

Book Reviews

OLDER WOMEN IN URBAN SLUMS : By P. Sailaja and K. Visweswara Rao. pp. x+180, tables, figures, 2019. Serials Publications (P) Ltd.: New Delhi. Hardback. Price ₹ 895/-

This hard covered slim volume on 'Older Women in Urban Slums' by Sailaja and Visweswara Rao when reached me for reviewing I was much disappointed after going through a few pages. There are hundreds and thousands of urban slums in India. The urban slums of Mumbai are greatly different from the urban slums of Delhi, or Kolkata or Kanpur. The socio-economic and cultural characteristics of urban slums greatly varies from place to place in India. The authors perhaps presume that all the urban slums are very much the same, so they did not identify the place name with the slums they studied. Superficially it may appear so, but it is not so similar, their life style, their life ways, their struggle for survival in the competitive slum world, particularly for the women be they young or elderly, greatly varies from place to place. Place name has importance in anthropological studies which I found missing on the cover.

The authors present their discussion on older women in urban slums in five chapters as follows - 1. Aging: Concept and Theories; 2. Demographic Profile of the Elderly; 3. Policies, Programmes and Issues of the Elderly; 4. Review of Literature; and 5. Findings of the Research Study and Conclusion.

The authors in the Preface write, "This book on older women in urban slums had (note the language expression) latest reviews, programmes, policies and present conditions of the elderly with special reference to urban older women in India." The authors have made great generalizations citing Census Reports from 1951 to 2011, in some cases projecting to 2021, providing 9 tables on the aged people of India, without much analyzing the tables. A general profile of demography do not reveal much about aged people where qualitative categories (social and economic) are very restricted when the general census is carried out. The authors could have cited some recent studies

South Asian Anthropologist, 2019, 19(2): 181-184

on older women that have been conducted at micro level to elaborate the demographic situation prevailing in a village or a block or in a town, that probably could have supported their observations.

Neither the title of the book nor the 'Contents' reveal where the authors have conducted their study, the slum areas. The 'Policies, Programmes and Issues of the Elderly', though a very lengthy chapter (pp. 27-77) is a very sketchy presentation. The authors have listed some policies and programmes starting from the First World Assembly on Aging that was held at Vienna in 1982, and the United Nations Principles for Older Persons adopted in General Assembly in December 1991. The authors have listed many such policies and programmes taken up by international institutions. Various national policies and schemes for older persons in India taken up by the Government of India from time to time have been presented by the authors in this chapter. But the authors have not discussed how far these centrally sponsored schemes were successfully executed by the state governments. There are many critical reports on the policies and the execution of the programmes by the government as only a few are the beneficiaries of the programmes. The authors should have presented the government reports on the beneficiaries of the schemes which are available for the different states.

Chapter 4 present 'Review of Literature', it seems the authors have followed an unusual style of presentation of chapters and their titles. Aging, demography, policy and then review – what a disorderly illogical sequence! In the last chapter, Chapter 5, 'Findings of the Research Study and Conclusion' have been presented, and discussed through 62 tables and 10 figures. Only while going through the pages 108-109 of the book the reviewer comes to know that the authors have conducted their study in Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation of Visakhapatnam (GVMC). The authors have not presented any chapter titled as 'Introduction' in the

New Series ©SERIALS

181

book, so their specific objectives of the study and field study area was not clear until the reviewer read the last chapter. In Chapter 5 the authors have presented the research methodology, design and sampling etc. A total of 200 elderly women (60 + years) were identified by Sailaja and Visweswara Rao from three slums of GVMC area who represented their study sample.

The authors write, “The present study, essentially exploratory in nature, aims at focusing on the profile and the problems of elderly women living in the slums of Visakhapatnam city. Hence, it was not planned on the basis of any rigid research design to test any hypothesis. The study is primarily descriptive in its approach, and it attempts to describe the various kinds of problems and life satisfaction of the elderly women living in slums of Visakhapatnam city.

The authors have concluded their study conducted in the slums of Visakhapatnam city giving some suggestions. The reviewer feels that this study on elderly women of slums areas conducted by the authors in Visakhapatnam city may be of some help to municipal administrators, researchers working on elderly women and NGOs working among aged women for bettering the life of elderly women in urban slum areas in Andhra Pradesh.

P. Dash Sharma

WOMEN AND HIGHER EDUCATION: REFLECTIONS ON ACCESS AND EQUITY. Edited by Sabiha Hussain and Shah Alam. pp. x+198, tables, figures, 2019. Serials Publications (P) Ltd.: New Delhi. Hardcover. Price ₹ 1295/-

This edited volume is an outcome of a national seminar organized by Association of Indian Universities, New Delhi, and Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. The editors, Hussain and Alam write in preface (p. vii), “This edited volume sought to identify ways to accelerate the attainment of gender equality in education, and to encourage shared growth, and to advance women empowerment. It also aims to contribute to the development of interdisciplinary feminist awareness, theory and dialogue, as well as organizational and will highlight underexposed areas of concern regarding gender issues in higher education”. The topics presented in the volume will reflect the status of women in higher

education in India. This slim volume contains only twelve articles apart from introduction contributed by sixteen authors. The editors have presented the ‘Introduction’ only, not any article. It is disappointing to see that a published volume of a national seminar on women organized by two well-known institutes contains so few articles. It perhaps suggests that women are not taking much interest on women studies.

Most of the articles presented in the volume are of a general nature. Under the ‘Contents’ the articles have just been listed and numbered from one to thirteen, without any sectional presentational. Thus thematic presentation is missing. The reviewer finds the following broad aspects have been presented by the authors: Gender discrimination in India; Gender mainstreaming in higher education; Higher education in empowering women; Sustainable development goal to foster equality; Challenges and issues of women in higher education; Autonomy and decision making of educated women; Schooling and girl’s education; Opportunities and challenges in inclusive development; What role does information and communication technologies (ICT) play; and State initiative on women’s education. Only three titles have mentioned the regions, like Haryana, West Bengal (Cooch Behr) and Mumbai where women studies were conducted others were generalized titles.

In an article on ‘Role of higher education in empowering women in Haryana’, the authors have presented (p. 53) the enrolment figures of women in Ph.D., M.Phil. and for Post Graduate degrees in India and Haryana from 2010-2011 to 2017-2018. The authors have further discussed ‘initiatives by the government of Haryana for higher education’, some eight steps taken by the government for higher education. But does this attainment of higher education of women in Haryana empower them in taking specific decisions for their personal life, are they independent in taking decisions at the family level for fulfilling their aspirations and desires, do they have a say at the decision making process in the family particularly for marriage etc, or they are still governed by the patriarchal authority in Haryana. The authors have not gone much deeper into the role the higher education plays at the family level of higher educated women. A few family studies of higher educated women could have possibly given the role ‘higher education’ played in their family life.

In another article 'Exploring the status of higher education of women among religious minorities', the author has presented in table 1 (p. 123) a generalized presentation of literacy rates of religious communities (Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, and others) based on 2001 and 2011 Census reports. Among the religious minorities Jains, Christians, Buddhists, and Sikhs, show much higher literacy rate figures than the Muslim community. Among the minorities highest literacy rate, 94.9% is found among the Jains (smallest religious minority community), while among the Muslims (largest religious minority community) the literacy rate is the lowest, 68.5% as given in Census of India, 2011, cited by the author Sahiya Amin. The author has not given the explanation for this great diversity observed in the literacy rate of the two religious communities. The author has given a very generalized presentation on the status of higher education based on Census report of 2011, and further has presented the schemes of the Eleventh Plan of the Central Government for providing 'Quality Education' in Madrasas', and further has added the programs and schemes of Twelfth Plan targeting minorities welfare and development. As such this generalized presentation does not reveal the prevailing situation of women in higher education in minority concentrated areas of any State in India, their job opportunities, socio-economic conditions and their social status in general.

However, the reviewer feels that some of the articles presented in this volume would be of much help to the administrators and researchers working on development planning for higher education of women in India.

Shampa Gngopadhyay

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY ACCESS AND EQUITY AMONG SLUM CHILDREN. By Manas Upadhyay. Pp. xxi+268, foreword, tables, figures, bibliography, 2019. Serials Publications (P) Ltd.: New Delhi. Hardcover. Price ₹ 1295/-

This volume in hardcover carries a message from the Upamukhya Mantri of Uttar Pradesh Dr. Dinesh Sharma, who writes, "information provided in this book will immensely help policy makers and programme managers in planning focused policies and

programmes for the slum dwellers." Further the volume carries a foreword written by Professor and Head Dr. Birendra Narayan Dubey of Sociology Department of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow, who writes, "the present book is an endeavour to reflect the educational scenario in the slums of Lucknow." This volume is the outcome of a Ph.D. research work conducted by the author with the ICSSR, New Delhi, financial support.

Manas Upadhyay's book on the educational opportunities among the slum children contains the following chapters: Introduction; Review of Literature; Education Commissions, Policies and Programmes in India; Socio-Economic Conditions in Slums; Educational Opportunities, Access and Equity; Learning Achievement of Slum Children in Lucknow; and lastly Conclusion. At the end there is bibliography. The author has followed the generalized presentation style of a Ph.D. report while developing the book. A stereotyped presentation of a research work in a book form. But it has its own value as it gives information about the children in the slums of Lucknow.

The author has conducted his study (pp. 24-25) in four slum areas of Lucknow, the sample size consisted of 200 parents and their children, who were studying in class I to V. The author also interviewed 60 teachers and 16 Principals. The unit of the study is single household. The author selected four schools from each slum for this study, and thus conducted his study in 16 schools.

The author has not discussed about the nature of the slum areas, the four slum areas (Sikandarnagar slum, Chihat bazaar slum, Rajajipuram slum, and Vikasnagar slum) have not been shown through a location map, no demographic study of the household sampled (200), covering age and sex distribution, educational level of parents, income of parents, etc have been discussed by the author taking each slum separately. This was expected of the author for a comparative study. Only a very generalized "Socio-Economic Conditions in Slums" has been presented by the author in Chapter 4 (pp. 189-208).

The author in the introduction has said (p. 24) that "60 teachers and 16 Principals" were also interviewed and were his respondents. But what information he gathered from them, or about their

problems in the schools, nothing of that sort have been presented by the author under a separate heading. Their views have not been reported by the author.

The author as a concluding remark writes (p. 253), "The analysis of the four selected slums clearly reflects that the slums are bereft of necessary physical and civic amenities, with no schooling facilities or with poor schooling facilities."

The administrators and the members of the local bodies in Lucknow city and in general, members of municipalities in larger cities may find this book helpful in their planning and developing schools in and around urban slum areas of a big city. For social activists and researchers working in slum areas for the spread of education among slum children this volume may be of some help for their planning.

Abhik Ghosh

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. Edited by Jagannath Dash, Laxman Kumar Sahoo, Mamata Dash and Rabindra Kumar Mohanty. pp. 354, tables, 2011. P. G. Department of Anthropology and Tribal Studies, North Orissa University: Baripada, Orissa. Hardcover. Price ₹ 895/-

This hard covered edited volume on 'Violence Against Women' has been dedicated to the first lady Vice-Chancellor of North Orissa University of Baripada, who has also written the 'Foreword' for this volume. It is not the conventional practice usually observed. This volume was published in 2011, when the name Orissa got changed to Odisha.

The volume contains 27 articles under the following sections as follows: Section 1: Conceptual Background (2 articles); Section 2: Demographic Profile of Women (1 article); Section 3: Status of Women (3 articles); Section 4: Empowerment of

Women (2 articles); Section 5: Domestic Violence (3 articles); Section 6: Policy Options and Human Rights (3 articles); Socio-Cultural and Psychological Contexts of Violence (3 articles); and lastly Section 8: Violence Against Women (10 articles). The sectional titles and the titles listed in the 'Contents' indicates they are generalized titles not very specific to a geographical cultural region or a district / state, as no specific statistical studies have been presented. Mostly descriptive studies based on media reports and theoretical background have been discussed. In almost every article conceptual background and theoretical aspects have been discussed, but no action taken reports by the governments have been presented. The effectiveness of the acts, rules and regulations against violence of varied nature on women have not been specifically discussed by the authors.

Almost all the contributing authors are from Odisha but whether the violence against women has come down that that has not been reported by any author. There is only one article specific to Orissa titled as, Violence against women in Orissa: An anthropological enquiry and analysis. The author has discussed about 'causes and solutions', 'remedies and recommendations' etc. There is another article on 'Violence against women in Sikh community', where the author discusses about dowry cases and domestic violence in the community. But what the government is doing about the violence against women in Orissa and in other places that has not been reported by the authors. Anthropologist who are working on 'women studies' must act as social activist, mere recommendations will not bring any change.

However, for a beginner in women studies, particularly on violence against women, I think this book will be helpful.

Shampa Gngopadhyay