

Subhadra Mitra Channa and Marilyn Porter (eds.): *Gender, livelihood and environment: How women manage resources.* New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2015, xvi +214 pp., Price not mentioned (hb). ISBN 978-81-250-5983-7

This volume is a collection of seven essays illustrating the issues of women's work, their access to resources, on environment and the intersection of capitalism, neo liberalism and the problems engendered by a largely male-centric view of economy and ecology. The essays are based on the different research works undertaken by scholars in various regions of the world. This volume to a large extent fulfils the claim of the authors regarding the two levels of academic inputs that the book provides - one, at the level of specific information and data, collected from across the globe and involving various types of ecological adaptations, including mountain and coastal environments; and two, the issues of larger theoretical relevance, interrogating concepts such as nature, culture, sustainability and development.

The essays have largely followed the feminist methodology and have critically looked at the more conservative views on development. Most of the essays in the book advocate the alternative modes of development, that is, the feminist perspective of nurture and care towards the environment as against the masculinist approach of conquest and exploitation. This book has successfully managed to highlight the micro-level efforts that women have been making to survive against the various odds, struggling to lead a life of dignity even when resources are few and to make the best of every available resource without engaging in plunder.

One of the important contributions of the book is that it has been able to put forward the argument that the personhood is what dictates and controls access to resources and the gendering is directly proportional to the social value of the resource. The value of resource has also been highlighted and presented through the women's work well especially in the essays by Channa through the nature and culture dichotomy and by Kingsolver through the women involved in farm economics. The essays based on the fishing communities, first by Marilyn Porter on coastal community of Tanzania, the second by Matolla focusing on fish for sex practice prevalent among African fishing communities and the third by Gerrard on the fishing community of Norway. Kingsolver using her two decades of ethnographic and oral history interviews the small farms of Kentucky shows that women's knowledge, skill and decision making in incorporating wild resources into household consumption is a success, and how the learning of the skills in managing natural resources has been part of their rural socialisation. In the essays involving the fishing communities, the authors have made a fair attempt to establish that vast majority of household in these different communities are entirely supported by women either by marginal activities which are small scale labour-intensive and cooperative groups combined into such support as the husband is prepared to provide or by sexual activities like Fish For Sex (FFS) which are not always forcibly undertaken but are negotiated by women. In the third case as highlighted by Gerrard, the mobility practices in fishing villages of Norway show the interrelation between women's and men's actions and experiences and gender 'contracts'. Gerrard gives a hope by showing that the earlier established gender asymmetry in these contracts seems to be broken and thus more balance comes in. There is a scope for what she calls flexible gender contracts.

One of the important essays by Panda on SEWA's water campaign in Gujarat is an important contribution of the volume as it highlights women's collective action and sustainable water management. It examines the efforts of SEWA to mobilise women for its women, work and water campaign in Gujarat and how SEWA works with women's groups to provide water, primarily for domestic use and to some extent for irrigation to rural communities. The factors like presence of strong grassroots institutions, the establishment of a technical cadre of women, the ability of women's groups to transcend social barriers and continuous dialoguing with the state have been examined and analysed to put forward the case of SEWA as a unique collective for cooperative functioning in a feudal and patriarchal society.

The last essay by Harrison about Global Apartheid culminates this volume's voice for feminist approach and the advocacy of women's rights

which Harrison argues is conceptualised as integral to an expanded notion of human rights. The author builds connection between gender, Neo-liberalism, ecology and environmental justice by raising various feminist issues and also dwelling on various schools of research that focus on gender and environment.

In sum, the essays fit into the theme of gender, livelihood and environment except the last which does not focus on the livelihood issue. The significance of the book lies in the fact that it brings together various essays which emphasise that it is usually women who know more about their resources as well as contribute the most in making them sustainable. The bringing together of experiences from contrasting parts of the world is another highlight of this book. Thus, it is an interesting addition to the discourse on Gender, Livelihood and Environment.

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