

CULTURE, ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT' edited by Sukant K. Chaudhury, 2006, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, p. 298, Price Rs. 650.

The present book aims at throwing light on culture, ecology and sustainable development. It consists of nineteen papers apart from the introduction. Under the wide canopy of culture, ecology and sustainable development, various issues have been brought together.

A rather comprehensive introduction by Chaudhury details the present concern about man, environment and development. The editor has dealt with the anthropological theories of environmental determinism and possibilism. Further, he has discussed the contributions of Daryll Forde, Julian Steward, Leslie A. White, Edmund Leach, Roy Rappaport and Clifford Geertz. He has also reviewed various works by social scientists including that of Madhav Gadgil and Ramchandra Guha. Besides, he has also critically analysed the Draft National Policy 2004 of the Government of India. On the basis of their content the papers in this volume can be broadly categorized under some specific heads, such as those throwing light on the issue of environment and development as seen through global and regional spectrum. Then there are papers which are examples of micro study.

S.L. Sharma in his paper titled, 'Rethinking Sustainable Development–Ecology and Culture in India's Development Context' focuses attention on the factors leading to the degradation of environment such as deforestation, air pollution, water degradation, etc. A rather sociological-

anthropological take on the topic has been done by J.K. Pundir and Shalina Mehta in their papers. Mehta highlights the comparatively lesser known Deep Ecology movement which is oriented towards a scientific understanding of environment. She opines that to understand the concept of environment it is imperative to view it from both the bio-physical and cultural angles. A.K. Sharma in his paper feels that the situations post Second World War exposing the environmental crises that occurred drew the attention of the economists to the idea of sustainability. P.M. Tripathi draws attention to the fact that the combined efforts of the Government and the people can bear fruits as far as achieving the goal of sustainable development is concerned. Awadhesh Kumar Singh in his paper points out that the problems faced by the tribes are mainly due to the environmental destruction of tribal areas.

To have a better understanding of the interdependency of culture and environment it is necessary to adopt a people specific, area specific or culture specific approach. The papers by Subhadra Mitra Channa, Oinam Hemlata Devi, Meena K. Karkhwal, P.C. Joshi, S.M. Patnaik and Nilika Mehrotra, Vinay Kumar Srivastava and others deal with this. In their paper, 'The Politics of Water-Lake, People and the state', S.M. Patnaik and Nilika Mehrotra explain the importance of lake Chilka from the socio-cultural point of view. By going back in time they attempt at explaining that in the past when the lake and the area was controlled by the King of Parikuda ecological balance was maintained. However in the present times the lake forms a sorry picture of environmental degradation. The might of the state government dominates the fishing community which stands out as a frustrated lot. This is due to the patronizing attitude of the state government towards the non-fishing community. Fishermen complain that their non-fishing high caste neighbours have always looked down upon them as they considered fishing to be a lowly occupation. However, finding the prawn-cultivation rather lucrative they too have taken to fishing. The paper highlights the polarity between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' and the 'haves' forming a strong nexus to gain commercial benefit from the 'have nots'.

In a rather interesting sketch of the Bishnoi community of Rajasthan, Vinay Kumar Srivastava shows how the religious beliefs of a people go a long way in affecting their environment. The Bishnois adhere to the simple philosophy that doing what is good and right would yield good in one's life. The indirect result of this belief is safeguarding and enriching their environment. A rather fresh insight on the issue has been taken by Nadeem Hasnain who writes about Islamic environmentalism. How religious and environment correlate with each other, has been well brought out in his paper. He writes that:

Islamic view of man's place in nature and the use and conservation of resources prescribe a way of life that comprises an overall view of the universe, life, man, the relationship of man with the environment and man's sustainable utilization and development of natural resources.

A mentionable aspect of this book is that it has invited the views on culture ecology and sustainable development from an interdisciplinary perspective, thus making the entire discussion a rather rich one. Further, the book on the one hand makes for lucid and interesting reading and also aims at sensitizing the readers about the relevance of such a discussion to make our space a better place to live. As the world is advancing at a face pace, thanks to the progressing technology, it is confronting the hazards resulting out of this development. The need of the hour is wholesome sustainable development. The book is a sincere attempt at encapsulating the crucial issues around this theme.

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