

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is a modified version of my doctoral thesis, for which I was awarded a degree in 2009. I completed my graduate and postgraduate work in the scientific discipline of botany, and this training in science has helped me to have a good scientific knowledge about the environmental issues around us. However, a concern about society and its problems prompted me to shift to the wider terrain of social sciences for my MPhil studies. My later engagement in the Social Sciences department at Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, encouraged me to undertake a deeper enquiry into environmental issues, which culminated in this interdisciplinary study for my doctoral research. An inquisitiveness that evolved out of understanding human beings, nature and environment philosophically directed me to this study.

The in-depth lectures on social science methodology and critical social theories that I received at the School of Social Sciences from eminent scholars during my course work and in subsequent years helped me get a thorough foundation in interdisciplinary research. In later years, my teaching experience in human ecology and environmental history including guidance of postgraduate and MPhil dissertations at the School of Social Sciences helped expand my knowledge field to varied issues transcending disciplinary boundaries. The doctoral thesis was an attempt to understand the human-environment interacting sphere (the domain of human ecology) from a multidimensional framework. In this volume, two chapters (one and three) are added anew to situate the themes historically with clarity. The book covers a wide range of theoretical approaches that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century and outlines a human ecological framework from a 'development' perspective. Thus, the book brings forth a new outlook in understanding and dealing with environmental issues. Prof. Bernhard Glaeser (president of German Society for Human Ecology), one of the evaluators of my PhD thesis, pointed out the potential of the thesis to be a book. I gratefully acknowledge him on this occasion.

Now, as the doctoral thesis has evolved into a book, I remember several faces with gratitude and I take this opportunity to acknowledge them here. My teachers at the School of Social Sciences need special mention. I express my deep gratitude to my professor and research supervisor as well as mentor, Dr T. K. Ahmed Nizar. Prof. Nizar always revealed to students through his own life how to be a perfect teacher, researcher, learner and, above all, a compassionate human being, rather than acting as a mere adviser. He taught me how to look critically not only at the research problem but at our own lives and our own ways of thinking as 'humans', which prompted me to go beyond the perceptions I had about the world and ourselves, which were founded merely on 'ego'. This 'critical eye' guided me in unfolding the analytical ability of my mental faculty that helped me to produce this volume.

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