

Book Review

-Chandra Bahadur Shrestha

B. P. Shrestha and S. C. Jain, **Regional Development In Nepal : An Exercise In Reality**, Delhi: Development publishers, 1978, pp. 156, tables and index.

Shrestha and Jain have written a very informative book on regions development in Nepal. The book contains a comprehensive regional account of different sections. Besides regional development strategy objectives and programmes are well treated. There are good attempts to look at development problems on regional basis. The appearance of a book of this nature is especially welcome at this time when strategy and objectives of regional planning are highly confused even at government level in Nepal.

The book is divided into two parts Part I contains four chapters and Part II three chapters. Four chapters of part I make reviews of existing conditions of national economy, agriculture, industry and infrastructure and social services on regional basis. Three chapters of parts II present strategy, objective and programmes of regional development in Nepal. The policy measures which are suggested in these chapters appear to be valuable guide lines in developing regional development policies in future. Right prospective regarding development concept has been categorically identified by emphasizing the fact that development and distribution should go side by side.

Development reviews which are presented in part I are made on sectoral basis by taking macro regions as regional framework. Different regional development measures which have been implemented in different forms are not reviewed in conceptual contexts. A critical regional analysis of existing socio-economic conditions is not effectively presented and all reviews are made in a broad general way. As a result,

the accounts given in part I appear to be highly descriptive. Moreover, the data which are provided in the book are for broad regional units. And in several cases, the data are incomplete in coverage of regional units (for instance, see tables 4, 5, 6, & 7 which do not include the Himalayan region). No explanation about this omission is given.

Seven different regional units including three ecological belts (Terai, Hills and the Himalayas) and four development regions (Eastern, Central, Western and Far western development regions) are generally used for regional treatment. But this has been done without examining their validity for planning purposes. Moreover, the basis of regional structure which is presented in the book is left unexplained.

The term 'regional development' has been used without defining it. Similarly, it is not made clear whether it is regional planning or regional approach in development which is being adopted in Nepal. The fact that neither there is any conflict between the national and regional objectives nor is there any need for a compromise between the two is not a new assumption as the authors try to claim. It is rather a non-controversial assumption. The differential rates of growth suggested for the four development regions are not supported by detailed survey of resources potentials of different regions. Therefore, one may doubt the validity of these growth rates.

In several cases, descriptions have been treated at national level, and their regional basis has not been well explored (see P.19 and several sections of Regional Development Programmes). In several sections of the chapter on Regional Development Programmes only listings of future programmes and activities are provided. The rational basis and future direction and forms of micro-regional units for these programmes need to be effectively analysed and well elaborated. Spatial dimensions of regional development strategy and objectives are not spelled out.

There are some conceptual mistakes in the book. For example, the growth axis is wrongly conceived as one tier in the hierarchy of growth centres. The concept of the hierarchy of growth centres is derived from the Central Place Theory. Conceptually, a tier constitutes a centre or a point not a corridor or a line as the authors have conceived here (P. 150). The authors claim that the proposed growth

hierarchy from the present 2 to 5 tier may be useful in the implementation of the integrated development programme (P. 155). This shows that the authors have failed to notice the fact that the idea of the hierarchy of multi-tier development centres is implicit in the policy measures on regional development specified in the Fourth plan of the country. The hierarchy of development centres which the authors have proposed is a popular model which incorporates well defined spatial frameworks. Such frameworks are not spelled out well in the book in the right context.

One obvious discouraging feature of the book is that it completely lacks illustrations in the form of maps, and diagrams except for an outline sketch map on the cover page. The names of several regional units and growth corridors appear very often in the text, and the foreign readers particularly may get confused as to their relative positions and locations owing to absence of relevant maps. In several cases, statements and arguments could be made very impressive with strong visual effect by representing data by means of suitable diagrams.

There are some factual mistakes and inconsistencies. For example, the statement that 9 out (of) 10 persons reside in rural areas (P. 6) is wrong as the people living in urban centres with 5,000 or more population are not more than 5.5 per cent of the total population of the country. The use of two different units of measurements (kilometres and miles in P.1) in similar contexts is an example of inconsistency. In spite of several limitations noted above, the book is to be considered as a valuable contribution on regional development study in Nepal.

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Activities (Nepal Geographical Society)

1. NGS ELECTION :

The election for the Executive Committee of Nepal Geographical Society for the term of 1979-81 was held at Padma Kanya Campus on July 20, 1979. Dr. Soorya Lal Amatya was elected President unopposed, and similarly Dr. Pitambar Sharma, Dr. Mangal S. Manandhar, Mr. Chakramehr Vajracharya and Mr. Indra N. Manandhar as Vice-President, Secretary, Joint Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Dr. Bal Kumar K. C. and Mr. Bhim Prasad Subedi were elected unopposed while Dr. Vidya Bir Singh Kansakar and Mr. Anand Man Sakya were nominated by the newly elected Executive Committee to fill up its members.

2. RECEPTION :

- 1) Nepal Geographical Society gave a reception at Hotel Bluestar in honour of Dr. Ratna Rana and Prof Upendra Man Malla for their appointments in the high post of Vice-Chairman and member respectively of National Planning Commission
- 2) Nepal Geographical Society graced a reception at Hotel Blue star in honour of Dr. Hiran D. Dias, Associate Professor, Division of Human Settlements Development, Asian institute of Technology (AIT), Bangkok on Oct. 8, 1979.

3. TALK PROGRAMMES :

- 1) In June 1979, Dr. Pitamber Sharma, Lecturer at Geography Instruction Committee, Tribhuvan University gave a talk to Nepal Geographical Society at Padma Kanya Campus auditorium. The subject of his talk was "Energy Consumption and societal Development: A cross-national analysis". The talk was based on his doctoral thesis presented to Cornell University, U. S. A., in 1978.
- 1) In August 1979, Dr. Mahesh Banskota, Research officer at CEDA gave a talk to Nepal Geographical Society at Padma Kanya Campus auditorium. The Subject of his talk was "The Nepalese Hill Agro-ecosystem: The impact of Alternative Policies on Food Production, Household Energy and Environmental Change" based on his doctoral thesis presented to Cornell University, U. S. A., 1978.
- 2) Dr. Sheela Rani Srivastava, Lecturer at Geography Instruction Committee, Tribhuvan University gave a talk to Nepal Geographical Society at Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur on Oct. 18, 1979. The topic of her talk was "Asian Community in Glasgow" based on her doctoral thesis, Glasgow University, 1977.