

Book Reviews

Economic Development and Employment in Sikkim, by Anjan Chakrabarti, Authors press, Delhi, 2009, Pp. XVIII + 113, ISBN 978-81-7273-501-2, ` 350/-

Padam Nepal is a Reader in Political Science at St Joseph's College, North Point, Darjeeling. He has participated and presented papers in a number of national and international seminars and conferences.

Traditionally, economic theory focused on mostly physical and human capital and technology to explain economic growth. In the recent years, increased attention is being paid to the historical contexts, transitions in the contextual settings and the nature of the institutions. The present book by Anjan Chakrabarti, an established researcher in development economics with a wide range of experience in policy issues, is designed to capture the dynamics of economic development, taking into account the political economic and historical settings. His study is a critical evaluation of the economic development and employment in the Indian state of Sikkim. The book is an earnest quest for a right relationship amongst community, state and market for economic growth.

The Book has been divided in to seven chapters. They are: (i) Introduction, (2) A brief historical Account, (3) Land and Agriculture, (4) Industry in Sikkim: Problems and Prospects; (5) Economic Transition of Sikkim; (6) Findings from Primary Survey; and finally (7) Conclusion.

First Chapter of the book entitled 'Introduction,' although brief, grounds the study in the thickly referenced theoretical discourses of Development Economics and sets the objectives. It also highlights the necessity of a historical analysis in comprehending the present pattern of economic development and development opportunities, constraints and prospects. The second chapter delves into the socio-political, demographic and economic history of Sikkim since the 17th century in the first part; then outlines the present demographic and administrative profile of the state. This chapter sets the ground for the present study by contextualizing the study in a proper socio-historical and economic perspective.

Chapter 3, entitled 'Land and Agriculture,' begins in a historical mode, analyzing the land tenure system up to its merger with the Indian Union in 1975. The focus is then shifted to the analysis of land reforms measures initiated and adopted after its merger, followed by an evaluation of the necessity and nature of the land reforms adopted by the state of Sikkim in the recent years. The chapter also gives a critical gaze at the status of agriculture in Sikkim today, which, in fact, has been the vital sector of the Sikkimese economy. Finally, the chapter addresses a vital issue: the issue of food

security in the state. It rings a knell for Sikkim, pointing out that the Sikkim's economy is bound to increase the incidence of rural poverty in the near future.

The fourth chapter deals with the problems and prospects of industrial development in Sikkim. The chapter begins its evaluation in this sector since the 1950s. This is primarily because planning for industrial development in Sikkim began in a systematic manner only in 1955 with the monetary aid given to Sikkim by the Government of India, and that industrial development in Sikkim became a priority in Sikkim only through 1966. The chapter then proceeds to discuss the industrial development in Sikkim in the post statehood period, industrial contributions to the economy, and the problem of industrial backwardness. The final section of the chapter is a study of the tourism industry in Sikkim and for that matter, ecotourism, which has received strong support and patronage from the state as it is marching towards the goal of a 'Green State.'

Chapter 5 on 'Economic Transition of Sikkim' is a vital chapter of the Book, as it bases itself the transition of the economy with time to the socio-cultural, demographic and institutional changes. The chapter studies the development structure of the state, economy under planning since the 1950s, pattern of economic growth during 1980s and 1990s, changing sectoral composition and its impact on economy, impact of growth on the employment structure and opportunities, and the growth of the urban centres with a particular reference to the capital town of Gangtok. However, the final section of the chapter appears to be the core of the chapter. It critically investigates the state dependence on central resources and points out the mismatch between the revenues of the government and its expenditure, the result of which is reflected in the state's double digit fiscal deficits.

Chapter 6 is a summary of the findings from the primary data pertaining to the state's economic performance and employment scenario. A brief yet compact 14 paged chapter, it highlights through quantitative data the arguments placed in other sections of the book. The chapter provides details of community-wise population distribution, religious distribution, social categories of the population in terms of percentages, educational status, sector-wise distribution of workers, community-wise participation in economic activities, income distribution, inter-state and intra-state migration pattern, and time-line migrations. The chapter has made a comparative analysis of two districts: Gangtok and Namchi. However representative the two districts may be (in terms of districts, the author has taken 50 percent of the universe as sample), since Sikkim has only four districts, the findings would have been both more enriching and enlightening if all the four districts could have been covered.

Chapter 7 is presented as a 'Conclusion'. The chapter highlights the fact that the development strategy is marked by a high degree of state intervention in all spheres of economic activity. The agricultural sector, which is providing sustenance to majority of the population, is shown to have been plagued by a number of obstacles, apt enough

to finally lead to food scarcity and rural poverty. The strengths of the state are shown in terms of tourism potential, potential to produce hydel power, and the gradual but promising social development leading to the development of human capital. The chapter, highlighting problems specific to the various sectors of the economy, also has pointed out possible remedies for a sustainable development strategy in the state.

The book has several merits. The book is rigorously researched, and the conclusions arrived at are supported by necessary data. Moreover, this is first book of its kind dealing with economic problems of Sikkim. So far three reports (Sikkim Human Development Report, Peoples Vision and Sikkim Development Report) have contributed towards unraveling the economic development process, and an academic analysis of the economic performance of the state was much awaited. There had been a dearth of properly researched materials on the economy of Sikkim. The present book has ably filled this void. The book also has covered all three sectors of the economy: primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, which have been scrutinised critically. History of Sikkim has been interpreted from economic point of view which was not done previously. The book has raised serious questions on the viability of the economy as well as critically reviewed the policy dynamics of the state. It has also recommended necessary steps for the correction of economic ills, the implementation of which, as expected by the author, would contribute to a more balanced and sustainable pattern of economic development in the state. However, the chief limitation of the book is that land relations, ethnic differentiation towards the access to resource endowment, impact of globalisation on the economy, regional imbalances and the contributory factors therein, and environment-economy relationships have not been adequately dealt with.