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## BOOK REVIEW

### **Global Warming and Climate Change: From Clash to Crash of Civilization**

by Tapeswar Singh,

**Published by:** Rajesh Publications, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 335, Price Rs 600/-

“Global Warming and Climate Change: From Clash to Crash of Civilization” is a collection of contributions made by the author between 1992 and 2007 to a number of reputed journals, periodicals, magazines and conference proceedings. It includes an abridged project report and an interview with the author published in the *Guardian*.

There are a total number of 26 documents divided into two parts. Chapters I to XV in Part I relate to various aspects of climate change and variability, their causes, consequences and the steps required to combat the ecological collapse. They include Chapter XIII entitled, “The Climate Bomb” which is an interview with the author by Peter Symon, on behalf of the *Guardian* (Sydney, Australia) published in the Paper on Dec. 8, 1999. Three Chapters, (II, XII and XV) examine the link between the ENSO phenomenon and drought and/or variability of the monsoon. Part II comprises Chapters XVI to XXVI concerning a wide range of issues like drought, land use, land cover, groundwater depletion and environmental degradation.

Authored by an authority on the subject it is dependable material to be welcome by undergraduates, graduates, postgraduates and research scholars. Among the general readers, it

will create awareness of the dangers of environmental degradation. One commendable merit of the book is that it suggests to prospective researchers, potentially valuable topics for future investigation. The author has had a vast range of experience of research in the field. There are occasions when his findings do not tally with the findings of other researchers and he says so in his conclusions, as, for example, on pages 97, 124 etc. In such cases the researchers may examine the scope for further research on the subject. Guidance in this respect, coming from a veteran, is valuable indeed. The problems are well analyzed and source references are given at the end of each chapter. Appropriate tables and figures are there for a quick and easy understanding of the scenario described. The matter is presented in an organised manner. Concepts are clearly stated and precise definitions of terms are provided wherever necessary. An index of figures and tables has been provided for easy tracing of any specific topic. At the end of Chapters V, VI, XIV, XVI and XVIII, there are useful appendices representing related information that can be grasped at a glance. All these features add to the merits of the book. The work is the accumulated result of a tremendous amount of diligent work put in by the learned author over a number of years and is hence to be highly valued by those who are in quest of the information provided by the book. The serious reader is bound to be inspired by the rich contribution made by the author in his field.

However, the usefulness of the book is significantly limited by the fact that the author,

in his wisdom, has kept all the documents of the book unaltered and has published them in their original form and not updated them. As a consequence, these are, as these were on the dates of the original publication. Most readers would be interested in the latest data in respect of various aspects of the issue involved. On occasions, they may doubt if the statements made ten years ago are as valid today as they were at the time when the document was written. Unfortunately, the author does not come to the help of such readers. This he could have done perhaps with an explanatory foot note. Thus often enough, the reading of the book would be like seeing pictures taken at some past time and not like witnessing the present scenario. Sometimes these pictures may be of interest and even relevant but more often readers would like to have up-to-date information. Let us take a concrete example. The first paper from page 1 onwards is entitled, "Impact of Anthropogenic Factors on Climate Change". This is a paper presented at a conference at Prague in August, 1994. In my opinion, the reader has a right to know this fact at the very outset when he starts reading, rather than obscurely at the end of the article, from a postscript. A reference relating to the 70's and 80's of the last century as 'recent decades' would have a jarring effect, if the reader is not clear that the statement was made in 1994. At page 6, the author points out that 15 years 'have passed since the first evidence' of an increase in the atmospheric methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) had come to light. In 1994 when the statement was made, it was '15 years ago', but another 15 years have since gone by and today we need to say that evidence came to light '30' years ago. Again, at page 7, the daily emission of pollutants in Delhi is described as 871.92 tons and in Bombay 540.80 tons, which certainly does not represent the present position.

The author appears to have realized the

anomaly but decided in his wisdom to retain the original form unchanged and unexplained. In the preface he says, "In no case, facts and figures referred to in different articles published between 1992 and 2007, a run of 16 years, were not (*sic*) altered and updated, these are kept in their original form."*(sic)*. At page 8, there is a reference to the scientists' prediction that the ozone layer would start to repair itself 'early next century'. The unwary reader would expect the author to tell him the position at the time of writing in 2008. Other similar predictions in the article also need to be duly modified/discussed. It is expected of the author in such cases to update the statements or at least refer to the present position with regard to the predictions. The words 'recent' and 'recently' frequently used in the book, often give a jolt to the reader. Page 36 talks of 'recent decades'. The author actually means the eighties and seventies of the last century. What was 'recent' in 1994 cannot be so fifteen years later. The eighties and seventies of the 20th century were 'recent' decades in 1994 but not today. Dates of writings of all such articles should necessarily have been stated along with the title at the very outset. Some errors of grammar and usage at different places in the book, particularly with regard to the use of the present perfect tense instead of the past tense could be easily avoided.

Undoubtedly the best part of the work is the "Introduction" by way of 'Foreword' by Professor R.P. Misra, Director, International Centre for Gandhian Studies and Peace Research, New Delhi. Professor R.P. Misra, a scholar of great eminence, treats comprehensively the topic of the book in an excellent style marked by precision, simplicity and lucidity that can be attained only by the best of authors. The book being a collection of disparate articles, the reader should not expect coherence and interconnection between them.

He set out therefore, in his introduction to provide the necessary information. Most logically, step by step; he gives the background information to the reader about the problem of global warming and climate change to enable him to appreciate each chapter of the book. Not only does he, in his inimitable style inform the reader but also persuades him and inspires him to take up the task of fighting the menace of anthropogenic factors in environmental pollution. He gives the latest information right up to the year 2008 of international action to fight the evil of environmental degradation. Professor Misra's introduction fills in the gaps, thereby playing an important role in a better understanding of the book by the general reader. It is interesting to note how he says he overcame his hesitation in acceding to the author's request to write a 'foreword' to the book, when for the last two decades; he had devoted his time and attention exclusively to Gandhian Philosophy and Peace Science. He realized that the principle of non-violence was central to the philosophy of the Father of the Nation and formed the core of his ethics of human culture. 'Had the world listened to Gandhi, the problem of 'Global Warming' and 'Climate Change' would not have taken the form it has'. Gandhi said, "We cannot have ecological movement designed to prevent violence against nature, unless the principle of non-violence becomes central to the ethics of human culture".

Thus the theme of the book was closely interwoven with Gandhian philosophy and peace science.

It is a matter of some surprise that an important work like the present one should not say a single word about those who believe that the idea of global warming is nothing but 'hogwash' except that Professor Misra has made a reference to experiments being conducted to ascertain facts. Contrarily, a very large number

of scientists point towards another phenomenon i.e. Global Cooling. Scientific evidence has been produced in support of the alternative theory. The Executive Director of International Climate and Environmental Change has said, "If you look at the satellite data, which is the most reliable data, the best coverage of the globe - 2008 was the 14th coldest in 30 years". According to the findings of U.S. Army personnel floating around in the Arctic Ocean, North Pole has become one metre thicker since April 2008. Polar bears that were protected are now found to be thriving in the Arctic. In India, soon after the Kyoto Protocol was put into effect, Kashmir suffered the highest snowfall in three decades with over 150 killed. During the years 1940 to 1970, there was global cooling and scientists predicted a new ice age. Scientists have raised doubts about Global Warming crisis (Ref. Is Global Warming Hogwash? by Shwetank Dubey: Pioneer, May 3, 2009). It appears that in spite of the confusion between Global Warming and Global Cooling, climate change is a reality that calls for a solution.

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