

BOOK REVIEWS

Himalayan Ecology, Transhumance and Social Organisation: Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh

By Veena Bhasin

*xvi, 269 pp. Illustrations, Tables, Maps,
Bibliography, Index, Kamla-Raj Enterprises,
Delhi (1988). Rs 300.00 (Cloth)*

What Berreman has called 'Pahari culture' characterises the lives of those peoples distributed along the southern uplands of the Himalayas between western Kashmir and eastern Nepal. Its main features are the absence of complex caste stratification and flexibility in social organisation. In this book, Veena Bhasin examines closely the lifestyle of Gaddi villages in the Bharmour area of Chamba district, Himachal Pradesh, and convincingly demonstrates the intricate connections between environmental constraints, economy and social relationships. The fieldwork was conducted between 1976 and 1979 as part of the Indian contribution to the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere programme.

Chamba exhibits a configuration of vertical life zones, the Gaddis being mostly located between 1000 and 3000 metres. Although they attach great significance to rearing livestock, which provides them with meat, milk (though an insufficiency) and wool, agriculture is the source of the bulk of their food. During the four winter months, heavy snow, land shortage and poverty forces most of them to migrate to the lower hills and plains where they sell meat and wool, and where women and children are employed as domestic servants. Low temperatures, a short season and physical geography place limits on agricultural potential, necessitating crop sequenc-

ing and periodic vacancy; while manuring, intercropping, and the strategic planting of a wide range of cultivars on different soils and at varying altitudes enhances productivity and reliability.

Bhasin focusses on a medium sized settlement (pop.713) in Bharmour, where 31 percent of land is permanent pasture and grazing. Unrestricted grazing in the face of attempts by the forestry department to control access has led to instability, erosion and deterioration of forest. Land holdings are small and dispersed. It is partly for this reason that joint extended families are preferred, as such an entity allows for labour to be more effectively distributed between scattered fields and home-base. But nuclear households are the norm in Bharmour due to early partition caused by the divergent interests of brothers, and the need to maintain scheduling flexibility. The use of field dwellings when plots and village are far apart facilitates optimal land use and population densities, as Berreman had earlier argued. Because of the requirement to disperse in winter and concentrate in summer, local, communal and kinship ties are always changing.

Given the universality of land ownership, the marginality of the economy and labour shortfalls, the usual lowland model of gender and caste segregation is undermined. Women have much greater social and economic freedom (in contrast also with other pastoralist groups), and there are no traditional caste occupations in Bharmour. The *jajmani* system of the Punjab plain never developed beyond a rudimentary level and its historical demise was hardly noticed. In Bharmour there are only four castes: Brahman, Rajputs, Sipi and Rehara. There is little evidence of sanskritization and the author predicts that Gaddis are moving directly to an emphasis on modernisation.

There is a higher proportion of unclean (Sipi and Rehara) castes than on the plains, ranking within clean and unclean castes is difficult, inter-caste marriage and other forms of interaction are common, and the economic and demographic reality does not permit complex stratification. All these features reflect comparative isolation and small settlement size, but are also the consequence of a pre-independence system of land allocation whereby families were given only as much land as they could cultivate, followed by universal private ownership after 1947. This has encouraged low caste autonomy, discouraged high caste attempts to enforce subordination, and prevented the emergence of a significant group of large land holders. The restricted availability of land, low margins of productivity and lack of market outlets have additionally combined to prevent the emergence of both landless labourers and full-time specialists.

In any evaluation of this book, distinctions must be drawn between content and presentation, theory and ethnography. As a text, we might well have wished for less repetition, more careful proof-reading and a better quality of photographic reproduction. As an ethnographic analysis, much of the preliminary theoretical exegesis comes over as old-fashioned holism and adaptationism, and is frankly not really relevant to what follows. It is, for example, no longer acceptable at this horizon of conceptual operationalisation to treat, technology, environment and social relations as three variables; nor is it in the normal way necessary (as we find in the methodology section) to tell us how to conduct an interview. In short, although this is a valuable and workmanlike study with important lessons for development planning, it could have been comfortably shortened without distracting from the analysis.

Ethnographic research in many parts of the south Asian sub-continental mass routinely presents situations reminiscent of that which prompted Frederick Barth to resort to a niche model in his work on Swat, namely intricate patterns of cultural and environmental variation.

From a human ecological point of view, the area of Himachal Pradesh described here is complex and (despite its isolation) culturally open, suggesting no convenient lines of closure or dominant institutional forms of adaptation. What does, however, typify Bharmour is its many detailed and cross-cutting classifications of both material resources and potential strategies for social assistance. The impact on the reader of the author's description of all this is to positively bewilder, making it rather difficult to separate out what is really important from what is not. Quantitative information on work input and yields for different activities and labour arrangements might have helped to disentangle some of this, but is notably omitted. Indeed, the major theoretical question which these data do raise, but which is not directly addressed, is how - in general terms - we can make sense of such involution. But as Veena Bhasin is able to show, it is precisely the density of variation as it applies to Gaddi social organisation, which permits individual populations to adjust to precarious environmental conditions and demographic dispersal, where strategies with fewer options might prove ineffective.

REFERENCE

- Berremen G.D.: Cultural variability and drift in the Himalayan hills. *American Anthropologist*, 62: 774-794(1960).

R.F. Ellen
University of Kent at Canterbury
Kent CT 2 7NS, U.K.

Geographical Aspects of Health and Disease in India

Edited by Rais Akhtar and A.T.A. Learmonth
xxiv, + 466 pp., *Figures, Tables, References, Index*; Concept Publishing Co., New Delhi (1985)
Rs. 340.00 (Cloth)

Research on natural environment and human health attracts scholars from different field like

medicine, geography and other social sciences. This edited volume of research papers on various aspects of medical geography in India will be a great asset to students as well as researchers. Various aspects of health problems in relation to physical and social environments have been discussed. In addition to disease ecology, the levels of nutrition in different geographical regions and a possible environmental correlation have also been attempted. Socio-cultural and economic aspects of health and disease, spatial distribution of some major diseases and programmes related to their control, and trends towards different systems of medicine and health care geography have been included in this volume. The problem of measuring health board index to provide better health care has also been undertaken.

Twenty-three papers of this volume are grouped into five parts. The part I is introductory, including five papers on origin, development and methodology of medical geography in India. It gives a detailed account of the present levels of research in medical geography in India. Andrew Learmonth's paper on reflections on the regional geography of disease in late colonial South-Asia highlights both progress and problems in the development of medical geography since the independence. A.K. Dutt and H.M. Dutta have discussed the disease dynamics in South and South-east Asia in general, with particular reference to India.

M.J. Joshi and C.D. Deshpande have studied the pattern of disease, distribution and ecology in southern Asia, with special reference to the Indian sub-continent. With this, they have spatially analysed a number of infective and communicable diseases. According to them, the distribution of disease in southern Asia follows a well defined pattern; a group of diseases which occur in the Western region are rare in the Eastern and vice-versa. The border land between these two regions in respect to diseases corresponds largely with the ecological watershed. A.K. Tewari's paper on the geo-medical method and its application in the study of medical geo-

graphy of Rajasthan, raises question on the methodology: 'The geo-medical method consists of public health studies in varied areal complexes. The geographer's contribution in this field is by way of graphic and numeric analysis of spatial variations and associations of endemic and epidemic diseases. The causative factors of human maladies become self evident when correlated with the elements of environment'. Taking Rajasthan as a model, Tewari presents a useful case study which integrates all the important facets of community health.

The part II of the book deals with disease ecology at macro - and micro - levels. M.K. Dutta has discussed the diffusion and ecology of cholera in India. In an endemic form, cholera is confined to certain areas which are not humid. As the germ of the disease is orally introduced to the human stomach, the socio cultural practices of human groups influence its spatial distribution.

R. Akhtar and A.T.A. Learmonth have taken the resurgence of malaria in India during the period 1965-76 and dealt with various factors that lead to malaria resurgence and areas which were effected by the disease since 1965.

R. Akhtar's paper is on the geographical distribution of cancer in India. This information is of vital importance in order to ascertain specific causes of the disease related to the geography of the area. Indra Pal and H.S. Mathur have discussed ecology of various helminthic diseases in Rajasthan. J. P. Sharma's paper evaluates the incidence, ranking and intensity of major disease in District Tehri, U.P. B. Hyma and A. Ramesh have discussed the geographic distribution and trends in cholera incidence in Tamil Nadu. R. Akhtar focuses on the problem of goitre in Kumaon Himalayas. Although smallpox has been eradicated completely, the paper by S. Singh and H.M. Dutta comments briefly on some correlates which explain the pattern of smallpox in Patna city during 1973-75.

Part III of the book deals with nutrition and deficiency diseases. R.P. Misra's paper deals with current nutritional status of the Indian population, the achievements in the last 30 years

since the independence and has predicted the prospects that lie ahead during the rest of this century. M. Shafi's paper is a comparative study of the food production efficiency and the availability of nutrition in terms of colonies in India. M.F. Siddiqi's paper deals with concentration of deficiency diseases in Uttar Pradesh. However, 'the study of regional dominance and the degree of concentration of various diseases as presented in the paper remains purely descriptive, unless the geographical distribution is linked up with ecological factors that influence their degree of incidence and prevalence'. Kailash Choubey's paper is a case study which deals with diseases of Sagar city in light of environment and nutritional deficiency factors. Rais Akhtar presents the geography of nutrition in the Kumaon Himalayas.

Socio-economic aspects towards health have been dealt with in Part IV. L. Schuyler Fanaroff and Arlene Fanaroff analyse the cultural environment of medical geography in rural Hindu India. It is a reprint of an earlier paper published in 1966. Changes must have come in these twenty-four years. The life expectancy has increased from 27 years in 1939 to 45 years in 1964 to 58 years in 1988. Disease incidence, pattern and control must have changed in all these years. A. Ramesh and B. Hyma throw light on the practical aspects of traditional Indian medicine and are primarily concerned with its distribution and socio-economic characteristics of the practitioners, rather than theoretical or developmental ideals. This paper reports and examines some findings related to the preference of the rural people for indigenous and modern physicians and systems of medicine in four selected villages of Punjab. They suggest certain conditions under which indigenous systems may be preferred over modern by choice rather than by tradition. Fanaroff points out that even where facilities are available, people do not always use them due to persistent cultural habits and beliefs about disease causation and treatment. Assumption of this type marks the fact that attitudes towards a given system of cure may not be so much dependent upon tradition as on the expect-

tancy of cure. It has been suggested by the authors that the culturally relevant classification of diseases be developed for understanding bases of preference of rural people for specific types of medical systems. A. Ramesh and B. Hyma's research paper is primarily concerned with some practical aspects of the persistence of traditional Indian medical practices (Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani) in the city of Madras. This paper investigates and presents a graphic outline of the services provided to the people by the Indian medical system and will provide some guide for further understanding of the extent, durability and continuity of services provided by this system.

Part V looks into the methodology involved and some case studies in health care geography. B.N. Mukherjee's paper analyses the formulation of a health hazard index to be adopted in micro-regional health planning. Rais Akhtar and N. Izhar identify inequalities in the distribution of health facilities in India.

This volume has presented various aspects of health problems in relation to physical and cultural environment. Their findings can be used in research or operational programmes to control major health problems in India. This book will be of use to students and researchers in medical geography, medical anthropology, environmental sciences, epidemiology, nutrition, public health, agriculture, sociology and regional health care planning.

Veena Bhasin

Department of Anthropology
University of Delhi, Delhi-110 007, India

Environmental Science: Living within the System of Nature

By Charles E. Kupchella and Margaret C. Hyland,
637 + A-28 pp., *Figures, Photographs, References,
Index. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, London, Sydney,
Toronto (1989) 2nd Edition (Paper).*

The world continues to have serious environmental problems with little likelihood of their

being solved soon. The seriousness of our global ecological problems demands a serious introductory text book on environmental science. The book under review focuses on the main issues of an environmental science, and is basic for students heading for careers in business, science, education, humanities, engineering, agriculture and other fields.

The authors' approach is human-centred; when the environment is harmed, the humans are consequently harmed - "this book is based on the idea that the principles of ecology are the paradigms upon which environmental science must be based". Substantiating this central idea, the authors have collated vast documentation, charts, graphs, pictures, diagrams, etc. The complex web of economics, social, political, ethical and legal aspects is well discussed as it has bearing upon the environmental decision making.

The authors refrain from offering or attempting any simple solution. Too much is still unknown and most environmental problems are too complex for simple solution. Facts and figures presented in the form of charts and graphs offer empirical material from which the readers can make their own assessments. The international environmental problem, using examples and illustrations, have been discussed, for example a description and analysis of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl (pp. 170-172); air pollution disasters like Meuse Valley, Belgium (1930), Donora, Pennsylvania (1948), London (1952) etc. (pp. 283-84).

Eighteen Chapters comprising this book have been grouped into four parts. The part one provides the principles of ecology, followed by separate chapters on energy flow, nutrient cycles, population and community ecology and the origin of ecosystems. Human needs for energy, water and mineral resources in relation to principles of ecology, water and mineral resources in relation to principles of ecology have been examined in the second part. Impact of human activities on biosphere and vice-versa have been taken up in the third part. Negative impacts of human activities on biosphere have been detailed

out, followed by a short history of some notable air pollution are closely related. The effects of air pollution on human health (respiratory and other diseases), on plant life, ozone shield have been described in detail. The problem of acid rain: What goes up must come down somewhere, sometime, in some form, its reasons, effects on lakes and aquatic communities, terrestrial system, wildlife other than fish are taken into account.

In Chapter 11, some measures of controlling air pollution have been suggested. In Chapter 12, water pollution, its types, sources of water pollution, some notable examples of polluted waters, wastewater treatment and other types of water pollution control have been discussed. The Chapter 13 deals with land use and misuse. Problems of soil erosion and soil conservation have also been taken into account. Land is affected not only by its use and treatment but also by what is being put into it. It has always been the ultimate garbage can. Land disposal of waste, radioactive waste disposal and saving land from waste has been discussed.

Human beings have a significant impact on other species. Chapter 14 of the book deals with wildlife, wilderness and other biological resources. Noise, crowding and ugly surroundings and psycho-physiological effects of these on human beings form the subject of Chapter 15. Following it is a general analysis of some environmental pollutants and the way in which they get into the ecosphere, contaminating other spheres subsequently. There are many kinds of diseases associated with environmental degradation and hazardous materials. Cancer, infectious diseases, birth defects, neurological problems, liver, respiratory and kidney diseases have been discussed in relation to environment.

The part four consists of two editorial chapters. Government, politics, economics and other institutions and their general relationship to environmental problems has been discussed. An editorial summary that outlines the nature of environmental problems and problem in dealing with them has been discussed in Chapter 18.

This is the second edition of a serious introductory environmental science textbook. This book takes the readers beyond the superficial level dealing facts and substance of environmental science. Having a big-picture approach, miniglossaries, enrichment boxes, substantiate and summarize each point, and at the end of each chapter, major points have been enumerated; therefore its educational value is very high. References for further readings have also been listed. The need for international approaches to global environmental problems has been explained and emphasised, thus making clear that neither problems nor their solutions are limited by national boundaries. We need a global approach and international cooperation to an optimum solution of ecosphere degradation.

V. S. Bhatia
Department of Anthropology
University of Delhi, Delhi-110 007, India

Social Change in Village India

By Sachchidananda

230 pp., References, Index. Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi (1988), Rs. 200-00 (Cloth).

The present book under review comprises of eighteen essays, thirteen of which have already appeared in different journals between 1967 and 1984. The present collection succeeds in describing the changing social reality of village India by focussing on agrarian relations and caste system which are accepted by many as the structural bases of Indian society.

The papers have been classified into three sections: caste and its ramifications, rural society and the rural development, and social change and social problems. The first part deals with changes in the caste system because of various democratic measures, such as abolition of untouchability, reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes in legislative and local bodies and universal adult franchise. These democratic measures coupled

with the efforts of various social reformers, especially those of Mahatma Gandhi, attacked the very foundation of the caste system. As a result, the high castes who hitherto were enjoying ritual, economic and political supremacy over the others, started feeling insecure and threatened. This led to caste conflict and caste Hindu violence against the Harijans. The author gives a succinct account of such anti-Harijan violence, illustrating it with empirical cases from different parts of India, and analyses their nature, cause and consequences, and suggests remedial measures for them.

In the second part, the author has tried to answer questions pertaining to the arena of rural society and rural development: what should be the strategy and approach of rural development in India? how to channelise, successfully and efficiently, the potential of rural youth in nation building? how the fruits of development would reach the rural poor? do these land reform measures really bridge the gap between the rich landlords and the landless poor? and finally, what are the recent changes in Indian peasantry? We shall discuss some of these queries later while critically examining the book.

The third part of this book deals with the changing socio-cultural scenario of village India, especially due to their exposure to modern innovations through television (TV) and voluntary action. From a comparative study of three villages in Bihar and Rajasthan, the author has identified some critical factors having a bearing on the adoption of telecast messages and innovations. They are: educational level, degree of social consciousness, economic condition, nature of political leadership, caste composition of the village and the role of school teacher in spreading the message conveyed through the TV. The role of the voluntary agencies along with the challenges they faced in the eighties, have also been discussed in greater detail. The last paper of the book which is on corruption as an institutionalized form of social reality is the only one justifying the sub title/theme of the third section, 'social problems'.

Though the book is a good attempt to understand various processes of change in village India, it is certainly not free from some confusions. One wonders why the author does not distinguish between *Jati* (caste) and *Varna*. Is *kshatriya* a caste (p. 4 and 5)? or is it a *Varna* category? Such distinctions are important for understanding the complex reality of Indian society.

While discussing the processes of change, Prof. Sachchidananda writes: "the processes of politicization and modernization has undermined the earlier processes of sanskritization" (P-8); it implies that sanskritization as a process of change is gradually being replaced by politicization and modernization. It should be mentioned here that these processes can not be arranged in any kind of succession or chronology. All of them occurred simultaneously; even in earlier days, when the touchable castes were sanskritizing themselves, the untouchables, who were denied every possibility to sanskritize, resorted to 'politicization', to move up in the power axis. Both the groups were exposed, though with varying degree, to the modernizing forces.

Distinguishing between two types of violence, Prof. Sachchidananda defines the *violence of establishment* as that which is initiated by those who oppress, exploit and fail to recognise others as 'persons'. Centralized bureaucracy, police and other machinery for law and order, caste system and large business houses by their power, position, wealth or merit provide infrastructure for such violence. This violence is not seen and is often unrecognised or unaccounted for (p. 39). On the other hand the *violence of protest* is a reaction to the former on the part of the oppressed, the exploited and the downtrodden (P.40). This distinction is based not on the nature of violence but on the persons who initiate violence. Some confusion arises when the author at one place says that the violence of establishment is not seen and often unrecognised (P-39) and in some other place includes the violence by law and order machinery (which is often visible) under such type. However, a more meaningful

typology of violence would have resulted had it been classified into *covert* and *overt* violence.

While searching for an alternative strategy of rural development, Prof. Sachchidananda rightly argues for *location specific models* of development (P-82) instead of a single model for the whole of India. But *culture specific models* would definitely have better relevance in the field of rural development.

The essay on rural family in west Bihar is full of factual details and provides some guidelines to data collection. In terms of analysis, a diachronic approach following the developmental cycle (or process) of domestic group would have been more useful.

The concluding note to the essay on the social organization of peasant society in India is another source of confusion. Its title 'A vanishing social category' (P-139) gives an impression as if the peasants are dissociating into 'something else'. But when the note is read further, Prof. Sachchidananda tells us that the sociologists should identify the social organization, normative structure and value charter of different categories of peasants and refrain from speaking 'of one generalized social organization for all peasant societies in India' (P-140).

On the whole, Prof. Sachchidananda's collection of essays is a useful introductory reading. But the references cited at the end of the essays are in most cases incomplete.

Soumendra Mohan Patnaik
Department of Anthropology
University of Delhi, Delhi-110 007, India

Culture and Urbanization

By S.M. Michael

422 pp. Tables, Photographs, Appendix,
Bibliography, Index. Inter-India Publications,
New Delhi (1989, Rs. 380.00 (Cloth))

Culture and Urbanization is about Kerala and Tamil Nadu migrants in Bombay. It seeks to

explore the relationship between ecological and cultural background of the migrants on the one hand and their adaptation to the urban milieu of Bombay on the other. This study suggests that variation in their mode of adjustment is related to differences in the ecological conditions and the cultural ethos from which they come.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part provides a theoretical and cultural backcloth to the study. The empirical findings are presented in the second part, while the third part recapitulates the main conclusions. Field work for this study was conducted in Goregaon-West, a suburb of Bombay. Data were collected by qualitative as well as quantitative techniques.

The main argument that Michael has tried to put forward in the book is that the Tamils show marked nativistic tendencies and live in close-knit clusters in Bombay whereas, Keralites do not reveal such tendencies. This is related to the fact that in Tamil Nadu people live in nucleated villages within which there is a close-knit social life. In Kerala, on the other hand, there are dispersed villages. It is the house and not the village which is the unit of social life. Residential clusters of all castes centre around a Nayar tar-

avad or Nambudiri *illam*.

In Bombay, the Tamils have created a replica of their indigenous cultural milieu. They have clustered in settlements in different parts of the city in accordance with their caste and district of origin, unlike the Keralites. The latter, on the other hand, have been not only geographically, but economically and socially more mobile. It is the author's view that by and large, Keralites live in better material and economic conditions than Tamils. However, disparity along caste lines is more obvious among Tamils. Both communities have set up socio-cultural associations for the betterment of their respective regional communities. Those of Tamils are more caste-oriented and their activities are mainly cultural and religious. The Keralite associations on the other hand, work for the upliftment of their members by establishing dispensaries, educational institutions, etc.

Though the book is very readable and well organized, it could very easily have been a shorter and more compact presentation.

Alka Malvankar
Department of Sociology, Miranda House
University of Delhi, Delhi-110 007, India