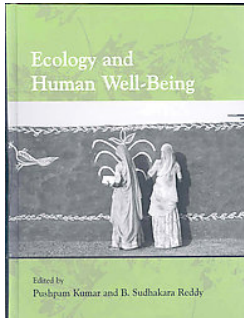


Ecology and Human Well-Being

Parthasarathi Mondal



Ecological economics is fast emerging as an alternative framework of natural resource management in a globalising world. This volume, based on some of the papers presented at the Fourth Biennial Conference of INSEE at Mumbai in 2005, seeks to contribute to an understanding of the Indian subcontinent scenario by conducting an in-depth discussion on section-wise themes related to ecological and social resilience, ecosystem services and quality of life, policy reform for sustainable development, valuation for ecosystem changes, communities and collective action.

In the first section, Z. A. Islam narrates the detailed measures which riverbank erosion causes in Bangladesh before, during and after their displacement from their original homelands. R. Nallathiga shows how land and water degradation in Andhra Pradesh is conditioned by natural, anthropogenetic and socio-economic factors. J. Sathyapalan and S. Iyengar discuss how over-exploitation of groundwater leading to salinity affects the Gujarati society. In their effort to reconcile strong with weak sustainability, B.S. Sri and M.S.V. Prasad re-examine the concept of total capital from the perspective of ecological economics and recommend the need for improved institutional and policy support.

In the next section on ecosystem services and quality of life, A.C. Gupta and R.N. Bhattacharyya integrate an economic biodiversity index and environmental quality variable under different biodiversity scenarios in the case of fisheries in West Bengal to show the need to minimize the conflict between conservation and profits. A somewhat similar conclusion is reached by K. Gupta et al in the case of fisheries in West Bengal and Orissa. A. Shah works out a local and participatory methodology to balance biodiversity loss and economic costs in the context of Gir Protected Area, Gujarat.

In the section on valuation of ecosystems, D. Mondal et al work out a detailed methodology to quantify wetlands in West Bengal and the rest of the papers here extend their efforts towards valuation of urban wetlands, mangroves in coastal Orissa, and forested areas. In this context the detailed discussion of Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare in B. Bley's paper is noteworthy. The papers on community and natural resources management which follow investigate various issues related to human-forest interaction, roots of collective action amongst private landowners and public land users, and the role of people's values on natural resource management. P. Sudha et al discusses these issues in the context of joint forest management in Karnataka whilst H.N. Chanakya et al critically examine – through the study of food

security in Tamil Nadu - to what extent India's policies favour community participation. S.C. Srivastava's paper shows how these policies favour the market economy, and Z. Hussain highlights these issues by doing a comparative study of fisheries in Kolkata, and tiger reserves in Rajasthan and Karnataka.

The papers in the last section insist on policy reforms which would make economic development come to terms with 'limits-to-growth' and thus promote sustainable development. There is an emphasis on locally sensitive planning and management of resources although it is noticeable that the paper by S.V. Subramaniam calls for strengthening the "distributive governance of existing sectoral departments". This book is a valuable contribution to the debate on natural resources management from the ecological economics perspective. It is likely to appeal to both practitioners and academicians alike.

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