

BOOK REVIEW

BEYOND BUSINESS: MAPPING THE CSR AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES OF TATA STEEL by Anirudh Prasad and Sudeep Kumar, 2016, Ranchi, Xavier Institute of Social Service. ISBN: 81-904112-8-4

Making profit is the main motto of any business endeavour. However, the cost at which this profit is achieved has been a continuous area of concern to governments, multinational bodies, civil society, judiciary, auditor and political activists. The profit may be accrued by indulging in unethical practices, violating human rights or by damaging the environment. The idea of business ethics is borne out of such genuine concerns. CSR (or Corporate Social Responsibility) is primarily an extension of the ethical concerns of the business initiated and implemented under the framework provided by the government such that the profit is gainfully shared with the people at large by means of systematic investment in the welfare of the people.

The present book under review is an evaluative study of the CSR initiatives undertaken by the TATA steel in the state of Jharkhand. The authors, Anirudh Prasad and Sandeep Kumar, have done an intensive field based study to understand the functioning of CSR and its impact on the lives of the people of rural Jharkhand. While evaluation of CSR is a very common practice and all business houses get their CSR initiatives evaluated on a regular basis, what separates out the present study from the rest is the use of anthropological methods in evaluation and therefore the present study aptly qualifies to be included within the ambit of Business Anthropology from India.

Ethnographic approach has been the hallmark of the study which has focused on the functioning of the Tata Steel Rural Development Society (TSRDS). The researchers have emphasized the importance of primary field based data collection and the choice of field based research as against structured statistics based investigation. This contention is very eruditely presented by the authors (p. xvii):

Some members of the Tata Steel with management background argued that when we are providing the detailed statistics of the rural development activities being carried out by our CSR practitioners, what is the use of investigating the areas through fieldwork research? We took them with us into the villages and showed them the houses in disrepair and others half fallen down and the landless labourers, farmers, artisans and women sitting idle. If most of the villages contain ruins of well-built houses and the farmers, artisans, women without occupation, the evidence of poverty is better than old statistics which may prove everything and anything.

The field study has made use of observations, interviews, focus group discussions and case studies in collection of primary data from five zones namely, Piplla, Kolebera, Ghatotand, Noamundi and Jharia covering 35 villages and collecting information from 2,046 households. A total of 48 in-depth interviews, 48 focus group discussions and 60 case studies (life histories) were collected during the study. This study was followed by time series study undertaken after three years to assess the impact.

Overall, the book presents a very informative ethnography of the CSR projects being initiated by the Tata Steel with immense details of the various facets of CSR activities, like self help groups, agricultural training, water harvesting, health, biogas, adult literacy, drinking water, solar lights, employability, infrastructure, etc.

Tata and Birla are the epitome of business in India and both have traditionally been associated with nation building. While now there are many mega business houses, at one time Tata-Birla used to be the synonym of wealth and business. The social commitment of both the business houses was distinctive. The social contribution of Tata may be termed as secular while that of Birla as sacred. We know Tata as builder of exemplary institutes and contributor to the growth of science and academics in the country. Starting from TIFR, TISS, TERI to many more institutions of national importance which have been conceptualized and nurtured by the Tatas. Birla, on the contrary is known for doing charity and philanthropy.

The present book peeps into the functioning of Tata as a corporate and at the same time introduces the readers to the commitment towards society that the Tatas are known to exhibit. While the chair at which the authors were functioning was funded by the Tatas, it was interesting to note that the book provided an insider's perspective on the functioning of Tata Steel CSR. Thus, besides evaluating the CSR activities of the Tata Steel, the book is indeed candid in pointing out the gaps in the rural development approach. As the authors state, "...section of beneficiaries from all the five zones were found to have a growing dissatisfaction in response to the non fulfillment of their rising expectations from the company. This was more observed in the mining zones and could be due to the fact that they were aware about the dispossession of mineral resources.." (p. 219). The downfall in the standards of the Tatas was observed in the field based observations of the authors. Thus, "...the villagers..believed that the welfare services by the Tata Company were the best during the time of Russy Modi. After him, his successors could not handle the company's administration efficiently. As a result, the company has been overtaken by the middle men and things are not going well." (p. 223). Overall, in the entire study we learn important lessons in field methodology, evaluation study and ethnographic approach.

On the whole, this book is a welcome addition to the literature on corporate social responsibility, industrial anthropology and business anthropology. It is also a very detailed case study on applied anthropology and tribal development. It will be useful to the students of anthropology, sociology, management and rural and tribal development.

Department of Anthropology
University of Delhi
Delhi 110-007

P. C. Joshi

MANCHA: A FOLK THEATRE OF MALWA (CENTRAL INDIA) by Niranjana Mahawar, 2015. New Delhi: Aayu Publications, pages 131+ photographs. ISBN: 978-81-930190-8-5. Price INR 1200.

There is general paucity of studies on folklore and oral traditions of Indian communities undertaken by Indian anthropologists although Indian diversity implies diversity in folklore, myths, ballads, theatres, dance, music and myriad other forms of written and oral documents providing distinctive identity to a particular culture and its heritage. Central Indian cultural area, in particular is extremely important for the fact that it harbors a very unique tradition of story narrations. One is at once reminded of the legendary Habib Tanvir whose plays like *Agra Bazar* and *Charandas Chor* under his production group *Naya Theatre* brought out distinctive Chhattisgarhi style of story narration. Another great style can be traced in the Pandavani style of Mahabharata narration made popular by Teejan Bai.

While anthropologists have not been very keen observers of these folk styles, we had Varrier Elwin writing passionately on the folk literature of the central Indian tribal communities covering myths, folk songs, arts and paintings of the tribal communities. Niranjana Mahawar is a very special researcher as anthropology for him is a passion and hobby and he has been a keen collector of tribal artifacts and crafts as well as documenting the perishable and vanishing oral tradition of the central Indian tribal communities.

One may like to call Mahawar an amateur anthropologist, having his own characteristic way of comprehending and appreciating folk art forms. He is no less than an institution in himself for his dedication and commitment to the cause of tribal heritage. His documentation of Bastar Bronzes, arts and crafts of Chhattisgarh, performing arts of Chhattisgarh is highly commendable effort in conservation of fast vanishing central Indian heritage. His valuable collection includes nearly 4000 rare books, 4000 artifacts including bronzes, ritual objects, utility objects, paintings, masks, lamps, ornaments, etc., along with 7000 photographs and negatives covering tribal dances, folk theatre, architecture, temple art, wood carvings, artistic combs, ornaments, traditional terracotta and wrought iron work and nearly 3500 slides and transparencies on Bondos of Odisha, Todas of Nilgiris, Banjaras of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, Madia, Dorlas and Bhataras of Bastar, Bhils and Baigas of Madhya Pradesh, Gonds of Mandala and Oraons of Surguja are very precious collection depicting central Indian art forms.

The present book under review is a detailed description of the Mancha folk theatre form of Malwa cultural zone of Madhya Pradesh. In focusing upon this theatre form, Mahawar provides us glimpses of the Malwa culture as well. The Mancha art form, according to Mahawar has come from Rajasthan but has amalgamated the local folk styles in order to establish itself as distinctive Mancha style of theatrical performance. The book is divided into eight chapters and each chapter is devoted to a particular aspect of Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. The author has covered geography, history, cultural heritage and folk art traditions in first four chapters providing a very rich background to the theatrical aspects of Malwa culture. The chapters titled *History of Malwa Mancha* and *Folk Theatre Tradition of Malwa* are extremely short chapters which actually could have been sub-sections of the succeeding chapter titled *Mancha Theatre*. In fact, the chapter titled *Mancha Theatre* is the main chapter which provides meticulous details of various aspects of Mancha Theatre such as stage, make up, costumes, light and sound apart from various prevailing traditions within the Malwa region. Mahawar has provided a very detailed description of a Mancha play named 'rakshabandhan' which actually is a very good example of Hindu Muslim unity besides providing glimpses of the life cycle rituals. The chapter further

gives the dialogues and songs being used in the plays along with the translations. Many other plays are described in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

The author has made liberal use of Hindi and Malwi words and at times, he has not provided the required translation for the words being used. For example, On page 41, he writes, "Malva also had a tradition of Swanga and Naqal". A non-Hindi reader would actually wonder what these two terms mean? The author may take special care in making this important work palatable to the non-Hindi readers in the further editions of this book. Another point worth noting here is the spelling of Malwa. In most of the places, it is spelled as Malwa but in many other places such as in the above quotation it is spelled as Malva. In anthropological writings, we generally stick to one spelling throughout. These minor mistakes albeit, the book provides a very rich and thick description of the Mancha theatre prevailing in the central Indian Malwa region.

On the whole, it is a great work where the hard word and dedication of Mahawar is amply evident. I am saying it because I have seen Mahawar and have also looked into his eyes, the pure commitment and devotion to the non-sophisticated art and craft forms existing in the hinterland. Unfortunately, now a days Bastar is known for bloodshed, violence and encounters. In such a scenario, Mahawar shows us the bright, innocent and colorful dimension of the Bastar life depicted through the uncontaminated and pristine art and craft forms. If today, the Bastar bronzes are being seen as a work of genuine art then Mahawar has definitely played a meaningful role in it. The book Mancha is not only a collection of theatrical form; it is a gift from Mahawar to the posterity and at the same time, it is a message to the young generation, especially the central Indian youths to have faith and trust in their culture and tradition which meaningfully adds to the rich heritage of India.

Department of Anthropology
University of Delhi

P. C. Joshi

TARAK CHANDRA DAS. THE UNSUNG HERO OF INDIAN ANTHROPOLOGY by Abhijit Guha 2016. New Delhi: Studera Press.

Some writers are accidentally discovered. They may remain unknown during their lifetime, with no following or readership except of their immediate students, notwithstanding the quality and range of their contribution. For years and years their writings may remain dust-strewn in library shelves till a well-known and a celebrated scholar is impressed with their work, and uses it profitably in his own research pursuits. The hitherto 'unsung' commoner becomes the 'sung' hero. He becomes the subject matter of research articles and books, and his forgotten publications are re-issued and discussed. Perhaps this is the story of Tarak Chandra Das (1898-1964), a faculty member of the Calcutta's Department of Anthropology, on whom Abhijit Guha of Vidyasagar University has written this book of 88 pages, besides publishing in the past some more articles on him in renowned journals.

In juxtaposition, another opinion comes to my mind. Perhaps Guha has exaggerated his observation that Das was constrained to lead an academic life of recluse and oblivion. When I read the subtitle of Guha's book, I was instantly reminded of the following lines from Andre Beteille and T.N. Madan's edited volume of 1974: "This volume [*Encounter and Experience. Personal Accounts of Fieldwork*] is dedicated to the memory of two very distinguished Indian anthropologists – Tarak Chandra Das (1897-1964) and Dharendra Nath Majumdar (1903-60). Both these scholars earned a great reputation in their own time as outstanding ethnographers and influential teachers...Anthropology owes these two men a deep and abiding debt."

It is known that Das came into prominence during his lifetime: Rodney Needham of Oxford University used Das's Purum data for illustrating structural analysis of kinship terminology. Das was alive when Needham was reading his 1945 book on the Purum, a Kuki tribe, for Needham's book was published in 1962. Later, in 1999, Amartya Sen referred to Das's 1949 book on the Bengal Famine, a work undertaken with survey methodology on its sufferers. Guha's interest in Das 'first arose' when he read a chapter on the Bengal Famine in Sen's book (p. xi). It was a little intriguing, for anthropology graduates acquire familiarity with Das's Purum through their course on kinship. I read about Das in Harris's book titled *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (1968) in 1973.

The point I am trying to arrive at is that maybe the contemporary significance of Das's anthropology is now dawning on us, courtesy Guha's book, but he was certainly a well known scholar in the fraternity of anthropologists when he was alive and later also, after his demise. It may be noted that not many Indian anthropologists are read in the Western world; Das was one of the central figures in kinship studies. And, it certainly was not a matter of less honour that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had taken note of his survey on the Bengal Famine. In his *The Discovery of India* (1946), he compared the number of the total deaths by the Famine as given by the officials of the Bengal Government with that of the survey that the Department of Anthropology had conducted under the stewardship of Das, and Nehru seemed to agree with the latter report since it was 'extensive' and 'scientific' (p. 36). Das's penchant for facts, which he might have imbibed as a student of history, was a dividend for his anthropological research.

Guha describes in detail the methodological rigour of Das's famine survey. Most anthropologists do not delve into the 'comparative reliability of the different methods' they use for data collection (p.37). In case of a team survey, where different investigators are employed for data gathering, they are least concerned with the reliability of the data each one of them collected, since each survey assistant hails from a different social background with a different intellectual predisposition and commitment to work. A lesson to be learnt from Das's survey is that in case of a study involving a myriad of investigators, it is imperative that the following things are detailed out about each investigator: (1) the qualifications; (2) the level of training received; (3) the quantum of data collected; (4) a sample of such data; (5) the errors he committed; and (6) the methods adopted for rectifying the errors. After carefully and critically considering the contribution of each surveyor, the 'overall reliability of the survey' should be assessed. Against this backdrop, Das was not in favour of a survey that the 'members of a political party' conducted, for it was likely to be biased, explicitly reflecting their ideology; in fact this was his comment on P.C. Mahalanobis's famine survey in which volunteers from the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha and the Congress party were engaged (p. 38). Pursuing a close examination of Das's methods, Guha concludes: '[Das] never compromised with scientific rigour for convenience' (p. 39) and this is a lesson for all researchers.

Das was a teacher *par excellence*. The Section in the book titled 'T.C. Das: A Sufferer of Academic Amnesia' (p. 5-10) is a mixed bag of two ideas: (1) Das was either ignored or given a cosmetic treatment by the other writers who researched the areas in which he was interested or those who wrote on the history of Indian anthropology; and (2) Das's students, presently well known for their anthropological writings, remembered how their teacher inculcated in them profound lessons in methodology through everyday examples. This portion of the book, in my opinion, is extremely important and should be read by all, not only because it contains the significant memories the students have of their teachers, an area on which not much information exists, but also it will guide them on paying attention to the collection of the nuances of social behaviour.

Guha has done a good job by speaking to the former students of Das and showing that albeit he was ignored by his contemporaries, his students were always indebted to him, for he was 'one of the most meticulous teachers in ethnographic methodology.' His unparalleled commitment to details often irked students at that time, but today they fondly remember the training he provided and express their indebtedness to him for instilling in them the rigors of academic work (p. 8).

Some instances are of particular significance, since they amply tell us how anthropology teachers can make their disciples imbibe the ways of conducting an ethnographic enquiry. While conducting a viva-voce on fieldwork, Das asked Amitava Basu, his student, to 'describe his journey' from his residence to the Calcutta Anthropology Department. Although Basu had jitter while describing his journey, the message his teacher was imparting was that if a student could not describe his everyday activities, how would he grasp the nuances of the life of the other people.

Another instance is from the narration of Buddhadeb Chaudhuri. On a rainy day, the students reached Das's class late. Das was already there. The moment a student entered the room, Das would write down the time of his arrival in the attendance register. After all the students had arrived, he asked each one of them to tell him the distance to the Anthropology Department from their respective residences. He did this entire exercise on the blackboard. When he reached the result of the relationship between time and distance, the students were caught with surprise on learning that those who lived nearer came late in comparison to those who hailed from distant places (pp. 8-9). The message he was conveying was that the empirical facts were the prerequisites of ethnography, and their analysis often leads to unanticipated and astonishing results. Nothing should be taken for granted. The other lesson he was putting across was that one should try to 'study' oneself – in other words, 'charity begins at home'. Once we understand our social and cultural milieus, we shall have ease in grasping the lives of the others; after all, anthropology is a comparative science of the different ways of living.

I am tempted to include here another instance. This comes from the memory of Ranjana Ray. Once, when she came to the practical class on material culture, she saw Das sitting in his chair wearing a large bamboo hat from a north-eastern tribal group. He instructed the students to draw the hat in their respective notebooks. The students requested him to take off his hat so that they could have a closer look at it, take measurements, and then draw it. To this, Das's answer was that when anthropologists are in the field they draw the objects as they are used and not as museum exhibits, thus advising the students to study material culture *in situ*. The impact of Das's teaching was so strong that his students remember it even after so many years. I have always maintained that a teacher's 'texts' are his students, for they are the embodiments of his knowledge.

Periodizing Das's intellectual life, Guha thinks that for more than eighteen years, from 1922 to 1941, Das did not make a significant contribution to applied anthropology. For this time he was essentially an ethnographer carrying out intensive field studies with several communities. A turning point in Das's career was 1941 when as the Sectional President of the Section of Anthropology in the Twenty-third Session of the Indian Science Congress held in Varanasi, he spoke on the areas where anthropological knowledge could be employed. Das's address was a 'pioneering' attempt, in which he argued that anthropology provides important insights into the phenomenon of nation-building (p. 24).

To sum up: Guha's book is highly readable. It not only familiarizes us with Das's work, but also introduces us to the anthropological tradition in Calcutta University. It is a delight to read about the founders of anthropology and the contributions they made to the subject. Perhaps, the discipline of anthropology expects a full-length account of what I would call the Bengal School of Anthropology.

Department of Anthropology
University of Delhi.

Vinay Kumar Srivastava