

BOOK REVIEW

CHILD ABUSE IN INDIA: INTERROGATING DEMOCRATIC AND CIVIL SOCIETY,
by Dr. Priyanka Singh, New Delhi, Blue Buck Publications, 2018

The book under review explains the conceptual and theoretical framework on the childhood and child abuse in reference with Indian society. The author defines child abuse as a state of emotional, physical, sexual maltreatment meted out a person below the age of 18. She says that child abuse is not a new phenomenon and has a historical perspective.

While explaining the causes of child abuse like socio-economic causes, she also focused on psycho analysis of family violence. In this study she has taken four variables namely education, women empowerment, social protection schemes as well as the protection structure and mentioned Bowlby's work on the emotional qualities of mothering and motherhood.

Further the author writes about her Indian experiences. Because of lack of any formal reporting against child abuse in India in medieval period there were no such legal cases found in that time. But in the present time, there are many incidences of child abuse. She has mentioned in detail the constitutional provisions to safeguard children's rights in India.

The study is based on a fieldwork of two villages: Naipurkala and Phulwaria in Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh. It combines both quantitative and qualitative data. The respondents are selected from various groups like heads of sample households, village pradhan, women member of self help group, child labourer and their employers. She used multilevel selection process to identify the sample. In the first stage she selected development block, in the second stage villages for intensive study and in the final stage basic units for the study were selected. She used purposive sampling, systematic circular and random sampling and stratified random sampling method. Household interview schedule, in-depth interview, focused - group discussion, case-study and observation tools have been used.

She has also done a facility assessment to access the appropriate implementation of school level norms determined for children. In this assessment she focused on knowing the number of schools following the child friendly school norms and have quality education facilities and infrastructure to give a friendly environment for school-going children.

The study highlights the protection strategies against the child abuse.

The author says that by empowering women and enhancing their capacity and knowledge may protect children against abuse. The study emphasis socio-economic profile of the respondents which presents the discouraging picture of child abuse. The data on the respondents' occupational status, income, landholding and literacy are significant on this issue .

Education is important for equality and preventing deviant behavior. Author says that studies on education are based on the hypothetical assumption that child abuse elimination and protection of child rights is a function of child rights . Somewhere or the other state and government lack that political will to give proper primary education to unprivileged and poor children living in rural areas . In her study she analyzed two aspects: a. the impact of the school on children and how it can be adopted to their culture and b. the influence of the school on a village and how it can be adjusted to needs of the community .

A better economic status and higher education level of parents make a better integration for society . According to the author , the teacher's participation in the government – run schools is higher , but parental contact with school is lower . A reciprocal relationship between society and education , between community and school , and intervention on both sides could be mutually reinforcing and more effective . So failure of educational agencies is also a crucial factor . There is mobilization of marginalized communities , cultural continuity and concern for economic issues . The author considers that such mobilization may create a climate for social awareness and political actions . this may solve many contradictions and give social protection structure for children . There are more initiatives that can be adopted even now.

The author says that women empowerment and their motivation to better life and overcoming from the culture of submission may minimize child abuse and promote child rights. This empowerment strategy should include economic as well as social empowerment of rural , S.C. and tribal women who lack money , income, skills and also self assurance and motivation . Awareness for their fundamental rights , justice and dignity should be spread . This will make them active citizen of country and maximize the benefits of empowerment.

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