

BOOK REVIEW

GEOGRAPHY OF INDIA. By Prithvish Nag and Smitha Sengupta. Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 110059. Rs. 300/- (Student Edition Rs. 75/-). 280 pp. 1992.

During the past two or three decades there have been a few books on Geography of India. They invariably were descriptive, dealing with various themes, on a regional basis, the regions being divided on generally accepted criteria. Besides the above, there have been many more books on specific themes covering the entire country or small parts of it. In the latter case, they were more often products of Ph.D. theses of varying quality.

The book under review is a welcome departure in the sense that it treats the country as a whole, though briefly under specific themes, some, not necessarily geographical, but yet of interest to the general reader. The noteworthy features in the book are the numerous maps which automatically give a synoptic view of the theme under discussion. The authors have made good use of the different NATMO maps already available. Further, to substantiate some of the statements made and conclusions drawn, numerous tables have been included containing data culled from reports and publications of many Government Organisations of the Centre and the State, most of them belonging to the year 1981, and a few of later years as well.

The text is well written in simple language so that it could be easily understood by any graduate student of geography or any other subject, for that matter, in India. It would also serve as a very handy book for others who would like to have some information on the various themes dealt with here. The Appendices are adequate and the References will be of considerable help to those who would like to know more on the themes dealt with. The 24 chapters cover almost all the conventional themes under geography like physiography, geology, climate, soil, forest resources, land use, irrigation, agriculture, population, settlements, industry etc., besides a few of some relevance and interest like education, economy, environment, Indian Ocean etc.

To reproduce a map to fit into the size of the page of the book, substantial reductions have been made, which is understandable. But this has resulted in the symbols, particularly in the Index, not being distinguishable (Maps 7.1, 13.1, 13.2) and letters becoming too small (Maps 2.1, 21.1). Boundaries are incomplete in some (Map 2.2), and the Index in Map 3.1, which is not structure but stratigraphy, contains the sequence a little jumbled up. In Map 4.3 Narmada river does not meet the sea, but joins Son (?) by headward erosion! The drainage lines in the Eastern Region have all joined together and the units on the scale (km) is missing. Map 14.2, about the second language in each State, while statistically may be right, gives a false picture. Where is 'Urdu spoken' in Map 14.1?

There are some mistakes which have got to be corrected, like: 'Peninsular India has not undergone marine transgression since Archaean times' (p. 32), 'Precambrian metamorphic rocks form the bulk of the Himalaya' (p. 35), 'Reserved faults' (p. 36), 'Drought-prone projects (!)' (p. 69), 'Appetite' (p. 91) for Apatite etc. Number of villages in India is given as 576000 on p. 167 and 557000 on p. 183, and the manufacture of yarn is given as 1.2 tonnes (p. 195). It is hoped that in a subsequent edition of this book all the above errors and many more minor ones, including spelling mistakes, will all be rectified.

This book will serve as an introduction to Geography of India and deserves to be kept in all the libraries in the country. It is good to know that a student edition of this is available for Rs. 75/- per copy.