
	<h1>Journal of Energy and Management</h1>	
	<p>Journal homepage: <a href="https://www.spm.pdpu.ac.in">https://www.spm.pdpu.ac.in</a></p>	

## BOOK REVIEW

### **Achieving Universal Energy Access in India: Challenges and the Way Forward.**

ISBN : 978-93-515-0137-4

Authored by P.C. Maithani, Deepak Gupta.

Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd.

[www.sagepub.in](http://www.sagepub.in)

India is still struggling with the problem of providing access to energy services even after 68 years of Independence. India's population of more than 1028 million is growing at an annual rate of 1.58%. As fossil fuel energy becomes scarcer, India will face energy shortages significantly due to increase in energy prices and energy insecurity within the next few decades (Kumar et al., 2010). In the book "Achieving Universal Energy Access in India: challenges and way forward", the authors PC Maithani and Deepak Gupta have done a remarkable job in directing our attention to energy access issues in India. Both personnel having served the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, were instrumental in launching of India's ambitious National Solar Mission. Both of them drew on their long tenure of experiences in the government to this book.

This is a well-documented book of about 250 pages with lots of informative charts and tables, but the flow goes well because of the authors' narrative skill. There are 10 chapters in this

book and each chapter is a full academic research note seeking to advance a discussion for formulating a new policy perspective on promoting renewable energy. The initial three chapters addresses sophisticated topics related to energy economics, which Maithani-Gupta presents these clearly and without oversimplifying the fact that energy and economic growth are strongly related. Energy access becomes a critical component not only to reduce rural poverty and drudgery, but also is one of fundamental condition for holistic rural development. Most of all, it succeeds in helping readers understand the breadth and complexity of the world of energy.

In the next chapter (4), the authors provide understandable descriptions of the constantly evolving policies and government initiatives/programmes (within the period 1974 to 2005) to promote rural electrification projects all over the country. The focus of this chapter is to bring to light the problems faced in India in terms of energy consumption as well as the hindrances faced by rural electrification networks. The author discusses in this chapter the key aspects of electricity access, status of access in India, the challenges faced in rural electrification and the potential of renewable energy.

The next two chapters (5 & 6), the author highlights the fact that more than 44 percent of the household in rural India lack basic access to electricity. Even those villages that have been provided with grid power receive less than 6 hours supply in most cases. Such a situation exists despite several initiatives and policies adopted by the government to support poor households. Maithani-Gupta indicated that renewable energy technologies could provide a

solution to these problems, citing examples of successful programmes, models and government initiatives implemented in the past.

The link with power and lack of energy access comes even more sharply in the next chapters (7 & 8) on cooking fuels. The problem is equally acute with regard to cooking energy. According to census of 2011, over 85 per cent of household in rural India is still dependent on biomass to meet its cooking needs. Although biomass resource is available in abundant, the health hazards associated and the resultant smoke appears to override the free factor consideration. The authors have also stressed upon the contentious issue of subsidies for the use of LPG as a cooking fuel. The concluding chapters discusses about several long-term strategies, decentralized administration and a commercialized subsidy program for rural energy development, that would be required to integrate developmental efforts suggested by the authors in future policy formulation, so as to resolve the energy access problem in India.

India is at an energy crossroads, with policy formulations and decisions to make, to improvise the infrastructure for energy access in rural areas. Improving energy services for poor households in developing countries remains one of the most pressing challenges facing the development community. A high concentration of population without access to energy is still found in India, where the largest number of people in any country in the world

without adequate energy access lives (Bhattacharyya, 2006). The government should redesign energy programs, keeping in mind the energy future of rural India. The government also needs to efficiently incentivize such energy programs to make them sustainable in a long run. From a policy perspective, the book is a gem as it the documentation extensively presents some holistic facts about electricity and cooking energy access in India. The book takes a critical look at the present energy policy and addresses ways to improve energy penetration. In doing so it encourages the use of renewable energy as an alternate medium, challenging the traditional power proponents.

## REFERENCES

- Bhattacharyya, S. C. (2006). Energy access problem of the poor in India: Is rural electrification a remedy? *Energy Policy* 34 (2006), 3387–3397.
- Kumar, A., Kumar, K., Kaushik, N., Sharma, S., & Mishra, S. (2010). Renewable energy in India: Current status and future potentials. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews* (14), 2434–2442.