

BOOK REVIEWS

SOCIOLOGICAL TRADITIONS: METHODS AND PERSPECTIVES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF INDIA by T.N. Madan, New Delhi: Sage, 2011.

'Tradition' as a topic of study is one that social scientists in India, mindful of cultivating a progressivity outlook, have generally had trouble negotiating. T.N.Madan takes up 'traditions' – religious and sociological - frontally in this book of essays, and develops a nuanced and lucid set of reflections with intricate argumentation. Wittgenstein's lines evoked at the start 'Thinking too has a time for ploughing and a time for gathering the harvest' set the tone for this volume – which has the feel of an experienced sociologist looking back on and applying to the topics of his interest, insights ripened over long years in the field. The epilogue in fact explicitly does this, including reflexive comments on the author's own stances in the past. Most of the ten essays in the volume were written in a relatively short period, between 2005 and 2010. Three has been published here for the first time. The other seven have been reworked and expanded specifically for the current publication and thus what we have is a unified book about themes, methods and perspectives. It thus avoids the pitfalls of the typical collection of essays written at different time periods and strung together with an introduction that is often unable to cohesively link the pieces.

The book is divided into two parts. One is on dynamic cultural traditions in India as subjects of study, and the other on intellectual traditions embodying particular approaches to these subjects of study. The first part contains essays on Madan's special field, namely the sociology of religious and value traditions.

The second part focuses on the making of sociological traditions through looking at the interplay of concurrence and contestation among some of the major contributors to the development of Sociology in India – namely Radhakamal Mukerjee, D.P. Mukerji, Louis Dumont and M. N. Srinivas, with a last piece on the journal 'Contributions to Indian Sociology' as the protagonist.

Madan has been a leading scholar in the Sociology of Religion in India – a subject that many sociologists have been wary of, caught as we are in the dilemma of reconciling professional interest with personal belief or non-belief. It is a subject which is also dealt with by philosophy of religion, theology and religious studies, and Madan has through his writings over the years, clearly worked out its sociological terrain and dimensions.

The opening piece is an essay on 'Indian secularism in a post secular age'. Madan discusses Indian secularism as religio-sacral ideal; a political ideology that assumes and builds on the co-existence of a plurality of religions in the public domain. While in agreement with the popular view on the distinctly 'Indian' nature of Indian secularism, the essay focuses on its specificity rather than its generality. While dealing with vexing questions of the nature of secularism in Indian history, the essay also engages with the contemporary politics of communalism and secularism.

Religious pluralism is not the same as secularism, Madan avers. He is critical of facile evocations of 'composite culture' in Indian history, which serves the purpose of keeping our

contemporary faith in secularism intact. Rather, as happened in Kashmir, he says, cultural and religious differences were recognized and separations kept alive, but non-conflictual (and sometimes harmonious) social arrangements were evolved that recognized the practical imperatives of having to live together. Instances of *bhakti* and sufi poetry that negated religious and caste differences cannot be construed as a base for secularism, since the basic assumptions of these sects had an other-worldly character. While Madan's points are valid, it cannot be denied that, despite separation and mutual tolerance (rather than obvious integration), religious plurality has, inadvertently or by design, given rise to syncretic forms in the arts and sciences, in modes of worship and in the domain of culture in general. Such syncretism, perhaps unintended and often un-self conscious, is also what is meant by composite culture, not just the presence of *roti-beti* relations. At some levels, and some historical moments, elements of deep integration have prevailed.

As Madan states, the character and cross-cultural relevance of Indian secularism are not yet finally settled issues, but there is no going back to western liberal or Marxist notions of the relationship between state and religion. To render Indian secularism intelligible, we have to take the study of Indian religions seriously. Thus, methodological issues in the study of Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism are the subjects of his next three essays, the cumulative import of which is to underline how pluralistic perspectives are vital to the survival of Indian secularism.

In part two, Madan makes the point that unlike in the West, contemporary Indian sociologists have not sufficiently reflected and critically evaluated the work of their predecessors. The four sociologists taken up for detailed treatment are 'exemplars' he says. Indeed the overall thrust of their cumulative work is in tune with Madan's own intellectual inclinations. Three of them – Radhakamal Mukerjee, D. P. Mukerji and Louis Dumont, are presented synoptically, using broad brush strokes to give a critical overview of their substantive and methodological contributions. In the case of M.N.Srinivas, he focuses on a specific methodological issue, namely the relationship between sociology and literature, in light of Srinivas' allegiance to the British empirical tradition of social anthropology.

Madan was a student in the early 1950s in the Department of Economics and Sociology at the University of Lucknow. His teachers included Radhakamal Mukerjee and D.P.Mukerji. With Dumont, he had an intellectual encounter which subsequently matured into a close association via their collaboration in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. M. N. Srinivas, though not his direct teacher, was an exemplar. So with all four, his was more than just an academic relationship.

Mukerjee's trajectory from a focus on regional economic systems to social ecology onto a sociology of values is tracked sympathetically, and Mukerji's oeuvre from Marxist methodology to an argument for the study of tradition is admiringly sketched. In the piece on M. N. Srinivas, Madan takes up a not so well known aspect his two short stories written very early in his career (*Legend on the wall* and *Image maker*), and shows how they reflect in a condensed form, his scholarly concerns and themes: namely the dynamics between village and town, as also between tradition and modernity. But more importantly, Madan argues that Srinivas, although a student of Radcliffe-Brown, evolved into a position (espoused by Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Sarat Chandra Roy and others) that ethnography is not just about careful observation, meticulous data collection, nor even only about putting these into an appropriate theoretical framework, but ultimately about immersion in and realization of the native view. It is an act of imagination and empathy and literary skill in communicating this as ethnography. Despite his training in and affinity for British empiricism, Srinivas had a deeper connection to this approach

and when circumstances resulted in his writing *The Remembered Village* relying only on memory, it became much appreciated for its novel-like quality. The two short stories (about which Srinivas was reticent and shy) anticipate, in a sense, this later development and in addition to literary merit, they thus bear a relationship to his ethnography.

Louis Dumont was among the major figures of 20th century anthropology who enlarged the scope of the subject beyond the confines of localized field work among 'other peoples' to include the comparison of civilizations. Though his main arena of comparison was India and the West, his methodologies have universal applicability. While operating within a structuralist paradigm, he was also engaged with issues of meaning, ideas, values and the principle of holism, constituting an important departure from the then prevailing hegemonic behavioural functionalism. Even critics acknowledged the importance of his work. Madan succinctly summarizes his contributions: his combining of ethnographic and textual sources, his reflections on the relation between status and power, his deep interest in Dravidian South India and its interaction with the North, his ethnography of the Pramalai Kallar which fleshed out Levi-Strauss's idea of cross cousin marriage as a structural 'alliance' between two patrilineages, his ethnography in North India to demonstrate that what the terminology obscures the gift giving patterns affirm, namely that North Indian kinship too recognizes the principle of alliance, thus producing a rather controversial implication that in the domain of kinship 'India is one'; his work on the west and its individualism for which his work on India furnished a vantage point.

While Madan is critical of Dumont's view of holism as overly intellectualistic and platonic, and has other reservations about his oeuvre, he says the question is not whether Dumont is right or wrong but whether his argument is intelligible and internally consistent and what his work tells us about Indian civilization.

In this and the subsequent essay on '*Contributions*', Madan brings in micro-biographical details which throw light on little known aspects of Dumont, who for generations of students of Sociology in India has become either a holy cow, or a sort of scapegoat for all the ills of Sociology. Initially Madan was a functionalist and only later did he gradually convert to the approach of '*Contributions to Indian Sociology*', the Old Series of which was edited by Dumont and Pocock. He narrates the story of the objectives and significance of the Journal, his long correspondence and interaction with Dumont and eventual forming of a successor journal to the Old Series of Contributions, namely the New Series, which Madan edited for many years with distinction. The comparison of this flagship journal of Indian Sociology with its close rival *Sociological Bulletin* and the respective thrusts they gave and continue to give to the discipline is one that needs to be explored and elaborated.

In terms of the sweep of theoretical, conceptual and methodological issues covered, with a beautiful interweaving of reflexivity and professional approach, this volume is a thoughtful and mature 'contribution to Indian sociology'.

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SURVIVING AGAINST ODDS: THE MARGINALIZED IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD by Debal K. Singharoy. New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 2010, Pp 412, ₹ 995/-

Undoubtedly the study of marginalized community is of crucial importance particularly in the Indian context. India has a large number of marginalized groups in terms of scheduled tribes, scheduled castes, landless labourers, and other vulnerable groups. The book covers most

of these sections of the society. It deals with the problems of marginalized groups and offers some solutions. It has 17 articles presented in four sections: (a) Globalization and Marginalization: Changing Dimensions and Emerging Perspectives, (b) Land, Labour and Marginalization, (c) Marginalization of Dalits, Tribe, Minorities and Children in a changing world and (d) Marginalization Issues of service Users and the Consumers.

Debal K. Singharoy very succinctly analyzed the process of marginalization into four aspects: Economic Marginalization, Political Marginalization, Social Marginalization and Cultural Marginalization. He says that marginalization is not a isolated, but an relational, cumulative, socially reproduced and legitimized phenomena. Marginality is spatially and horizontally relational with reference to the economic, social, cultural, and political undercurrents of the society. Economic means it denies a large section of society to have equal access to productive resources, avenues, for the realization of their potential and relegates them to the margin of economy. They are pushed into rampant poverty and face livelihood insecurity. Socially marginalization means it deprived them of effective social capital, space for their social mobility, new avenues for social and human development. It relegates them to get lower social status, designating them to belong to lower caste, inferior race, gender and ethnicity. Politically marginalization means it denies the people to have access to the formal power structure and participation in a decision making processes. Further, it subordinates them to the hegemony and coercion of dominant sections and pushes them ultimately to become the underdogs, un/underrepresented and disempowered in society. Culturally marginalization means it relegates them to the periphery of the society, become the 'part society with part culture', 'outsider from within', alienated and disintegrated. They are pushed to be aliens in their own land, in the process of historical contacts and colonization, and to remain socially and culturally embedded with such alienation even in the post-colonial period.

The first section deals with the conceptual issues and some of their manifestations as seen through race and caste inequalities in contemporary world. James M. Jasper in his paper 'Strategic Marginalizations and Emotional Marginalities: The Dilemma of Stigmatized Identities' says that marginalization is a central political strategy and at the centre of marginalization is an effort to create a damaged or stigmatized identity for a group, as a way to disadvantage them strategically. He has focused on the cases of African-Americans in the United States and Dalits in India. Satish Deshpande brings forth emerging patterns of caste-based social inequalities in India in his paper 'Recent Trends in Caste Inequalities: Comparison of NSSO Consumption Expenditure Data of 2000 and 2005'. He delineates the caste-based social inequality based on consumption patterns. Here he makes a comparative caste-disaggregated analysis of monthly per capita consumption expenditure data from the last two quinquennial (big sample) surveys of the NSSO conducted in 1999-2000 and 2004-05 respectively.

The second section of the book deals with the emerging facets of marginalization surrounding the use, control, ownership and management of land. Vibha Arora in her paper explains the complex interplay between new usage of land for the development of hydro-electric projects in Sikkim in North-East India and perceived threat against the loss of cultural identities of the tribal people. Malathy A. in her paper 'We are the Land; The Land is Us: Land and Identity in Australian Aboriginal Culture' discusses the significance of land in constructing identity in Australian aboriginal culture. She points out that land and the human relationship have always figured conspicuously in the Australian aboriginal consciousness. However, making historical reference, she points out that the advent of colonialism has disrupted this sense of aboriginal interconnectedness with the land. Against the background of the debates regarding traditional rights of aboriginals to land and native rights, this paper explores Australian literary

texts that document the traumatic consequences in aboriginal life, and their alienation from land. A. Satyanarayana in his paper 'Agrarian Development, Marginalization and Unionization of Peasants in Meerut' examines the nature of agrarian development, everyday interactions of cultivators with proliferated middlemen and interpretations of such interactions prior to the emergence of collective actions in Meerut commissary. Analysis of agrarian development in the commissary reveals that although agriculture has become capital intensive with mechanization and commercialization, familial form of organization of production is predominantly retained. In the context of such agrarian development the 'moral density' of cultivators with urban capitalism magnified and the credit institutions, electricity board, industry, state, proliferated middlemen have imposed unilateral contracts on the cultivators.

The third section of the book deals with issues of the dalits, tribals, minorities and children. Jose Kalapura in his paper 'Globalization and Livelihood: Increasing Marginalization of Dalits and Tribals in India' attempts to show with relevant data that while there have been benefits of globalization in many aspects of life, the economic globalization without a touch of humanism has deepened the rich-poor divide, and has further marginalized the dalits and tribals. Ashish Saxena in his paper 'Locating Prospects of Dalits in the Era of Globalization' discusses with reference to the dalits the social implication of globalization, changing position of the nation state to tackle the social concern (welfare goals) and the possible ways to protect and promote their human rights in India. D.C. Sah in his paper 'Social Exclusion and Marginalization: Poor among Tribals in Village Democracy', based on the data from three predominantly tribal villages in Madhya Pradesh, examines the form and extent of tribal marginalization, process of creation of social capital in this tribal belt as well as the role played by social capital in tribal development.

The fourth section of the book deals with the issues of service users and the consumers who are the most visible community in the global consumerist world. Here the issues of the service user and the consumer are discussed in the contexts of a developed and the developing societies respectively. Kristin Heffernan in her paper 'Are We Meeting the Needs of the Most Marginalized with Service Users Involvement?' presents findings from a focused group study on the 'service user' in British social and health care services delivery. Kamlesh Mohan in her paper 'Learning Consumerist Culture: The Indian Middle Class's Experience in the Periphery' explicates the extent and nature of changes in material culture of the Indian middle class, their interface with satellite television and cable network which has become a potential source and instrument of value-formation for global entrepreneurs in finance/business, entertainment industry, health and religious faith, etc. organizations.

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ENVIRONMENTS AND TRIBES IN INDIA: RESOURCES CONFLICTS AND ADAPTATION, edited by Vineetha Menon, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Co. for Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, 2012, pp 213, price ₹ 500/-

The volume under review consists of 18 articles including the introduction by the editor. The volume is a product of two seminars organized by the Department of Anthropology, Kannur University, on the theme Ecology Indigeneity, Resource Conflicts and Adaptation: India and Kerala. All the articles are based on study and analysis of different tribes in India. Writing the foreword Kamal K. Mishra of the Manav Sangrahalaya expressed concern on the mindless implementation of mega-development and eco-tourism projects in Adivasi inhabited regions.

Such projects ignored the perception and participation of the adivasis which led to a disastrous situation. In introduction the editor says that the role of environment is crucial for sustainable development. The more fragile an environment is, the more are the subsistence conflict and the challenges to sustainable development. An environment or ecosystem and thereby culture, become fragile on account of various factors ranging from climatic change, overpopulation induced by migration, changes in land use or livelihood practices, technological changes, overexploitation, depletion and destruction of resources, etc. Undoubtedly today communication system has intensified global interaction. It has led to many development projects including promotion of tourism in tribal habitats. However, it has not led to any development among the tribals rather it has led to a conflicting situation among them.

Susan Visvanathan in her article entitled 'Foresters and New Orientation to Survival' discussed the case of Tiruvannamalai on regenerative forest policy. The tribal and caste community are divided on their interest on forest. Tiruvannamalai is a pilgrim centre where both tourist and pilgrims visit; it has not become a fully commercial area. People have taken care of the ecology and resources. But it does not happen everywhere. B. Francis Kulirani discussing North-East region of India says that the region is rich in natural resources and people consider tourism as a development option for the region. Many of the States in the region, land-locked and having typical geographical features have recognized it as a viable and welcome option. Kulirani suggests coalition-building of indigenous communities of India in political, economic, cultural and socio-religious levels through community development centering on tourism development. C. P. Vinod in the article entitled 'Habitus and Habitats: Resource Conflict and Development Failure among the indigenous communities in Wayanad, Kerala' cautioned that when Migrant Claim their Shares of the Bounty, indigeneity might lose out in the course of development. In the case Wayanad, a development habitus with major dispositions of market based monetary regime was organizing the practices of migrant or settler communities at large. They imbibed the principles and practices of market economy at greater speed even at the early stages of development. Social reciprocity and ethnicity remained the major dispositions of most of the indigenous communities. While their habitats underwent tremendous changes, these were unwarranted in their habitus. Amalmani Sarma in the article analysed the tea community of Assam particularly their assimilation process. Sarma said that despite the tea community's enormous contribution to the economy of Assam and in the other spheres to the greater Assamese community, the community has been lagging behind in almost every aspect of life compared to the other sections.

R. Rajendra Prasad in his article entitled 'Kadar's Tryst with Eco-Tourism at Athirapally and Vazhachal: Emerging Resettlement Issues of a Particularly Vulnerable Tribe in the wake of AHEP' discusses this location of Kadar because of hydro-electric project and eco-tourism. He said that indigenous people should be given de-facto decision making power concerning the use of natural resources in their own habitat to avoid their marginalization. Marginalization by the larger society is a contemporary reality for many indigenous communities. Bindu's paper deals with the stress arising from such kind of marginalization among the Kurumba tribes of Attappady. An analysis of Kurumba self perception of their stress reveals that their stress in relation to eco-degradation and loss of traditional livelihood is optimum. P. V. Mini and Prasad A. M. in their paper discuss the displacement experience of the tribal people on account of an irrigation project in Wayanad district. Shashi Kumar in his article discussed about the Koraga of Kasaragod. In their habitat a shift to cash crop cultivation of rubber got implemented, earlier they were expert in basketery. In this manner livelihood resources have been taken away and they are facing a precarious condition. P. R. G. Mathur in his paper entitled 'A Comprehensive Environmental Conservation Project and some Lesson discusses in detail the

benefits and problems of Attappady eco-restoration project. He said that although there was tribal focus in development benefit, greater benefits went to non-tribal people.

In this manner, the volume brings together diverse experiences of ecology-indigeneity, interfaces, resource conflict, constraints and adaptation which call for multiple levels of understanding and strategies for conserving and promoting a healthy environment.

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TRIBAL HEALTH: STUDYING SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR by Mohammad Akram, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2010, pp vii+269, ₹ 530 (hb)

The book under review attempts to understand how socio-cultural and economic environment of southern Rajasthan influences the sexual life of the tribal population of the region. It further examines how change generating agencies and mechanism have exposed the innocent tribal people to the menace of STDs making their life very tough and miserable not only socio-culturally but also politico-economically.

A conceptual framework for sexual behavior and spread of STDs has been presented in the introductory chapter of the book. A broader framework has been developed for studying the tribal societies from sexual behaviour and STDs perspective. Besides, a review of the available works, with due references, has been done to supplement the theoretical framework. And, further, the methodological details to the work have also been delineated in the same chapter. This is followed by a brief introduction of the socio-cultural lifestyles of various tribal communities of Rajasthan and profile of the respondents and the area of study. In the succeeding chapter, author have provided details about the institutional dimensions of the tribal sexual life which discloses the behavioural differences related to premarital and extra marital sexual relations, prevalent among them. Author has nicely examined the role of prevalent non-marital sexual relations in spread of STDs. This is being followed by a probing of the situation of tribal sexual health from the view point of commercial sex. Author has put his effort to find out the extent of involvement of tribal communities in commercial sex. The impact of changing working situations on the sexual health of tribal people has also been studied. And further the author has explored the role of commercial sex and changing work situations in spread of STDs.

The consequences of STDs, social situation of a person having the disease and treatment patterns prevalent among the tribal population are the other related areas that have also been probed by the author in this book. Indicators of freedom of sex and prevalence of STDs have also been developed on the basis of the findings. Testing of the hypothesis has been done separately and the specific findings have been compared with other related findings. Although the approach and methodology of the study is comparative and statistical, yet sufficient cases and evidences have been covered through case study method. This is the strong side of this book. Personal experiences of field work have been shared by the author which help in substantiating the findings in logical way. Most of the data have been presented in tabular form for easy comprehension and strict quantification has been deliberately avoided.

In the final segment of this book, the need for developing an integrated sociological model for studying the sexual behaviour and the STDs together has also been realized because most of the related studies opt for the different perspective. The anthropologists along with many ethnographers have studied the sexual behaviour of the tribal population from the

evolutionary perspective. Some other studies have looked at the phenomenon from cultural contact perspective. Recently, some researchers have tried to visualize the problems from the social transformation perspective. The STDs are generally studied from the clinical and medical perspective. Finally, the author on the basis of his work is of the view that the sexual behaviour and spread of STD among the tribals can be better understood by making use of continuity and change perspective. It is a matter of fact that the problems surrounding the tribals sexual life are mainly related to the problems related to paradoxical change in tribal life.

There is no denying that the significance of the book lies in the fact that onslaughts of health hazards in the form of STIs/STDs/HIV/AIDS have created new threats for all human societies transgressing the boundaries of the East or West. The spread of these complications, which are sexually communicable, depends upon socio-economic environment, ecological patterns, cultural ethos, religious sanctions, sexual preferences, clinical or medical orientations, physical mobility, migration patterns and other family, marriage and kinship related institutional structures.

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WHOSE CULTURE HAS CAPITAL? CLASS, CULTURE, MIGRATION AND MOTHERING by Bin Wu, Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, Bern 2011, pp. 205.

It was a very insightful experience to read this book based on qualitative research of eight respondents and their experiences as Chinese migrants, as mothers of very young children and the early childhood care and education. The book is so engrossing that one could read it in one sitting, while providing insights into the traditional and post-economic reform Chinese family structure, child rearing practices, cultural field on one hand and also giving an understanding of early childhood care and education in New Zealand, the painful and arduous process of cultural assimilation on part of the Chinese mothers on the other. Simultaneously, the book weaves in the abstract theoretical propositions, concepts and references of other similar and relevant researches without breaking the flow of the narrative. Besides other high points of this research work, this is one very significant feature. In fact, this book could be used as a model for teaching students on how to undertake qualitative research using a theoretical perspective, wherein, various concepts of the theoretical perspective are subjected to testing and validation.

The author has worked on her research using the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu and his concepts of field and habitus; economic, social and cultural capital. She uses institutional ethnography of Dorothy Smith to meet her need to blend the perspective of Bourdieu and feminist methodology. This meant using an emic perspective wherein women's experiences are understood in terms of their day-to-day account of facing the social reality of bringing up children, managing their paid work, balancing life in a culture where they are migrant ethnic minority. It deals with how these women deal with their downward social mobility from middle class paid work professionals in China before migration and intense desire to provide the essential resources of social and cultural capital to their children in early childhood so as to uplift the family in social hierarchy of class structure and also in terms of social and cultural capital. However, to organize the analysis of data the author improvises and uses the analytical tool for qualitative research devised by Attridge-Stirling, Thematic networks. Thematic networks comprise three levels of themes so as to arrive at abstract concepts and propositions from the empirical data collected in field research. First the empirical data is organized in the *Basic Theme* and

then these *Basic Themes* are organized into cluster of similar issues in *Organising Theme*. Thereafter, the sets of *Organising Themes* together constitute a *Global Theme*.

In this study, *Global Theme* is “Mother’s strategies, decisions, and actions to maximize capital for their children in daily practices”. This is based on four *Organising Themes*, viz., New Zealand and China; Early childhood centre and home; Mothering work at home; and Within the family.

New Zealand and China has three *Basic Themes*, viz., Big OE, but a different style(OE stands for overseas experience); Birds of different feather (highlighting issues of ethnicity and identity); and Where do we belong?

Early Childhood centre and home has four *Basic Themes*, viz., Choices (between Home and Early Childhood Care Centre); Daily communications (dealing with concerns and language barrier); Portfolio(A critique of documentation in the form of observation of children and extensive record keeping); Playing or learning (in the Early Childhood care Centre).

Mothering at work has three *Basic Themes*, viz., Reinforcing, Extending and bridging; English and Chinese Learning; and Extracurricular activities.

Within the family has three *Basic Themes*, viz., Two generations; Gendered Parenting; and Mothering and paid work.

The whole book is organized into chapters that highlight these various types of *Organizing* and *Basic Themes*. The author has tried to understand how the migrant mothers, while transcending different fields, interpret norms and observe ‘feel for the game’, in the perspective of Bourdieu, in relation to the relevant fields and habitus so as to provide their children with the right currency of capital. This book also highlights the difference of early childhood care in terms of time (present and past) and space (China and New Zealand); also the difference of fields (China and New Zealand); difference of habitus and how the middle-class habitus is carried forward from China to New Zealand despite downward mobility of these Chinese migrants. The book also explicates on the complicated relation between field and habitus, social class and ethnicity. The respondents describe how inequality is shrouded in seemingly neutral terms such as proximity to the Early Childhood Care Centre, affordability of the centre, cultural and language barriers. The difference noticed by one of the respondents was not just about the skin colour, different cultural practices and customs but also the family’s living or economic condition with social status and class.

The findings of this research show that the migrant mothers redefined and reconstructed the concept of capital. This attitude towards mainstream education was ambivalent and complex, covering the spectrum from willingly embracing, reluctantly following, selectively utilizing to firmly rejecting. Simultaneously, the mothers promoted, criticized, and rejected various traditional Chinese practices and beliefs in order to maximize benefits for their children.

In terms of the experience of Early Childhood Care Centre, participants observed how emphasis on adherence to regulatory policies, prescriptions and restrictions by the Centre’s teachers takes precedence and it relegates the real priority, the child, to the side lines.

The author also discusses the issues of ‘feminization’ of migration, how woman has to sacrifice her career/further education and /or work overtime to put the needs of her children’s care and husband’s career ahead of her own. It also deals with the gendered habitus, gendered parenting. It further discusses the ambiguity and complexity of the dominant/non-dominant

group hiatus and diversity within the so called apparently homogenous ethnic minority groups, the diversity of linguistic and regional cultures among Chinese migrants.

In spite of all these merits of this work, it does raise some strong questions such as methodological inadequacy of extremely small sample of eight respondents and that too interviewed in two or three installments for an hour each. It also seems that the researcher trusts and accepts every word of the respondents on the face value besides all the responses from respondents are so well interwoven with the theoretical perspective and narrative that it appears as if the empirical facts have been retrofitted to the theoretical arguments. Besides, it does not deal with the concept of economic capital, i.e., the economic hardships faced by the migrant mothers and their family in their earlier years of settlements in New Zealand. How do these families cope with these hardships and what are their coping mechanisms to ensure that the expenses on early childhood care and education are not compromised. Despite giving background information on the cultural capital of patrimonial value structure in Chinese families, it really does not deal with the stress caused due to difference of opinion between husband and wife on the ways and strategies of early childhood care and education of children. It portrays Chinese families in perfect harmony as far as conjugal and/or familial relations are concerned. In no instance the study shows conjugal conflicts/generation gap or value transition between generation of parents/parents in law and the migrant mothers under study.

Ethnomethodological approach combined with the use of Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography which emphasizes that to understand women's experiences, research should start from the actuality of everyday lives of mothers would have benefitted this research on mothers' efforts to facilitate their children in acquisition of linguistic capital. In fact, ethnomethodological approach combined with the perspective of Bourdieu and Smith's methodology would bring out the true essence of the reality.

Nevertheless, the concluding lines of this book bring out the prescription for future society of New Zealand, that is, an appeal for more research and debate on the issues of gender inequality in migration and parenting to ensure fairer economic opportunities for women with young children, regardless of their socio-economic status and ethnicities, to fulfil the vision for New Zealand women as promised by government: "Aotearoa/New Zealand will be an equitable, inclusive and sustainable society where all women can achieve their aspirations"(Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2004, p.3).

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A MATTER OF BELIEF: CHRISTIAN CONVERSION AND HEALING IN NORTH-EAST INDIA
by Vibha Joshi, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012.

Werner Heisenberg (1989:9) introspecting on the developments in particle physics comments that "tradition exerts its full influence in deeper layer of the scientific process." If the ethnographic tradition in anthropology is critically built upon the work of its predecessors, then Joshi's book is built on the anthropological tradition of the British anthropologists who wrote on the Naga tribes during the colonial period. The book at first glance reflects the richness of the proverbial missionary writings, the British Raj administration reports, and the European anthropological writings on the Naga tribes of Nagaland. She has ingeniously fused the writings on the Naga tribes from various periods and has provided a unified narrative basing on the

religious beliefs and practices of the Angami Naga. Nevertheless, apart from the secondary sources, the narrative is weaved around her firsthand account description of the social process. Her keen use of ethnographic method recurs throughout the book and is evident owing to the qualitative nature of the data. On a reflexive note, research as an embodied activity is recurrent in the narrative as she acknowledges her multiple identities as a researcher and the research process being influenced by the socio-political realities of the subjects.

Joshi's treatise on the Angami is taken as prototype of the Naga groups and the description of especially the Naga political ethos is from Angami perspective. Her main focus is on the Angami healing practices imbued with religious beliefs; moreover, one of the important coordinates explored in the ethnographic description is the pervasive Naga national struggle seen as an existential theme to the Angami worldview. She sees Angami perspective on Naga nationalism not as a disembodied discourse but rather as inseparable from the religious process. This reflects the complex nature of the social reality but be that as it may the theoretical insights on their interaction could have facilitated the analysis. As Agar (1980: 23) echoed that ethnography is not mere data collection but theories ensue implicitly during the analyses of individual, society and culture, Joshi's analysis has somewhat followed this ethnographic process. Considering the consistency of her theoretical orientation she has used the notion of rupture, implying a radical break, to gauge the religious conversion process among the Angami. According to her the Angami conversion to Christianity cannot be understood as 'radical discontinuity' from the past because the two themes often converge and inform each other forming a single strand of religious process. However, to her "the rupture that did take place was surely more to do with the change in the political situation" (p. 9). In addition she has incorporated the anthropological approach on Christian conversion as having global interconnections and has related Christianity to the process of modernity.

The outline of the book is distributed along three thematic strands of enquiry: the Angami traditional animistic religion; Christianity in Angami society; and the Angami religious life in contemporary situation as eclecticism of traditional and Christian beliefs. The connecting concept throughout the discourse is on the Angami healing practices which are appraised significantly through different layers of meanings and interpretations. As an ethnographic endeavour she delineates some key periods deemed responsible for shaping the Angami socio-political world and religious life thus navigating through the annexation of the Naga Hills by the British, the history of Baptist mission, the two world war experiences, and the rise of Naga nationalism after the Indian independence. The ethnographic account of Angami society and culture is narrated through the lens of a shared Naga cultural similarity and the construction of a common identity. In the chapters 2, 3 and 4 the Angami traditional religious beliefs and practices are explored: chapter 2 is a description of the Angami pantheon which is seen as precluding the concept of health and aetiology of disease; chapter 3 is given as praxis of the Angami religious beliefs or in other words the experiential aspect of the religious system, here the personal and the communal ritual performances is explicated; chapter 4 is *tour de force* of Angami religious specialists and traditional healers, their concepts, motivations and significance. In the following chapters 5, 6 and 7 the religious encounters, continuity and change, themes, sect dynamics and healing practices are understood within the rubric of Christianity: chapter 5 is a historical overview of Baptist mission in the Naga Hills and its ramifications; chapter 6 is a brief overview of denominational structure and the process of sect formation in Angami Christianity, here the church as an important institution is given a primary focus; chapter 7 accounts for the concept of healing and the church and the pluralistic medico-religious practices of the Angami; interestingly Joshi analyses the role of the church in brokering peace in the conflict ridden Naga society as a form of healing.

Joshi's analytical categories do not seek to demystify the Angami religious system; what she has tried to portray is the multiple facets of social reality and a phenomenological approach to religious experiences. In juxtaposing the two beliefs systems her analysis of the Angami society is seen from the perspective of social equilibrium and less on conflict; and the narrative proceeds along the Angami appropriation of religious themes and symbols evincing their understanding of reality. The religious developments in Angami society can be understood from Berger's (1990: 138) analysis of religious institutions in modern situation; according to Berger in the modern pluralistic situation, "the religious institutions become marketing agencies and the religious traditions become consumer commodities." However, in her discourse Joshi talks of individuals actively reorienting and reinventing their religious beliefs and affiliations and according to her analysis the focus for such development is from the individual volitional perspective and not the competitive situation created by different religious institutions. This is because she explores the Angami religious beliefs and the notion of health and aetiology of disease as subjective phenomena. Apart from the nuances of healing practices in Angami society, conversion as an important variable is addressed throughout the discourse. Conversion to new religion is analysed at the level of religious identity and the demarcation of traditional animistic faith and the world religion Christianity, and thus the Angami terms *Krîna* for those following ancestral faith and *Kehou-mia* for Christians are used to explain the distinction. According to her interpretation the two traditions in the social reality "are to be understood as two broad alternating streams of discourse, the one masking the other but at different times and in different guises" (p.3). As an addition to Joshi's conversion analysis, Richard Travisano's (1970) conversion model can help us understand the conversion process in Angami society. Travisano has argued that a person can change his religious identity without changing his perspective on life thereby implying that, an objective break is easily identifiable because of the structural change; however, a subjective break is hard to determine because one cannot ascertain a radical break in one's perspective of life in changing his religious identity. Thus according to Travisano, the term conversion is fitting only when it accounts for both the types of break. To infer from Travisano's model, Joshi has talked of Angami religious identity as an objective break, but the praxis of religious beliefs as a subjective knowledge is not seen as a radical break but an ongoing discourse contingent on the daily social transactions, life crises and their perspective of life.

The entire narrative is a juxtaposition of two religious traditions and their interaction in the social process. To me Christianity in Angami society could have been given more focus moving toward a diverse discourse. On a comparative note, among certain Naga groups like the Sumi and the Lotha, who claim to have achieved 100 per cent Christianity (see *Perspective on World Missions* 1998), the rhetoric of healing practices is appraised within the scope of Christian beliefs and the legitimacy of such practices, appraisal of syncretic tradition, and the selective appropriation of traditional beliefs and practices are within the discourse of Christianity and less on the juxtaposition of two different religious traditions. The Angami religious life as described in the book is vibrant, more experiential and less dogmatic; and something that strikes the reader is the diverse religious context created by the various Christian denominations and sects. And as is evident in any social group the proliferation of various religious groups is bound to create divergent views and ideologies. In my study among the Sumi Naga what is observed is that the healing practices are not only linked with the Sumi concept of body and soul but they are contested by various religious sects as either spurious practice or as a mark of supernatural intervention. As a matter of fact the concept of healing is inexplicable from the ideological construction of the group and the contestation of divinity beliefs among the different Sumi Christian groups. The Angami Christian complex is perhaps best left to upcoming researchers who can take cue from Joshi's commendable ethnography and contribute to anthropology of religion as a whole.

In conclusion, Joshi's book is a long awaited anthropological treatise on the Naga groups amidst the plethora of myopic treatment of Naga society afforded by many writers. She has maintained the anthropological integrity by conducting an intensive fieldwork and has given an anthropological approach to the study of Angami religious life; and the diverse voices she has rendered in the discourse is what separates her from prominent British anthropologists such as J.H. Hutton and J.P. Mills who wrote on the Naga tribes during the British Raj. Overall the book is a laudable ethnographic account on the Angami Naga and is a recommended read for those interested on religion in Naga society, and for the students of medical anthropology dealing with indigenous healing therapies and practices.

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