor will serve the cause of geography.