

a very vicious viral disease. The saviour was one resistant gene for this virus found in a wild rice (*Oryza nivara*) collected from a godforsaken place like Gonda in Uttar Pradesh. This single gene made a colossal contribution to the well-being of whole of the SE Asia. It shows the importance of our wild flora. We do not know what the country will need in future. Therefore, we should try to conserve as much biodiversity as is possible.

We are grateful to Nayar for producing this book which contains a wealth of information useful to phytogeographers, ethnobiologists, biologists, evolutionists, geneticists and breeders.

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Biomass Studies: Field Methods for Monitoring Biomass. Shailaja Ravidranath and Sudha Premnath. Oxford and IBH Publishing Co Pvt Ltd., 66 Janpath, New Delhi 110 001. 615 pp.

Measurement and documentation are the essence of a growing scientific field and I was hoping this book would guide the large number of lay environmentalists into a new scientific data collection enterprise. Such a mass data collection movement could bring in more scientific temper than the conventional jathas and morchas.

The book may not do this but could be the first small step towards this goal. This book is an outcome of a project for studying environment, that involved college students. The book is well suited to do, but I have my doubts whether it will help NGOs (non-government organizations) or government organizations to undertake such studies. What comes out after going through the book, but is not stated explicitly, is that such a monitoring study is a major expenditure in time and effort and therefore expensive. How can an NGO or a GO justify this? Only understanding the status or creating awareness does not justify the expenditure, if there is no action goal in mind.

The book does not attempt to quantify the effort say in man-hours.

The chapter on Applications of Biomass studies should have come first, so that the reader knows how he can use it. More important, this should have applications that help to save or generate wealth, in whatever form. Unfortunately all such possible applications have been put in just 35 words.

Some elaboration of how this kind of study leads to income generation or saving would have been invaluable in promoting the use of this technique by NGOs. Though not suitable for use by most NGOs in its present form, the book is an excellent resource for educational institutions to give small projects for students to do. Over a period considerable data about the neighbourhood can be collected. Also the students will (i) learn about problems and opportunities through interacting with the community, (ii) get familiar with the use and meaning of statistical techniques and (iii) be able to write reports for different target groups.

The authors have very comprehensively dealt with all aspects of monitoring and measuring from technique; applications, recording of data, interpretation and writing reports for scientific documentation, for planners and decision makers, local community leaders – I wish they had also included funding agencies.

The value of the book would have been increased considerably, if the authors had included case studies at least one for each chapter from the field studies already conducted. This omission has made the technique look less significant than it actually is. Also, the illustrations do not supplement the text in explaining the methods.

There are also a few errors ('Identifying and using plants for their medicinal value dates back 100,000 years or more'; obviously lack of understanding of the time scale of human development). The belief that medicinal plants, locally used take 80% of the health care is also questionable – certainly not true of western Maharashtra.

The moisture content, even approximation seems to have been ignored in the collection of data, as also some units of measurement used locally. For example, dried fodder is sold in bundles not by weight (also some leafy vegetables). If ignored these can produce variations of 200–300% in value or quantity.

Some of the compromises suggested by the authors also give the impression that they have stressed more on the academic part at the cost of the implementable needs. For example, making 60 plots of 0.5 × 0.5 m will not give as good data as compared to one plot of 5 × 3 m. There is not much attention given to the type of soil, which can vary from plot to plot levelling and gradient, weeds, method of irrigation, etc. These produce variations that can make the monitoring exercises less meaningful.

If the authors had gone through the exercise of doing these tests in the field by themselves and found logical applications, that data would prove helpful to the readers and the country at large.

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Human Nutrition in the Developing World. Michael C. Latham. FAO Food and Nutrition Series, #29. 1997. 508 pp. Price not known.

While there are many books devoted to nutrition, very few of them give an overall perspective on all aspects in a concise and comprehensive manner. This publication by FAO is one in that direction. A ready reference on nutrition and nutritional disorders in general for the developing world. The book emphasizes the food-based approach as the only solution to nutritional problems of the developing countries. The book comprises of 5 parts dealing with causes of malnutrition, basic nutrition, disorders, foods and nutrition policies and programmes.

The first chapter commences with the noble objectives of the 1992 International conference on nutrition. The extent of the problem and the broad etiology and contributing factors of malnutrition are explained. The following chapter elucidates food production and highlights the importance of household food security to combat malnutrition.

Chapter 3 is on nutrition and infection, health and disease. Some important examples of interventional studies are also illustrated.

Chapter 4 is on social and cultural factors while the fifth chapter deals with

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population increase. Analysis of the effect of urbanization and the ability of modern agricultural technology to cope with the demands of increasing numbers is lucidly handled. The nutritional goals to deal with vulnerable populations like the pregnant, the lactating, infants, elderly, etc. are given in the subsequent sections. The seventh chapter is on breastfeeding practices.

Part II is on basic nutrition with separate chapters on macro and micronutrients. The third part of the book is concerned with nutritional disorders addressing all major areas like PEM, iron deficiency, vitamin deficiency as well as micronutrient deficiency disorders. The last two

chapters in this part are on chronic disorders and nutritional implications and end with disaster management like famine, starvation and the modern day problem of refugees. Chapter 4 constitutes food composition and food processing while nutrition programmes are elucidated in chapter 5. Information is provided on the assessment and surveillance methodology used in the field. The later part of the book is aimed at preventive aspects and methods to be applied to the developing world like food fortification.

The final chapter is on group feeding, public catering and street foods which is a major problem of urbanization.

Annexures include recommended intakes, anthropometric tables and nutritive values. An excellent book for anybody who has anything to do with nutritional problems of the developing world. Its presentation, illustrations and tables make it very readable. It would stimulate the student, teacher, researcher and policy maker in nutrition with equal intensity.

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MEETINGS/SYMPOSIA/SEMINARS

An International Workshop on Historical Perspectives of Land-Use Land-Cover Change in South Asia for the Study of Global Change

Date: 18–20 February 1999
Place: New Delhi

Particular emphasis will be laid to sort out the following issues, among others, in this workshop: Inadequate knowledge to ascertain the reliability of historical information; Inadequate and approximate nature of references to status of land use in a particular historical land frame; Conversion of historic verbal/qualitative statements to quantities and statistics usable in land use/cover change analysis; Difficulty in delineating the precise geographic region being referred to in historical records; Conversion of historical information into GIS compatible data formats and statistics.

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International Seminar on Holistic Management of Heart Diseases

Date: 5 February 1999
Place: Pune

The disciplines covered will be Ayurveda, Yoga, Modern Cardiology, Acupuncture, Acupressure, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, Chinese medicine systems and other allied fields.

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