

Book Reviews

SANTALSHAMANISM. By Suresh Chandra Murmu, Jagannath Dash and Laxman Kumar Sahoo. pp. xiv+94, tables, bibliography, 2012. P.G. Department of Anthropology & Tribal Studies, North Orissa University: Barida. Hard Cover. Price ₹ 390.00

The hard-bound volume is the result of a sincere attempt by the authors, expressed in their own words under 'Preface', wherein they clearly stated what Shamanism is. It is stated that Shamanism is both a magico-religious behaviour and a healing practices. In the trance the Shaman has to travel to the supernatural world in their realm and find out the ways of healing. In short in this book discussion has been made on Shamanic / spiritual healing practices of Santals of Mayurbhanj area of Odisha and Vice-Chancellor of the University advocated at her 'Foreword' also mentioned about the 'shamanistic practices'—one of the great cultural attributes of Santal cultural heritage for its preservation.

The book comprises seven chapters with empiricity and quantitative analysis of data generated from the field has been made in Chapter-2. It appears from the empirical data that high rate of maternal mortality; the frequency of marriages is high within age-group 18 to 22 for both the sexes; while, the literacy rate among the studied population is not good, it is gradually increasing. With these findings it is clearly reveals that the study area is obviously isolated and deprived of developmental programme and perhaps for such reason there is high prevalence of shamanism practices.

Under the Social Division of Chapter-2, a list of clan and sub-clans are furnished, both clan and sub-clan exogamy are practiced but what are the totems of *khut* or sub-clan are not mentioned, even under what circumstances the formation of *khuts* were arose among them are not clear, though sweepingly in Page-15 it is mentioned that 'separate geographical area'. Yes, it is true that as per their habitation in various pockets / terrain of a particular niche, this nomenclature as a sub-clan were arises like Toto (a

PVTG) of Jalpaiguri, West Bengal where Baudhbei *sarkhae* (or clan) divided into Dikbei and Badampa and Dankobei *sarkhae* are divided into (a) Japa, (b) Myapa, (c) Yapa, (d) Syapa, (e) Tyapa and (f) Nipa.

In Chapter-3 the folk classification or the categories of shamans are well described but for which ailment a particular *ojha* or *jan guru* or *kamru guru* is asked by them is not clear. It is also believed that when an *ojha* fails to cure a person then they consult *Jan-Guru*- the sorcerer or a shaman of their community who is believed to be more powerful than *ojha* as also observed among the Mal Paharia of Santal Pargana. Similarly, among the Toto the role of medical practitioner *jhankri* (sorcerer) and the medicinal practitioner or *pau*- who chiefly identifies the disease and prescribe herbal medicine for treatment of; while, *jhankri* through his magical performances and counting, suggest exact cause of diseases. In case of Abujh Maria, Muria, Bison-Horn-Maria (or Dandami Maria) of Bastar, Chhattishgarh there are some healers like *leske*, *gaita*, *wadde*, each has separate assignment and the post among them are hereditary. In case of Kandh and Pano of Kandhamal there are posts like *laka-gatanju* or priest and *kepagatanju* or *clega* or sorcerer or *gunia* are prevalent and each has separate assignment for healing practices.

In Chapter-4 we find a list of medicinal plants for various ailments. It would be more fruitful if botanical names or scientific names of plants or herbs are inserted. Moreso, collection of those plants / herbs from forests also require time, i.e. before sunrise, either darker half of the month or brighter half of the month as well as some taboo also exists for the medicineman for collection of those plants and herbs. It is also believed that application of herbal medicine to a patient also depends on in which time it was collected from forests; the ingredient quality of the plants or herbs are almost in saturation point in a particular time of lunar movement, which are more effective for treatment, and this knowledge they acquired from generation together. This treatise will be more fruitful

to the scholars and social workers if the above-mentioned aspects are taken into consideration.

More than 35 years of research experience in various eco-cultural zones of tribal world of Indian social landscape it is observed that more or less same plants or herbs are used by them while their local name differs but botanical name remains same, like *Rauwolfia serpentina* chiefly used for snake bite case; among the Abujh Maria this plant is locally known as *bhuikuriva*.

Reviewer feel the book under review through their micro study highlighted the intricate relations of Santal society with their super-natural world and would be of much helpful to the students, research hers as well as local administrators and NGO's for the execution of any developmental programme.

Thus, our feeling is "religion is a phenomenon of social articulation followed by ritual and practices and by practicing it, one feel secured as well as gets a feeling of an in-group social bondage, which differs from other. The intricate dependence of various benevolent and malevolent spirits, become the part and parcel of their survival strategy in a particular ecological niche". This observation made by us among the Mal Paharia of Santal Pargana is equally applicable in the present context. The light of education and wave of modernization in the studied area is sufficiently poor as per the empirical data presented, which needs attention to the local authority for needful action of up-liftmen of the studied area.

Dr. Amitabha Sarkar

HUMAN EVOLUTION: AN INTRODUCTION TO PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY. By P. Dash Sharma and Prodyot Gangopadhyay. pp. x+251, tables, charts, bibliography, 2021. 2nd Ed. Serials Publications Pvt. Ltd.: New Delhi. Hard Cover. Price ₹ 1295.00

This hard-bound textbook is the result of the continuing efforts of the authors to enrich the readers about a core area in Physical Anthropology, which is Human Evolution. The authors have done a commendable work in bringing out this book in this regard. Under the 'Preface' section, it has been correctly stated that although there are excellent textbooks on human evolution written by eminent British scholars, unfortunately, few Indian students have limited access. The first edition of the book was published in the year 1987 as the present authors had correctly felt the need for a suitable textbook dealing with Human Evolution particularly for the students in our country. The present edition is a revised and an enlarged one, as compared to the earlier edition. It has a total of twelve chapters, with two new chapters titles "Narmada Valley Hominid Fossils" and "Human Variation at Molecular Level". The book is very lucidly presented with a lot of graphical images, for easy comprehension.

The first chapter introduces the readers to the concepts of evolution with simple definitions The section on organic evolution and the different theories

of evolution have been very concisely, yet very systematically discussed. Very interesting is the part where the authors have tried to have a link with Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism, which is a welcome addition in this book.

The chapter on Animal Kingdom (Chapter 2) familiarizes the concept of taxonomy. A very detailed taxonomic classification of the animal kingdom has been provided. This chapter bears great significance as humans belong to the Order Primates. The authors have wonderfully classified the kingdom upto the Primate level which is the firm base from which one can move on so as to understand the other aspects of Human evolution.

Very appropriately, the third chapter deals with the Primates, the order where we belong. The characteristic features and Order of primates are well presented. The characters of the infra-orders and families have also been properly depicted. A very significant section is the anatomical changes that have occurred in the human skeleton due to assumption of erect posture.

The fourth chapter introduces primate phylogenies and hominid origins. The theories of hominid origins have included all the major theories that are in vogue today, such as Tarsoid hypothesis, Pithecooid hypothesis, and knuckle-walking ape ancestry. The authors have also discussed the

immunological approaches to hominid evolution and the discussion on Vincent Sarich and the molecular clock is very well represented.

Two very important aspects are knowledge about the geological eras and the methods of dating. The authors rightfully considered these two aspects in the next chapter before moving on to portray a short description of the fossil primates on the Eocene, Oligocene, Miocene and Pliocene. The *Dryopithecus* has been very well documented. A section on the Siwaliks is also included. Brief descriptions of the controversies of the Miocene finds have been summarized.

It is a well known fact that human evolution occurred in Africa and then moved to other parts of the world. The authors have given a vivid description of australopithecine evolution in Africa in chapter six. The fossil finds of Taung, Sterkfontein, Makapansgat and other significant finds have been well portrayed. The new find *Australopithecus garhi* has also been included.

The authors have presented the evolution of the genus *Homo* in the next chapter. The fossil finds from Java and China have been very well depicted. The sites, anatomical features of the fossils and the phylogenetic positions have been presented in a very lucid, yet very informative fashion. We cannot understand human evolution without knowing the culture. The authors have so also included a section on the culture of these finds. The authors then moved on to illustrate the fossil finds in Europe and Africa. Fossil finds such as the Heidelberg man, Steinheim, Swanscombe, Krapina and Saccopastore have been very well written. The readers will get a vivid description of the evolution of our genus once they read this chapter.

There has been a lot of debate on the Narmada Man from India. The Narmada man was excavated by Sonakia in the mid-1980s. The next chapter (Chapter 8) is one that is fully devoted to this fossil find from our country. The authors have given a vivid description of the discovery, nomenclature of the Pleistocene formations. The characteristic features of the skull cap have been very well documented. The post-cranial remains and the phylogenetic position have also been discussed. As far as my knowledge goes, this is the only text book on human evolution

that has a separate chapter dedicated to this important fossil find from India.

The next chapter deals with a fossil find that has always been an enigma in human evolution. It is the Neanderthal man. The type find La-Chapelle-aux-Saints have been very well summarized. A brief account is also there about the associated finds. The other important fossil finds from sites such as Skhul, and Tabun from Europe have also been covered. The authors then moved on to cover the important Neanderthal finds from Asia and Africa. A brief account of the culture of the Neanderthals is also included. The authors have also pertinently included a section on the problem of Neanderthals in the context of human evolution. This is why this find is called an enigma in the context of our evolution.

The details of the emergence of modern has been written keeping the Cro-Magnon, Chancelade and Grimaldi fossil finds in mind (Chapter 10). All these three fossil finds have been well illustrated. The readers can get themselves well acquainted with the nature of the finds, associated finds, characteristic features and the phylogenetic positions. Subsequently, the Upper palaeolithic fossils from other parts of the world such as Africa and Australia have been included.

All anthropologists and scholars of allied disciplines will agree that we, humans have a lot of variation and that physical anthropology studies these variations. This is where, the penultimate chapter comes in. The authors have very suitably referred to Washburn and Howells when they discuss the concept of human races. The UNESCO concept of race has also been given. This statement bears great significance in modern day world.

The last chapter deals with human variations in the molecular level. This chapter bears significance as this is a new area of research for physical anthropologists. The concept of genetic diversity has been well explained. The population expansion in India has also been well documented in this chapter. The sections on the Human Genome Variation and Indian mt DNA Typology are well represented.

Finally the authors have also provided a list of books as suggested readings.

The book will be very useful to the students of

the subject and also those who are keen to understand human evolution. It will also provide a good knowledge about this aspect to those who are appearing in various competitive examinations with Anthropology as one of the subjects.

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