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BOOKREVIEWS

CHRISTIANS IN INDIA. Rowena Robinson. New Delhi: Sage Publications. 2003. Pp. 234. Rs. 300.

Christians in India is written within the larger framework of the sociology of religion in India in general and of conversion to Christianity in particular. The book, far from being a summary of the literature on Indian Christians, eclectically draws materials from different sources. It shows the intriguing character of the Indian Christianity through anthropological and socio-historical material. There is an engagement to integrate theoretical and ethnographic material keeping in mind even the "comparatively unspecialized audience".

In this construction of the sociology of conversion to Christianity in India a number of relevant issues are raised, such as space for voices, motivation of conversion, visibility of transformation in the convert, missionary-state interrelations, man-woman relationship, and casteism in Christianity.

The complexity and heterogeneity of Christianity in a multi-religious environment is examined in the book. The reality of diversity and pluralism in India has been highlighted not only in relation to religion but also to Christianity. It is argued that pluralism of knowledge demands that we listen to all voices. The myth of India as a Hindu nation and non-Hindu religions as non-Indian alien/non-indigenous is contested. It is also contended that so far there has been neglect to the writing on Christianity as well as to the non-Hindu communities in India. Even if materials were available, they often lacked "richness and depths" and, sometimes, analytical rigour. The Dumontonian perspective of India, viz. the equation of Hinduism with India, is challenged as an "upper-caste essentialized version" of Hinduism. The diversity in Christianity has also been explored and analyzed sufficiently. The book gives a glimpse of many 'Christianities in India' - a shift in the sociological engagement with Christianity in India. The regional and historical locations of various 'Christianities' facilitate understanding of their origin, growth, further diversification, negotiations, and shifts in their identity

The book engages in a comparative study of the Christian communities (in the context of converts from upper caste and lower caste, tribal and peasant communities). This helps the readers to understand the resemblance and differences among the upper and lower castes, tribes and peasants, men and women, priest and laity, within different Christian communities. Putting aside the studies which only highlight the impact of one religion upon the other, the present book discusses how among religion such as Hinduism, Islam and tribal, there have not only been lending but also borrowing from others. The author argues for complicating the question further and seeking an understanding of what ideas and practices have given to people of other faiths and how they have been received. The book argues for the "importance of factoring in time" and change in a shift in the understanding of how religions have interacted with each other in India.

The questions of motivation and the understanding of what constitutes conversion are examined carefully. Attempt has also been made to chart as to how misunderstanding, subversion, compromise and negotiation were all part of the narratives of conversion. The study points out how the desire for social mobility and for access to various kinds of power and resources, and their control and management, intertwine in creating a space during different phases of conversion.

The book finds "the temporal versus the spiritual motivations for conversion" debate false. It is argued that the two are "largely inseparable". On the part of the converts there may be a perception of the missionaries' offerings as an "undifferentiated package deal". Motives such as acquiring dignity, maintaining privilege, achieving social and economic mobility, retaining status depending on where one's position in the hierarchy lay, are associated with conversion. Conversion is more than only a change in religious beliefs and ideas. It is more than just a change of heart. There have been excesses, for instance, in the case of Goa where inquisition "viewed with suspicion" a variety of indigenous cultural practices and "sought to eradicate them". This is the pattern in other parts of the country as well.

From the missionaries' point of view visibility factor in conversion is significant to give the new community of the converts a transformed and distinct identity. Conversion involved "not only a transformation in the system of beliefs", but also "social and cultural changes". Missionaries were responsible for banning the tribals' "participation in New

Year or harvest celebrations, drinking of rice beer or dancing and attending indigenous dramatic performances" and also "they had objection to the use of traditional instruments of music". However, it has been pointed out that there were also accommodations and negotiations rather than a simple elimination of indigenous ways.

Missions were looked upon as an "extension" of the state's "economic and political goals". There was no ambiguity about it. However, mission was "never an arm" of the state in any unequivocal fashion. In fact, far from believing that mission furthered the colonial project in India, the state looked upon it with a great deal of suspicion. This was the post-Reformation period and religion was no longer as entangled in the construction of statehood or political identity as it had been in sixteenth century.

The question of caste and other forms of stratification and differentiation within Christian communities is explored. The theme of gender differences in socialization and ideas about sexuality and behaviour raises some interesting questions. The idea of male celibacy seems to be associated with sacred power. Economic differentiation facilitates many more opportunities for employment. They are no castes but they do not ignore castes altogether. The book looks more specifically at status as caste, and its implications for social relationships. The strands that emerge in the book are the modes of political and social differentiation among 'casteless' Christian groups, the shifts in the caste structure of communities with the changes brought about by modernization, patterns of gender differentiation and their implications for the organization of space, the allotment of resources and the negotiation of kinship relations and responsibilities. There is an exploration and incorporation in Christianity particular ideas about morality relating to the family, to kinship and marriage. These ideas were sometimes in accord with indigenous concepts and practices, but more they were in discord. The norms of matrilineal societies in particular were set at considerable dis-ease due to the presence of Christianity.

The book raises some interesting questions. For example, the problem of casteism still dominates the Church-civil society discourse. The Dalit/non-Dalit axis is the one where most of the action is raging. The book addresses the concerns of India's Christian communities including hierarchy, system of differentiation, possible break-up of mainstream churches, and challenges posed by Dalit and women. The troubling

issues related to women such as gender equality, priestly celibacy, the ordination of women, marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc., are raised. The book raises a question whether Christians are a 'community' or a 'minority'.

The study debunks the "mainstream academic understanding" of some critical issues like communalism, Sanskritization, feminism, conversion, etc., in the sociology of religion in India. It seeks to counter certain central ideas in which Christianity has often been studied. It critically scrutinizes ideas such as 'accommodation', 'assimilation', 'syncretism', etc. The argument is that the employment of these kinds of concepts in the study of Christianity has led to a "seriously flawed perception".

Joseph Marianus Kujur

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INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIAL INTERVENTIONS; TOWARDS INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS. Vijay Padaki and Manjulika Vaz., New Delhi: Sage Publications. 2003. Pp. 238. Rs. 295.

The book under review is an outcome of the observations and research work done by authors while completing their various assignments of development interventions. However, the authors submit that this book is in the nature of a presentation of a work that is in progress and is not merely a report on the research project. The authors attempt to put together observations and insights from several exploratory excursions from Institutional Development (ID). The text in the book is arranged in three sections; namely concepts and perspectives, practitioner experiences and institutional development at work.

In section one on Looking Back Concepts and Perspectives, the authors review the emergence of collaborative behaviour in the development interventions and attempt to frame theoretical understanding of the ID from social development perspective. This section comprises of five chapters. In chapter on Social Institutions in Development, the authors illustrate the development process from two perspectives; understanding social institutions and development interventions. They argue that often development interventions succeed in introducing new behaviours and even new organizational entity to support it, but often fail to ensure sustenance of both. In the process of development, interventions erode existing social organizational frames that were serving

the purpose. Thus the challenge in ID is in arriving at an alternative methodology that achieves the internal consistency across behaviours, organizations and institutional facility. While conceptualizing the term ID and its contextual applications, authors argue that yet literature on this subject is not mature enough to provide a standard definition. They further state that institutions are super ordinate structures that play a pivotal role in the development process by influencing policies, coordinating and managing resources and sustaining development process. The authors support their submission by giving illustrations with examples on the features of institutional development. At the end of the chapter, the authors summarize emerging issues in ID. Chapter three is on the relevance between social ecology in ID. The authors take an overview of the relations of community with polity, social structure, economy and ecological infrastructure. In chapter four authors attempt to explain economic theories to build key ideas in neo-institutional economics. They argue that any one concerned with institutional development should see institutions as norms rather than organizations per se. In chapter five of section one, authors attempt to theorize the institutional framework in development interventions by comparing it with ecosystem which is comprises of different components and each component has a specific function to perform along with having inter connectedness with the other components. They have illustrations in the development organizations and development institutions.

Section two of the book depicts the experiences of the practitioners. The writers have summarized eight case studies of ID from various parts of India. Case studies are taken from different sectors of social development such as micro-credit, agriculture, etc., and are followed by emerging questions on the different aspects of ID such as catalyst-facilitator role, formalization, stages of development, ownership, structure and networks. In presentations of the cases, they illustrate organizational structure and institutional framework that followed for information exchange.

In section three on Looking ahead for ID at work, the authors try to evolve theory by summarizing their observations, analysis and experiences in three different chapters. In chapter seven authors have illustrated methodology, findings and conclusions of the workshops they organized on the cases which are presented in the previous section. The conclusion drawn is that action research paradigm suit to develop

Bhagats in late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries" contests assumptions about the tribe as the "oldest inhabitants of the land" with distinctive social institutions and land structures, and as a people "exploited, oppressed and subjugated by the non-tribals". She points out how even the internal stratification in the Oraon tribe provides a space for exploitation, for instance the *bhainhars* having special privileges. She articulates the ideology of a marginal group within the Oraon society. The movement of the Tanas was a response within the Oraon community to outsiders – the zamindars, *bainias*, missionaries, and British administrators – who had infiltrated the Oraon land, traditions, belief structure, rituals and practices. Das Gupta examines the link between two processes: a process in which administrators, anthropologists and missionaries defined and determined who an Oraon was and what his rights were; and a process through which a historically constituted community of Tanas responded to the influence of different worlds.

Within the framework of the "Tribal Philosophy of Life", Ritambhara Hebbar's paper "Eternal and Ephemeral: The Significance of Myth and Ritual among the Ho" attempts to understand the underlying meaning of the Ho myths and their significance for Hos. Hebbar argues that these myths not only form the "intellectual reservoirs" of the Ho, but also provide an insight into "Ho philosophy regarding their relationship with the supernatural and the natural world". She demonstrates the way in which the morals of the myths are "enacted and committed" to memory in *Maghe Parab*, the main festival of the Ho celebrated between the months of January and March to mark the beginning of a new agricultural cycle, in order to establish a symbiotic relationship between spirits, the human and the natural world. She argues that through the *Maghe Parab* ritual there is a "corporeal as well as a cosmic reconciliation of the mythic experience of transgression and disrespect in relation to the spirit and the natural world".

Within the theoretical background of social change, Mondal Hembrom's "A Socio-Philosophical Change in Tribal Life" conceptualizes tribals in their "pristine and hallowed living", with a symbiotic relationship with land, nature, and environment and traces the cultural distortions. In recent years Chotanagpur has gone through tremendous changes in language, cultures, traditions, social institutions. The author identifies

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CHANGING TRIBAL LIFE: A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE. Padmaja Sen (ed.). New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. 2003. Pp. 141. Rs. 250.

This book is the outcome of the papers presented at the National Conference sponsored by the UGC, Eastern Regional Office, Kolkata, and organized at the Mahila College, Chaibasa on 21-22 March 2002. It is a synthesis of sociological and philosophical perspectives on tribes in transition, with reference to the Hos, Mundas, Oraons and Santals in the states of Jharkhand and West Bengal. The main focus all through the fourteen essays of the book is the socio-philosophical transformation of various tribes facilitates the process of their ongoing identity formation. The book begins by questioning the notion of tribe as a colonial construct. Thereafter, the tribal philosophy of life in relation to the place of myth and ritual, cosmology, values, medical behaviour of tribals, and the process of change influencing the tribal worldview, is discussed. Discourses on the conflicting paradigms of development are highlighted with recommendations for a viable solution.

Papers by Ashok Kumar Sen and Sangceta Das Gupta debunk the old notion of tribe. The difference between them, however, lies in the focus. Sen's essay "Conceptualization of the Hos of Singhbhum as a 'Tribe'" does not accept the categorization of 'tribe' as a colonial construct. Sen argues that 'tribalism' is a 'pre-colonial notion', which the British were "reconstructing instead of constructing". He dichotomizes the 'self perception' of the Hos of Singhbhum as a 'separate entity' and the conceptualization of same people as a 'tribe' by the British ethnographers. The author attempts to show how the Hos evolved as a tribe linguistically, in geographical space, as a pre-state community, and culturally as a distinct group. So strong was their linguistic identity that the non-tribals were perceived as the 'linguistic other'. Sen proposes that any understanding of tribe should invariably be accompanied by the sensitivity to their self identification as 'Horo, Horoko, or Ho' meaning 'man' and not tribe. Das Gupta's essay "Constructing a Tribe: A Case Study of the Oraons and the Tana

the origin of these distortions in the colonial rule – to the infiltration of outsiders, especially that of Christianity. Besides the rupture between the Christian elites and the non-Christian elites, there is also a crisis between the Santal worldview and the Brahminical mind set. Hemrom argues that fundamentalism-guided ethnocentrism has been able to break the tribal solidarity. He laments that the entire Santal worldview has been pushed to the background and that they have been “reduced into mere human cattle to serve policies of globalization, privatization and liberalization”.

Pashupati Prasad Mahato's paper “Changing World Views of the Indigenous (Mulvasi-Adivasi) People of Jharkhand: A Socio-Philosophical Perspective” discusses the changing worldview of the Jharkhand tribals. It highlights the strong cultural bias of the so-called ‘civilized’ people against the ‘indigenes’. Mahato contests the very principle of “scheduling some people as tribe” and argues for the inclusion of some others in the list of scheduled tribes. He is pained that “the most egalitarian, democratic, culturally literate people” are facing the “culture of silence” caused by the cultural violence caused by outsiders. He insists that there be more receptivity among peoples of all walks of life, to what these simple people have to say about themselves and their world.

Identity formation and articulation are important components in the present book. Alternate tribal system of medicine is an expression of tribal identity. That is precisely what Adikanda Mahanta's “Folk Treatment System of Tribal Society in Eastern India” drives home. Mahanta holds that though the thought and philosophy of the Adivasi influenced the Indian language, culture and philosophy in general, yet in course of time there was a departure of tribals themselves from their original philosophy. This the author discusses in the context of the medical behaviour of tribals in eastern India. Sankar Sengupta in his essay “Bengalee-Santal Equation: Dialects of Identity and Assimilation” talks about the social and philosophical transformation of the community of 20 lakh Santals of West Bengal. He understands the “dialectics of identity and assimilation in this complex laboratory of a state”. He points out the inadequacy of the “outside view” and argues for an “amalgam of both the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’”. Identity construction in relation to culture is discussed by Tapashi Ghosh in her paper “Socio-Religion of the Tribes of West Bengal” in the districts of Midnapur,

Birbhum and Bishunpur. Ghosh examines how changes in social structures are taking place along with rites and rituals and the thinking of the people. This study of the religion and art of the tribes of West Bengal – at the level of folk, both tribal and non-tribal, is presented as one regional culture.

The impact of various processes of change such as modernity, Christianity and development are discussed in the book at length. Barbara Verardo's work is an insight into the process of detribalization due to the emergence of a new religious cult. Her essay “Forest People, Modern People: Modernity and Social Change among the Ho and Munda People of Jharkhand” argues that the Ho and the Munda people of Jharkhand by imitating and adopting moral values and codes of behaviour of high-caste Hindus “not only *sanskritize* but also *modernize*”. The ethnography of the Ho and the Munda of a forested village in Porahat area in the West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand in central India shows how “adoption of ‘caste values’ does indeed correspond to an ‘overthrow of the traditional [tribal] ‘system’”. The author debunks the notion of modernity as given by the West and claims that the Hos and the Mundas “find in caste values a new, *modern*; continuity and source of legitimacy”. The differentiation between the non-convert Munda and the convert resulted in the converts dissociating from ‘forest’, ‘land’, marginality, ignorance, backwardness and subordination. On the other hand, the land of the plains is equated with ‘civilization’ and a space for modernity. Chittaranjan Kumar Paty's paper “Changing Tribal Life of Chotanagpur: Christianity as a catalyst” studies the ways in which Christianity brings about transformation in the tribal life, belief system, values, internal formation of identity, ritualistic practices, cosmology, education, health and hygiene, promotion of tribal language, grammar, dictionary and literature, composition of songs, place of worship, life style, technical trainings, new games, removal of social evils like alcoholism, witchcraft, political life and bringing about political consciousness.

The essay titled “Development: Conflicting Ideologies” by S. N. M. Topno highlights the conflict between two groups in their approach to tribal development - the tribal and the modern. The tribals are closely related to land, water and forest and are known for core values as communitarianism, cooperation, consensus, etc. Any development programmes for them should take into account their economic and

social sustainability. However, the "so-called modern" concept of development is based mostly on indiscriminate exploitation of nature for the supposed good of the humankind. This approach has resulted in the indiscriminate displacement of tribals without proper rehabilitation. To address the problem of development induced displacement the author recommends the tight implementation of the ILO-Convention 107 and 169, the Bhuria Committee Report and Panchayat Extension to the Scheduled Area Act, besides the Nehruvian *Panchsheela*.

Some of the papers make recommendations to address the problem of development and destruction of tribal communities. Debashis Guha's paper "How should we resolve value-laden Practical Problems in Changing Tribal Societies?" makes a plea for value-based engagement in the development enterprises such as big dams and projects. Padmaja Sen's paper "Value, Valuation and Tribal Society" addresses the problem of tribal values in the face of social change. She observes how the notion of value and the process of valuation in tribal society are "existence-centric". Sen also holds that the "preservation of its solidarity" and "distinct demographic group" is its main motive. Sunil Kumar Singh's paper "Approaches to tribal development: A Sociological Analysis" synthesizes 'morality' and 'materialistic development'. Singh promotes an inclusive and comprehensive notion of development and not merely development in terms of 'economic growth'. But there seems to be a slight confusion in his recommendations because he, on the one hand recommends transparency in the programme and tribals' participation in them, but wants that the tribals only "be informed about the development plan right from its inception". The crux of the matter, however, is that unless tribals are part of the decision-making process, the lot is not going to change for them. There is nothing new in other suggestions given by Singh that non-tribal officers should acquire the knowledge of local/tribal languages, that education be given to tribals to remove their superstitions and prejudices, that they be made aware of their constitutional rights and the means to protect them from exploitation, that possibilities be explored to solve the problem of migration, etc.

The present work is not a comprehensive work on the socio-philosophical aspects of transformation in tribal society. However, the essays give insights into some socio-philosophical aspects of tribal life. These features are reciprocity, democratic living, a distinct philosophy, a unique belief

system, existentialist value system, and a distinct notion of aesthetics and harmony. This worldview constitutes a distinct tribal identity, which has been highlighted through this book. There is an assertion of this identity which is "being submerged and muted by so-called civilized people".

Joseph Marianus Kujur

COMMUNICATION, DEVELOPMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY: ESSAYS ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY. V.S. GUPTA. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. 2004. Pp. xii + 260. Rs. 500.

The legitimacy of the discourse of Indian development has been a contentious subject. It raises many questions like development for whom, development for what (economic growth or human well-being) and at what social cost (the cost of the poor and marginalized people)? Does Indian democracy consider the consent and participation of the people in choosing their own development strategy? Perhaps not and this is the reason why as V.S. Gupta says, Indian democracy, after fifty plus years of planning, is still facing challenges like chronic poverty, widespread illiteracy, larger population base, criminalization of public life, politics of vote bank, bloated bureaucracy, and exploitation of the marginalized.

Using the latest sources of information and database V.S. Gupta updates his earlier publication on "Communication and Development: Challenges before the 21st Century" and brings out this new edition on *Communication, Development and Civil Society: Essays on Social Development and Civil Society* which tries to explore various aspects of the post-independent centralized developmental planning and its endeavour to transform the Indian society. The book has been classified into ten important issue-based chapters revolving around the theme of development, communication and good governance with two annexures on declaration on the right to sustainable development. It also has a very unique concepts glossary and a selective bibliography of the literatures utilized.

Written in a broader perspective of communication, people's participation in, sustainable development and human well-being the book tries to explore the possibilities for a shift from representative, centralized and