

## BOOK REVIEW

*'The Art and Science of Geography : Integrated Readings'* edited by R.D. Dikshit  
(1994), Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi. pp 195 price Rs. 85/-

This medium size book titled 'The Arts and Science of Geography' is a collection of sixteen articles, published previously either as research papers in journals or as chapters in books, that amply justify the subtitle of the book-Integrated Readings. Unlike many edited volumes, 'The Art & Science of Geography' is not simply a putting together of published material; it has taken all the skill of its editor to select, condense, summarise and add notes wherever required to make the text a 'Reader', a text to be read, understood and reflected upon by university students.

Divided into five parts - 1. The spirit and purpose, 2. Conceptual structure, 3. Models for Geographical Enquiry, 4. On Geographical Methodology and 5. Continuity and change in the Philosophy of Geography — the papers are grouped thematically, not adhering to any chronological order. The first two chapters, of which one was written over four decades ago, are lucid and clear, reflecting the inimitable style of Preston E. James, the quintessential geographer of 'environment-landscape-region' school. These two papers don't set the tone for the rest of the book, but the echo of the seminal ideas contained in these two chapters could be discovered in many, if not all the subsequent chapters. The 'Geographical versus Sociological Imagination' of David Harvey appears a trifle complex and a little too early in the volume. His idea that the 'Concept of

space is not as simple as the physicists and the philosophers of science would have us believe' remains unsubstantiated, yet there could be a fair measure of agreement on the view that if 'we are to understand space, we must consider its symbolic meaning and its complex impact upon behavior as it is mediated by the cognitive processes'. He emphasizes the necessity to combine the two perspectives : one of geographers who fail to recognize the way in which space is fashioned and the other of sociologists who seem to live and work in a spaceless world.

In contrast to Harvey's abstract paper, 'The Conceptual Structure of Geography' (Edwin N. Thomas) limits the concept to geographic facts, spatial distribution and areal association, and appears too elementary in content, though presented quite systematically. 'The Historical Mind and the Practice of Geography' by Cole Harris is eminently readable and reminds a geographer of the time warp in every spatial pattern or areal association developed over time.

The third part of the book 'Models for Geographical Enquiry' begins with a pattern process model in which R. L. Nostrand argues that geography as well as history, unlike other systematic sciences, is a method of study and not the study of a specific kind of Phenomena.

The pattern - process model of geography combines the geographical perspective with the historical. 'The Behavioural Model for Geographical Enquiry' of W. Kirk goes beyond the pattern study and focuses on the response of the individual, or the community to environment in organizing or evolving a landscape. In including Stoddart's 'Organism and Ecosystem as Geographical Models' excerpted from Stoddart's 'On Geography (1986-pp230-70)' the editor shows consideration for physical geography, or else Professor Dikshit's perspective of geography is too one sided, almost exclusively of a social scientist. This reviewer wonders if the geographers calling themselves social scientists are trying to rid themselves off, of the notion of the essential unity of the discipline.

The editor while selecting this chapter 'Organism and Ecosystem ..... models' for inclusion in the volume has been too liberal with pruning and did not find it worthwhile to retain the discussion on the eco-system, as in the original. The editor's own contribution - 'Teaching of Environment' takes a historical perspective and talks of geography as a study of environment, the pollution of environment and the concern of geographers.

Part IV of the book discusses 'Geographical Methodology', in which the editor himself has contributed an article 'Geography and Scientific Method'. This is a review and integration in geography of Popper's philosophical approach, the chronological development of the field as seen by Paterson and the problem solving approach of C. Hart. The last two don't appear to have much to do with scientific method. The apparent dichotomy of systematic versus regional appears resolved, if viewed in a matrix as suggested by Berry, whose rows represent the characteristics and the columns symbolize places, sub-regions and regions. In the

subsequent chapter Simons and Cox, inclined to project 'holism' as a principle in geography, seem ignorant of the systems application in physical geography and believe that 'although the methods may derive from mathematics or statistics, the applications which geographers have taken up or fostered have been from social sciences. The discussion on 'Holism Beyond Geography', is *sensu-stricto*, beyond geography and talks of abstract hypotheses like 'the implicate order' The 'Gaia hypotheses, an offshoot of Kantian teleology. 'Changes in the philosophy of Geography' by Wrigley, written over 3 decades ago hardly talks of any philosophy and is preoccupied with Brunhes, Vidal de la Blache, Dickinson and others. An advocate of de la Blache's ideas, he pleads for eclecticism as a way out. The last chapter in the book, 'The Essence of Geography' by Brock is a review of different approaches and some of the basic concepts. It talks of 'regional concept', 'areal coherence', 'spatial interaction', 'significance of scale', 'Dichotomies in geography', 'Geography as Human Ecology', 'Geography as a Landscape study' and so on, and on. The contents of the chapter don't justify its title, nor is this chapter an apt finale to a book which has an excellent beginning.

Thus far the contents of the book are reviewed, none of the editor's creation, yet reflecting beyond doubt his choice and style of arrangement.

If one were to speak of the editor's craft, one has to bear in mind the purpose for which these papers were brought together. The book is designed to impart knowledge about the fundamentals of the discipline to honours and post-graduate students, out of the belief of the editor that 'inaccessibility to journals and non-availability of suitable text books dealing with the fundamentals of geography as a science

have led to a widespread ignorance among our students in regard to the basis of geography as a scientific enterprise'. The editor has no doubt well achieved his objective and has given to the students a book that is handy yet comprehensive enough to represent varying perspectives and approaches.

The selection of published papers and chapters from books, and the choice of themes, could evoke, comments from professional colleagues, notwithstanding the editor's effort to make them representative. For instance, one is disappointed on the omission of a paper on 'Region' as a core - concept in geography. And there is no dearth, as the editor is well aware, of such papers. 'Approaches to Regional Analysis' by Berry is more methodological and less substantive. The second striking omission is the absence of any paper on the concept, content or methodology of physical geography. It is a failure to recognize the importance of physical environment in the organization of human society and shows only a blinkered view of the discipline. Field work, so typical of geography should have found a

place in the book as much as the education and training of a geographer.

These subjective views of the reviewer notwithstanding, the book has some unique merits; the way the editor has pruned and summarized the lengthier of the papers, without losing the essence, is an accomplishment. Secondly, in a few papers the editor has appended short notes which impart clarity to the text and will be a great help to the students.

The book is handy, the printing is methodical and error-free, and the price of Rs. 85/- is affordable. Professor R. D. Dikshit is known for his scholarly geographical writings, but even as an editor he has done a meticulous job displaying a thoroughness with which we associate him.

A useful and readable book, 'The Arts & Science of Geography' should find a place in every library and is a good text and reference book to be possessed and read by every serious geography student at the honours level.

**K. R. Dikshit**