

Book Reviews

MARXIAN THEORY: ASSESSMENT AND RELEVANCE IN THE POST REFORM ERA. Edited by Anureema Bhattacharyya, Subrata Kumar Ray and Sutapa Ray. pp. xxi+ 350, foreword, 2017. Madhav Books (P) Ltd.: New Delhi. Hard bound. Price ₹ 1500/-

This fat book in hand contains twenty-six articles edited by two philosophy teachers and an economist, now Principal of Prabhu Jagatbandhu College at Andul, Howrah district, West Bengal. The volume discusses on the 'Marxian Theory', which has been published a few months' ahead of Karl Marx's bicentenary year – he was born in 1818. Naturally eulogies for Karl Marx are pouring in this year and which are deserving in countries where his theories have been experimented, followed, modified and strengthened by his followers like Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, and many others.

As the culture changes so are the ideologies. It changes with time and space. And with the arrival of newer proponents, newer interpretations and additions are made. In Marxian theory too these have impacted and have resulted in developing many shades of communism world over, which got deviated from Marx's original ideas. Thus we find Stalin's Soviet model, Trotskyism, Khrushchev's model during Cold War, Cultural revolution of Mao Zedong in China, as the important ones.

This volume with the main title 'Marxian Theory' has a subtitle 'Assessment and Relevance in the Post Reform Era'. Each article is presented under a chapter – so there are 26 chapters, just listed in 'Contents' without any categorization or under sectional presentation. Classification gives a historical perspective, which is missing in this edited volume. It is surprising to find that a book of this nature has been presented without an indexing at the end, suggesting that the editors do not understand the importance of indexing, The editing works have been

taken very casually as there are numerous spelling errors and inappropriate language expression. All the contributing authors are from West Bengal excluding three, one each from Delhi, Patna and Ranchi.

In the 'Preface' the editors write, "The material for this study is to be derived from University Grants Commission UGC sponsored National Level Seminar on assessment and relevance of the concepts or theories of Marx that will be held in November, 2016 at Prabhu Jagatbandhu College. The present book consists of essays that address the assessment and relevance of the theories of concepts of Marx"(p. xvii). The quoted lines convey confusing language expression.

The reviewer is much disappointed with this book. The authors have only presented a collection of essays on the theory of Karl Marx, in between the hard covers – with his photograph on the jacket flap and on hard cover. It never had appeared to the authors that a brief biographical sketch should be presented about this great German philosopher, economist, historian, political theorist, who was born in Trier, Prussia (present-day Germany), two centuries back on May 5, 1818. Marx who had his education in Berlin and Bonn lived in exile for 30 of his 65 years, spending a large part of that time in the reading room of the British Library. Karl Marx was stateless after 1845, and died on March 14, 1883 in London. No author in this volume has presented how the ideas of Karl Marx were shaped and evolved through his research during his life time, except some passing remarks.

The volume contains a Foreword by Dr Anjan Chakrabarti of the Department of Economics, University of Calcutta; and he writes, "The essays crisscross the past, present and future to bring into sharp focus the strength, problems and possibilities in Marxian theory" (p. xv). Broadly the essays discusses on the following topics: contemporary relevance of Karl Marx; his theory on gender; on suicide; his theory of historical materialism; contemporary capitalism and present relevance; on

civil society; on religion; on teachers' movement and communist influence; on freedom; Marxian humanism; Marxian economics; Marx and Gandhi; relevance of Marxian theory in modern India; assessment and relevance in the era of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation; Karl Marx in the light of Upanisadas; on ideology and social epistemology; and lastly, an appraisal of the Marxist conception of socialism.

The reviewer feels that two articles need to be commented upon – one titled as 'Relevance of Marxian Theory in Modern India: A Case Study in Mouza Adityapur, Birbhum, West Bengal'; and the other 'Yogi from the West: Karl Marx in the Light of the Upanisadas'.

Sarada Mandal of geography department talks about the famous terracotta dolls and decorative objects that are being made by the artisans of Adityapur of Bolpur block in West Bengal. The author discusses the entire process of terracotta manufacturing which is an important craft of West Bengal, and the socio-economic conditions of the artisans. And she stretches her imagination to relate the situation of the artisans and their production with the Marxian theory, and modern India. The author states, "This small case study proves that the age old Marxian theory regarding the gap between Labour Productivity and Labour wage is still true and relevant in this industry" (p. 256). One wonders whether this family run small business enterprise of the artisans comes under the labour laws. There is no doubt that in some cases the artisans are being exploited by the middlemen who are marketing the items produced. But why then the exploitation of the artists were not controlled or eradicated by the powerful Marxist government, CPI(M) and its allies, that ruled over West Bengal uninterrupted for 34 years, for seven consecutive terms from 1977-2011.

One serious drawback of the volume is striking – there is no article in this book that gives a historical analysis of the rise and fall of the party that followed Marxian ideology that governed the State of West Bengal for a long uninterrupted ruling of 34 years. The party that adhered to Marxian ideology as suggested by the name CPI(M), had have never experimented a model that suits the Indian culture, environment, and the Indian people. They followed

the alien culture, seeking guidance from Russia and China.

Regarding the other article, "Yogi from the West: Karl Marx in the Light of the Upanisadas", by Sutapa Ray of the department of philosophy, the author writes, "While Marx focusses (should be *focuses*, italics mine) on the equality of mankind, the Gita focusses on the oneness of mankind. The concepts of equality and oneness thrive on the basic upanisadic principles which characterize a yogi. So, in the end of my paper, I would unhesitatingly declare Marx to be anupanisadic (*mark the word*) yogi from the west"(p.315).

The author misinterpreted the word or expression 'equality' while stating "Marx focusses on the equality of mankind". Marx was extremely disturbed, dismayed and perturbed to see that there is extreme inequality in mankind, he realized this in his heart of hearts, that a few are extremely rich and the majority among the rest are extremely poor. So his entire theory is centered around to change the situation and to bring the masses, the labourers and the peasants, from the state of inequality to the state of equality, at least to have some semblance of equality. Inequality exists and this has to be changed, and like a *yogi*, Marx concentrated on this throughout his life when he was in exile. Karl Marx and Max Müller were contemporaries, and Vedic philosophy was flourishing at that time in Germany and the West. So in that sense Karl Marx is a *yogi*. But the 'oneness of mankind' that the author talks about is entirely a different concept, it may be explained through the sloka – *sarabhuteysu chaatmanang tato na bijugupsatey*.

Sutapa Ray in her presentation of *slokas* (about 20; p. 298, 300) jumbled up the alphabets without any pause in one line. There are conjunct letters in Sanskrit texts expressing words but it has a specific style of presentation which has not been followed by the author.

This volume is just one more addition to the already existing volumes on Marxian theory. Research students who are interested in the study of Marxian theory will find this book of much help at the introductory level for developing their framework for further research.

P. Dash Sharma

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN WOMEN'S STUDIES.. By Asha Shukla and Anjali Chavhan. pp. 291+viii, index, tables, figures, 2017. Serials Publications: New Delhi. Hard cover. Price ₹ 1295/-

This volume on 'women's studies' by a development economist and a professor women activist of Barkatullah University, Bhopal, has been developed "because of the relatively novel and often changing nature of the subject"(p.vii). The authors further write in their 'Preface', "In the prevailing Indian scenario over the last decades the contributions of feminist scholars to social science and humanities research have been very significant. They have offered new perspectives and methods in searching women's lives and in analyzing the structures and ideologies that mediate women's everyday existence. But there is yet to be a systematic documentation and reflection on what constitutes feminist research, on the feminist use of various research techniques, tools and methods, how these have offered possibilities for thinking research within various disciplines and also on the interdisciplinary aspects of doing feminist research. The book provides an overview of the research process and explains the main types of design used in social sciences and its significance in Women's Studies'." (p. viii)

Let us see what the new methods of research on women's studies have been presented by the authors. The contents may reveal this, and in the 'Contents' the chapters are: 1. Meaning, Scope and Significance of Women's Studies; 2. Types of Research and Research Design; 3. Research Design and Sample Design; 4. Measurement and Scaling Technique; 5. Methods of Data Collection; 6. Feminist Movement and Feminist Research; 7. Gender Sensitive Indicators; 8. Methodology for Women's Studies; 9. Data Processing, Analysis and Statistics in Research; 10. Interpretation and Report Writing. And lastly the authors give 'Selected References and Recommended Readings' listing 124 references; and an Index at the end.

The chapters presented in the volume are of general nature as we find in most social science research methodology books in India. The authors have disappointed the readers as the presentation is

not a novel one so far methodology is concerned. They have not used visuals, through symbolic figures, signs, symbols, to explain some of the concepts in methodology, which would have been easier to comprehend by the students.

In the chapter on 'Methodology for Women's Studies' (pp.184-204) the authors have only defined some of the terms like – Standpoint Theory, Multiculturalism, Transnational Feminism, Auto Ethnography, Feminist Ethnography, Critical Theory, Post-Structuralism and Queer Theory. The authors have discussed in less than one and a half page (p. 190-191) about India on 'multiculturalism' (*taking religion as indicator*), but nothing on women. The authors have not even discussed whether these western concepts fit with the Indian situation, or whether any scholar has had attempted these methods for women studies in India, though most universities in India are now having department of women studies.

The authors have presented mostly the theoretical aspects of the methodologies and not the practical application of these models in the field situation, through specific case studies citing earlier researches on women for explaining the methodologies to the students.

Though this volume on women's studies could have been presented in a more elaborate way, nevertheless, the reviewer feels that this volume on 'research methodology in women's studies' would certainly help the first time researchers on women studies for developing their research design.

Shampa Gangopadhyay

EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN: THE ROLE OF SHATAVAHANA GRAMEENA BANK. By Errabojju Ramesh. pp. 224 + xii, foreword, tables, figures, bibliography, 2017. Madhav Books (P) Ltd.: New Delhi. Hard cover. Price ₹ 1095/-

This hard bound volume carries an one page scanned copy of the 'Foreword' written by Prof. Sukhadeo Thorat, Chairman, Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, in his letterhead. Prof. Sukhadeo Thorat writes, "The study suggested that

for the effective implementation of Self Help Groups, it is necessary that they should be provided with more seed money, loan facilities and subsidy components. These aspects are more essential for better performance on SHGs as of late progress and prosperity of rural development in our country largely depends upon people's participation."

This volume on the role of 'Grameena Bank' for empowerment of rural women has been developed by the researcher with the following objectives: i) to analyze the impact of credit provided by the Shatavahana Grameena Bank on socio-economic empowerment of rural women in Karimnagar district; ii) to examine the relationship between the socio-economic factor and the women empowerment; and iii) to assess the changing socio-economic conditions of Self Help Groups. The book under review is based on the research work for the Ph. D. thesis of the author. Nowhere in the volume the author has mentioned where Karimnagar District falls – Andhra or Telangana ? Somewhere while discussing the study area the author should have mentioned that Karimnagar District is in Telangana State now, which was earlier in Andhra.

In Chapter 4, the author writes, "an attempt has been made in this chapter to appraise the socio-economic status of the SHG respondents covered from six villages i.e., Gouravelly, Ramavaram, Chenchar, Cheruvupally, Sriramulapally, Damerakunta and Dharmasagar of three mandals i.e., Husanabad, Kataram and Koheda in the district of Karimnagar, Andhra Pradesh, during the investigation period ranging from January to June i.e., approximately six months." (p. 74) The author has failed to mention which year the field investigation was conducted.

The author has also not mentioned the number of respondents interviewed during his investigative period. Nothing has been mentioned about the socio-economic conditions of the respondents interviewed, except collecting the statistical information from the bank about the SHGs. The language of presentation is very poor, as reflected by expressions like 'I my special thanks'; 'I my deep sense' etc.

The entire discussion has been presented through six chapters; namely 1. Introduction; 2. Empowerment of Women and the Role of Financial Institutions; 3. Methodology; 4. Socio-economic Conditions of Self

Help Groups Women in Karimnagar District; 5. Performance and Functioning of Self Help Groups in Karimnagar District; and lastly 6. Summary, Conclusions and Suggestions.

The author has followed a general thesis style of presentation of self-help groups of the Shatavahana Grameena Bank, without discussing how the empowerment of the women through the Grameena Bank helping their families towards developmental prospects.

Shampa Gangopadhyay

THE BEDIYAS: MARGINALITY EXPLORED. By Samita Manna and Soumyajit Patra. pp. 103+xii, tables, diagram, references, 2017. Serials Publications: New Delhi. Hard cover. Price ₹ 595/-

This hard cover slim book discusses on the Bediyas of Nadia district of West Bengal. The authors state, "The Bediyas are one such tribal community who are suffering from socio-political marginality and consequent identity crisis in many parts of West Bengal. The administrative measures to include this excluded group could hardly bring in any change. The fate of the Bediya remain the same as before. One of the reasons is that the 'Bede' (local people call them as Bede) is synonymous with 'snakes', in the imagery of the local people. The problems of the Bediyas are complex, deep-rooted and multidimensional as these are mostly psycho-cultural rather than simply economic" (p. ix).

The authors find that the Bediyas of Haringhata block are associated with cultivation and the others are snake charmers in Tehatta I block.

The authors state, "...in this study all adult members (both male and female belonging to the age group 18 years and above) living in six villages of Nadia District (West Bengal) have been interviewed. ...Out of 427 respondents, 212 are males and 215 are females" (p. 26). Four villages from Haringhata block and two from Tehatta I block. However, the distribution of the villages have been wrongly presented in Table 2.2 (p.25). There are 37 tables presented in this book for discussion on the following

aspects of the chapters as listed in the contents: I. Understanding '*The Adivasis*'; II. The Bediyas; III. Rites of Passage; IV. Struggle for Sustenance: Problems in Bediya Society; V. Patterns of Interaction and the Issue of Marginality; and lastly VI. An Overview.

The authors have not presented clearly the help received from the government (Table 4.8) during a specific time period. There is no probing why the families of the six villages who had applied for help were denied the help from the government (a large percentage fall in this group), and the role of the panchayat office in extending help to the needy families. The authors report that the literacy rate is very low. In the Table 4.9, the authors have shown 8 primary school; 3 secondary school, and 4 higher secondary school, in the six villages. There are only 2 higher secondary schools listed (p. 69) and not 4 as totaled by the authors. What initiative the government

or NGOs are taking to enroll more students have not been presented. The authors should have specifically mentioned the literacy level of the children of the 427 respondents interviewed, which is missing.

The authors state in 'An Overview', that "This work is perhaps the first attempt to divulge the problems of the Bediyas in Nadia district of West Bengal systematically and scientifically" (p. 98). The authors should have presented the response and the reaction of the tribal welfare authorities of the government at the block/district level and of the political leaders about the problems faced by the Bediyas as observed by the authors, and what the authorities are going to do about it.

This slim book on the Bediyas will be helpful to the first time researchers engaged in tribal studies to understand the developmental situation prevailing in small marginal tribal communities in West Bengal.

Abhik Ghosh