

Book Review

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE HORTICULTURIST COMMUNITY: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY. By Jagriti Mehta, Anil Kishore Sinha and Maninder Kaur. pp. xxii+240, tables, figures and plates, abbreviations, glossary, references and index, 2024. Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd.: New Delhi. Hard Cover. Price ₹ 1250/-.

This hard-bound volume is the result of the continuing efforts of the authors to study about a core area 'of environmental research, that is, climate change and its impact on human beings.

Many people think climate change mainly means warmer temperatures. But temperature rise is only the beginning of the story. In the Earth system everything is connected, changes in one area can influence changes in all others. The consequences of climate change now include, among others, intense droughts, water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity. Climate change can affect our health, ability to grow food, housing, safety and work. The impact of climate change on human communities, especially those dependent on the environment for their livelihood, is an important field of inquiry.

The authors in this book have explored the impact of climate change on the horticultural community of Himachal Pradesh, located in the northern part of India. Himachal Pradesh a hilly and mountainous region with great scenic beauty, is the home to a large number of farmers who are dependent on horticulture for their livelihood. In recent decade the state has witnessed changes in climate patterns that have had a significant impact on the horticultural community. The farmers are facing challenges due to the irregular rainfall, declining and erratic snowfall, rising temperature, and increased incidence of pests and crop infection, all these are affecting the crop yield and quality.

The authors write (p. 27), "The present study focuses on the four villages of Kotkhai tehsil viz.,

Bhawana, Kiari, Kufar Bag and Jashla. These villages were selected on the basis of their relative altitude. The study attempts to assess climate change by analysing the available climate data for the region, which are the temperature, rainfall and snowfall of the region. The impacts of these changes on various aspects of livelihood of the people have been explored using a holistic anthropological approach. The aim of the present research is to study climate change and its impact on the livelihood of the people of Tehsil Kotkhai, District Shimla, Himachal Pradesh." On the methodology of the study (p. 28) the authors write — "The present research is both descriptive and exploratory in nature. It is descriptive in the sense as it describes the phenomenon of climate change by collecting and analysing the recorded climatic data of the field area. The study is exploratory in nature as it investigates and attempts to comprehend the impact of climate change on the livelihood of the people of the field area." The field study for this research was conducted during May 2017 to Aril 2021, through six field visits during the period, and staying in the villages for several weeks intermittently.

Kotkhai tehsil is known as the apple of Himachal's eyes, as it is the major apple producing tehsil in Himachal Pradesh and the apple cultivation is the major source of income of the people of the area.

The authors have presented in this volume the impact of climate change on the people and on the crop varieties through the following seven chapters: 1. Introduction; 2. Area and People; 3. Climate Change and People's Perception; 4. Impact of Climate Change on Crop Varieties, Calendar and Crop Production; 5. Impact of Climate Change on the Livelihood: An Emic View; 6. Adaptation Strategies and Government's Efforts to Combat Climate Change; and lastly Summary and Conclusion. Each chapter carries many numbered subheadings, for example, 1.10.8.2 Quantitative data analysis (p. 38), 1.10.8.2.1 Mean (p. 39), 1.10.8.2.2 Percentage (p. 40), 1.10.8.2.3 Regression analysis (p. 40), 1.10.8.3 Triangulation method of data analysis

(p.40), and so on the numberings are placed with the subheadings. These sorts of numberings are mostly used in government reports, for an easy short referring of matter, view, result, while discussing certain specific issue. These numberings, the reviewer feels, are not relevant here while presenting the subheadings, as no such referring has been done through numbers in this volume. This numbering could have been omitted.

On the Impact of Climate Change on Livelihood: An Emic View (Chapter 5) the authors have discussed on natural assets of livelihood. Natural assets comprise resources such as soil or land, forests, water and biodiversity. The impact of climate change on natural assets (land, water and biodiversity), human assets (household member, active labour, education, health, and knowledge and skills), social assets, physical assets, financial assets and horticulture have been taken into account in this chapter (p.125) by the authors.

In Chapter 6, the authors have discussed the 'Adaptation Strategies and Government's Efforts to Combat Climate Change' of the four study villages namely, Bhawana (lower altitude village), Kiari, Kufar Bag, and Jashla (higher altitude village), separately, as the altitude of the villages differ. The adaptation strategies acquired and learnt by the people of the field area are thus a part of the cultural adaptation to the changing climate which has affected the various aspects of their livelihood.

According to the authors (p. 176) the adaptation measures varied depending on the extent of the impact of climate change on the various assets of livelihood and the requirement of the people of the field area. There is 'no one size fits all' solution to the effects of the climate change on the livelihood of the people of the field area. The findings of the present research suggest that the impact of climate change is mostly experienced on water and horticulture practices, which is different in extent at different altitude villages. Therefore, adaptation strategies related to the major issues faced by the respondents of different villages have been acquired in accordance to combat climate change impact.

The authors conclude (p.216) that the findings of

the present study indicate towards an increase in the temperature and decline in the snowfall and rainfall thus affecting the livelihood of the people of the area. The lower-belt area areas have been found to be more affected by the changing climatic conditions, while the higher belt areas are also becoming vulnerable to climate change over the time. It has resulted in a decline in apple production in lower and lower-middle altitude villages. It has led to the problem of water scarcity in all the villages. In case of high-altitude village, the higher reaches are now available for apple production, thus increasing their source of income. The people of the study area have taken up steps like afforestation and rainwater harvesting at individual and community level to combat the impact of climate change.

The government of Himachal Pradesh have been taking multiple steps to combat the impact of climate change. The government have formulated various policies and strategies to combat climate change in that region in order to increase the economy of the people who are mainly horticulturists with apple-based cash crop economy.

Climate change is one of the most important global challenges that have threatened with great implications on the food production, water supply, health, energy, etc and some other human socio-economic aspects. It is commendable that the authors have researched in high altitude areas the impact of climate change through several visits of the field area spanning a period of four years.

The authors have interviewed several people during their field study, but the number of persons interviewed in each study village during field studies is found missing under methodology, and also while discussing about the villages separately.

Nevertheless, the reviewer feels that this book on the impact of climate change on the horticulturist community is a commendable work by the authors. The students of anthropology interested in environmental studies will find this book very informative and helpful for their studies on environment, and impact of climate change on culture.

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