

## Book Reviews

TRIBAL EDUCATION & HEALTH. By N.K. Vaid. pp. x + 133, 2025. Antim Publications: Delhi. Price: ₹ 102/-

N.K. Vaid, fondly called 'Vaid Sir' by his students, is the Director of Vaid's ICS, Delhi and a renowned Anthropologist. His *Tribal Education & Health* presents a critical examination of the state of education and healthcare among India's tribal communities. Published by Antim Publications in 2025, the book provides an in-depth analysis of government policies, historical contexts, and the ongoing struggles faced by Scheduled Tribes (STs). With a mix of data, case studies, and policy reviews, the author highlights the systemic neglect and socio-economic barriers that continue to hinder tribal development.

The book is structured into two main sections: *Tribal Education* and *Tribal Health*, that meticulously presents statistics, policy evaluations, and grassroots realities. The book comprises of eleven chapters with first chapter, Constitution & Tribals, exploring the constitutional provisions and legal safeguards for Scheduled Tribes, emphasizing their rights, land ownership, and government interventions. Chapter 2 through 7 falls under the section of *Tribal Education* wherein the author traces the historical trajectory of education among tribal communities, from ancient indigenous learning systems to colonial disruptions and post-independence policies. He critiques the government's efforts, pointing out gaps in the implementation of education schemes such as Eklavya Model Residential Schools and scholarships, as well as discusses the Xaxa Committee Report's findings, dropout rates, and gender disparities in detail. The highlight of this section is a data-driven analysis of literacy rates, enrolment, government initiatives, and critiques existing scholarship programs and their limited impact, as well as the collection of media reports and expert analyses that provide insights into current trends, challenges, and potential solutions for tribal education.

The *Tribal Health* section, comprising of

chapters 8 to 12, covers the healthcare crisis in tribal areas, touching upon malnutrition, maternal and child health, disease prevalence, and the failure of government interventions. Vaid references reports from the Abhay Bang Committee and Xaxa Committee, drawing attention to high infant mortality rates, lack of medical infrastructure, and the need for a dedicated Tribal Health Mission. Additional insights from recent studies highlight the severe impact of lifestyle diseases among tribal populations, the rising burden of non-communicable diseases, and the significant healthcare accessibility gaps. Reports indicate that non-communicable diseases (NCDs) now account for 66% of deaths in tribal areas, with cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and chronic respiratory illnesses being major contributors. Malnutrition continues to be a pressing issue, with high levels of stunting and anemia, particularly among women and children. Furthermore, tribal communities face substantial challenges in accessing medical care due to distance, lack of female healthcare providers, and limited awareness about diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

The section evaluates various government initiatives and NGO efforts aimed at improving tribal education and healthcare. It discusses the impact of policies such as the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), analyzing their successes and shortcomings, and proposes future strategies for more effective policy implementation and community participation. The socio-economic and health conditions of Scheduled Tribes with other marginalized communities in India and globally has also been compared. By examining case studies from other developing nations, it highlights best practices and potential lessons that India can adopt to bridge the gap in tribal welfare.

N. K. Vaid effectively incorporates government reports, surveys, and independent studies, making the book a valuable resource for policymakers and researchers. The book does not merely present information but critically assesses the effectiveness

of tribal welfare programs, exposing inconsistencies in government claims. Real-life narratives from tribal communities enrich the analysis, making the book more relatable and impactful. Though the book is heavily data-oriented, which might be overwhelming for casual readers or those unfamiliar with policy discussions, *Tribal Education & Health* by N.K. Vaid is a significant contribution to the discourse on tribal welfare in India. It serves as a wake-up call for policymakers and stakeholders to reassess their approach to tribal development. While the book's depth and critical analysis make it a must-read for

scholars and activists, a more accessible presentation and practical solutions could have widened its reach. Nonetheless, it remains an essential resource for understanding the persistent challenges in tribal education and healthcare in India.

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**INSIDE OUT: A COLLECTION OF AUTOBIOGRAPHS BY INDIAN ANTHROPOLOGISTS.** Edited by P. C. Joshi and V. K. Srivastava. pp. xxv+422, index, 2024. Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd.: New Delhi. Hard cover. Price: ₹ 1600/-

The present hard bound volume is a compilation of autobiographies of 41 Indian anthropologists, a concise presentation of their life-sketch with the objective to present the factors that led them towards the subject of anthropology, generally after graduation. Only a few among them took anthropology as a combination with other subjects at the graduate level.

Professor P. C. Joshi had “co-edited one such compendium on Indian anthropologists with Professor P. K. Nayak earlier (*year of publication not mentioned*) which contains biographical accounts on nearly fifty anthropologists” (p. vi).

The present work is a sequel to this biographical volume. Prof. P. C. Joshi writes, “While the biographical work on notable Indian anthropologists was in progress, the late Professor Vinay Kumar Srivastava suggested that a sequel to biographies should be asked to pen down their own professional journey in first person account. .... But the response was very slow ..... In a webinar, on multiculturalism, organized by United Indian Anthropological Forum, Professor Srivastava publicly raised concern on the plodder authors. Within ten days unfortunately, he was in the grip of COVID-19, and we eventually lost him, His own autobiography is now untraceable and it is being now written by his wife Dr Kumkum Srivastava. He was my co-editor and will remain so

while under his name, the entry will be biographical-autobiography” (p. vi).

The autobiographies presented in this volume are narratives on the circumstances and situations that directed the young graduate students to pursue anthropology as a career subject, ignoring other popular social science subjects.

In the ‘Introduction’ (p. ix) it has been stated that—”The present autobiographical compilation is .....a succinct and terse life sketch formatted around a framework by large number of active anthropologists of contemporary times right from the seniormost anthropologist R. K. Mutatkar to Somenath Bhattacharjee.” It has been observed under the ‘Contents’, the article by Somenath Bhattacharjee (*I am Learning Anthropology Regularly: A Brief “Atmakatha”*) appears at the end of the volume (pp. 405-414). There is a serious typographical error (*Aanthropology*) in the title of the article that has been overlooked by the ‘learner’, however, his ‘*Atmakatha*’ in brief, is well presented.

I find it interesting to read the narratives of some of the anthropologists about their professional journey towards anthropology. Their stories about what led them to take up anthropology as a subject for their future career tell about the situation of that time. Sometimes it’s the smallest decision that can change your life forever. But the question, has the decision been taken by you alone, or someone in your family or relative or friend helped you to take a firm decision in selecting anthropology as a subject for higher studies. The autobiographies presented in the volume answer this specifically, in most cases.

Let me present what some authors have said about it.

Prof. R. K. Mutatkar (b. 1936, Gwalior), after graduation in social sciences 1957, was recommended by Dr B. N. Ganguly (Director, Delhi School of Economics) to join anthropology at Sagar. Dr Leela Dube invited him to join anthropology at Sagar University, where Dr S. C. Dube was the first Professor. In 1960 he joined as lecturer in cultural/social anthropology at the University of Poona, located at Deccan College Postgraduate Research Institute. He has briefly presented about his contribution in the various fields of anthropology in his article (pp. 12-24) titled—*Practicing Anthropology as a Vocation*.

Prof. Rajat Kanti Das writes, “I took anthropology as a subject at the B.Sc. level in Cotton College, Gauhati, after I was denied admission in the Dibrugarh Medical College on the ground that I was underage. .... Now, after associating myself with anthropology for about six decades, I could at least realize its importance and the questions it is capable of asking that are of crucial importance in the context of varied human existence which is becoming more and more problematic day by day. All these aspects he discusses briefly in his article (pp. 25-36) titled—*My Almost Lifelong Association with Anthropology: A Late Realization about Anthropology’s Range of Influence*.

Dr S. B. Chakraborty writes in his article (pp. 37-41) on *My Autobiography*—“When we migrated to Calcutta (now Kolkata) in India from Dhaka in the then East Pakistan.... sometimes in the year 1950, we had no shelter of our own.” He obtained B.Sc. degree in 1963 with subjects as botany, zoology and anthropology as the combination. Thus, anthropology was not a new stream for him when he took up anthropology for his postgraduate studies. He obtained M.Sc. degree in Anthropology in the year 1966 with specialization in cultural anthropology. He concluded in his autobiography—“Before I entered into the discipline of anthropology at the graduate level, I got fascinated in the political ideology of dialectical materialism which seeks explanation of every social formation and transformation in a historical context. My formal training in anthropology especially in its fieldwork tradition, added one direct link of coming close and knowing the people *in situ* based on structure-functional approach. This helped

me a lot in understanding the human interactions and their intricate networks”. He did extensive studies on the agrarian situations in India, when he was in Anthropological Survey of India.

Prof. Ranjana Ray, writes in her article (pp. 67-79) *An Anthropologist by Choice*—“My father and Dr B. S. Guha, the famous anthropologist played a major role for me to take up anthropology. My father was neither an anthropologist nor famous but his influence was great in choosing of a career” (p. 67). Principal of Lady Brabourne College Dr Rama Choudhury, at that time had suggested her that she may take anthropology as honours subject. Prof. Ranjana Ray further writes, “I had found Hooton’s *Up from the Ape* book in our college library. A look into its pages made me decide to go for Anthropology” (p. 68). Thus, for her we find the road is straight, only miles and miles to go. She took prehistoric archaeology as a special paper for Master’s degree, and extensively contributed her research findings in Indian archaeology and related aspects, since she joined as a lecturer in the Anthropology Department of the University of Calcutta in 1974.

Prof. Kishore K. Basa did his M.A. in history specializing in Ancient Indian History and Archaeology from the University of Delhi in 1979. In 1980 he was appointed as a lecturer in prehistoric archaeology in the Anthropology Department of Utkal University. He writes in his article (p. 103-104), “I won Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellowship at Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge during 1999-2000 and .... carried out my research on *Social Theory and Indian Archaeology: A Historiographical Study*. .... I became a professor in 2001.....”. Apart from archaeological studies, Prof. Basa was Director of two leading Museums in India, IGRMS in Bhopal, and Indian Museum, Kolkata. He has many publications relating to museum studies. Prof. Basa concludes in his essay (pp.102-116), “*Traversing from History to Archaeology, Anthropology, and Museum Studies*”, that “archaeology was the link between history I studied as a student and the discipline of anthropology I carried out as my profession” (p.115).

Prof. Subhadra Mitra Channa remembers growing up in a house of books. Her father was a professor of English literature and passionately fond of books,

they lived in a bungalow in University of Delhi campus. She did her schooling in a Missionary School in 1950s-60s and loved biology, and had wished to join medical. But her mother, she says—"thought the regime was too harsh for a delicate girl like me" (p. 141). Though finally she graduated from Delhi with B.Sc. (Hons) in Physics, but she did not wish to continue further. Professor Subhadra writes, "My father too had realized that I was not meant for the hard sciences. He then suggested me I do anthropology. ....I had not heard of this subject. From his vast library, my father chose several books, .... I was delighted. The subject seemed very absorbing and .....close to literature. ... My father spoke to Prof. I. P. Singh, who had been his former student. I was admitted and soon found out that I was doing a subject close to my heart" (pp. 141-142). At the end Professor Subhadra writes, "Over the many years of my professional life, I have published and researched on a variety of topics and issues. But throughout my academic life, I have been an involved scholar, one who never deviated away from a critical perspective" (pp. 145).

Professor P. C. Joshi born in a hill village of Uttarakhand in the district of Almora writes in his article (pp.187-197), *My Anthropological Voyage*, "...I passed my higher secondary examination (*year not mentioned*) .... Since I could not get into pre-medical, I decided to go for B.Sc. .... A clerk at the science faculty suggested that I may take anthropology which was offered as honours course which I accepted, although, I must admit that I had heard of anthropology for the first time in my life. I later discovered that this subject was most appropriate to my taste and interest" (p. 187-188). Prof. Joshi writes, "My field work has mostly been confined to Central Himalayan polyandrous community known as Khasa of Jaunsar-Bawar, one of the most studied communities by University of Delhi and Lucknow University" (p. 189). Prof. Joshi got his first job as lecturer in anthropology in Garhwal University (now H. N. B. Garhwal University) where he stayed for about twelve years. He started his "journey of teaching with two students only", and within three years "made anthropology popular by regularly hosting conferences and seminars" (p. 192). Prof. Joshi writes, "I started my serious research career by learning about the health-related beliefs and practices", when he

moved to a neuro-psychiatric teaching hospital in Delhi (Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences) (*year no mentioned*) for Associate Professorship in Medical Anthropology. Prof. Joshi further writes, "I joined the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi as professor of social anthropology in the year 2003 .....The idea to work in the area of medical anthropology was incidentally given to me by Professor Bhattacharya who thought this subfield of anthropology needs to be explored" (p. 193).

Professor Abhijit Guha in his article (pp. 225-234) titled "*The Journey of an Accidental Anthropologist: A Memoir*" narrates the story of his induction into anthropology through a series of accidental incidents. "These accidental incidents included my encounters with the Adivasis living around my own university campus .....Vidyasagar University campus. Another accident was my chance meeting with a peasant leader fighting against governmental land grab in the vicinity of Medinipur town for industrialization. On the hindsight, I view these accidents crucial to my career as an anthropologist to which I look back as an unending auto-ethnographic journey" (p. 225). Prof. Guha writes (p. 228), "My anthropological journey began in 1974 when I had to opt for an honours course at the undergraduate level at the University of Calcutta since I could not get a chance in any popular science subject with my kind of school leaving marks. ....I later felt and still feel that it was a blessing in disguise. One of my brilliant friends who chose to study economics suggested me to take anthropology....It was an accident and I am still grateful to him" (p. 228). Prof. Guha further states (p. 230), "My real interest in anthropology began on bio-social studies (Kroeber's "no man's land") under the influence of Professor D. P. Mukherjee ... during early 1980s." Prof. Guha states specifically that he learnt two important lessons from his excursions into bio-social studies and kinship which were: (i) Indian anthropologists should not remain successful "apprentices" of their Western masters, and (ii) we should concentrate more on the non-traditional and policy focused problems under interdisciplinary frameworks. Prof. Guha joined Vidyasagar University in December 1985. And he writes (p.230), "The unique location and cultural milieu of Vidyasagar University provided me the

opportunity and I plunged into a no man's land which of course was not envisaged by Kroeber."

This interesting book presents 'autobiographies' of some Indian anthropologists. Autobiographies usually follow a timeline, starting with the author's birth or early childhood and progressing through their life, offering a first-person perspective on their journey, thoughts, and emotions. Most autobiographies are typically written later in the author's life, and often highlight important milestones, challenges, and turning points in the author's life. In this volume the editors have specifically asked the authors to present—"narratives on the circumstances and situation making people pursuing anthropology as a career choice amidst a galaxy of popularly known and socially reputable subjects" (p. ix). Thus, in strict sense, this volume is more a 'memoir' (collection of

memories) than an autobiography (autobiographies). Some of the articles are very informative and lively, as I find Prof. Subhadra Mitra Channa has presented a lively account of her journey into anthropology; and the 'memoir' of Prof. Abhijit Guha's journey; many other authors have presented their articles in an interesting way. The 'autobiographies' presented in this volume have given interesting insights into the changing facets, several avenues, newer directions in the study of human population groups socially, culturally and biologically, encompassing political and economic dimensions of the people in many cases.

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**HOME HEALTH CARE FOR GERIATRICS: CHALLENGES, EXPERIENCES AND WELLNESS.** By Ramandeep Bawa and A. K. Sinha. pp. xx+364, figures, plates, tables, maps, index, 2025. Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd.: New Delhi. Hard cover. Price: ₹1400/-

The authors of this hard bound volume on home health care states—"The lack of health care for the elderly is a matter of grave concern. The state of the elderly in the country is such that they are without any social or healthy safety nets in the sunset years of their lives. Among this section the most deprived are the ones who are bedbound or in need of home care round the clock" (p.vi). In the world of home care, the caregivers, also known by other titles such as personal care assistants, or general duty assistants, and nursing staffs play a key role in nurturing the health and well-being of individuals in need.

In this volume on 'Home Health Care for Geriatrics' Dr Ramandeep Bawa and Dr A. K. Sinha have presented their studies focusing on the experiences of home care workers, the emotional stress that they face at their work place, the conditions under which they perform their duty and the support they receive from the clients, their family members and agencies, etc. These have been discussed through the eight chapters as follows: 1. Home Health Care for the Elderly People; 2. Literature Review: Elderly Health,

Illnesses and Home Health Care Services; 3. Research Methodology: Approaches and Techniques; 4. Home Care Staff, their Adjustments and Challenges at Workplace; 5. Voices from the Field: Job Experiences of Nurses and General Duty Assistants; 6. Patient Demographic and their Underlying Challenges; 7. Understanding the Lifestyle Adopted by Patients and their Care Providers to Cope up with the Disease; and lastly, 8. Summar and Conclusions. The volume contains 25 plates showing photographs of different situations in health care practices of elderly people, 44 tables, 39 figures and 2 maps. (In chapter 7, it should be *Cope with not Cope up*)

The research study was conducted at the home care agencies and hospitals in Chandigarh, SAS Nagar (Mohali), and at Panchkula. The researchers visited various agencies and hospitals that provided home care services. The unit of the study were nursing supervisors, nursing staffs, general duty assistants, patients and their family caregivers. The family caregivers were interviewed in order to gather required information about the patients. Three interview schedules were developed with the help of the information collected through the pilot study and secondary sources. The fieldwork was carried out for 12 months in four phases, during September 2020 to October 2021. The authors conducted their study based on the sample size of 55 nursing staff, 55 general

duty assistants, 40 patients, 40 family caregivers. A total of 190 respondents were thus interviewed for the study. The sampling was carried out in stages. The authors followed the technique of purposive sampling, snowball sampling and focused group interview methods for their research study.

The authors open the summary and conclusion part of their study with the statement of Ronald Reagan —*We can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone*, and concludes that “Elderly people in India are at a disadvantageous position as compared to other countries in terms of geriatric specialist, health care and insurance benefits. However, it is important for every country to reassess and redesign its health care system to cope with the challenges put forward by demographic and financial variables” (p. 318-319). The authors further conclude, “In the present study, 67.5 per cent were suffering from the disease of the endocrine system (Diabetes mellitus), 60 per cent were suffering from the diseases of the nervous system (Alzheimer, Parkinson, paralytic attack), 32.5 per cent of the respondents were living with Neoplastic diseases (means conditions that causes tumor growth), an equal percentage (32.5%) were suffering from diseases of circulatory system (heart disease). The patients were also found to be suffering from cancer of the brain, bones, lungs, breast in females, and prostate cancer in case of males. About 22.5 per cent of the respondents were suffering from Musculoskeletal diseases such as injury and fracture. There were 17.5 per cent of the respondents who had open wounds or have developed bedsores as a part of their disease. 7.5 percent were suffering from the disease of the skin and about 5 per cent were suffering from respiratory diseases such as asthma, lung cancer,

chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD). .... However, majority of the patients were cared by their daughter's and son's (50%), while 27.5 per cent were cared by their spouses. However, 15 per cent were cared by their relatives (such as their sisters, daughter-in-law, brothers). Just meagre percentage (7.5%) of them were cared by their paid help as their immediate families have shifted abroad” (p. 320).

The authors found, ....”52.5 per cent of the patient faced problems with the caregiver work, as it was investigated from in-depth interviews that few of the caregivers used to talk on phone all the time; they were not ready to wash patient's clothes and change diapers ..., and were reluctant in changing patient diapers as they believed that changing diapers is the work of home care aides. Even few of the home health care aides were inexperienced and untrained, which has led to adverse problems in patients” (p. 320).

The present research study by the authors on the health care services provided by the home health aides and the socio-medical perspective of patients receiving care at home, and the well-documented presentation of the study deserves much appreciation, though based on a small sample of 40 patients and their home care agencies. The reviewer has a feeling that there was a need for thorough language editing before sending the volume to the press for publication. However, students interested in home health care practices and medical anthropological aspects would find this book much helpful for their research studies.

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