

BOOK REVIEWS

"Persistence and Change in Tribal India" by M.V. Rao, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd., pp.-i-xxiv & 1-226, ₹ 600, 2012.

Indian Anthropology has crossed hundred years milestone after the publication of the first monograph on Indian tribe by an Indian. S.C. Roy's Munda and their country was published in the year 1912. On such a great occasion it is interesting to find a book in hand on the theme of persistence and change in Tribal India by an administrator-cum-academician who has long experience of contact and first-hand experience of the tribal communities of the Midnapur (undivided) and West Midnapur. The author was blessed and initiated to this field of research by late Prof. P.K. Bhowmick and got associated with his action research laboratory at Bidisa. Prof. Bhowmick's insight on the theme of continuity and change as well as the tribal communities of the region specially the Lodhas has been useful for the author to induce himself into such research from theoretical as well as applied and action angels.

The book is an outcome of the long field experience of the author. It aims to find out the traditional picture of tribal life and culture as well as to depict the changes that are taking place. In addition, it also tries to find out effects of the development perspective on the tribal life and culture of West Midnapur. One Santal and one Lodha village have been taken up for intensive study while extensive survey have been carried out through out the whole tribal area of the district. The two tribes are at the opposite rungs of the development ladder.

The field data have been arranged in the form of nine chapters. The ethnographic details

of the two communities have been put together in a chapter. Illustrations of customs, traditions, beliefs etc. of the two tribes as well as the dynamics of cultural practices and social customs are presented in another chapter. Social control and authority including mechanism of modern governance are discussed in another chapter. Changing livelihood of the two communities including exploitation, role of moneylenders and reasons for their backwardness have also been discussed in a chapter. It also includes MGNREGA and SHGs intervention etc. The next chapter is on Tribal Health which analyses tribal health and its changing nature in relation to tradition and modernity. It also includes initiatives and innovations to overcome health problems through voluntary health workers and the positive impact of campaigns of sanitation and hygiene health of tribal people. In the context of development a full chapter is devoted to illustrate various interventions and resultant changes in tribal development. It also critically analyses implementation of different schemes, depicts intervention consequent to researcher - administrator's continuous field visits and interaction with the tribal people of the district. Finally he has pointed out the major finding and his recommendation for ameliorating the conditions of the tribal people at large.

The author in his study has put a balanced attention on ethnography changes and continuity as well as on contemporary issues like health, education and development. He has utilised his long stay in the district by not only performing his administrative responsibilities but also by conducting ethnographic as well as applied and action oriented researches among the tribal people

of the area. His visits to field area and Bidisa campus have remained useful and helpful for both the ends, we are really thankful to the author for his painstaking efforts in producing such an useful volume on tribal life and change. I congratulate Dr. Rao for producing such a volume which will be useful for academicians and social scientists on one hand and policymakers, administrators and people in general on the other.

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e-panchayats in India - Some Facts

by Ravindra Kumar Verma, Archana Kumari, 2012, Serials Publications, New Delhi, pp 283, price ₹ 995.

The authors have lucidly brought out the proceedings of the University Grants Commissions' National Seminar on e-panchayats in Bihar - Impediments and Solutions, at a juncture when the State of Bihar is trying its best to harness the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) potential in an holistic manner by opting to go for e-panchayats implementation, when e-governance has become a key to success of governance as well as good governance in an era dominated by knowledge society. The National e-governance policy, Government of India, too envisages proliferation of electronic form of transfer of information at all levels of administration by connecting through State Wide Area Network using a mix of affordable technologies to make e-panchayats function as an efficient institution in providing easy access to information on a host of government activities such as RD programmes, schemes for its stakeholders/citizens in a transparent, reliable, accountable manner enabling quick decision making process alongside delivery of common services at their doorsteps as and when required on timely basis.

The book is a compilation of seventeen papers presented in the National Seminar, 2009 in Bihar. Out of these, nine papers are in English and the rest in Hindi version which are again sub-divided into five parts.

The first part consists of introduction as well as proceedings of the Seminar spread in two chapters. The proceedings highlighted issues and strategies in five broad themes: a) *theoretical issues* such as e-governance, e-panchayats and good-governance, ethics, people's participation approaches to study e-panchayat, ICT and knowledge management. b) *financial issues*-human resource development was main focus in attempting to use ICT in local governance, lack of infrastructure, awareness and e-readiness among the people towards use of ICT for better service delivery. c) *Issues related to policy and measures* include the use of postal network infrastructure for information dissemination, creation of common and personal e-mail IDs with PIN code and to have Hindi portal and involvement of NGOs and social activists in the policy framework. d) *issues related to society and e-panchayats* touched on social features vis-a-vis e-panchayats, linkages between consumerism/globalisation, knowledge based society and development. e) *Issues emerged on practice* encompassed corruption, interface of local bureaucracy and upper hand of district administration, dissemination of knowledge among panchayat representatives and transparency in transactions.

The second part of the book focuses on challenges, opportunities and issues spread in five papers touching on very crucial topics like challenges and opportunities, challenges and impediments, the conceptual aspects and functional aspects in the context of e-panchayat establishment, where knowledge based panchayats would narrow down the digital divide and delivery of services will improve. A great emphasis has been given as