

Book Review

Shrestha, B.P., **An Introduction to Nepalese Economy**, Kathmandu, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 4th Edition, 1981, Foreword by Prof. N. M. Singh, pp 274. Price Rs 40/- N. C.

There is no denying that the economy of a country is highly dynamic. In this sense, Nepalese economy in no way stands as an exception to this general rule. Virtually speaking, the degree of dynamism hinges basically on the nature of plans, programmes and policies formulated and executed during different periods. The present work by Dr. Shrestha is designed to depict the prominent features pertaining to diverse aspects of Nepalese economy. His treatise is divided into 19 chapters dealing with all the vital facets of Nepalese economy. It contains a myriad of statistical tables reflecting the dimensions and trends of growth processes.

Since the economy of Nepal has always been found to be influenced to a large measure by ecological environments, the writer has initially endeavoured to introduce the broad geographic features of the country. The approach he adopted is really appreciable. But this performance is found to be set with a number of inexcusable shortcomings.

To begin with, he states that the length of Nepal in an east-west direction is 842 Km. The Tarai and inner Tarai represent 21.4%, hills 44.2% and Himalaya 34.4% of the total area of the country. In actuality, their figures in round numbers must be 885Km, 25%, 51% and 25% respectively. In his version, Nepal gets rain from S. W. monsoon; and in winter western Nepal receives rain from N. E. monsoon (pp 1-2). In fact, the summer monsoon blows to Nepal from S. E. direction and during winter rain is caused not by N. E. monsoon, but by westerly cyclones. To continue further, he speaks of Chure Mountain. Really speaking, it is a hill not a mountain. It should have been stated as Chure Hill or Chure Range. In reckoning temperature the scale most widely and popularly used in these days is centigrade. But the author

presents it here in fahrenheit scale (p 2). In regard to the nomenclature of development regions of Nepal as well, the Mid-western Development Region (4th region) has been mistermned as the Far Western Development Region (pp. 3-4). According to him, there are two Far Western Development Regions in Nepal. It is quite absurd. Further, he refers the tarai region as tropical zone. On the basis of latitudinal extent, it should have been stated as sub-tropical zone. To add more, he has frequently used the name of Malaya in lieu of Malaysia. He is unaware that Malaya as a state does not exist at all. In the chapter on mineral resources too, outdated terms like East No. 1 and West No. 1 have been employed. Instead of these obsolete terms, he should have mentioned the name of districts. As regards the total area of Nepal, he has presented 1,47,881 sq. km. (p. 1) and 54362 sq. miles (p.48). These figures are dissimilar not only in terms of the unit of measurement, but also in the actual area of the country. The factual errors enumerated above are enough to reflect in the author the lack of even the broad geographic apprehension of the country he lives in.

Though written by an eminent economist, the book presents a number of vague or meaningless statements such as the following ... students taking the examinations(p. 43). It conveys opposite sense. It should have been stated as "students appearing in examinations. ... Nautanwa alwa with (p. 51). It is meaningless

Where the rates of interest charged varied from 10 to 150 percent (p. 63). This sentence looks odd and incomplete..... were reduced to almost all due to merger of ... (p. 100). It is absolutely inexplicit.

He has used the term •Kilomile (p. 51). Who can interpret it ?

In addition, the book, though widely recognised as an authoritative one, abounds in grammatical errors pertaining to syntax, punctuation, etc. A few instances presented below would support it another seven rivers (p. 2), Seti, and Mahakali, zones (p. 4); Nepal now have five development regions (p. 4); the reserve are (p. 21); Literature Population (p. 44); 300 qualified doctors (p. 46). Here the word "qualified" is superfluous It make (p. 85); There was no laws (p. 106); all of those tax (p. 125); trade directions has changed (p. 170); measures of stabilize (p. 178); There is, however no, [p. 219]; As matter of fact [p. 271]; in order for [p. 273]; 3394 crore [p. 265]; runway to the extended [p. 54]. It should be "runway to be extended.

presents it here in fahrenheit scale (p 2). In regard to the nomenclature of development regions of Nepal as well, the Mid-western Development Region (4th region) has been mistermned as the Far Western Development Region (pp. 3-4). According to him, there are two Far Western Development Regions in Nepal. It is quite absurd. Further, he refers the tarai region as tropical zone. On the basis of latitudinal extent, it should have been stated as sub-tropical zone. To add more, he has frequently used the name of Malaya in lieu of Malaysia. He is unaware that Malaya as a state does not exist at all. In the chapter on mineral resources too, outdated terms like East No. 1 and West No. 1 have been employed. Instead of these obsolete terms, he should have mentioned the name of districts. As regards the total area of Nepal, he has presented 1,47,881 sq. km. (p. 1) and 54362 sq. miles (p.48). These figures are disimilar not only in terms of the unit of measurement, but also in the actual area of the country. The factual errors enumerated above are enough to reflect in the author the lack of even the broad geographic apprehension of the country he lives in.

Though written by an eminent economist, the book presents a number of vague or meaningless statements such as the following ... students taking the examinations(p. 43). It conveys opposite sense. It should have been stated as "students appearing in examinations. ... Nautanwa alwa with (p. 51). It is meaningless

Where the rates of interest charged varied from 10 to 150 percent (p. 63). This sentence looks odd and incomplete..... were reduced to almost all due to merger of ... (p. 100). It is abslutely inexplicit.

He has used the term 'Kilomile (p. 51). Who can interpret it ?

In addition, the book, though widely recognised as an authoritative one, abounds in grammatical errors pertaining to syntax, punctuation, etc. A few instances presented below would support it another seven rivers (p. 2), Seti, and Mahakali, zones (p. 4); Nepal now have five development regions (p. 4); the reserve are (p. 21); Literature Population (p. 44); 300 qualified doctors (p. 46). Here the word "qualified" is superfluous It make (p. 85); There was no laws (p. 106); all of those tax (p. 125); trade directions has changed (p. 170); measures of stabilize (p. 178); There is, however no, [p. 219]; As matter of fact [p. 271]; in order for [p. 273]; 3394 crore [p. 265]; runway to the extended [p. 54]. It should be "runway to be extended.

Still more numerous are the mis-spelt words all of which cannot be accepted as press mistakes. A few evidences are as follows: 'Marsyangdi' for Marsyangdi (p. 2), 'experts' for experts (p. 19) 'Dangadi' for Dhangadhi (p. 50), 'guage' for gauge (p. 51), 'weather' for whether (p. 53), 'foot tracts' for foot tracks [p. 50], 'cummunication' for communication [p. 54], 'easil' for easily [p. 55], 'Pipartar' for Pipaltar [p. 67], 'Kgheri' for Khageri [p. 67], 'Tan-hau' for Tanahu (p. 67), 'Judishpur' for Jagadishpur [p.67], 'by' for be [p.102], 'querying' for quarring [p. 105], 'competetion' for competition [p. 125], 'we-re' for were [p. 141], 'Bhairawha' for Bhairahawa [p. 139], 'boras' for borax [p. 144], 'boarder' for border [p. 154], 'terpentine' for tarpentine [p.263] and so on.

Although the book is of 1981 edition, most of the facts and figures presented therein are outdated. Moreover, entirely diverse data have been presented for the same phenomenon in different pages. For example, hydel power production from the Kosi Project has been presented as 10,000 Kw. [p. 7], 7,500 Kw. [p. 10] and 6800 Kw. [p. 11]. The agricultural employment of the total active population has been indicated as 92.7% [p. 59] and 90% [p. 37]. Likewise, the per capita arable land has been shown as 0.18 hectares [p. 41] and 0.19 hectares [p. 60]. Such a variation in data is bound to cause much confusion among readers on one side and may also alleviate the popularity of the text.

Another amazing aspect in the presentation of data is the extreme deviation from those established and accepted widely. The hydro-power potential of Nepal has been estimated to be 83,000 Mw. But the book shows it as 8,300 Mw [p. 13]. It is obviously a colossal difference of ten times. Similarly, the GNP which is 4.3% per annum has been presented as 43%. It explicitly reveals the utter carelessness on the part of the author. The literacy percentage shown in the book is 33.4% in 1979-80. It is only 24.5% even in later year, 1981. The total active population engaged in agriculture is 90% but the book, as indicated previously it as 92.7%. The total forest area which now has been computed to be 29% of the total area of Nepal has been shown here as 34.20%. It is the estimation made before 1979.

Still more gloomy picture is the extreme variation in the units of measurement. In a master book like this, the unit of measurement which is widely acceptable is metric unit. But on the contrary, the measurement units used herein are various. e. g., acres, ropanies, hectares, miles, kilometres, feet, metres, maunds, seers, kilograms, muries, pathies, bushels, etc. Such a random use of measurement units is sure to scale down the academic value of the book under review.

Among the existing natural resources of Nepal, soil is also very significant inasmuch as it exerts tremendous impact on agricultural productivity. But the book does not deal anything on this valuable resource. Likewise, tourist industry which now is deep-rooted in the economy of Nepal should have been elaborated upon to an adequate extent. But it has been totally ignored. One of the massive hydel projects under execution and also near completion in Nepal is the Kulekhani Hydro Project. But the book does not mention even its name. On the other hand, a minor project irrigating just 32 hectares of land has been listed in the table of major irrigation projects. It really looms quite queer. In addition, one of the burning topics in Nepal at present is human migration. But the text in its population chapter does not spare any space for such a vital point.

As far as the approach is concerned, the treatment of subject-matter seems to be highly critical and analytical. Moreover, most chapters are preceded by lengthy historical background and the chapter on "Economic Planning and Development" has been made unduly lengthy. Most of the pages under the chapter have been devoted to earlier plans, while the treatment of the sixth plan which is far more significant has not been elaborated upon to an adequate length. The concluding chapter "Planning through Panchayat" deserves, however, ample appreciation. To continue further, there is utter lack of consistency in expression. It is quite stiff in some pages. As such, the book, though excellent for teachers and scholars, may not be so helpful to average students as it was supposed to be. As a matter of fact, the target group ought to be the students themselves.

On the whole, the treatise, notwithstanding the aforementioned weaknesses, is, I think, a master piece in the domain of Nepalese Economy. Its print is quite fine and get-up attractive. It is a valuable treatise, which, I deem, is, worth reading as well as possessing by all those interested in Nepalese Economy. At the same time, due care ought to be taken in subsequent editions for keeping up the good name of the book intact.

S. H. Shrestha*

* Mr. S. H. Shrestha, is now a Reader in Geography, Geography Instruction Committee, Kirtipur Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University.