

REVIEW ARTICLE

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Forest, State and the People

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The growing awareness about ecological problems and particularly the problems of deforestation and land degradation has attracted the attention of social scientists all over the world and the number of contributions in the field are increasing. The problem of sustainable growth is mainly related to the use of scarce natural resources and heavy demands on them for satisfying different ends and is basically a problem of political economy. If the nations are to follow a path of sustainable growth, a drastic change in the lifestyles of people and an entirely different concept of economic development and growth are necessary. However, a number of contributions in the field of ecology and environment either ignore this aspect or under-rate its importance.[1]

The book under review* clearly states that the problem of reconciling uses of natural resources in the course of economic development is in reality a problem of political economy. The book is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the use of forest resources *vis-a-vis* the larger economy and the state. It is pointed out that the problem of resource use in a market economy in respect of the ordering of ends in terms of their importance is done not by a given decision-maker but through a struggle between vested interest groups. In case of the appropriation of forest resources, there are three main competing groups viz. The local people depending on forests for fuelwood, fodder, raw-material etc., the commercial and industrial interest and the state. The first two groups are not homogenous. Among the local people there are landlords, small and middle peasants and the landless labour. In the commercial and industrial interests, there are merchants

* (The political Economy of Forest Use and Management, M. V. Nadkarni with Syed Ajimal Pasha, L.S Prabhakar, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 182, Rs.150/-.)