

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Adolescent Girl - An Indian Prespective**

Edited by Sunil Mehra

*MAMTA, New Delhi (1995)*

This edited volume contains first hand information on wide and diverse aspects of the adolescent Indian girls with eleven contributions, followed by a concluding section and an appendix.

In the Introduction, the editor modestly states the paucity of literature on the Indian adolescents and therefore the book has dealt with various aspects like, physical growth, nutrition, health, psychosocial behaviour, education etc. Such a statement is imperative as many articles in this book are not based on empirical data. The first article is C. Gopalan's well known reprinted paper, which illustrates poorer nutritional status of the women by citing evidences from i) an increase in low birth weight babies, ii) lack of secular trend in growth and adult height, iii) increased incidence of adolescent and teenage pregnancy due to early marriage, iv) inadequate antenatal care and support to the nursing mothers, and v) predominance of diseases like anemia and endemic goitre. For implementing any developmental programme on women, the author recommends inclusion of women in all administrative points starting from the block levels. The author establishes that education and economic liberty to the women should be the important basis for undertaking any developmental programme on them. Shanti Ghose rightly designates the period of adolescence as nobody's baby and points out the inadequacies in research on this period of life, specially from India. She emphasizes the need for undertaking multidisciplinary research covering the important areas like nutrition, health and psychosocial behaviour. Agarwal presents height, weight and menarche data of the Indian Girls and compares it with Dutch girls. As expected, poor growth performance of the Indian Girls has been attributed to the nutritional

deprivation. However, role of genetic factors should have also been mentioned in making such a comparative analysis. Misra et al. presented data on physical growth, sexual maturity, haematology, nutrition and knowledge about reproductive health status of the adolescent girls. The study reveals that the girls enter puberty with chronic undernutrition, anemia and vitamin A deficiency and they are more vulnerable to diseases like tuberculosis, AIDS, etc. The author strongly feels that as one of the preventive measures, education of the adolescent girls should be given the highest priority to develop their health awareness. The author also recommends late marriage and awareness about the family planning as the measures of development. In a cross-sectional study, such as the present one, the term "velocity of growth" should have been avoided which is essentially used in longitudinal studies. Goswami indicates the ignorance of the rural adolescent girls about their onset of menstruation as well as the consequences of early pregnancy. The author examines different Maternal Child Health (MCH) Programmes, implemented by the GOI and point out their shortcomings, the important being womens inaccessibility to different aspects of the programme. To achieve success in the MCH programme, the author recommends social educational and economic empowerment of women. Geeta Sethi warns about the grave consequences of the health of the adolescent girls, exposed to unprotected sex, particularly by the HIV infected male. As a precautionary measure the author suggests sex education to the girls. The article is extremely relevant in the context of the increased incidence of HIV infection, reported in the country. Sunil Mehra's interview based study covers several topics on the adolescent girls and their parents. 163 parents were interviewed for i) aspirations, ii) daily routine, iii) vocational training, iv) attitude to women health, v) anemia, vi) malnourishment, vii) diarrreal disease, viii) puberty, and 225 girls

were interviewed for i) aspirations, ii) marriage, iii) daily routine, iv) employment, and earnings v) vocational training, vi) knowhow and social responsibility, vii) eating habits, viii) knowledge of pregnancy, child care and health problems and ix) awareness of physical changes due to puberty. This chapter contains wealth of data but unfortunately inadequately analysed. Rama Baru has noticed that in the rural areas, the role of the girls as adolescent remain virtually ignored because they assume their adult roles quite early due to their early marriage. Such premature acceptance eventually distorts their personality, which in turn develops, a poor self image. From the psychological point of view, the author's observation is undoubtedly original. Arunduti Misra points out the ignorance of the rural and tribal girls in maintaining health of their reproductive tracts during the period of menstruation. Moreover, additional pressure, imposed on them, due to various socio-cultural taboos, lead to different types of infection during this period which affects their reproductive health. Arya and Subramaniam report several case studies on psychosocial disorder of the adolescent girls from the upper middle class families, like suicidal tendencies, sexual abuse etc. As one of the authors is a practicing psychotherapist, an extremely useful list of behavioural problems of the adolescent girl is also provided. Das and Mohanty remind the consequences of female illiteracy on their overall physical and cultural developments. The authors provide relevant figures on female literacy rate in different states, the highest being in Kerala (75.36%) and the lowest in Rajasthan (16.59%). According to 1991 census, the female literacy rate in rural India is 25.13% but, in urban, it has noticeably improved (54%) although the pooled figure is not very encouraging (39%). However, the rate for gross enrollment in both primary and secondary education show a progressive rise. Finally, the author enlists the major socioeconomic and cultural constraints that affects education of the adolescent girls. The concluding chapter, entitled "Scheme

for adolescent girls under the Government of India" States that in the ICDS programme, the adolescent girls have been included with a number of purposes like: a) to improve health and nutritional status of the girls; b) to provide them literary and numerary skills through nonformal system of education; c) to train and equip the girls in order to improve and upgrade home based skills and d) to promote awareness of health, hygiene, nutrition, family welfare, home management and child care. Two independent schemes, one for the girls aged 11-15 years and the other for the girls aged 15-18 years, have been formulated for execution through the Mahila Mandal and the Anganwadi Programme of the ICDS. The appendix entitled, "Interesting information", provides seven useful and important demographic tables, namely, vital rates, infant mortality rates, literacy rates, key indicator of womens status, gross enrollment ratios in elementary education and school drop-out rates in different states.

In view of the paucity of studies on the adolescent girls and their future role as mothers, the editor has done a commendable job in bringing out this edited volume. The volume, it is hoped, will inspire scientists from different disciplines to initiate research in several areas identified by various contributors. The book has brought together many relevant as well as important issues on which special care should be given before implementing any development programmes on the adolescent girls. It is highly noteworthy that in most of the papers, the suggestions and recommendation given in the conclusion pertain to education, economic liberty and social empowerment of the women. Refreshingly the book contains only a very few technical terms. Therefore, it will be extremely useful to the planners, social workers and the NGOs, who primarily involved in the developmental programmes for the adolescent girls.

**Parasmani Dasgupta**  
*Anthropology and Human Genetics Unit,  
 Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta 700 035,  
 West Bengal, India*



**South Asian Studies (Volume 11)**  
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This is the annual report published by the Society for South Asian Studies established in London in 1985. It is aimed to promote study and research in history, antiquities, art and culture of South Asia. Numerous Scholars spread over both the hemispheres have taken interest in South Asian Studies and have contributed pioneering analysis on their areas of interest in the past. These include names like Tucci, Taddei, Dallapiccola and F  rer-Haimendorf among many others. Unfortunately such works remain scattered in various languages in such diverse section as art and architecture on the one hand and cultural anthropology on the other. This 10 years young Journal, it can be hoped, will help us pave a way towards giving birth to a new and consolidated subject of South Asian Studies in primary institutions of the world. Probably a slightly more emphasis on ethnography would make it complete and relevant for understanding art and culture.

The present volume contains 14 research reports and 4 book reviews. Derek Linstrum discusses the contribution of Lord Curzon preserving the pelthora of Mughal and Rajput architecture in India. Frederick M. Asher, an accomplished authority in Art history, now pays attention to the Artists of Jaipur (Patharkatis). It is an interesting shift which can solve many unsolved issues in dealing with ancient Indian traditions of art. Who creates the styles of representations of say the facial details in gods and apsaras. How does a change come in these Traditions of styles. What are the roles of market and buyers in establishing such traditions and many other related questions can be addressed in such studies. Asher does tackle some of these questions in this article. Richard Solomon studies the inscriptions found on the lid of a Buddhist relic bowl of stone. This is written in Gandhari Prakrit and Kharosthi script during the time of Vishnuvarma of 1st century B.C.

Ranabir Chakravarti re-studies the donative records in the caves discovered earlier by N.P. Chakravarty from Rewa in Madhya Pradesh. The present article uses these inscriptions to hypothesise the possible penetration of Gangetic merchants to the Deccan. Fynes analyses the religious patronage of the Satavahanas in the western flanks of Deccan India. He demonstrates, the secular attitude of this state towards Brahmins, Buddhists and also possibly Jain traders, craftsmen and citizenenes. G.A. Bailey discusses the role of the Jesuits in the royal administrations of the independent kingdoms of medieval India. The role of the Portugese doctor Pedro da Silva in the court of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of Jaipur (1686-1743) is particularly fascinating and provides enormously significant source material for the historians. Cooper describes a large number of art executed in tiles in the seventeenth century Lahore Fort. It is a very detailed report and deserves all praises for noting significant attributes of these art executions. Tanvir Hasan describes the clay tiles, terracottas, and glazed ornaments of the Sultanate India. It is a very important typotechnological study which attempts at broad periodization and chronology of development. N.F. Howard report the fortified palaces of upper Kullu belonging to 16th to 17th century A.D. It is a new area of archeological survey and throws a great deal of light on primary data from this region. Shokoohy studies the epitaphs of Kayalpatnam found in Tamil Nadu. He surveys a number of old mosques in the town of Kayalpatnam found in Tamil Nadu which are dated from 14th Century onwards. He surveys the epitaph stones of the graveyards found attached to these mosques. Dilip K. Chakravarty reports a survey conducted by him in South Bihar. This is co-authored by four more scholars which include Ajit Prasad, S.K. Jha, K. Anand and R.K. Chattopadhyay. This records some antiquities as also a list of sites. Many of these sites have already been described and discussed at length by their original discoverers. However, the icons represented (some from

their local museums) are merely for recording details and the authors do not pursue any specific questions through these surveys. Bridget Allchin reports the result of the Potwar project undertaken with partial funding of the society for South Asian Studies. Bridget Allchin reports the findings of this project as the joint director of the British Archaeological Mission to Pakistan and director of this project.

The last project included in this issue is very significant historical issue related to the development of cotton technology. It is a review of the archaeological evidences showing the utilization of textile in the South Asia carried out by R.C. Janaway and R.A.E. Coningham. For this purpose they studied the metallic content available in the remains of textile material recovered from South Asia. It is an important problem and probably requires more intensive investigation by future archaeologists - which

so far has received scant attention from traditional archaeologists. Finally a note on Maritime research in India by Sean McGrail who details some of the works done in this field so far. These are followed by book reviews on Blurton's book on Hindu Art (1992, London), Anamika Roy's *Amaravati Stupa* (1994, New Delhi), Milada Ganguli's *Naga Art* (1993, New Delhi) and Siran Deraniyagala's *The Prehistory of Sri Lanka* (1992, Colombo).

The diverse areas focussed in this Journal throws light on the wide areas of involvement of this very important society. The production is excellent and few printers' devils which have escaped scrutiny can be overlooked because of the extremely diverse areas that one has to deal with.

**D.K. Bhattacharya**

*Department of Anthropology,  
University of Delhi, Delhi 110 007, India*