

BOOK REVIEWS

AMONG THE ENDANGERED HUNTER-GATHERERS: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXPLORATION IN ANDAMAN ISLANDS by **Jayanta Sarkar** New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2015, pp. 130 + 16 Plates. ISBN :978-8183245296, Price Rs. 600.00/-

The book under review is written by a cultural anthropologist is welcome addition to the scant literature on the subject. The work has been approached as a prolonged anthropological observation, examines probable reasons of conflicts and hostility that prevailed among the four Negrito small tribes i.e. The Great Andamaneses, the Onges, the Jarawas and the Sentineleses. The study opens with a brief account of the research background and introduces the readers the story of struggle of the original inhabitants of the Bay islands as well as the struggle of the new comers from different parts of India for settling down at a completely new physical and hostile environment. The author has also vividly discussed the present day behavioral patterns of these small tribes in order to answer the many odd queries raised by the inhabitants of Andamans as well as others from different parts of the world. The most popular question from all sections of the people is about the emergence of these small Negrito tribes in different islands of the Andamans. The author is of opinion that it is still a mystery when and how these indigenous tribes immigrated here. Another important question by the outsiders is why these tribes are hostile to others. The author has elaborately described the processes of deforestation of huge area during the British era due to the establishment of penal settlement, for establishing villages of life-imprisoned convicts, creation of habitats for the Mophlas, Bhanthus, Burmeses and the Karens and also in post independent period for rehabilitation program of refugees of the erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and re-patriots from Sri Lanka, extraction of timbers for commercial purpose. As a result, the semi-nomadic tribes of these islands had to face tremendous threat on their resource areas for their day to day requirements with the advent of such migrant population. The settlers also never considered these tribes at par with them. The then British Colonial rulers did not take any interest in introducing any welfare measures for the protection and preservation of life and culture of these endangered tribes, which had caused a severe psychological shock on them. In order to safeguard their traditional rights over the surrounding forest and marine resources, that provided them all the necessities essential for survival during the British rule, it was of confrontation, which culminated in hostility with the newly arrived people. This unfriendly behaviour helped in protection of their right over the resources. Among the four Negrito tribes, the two namely the Great Andamaneses and the Onges became friendly, gave up their hostility, but the Jarawas from the very beginning did not come to any compromising terms with any other population, rather they preferred unscarred freedom. The author through his several close and intimate

observations on the behavioural patterns of these people discusses that these tribes are not marked cruel and hostile population, who attack any outsiders at the very first appearance. Another important aspect of this book is the analysis of circumstances to know how for several decades the Jarawas continued fight with the outsiders. The author through his anthropological observations witnessed many activities in their way of life and is confident enough to state that their social norms and customs that contributed to the development of a united and extremely disciplined way of life are the source of their inherent mental strength in continuing to build up resistance to the outside forces in their land. These Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups as they live in total isolation have no idea about any outside population. In such a condition they primarily opted to resist any depletion in their traditional rights over the natural resources. In the process, they developed certain acts of 'hostility' in their way of life that would safeguard their resources. But due to increasing pressure on their resources by the numerically dominant groups, equipped with modern technology, they felt it would be difficult to continue with their image of 'hostility'. But their unfriendly attitude has completely changed and earned their trust due to the regular visit of the Contact team since 1974. During post-independent period a large number of people came to these islands in search of their livelihood. Due to their settlement, the Onges, another Negrito tribes of Andaman and Nicobar islands became a minority in their original home land and their resources reduced. The Great Andamaneses were rehabilitated in the Strait Island. Both these groups have witnessed a drastic decline in the population. Keeping in mind the past experience about the Great Andamaneses and the Onges, it was decided by the Government not to disturb the Jarawas and Sentineleses further, as they may face the same fate. The regular visits of Contact team, to these people since 1974 with the mission to establish a friendly relation has a positive result. No more encounter between the Jarawas and the non-Jarawas exist, mutual trust on each other is slowly developing. Now Government may introduce some schemes with the objectives to develop the way of life of the Jarawas. The author is also of opinion that by granting 'Fruits of development' by the people of larger societies to these small tribes may destroy their cultural heritage and push this self-sufficient economy to the stage of complete dependency to the people of larger society, as both in culturally and psychologically they remain outside the fold of larger societies.

As these endangered communities are very small and also isolated from the neighbouring population it is the moral duty of the members of the larger society to find out an effective way not to interfere in their cultures, so that the members of these tribes could survive as independent population. After the opening of Andaman Trunk Road (ATR), the Jarawas are frequently coming out from their habitats and in the name of friendship, we the people of so called advanced society sometimes getting involved in serious unethical activities and consciously destabilizing the well maintained discipline of their society.

Before the publication of this book, practically nothing is known about the Jarawas and the Sentineleses. The author through his close and intimate observations recorded properly and added some unknown knowledge in the anthropological understanding of these lesser known groups.

At the end of the book, the author has illustrated the fact through some rare colour photographs of these Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

With a beautifully designed cover and readable clear typeset the book is a valuable treasure for those interested in the study of the endangered population. The author deserved special appreciation for unfolding the many unknown facets of knowledge of these hunter-gatherer tribes. It is needed to be read widely not only by the academicians but by the policy makers dealing with a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group. Mittal Publication who brought out the book should also be thanked for this interesting and important book.

Palash Chandra Coomar

Former Joint Director of Census Operations
Government of India

DEVELOPMENT AND TRIBES – CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES Edited by **M.C. Behera**. pp. xxviii+446, tables, figures, 2019. Serials Publications (P) Ltd.: New Delhi. Hard Cover; ISBN 978-93-86611-63-5; Price Rs.1995/-

Developmentalism has remained one of the major concerns in anthropology in recent years. The development industry emerged mainly after the Second World War, although the development concern of the anthropologists can be dated earlier to this as the musings on development has been rooted in the domain of applied anthropology. In India, writings on the development of its people, particularly the backward classes of people within which tribal communities were included began mainly after Independence, more specifically in the 1950s. With the formal inception of Development Anthropology as the sub-discipline in the 1970s, it has contributed to the streamlining of development discourses in anthropology, though the development issues have been taken up by the scholars other than anthropologists. Anthropology has a characteristic approach that includes micro-studies of the small and peripheral communities. However, the present volume under review engages scholarships from different fields of studies which do fruitful researches on development. The book *Development and Tribes- Contemporary Issues and Challenges* (2019) has dealt with one of the major developmental focuses in India, i.e. the development of the tribal communities.

The objective with which the book has opened aims at examining the contemporary perspective of development that according the present argument is not 'tribe centered' (p.4). The author referred to one of his earlier arguments to clarify the stand when he mentioned that the earth and resources on it are living

entities for a tribe, it differs from the mainstream ideology which holds the view of growth oriented ideology. The present editor of the book mentions that the human development perspective involves three critical issues namely, health, education and standard of living (indicative of economic well being). He has accommodated eighteen articles in the volume. The articles have touched upon a wide range of issues such as market and tribal economy in neoliberal perspectives, bureaucrats–scientists interface, sustainable development, wage labour, tribal tourism, resource management, human security vis-à-vis displacement and rehabilitation, atrocities on tribal women, Forest Rights Act, health related issues like occupational health, breast feeding, HIV, gene-culture interaction, popular health sector, social exclusion and old age pension. The spatial coverage of the volume is also quite impressive since it stretches from central Himalaya in north to Karnataka in south and from Tripura in the east to Bastar in central India. Even, it has included one discussion on livelihood of a community in Bangladesh. The tribal communities among whom the authors have worked and presented their development experiences include Raji, Parhaiya, Bonda, Koya among others. Discussions undertaken here point to some of the concerns which require our immediate attention.

The paper by Thekaekara and Chakraborty on money and market in tribal economy have argued that the tribals have confusion to make meaning of terms like debt, interest etc. which invaded their life with the growth of neoliberal economy. The article states that the global village is expanding at the cost of such societies like the tribal ones. The paper is based on secondary data and literature review which has weakened the merit of the discussion as some conclusions appear sweeping. P. C. Mohapatro's paper has also dealt with situations having much similarity with the earlier context. It has discussed the role of wage labour in tribal economy in Odisha with help of secondary literature. The study has shown that the cash wage has increased their income, but at the same time their material needs have been diversified and it has made them dependent. Paper on tribal tourism by Bagchi has shown the potential role of tourism in development of the tribal people as it has proposed a model by outlining the modalities of such initiative.

Another bunch of articles addresses the issue of tribal health from different perspectives. Bhattacharya's paper on occupational health hazards of the coal mine workers in Odisha has clearly shown how the tribal coal mine workers are affected by a condition of multi-morbidity which includes respiratory troubles, skin infections, and orthopedic problems. Sikdar discusses the prevalence of communicable and non-communicable diseases among the Scheduled Tribes population. His observations drawn from meta-data clearly reveal the higher level of anemia, asthma, thyroid disorders among this section of population. The study of breast feeding is now a well formed domain of investigation as it provides us with many clues to the better understanding of health status of a group. Dakshayani and Gangadhar have studied the breast feeding and weaning practices among the tribal communities

namely, Hakkipikki, Iruliga, Jenu Kuruba, and Kadu Kuruba of Mysore. Their results show that slightly above fifty percent of the tribal mothers studied start feeding immediately after birth. The study finds that about ninety seven percent of them do not feed artificial milk to their children. Gambhir has tried to show the interaction between Great and Little Traditions in health sector. However, it caters little to the Great Traditions to pinpoint his argument. Some quantitative data, if given would have enriched the discussion. Kolay, Mahant and Baghel dealt with somewhat little explored issue of the HIV affected children in tribal dominated Bastar. They conclude that a better nutritional input could reduce the risk among the affected population.

The volume has undoubtedly brings out different facets of development that the tribal people experience in the recent times in India. However, the edition misses some of the contemporary anthropological concerns which have contributed enormously to the understanding of tribal development. There was a scope for a better critique of development as anthropologists have advanced with regard to 'development alternative' that surfaced with the post-development epistemologies. The role of international aid agencies and politics of welfare assistance could have been addressed better. A good number of papers in the volume are based on secondary data; though more empirical studies could have sharpened the arguments derived from ground realities. The typological errors are at times disturbing. In spite of that the book under present review deserves praise for unraveling multiple facets of development of the tribal communities in India.

Sumahan Bandyopadhyay
Department of Anthropology
Vidyasagar University

