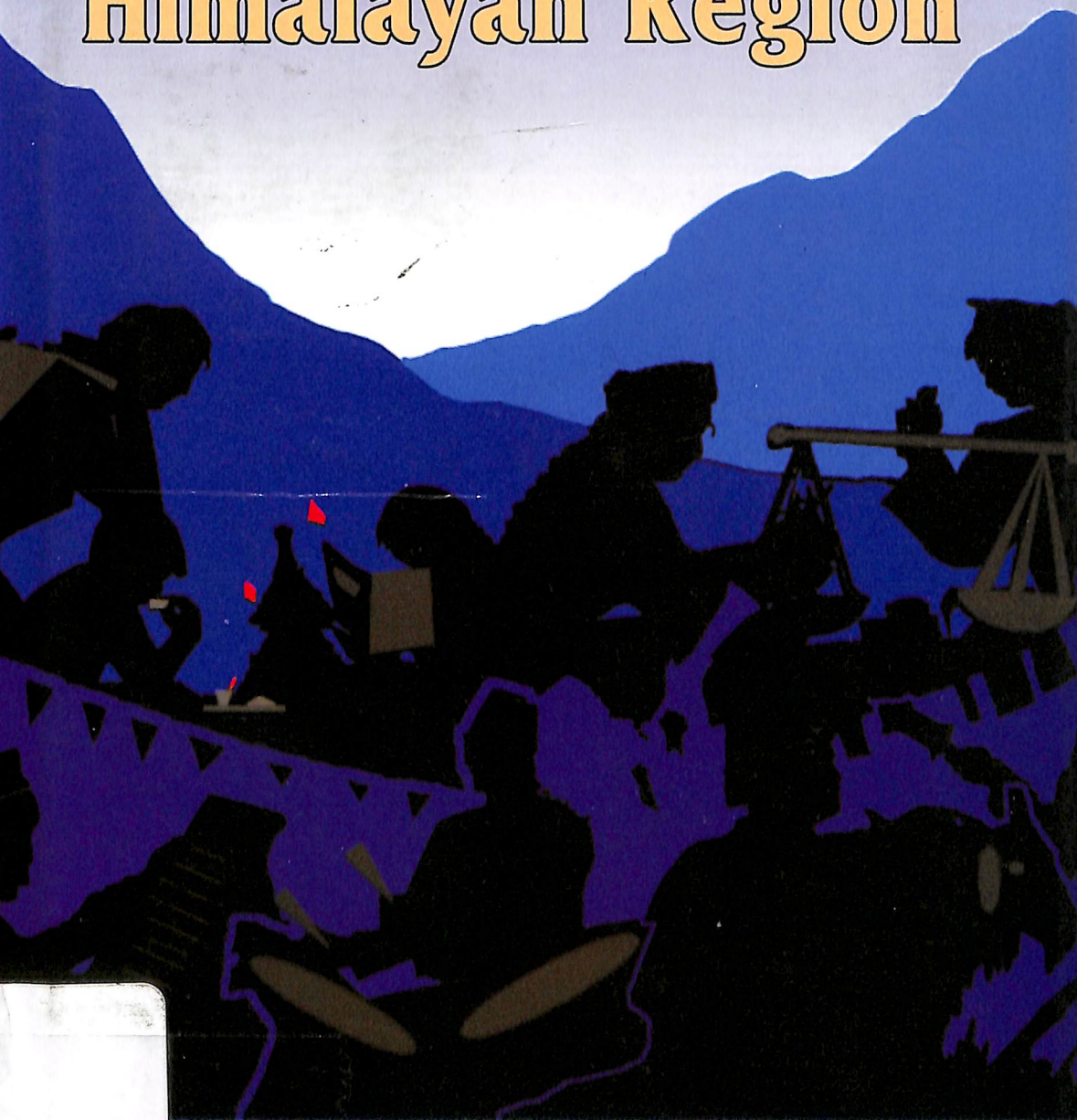


# Quality of Life in the Himalayan Region



Edited by  
**Prof. L.R. SHARMA**

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VIRBHADRA SINGH  
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## Foreword

This volume on the *Quality of Life in the Himalayan Region* is the result of research conducted under the aegis of the Institute of Integrated Himalayan Studies, Shimla that has been established as a Centre of Excellence by the University Grants Commission. It provides a detailed and analytical picture of various aspects of life in the Western Himalayas and engages actively with the complex questions that invariably arise whenever the issue of human development is seriously discussed.

Needless to say, the quality of life of the inhabitants of a region is indicative of their general well-being. For the common folk in the Himalayas, the struggle to obtain a qualitative improvement in their lives has always been—literally and metaphorically—an uphill task. Large parts of this extensive mountain system continue to suffer from severe socio-economic deprivation. It is, however, heartening for those of us who live in Himachal Pradesh, to realize that the State has taken rapid strides to eradicate poverty and to improve the quality and range of welfare programmes directed towards improving living conditions. Ensuring the welfare of people is an ongoing process: one that requires higher standards to be met at each level of development. Much, of course, depends upon the frugal harnessing of economic resources, the introduction of technological change and improvements in the system of implementation and management. This would make available a greater array of development choices. In the final analysis, it is people who are central to the question of development. Society has, therefore, to invest wisely in the social sectors and to inculcate appropriate cultural values. It is only then that we would be able to create an environment conducive for people to live prosperous, healthy and fruitful lives. These essential constituents

of a qualitatively good life would also be certainly instrumental in making people more productive in a more material sense. Even as these remain our long-term objectives, it is important for us to engage in periodic assessments of how far we have progressed. Such appraisals, as this volume attempts, have to be integral parts of any developmental paradigm.

Returning to the context of Himachal Pradesh, it is now widely acknowledged that after independence, and especially after the attainment of statehood in 1971, the State has made significant progress in the fields of basic education and health care. This has led to the lowering of mortality and fertility rates, and consequently to a marked improvement in the life expectancy of women and children. The fairly high level of social development that Himachal Pradesh has achieved is, to a considerable extent, also the result of a more accountable and transparent system of governance.

This collaborative work on the *Quality of Life in the Himalayan Region* includes and examines all the crucial indicators essential for evaluating human development. It provides requisite and relevant data on education, health and nutrition. Very significantly, it incorporates the region's rich cultural traditions and examines the pertinence of participatory approaches to forest resource management. But perhaps, most importantly, it recognizes the centrality of women to the creation of a more progressive and better society.

I congratulate those who have contributed to this volume, and sincerely hope that this publication will stimulate further research and thus complement efforts being made to improve the lives of the Himalayan people.



VIRBHADRA SINGH

## Preface

Since appearing on earth humans have continued to strive toward improving their quality of life. From humble beginnings to modern developments the paradigm of people's opportunities and choices has been greatly enlarged. Concurrently, agencies/agents for change too have multiplied. Governments the world over have largely shouldered the responsibility of improving the quality of life of their subjects. Programmes targeted at the social sector have been the mainstay of such endeavours. Health and education, food and nutrition, water, environment and culture have received considerable attention.

In recent times the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Reports (since 1990) have attempted to provide a bird's eye view of the global scenario of the quality of life. As part of a national initiative, the Himachal Pradesh State Human Development Report has been presented for the first time in 2002. These two documents, along with some others have suitably highlighted the multi-dimensional nature of the quality of life.

The present volume on the *Quality of Life in the Himalayan Region* contains scholarly contributions documenting some of the diverse aspects of the quality of life with a focus on the Himachal Himalayas. The conventional components of the quality of life such as health have been attended to in the first four chapters. Two chapters describe the role of forests in the Himalayan region. In addition, environmental protection through the agency of myths and legends too has been reported. It is particularly gratifying to note that the cultural and traditional moorings have not been neglected and this has to count as one of its strengths. I am confident that this volume will contribute toward improvement in the Quality of Life in the Himalayan Region as an academic perspective on

developmental issues can only enrich any endeavour to affect qualitative improvements in the same.

President, Institute of Integrated Himalayan Studies and the Editor of this volume express their sincere appreciation and gratitude to the authors and co-authors for their contribution in bringing this volume to fruition. The publication of this volume has been possible with the support of the Director and staff of the Institute of Integrated Himalayan Studies.

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# 1

## Quality of Life in the Himalayan Region: An Introductory Profile

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The articles in this volume are written by a distinguished group of research scholars working in different universities and research institutes of north-western India. There are also some who have retired from their active academic life, yet they have not completely withdrawn from their academic pursuits. Each of the authors takes up a determinant or two of quality of life in the Himalayan region and explores its/their impact on the lives of the hilly people. This introductory profile seeks to analyze the concept of quality of life; provide an outline of the quality of life in the states of the region using well-known indicators of people's well-being; and finally, give a preview of the articles that follow.

### **Concept of Quality of Life**

Improving the conditions in which people live and providing them the environment that enables them to lead life as they would like to live it are universally accepted societal goals. The very objective of development everywhere has been to promote these goals, although those responsible for development like the planners or aid-donors may define the ends that they are pursuing for the people only in rather minimalist terms like raising the standards of living

of the people and may not go to the core of what the people and the society would be really looking for as the ultimate level of fulfillment for them.

There is no denying the fact that human beings seek fulfillment through improvements in their quality of life. And quality of life is denoted by human well-being or a well-lived life,<sup>1</sup> a state of thriving, "good human living", or a "good life", etc.<sup>2</sup> Analysts have gone into the question of what constitutes such a life and what promotes it. Interestingly, the definition of quality of life (i.e. human well-being), its components and determinants, and the methods of measuring it have generated a great deal of debate. Those interested in having a feel of how intricate all these aspects of quality of life are to deal with may look up Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Ed), *The Quality of Life*.<sup>3</sup>

Among the various facets of analysis of quality of life, the least contentious seems to be the components and determinants of human well-being. According to Partha Dasgupta a well-lived life has some basic features, such as personal growth (promoted by self-respect, honesty, charitability, displaying and receiving of affection, among other features), a successful family life, warm friendships, a satisfying job, an occasional trip to see other places and cultures, a meaningful social life, satisfaction of commodity requirements, and enjoyment of human rights.<sup>4</sup> Amartya Sen refers to some "valuable functionings" (to be explained below) in terms of which quality of life can be assessed. Some of these are very elementary and basic but strongly valued by all, such as being adequately nourished and well-sheltered, being in good health, etc. Others are more complex, like being happy, achieving self-respect, being socially integrated, appearing in public life without shame, and so on.<sup>5</sup> Sen argues that in very broad terms quality of life and well-being of a person are promoted by anything that enhances freedom to live the way one would like, thus living freely, and availability of freedom of choosing between alternatives.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the foregoing, Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen have referred to social equity, removal of deprivations of the poor people, integrity of the physical environment, delivery of public services, removal of gender biases and disparities, etc. as essential for enhancement of quality of life of the people.<sup>7</sup>

It is perhaps clear by now that quality of life is synonymous with

human well-being and a happy and good life. We have referred above to the major components and determinants of human well-being that have been studied in depth by some of the best minds in this area of research. Before we come to some other issues concerning the concept of quality of life, it may not be out of place to briefly look into Amartya Sen's somewhat peculiar terminology of and the interconnections among processes promoting quality of life.

Sen's capability-focused approach<sup>8</sup> looks at "... well-being and advantage in terms of a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being." Sen has been analyzing several related issues, including poverty and development, with the help of this approach since 1979.

According to the approach, quality of life should be assessed in terms of the capability of a person to achieve valuable "functionings". These functionings are comprised of a combination of various doings and beings so that these represent the things that a person manages to do or be in leading a life. This approach thus views the life that a person leads as a combination of various doings and beings (i.e. functionings). The examples of some elementary functionings are: being well-nourished, properly housed, remaining healthy, etc. The somewhat complex doings and beings are, for instance, having self-respect, enjoying human dignity, being integrated with ones community, and so on. "The *capability* of a person reflects the alternative combinations of functionings a person can achieve, and from which he or she can choose one collection". It is thus clear that facilities like education, health care, housing, etc. improve the capabilities of the people to lead more satisfactory lives and thereby improve their quality of life.

The "notion of capability is essentially one of freedom—the range of options a person has in deciding what kind of life to lead". Poor people enjoy a low quality of life and their well-being remains constrained. According to the capabilities approach, poverty is seen as the deprivation of even basic capabilities like the freedom to lead a normal life span, or the freedom to read and write. Similarly, insufficient income curtails poor people's capabilities. These deprivations severally restrict the choices people have to lead lives that they would like to.<sup>9</sup>

Interestingly, the UNDP, whose annual *Human Development*

*Reports* are now well-known the world over, endorses and uses Sen's capabilities approach to analyze components of and changes in human development in these *Reports*.<sup>10</sup>

Now, it is not uncommon to notice that quality of life, human well-being, level of welfare and standard of living are terms that are usually used interchangeably. For instance, Sweden and other Scandinavian countries have been conducting standard of living surveys and in that context, the foregoing terms have been used without bringing out any distinction among them.<sup>11</sup> However, standard of living is seen by Amartya Sen to be only a component of the wider concept of human well-being. Standard of living in fact refers to those influences on well-being that come from the nature of a person's own life. Robert Eriksson gives a definition of level of living, based on European tradition (especially Swedish Level of Living Surveys), which perceives it as "... individual's command over resources in the form of money, possessions, knowledge, mental and physical energy, social relations, security and so on, through which the individual can control and consciously direct his living conditions."<sup>12</sup> However, individual's overall well-being and quality of life are determined by a wider spectrum of processes. These are not only influenced by standard of living, which focuses on individual's own life and circumstances and his access to economic resources, but also by what Amartya Sen calls "success in the pursuit of all the objectives that he has reason to promote."<sup>13</sup> Thus, well-being can also be 'other-regarding'. People too derive satisfaction from helping others. In this case, the source of well-being is external to the person whose quality of life is being evaluated. It is, therefore, clear that quality of life is influenced and determined by a wide array of factors. While gauging the quality of life of a person or a community, the list of such factors would be quite formidable since one shall have to look at all those influences and phenomena that add to the well-ness and welfare of the people.

Quality of life is, in the ultimate analysis, a subjective phenomenon because it has to do with people's utility, feeling of well-ness, and satisfaction. But in order to ordinally evaluate the improvements or deterioration in it, objective criteria such as the literacy rate, income level and life expectancy at birth have been used. In the evaluation of a subjective phenomenon with the help of objective

criteria a serious dilemma arises. These criteria for evaluation of human well-being are designed by various categories of experts on the basis of their own judgement of what should best reflect and measure changes in people's well-ness. The question is: do these criteria exactly and faithfully bring out the inner feelings of a person or a community whose well-being is sought to be evaluated? Alternatively, are the people themselves not the best judges of how they feel about whether a change of policy, circumstances, or availability of additional resources have added to their well-being, and if it has, then how much? In the context of this dilemma in the measurement of phenomena like standard of living, well-being and quality of life with the help of objective indicators designed by experts on the one hand, and alternatively, trying to fathom the actual feelings of the people themselves on the other, Erik Allardt poses the question about a common indicator of well-being, viz. dwelling space. "In measuring housing standards, for instance, should one rely on objective measures of the space available and the number of household appliances in the family or should one ask whether or not the respondents are satisfied with their housing conditions?"<sup>14</sup>

This is a real issue in the evaluation and measurement of a change in the quality of life of people. However, one has to assume that the objective indicators will roughly help in gauging the direction of change, whether improvement or deterioration, in the quality of life. Now, having briefly examined the nature of the concept of quality of life and well-being, we may ourselves use some of the well-known indicators of this phenomenon here to assess its various dimensions in the context of the Himalayan region. In the following section, we shall make an inter-Himalayan states comparison of quality of life, and also compare the same with the all-India averages.

### **Quality of Life in the Himalayan States**

Table 1.1 here provides statistical data on 23 indicators of quality of life of the people in each state of the region. Unfortunately, Uttaranchal had to be excluded because of lack of data on this newly set up state. These indicators are divided into six broad categories, viz. those relating to income, consumption and distributive justice, literacy and education, health and demographic features, those which

Table 1.1 Indicators of quality of life in the states of Himalayan region

Indicators	J.K.	H.P.	Sikkim	Naga-land	Manipur	Meghalaya	Tripura	Arunachal Pradesh	Mizoram	All-India Average
<b>A. Income, Consumption and Equity-related Indicators:</b>										
1. Per capita gross state domestic product at 1993-94 prices (Annual average for 1997-98 to 1999-2000 period)*	8454 (19)	11501 (9)	10852 (10)	10182 (12)	8295 (20)	8972 (17)	8109 (23)	9759 (14)	-	10165
2. Annual compound growth rate of per capita gross state domestic product at 1993-94 prices (% per annum in the 1990-91 to 2000-01 period)	2.21	4.45	4.80	0.80	3.91	2.19	5.60	2.18	-	3.83
3. Monthly per capita consumer expenditure in rural sector in Rs. (2000-01)	680	701	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	North-Eastern states = 620	495



Indicators	J.K.	H.P.	Sikkim	Naga-land	Manipur	Meghalaya	Tripura	Arunachal Pradesh	Mizoram	All-India Average
4. % of population below poverty line:										
a) 1973-74	40.83	26.39	50.86	50.81	49.96	50.20	51.00	51.93	50.32	54.88
b) 1999-2000	3.48	7.63	36.55	32.67	28.54	33.87	34.44	33.47	19.47	26.10
5. % of rural households getting enough food everyday throughout the year (2000-01)	100.0	99.9	—	—	—	North-Eastern states = 96.3				
<b>B. Literacy and Education-related Indices:</b>										
1. Literacy rate (%) age 7+										
a) Male 1961	19.8	37.6	22.4	27.2	53.5	N.A.	35.3	53.4	N.A.	40.4
2001	65.8	86.0	76.7	71.8	77.9	66.1	81.5	64.1	90.7	75.9
b) Female 1961	5.1	11.2	4.9	13.0	18.9	N.A.	12.4	24.1	N.A.	15.4
2001	41.8	68.1	61.5	61.9	59.7	60.4	65.4	44.2	86.1	54.2
2. Gross enrolment ratios (2000-01) (6-14 years)										
a) Boys	93.04	98.30	112.97	94.94	95.72	97.29	99.16	107.05	101.35	90.26
b) Girls	73.23	84.97	113.57	89.15	83.74	93.75	84.57	93.34	91.27	72.36

Indicators	J.K.	H.P.	Sikkim	Naga-land	Manipur	Meghalaya	Tripura	Arunachal Pradesh	Mizoram	All-India Average
<b>C. Health-related Factors and Demographic Features:</b>										
1. Infant mortality rate (per 1000 of live births)										
a) Male	78	101	105	76	31	81	106	141	73	122
2000	59	57	50	-	21	65	31	41	18	67
b) Female	78	89	87	58	33	76	116	111	65	108
2000	46	45	44	-	24	67	39	39	17	69
2. Total fertility rate (1998-99)	2.71	2.14	2.75	3.77	3.04	4.57	-	2.52	2.89	2.85
3. %age of deliveries assisted by health professionals (1998-99)	42.4	40.2	35.1	32.8	53.9	20.6	-	31.9	67.5	42.3
4. %age of children age 12-23 months who received all vaccinations (1998-99)	56.7	83.4	47.4	14.1	42.3	14.3	-	20.5	59.6	42.0
5. %age of under-weight children under three years (1998-99)	34.5	43.6	20.6	24.1	27.5	37.9	-	24.3	27.7	47.0

Indicators	J.K.	H.P.	Sikkim	Naga-land	Manipur	Meghalaya	Tripura	Arunachal Pradesh	Mizoram	All-India Average
<b>D. Factors affecting Quality of Life of Women and their Empowerment:</b>										
1. Sex ratio (women per 1000 men)										
a) 1961	878	938	904	933	1015	937	932	894	1009	941
b) 2001	900	970	875	909	978	975	950	901	938	933
2. Percentage of ever-married women with any anaemia (1998-99)										
	58.7	40.5	61.1	38.4	28.9	63.3	-	62.5	48.0	51.8
3. Percentage of women having married by age 18 years (1998-99)										
	47.5	38.2	35.5	24.4	20.6	34.8	-	39.7	13.0	64.6
4. Status of ever-married women's autonomy (1998-99):										
a) % involved in decision-making on own health care	55.5	80.8	60.2	69.4	43.3	78.9	-	70.0	73.2	51.6
b) % with access to money	58.1	80.1	78.9	27.9	76.8	81.5	-	78.6	55.0	59.6

Indicators	J.K.	H.P.	Sikkim	Naga-land	Manipur	Meghalaya	Tripura	Arunachal Pradesh	Mizoram	All-India Average
5. Percentage of ever-married women of age 15-49 years who were self-employed, or working in family business/for others (1998-99)	42.5	20.8	22.1	63.9	69.9	47.6	-	59.6	49.9	39.2
6. Percentage of ever-married women who have been beaten or physically mistreated since age 15 years (1998-99)	22.0	5.8	11.4	19.0	19.7	31.1	-	26.4	20.1	21.0
<b>E. Basic Amenities available to Households:</b>										
1. Percentage of rural households using electricity for lighting (2000-01)	89.1	95.2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	59.9
										North-eastern states = 59.8

Indicators	J.K.	H.P.	Sikkim	Naga-land	Manipur	Meghalaya	Tripura	Arunachal Pradesh	Mizoram	All-India Average
2. Percentage of habitations partially/fully covered under rural water supply (2003)	84.7	98.2	100.0	77.1	99.9	96.2	98.7	92.4	100.0	99.0
3. Average covered area of dwelling unit (in sq. m.) available to rural households (2000-01)	54.1	42.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	42.5
North-eastern states = 52.3										
<b>E. Environmental Factors:</b>										
1. Area under forests (in hectares) per capita of rural population										
a) 1991-92	0.47	0.22	0.70	0.86	0.45	0.65	0.26	6.90	3.50	0.11
b) 1998-99	0.38	0.20	0.56	0.58	0.35	0.53	0.23	6.10	3.68	0.10
2. Average size of agricultural holdings (hectares)										
a) 1976-77	1.07	1.62	2.55	7.63	1.11	1.74	1.26	-	-	2.00
b) 1990-91	0.83	1.20	2.11	6.84	1.23	1.00	0.47	3.71	1.37	1.57

Sources:

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- Indicators E.3: NSSO, *op.cit.*, p. 56.
- Indicators F.1: Calculated on the basis of data in CMIE, *Agriculture*, Dec. 2002, p. 12, and Govt. of India, *Economic Survey 2000-2001*, p. S-114 and *Economic Survey 2001-2002*, p. S-109.
- Indicators F.2: Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India, *Indian Agriculture in Brief*, 1982, pp. 186-87, and *Indian Agriculture in Brief*, 26<sup>th</sup> Edition, pp. 252-53.

\*Figures in parentheses show ranks among Indian states.

particularly impinge on the quality of life of women who constitute nearly fifty percent of the population, those relating to the basic amenities available to the households, and finally, the environmental factors. It is hoped that these indices of quality of life taken together will indicate the broad level of well-being of the people living in this region. The data relating to all-India averages given in table 1.1 will help in roughly evaluating quality of life in the Himalayan region relatively to the position in this regard in the rest of the country.

Of the indicators given in table 1.1, those covered under A and E categories may be reasonably expected to be the basic determinants of people's well-being since these broadly measure the standard of living of the people. Indicators A.1 and A.2 in table 1.1, showing the level and rate of growth of per capita income in these states, can be considered to be the most basic in this respect. Thus, it is seen that three states had per capita income higher than the country as a whole but the remaining five states, for which data are given in table 1.1, had a lower per capita income. The rate of growth of per capita income at the all-India level was fairly high (3.83%) during the 1990s, and in the Himalayan region while four states exceeded that rate of growth, an equal number of states lagged behind.

Further, it is to be noted that Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim both enjoyed a fairly high ranking in terms of level of per capita income and, at the same time, had recorded an equally impressive rate of growth of the same during the 1990s. On the other hand, states of the region like J&K and Meghalaya were laggards in both respects. Spurring economic growth relatively to population would be necessary in the entire region if standards of living and the level of well-being are to be adequately raised.

Focusing next on the two distributional indicators of poverty and hunger (A.4 and A.5), it is to be noted that sustained food security is somewhat of an issue in north-eastern states, but it is no problem in the north-western states. This is consistent with the incidence of poverty being much greater in the former category of states compared to the latter. Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh have performed very well in reducing poverty between 1973-74 and 1999-2000 and the two states seem to be close to banishing poverty completely from amongst their people. Nearly all north-eastern states had in 1973-74 more than half their populations below the poverty

line, but despite a decline in poverty ratios in all the states, more than a third of their population still remains below the poverty line, except in Mizoram which has made an impressive dent in its poverty problem. Compared to the all-India average, the incidence of poverty is still fairly high in most parts of north-eastern India, thus adversely impacting on the well-being of a sizeable fraction of the population there.

Another set of determinants of quality of life, perhaps as important as the foregoing, is that enlisted in table 1.1 under E. The data provided here relates to the rural population only, understandably so because these hill states have huge proportions of their population living in the rural areas. Here, data are given relating to such important amenities available to the people as the dwelling space, electricity used for lighting and the habitations covered under rural water supply. In the matter of average covered area of dwelling unit per household the position in these hill states seems to be better than the all-India average. However, these "average" figures must surely be concealing a good deal of inter-state and inter-household differentials. Then, the position with regard to the habitations partially/fully covered under the rural water supply schemes of the government even at the all-India level appears from the relevant data in the table to be quite satisfactory, and among the states of this region, except Jammu & Kashmir and Nagaland, the same is equally so. However, safe potable water being such an essential ingredient of people's health and well-being, one does not know from these data the ground reality with regard to the proportion of households in the served habitations actually being supplied with tapped water, its adequacy and quality. Next, among these basic amenities, is the use of electricity for lighting. In India as a whole, the picture emerging from data in the table is not a very happy one, with just about half of the rural households having access to this component of modern facilities. Here again, one notices a divide of sorts between the Himalayan states of the north-east and the north-west, with the latter boasting of a very high proportion of rural households (Himachal Pradesh particularly so) using electricity for lighting, but the former lagging way behind in this respect.

Coming now to the literacy and education-related factors, the position in the table is depicted separately for males and females.



Literacy rate in this respect is universally considered to be an important indicator. Female literacy in particular reflects the well-being, status in society, their autonomy and degree of empowerment not only of women themselves but in several subtle ways that of their families as well. In the year 1961, the literacy rates of both males and females in most states of the Himalayan region were much lower than the all-India average. The position was very poor in this respect especially in Jammu & Kashmir and Sikkim. By 2001, several states of this region had taken giant strides in both male and female literacy, particularly Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Tripura and Mizoram. Strangely enough, Arunachal Pradesh which was way ahead of all-India average in 1961, made very little progress in this respect subsequently and thus fell far short of the all-India male and female literacy rates in the year 2001. Jammu & Kashmir, though making rapid progress compared to 1961, still lagged behind all-India average in both male and female literacy rates in 2001.

Another indicator in this category is the gross enrolment ratios. At the all-India level, school enrolment in the age group of 6-14 years was fairly high, though much below the landable target of cent percent enrolment in the case of boys, but pathetically low in girls' case. In both respects all the Himalayan states had by far exceeded the average all-India gross enrolment ratios. States like Sikkim, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram and in fact all north-eastern states have done exceedingly well in this respect. In the north-west, Himachal Pradesh is not far behind, but J&K is lagging behind a little in recording gross enrolment ratios of girls.

Next we come to the very important indicators related to the health status of people and the demographic features of these states. 'A long and healthy life'—which is undoubtedly a significant component and determinant of people's well-being—has for several years now come to be gauged with the help of life expectancy at birth by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) while calculating the human development index. It is unfortunate that data relating to life expectancy of people of the states of Himalayan region in particular are not available even for the 1990s, though the same are available for bigger states of the country.\*

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\*See Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India, Health Information of India, 1997 & 1998, table 2.11, p. 54.

The first indicator under this category in table 1.1 is infant mortality rate (IMR). Comparative data for 1961 and 2000 are given there for male and female infants. These estimates are based on sample registration system which may not be very reliable because of many births and deaths going unrecorded. Yet whatever these are worth, the all-India male IMR was much higher than female IMR in 1961. Within the Himalayan region, both state-wise estimates were much lower, except for Arunachal Pradesh. And only in Manipur and Tripura was female IMR higher than male IMR. In the nearly forty-year period, 1961-2000, male IMR declined more steeply than the female IMR at the all-India level. Thus, in the year 2000, female IMR was slightly higher than its male counterpart. This too is revealed to be the case in the states of Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura. Wherever the female IMR is greater than the male IMR there exists what is called female disadvantage in child survival which is the result of gender biases or gender inequality.

These figures show that IMR has fallen rather sharply in states like Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, but the decline has been somewhat slower in Meghalaya, Manipur and Jammu & Kashmir.

The next four indicators of quality of life under this category, with data from National Family Health Survey-2 (1998-99), NFHS-2 for short, primarily relate to the lives of mothers and infants. The total fertility rate (TFR) shows the number of children a woman would bear during her reproductive life if she were to experience the age-specific fertility rates prevailing at the time of a survey conducted for this purpose. The TFR has wide-ranging effects on the health and well-being of women going through the reproductive years of their lives, their newly-born babies and welfare of entire societies through the TFR's impact on their demographic profile. TFR is also a measure of women's empowerment or lack of it. Among the states for which data are given in table 1.1, the TFR was the lowest in Himachal Pradesh and it was lower than the national average in three other states. It was fairly high in three north-eastern states of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Manipur (in that order).

Then there is the indicator showing percentage of deliveries assisted by health professionals. This shows the outreach and the effectiveness of the Reproductive and Child Health Programme of

Government of India. The data in table 1.1 indicate that this programme could ensure safe motherhood and child health, in 1998-99, only to nearly two-fifth of the deliveries taking place in the country as a whole. Interestingly, the position in this respect was almost identical in both the north western Himalayan states of J&K and Himachal Pradesh. Among all the Himalayan states, the best and the worst performers in this respect were both in the north-east, the former being Mizoram and the latter Meghalaya.

The last two indices of well-being under this category relate to the infants; the first one covering those, still under age two years, who received all the vaccinations prescribed for infants of this age group, and the second showing a negative characteristic of children of age under three years, viz. those who were found underweight. The first of these indices, as is clear, indicates the proportion of infants who have been immunized against many deadly diseases. In this respect, the all-India position is found to be none too happy, with only about two-fifth children having been immunized. Himachal Pradesh is found to have outperformed all the other Himalayan states in this respect, with 83.4% infants of relevant age group having been fully immunized, followed way behind by Mizoram and J&K. Performance of states in the region, such as Nagaland, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh is shown by data in table 1.1 to be very poor in this regard. So far as underweight infants are concerned, the proportion in all-India was found to be fairly serious, with 47% of them having been seen to be categorized as such. Fortunately, the position in this respect is not that serious in the Himalayan states, particularly in those of north-east where the proportion of such infants varied between 20.6% in Sikkim and 37.9% in Meghalaya. Unlike in respect of most other indicators given in table 1.1, Himachal Pradesh had the largest proportion of underweight infants (43.6%) among these states, though this proportion was still lower than the all-India average.

Under category D in table 1.1 are enlisted some well-known indicators of women's quality of life and the degree of their empowerment. Focus on women's well-being is necessary, not only because they constitute nearly half the population anywhere, but also because their wellness is intricately woven with that of other members of their families, particularly the children. Several indicators of their

well-being and empowerment have been considered in table 1.1 under other categories of quality of life as well, such as female literacy rate, school enrolment of girls, the female infant mortality rate, the total fertility rate, and the like. Here, under category D in table 1.1, are some other often used such indices. Among them sex ratio is widely recognized as an index of societal biases (or the absence of them) against the female sex. In table 1.1, the 2001 Census data of sex ratio are compared with those of forty years earlier, i.e. 1961. At the all-India level, there has been a fall in the ratio, indicating an accentuation. Among the Himalayan states, the sex ratio in 2001 was much lower than the all-India average in Sikkim, J&K, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland (in that order), indicating a much greater degree of gender biases than in the country as a whole. Though improvement in the ratio over the forty-year period is seen in several of these states, yet there is also the unfortunate fact that in none of them is this ratio 1000 or more and in Manipur and Mizoram where it had exceeded the 1000 mark in 1961, there has been a sharp decline in it.

Anaemia in women is a serious health problem since it accentuates morbidity and mortality among them and their newly-born babies. The data in table 1.1 is from NFHS-2 (1998-99) and relates to ever-married women. At all-India level, these data show a little more than half of them suffering from a certain degree of anaemia. Thus, the problem adversely impacts the well-being of a large proportion of ever-married women in the country. In some of the states in the Himalayan region, such as J&K, Sikkim, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, the problem was even more serious. Only Manipur had a little less than one-third of them suffering from it.

Early marriage of girls has some well-known adverse effects on their own and their children's health and thus on their well-being and creates problems like early child births, higher fertility rate, poor health of their own and that of the children, higher incidence of maternal mortality, and so on. In our country, 18 years is the legal age of marriage for girls. According to the figures given in table 1.1, on an average as many as 64.6 per cent of women were found to have married by 18 years of age. Thus, early marriages seem to be quite a norm in many parts of the country. But the states of the Himalayan region are shown by these data to have set norms of

delayed marriages compared to some other states of the country. Even in J&K where the proportion of such women is the highest in the region, much less (i.e. 47.5%) than the national average were found to have married by the age of 18 years. In the north-east these proportions are fairly low in states like Mizoram, Manipur and even Nagaland. The proportion is higher in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Meghalaya, though in none of them does it exceed 40 per cent.

Then, there are two indicators in the table which reflect the autonomy status of ever-married women. These are: the involvement of women in decision-making on their own health care, and their access to money. A patriarchal society typically denies autonomy to adult women in both the respects. However, as shown by data in table 1.1, things are gradually changing in favour of autonomy status of these women. In India as a whole, still only a little over half of the ever-married women enjoy autonomy in respect of these two indicators. The position regarding this dimension of adult women's well-being appears from the data to be far more satisfactory in the Himalayan region than elsewhere in the country. In Himachal Pradesh, for example, nearly four-fifth of these women enjoyed autonomy in respect of the two indicators. Meghalaya was close behind in this matter. The lowest percentage of women enjoying autonomy in decision-making on their own health care was observed in Manipur (43.3%) and that in respect of access to money in Nagaland (27.9%). Overall, most states of the region show a greater degree of autonomy in these two respects than the country as a whole.

Women's empowerment and autonomy and hence their well-being are also reflected in what is called female labour force participation rate. The 2001 Census data being unavailable at the time of writing this essay, we had to make do with the NFHS-2 data relating only to the ever-married women of the age group 15-49 years who were self-employed or working in family enterprises, or alternatively, for others. At the all-India level, nearly two-fifth of such women were gainfully employed, while among the Himalayan states, in Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim the labour-force participation rate was fairly low at around one-fifth of these women. However, in states like Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh the labour-force participation rate

of the ever-married women in the age group 15-49 years was quite high.

Lastly, under this category of welfare indicators is an index which very negatively impacts their quality of life. This is the unfortunate, but universally observed, phenomenon of beating and physically mistreating women. The data in table 1.1 relates to ever-married women who reported having been subjected to such physical violence since age 15 years. In India as a whole, nearly one-fifth of them reported having suffered such maltreatment. Among the states of the Himalayan region the extent of such physical violence was higher than the all-India average in Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, but nearly identical with it in J&K, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. Happily, its extent was reported to be the lowest in Himachal Pradesh.

Finally, in table 1.1 are provided data on a couple of environmental factors. These factors are important determinants of quality of life wherever people are engaged in large numbers in primary occupations such as agriculture, mining, forestry, etc. and are thus heavily dependant on natural resources for their livelihoods. The Himalayan ecology is considered to be rather fragile and thus human and other pressures on it can adversely affect the well-being of inhabitants there.

In table 1.1, the first environmental factor, on which data for two years of the 1990s are given, is area under forests per capita of rural population. The rural population in the hills heavily depends on forests for the satisfaction of a variety of its requirements like timber, fuel wood, grazing of cattle, sheep and goats, wild fruits, and even for their income and employment (as is brought out in a subsequent chapter written by Dr. H.K. Gupta). The figures given in table 1.1 here clearly show that whether one considers the position at the national level, or in the individual states of the Himalayan region, even within a brief period of seven-eight years of the 1990s, the pressure of rural population on area under forests was rising. The decline in area under forests per capita of rural population between 1991-92 and 1998-99 implies that rural population was rising faster than increase in area under forests (if at all) thus leading to increased pressure of human population on this important natural resource. These figures show improvement in this respect only in one

Himalayan state, viz. Mizoram. The deterioration in the region as a whole, and impliedly over a long period, surely indicates an adverse impact on the quality of life of the people there since, as noted above, they depend on forests for many of their important requirements.

Another environmental factor, also indicating man's dependence on nature, on which data are given in table 1.1, is average size of agricultural holdings. The latest data available at the time of writing this profile is for the year 1990-91 even though the last Census of agricultural holdings was held for the year 1995-96. The figures given in table 1.1 indicate a growing pressure of population on farm land whether at the all-India level, or in the Himalayan states. Over the roughly 15-year period, 1976-77 to 1990-91, average size of agricultural holdings declined in India as a whole and in all the states of this region for which data are given in table 1.1, except the state of Manipur.

The broad conclusion that emerges from the consideration of these two environmental factors is that in the Himalayan region, as elsewhere in India, there has been a deterioration in man-nature relationship over time. To the extent that the tribal and other communities in the region heavily depend on the physical environment and its bounties in the form of forests and farm land, such deterioration must have adversely affected some dimensions of the quality of life of the people of the region.

To conclude discussion in this section, we may identify the state/states of the region which score the first and the last rankings in respect of most of the indicators given in table 1.1. Those which score the highest number of first rankings would be considered to manifest a relatively better quality of life of its/their people, and those remaining laggards in most cases would indicate a rather low level of well-being of people. On this basis, it is noted that the states of Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram in the region seem to enjoy a relatively better quality of life, but on the other hand, the state of Jammu & Kashmir lags behind the rest of the region in most dimensions of well-being considered here. It must, however, be emphasized that quality of life is a multi-dimensional concept, as must have been clear from the preceding section of this chapter, and therefore it cannot be claimed that the consideration of a few quantifiable phenomena and objective indicators would help in

drawing a firm conclusion on overall level of well-being of the people of a region.

### **Articles in This Volume: A Preview**

Unlike what we have done in the preceding section (having taken several well-known and often used indicators of quality of life), the articles included in this volume discuss different determinants of people's well-being in the Himalayan region which, though difficult to quantify, definitely influence people's lives positively in subtle and holistic ways. Some of these determinants are rooted in the regions' cultural and social ethos and are peculiar to its people and local communities.

Among these articles, the first four deal with the traditionally well-known indicators of quality of life in the context of the Himalayan region, viz. education, health and economic growth promoted through technology, production systems and the development programmes implemented under the planning process. Then follow articles dealing with phenomena such as cultural traditions and fairs and festivals, which help in enriching lives of communities and enhancing people's well-being. Factors impacting the lives of females of the region are the focus of the next three articles. These provide interesting insights into how the females of the region, though overburdened with work, almost everywhere, devise ingenious ways to bring light, colour and amusement into their otherwise humdrum lives. The forests play a multifarious role in the lives of the people. They generate positive externalities in the form of causing rainfall, regulating subterranean and overground flow of water, influencing other features of climate etc. not only over the region but much beyond. These issues are the subject matter of the next two articles. While the first one looks at a traditionally evolved but unique institution of integrated approach to forest management, exploitation and conservation, the second analyzes the causes of unrest among communities dependent on forest resources in the state of Uttaranchal and their unique modes of protest and methods of protection of such resources. Finally, there is an interesting article on how the tribal people of the land-locked Pangi valley have attempted to protect their physical environment since times immemorial involving myths



and legends that generate a fear and awe in the heart of the people for nature's bounties so that they would not over-exploit them.

Let us take a peep into these articles and notice how each of them views the phenomenon, process or factor that it takes up for discussion impacting the quality of life of the people of the region. The first of these articles by Prof. (Mrs.) K.K. Kaushik and Dr. Sanju Karol is titled 'Education as a Component of Economic and Human Development in Himachal Pradesh: An Evaluation'. Education is universally recognized as an essential factor for improving the quality of life. This paper covers a somewhat wider canvas and education is being perceived as a determinant of both economic growth and human development in Himachal Pradesh. While evaluating the educational progress of this state, the authors address two main issues, viz. the state's progress in this respect in relation to its population growth, and the discernment of synergy in progress of education, economic growth and human development. Allied issues like investment in human capital, the rising female literacy and what has come to be called "the schooling revolution" in the state, are also discussed. The authors conclude that social sector development, of which educational progress is an essential component, economic growth and human development have taken place in a complementary and harmonious fashion in the state which has in turn led to significant improvement in the quality of life of its people.

The status of health care of the people is yet another important ingredient of quality of life. The paper 'Health Care as a Determinant of Quality of Life of Women and Children in the Hills' by N.S. Bist deals with this important factor with reference to the hill states of Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim, using National Family Health Survey-2 (1998-99) data. The study focuses on health care indicators of quality of life of women such as fertility, mortality, family planning, their nutritional status, and those of children like their immunization against diseases, their mortality rates and nutritional status and so on. A comparative picture of status of women in two states is also brought out in terms of sex ratio—sometimes considered a summary measure of women's well-being—marital status of girls in the age group of 15-19 years, women's involvement in decision-making within the household, and so on.

The study concludes that speedy fertility decline, and a healthy

sex ratio in the two states are the result of rapid growth of female education and other sources of empowerment of women (like participation in decision-making, late marriages, universal knowledge of contraception, etc.). Himachal Pradesh in particular has undergone a rapid demographic transition. Moreover, undernourishment of a large proportion of women and children remain a worrisome problem in the two hill states.

The next paper, in the genre of traditional view of optimizing production systems thus promoting agricultural development and thereby improving the quality of life of the people, is authored by Dr. Ashok Kumar *et al.* The paper 'Sustainable Production Systems: Implications for Nutritional Security and Quality of Life in the Himalayan Region' argues that in the region, stress on total farming system rather than single crops is necessary for ensuring food security for people. The need to conserve environment and natural resource-base requires exploring production systems which create strong linkages between economy, ecology and sustainability. A farm production system is seen as a combination of all those related farm enterprises which are taken up under a single management unit and which compete with each other for a common pool of resources and environment. The study also emphasizes the need to develop location-specific optimum farming system for raising farm income, generating employment and ultimately improving quality of life of the people. It chooses three agro-climatic zones from Himachal Pradesh, and using a linear programming model, develops optimum farming systems for each of them. The model shows that these systems will help in raising returns to fixed resources substantially and thus improve farm income and food security in the region to quite an extent.

The paper of Dr. Krishan Mohan, bearing the title 'Area Development Programmes in the Himalayan Region: An Evaluation' seeks to assess the impact of different Area Development Programmes designed and implemented in all the ten Himalayan states and designated hill districts of the region. The implications of the impact of the Programmes on quality of life are drawn only indirectly. Main evaluation is in terms of level of development, for which three indicators are taken, viz. female literacy, representing social development, urbanization taken as a proxy for economic development, and non-

agricultural work-force representing diversification of rural economy. An elaborate methodology has been used to derive a composite development index.

The main finding of the study is that in terms of each of the three indicators, while performance in the region was poor compared to the national average in 1971, the region performed better in the year 2001. However, in terms of the composite development index, the region remained way behind all-India in both the years. More and more hill states are found to be performing better than the national average as a result of the various Area Development Programmes. However, concerted efforts at the state level, with central support, would be necessary to improve quality of life of the hill people further.

As mentioned earlier, the next two papers included in this volume explore question of how the cultural traditions, and fairs and festivals of Himachal Pradesh, which have been an integral part of the lives of people here since times immemorial, contribute to their well-being. The paper by Dr. B.R. Sharma is titled 'Cultural Traditions of Himachal Pradesh and their Impact on Quality of Life of People'. The paper, starting with a historical background of the people, show them to be the descendants of various mythological and historical tribes who inhabited these mountains even prior to the time of the Vedas and the Epics. According to the author, the history, traditions and beliefs of the people here go back to the dawn of civilization. The people of the tribal belt practice Buddhism and thus have their peculiar Lamaistic customs, traditions and beliefs. The author analyses the cultural profile of Himachal Pradesh with reference to three eco-cultural zones, viz. the upper reaches of the Himalayas, the middle belt, and the lower belt. Each of these are shown to be under separate religious influences, with different food habits, marriage rituals, and so on. The institution of village gods is the identity and peculiarity of life in the Himalayas.

The study includes that diverse aspects of human life such as belief in divine spirits, village deities, celebrations at community level, perpetuation of beliefs originating in prehistoric times, nature worship, preservation of arts and crafts having evolved over time—and so on enrich the hill society in sure but very subtle ways and ultimately contributing to its well-being and harmonious existence.

In the same genre is the next paper by Dr. Neelmani Upadhyay

titled 'Fairs and Festivals and Quality of Life of People in Himachal Pradesh'. Himachal Pradesh has undoubtedly a rich cultural heritage of which fairs and festivals are an important component. These, according to Dr. Upadhyay, are rooted in the state's geographical location, its seasons, crops and the peasantry, history and traditions, religious beliefs and ceremonies, folk culture and folklore, even local trade and commerce, and rural sports, etc. Along with fairs and festivals, the deity-culture is another distinctive feature of Himachal Pradesh. Significantly, the deity-culture is not caste-ridden. The oracles of deities can be from lower castes. So, there is an egalitarian aspect to it.

The author interprets the attributes of good quality of life in terms of self-cultivation, character-building and spiritual upliftment. This is mainly an idealistic and normative approach. Fairs and festivals in the hills are seen not just sources of entertainment and excitement but also influencing the moods and modes of living of the people. The author concludes that quality of life is dependent on factors such as faith in the destiny of man and universe, work-culture, balance and synthesis, integrity and accountability, composite and comprehensive outlook and self-actualization and realization. Fairs and festivals help in the attainment and enhancement of all these attributes of quality of life.

The next couple of articles in this volume focus on gender issues and quality of life of the hill women-folk. Among these, the first one by Ms. Sonia Khan is titled 'Leisure Behaviour of Women: A Study in the Remote Region of Kinnaur in the Himalayas'. According to Ms. Khan, patterns of leisure and recreation of women in developing societies have received scant attention in the literature. The very concept of leisure has various connotations in different societies and this is particularly so in developed and developing countries.

Women's gender role obliges them to find and coordinate their leisure time with duties towards their families. Their care-giver attitude, values and sense of responsibility towards their families may inhibit them from pursuing leisure involvement.

This case study relates to the district of Kinnaur of Himachal Pradesh which borders with Tibet and is nestled in the rugged mountains of western Himalayas. Due to the remoteness of the region, its people by and large remain insulated from outside

influences. So they retain their unique identity. The author describes in detail the life-styles of these tribal people, their ingenuity in devising their own methods of amusement and recreation, and their leisure behaviour taking the forms of singing, dancing, merry-making, and consuming home-made liquor. The study finds that though the women of the region have heavy workloads, yet most of them do manage to squeeze some free time within the work schedule itself. They socialize with neighbours, gossip, sit, chat, or visit the market or a temple. But these simple leisure pursuits are not distinctly different from strict work. Moments of leisure are spontaneously extracted from within the schedule of daily chores.

The study notes that in such societies, leisure, which is an important determinant of quality of life, is integral to the life of every individual, regardless of a person's location, gender or socio-economic condition.

Another article, also focusing on gender issues and well-being of women, is that by Dr. R.S. Bora, with the title 'Emerging Gender Issues in Uttaranchal: Socio-economic and Demographic Perspective'. In this paper, Dr. Bora tries to interlink issues of development, demographic change and women's role and status in society. Changes in the status of gender bias, and autonomy and quality of life of women in the state of Uttaranchal are analyzed with the help of socio-economic and demographic indicators. These changes are also compared with those taking place in the neighbouring states, particularly Himachal Pradesh, and all-India. Among the demographic indicators, sex ratio, a summary measure of women's welfare, is discussed in detail. The ratio is found to be favourable to females in most hilly districts of the state. But sex ratio of child population is found to be deteriorating. That is partly due to the much higher female infant mortality rate in the rural areas of the state.

Two other demographic indicators of well-being of females in Uttaranchal are analyzed, viz. the total fertility rate and the age at marriage. The former is steadily declining and the latter gradually rising. Though the trends are somewhat slow, yet these are seen to be positive developments for the welfare of women of the region. Other demographic changes include increasing trends in female literacy, utilization of reproductive health services, and so on. Female labour force participation rate, a significant indicator of women's

well-being, is found to be rather low in the region. Among the female main workers, while a preponderant majority is found to be employed in the primary activities, participation in non-traditional secondary and tertiary activities is relatively low.

On the whole, the study finds improvement in the status of women in terms of female education, total fertility rate, sex ratio, age at marriage, etc. But the male out-migration primarily because of economic backwardness of the state continues to be a serious issue. Decline in child sex ratio, an indicator of persisting gender discrimination, is another worrisome problem.

The article by Dr. Usha Bande titled 'Nature-Woman Continuum, Earth-based Spirituality and Himalayan Folklore' also explores gender issues in the Himalayan region but through the medium of the folklore. This essay refers to many folk rituals, attitudes and beliefs which show close association of people with nature in Himachal Pradesh and largely for the hill people's characteristic goodness, truthfulness and healthy mental life. 'Nature-woman continuum', an eco-feminist idea which identifies women with nature is analyzed through the medium of folklore, thus bringing out how women tend to express themselves artistically seeking fulfillment and entertainment. This women's identification with nature is reflected in folk-games and celebrations with religious fervour like Rali played in some parts of Himachal Pradesh. In this month-long game, women interact with nature, affirming their deep relationship with earth. Rali, in fact, deifies a girl of that name who is believed to have sacrificed her life for her parents having wronged her in having her married off to a child groom. So celebration of Rali is a sort of warning to parents of the marriageable girls not to sacrifice them at the altar of marriage. The celebration is not only a veiled challenge to patriarchy, but is also a way of empowering women and giving them their identity. The celebration also gives them freedom and enriches their social life. And in the ultimate analysis, all this helps in improving their quality of life.

Dr. Bande maintains that folklore of Himachal Pradesh is not mere ritual but a way of life. The deification of women-nature bond can be a befitting answer to the megalomaniac world drugged with power, violence and domination. The ecological wisdom inherent in Himachal's folklore bequeaths to us a world-view that is non-violent

and harmonious and is a sure path to improve people's quality of life and well-being.

'Forest Resource Management through Traditionally *in vogue* Participatory Approaches in Himachal Inner Himalayas' is an interesting study by Dr. H.K. Gupta. The study *inter alia* focuses on sustainable, participatory, forest resource management practices that are being followed since ages in ecologically fragile tribal inner Himalayan areas of Himachal Pradesh. The forests are managed, conserved and exploited by the villagers themselves through the local management committees presided over by the local deity. The article covers six case studies of traditional participatory forest management practices pertaining to the sub-alpine and alpine regions of Kinnaur, Lahaul & Spiti and Killar.

The first case study relates to the management and collection of edible pine nuts, cumin seeds and grass, and conservation of forests of Kanan village of district Kinnaur. The villagers have recorded rights on forest produce like timber, firewood, fodder, edible nuts, medicinal herbs etc. Main commercial forest crops are edible pine nuts, cumin seeds and grass. Villagers are under strong influence of the local deity and the latter presides over the management committee which decides the mode of collection and distribution of the aforementioned commercial forest produce. The process of collection and distribution is completely participatory and equitable.

Though this process of management and the forest produce vary from one case study to the other, the broad features are nearly identical. The second case study relates to willow coppice management in Lossar village of Spiti valley. The third one focuses on extraction of Guchhi, a wild edible mushroom, medicinal plants and grass in Nathpa forests of district Kinnaur. The fourth case study deals with the extraction of edible pine nuts, cumin seed and grass in Neshang forests of Morang tehsil of Kinnaur. The fifth one describes the process of collection and distribution of edible pine nuts and cumin seed in Akpa forests in the same district. The last study pertains to the collection of edible pine nuts and grass in Luj and Dharwas forests of Killar forest range in district Chamba.

These case studies bring out the existence of a traditionally institutionalized forest management-livelihood linkages. The system succeeds mainly because people have deep faith in the local deity

and do not act against the wishes and dictates of their deity. Participatory institutions, equity in distribution of gains and strict norms for conservation enhances the well-being of the people and promote sustainable use of natural resources.

The underlying ménage is found such institutions need to be promoted and clear: nurtured and replicated in other areas, wherever possible. The exploitation and management of forest resources is a live issue in the neighbouring state of Uttaranchal, which forms the subject matter of the next article, but from an entirely different perspective. Prof. Mehta, in article 'Journey through the Unquiet Woods: Contested Resources and Protest Movements in Uttaranchal', rues the fact that the process of planning in post-independence India, dominated by mathematical models, has been guilty of glassing over biophysical reality. The grassroots ecological realities of deforestation, depletion of natural resources, etc. were totally ignored by economists, political leadership and other dominant voices in academics and politics.

Prof. Mehta's study is on protest movements in Uttaranchal. The term movement is defined as persistent, patterned and widely distributed challenges to status quo and collective perception of exploitation, such as cutting of trees or building of dams which do not help in providing the grassroot people with jobs, water or electricity but only help in aggravating these problems. The study endeavours to read through the unfolding of messages emerging from Chipko and post-Chipko movements in the recently constituted state of Uttaranchal. In the post-Chipko period, the people, embracing the trees are prepared to take the axe blows on their bodies and would not allow the trees to be axed at all. Episodes of villagers tying a symbolic sacred thread of Rakhi around trees are also recalled.

The author refers to the fact being lamented in the local press of the area that, way back in 1978, the Chipko movement was indeed based on 'power of the people' and 'collective action'. But now judicial intervention on behalf of the people is increasing. Local activists and ecologists of Uttaranchal consider it as the Chipko getting aborted.

The protesters in the region effectively use religious symbols and rituals such as lighting of lamps, tying of Rakhi to the trees, performing the ceremonial dances, and so on. Dr. Mehta was surprised to find that even international agencies like the WWF justifies



espousing religious symbols and sentimentalities in 'protest' and 'protect' movements if these help in achieving the desired objectives.

The last article in this volume 'Nature-Culture Complex in Pangi Valley: The Legend of Mindhal Mata' by Prof. Birinder Pal Singh delves into the mechanics of how ruling myths and legends in a tribal society help in protecting its peculiar physical environment from the rapacity of crass materialism. The legend in this article is connected with Mindhal Mata, the ruling deity of Pangi Valley. This valley is completely fortified by nature from all sides and is approachable only through seven high passes. People living in most parts of the valley are economically and culturally very backward. They still adhere to the age-old traditional practices in economic, social and political spheres.

Mindhal is a medium-sized village in the Sach area of the Valley, where the temple of the Mata is located. According to the legend, an old lady once lived here with her seven sons. One day, a Devi appeared before her when she was clearing her hearth. The Devi wanted a temple to be built for her, which the sons of the old lady would build only if the Devi would revive their bull and get them tax free land. This infuriated the Devi who not only turned the sons into rock but also cursed the villagers that they would always plough their fields with a single bull and no one would ever have seven sons.

The elders of the village still adhere to the curses showered on them by Mindhal Mata. Prof. Singh surmises that the legend must be the mental construction of the people of the area to cope with the material reality. A nature-culture complex thus emerges from the legend. Grant of their wish by the Mata of more material means of production to the sons of the old lady would simply have meant reckless exploitation of nature. According to Prof. Singh, the elders of this area must have tried to restrain the people from over-exploiting the peculiar geophysical conditions of the area like high mountains, steep slopes, extremely heavy snowfall, and so on. Such restraint imposed through these legends and myths must have contributed to the richness of natural resources, both flora and fauna, of the valley till recently.

The study concludes that myths, legends and other cultural practices of the tribal communities are a clear manifestation of the dialectic between natural and cultural forces characteristic of that

region. These pre-modern cultural constructs are based on a holistic cosmology, which having evolved over the centuries, ensures to the people a simple, completely satisfying, unalloyed life, and no other alternative would lead to their greater well-being and a better quality of life. The government and other external agencies should, therefore, desist from interfering with this nature-culture complex mingle.

#### NOTES

1. Partha Dasgupta (2001), *Human Well-being and the Natural Environment*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p. 13.
2. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Ed.) (2002), *The Quality of Life*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. See "Introduction".
3. *Ibid.*
4. Partha Dasgupta, *op.cit.*, p. 13.
5. Amartya Sen, "Capability and Well-being" in Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 31, 36-37.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
7. Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen (2002), *India: Development and Participation*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp. 6-8, 18, 219 and 359.
8. See Amartya Sen, "Capability and Well-being" in Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 30-42.
9. Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *op.cit.*, pp. 35-36.
10. UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003*, p. 28.
11. See Erik Allardt, "Having, Loving, Being: An Alternative to the Swedish Model of Welfare Research" in Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 88-89.
12. Robert Erikson, "Descriptions of Inequality: The Swedish Approach to Welfare Research" in *ibid.*, pp. 72-73.
13. Amartya Sen in *ibid.*, p. 37.
14. Erik Allardt in *ibid.*, p. 92.