

BOOK REVIEWS

EXPLORING INDIAN SOCIETY: ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF YOGESH ATAL edited by **Surendra K. Gupta and Vinay Kumar Srivastava, 2015, New Delhi, National Publishing House. ISBN : 978-81-214-0778-6. Price INR 650.**

The book under review is a tribute to Yogesh Atal who has been a prominent social scientist contributing to bettering our understanding of social science epistemology and methodology through his writing and theoretical insights in explanation of myriad social phenomena. Most of the contributors to this volume are his colleagues, students and acquaintances. The book has been aptly titled Exploring India Society as it truly provides an insight to conceptually understand Indian society and its people through various concepts such as sandwich culture, aperture opening, insulatory mechanisms, insider-outsider duality, indigenization, short lived alliances, sense of political efficacy, etc. Atal had a very eventful career beginning with teaching jobs in some Indian universities and then taking up administrative assignments in ICSSR and finally joining the UNESCO.

The book is divided into two parts; part one dealing with the life and works of Yogesh Atal and part two with various scholars paying tribute to him by focusing upon the subject matters of his interest. In part one, the first paper jointly written by the editors is very important as it very pithily sums up the intellectual contribution of Yogesh Atal. If one reads this chapter along with Surendra K. Gupta and Indira Baptista Gupta's articles in part two, one is really rewarded by getting enough insight into the intellectual mind of Atal as well as immense creative abilities that he possesses in analytical understanding of the complex social science phenomena.

There are four very important issues that have been meticulously debated in the book. These are the study of diaspora, situation of Indian tribal communities, indigenization and gender studies. The paper by Sanket Atal and Sunil Choudhary cover the issues concerning diaspora studies. The usefulness of the concept of Sandwich Culture denoting the sandwiched position of the Indian diaspora between the parent and the host culture is extensively explored by the authors. In fact, Yogesh Atal being primarily working in foreign countries as official of UNESCO was continuously exposed to the diaspora. For a country like India, understanding of the situation of the people of Indian origin settled abroad is of immense importance not only because they are our ambassadors but also for the substantial monetary contribution that they make to the development of our economy and infrastructure.

Yogesh Atal had written a book titled "Adivasi Bharat" in 1963 which described the scenario of Indian scheduled tribes when such a consolidated work was quite rare. The articles by Yatindra Singh Sisodia, Vinay Kumar Srivastava and S. N. Chaudhary have focused upon various aspects of the tribes in India. The paper by Sisodia subscribes to the Aryan invasion and 'push' theory for the scheduled tribes. In his words, "These tribals had to move gradually from the plains to more inaccessible regions of forest, hills and large mountains, slopes or frontier regions on the fringes of agriculturally settled, organized and more developed areas" (p. 80). Taking inspiration from Yogesh Atal, very interesting Hindi words have been introduced in the paper for ascribed and achieved status as *janma-pradhan* and *karma-pradhan*, respectively. V. K. Srivastava's paper is a very detailed account of the tribal situation from the perspective of

deprivation and poverty. The central question addressed in the paper is “Why developmental benefits have not reached people in spite of an elaborate institutional structure of laws, regulations, and agencies?” (p. 115-116). The author has examined the institutional mechanisms, acts and regulations, programmes, provisions and implementation strategies for the development deficit that is prevailing on the front of tribal development. Ultimately, the author highlights the fact that there is generalized marginality not only with respect to the tribals but also the institutions which are meant to serve the tribals. (see page 116). S. N. Chaudhury’s paper examines the plight of the tribal communities in the wake of globalization when there is spurt in the external agencies influencing the simple tribal life.

The issue of indigenization has been always dear to Yogesh Atal. A very insightful paper on this theme was published by him in 1981 issue of the *International Social Science Journal*. Papers by Jamil Farooqi and Sukant K. Chaudhury are specially written on this theme. While Farooqi’s paper is a very detailed treatise on the issue of indigenization and quest for knowledge anchored in the non-western thoughts and philosophy, Sukant K. Chaudhury in a very enlightening paper traces the growth of sociology in India. The last paper of the book is a very thorough and extensive review paper on the theme women studies written by Abha Chauhan. This paper not only informs us on the historical development of women studies but also examines the emerging issues on this theme.

Overall, the book highlights a very important fact and that is our generalized apathy to indigenous scholarship. By this statement, I am not adding to the advocacy on indigenization but on our being neutral to Indian scholarship. Yogesh Atal has been read and critically examined by Robert K. Merton but the Indian scholarship is generally ignorant and unaware of his theoretical contributions. Why after all we need a Rodney Needham to recognize T. C. Das? The tendency of generalized apathy towards native scholars is a very serious problem in India and the time has come when we start believing in cumulative knowledge creation rather than blindly emulating and following the foreign and distant. I do not mean to demean the foreign scholarship but my plea is that there has been quite a lot that the Indian scholars have written and all of that should be our starting point. I wish that the insightful writing of Yogesh Atal is likewise examined and improved upon by the upcoming social scientists and that to my mind would be a real tribute to him.

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BURDEN OF LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS IN RURAL COASTAL ODISHA: A STUDY IN MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY by Abhaya Naayan Nayak, 2014. Bhubaneswar: Athena Books, pages 200. ISBN 13-978-93-80824-48-2. Price INR 400.

In the plethora of health care challenges that India faces as a country, there are unfortunately many such challenges which are still lingering on due to lack of effective eradication strategies and people’s active support. Such challenges are repeatedly endorsing the fact that by and large disease is a social and cultural entity and quite frequently the social and cultural dimensions of disease comes in way of biological and technological means of eradication of the disease. Lymphatic filariasis is one among many such unsolved puzzles. It is a disease about which every thing important is known to us and with effective strategy; the disease can not only

be controlled but even eradicated. A three-pronged strategy of effective prevention, behaviour change and proper treatment can certainly eradicate this disease from any known human habitation. And yet, it is easier said than done. The present study undertaken in one of the very challenging part of India is a case in point where the social, cultural and moral issues are intertwined with the nosology and etiology of the Lymphatic filariasis, making the task of disease eradication extremely difficult.

Single disease focused studies are not very frequently attempted in Indian medical anthropology. In general medical anthropology in India has been emphasizing upon the health care beliefs and behaviour in traditional set up. The present study is special in the sense that it has endeavored to examine a very important disease from the point of view of beliefs and behaviour. Lymphatic filariasis, as a vector born disease, is a very ugly disease in its manifestations in the form of hydrocele and elephantiasis. Although, not at all fatal, its ugly manifestation contributes not only to the negative self esteem of the patient but also leads to functional disability in performance of normal day to day duties. Thus, the social, cultural and behavioural dimensions of Lymphatic filariasis are very important in arresting its spread and its eradication.

The coastal Odisha, especially the Khurda district, where this study has been undertaken provides a conducive environment for the existence and spread of Lymphatic Filariasis (LF). Abhay Narayan Nayak, the author of this study has undertaken the study as part of his doctoral work under the active guidance from Sambalpur University as well as the Regional Medical Research Centre located as Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The author has tried to understand various socio-cultural practices related to LF while delineating the existing knowledge, attitude and perceptions that do not always receive the support of established medical practices. He has also examined the impact of LF on individuals in the form of societal reaction, intangible social stigma and psychological impairments.

The study reveals quite candidly the fact that there is huge gap in the scientific and lay understanding of the cause and progression of LF. This actually reflects the hollowness of the health education campaigns which have been undertaken in this region since last 6-7 decades. The author has quoted one elderly persons who says, "We do not know the reason behind filariasis, but we think that salty climate of coastal Odisha is responsible for elephantiasis" (p. 98). After so many years of independence and continuous suffering due to filariasis, if the above mentioned statements are emanating from the rural Khurda, then there is something seriously wrong with our mass media communication and health education efforts. The author's conclusion is also on similar lines, when he writes, "...majority of people did not know the science behind filariasis transmission. They did not have adequate knowledge about the breeding sites of mosquitoes. People were not conscious about environmental degradation leading the conducive condition for the spread of the disease. They even failed to correlate rain with mosquito breeding." (p. 99).

Why the people try to correlate the cause of LF to cultural conditioning rather than to biological and scientific explanations? Why are we not able to explain the etiology and progression of LF to people in the language that they understand and internalize? In other words, why is our communication strategy not 'active' and what is needed to change in order to make it dynamic and active so that the desired behaviour change takes place? After all, people do not want to live with the ugly manifestations of Lymphatic Filariasis in the form of elephantiasis limb and hydrocele testicals for ever. We have learnt that they despise this state of health and cross many miles to get rid of it. There is something seriously wrong in our efforts.

Our approach in health education requires complete overhauling and we need to change the way we have been conveying the health education messages so far. While, it is true that we

need to allocate more money for the research and development, for discovering new vaccines and developing new technologies; it is equally important that this technology reach the deserving people in time so that we are able to ameliorate their suffering and hardships. The social science component, in our medical sciences is very poor and the time has come when it should be strengthened and augmented to be used in saving of precious resources that we waste due to faulty implementation of the health care programmes.

The book under review is an excellent work in medical anthropology, though; the author would like to call it biomedical anthropology. It is full of very detailed case studies of the patients of LF. Leaving aside some errors like in table 2 and 4 in chapter IV, the book provides very rich epidemiological and KAP data on the patients of LF in Odisha. On the whole, this book will be very useful to the scholars interested in medical anthropology, applied anthropology, medical sociology and rural sociology.

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