

## BOOK REVIEWS

---

**TRIBES AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATIONS: INDIA.** Edited by **Ajit Kumar Danda** Jhargram: Indian National Confederation and Academy of Anthropologists, pp. i-xv +285 + appendices, select bibliography, indices and 20 colored plates. 2017, ISBN: 978-93-83088-17-1

The book under review took several decades in its making and clearly shows tremendous patience, application and determination of the author to go ahead with the task in spite of some unforeseen odds. The book has ten chapters. The task which the author took was stupendous and lay with mines ahead. In the words of the author it took nearly 'four decades and half' in presenting the book in present form. The initial task was to prepare a status report on 'Tribal Economies and their Transformation' which required taking into account whatever had been published on the tribes and then sorting out that literature in different economic categories. This task in itself by no means easy was further complicated by undifferentiated nature of the economies of tribes, problem of ranking them, their multiple occupations and above all uneven coverage of the data by different authors. Then the author had unenviable task of updating his report which was initially ready in 1973.

In the opening chapter of the book the author rightly so in unequivocal term states that the term tribe is a western concept and is not applicable to the Indian situation. By a systematic review of the published literature he successfully demolishes the concept of tribe. It is from here he is in multiple knots- theoretical, methodological and practical in sorting out the literature in different categories. The last two he has managed them well by giving suitable explanations and caveats in defense of the analysis he has done. The first one would remain as long as we continue to consider tribe as an all India category. In fact all of us who have been working on tribes are guilty of that. It is now well accepted fact that the concept of tribe is not suitable for Indian situation. But the problem is that after forcefully arguing in its favor we get along with the same. The business as usual. Administrators, politicians and even academics have been quite liberal in the use of the term tribe. For the purpose of protective discrimination, development and political posturing the category of

Scheduled Tribe is good enough and that is the term that has to be used. In the considered opinion of this reviewer the tribes should be considered as part of the regional framework which has been substantiated by so many authentic studies. Way back in 1935, A.L. Kroeber commenting on the then celebrated study of the Toda by W.H.R.Rivers remarked that it did not take into account 'the higher Indian culture, (which) is treated with scant respect' ("History of Science in Anthropology", *American Anthropologist, New Series*, Vol.37, No 4 Part 1, pp.539-5690) and he almost said that the study has treated the Toda as if they were living in an island.

This hangover of treating the tribes as an isolate has to go. Just consider one fact that forest has been a store house of huge resources which all sections of the society needed. Who extracted them, how that was distributed and marketed are matters of detail? It is well known that spice trade from western coast has been going on since ancient times and incidentally to begin with most of the spices were wild species and their domestication is much later. Similarly the trade on wild animals particularly elephant has been going on since ancient times. This aspect is especially relevant on the face of the fact that unlike horse the elephants were not raised in captivity, besides other things it was uneconomical. They had to come straight from forest-but who caught them, trained them for specific uses again are matters of detail and need in depth historical research. It may be stated that several scholars who have been working on foragers recognized their relationships with the world outside their terrain, Fox called them as 'professional primitives' (1969), Morris as 'forest traders' (1982), and Gardner as 'oscillators between cultural frontiers' (1985), Roy-Burman 'as playing the role of bridge and buffer between powerful states' (1969, 1970).

The book under review further substantiates these observations rather forcefully. The vast literature on economies of tribes shows that overwhelming majority of tribes indulge in multiple occupations.

On the chapter on Patterns of Livelihoods the author has presented data on all the tribes of India in a tabular form which in general would be found extremely useful for people working on tribes.

Since the book has been published in 2018, it is worthwhile to make the point that in India perhaps there was never a sharp divide between tribe and other and even if it was there it has long gone past particularly in the wake of massive development projects being undertaken all over the country. Besides, those who have been put into stereotype of tribe have always resorted to adaptation as a strategy to cope up with the pressure put on them by external environment and now are learning fast, showing their entrepreneurial skills and political posturing. Therefore, categorization of their economy needs to be questioned and also of the primary data that supports it. Broad sweeps hide more than what they reveal. There is no short cut to come over the problem but to provide precise quantitative data.

**P. K. Mishra**

**TRIBAL HEALTH: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE. Edited by Laxman Kumar Sahoo.** pp. xxiii+326, photographs, tables, figures, 2018. Serials Publications Pvt. Ltd.: New Delhi. Hard cover. Price ₹ 1595/-

This volume on 'Tribal Health' is another additional source book on the already existing voluminous material on the tribal health studies in India. This volume is interesting as all the nineteen articles presented in pages between the two hard covers of the volume discusses only about the prevailing health situation among

the tribes of Odisha. A beginner in tribal health studies in Odisha may find this volume helpful at the introductory level for research. The editor writes in 'Preface', "There is a need for initiating the area specific, action oriented health research in consonance with the felt needs of the tribal communities" (p. xiii).

Let us see how far the editor and his team have translated the objectives while introducing the volume for the readers.

This edited volume contains nineteen articles on tribal health in Odisha without any sectional presentation, authored by thirty-four scholars all belonging to the colleges, universities, and other academic institutes of Odisha. Thus scholars of Odisha tried to assess the regional perspective of 'tribal health' of the State through nineteen articles. The topics or themes covered are as follows: Socio-legal studies on rights to health of tribals; Abnormal haemoglobin related health problems; RNTCP in tribal dominated regions (RNTCP: Revised National Tuberculosis Programme); Ethnomedicine/herbal medicines, ethnopharmacology practices; Epidemiology of blood pressure; Accessibility of right to health; Burden of disability among tribes; Menstrual hygiene etc. These are some of the broad aspects covered in this book. However, the reviewer feels that some of the research topics presented in this volume does not appropriately fit the title of the volume '*Tribal Health: A Regional Perspective*'. Some of the research articles presented here are too specialized and does not well fit under the general theme 'tribal health' status of a region in India. The discussion points of these articles are more on theoretical aspects and not on the health situation of the tribals of Odisha at the ground level specifically, for example the topics like "Tribal Health: A Genomic Perspective"; Opportunity of Natural Selection among the Sabara Tribe of Odisha"; and "Use of Molecular Diagnostics in Tribal Health". These articles are not reflecting upon the health status of the tribals of Odisha.

The book is subtitled as "Regional Perspective" and many articles with common theme have been presented, like as on medicinal plants (six articles). However, the reviewer feels that not much have been elaborately discussed on the government's programme for the protection, preservation and propagation of the medicinal plants of the region. Tribals being poor are much dependent on the medicinal plants for their health care. Are they getting any supporting care for the preservation and propagation of the medicinal plants from the government? This has not been answered. This is important as Odisha is rich in minerals and extensive mining is being done in forested areas where the tribals are living, And extensive mining is causing destruction of the flora and with it the medicinal plants. The authors of the articles should have probed a little more in this aspect. Mere listing and discussing about the medicinal plants used by the tribals of the area is of not much help as lot of information already exist on this aspect. What we need to know more is about the development programmes on the medicinal plants taken (if any) by the government and the infrastructure and health care facilities extended by the government in this

region. This should have been discussed elaborately by the authors.

However, the reviewer finds that this book is greatly informative for understanding at the introductory level about the tribal health situation in some of the districts of Odisha where tribals are concentrated.

**P. Dash Sharma**

**GLOBALISATION AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS INDIA'S EXPERIMENTS AND EXPERIENCES.** Edited by N. Radhakrishnan. pp. xvii+204, foreword, tables, 2018. Serials Publications Pvt. Ltd.: New Delhi. Hard cover. Price ₹ 1100/-

This hard covered volume edited by Dr N. Radhakrishnan, Associate Professor and Head of Post Graduate & Research Department of Economics, Muthurangam Government Arts College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, is the outcome of a national seminar on "*Impact of Globalization on Rural Livelihood: Opportunities and Challenges*", sponsored by Indian Council of Social science Research, New Delhi. The seminar was held on 2nd and 3rd February of 2017. The editor in the Preface writes, "The seminar focused on conceptual and methodological issues with a view of discerning channels and transformation mechanisms through which the process of globalization affects different aspects and dimensions of rural community of India." At the publication stage the volume has come out titled as "*Globalisation and Rural Livelihoods: India's Experiments and Experiences*". The edited volume contains selected titles presented by 40 scholars in the seminar of 2017.

Twenty-nine articles have been contributed by forty scholars. The editor has not sectioned the articles under any specific theme. The articles have just been listed without section-wise presentation. However, the reviewer finds that most of the articles are on general studies on 'impact of globalization on human development/economy. Specifically titled articles on 'globalization and rural livelihood' are only five. There are a few articles on 'impact of globalization on Indian economy', and a few on agriculture, education, on IT industry and on banking. Of all the forty authors, twenty-three scholars are from institutes/colleges/universities located in Vellore; three from Chennai, and some from other places of Tamil Nadu. Two articles, each from Lucknow and Mumbai, have been contributed in this volume. Most of the articles have discussed in general about globalization and livelihood.

In an article on 'Globalisation and its impact on Indian culture and society' the author has presented his discussion in a very generalized way under the headings as: adultery; food, clothing and dialect; employment through MNCs; technological advancement, etc. The author says (p. 61), "With the emergence of globalization and western culture, youth have started mixing up well with each other. The friendly approach and socializing feature is worth appreciable. But the total breakouts of restrictions have adulterated the Indian mindset, playing up with the physical relationship. This has given birth to new relationships in India like

live-in relationships.” This is ridiculous. It seems the author (editor of a Chennai journal) is not aware of the culture and society of some of the tribes and castes of central India. The author has used the term ‘Indian mindset’, a vague expression generally used by journalists.

In another article, ‘Core Banking Services of State Bank of India in Vellore District’ — the author discusses (p.116) about ‘Centralized Online Real-time Environment (CORE)’ banking supports anywhere and anytime banking services. The author studied impact of core banking on bankers and customers satisfaction in State Bank of India in Vellore district. But no where the author has given the number of branches of SBI from where 80 respondents were identified. The sampling design is not revealing. Are there respondents from the rural areas? The author has not discussed about the customer’s satisfaction and the problems they are facing particularly in rural areas. How core banking in Vellore is improving the livelihoods of the rural poor should have been discussed in a volume devoted to ‘globalisation and rural livelihoods’.

In a volume with this title it was desirable and was expected that experiments conducted and experiences gathered by the rural people of Vellore districts (as most of the authors are from Vellore) be discussed at length through specific case studies in some villages to give an idea of the impact of globalization in rural areas. This reviewer feel has not been much discussed.

However, the reviewer finds that this book is informative and would be helpful to the younger researchers for understanding at the introductory level about the various facets of globalization impacting India.

**Abhik Ghosh**

