

## BOOK REVIEWS

MULTIPLE VOICES AND STORIES: NARRATIVES OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS edited by Arima Mishra and Suhita Chopra Chatterjee, 2013, New Delhi, Orient Blackswan Private Limited. ISBN 978-81-250-5379-8

The book under review deals with narratives of health to explore social realities and lived experiences. The issues of health and illness have been highlighted through a range of theoretical and methodological narratives in the field of medical sociology and anthropology. This volume has used various narratives to questions and to understand issues of health, illness and suffering in everyday life.

The editors of this volume has written a comprehensive introduction to explain the need of paying attention to the voices of the patients and what they have to say about their illness. Along with it they have comprehensively explained the need of the stories of health to expand the horizon of this work beyond illness. The editors have also precisely explained the inclusion of two contrasting narratives on mental health to prove the point whether narrative approach to medicine works or does not work.

All these narratives have been arranged thematically and the book is divided into three sections. Section I deals with Voices from the Margin: Health Providers and Healers, and issues like Moral narratives and biomedical critiques in the accounts of bone doctors and their clients, accounts of complementary therapy practitioners in Delhi, outcaste women, cast-out birth knowledge, narratives of Tulu-speaking healers in Karnataka, accounts of lay health workers in Odisha are the issues discussed in length. Helen Lamberts's essay titled "Moral Narratives and Biomedical Critiques in the Accounts of Bone Doctors and their Clients" discuss how the bone doctors provide comfort to the patients at low cost and provide service as part of moral social service as contrasted with the biomedical market with profit motive. In the similar vein Ruby Bhardwaj's essay "No One Medicine is Enough: Accounts of Complementary Therapy Practitioners in Delhi" discuss the challenges of complementary therapy practitioners like acupressure and acupuncture along with allopathy. Janet Chawla's essay "Outcaste Women, Cast-Out Birth Knowledge" shares the traditional knowledge of midwives regarding child birth and the support they provide. Issues of caste and marginalization is also highlighted and Marine Carrin's essay "Narratives of Tulu Speaking Healers in Karnataka" extends the discussion of caste through biographical narratives of native healers. The first section concludes with the essay "Numerical Narratives: Accounts of Lay Health Workers in Odisha" by Arima Mishra, Shefali Hasija and Sidsel Roalkvam narrating the experience of lay health workers that work with the communities as against a formal healthcare system.

Section II deals with "Doing" Health: Stories of Health and Illness" providing narratives of self about dealing with an illness or curing a particular disease. Various essays in this section by Haripriya Narasimhan, Amar Basu and Mohan J Dutta, Tania Porqueddu, Ceciline Nordfeldt, Amrita Basu provide the narratives on biomedical healthcare practitioners in Chennai, sex workers in Kolkata voicing their concern over health issues, living with Diabetes, accounts of South Asian migrants in the United Kingdom, Garhwali women of Uttarakhand offering their

views on social change, food and identity, Fertility narrative, etc. This section reflects on the usefulness of narratives in medical practices.

The third section "Narrative Approach to Mental Health: Two Contrasting Case Studies" deals with the well debated issue of role of narratives as evidence, specifically in case of mental health. Based on a study involving school children, the essay by Kalyani Viswanath and Uma Hirisave, "Silent Voices: Narratives in Child Mental Health" reveals how narrative approach can help in addressing issues of child mental health. The other essay in this section, "Are Narratives a Legitimate Tool of Diagnosis?" by Suhita Chopra Chatterjee dwells on the limitations of narrative approach suggesting that narratives may or may not play a role in the process of diagnosis and treatment. The volume has an appended autobiographical narrative by Harmala Gupta that shows how the patients by telling their own stories can improve the care and support given to similar patients.

The book in totality has made a good effort to represent varied voices in presenting health and illness narratives. It has also opened up a debate on the functions of narratives, whether they can be use as evidence and are they indispensable in the practice of medicine.

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**Pranjal Sarma**

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND COMMON HUMANITY by N.S. Reddy. New Delhi: Academic Foundation. Price: Rs. 1445.00/-

The volume under review is an impressive collection of papers, essays and academic addresses of perhaps the senior-most anthropologist from Lucknow. N.S. Reddy was one of the best of Prof. D.N. Majumdar's students and he has held many distinguished positions in the field of teaching and research during his long carrier spanning more than six decades.

The volume running into more than 500 pages contains 30 such essays, etc. The author has grouped the writings into three parts, viz., cultural diversity and common humanity; critical essays on some contemporary theories and issues; and vignettes of tribal and village India. The book has been dedicated to two of his distinguished teachers, Majumdar and D.P. Mukerjee; and very aptly Reddy acknowledges with a precision the ethos of their teachings: Majumdar for enabling him 'to understand others with empathy', which is in a way the hallmark of anthropological research; and Mukerjee 'to comprehend the world through critical analysis'.

In the introduction itself Reddy raises a question which has been constantly asked about anthropology: the broad lesson that the discipline imparts regarding the larger concerns of humanity as a whole?, and the first part of the collection of essays largely dwells upon this very issue. The essays grouped under this part therefore present how the author has critically thought over and researched this bedrock point relating to anthropology. Since anthropology has 'man' as its subject matter, the discipline spans biological and cultural aspects including prehistoric archaeology and linguistic as supportive branches. The first essay, briefly examining various relevant literature, tells us how, "With the preparation of human genome and significant break-through in neurology, we can look forward to an authentic vindication of what has been perceptibly figured out by eminent scholars..... relating the interaction between cultural and biological factors in the present stage of human development" (p. 41). The next presentation entitled, 'kaleidoscope of cultures', presents a canvas of diverse cultures across the world focussing

on how culture moulds the man and his motivations, behaviour, values and attitudes. Interestingly, it examines individual behaviour in the context of societal norms and how options are chosen or alternatives initiated. This analysis is advanced through the third essay on human motivations and cultural mechanisms, wherein Reddy endeavours to carry the historic development of anthropological thought through Malinowski's functionalism with all its merits and demerits. The much-reviled functionalism and Malinowski are held out by the author for, 'vision on man and culture, stands out permanently and contributed a rich ground work for more finite theory' (p. 91). The next chapter discusses how ethnographic techniques help in understanding humans across cultures. Globalisation and its socio-cultural implications have been viewed in the next two chapters.

"Cultural diversity and common rationality– the Riddles of relativism versus universalism", is the text of the D.N. Majumdar Endowment Memorial Lecture by Reddy in 2007. After a critical discussion of the concept of cultural relativism the author comes out with the views that:

The ideals subsumed under cultural relativism as presented by leading anthropologists, should command general approval. But when the word relativism, in the original sense, means that standards of truth, morality and rationality are culture specific, there is a problem (page 183).

The solution to the problem according to him would be to replace the concept with a phrase 'which would cover the same meaning and message which we cherish such as non ethnocentrism, etc.'– a really difficult task.

Part 2 of the volume contains 10 essays which cover some of the most interesting debates and controversies the discipline of anthropology has seen during the last many decades from 1950 onwards. Some of these include Levi Strauss' structuralism and its models, cultural materialism, Geertz's interpretive anthropology, post-modernism, culture of poverty, etc. The writings in this section illustrate the author's wit in academically critical writings. For instance "post-modernism in anthropology: Aberration or apocalypse?" tells the reader how "a sinister side of the reality is reflected in campus politics and academic power games which are said to be at the root of post-modernism" (p. 298). Then, discussing "dialogical method", Reddy, while examining the writings of Clifford and Tyler concludes that:

From this one can understand why post-modernism cannot cohere with any unified theory. The word text which appears very often in post-modernism literature does not seem to have a fixed denotation. One writer says that post-modernism privileges discourse over text. A second writer says that everything is a text including an individual's life and thought. Another writer says that a society or culture cannot be a text though it produces a text. Only one aspect of text seems to have a relative fixity in post-modernism, and that is it has multiple meanings and is amenable to multiple interpretations (p. 292).

The essay on 'Village studies: A few question of method', concludes with a seasoned note for researchers intending to make an intensive study of a single village to precede such a study with enough preparatory work relating to a region in which he has to locate a representative village.

The third part comprises 11 essays about tribal and village India. Most of these essays provide Reddy's field-based observations about tribal policies and their outcome by way of tribal problems, Naxalite movement, and how tribal society has been changing. The observations are mostly from the southern parts of the country, mainly Andhra Pradesh. The only exception is

the working of the jajmani system among the Lohars in North India based on the field work Reddy had conducted under Majumdar.

This lifetime's work assiduously put together, brings into focus, to a certain extent, the gamut of anthropology particularly Indian Anthropology's development. Most of the writings therefore provide brief, readable glimpses thereon and well presented material on important topics particularly useful for students, teachers and all those interested in anthropology and the human problems in our country. On the whole the author has hereby rendered a singular service to the discipline.

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TRIBAL WOMEN YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW edited by: Prof. S. N. Chaudhary,  
Published by : Rawat Publications, Jaipur, Rajasthan.

Contribution of Prof. S.N. Chaudhary in the form of edited book entitled 'Tribal Women- Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow talks about the changing status of tribal women in India. In Indian society, the status of women (tribal or non tribal) is a point of debate and dialogue since ages. The present book has tried to explore and underline the various aspects of changing status of tribal women which includes education, health, nutrition, politics, economy, trade and commerce, art and craft, discrimination, oppression etc. These aspects directly or indirectly determine the contributions of tribal women for their society in particular and to the nation in general. Most of the contributors in this edited volume are of the view that in 21st century India, the status of tribal women has changed to various levels and degrees.

There are many reasons or factors which are playing a very crucial role in the process of changing status of tribal women. These factors include education, modernization, globalization, constitutional safeguards, developmental programmes etc. The point here is to understand as to how these forces of social change are determining the changing status of tribal women. Some of the contributors are of the view that it is not always right to say that all these forces are resulting in positive changes for the tribal women in particular and tribal society in general, it may have negative or neutral consequences and effects too.

Prof. S. N. Chaudhary has tried to examine and address these pertinent issues in this edited volume. The present volume includes 18 major research papers based on primary and secondary data sources which look into various aspects of tribal women in India which determine the condition, status and problems of tribal women in all walks of their life.

This piece of work will definitely add a new framework to the existing sociological and anthropological stock of knowledge. This work will also help the policy makers, students and experts in the subject to understand and address today's problems of tribal women so to make a good future for them.

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INDIAN VILLAGE: A CONCEPTUAL HISTORY by Manish Thakur, 2014, Jaipur:Rawat Publications, P.214+x, Price Rs.650/- only(HB).

Village studies in India have attracted a lot of attention from Sociologists and Social Anthropologists in India as well as abroad. Scientific studies on village are not very old at the most they can be traced back to Radcliffe Brown's study of Andaman Island, which has been a monograph on the tribes of Andaman with a detailed description of the village. When we speak about a thorough single village study by some Sociologists or Social Anthropologists then we have to remember D.N. Majumdar's study of Gohanakalan. 1955 was a remarkable year for village studies in India: three important volumes came in – a) S.C. Dube's own study of Shamirpet titled Indian Village, b) M.N. Srinivas' edited volume India's Villages having 13 articles based on 13 village studies and c) Village India edited by McKim Marriot has 20 articles. After that a number of significant studies have been conducted. The current volume by Manish Thakur is a welcome addition to village studies in India.

In his foreword to the book N. Jayaram writes, much of scholarship on the village in anthropology and sociology has been devoted to challenging its contribution the nationalists as well as the colonial discourses. Anthropologists and Sociologists have tried to examine the enormous complexity of the reality of Village India. Post-independence, the idea of the village got politicized with the state – initiated programmes of rural development.

In an interesting note Manish Thakur in his acknowledgement in the book wrote that he was doing a course in urban sociology and there he studied urban villages. After the course got completed. Thakur writes 'My Jat friends in Delhi would frequently asked: gaon kab jaa rahe ho? Gaon se kab aaye? (when are you going to the village? When did you return from the village?) These innocuous questions used to annoy some of my friends, who were not from the gaon, as I was, but who had their houses in cities like Patna or Muzaffarpur. They used to wonder why these 'brainless' Jats equate everything with Gaon! Obviously they were referring to home as gaon. The book has seven chapters. In the introduction the author has made a detailed analysis of village studies in India from the pre-modern agrarian period to the contemporary period.

The author says like any other concept the village in India, has a historical trajectory in terms of its origins and other things. In Sociological and Anthropological literature, village has been approached from different point of view. The author says that for Jan Breman village has been a strategic point of entry to look at wider processes operating in the society. For Srinivas, village has been a self content microcosm embedded in a larger macrocosm, a handy methodological tool for generalizing about the totality of Indian Social Structure. Village as a space has been the concern of post-modern thinkers. Thakur says the term village indicates on one hand an empirical reality that has given a territorial (spatial) and demographic (Census) unit, and on other hand village in Durkheimian sense provided a representation of that fact or thing i.e., as a discourse.

The second chapter deals with the colonial construction of the village i.e., the first major administrative work of the British Government, as reported by Sir Henry Maine was the settlement of land revenue. It defined right to land and devised different mechanism for revenue assessment and collection.

The third chapter deals with "the Indian village and western social theory and historiography" where the author discussed the study by Stokes, Guha, Metcalf and Mehta. The fourth chapter deals with the village in the nationalist discourse where the ideas of Gandhi and

Ambedkar have been analyzed. In the fifth chapter the author provides a succinct review of various studies of village found in Sociology and social anthropological literature. The discourses on rural development have been discussed in the sixth chapter and the final chapter deals with the summary and conclusion.

Overall it is a volume dealing with all aspects of village in India. Today the traditional notion of village is changed considerably in light of modernization and globalization. The book will be the immense interest to all students of Sociology and Social Anthropology.

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