

Premi's exercise is valuable for its detailed tables. He has chronologically traced the evolution of family planning programmes launched from time to time. The net outcome of these programmes is known to all and requires no elaboration.

Volumes like the present one which are based on symposia contributions are bound to contain a mix of outstanding, average

and mediocre collections. Tremendous credit goes to the editors who have painstakingly put the disparate essays together and given them a readable form. The introduction to the volume by Aijazuddin Ahmad is superb both in style and substance.

The books is priced rather high and this may make it inaccessible to individuals.

- Dr. (Mrs.) Swarnjit Mehta

SUSTAINABLE REGENERATION OF DEGRADED LANDS

Edited by - Jyoti K. Parikh and B. Sudhakara Reddy

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Land is the most tangible of all natural resources. It is upon land that man has left the imprints of all his cultures and civilisational remains, sufferings and happiness, achievements and failures. It is for land that many a battle has been fought, civilisations rose and perished. And yet, land remains the most contentious of all human affairs. While land as private property emerged with the development of the agrarian civilisation some ten thousand years ago, considerable amount of land remained as a common resource for the community on which the community has use and occasionally, occupancy rights. This is often common to developing societies where various social groups and communities at different evolutionary phases of their social history, may co-exist. In such societies, rights on Common Property Land Resources (CPLR) are generally accepted concepts of the community vis-a-vis the state and also, the

individual holder of ownership rights. Even the developed nations do recognise the use rights of citizens over certain forms of environmental or infrastructural resources. This phenomenon is quite common among forest dwellers, quasi-nomads and village communities of India. However, in recent times, the traditional use rights of various communities under various circumstances, over common land resources, have come under severe strain both through the restrictions imposed by an all pervading, sovereign state and the greed of the individual encroachers over common land resources. This has resulted in severe erosion of the livelihood-system of many communities, who traditionally survived on their use rights on the common land resources.

In this light, the contributions of various scholars in a national seminar at IGIDR, Mumbai in November, 1996 and encapsulated in the current volume is a refreshing deparature

from the main-stream economics, into an area much neglected but of immense significance to a large number of Scheduled Tribes, Castes and village communities through out the country. The book contains a total of thirteen papers arranged into three parts, Part I dealing with the concepts and status of CPLR, the Part II dealing with specific methodologies and Part III dealing with management practices and alternative institutional arrangements on specific case studies. Majority contributions, of course, emanate from the CAP21 group of IGIDR.

The first paper by Vijay Laxmi and Jyoti Parikh deals with the concept of CPLR and its current status in India. The second by N. C. Gautam (of NRSA) stresses on the modern methodologies like remote sensing application to identification of various categories of waste land and to the extent they could be utilised for land regeneration. Iyengar's paper on CPLR in Gujarat points to the modernisation forces that beset the traditional relationships like land encroachment, etc. and the possibility of state intervention in parceling the degraded commons to co-operatives for land regeneration, as income and employment generating activities. Nadkarni emphasises the revival of the traditional use rights system as an important component of the strategy of rural poverty alleviation in the country. Dixit narrates the travails of the Banni villagers (of Kachchh) where frequent droughts in recent years, have degraded the quality of the grasslands, a common property resource and thus, affecting their livelihood system.

Part II contains three papers by NTGCF and the IGIDR faculty and largely deals with the

economics and methodological innovations in environmental accounting (of some case studies from Gujarat and Karnataka) of National Tree Growers' Co-operative Federation Ltd. and demonstrates that many such co-operatives are not only economically viable but remunerative and thus, are eminently viable enterprises and could be replicated in many such villages with degraded village commons for bettering the livelihood system of the villagers, -- a major task that NTGCF has ventured upon.

Drawing extensively upon the Palamau experiments (on village co-operatives), Gopal Kadekodi emphasises the successes of such alternative institutions and management practices (primarily, land co-operatives) and their economic viability in enhancing the quality of life of the villagers. Reema Nanavathy (SEWA) takes, rather an extreme feminist stand by forcefully arguing to hand-over the entire forestry sector to women and under women's management. Riya Sinha's paper, while commenting on various CPLR institutions (NGOs), is of opinion that 'reward in proportion to effort and contribution' works the best. The study based on six Rajasthan villages by Kanchan Chopra and S.C. Gulati addresses the problems of linkages of CPLR system and stress migration¹. The last paper by Reddy, Parikh and Parikh is based on a stakeholders survey of Mallanhally village that analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the TGCS system adopted.

No doubt, India now is saddled with nearly one third of her land area degraded, either degraded forest land, wastelands or marginal lands, a major part of which falls under CPLR. It needs regeneration and the regeneration process can

¹ *Some of our own studies on Meghalaya indirectly vindicate the hypothesis: -- that 'ecological degradation in the rural areas has led to distress migration from rural to urban areas' It may be noted that Meghalaya, like many other North-Eastern states have a very strong tradition of CPLR. (Ph.D. thesis of D.D. Nengnongn, Rural-Urban Migration in Meghalaya, to be submitted)*

create millions of man-days of work and employment and economic regeneration of many marginalised communities. Many traditional CPLR management systems are available, many new experiments in the form of the JFMCs, TGCS and the Palamau type land co-operatives are also available. The government has no funds to regenerate all these land on its own steam (the ventures like the social forestry or NWDB etc.) and the successes of such efforts are limited only and the programmes are not quite cost-effective. CPLR provides an alternative to such approaches, where the

community is the investor and harvester of benefits. The institutional arrangements and management systems could be adopted in such manner that the ventures truly become 'bankable', i.e. without surviving on doles from public funds. The role of government or the NGOs to that extent should be that of the promoter and facilitator, allowing the co-operatives to take a plunge in land regeneration as an economic venture.

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