

BOOK REVIEWS

Recent Trends and Concepts in Geography (Vols. I, II & III)

Edited by R. B. Mandal and V. N. P. Sinha

Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, Rs. 400/- per set.

The three books entitled 'Recent Trends and Concepts in Geography' embody a collection of sixty-eight papers, published in three volumes. The first-two volumes have two sections each and the papers therein are classified section-wise under four major heads, namely, (i) Conceptual Development, (ii) Physical Geography in Vol. I and (i) Resource Geography and (ii) Agricultural land-utilization in Vol. II. Papers related to the social, political, historical and allied branches of Geography are included in Vol. III. All the three volumes contain brief introduction to each section which gives the reader a glimpse of the topics dealt within each of them.

The editors' main purpose in bringing out these volumes is 'to help the student keep abreast of recent trends' and to acquaint him with recent conceptual developments in the realm of geography. A critical examination of the papers published shows that the editors' objective has been achieved to a great extent. Papers dealing with the application of new techniques to the geographical research are of great help to those who have enthusiasm for deeper research. They may also get enough research material from the comprehensive bibliography which has been provided at the end of many chapters.

The publication of these books will certainly help the dissemination of geographical knowledge. The present collections, in a way, represent an Indian effort in this direction, since most of the contributors (about 85%) are Indians working in different fields in India. Of them, very few (less than 20%) are associated with fields other than geography. And only a small number has been drawn from other fields of knowledge, such as Zoology, Economics, Political Science

and so on. From this point of view the interdisciplinary nature of geography is not fully revealed.

Barring a few, most of the articles are essay type. They have drawn heavily on other sources to present a summary of the various views held on a particular topic or the techniques adopted by others to handle specific problems.

The conceptual development in geography is well reflected in the articles discussing the concepts of morphological analysis, jet streams, continental drift (all in vol I); concepts of resources, marketing geography, consumer behaviour and geography of retailing (all in vol II); and finally the concepts of Urban fringe, neighbourhood and military geography (in vol III).

The articles like (i) Changing methods and techniques in geography (ii) Use of computer in data analysis, (iii) The use of socio-metric measurement in cultural geography (iv) Some techniques and recent trends in Geomorphology -- all published in Vol. I. The application of remote sensing in land resource management with reference to India, (vi) Models in land-utilization, (vii) Aerial photo-interpretation technique in agricultural geography and (viii) Air-photographs in land use analysis -- all published in Vol. II give an idea of modern techniques used in research work in the various fields of geography.

Some articles have definitely research bias and they deserve special mention. They include: (1) Geography and the sense of place by Gary L. Peters, (2) Spurious Geography by Brian Robinson, (3) The use of sociometric measurement in cultural Geography by K. B. Sajjadur Rasheed -- all published in Vol. I; (4) The concept of consumer behaviour by Suresh Kumar,

(5) Spatial diffusion of agricultural innovations - An empirical analysis by Ram Bahadur Mandal - all published in Vol. II; (6) A critical Review of central place study in India by B. K. Sinha, (7) The geography of music by Sister Violita A. C. and finally (8) Approaches towards a geography of health - A Synoptic view by R. L. Singh, Rana P. B. Singh and B. P. Singh - all published in Vol. III. The special feature of each of the abovementioned articles though needs to be mentioned here, has been shelved off for want of space.

It is very difficult to understand however,

why some articles, notwithstanding their quality, are included in these volumes. Their titles and contents do not conform with the purpose and scope of books. Articles like 'Geography in Kalidasa's works', 'Geomorphology of Drainage Basins in Palamau Upland' and many others fall under this category.

All in all, the editors deserve all the compliments for bringing out these works which throw enough light on the recent trends and concepts in geography.

D. M. W.

Urban Settlements in Eastern India

Baleshwar Thakur

Concept Publishing Company, (1980), New Delhi, pp 222, Price Rs. 80/-

The study aims at bringing out the changing nature of urban patterns, with a view to making generalizations about trends in developing countries, especially India. It also tests the hypothesis that uniformity of spacing of urban places decreases over time.

Two quantitative measures, nearest neighbour analysis and entropy have been employed by the author to assess whether the emerging pattern of urbanization in Eastern India has resulted in uniform, random or clustered development.

In the evolution of urban patterns, the works of location theorists like Von Thunen, Weber and Christaller have made fundamental contributions, being pioneers in the model building methodology in Geography. Particularly the works of Christaller and Losch have provided the framework for the reorganization of a uniform, random and clustered component in the distribution of urban places, while at the same time developing the concept of equilibrium in urban patterns. Christaller's work generally has stimulated considerable interest in pattern analysis.

In the first three chapters, Thakur discus-

ses how the basic inadequacies of the earlier static models led to the adoption of the systems approach in analysing urban pattern. The application of the systems approach has been rather slow in Geography, this might be attributed partly to the complexity of systems analysis itself, and partly due to the lack of comparative time series data. In pattern analysis, the various concepts like open and closed systems, stability-instability, different types of equilibrium associated with different growth patterns, along with the concept of 'entropy' and its application to non-physical open systems frequently encountered in geography are discussed. Particular attention is drawn to the fact that the interpretation of entropy is not quite the same in case of urban systems which in the course of their development tend towards organization. So maximum entropy in the case of the present study (unlike the second law of thermodynamics) is associated with order and organization in the system. The validity of this a priori assumption needs to be questioned, when settlements have shown equal propensity towards both the random and regular pattern over