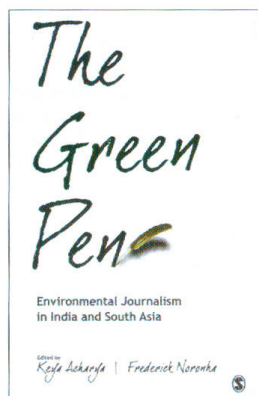


CURRENT SCIENCE, 25 September 2011



The Green Pen: Environmental Journalism in India and South Asia. Keya Acharya and Frederick Noronha (eds). SAGE Publications, B1/I-1 Mohan Co-operative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044. 2010. xviii + 303 pp. Price: Rs 395.

As the name suggests, *The Green Pen* is a book about environmental reporting. Lyla Bavadam's first write-up in the book goes to show what makes environmental reporting the most challenging. Kunda Dixit argues that creating this separate category of reporting has affected environmental protection, and that there can be only two types of journalism – good and bad. Writing on similar lines Kalpana Sharma adds that the skills needed for environmental journalism are the same as those needed for good journalism.

Devinder Sharma justifies why he believes that the media is no longer the 'fourth estate'. He exemplifies issues that are mostly untouched by the media such as farmer suicides, which make only occasional headlines and the enormous

consumption of water by the automobile industry.

Frederick Noronha raises concerns surrounding tourism in Goa, and Ahmed Zaki Nafiz presents a glimpse of environmental reporting in the Maldives, acknowledging that even though the media has its spotlight on environmental issues, the reportage is mostly 'superficial'. The need for collective environment and health reporting, mostly done by separate reporters is expressed in the book. Disaster reporting (earthquakes and floods), and reporting on water, agriculture and wildlife are discussed too. There are other articles authored by well-known names in the field of environment/journalism, including Richard Mahapatra, S. Gopikrishna Warriar, Pallava Bagla and Sunita Narain.

The book explains how reporting on environment cannot be done in isolation; it is connected with political and economic dimensions. It calls for journalists to have a scientific understanding of the environment to be able to report credibly. There are essays on photojournalism, gender and environment issues, and environmental movements. One section, 'An Anil Agarwal Reader' is devoted to the late environmentalist Anil Agarwal's selected writings.

All the essays represent strong views and first-hand experience of the active contributors in the field. *The Green Pen* is a must have for all journalists, not particularly for those reporting on the environment. In the words of Darryl D' Monte, 'The admonitions that several contributors to this book address to environmental journalists actually apply to all scribes'.

RICHA MALHOTRA

e-mail: rchmalhotra@gmail.com