

Book Reviews

TARAK CHANDRA DAS: AN UNSUNG HERO OF INDIAN ANTHROPOLOGY. By Abhijit Guha. xiv+74, index. 2016. Studera Press: New Delhi. Price ₹ 345/-

This slim book of 74 pages with a Foreword by Professor Hari Mohan Mathur of the Council for Social Development, New Delhi, is the result of several years, almost a decade of dedicated conscientious research by Dr. Abhijit Guha, on the contribution of a forgotten pioneer in anthropology, Tarak Chandra Das (1898-1964). The soft cover of the book carries the title of his pioneering great work on 'Bengal Famine' of 1943, on the background, with camouflaged dark shades of the cover, but with a distinct capital reverse printing titling as 'Tarak Chandra Das: An Unsung Hero of Indian Anthropology',

Professor Hari Mohan Mathur in his Foreword writes, "When the first full-fledged Department of Anthropology in India was established in Calcutta in 1921, Tarak Chandra Das was appointed as a lecturer in the department. He came with only a Master's degree in Ancient Indian History and Culture. With no formal degree in anthropology, his task was indeed a daunting one" (p.vii).

The reviewer felt a little dismayed to find that in the inner title page (iii) it is differently subtitled as "The Unsung Hero...", instead of "An Unsung Hero...", a critical editing could have set the things right.

In Preface, Professor Abhijit Guha writes, "My interest in T. C. Das first arose when I read the chapter on Bengal Famine in Amartya Sen's book *Poverty and Famines: An essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* sometime in 1999 or 2000. Sen referenced the book of Das on famine several times" (p. xi).

In the 'Introduction' the author (who was invited to deliver the Ninth Tarak Chandra Das Memorial *South Asian Anthropologist*, 2016, 16(2): 215-218

Lecture by the Indian Anthropological Society, Kolkata on 23rd November 2012) writes: "While preparing for the memorial lecture, I also felt a kind of sadness because Tarak Chandra Das, as an anthropologist, was one of the first victims of institutional amnesia, a characteristic feature of the centres of higher learning in India (Béteille 1997:98)" (p.2). The author further adds, ".....I knew almost nothing about the personality of Tarak Chandra Das (1898-1964)". The author admits, "The illustrious contemporaries of Das were known to me through their students famous students, like Surajit Sinha, B. K. Roy Burman, L. K. Mahapatra, Andre Béteille, Probodh Kumat Bhowmick, Ajit Kumar Danda, Gauranga Chattopadhyay, Ananda Charan Bhagabati, and many others who got their first trainings in anthropological fieldwork from this great ethnographer were well-known to me and the generation of students who became our successors"(p. 2-3).

And who were the illustrious contemporaries of Tarak Chandra Das, they were, "Biraja Sankar Guha (1894-1961), Kshitish Prasad Chattopadhyay (1897-1963), Nirmal Kumar Bose (1901-1972), Verrier Elwin (1902-1964), Dharendra Nath Majumdar (1903-1960), Shasanka Sekhar Sarkar (1908-1969), and Irawati Karve (1905-1970), but I knew nothing about the personality and works of Tarak Chandra Das (1898-1964)." Thus Dr. Abhijit Guha lamented in his 'Introduction' to the book (p.3).

This very lacuna, pushed Professor Guha to take an initiative, an untiring effort to develop this volume on Tarak Chandra Das, an unsung hero of Indian anthropology.

This small book on the anthropological contribution of Tarak Chandra Das contains seven chapters, they are — (I) Introduction; (ii) Research Interest of T. C. Das; (III) Turning Points: Science Congress Lecture, Purum and Chiru; (IV) Bengal Famine: Das, Sen and Tauger; (V) Policy, Law and the Philosophy of Tribal Life; and (VI) Conclusion.

At the end (pp. 63-66) Professor Guha has given the 'Complete Bibliography of T. C. Das'; and for this he has acknowledged (p.66) the book '*Bibliographies of Eminent Indian Anthropologists*' by Shyamal Kumar Ray (1974), from where he has cited the bibliography.

Dr. Guha has meticulously discussed the research works of T. C. Das in Chapter II (Research Interest of Das) whose publications spanned over a period of 41 years from 1922-1963. Dr. Guha writes, "He began to write academic articles in Anthropology when he was 24 and wrote his last article in 1963, a year before his death. Das, of course was not a prolific writer like his illustrious contemporaries, viz., K. P. Chattopadhyay, Nirmal Kumar Bose, D. N. Majumdar and Irawati Karve, and did not publish popular or serious articles in the vernacular in the newspapers and magazines (p.14).

The chapter titles presented in the book by Dr. Guha reflects the research interest and anthropological contribution of T. C. Das. The focus of research of T. C. Das is reflected in the chapters through the titles as — 'Science Congress Lecture, Purum and Chiru' (Chapter III), 'Bengal Famine' (Chapter IV), and the title 'Policy, Law and the Philosophy of Tribal Life' (Chapter V). While the contemporaries of T. C. Das were engaged on the observations on tribal structure, economic organization, material culture and religion as their focus of interest and study, Tarak Chandra Das in the middle of his career moved out of the traditional anthropological studies of that time, and ventured into a new field of study, like on the 'Bengal Dowry Restriction Bill' (1941), 'Hindu Code Bill' (1944), and the 'Bengal Famine' (1948). His study on 'Bengal Famine' in 1948 put him to a great height.

Professor Guha in his 'Final Remarks' states (p. 61) "The ethnographic journey of T. C. Das however, took a sharp turn towards the applied and policy dimensions of anthropology during 1940-1949 and it was this period when he grappled with bigger macro issues like the role of anthropology in nation building, Bengal famine, dowry restrictions and Hindu code bills as well as building of new kinds of museums in independent India. His famous Purum study also came under this period, although both Indian and foreign anthropologists missed the applied side of the Purum ethnography."

The reviewer feels that the list of 'Pioneers of Indian Anthropology' as given by Professor Guha (p.14) covering 13 scholars from the period of L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer (1861-1937) to S. S. Sarkar (1905-1970), their fundamental contribution with brief biographical sketch should be included in the foundation course of anthropology in undergraduate studies, so as to help the students to realize the trends of anthropological researches in India.

The author has missed mentioning about another pioneer anthropologist, Prafullo Chandra Biswas (1903-1984), who had developed the other strong centre of anthropological studies in India at the University of Delhi, after getting trained under Panchanan Mitra (1892-1936) for his Master's degree in anthropology from Calcutta University. After obtaining Ph.D. degree from Berlin University (1936) under the guidance of Professor Eugene Fischer, a Titan in the field of Human Biology of that period, Dr. P. C. Biswas returned to Calcutta University and served as Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology for 11 long years. In 1947, Dr Biswas left Calcutta and joined at the University of Delhi as Reader and Head of the Department. Professor Biswas had helped in developing many centres of research in human biology particularly in the universities of northern India. And if today we know something about dermatoglyphics of various Indian ethnic groups, it is due to the leadership given by Professor Biswas.

P. Dash Sharma
Sarat Chandra Roy Institute of
Anthropological Studies, Ranchi

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. By Md. Mustaqi, m. pp. 401+xxxiv, tables, figures, bibliography, glossary, index, 2016. Serials Publications (P) Ltd.: New Delhi. Hard bound. Price ₹ 1550/-

This hard bound volume with silhouette on the jacket suggesting people standing in queue possibly in search of employment as suggested by the title 'Employment and Socio-Economic Development'.. Initial glancing at the title gave the impression that the author must have discussed or argued about

'employment and socio-economic development' on a theoretical plane, rather than based on experience of a specific region. But this impression got changed when a few more pages were turned over and the eyes got stuck to the list of figures and tables that appeared in pages xv-xxvi. The figure and tables only presented the situation that prevailed in West Bengal only. Not even the 'Contents' (p. v) give any indication that the volume is entirely devoted to West Bengal.

The book carries a 'Foreword' of Prof. Jabir Hasan Khan of the Department of Geography, Aligarh Muslim University. And Prof. Khan writes, "The author has selected forty-six socio-economic variables for explaining the regional variation in the level of development and to analyze the spatial patterns of employment rate vis-à-vis socio-economic development in West Bengal which is highest densely populated state of India" (p.xv).

The 'Contents' page present seven chapters. They are as follows: 1. Employment – Concept and Determinants; 2. Components of Socio-Economic Development; 3. Research Methodology; 4. The Study Area; 5. Trends and Pattern of Employment; 6. Structure of Employment and Employment Regions; and Employment and Levels of Socio-Economic Development. Apart from these chapters the author has also given at the end 'Conclusion and Suggestions'.

The study area (pp. 78-112) gives a description of the environmental setting, administrative divisions and the physiography of West Bengal, and the district-wise population figures of 2001 Census of India for the State of West Bengal. The entire work is based upon the secondary sources for the 18 districts of the State of West Bengal. And the objectives of the study are to 'analyse the trends of employment rate of West Bengal with comparison to India (1951-2001), and to investigate the regional pattern of employment rate by residence and sex (1971-2001) and correlate them with other selected socio-economic variables'.

The author concludes at the end before giving his 'suggestions', that "Urban employment rate vis-à-vis socio-economic development clearly reveals that the maximum number of districts of the study area cover medium grade of urban employment rate with medium level of socio-economic development and they are located in the extremely northern and

southern parts of the state. The districts of medium category of urban employment rate versus low grade of socio-economic development are mainly concentrated in the North Bengal plain of the state" (p. 359).

A very generalized statement which only indicate statistical score (z-score) suggesting high, medium and low; and does not state anything about or reveal or indicate about — the people, their age-group, gender, level of education, community etc. We arrive at such situations when a researcher chooses census figures only as a source of data in a generalized way. However, this book may be helpful to some administrators and policy planners for development planning in West Bengal.

P. Dash Sharma
Sarat Chandra Roy Institute of
Anthropological Studies, Ranchi

GLOBALISATION, STATE AND DEMOCRACY IN INDIA. Edited by A. Mohankumar & Sreejitha A. pp. 249 + xvi, tables, figures, 2016. Madhav Books: Gurgaon. Hard cover. Price ₹ 995/-

This hard covered edited volume contains a collection of articles edited by Mohankumar, an associate professor of political science, and Sreejith an assistant professor of economics associated with the university and a college of Kerala. Together they developed a volume containing twenty-one articles on *Globalisation, State and Democracy in India* contributed by twenty-two scholars. All contributors, except one, are from Kerala, and the only one is from Tamil Nadu. Of the twenty-one articles, only six articles are Kerala specific, and the rest are generalized presentation on globalization in India.

The editors in the 'Preface' write, "In effect, globalization has eroded the welfare state concept developed in independent India which provided safety net against vulnerability, uncertainty and insecurity in social life. All these resulted in a new method of democracy, social system and justice system which created a troubled relation between legal precept and peoples' experience or aspiration."

“It is with these issues in mind that the Department of Political Science, D. B. College, Sasthamcotta, organized a two day National Seminar on 6 and 7 Aug. 2015, in collaboration with University Grants Commission (UGC) on “Globalisation and Emerging Social Security Paradigm in India. It is in this context that the Core Committee of the National Seminar decided to publish the important articles the present work is the realisation of this endeavour” (p. xiii-xiv).

The articles that deal specifically to the situation prevailing in Kerala are on the impact of globalization and liberalization on rubber cultivation, self-financing colleges, and on public health intervention. It would

have been excellent if the scholars who participated in the seminar had discussed and presented more about the situation that are prevailing in other sectors in the State of Kerala and the impact of globalization on these sectors. The reviewer has not found the relevance of the word ‘democracy’ as suggested in the title of the book, as it carries only one article “Rethinking Democracy and Locating its Sources in India”, a misfit under the cover ‘Globalisation’.

Ashesh Kumar Haldar
*Sarat Chandra Roy Institute of
Anthropological Studies, Ranchi*