

## BOOK REVIEW

***Women in the Contemporary Society: Issues and Challenges by Th. Binarani Devi,***  
Concept Publishing Company (P) Ltd., New Delhi,  
2017, Price ₹ 800

Written in a lucid style, the book is unique in covering a broad range of subjects that impact gender in general and women in particular. The preface describes in detail nuances of Indian civilisation ranging from political hegemony to the first chapter of introduction where the concept of Pativrata is explained. The author weaves an interesting read albeit there are grammatical errors in the preface, while the rest of the book is certainly eloquently written.

The author has quoted extensively from World Economic Forum Report and UNDP Report. She has quoted Prof. Amartya Sen reflecting about the way culture of India is perceived by foreign Media under three categories i.e. Exotical Approach, Magisterial Approach and Curatorial Approach, yet fails to mention the source in the references quoted at the end or Bibliography at the end. She has even mentioned the Nirbhaya case which occurred in 2012 and the escape of the main accused as he was a minor. She quoted Smt. Sonia Gandhi's speech given in 2013 in a Commonwealth Lecture but her references to such events are missing from the references quoted at the end. In the chapter on Human Development and Violence Against Women, the author quotes Galtung on page 37 to discuss violence under direct violence, cultural violence and structural violence, yet the reference is not mentioned at the end of the chapter. What is more, she has magnanimously quoted her works in most chapters.

There are nine tables in the book elaborately mentioned in a separate list but almost all tables have old data which is a big lacuna. There is in Table 1 page 8, a detail regarding Juvenile Cases during 2001-2011. But as a publication of 2017, the reference range could have been till 2016 with details available on websites from National Crime Record Bureau link (<https://data.gov.in/resources/cases-registered-against-juvenile-conflict-law-under-different-crime-heads-sll-during-2015>).

In fact, the only table showing latest details is on page 128 showing Census data on changing sex ratio since 1951 to 2011 in North East India. Table 3.1 on page 42 also gives crime against women in Assam 2012-13. The rest of the tables which show election data and women's political participation show data from Human Development Report 2005 which is 12 years old. It is pertinent to point out that the official website of the Election Commission of India carries detailed statistical report on General Elections 2012 and also latest Manipur General Legislative Elections 2017.

Any references from a book published in 2017 ideally should reflect the latest figures. Importantly, the book uses a number of acronyms which are elaborately explained in the text. It is therefore, suggested to have a separate list of acronyms mentioned after the list of tables which will facilitate comprehensive understanding.

Besides the shortcomings mentioned above, this is an honest attempt put forth by the author to highlight the women in the State of Manipur. There are sporadic references of Manipur and North East in most chapters particularly in the chapter on Politics and Women

Empowerment. But a separate head on North East in general and Manipur in particular is not universally present. On page 72, she has mentioned customary laws that discriminate between men and women. It is enlightening to read it and one craves for more on such laws. As a matrilineal society, is amniocentesis as mentioned on page 77, practised in favour of female child in North East as inheritance is in

female line with laws being matrilineal is not clarified. More on that would have enriched the average reader along with latest data on the state of the far flung North East which seldom figure in the main news stories of the rest of India. Notwithstanding any critical analysis given above, this initiative is a good read for students and academicians alike who work in the area of gender and related fields.

*Dr. Akanksha Shukla*