

SANSKRITI NEWS

(North Eastern Institute of Culture & Religion)

Annual Issue January 2010

A. Origins

SANSKRITI, the North Eastern Institute of Culture and Religion, Guwahati is a research centre in Anthropology, Folklore and Sociology. It was founded in 2006 by Divine Word Society (SVD), and K. Jose SVD, a Life Member of *ANTHROPOS* International Research Team is appointed as its first director. This society is well known around the globe for its contributions to the field of Anthropology through ethnographic and cultural studies. Over the years the Faculty members of *Sanskriti* have done primary research on people of North East India with special reference to Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. A number of research papers are published by its faculty members in the leading journals and books.

This Institute has been hosting regional and national seminars and workshops on different subjects related to the cultures and religions of the people of North East India. In the first stages of this institute there was no built up structure of its own. The contacts with various research institutions and universities in North East India were undertaken from a rented house, a part of Lakshmi Bhavan C/o Mr. Narayan Bhaishya and later on Anusuya Apartments, both in Lonkeshwar near Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam. From October 2008 we have shifted our residence and office to Goral Village, Bhattapara, SOS Village (Airport) Road – 2 kilometers from Dharapur on the way to Palashbar

B. SVD Anthropological Pursuits

It is a well-established fact that SVD International Society from the time of its founder Arnold Janssen gave adequate importance to the intellectual pursuits including study of natural sciences. Arnold positively promoted social sciences, reading the signs of the times. We are blessed with many stalwarts in Anthropology and Ethnology as pioneers of primary research, documentation, library and publications. *SANSKRITI* as an Institute is primarily doing research on the cultures and religions of the people of North East India. Following the great traditions of late Dr. Wilhelm Schmidt SVD the founder of Anthropos Institute, Germany and his long time collaborators in SVD and other academic fraternity, and late Dr. (Prof.) Stephen Fuchs

SVD the founder of Institute of Indian Culture, Mumbai and a number of renowned faculty members and great stalwarts like Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil SDB of Guwahati and others we hope to establish this Institute for scientific study of the people with special reference to this region.

North-East India has a marked individuality and uniqueness of its own. It is a miniature India – an epitome of the subcontinent. It is a paradise and an anthropological as well as a folkloristic storehouse where we can witness the beauty and variety of India. The people of this area are mainly of Mongoloid race. On the basis of certain commonalities like socio-cultural similarity, linguistic affinity, ethnic affiliation

and common territory, these ethnic communities are conveniently divided and settled in different regions. Christianity in this part of India has the history of more than a century. The Christian values and principles, ethics and morality have certainly influenced the people of North-east India. The hard work that is put in by the various missionary Congregations are really commendable. Divine Word Society members are working in North East India for the past several years. In the year 1992 they reached Tripura and contributed for primary

evangelization, education, social empowerment, seminary formation, biblical and ecumenical works. In 1995 they undertook similar initiatives in the far-flung mountainous terrains of Arunachal Pradesh, the land of the dawn-lit mountains. In 2005 Anthropological research had its humble beginnings together with our involvement in primary education in a couple of places in Assam. And it was in 2008 that we reached out to Meghalaya with our educational missionary outreach programme.

C. Vision of *Sanskriti*

From its inception *Sanskriti* works with a vision towards providing reliable and researched data on Cultures, Religions and Society as a whole with special reference to North East India with an aim to promote a just, peace loving and humane society. In this effort we net work with other research institutions, universities, NGOs and Government departments to preserve, promote and disseminate various cultures through research, documentation and publications on languages, fine arts, cultural symbols, indigenous knowledge systems of people to promote development in view of socio-cultural, economic, political and religious advancement of people. The main objective of this institute is to disseminate and advance knowledge by providing quality, data based research/ facilities in such branches of social sciences which may play a positive role in the socio-economic, cultural and religious development of the people

of North East India. We are sure that a blending of proper and appropriate technologies and intellectual pursuits with the natural resources and ethnic wealth of the region can promote human development and economic advancement par excellence. As we have undertaken efforts to net-work with other like minded organizations and individuals within the next couple of years time we hope to establish a mini museum, reference library, publish bi-yearly news letters, yearly research journal, a couple of one day consultations on major issues pertaining to our region including identifying research priorities of the region, publishing of occasional papers by the faculty and an yearly national seminar on one of the most current theme suggested by the faculty and approved by the governing body members. The proceedings of the seminars are to be published in to comprehensive volumes in English.

D. Faculty and Honorary Members

The following members are currently the faculty members of the institute. Some of them are Foundation Fellows, others Fellows and yet others are Research Fellows, Associate Members and Collaborators, who collaborate with this institute based on the specific

programme and the faculties' field of specialization. We have also plan to include a couple of members in each academic year with special reference to anthropology, folklore, sociology, history, philosophy, political science, and other related social science disciplines.

1. Prof. Birinchi K. Medhi
2. Dr. R.P. Athparia
3. Dr. Gautam K. Bera
4. Fr. K. Jose SVD
5. Fr. Cyprian Pinto SVD
6. Dr. Prabin Chandra Das
7. Dr. Luke Daimary

8. Shri. Rajib Chatterjee
9. Fr. John Bosco SVD
10. Fr. Manoj Antony SVD
11. Sr. Janet Tellis SSps
12. Shri. Nabajit Deka
13. Smt. Binita Basu
14. Smt. Padmakshi Kakoti

E. Major Undertakings

In the year **2007** we organized a three day **National Seminar on Tribes & Castes of North East India from Nov. 23-25**. The venue was North Eastern Diocesan Social Forum, Kharghuli. In all more than 65 members including a handful of SVDs/SSpS participated and presented papers. Members from Anthropological Survey of India, Shillong also participated and presented papers. The Major thrust of the seminar was an in-depth study on some of the various indigenous communities in North East India with special reference to various cultural changes taking place among them and how they cope up with the aspirations to be relevant to the modern trends in society. Many anthropologists and folklorists and other social scientists collaborate and net-work with us in our research pursuits. Based on this seminar we have brought out a book titled ***Tribes of North East India: Issues and Challenges***.

In the year **2008**, from 28th to 30th November, we organized a three day **Regional Seminar cum Workshop** in Tripura with the theme **Tribal development in Tripura: People's Participation, NGOs and Government** as the key theme of the two day deliberations. The venue of this programme was ASHA, Holy Cross, Agartala. About 45 scholars including Tripura University and the Tribal Research Institute in Agartala together with a number of professors and scholars have presented papers. This way we as an NGO expressed our commitment for the welfare and development of people of the state with special reference to the indigenous population of Tripura. We also hope to invite other agencies and scholars to participate in the aspirations of the people in a much focused way. This will also be an occasion for us to build up data-base on the people of the state. The proceedings of this seminar was edited and brought out a book titled ***Tribal Development in Tripura***.

In the year **2009** we organized a three day **National Seminar on Social Unrest and Peace Initiatives in North East India, from 20 – 22 November 09**. The venue was Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati. This theme was chosen by our team of Scholars and Anthropologists most specifically because of

the violent instances of turbulence experienced by the people of the region in the last couple of years. Many Anthropologists and other social scientists consider that People's movements in search of identity, human rights and dignity for a prolonged period of time must usher in positive results. This is to say Peace with Justice is imperative for any individual and society to flourish and grow. Among the people of North East India this journey took quite a long and arduous path treading through unknown paths with much turbulence and desperation. It is a very well known fact that since time unknown human society among various communities has experienced unrest in many forms, many of which led to social, cultural, political, economic, historical transformation in different societies. These voices of protest were raised at different levels, viz. intra community level, inter community level, territorial level, regional level or even national level. Keeping in mind the author of 'Rebellious Prophets', we also had the first (Prof.) Stephen Fuchs SVD Memorial Lecture delivered by Prof. S.M. Michael SVD. We have brought together the Anthropologists and other Social Scientists, Administrators, Writers, Activists, Government agencies and NGO's on a common platform to share their experiences and ideas. We believe such an exercise has generated fruitful debate on the ground realities and the process of nurturing peace, understanding people's aspirations in a broader frame work, and learning vital lessons in accepting cultural differences etc. will become a possibility and a reality. The major papers of this national seminar are being edited by us and will be published in to a comprehensive volume titled **Social Unrest and Peace Initiatives: Perspectives from North East India**.

Forthcoming National Seminar

**Concept of God and Religion:
Traditional Thought and
Contemporary Society
Nov. 19-21, 2010, Agartala, TRIPURA**

F. Research Coordinating Committee

In 2009 NEICR has recognized three well known anthropologists of North East India as Foundation Fellows of the Institute who will also act as the members of the Research Coordinating Committee which will be headed by the Director of *SANSKRITI*. We are happy to announce that **Prof. Birinchi K. Medhi, Dr. R.P. Athparia and Dr. Gautam Kumar Bera**

are the *SANSKRITI* Foundation Fellows; and in the National Seminar in November 2010 four emerging scholars will be elected *Sanskriti* Fellows of the Institute. They will also assist in the various ongoing research projects, look after the academic affairs of the Institute from time to time, and also assist the Director in other academic affairs.

G. Ownership of the Institute

Sanskriti is owned by **SVD Society** which has its North Eastern Regional Office at Goral, Bhattapara, SOS (Airport) Road. The Director is appointed by the Society and all the major decisions of the Institute regarding

appointment of personnel, finance and all other clauses mentioned in the by-laws of the institute have to be approved by the Governing Body of the Society.

H. Research Thrust

Cultures & Religions
Cultural Symbols
Cultural Change
Languages
Peace Studies
Folklore of Ethnic Communities

Tribal Studies
Indigenous Resource Management
Social Unrest
Endangered Cultures
Development Studies

I. Special Lectures

The year **2008** being the centennial year of **Stephen Fuchs SVD** this institute organized **Memorial Lecture** in honour of him and an award was instituted as a tribute to this renowned scholar of Anthropology. In the year **2008** this award was given to **Prof. S. M. Michael SVD** an eminent Anthropologist from Mumbai University who also delivered a Memorial Lecture. In the year **2009** **Dr. Gautam Kumar Bera** a well known anthropologist from Agartala was the recipient

of this award and he in turn delivered a memorial lecture. These lectures are ordinarily delivered by a renowned scholar who has contributed substantially to research in social science disciplines preferably in Anthropology, Folklore or Sociology. For the year **2010** we have planned to organize **Foundation Day Lecture** and **Mother Teresa Centenary Lecture** in our National Seminar. There are also plans to organize occasional scholarly lectures based on the current topics of interest.

J. Seminars and Workshops

This Institute organizes one annual National Seminar and a couple of one day workshops and consultations of timely importance. All the seminars are partially sponsored by various social science research institutions of national standing. Any contributions received from any quarters are

duly acknowledged. This also is part of our net working with agencies and collaborators so that we share our resources in a broader framework of North East India. So far 2 volumes have been jointly edited and published by renowned publishers of Delhi and Guwahati and one

comprehensive volume based on the recently concluded national seminar is in the press.

K. Sustainability

Within the next three years of our work we will be able to document some data on the people of North East India. SVD Anthropological Initiatives which began in a small way under the banner of **SANSKRITI** will train a number of field staff in all the eight states of North East India beginning with the four states where we are working now; namely Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura. We will also make use of our documentation and research data to be published

into small booklets dealing with various themes such as – peace initiatives, development themes, folklore, cultures and religions, life events and feasts, cultural symbols, languages, indigenous resource management, museum concept in education etc... We, surely desire to invite government and other non-government agencies to support our projects. This will evidently demonstrate the sustainability of our anthropological initiatives for the greater cause of human welfare.

L. Conclusion

The target group of this programme titled **SVD Anthropological Pursuits** is the people of the eight states of North East India. This region is the unique homeland for a large number of indigenous as well as various migrant communities. Any meaningful engagement to make a positive and lasting contribution to the people will give us a fair knowledge of the area which are similar in many ways yet, much unique in various ways. As North East India consists of vast expanse of land and the communication net works are far from satisfactory we will have to incur a substantial amount of finance on travel and transportation.

However, we aim to make all efforts to select and train committed field staff, area supervisors and research coordinators who are highly motivated having missionary spirit. We as an NGO will focus on data collection with a specific objective of empowering the peoples and cultures. Your support in carrying on such an initiative will go a long way in gathering of Anthropological data and dissemination of knowledge on Cultures and Religions, side by side enhance goodwill, peace & development among the people of North East India. We are ever grateful to you for the help and support and your interest in our research pursuits.

Forthcoming Seminars/Research Projects

1. **Concept of God and Religion: Traditional thought and Contemporary Society (2010).**
2. Status of Endangered Dialects in North East India

3. Indigenous Resource Management: Perspectives from Tribal Cultures in N. E. India
4. Anthropological Research in India: Issues and Perspectives

Snippets

Occasional papers from Sanskriti: This Institute is planning to bring out a number of research papers pertaining to timely themes. If you have an original paper written in the light of current anthropological data your write up may be published under the title “occasional papers”.

K. Jose SVD, Director, has been announced as a full time **Honorary Member of Anthropos International Research Team, Germany.**

Dr. G. K. Bera’s books on Nirmal Kumar Bose & Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy released.

Book on *Tribes of North East India: Issues and Challenges* released.

Book on *Tribal Development in Tripura* released.

Book on Social Unrest and Peace Initiatives: Perspectives from North East India (in press).

Proposed Net-Working Organisations

Universities in North East India
Social Science Research Institutes of North East India
Tribal Research Institutes of North East India
Institute of Indian Culture, Mumbai
Anthropos International, Sankt Augustin, Germany
Nanzen Institute of Folklore Studies, Nagoya, Japan
Malanesian Institute, Papua New Guinea.

OBITUARY



CLAUDE LEVI-STRAUSS (1908 – 2009)

By

Gautam Kumar Bera

SANSKRITI Foundation Fellow &

Fr. (Prof.) Stephen Fuchs Memorial Awardee, 2009, NEICR, Guwahati

Claude Lévi-Strauss, the French anthropologist, considered to be the father of modern anthropology and one of France's most revered and influential intellectuals, who transformed Western understanding of what was once called 'primitive man' and who towered over the French intellectual scene in the 1960s and '70s, died on 31st October, 2009, in Paris, a few weeks before attaining his 101st birthday. Considered to be the most influential exponent of *structural anthropology*, the title of a collection of his papers published in 1963, his seminal appearance is credited with the outstanding paper on 'social structure' (1953) and his book *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, first published in 1949, which dealt with kinship organization. Nevertheless, despite his close familiarity with this field, Lévi-Strauss's interests were more psychological than sociological. It is apparent from his statement

'ethnology is first of all psychology' that appeared in the work *La Pensée Sauvage*, which was later translated into English under the title *The Savage Mind* (1966). His interest in psychology did not concern the emotional aspects of personality that had been investigated by scholars in the field of culture-and-personality; rather, he dealt more with the cognitive process. Earlier in his work on kinship structure he devoted a chapter on child psychology in order to clarify the psychological basis for the idea of reciprocity. It later formed the main theme of *The Savage Mind*.

Today structuralism is an approach that is not limited to anthropology; rather, it has crossed all boundaries and has entered in the fields of sociology, mathematics, psychology and philosophy. But the main source of structuralism has been linguistics. Lévi-Strauss

compared his approach to ethnological data with the methods of structural linguistics that stress the study of the unconscious infrastructure underlying linguistic phenomena. He revealed the mental structures that underline human behaviour, which take the form of binary contrasts or oppositions. His effort to understand the inner logic of primitive thought led him to take a special interest in mythology. In an article titled 'The Culinary Triangle' (1966) he correlated cooking practices of a society with language, which contains certain structural oppositions like roasting and boiling. Not many of his theories were open to testing, but the above idea was put under investigation.

What exactly a myth is? To him, myth is a dialectical structure in which the opposed logical positions are stated. These oppositions are mediated by a restatement, which again, give rise to another kind of opposition which on its turn is mediated or resolved as process of continuity. The impact of the Hegelian dialectical models is certainly pronounced on such thought model but Levi-Strauss used this dialectic with a universal dimension. The opposition in human mind is a deep-rooted entity while the desire for resolution for conflict is also as great as the instinct to oppose. His scheme of dichotomies like the raw-and-cooked, culture-and-nature, sacred-and-profane, silence-and-noise, metaphor-and-metonym, all were put in a binary set of opposition. His legacy is imposing. His four volume work published under the title *Mythologiques* looks into the structure of native mythology in the Americas, attempting nothing less than an interpretation of the world of culture and custom, shaped by analysis of several hundred myths of little known tribes and traditions. These myths were pivotal in changing Western thinking about the so-called primitive societies. This tetralogy relates to the structure of mythologies and is a

seminal work on how to interpret custom and cultures in order to draw universal parallels.

It is said that when *Tristes Tropiques* was published, members of the jury of the Goncourt Prize, France's pre-eminent award for fiction announced that they regretted not being able to honour the writer because the book was not a novel. Essentially a memoir detailing his time as French expatriate throughout the 1930s, the book combined dazzling prose with audacious philosophical meditation and ethnographic analysis of the Amazonian peoples. The essence of Claude Levi-Strauss's work pertained to theories about commonalities between tribal and industrial societies. He maintained a distance between himself and active politics, except in his early years when he was a militant socialist. He was not like Sartre, Camus or Bourdieu who had political engagement.

By the 1980s, structuralism as imagined by Levi-Strauss had been displaced by other French thinkers who came to be known as poststructuralists namely, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida. They rejected the idea of timeless universals and argued that history and experience were far more important in shaping human consciousness than universal laws. Despite all these he was considered the most towering intellectual who was astonishingly erudite. During his long life he taught at various universities across the globe and held the coveted Chair in Social Anthropology at the College de France. He was conferred upon with honours that included doctorates from Harvard, Yale and Oxford Universities and in 1973 he was elected to France's prestigious *Academie Francaise*, the circle of writers and intellectuals known as the 'immortals', created in 1635 by Cardinal Richelieu.

May his immortal soul rest in peace.

BOOK REVIEW

Tribal Development in Tripura, Chief Editor: Gautam Kumar Bera, Editors: B.K.Medhi, R.P.Athparia, K. Jose SVD, published by EBH Publishers (India), Guwahati, 2009, pp-i-xiv+270, Rs.825/-, HB.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this is the first book ever brought into print on the aspects of Tribal Development in Tripura. The book has been edited by four anthropologists of the country who have wide experience in North-East India. The book begins with messages provided by **Shri Aghore Debbarma**, Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture & Tribal Welfare, Govt. of Tripura; **Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC**, Bishop of Agartala and **Rev. Fr. Cyprian Pinto SVD**, Regional Superior of northeast region, followed by the preface by **K. Jose SVD**. The book contains twenty one articles, emphasizing the various strategies, plans and programmes, and constraints that are creating obstacles on the way to development.

The **Introduction** written by **Gautam Kumar Bera** is provided with rich information about the State Tripura in a very compact way which gives a clear vision to the readers, anthropologists and researchers. The next article is the **Key Note Address** delivered by **K.B. Jamatia** who described the initiatives that have been implemented for tribal development starting from Pre-Independence era till date. He also mentions the constraints that are hindrance to the development in the desired way. Again, **G. K. Bera** presented the **Special Theme Address** mentioning the various programmes from Pre-British period highlighting additional measures that should be mandatory especially in the states of North-East India. He appreciated recent development planning with suggestion for proper governance of the land and people.

The book starts with the technical article of **Lincoln Reang**, who considers education as one of the most important element for development depicting a kind of symbiotic relationship between the two. He also indicates the various hurdles like language barrier, isolation due to their surrounding ecology, *jhum* based economy, unavailability of modern amenities, etc. of the Reang, appealing for proper guidelines to fight against all forms of social evils so as to bring development in true sense. While in the next article **Manoshi Das** and **Sriparna Chakraborty** deal with the socio-economic status of Reang along with some recommendations for their proper development. More or less with the similar thought **R. P. Athparia** has presented an ethnographic study on a tribe who numerically occupies a significant position in Tripura. In this paper he has explained those changes that have taken place in post-Independence period in the socio-political life of the Chakma. **K. K. Raghavan** has attempted to describe the impact of rubber plantation which contributed to uplift the economic sphere and act as a catalyst to bring Community Development.

Next two articles are on the same theme of the seminar where **H. L. Deb Barma** has described an overall developmental picture among the tribals of Tripura mentioning the initiatives taken both by the Government and NGOs for the same. On the other hand, **Jayanta Choudhury** has shown the impact of various plans and programmes made for the tribals of Tripura emphasizing the weaknesses along with suggestions to overcome them. **Luke Daimary**, another emerging scholar has put forward the major obstacles like indebtedness, land alienation, educational backwardness and so on that are still common among the tribes from remote past and are hindering the speed of development. He also gave some recommendations to improve the present status. Women empowerment has been one of the most important items in the agenda of national development. Taking this into consideration, Tapati **Chakraborty** has presented a paper on the status of tribal women in decision making in Tripura where she has shown that a marked change came into the scenario regarding the position of women that has taken place after 1992 with the implementation of 73rd amendment of the Constitution.

Rajesh Bhowmick and **Kaberi Choudhury** presented two different articles on the traditional arts and crafts as practiced by the Tripura tribes being part of their culture. Tripura state is very much famous and honoured due to its various kinds of arts and crafts made of bamboo and cane,

wood, jute, leather, etc. Bamboo and cane are very closely related with the material, philosophical and social life of the tribal people inhabiting in this region. Having many engagements in the day-to-day life of the tribes, they irrespective of their ethnic and sex identities like to produce this kind of indigenous items. Another scholar **Rajib Chatterjee** has explained the significant role played by the Non-Government Organizations and their welfare programmes apart from the Government initiatives. The NGOs are performing a key role at the grass root level by providing basic social services, infrastructure building, provision of basic education, raising public awareness on gender issues, environmental protection, health, etc. in order to uplift the socio- economic status of the tribals. In his paper, **Sourajit Roy**, has discussed about various programmes and policies for tribal development indicating its limitations to proper functioning. With a shift in thought **Nirmal Das** presented a paper on a very important issue – the indigenous *Garia* festival of Tripura which is still in action but with a different meaning from the past due to the influence of neighbouring Hindu religion and Bengali culture. **Sreelekha Roy** in her paper on the initiatives taken by the Government and NGOs for the tribal development in Tripura highlights the various aspects of development like education, economy, infrastructure, health and so on mentioning the challenges faced by her during her field study.

Next two papers are on the role of the Tripura Adivasi Mahila Samiti (TAMS) presented by **Rita Rai** and Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) by **R. Mathias CSC** functioning effectively in this region for the sake of tribal development mentioning their aims and objectives, vision, mission, structure, plans and programmes. Following the same concept, **Biswarath Deb Burma** has put forward a brief scenario on the developmental aspects emphasizing on education as one of the essential tool required for development. In his paper, **K. J. Joseph SDB** discussed about the mission, objectives, developmental measures, etc. as taken by the St. Xavier's Bishramganj for Community Development work on the belief and principal of involvement of the particular community under development as the basic strategy in this state. The last article is by **J. Pulithanath SDB** who focussed on Kok Borok language which is now in transition with its gradual disappearance from their culture. Finally, the **Valedictory Address** was delivered by **G. K. Bera** to bring into relief the wonderful picture of the scenario of the country.

The book is very much beneficial for both the researchers and planners as they provide suggestions and challenges from different authors. As learnt from the book, *SANSKRITI* – North-Eastern Institute of Culture and Religion, Guwahati has been arranging an annual seminar since 2007 and the proceedings are published in the form of a book with a very good standard.

Binita Basu

BOOK REVIEW

Passage Through Aboriginal India: Anthropological Profile of Verrier Elwin, by Gautam Kumar Bera, The Oriental Institute of Cultural and Social Research, Allahabad (INDIA), 2008, pp-1-78, Rs.50/-; US \$5.00, PB.

The Wanderlust Anthropologist: Anthropological Profile of Nirmal Kumar Bose by Gautam Kumar Bera, The Oriental Institute Of Cultural and Social Research, Allahabad (INDIA), 2009, pp-1-96, Rs.100/-; US \$10.00, PB.

The Patriarch Pathfinder: Anthropological Profile of Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy by Gautam Kumar Bera, The Oriental Institute Of Cultural and Social Research, Allahabad (INDIA), 2009, pp-1-48, Rs.50/-; US \$5.00, PB.

A few decades ago, some eminent anthropologists searched for the retrospect and prospect of an Indian tradition in the Scio-Cultural Anthropology of India through a serious question. Having the same aim in view, OICSR, Allahabad has launched a series of biography on eminent Indian Anthropologists who are considered to be the builders of Anthropology. The series started with the biography of Verrier Elwin, titled 'Passage Through *Aboriginal* India', published in 2008, by Gautam Kumar Bera. Elwin got popularity as a romantic anthropologist and rhythmic poet with an anthropological mission who encouraged many a scholars to work in anthropology of later phase. While living in India, India's struggle for freedom attracted him and he got involved with the National movement as an associate of Gandhiji. Elwin came to Anthropology after leaving another career. He actually lived among the people whom he referred to always in his writings. He spent first part of his life in Central India where his monumental works were focused on the Baiga, Muria, Bondo, Gond and the other Central Indian tribes. During his long and close stay with the tribals of Central India, he witnessed and also stirred by the exploitation of the tribesman by the *Banias* and the other non-tribal groups. The Government of India appointed him as the Adviser for Tribal Affairs to North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in 1953. He believed that NEFA has a direct bearing on the entire tribal canvas of India. In 1960, he was appointed as the member of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission to look after the welfare of these people. During his life time, he entered into two major debates of his life: the Elwin-Missionary debate and 'National Park' theory debate. The second phase of his life was spent in North East India. He influenced the then Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to formulate five principles of development, called *Panch Sheel*. He preferred Anthropological application for tribal welfare. Elwin made another noteworthy contribution, which had a far reaching implication in the study of Indian civilization and society especially when one looks towards it from the hierarchic and stratificatory points of view. This is where Verrier Elwin, an ethnographer,

methodologically speaking a field-worker-theorist, a participant-observer, an anthropologist of aboriginal people stands. Probably, he is the best known anthropologist who has devoted his life particularly in the Central region and the North-East. Justifiably, the author has titled the book as the 'Passage Through *Aboriginal* India'. This also holds true for the other two books on Nirmal Kumar Bose, who was a wanderer in quest of knowledge, and Sarat Chandra Roy who was the pathfinder of Anthropology in India.

After that in 2009, two more books were launched on Nirmal Kumar Bose and Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy, by the same author. The second book is a tribute to N. K. Bose where the author has portrayed the heroic and legendary life and works of the scholar dividing the whole discussion into ten sections. The book contains the entire biography and bibliography of Bose. As an anthropologist, Bose initially involved himself in Indian National Movement and was highly influenced by Gandhi. Later he also worked as Private Secretary to the Father of the Nation. His major work includes the study on the totalitarian structure on Indian Civilization, caste system, political unrest, cultural revolt, tribal studies and so on. He also made empirical study on pottery and metal work all over India, traditional caste *panchayat* in various parts of India, etc. All these made him the Doyen of Indian Anthropology.

The third book is on Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy, a gigantic personality who is considered as the 'Father of Indian Ethnology'. Drawing from the career of Bar, he involved himself in the tribal study and worked for the cause of the tribal people of India. He was the first person to bring out a monograph on any of the tribes of India, titled '*The Mundas and Their Country*' in 1912. The exploitation, oppression of the tribals stirred his mind. Being a lawyer by profession, he studied tribal cultures in order to protect them from such situation. After him, many a scholars of later generations worked on various tribes influenced by him. He developed interest in all the fields of Anthropology including Physical Anthropology, Social Anthropology,

Archeology, Ethnology and so on. The study material in this book is divided into three sections where the present author had critically and constructively reexamined by portraying the achievements and contributions of S. C. Roy in the development of Anthropology in India. He was the first person emphasizing on empiricism and for practicing longitudinal study. He also founded the first anthropological journal named '*Man in India*'. He is credited with a good number of books and articles based on smaller research on various aspects of different tribes. His prolific writings inspired many important personalities of his time. The credits of digging up the Asur Sites, importance of Chotanagpur plateau not only as a Neolithic site, studying caste, race and religion in India, folklore and so on are worth mentioning contribution of Roy. The author had also added a genealogical chart of his family along with his publications both in the form of books and research papers.

These two books are very much beneficial for the Post-Graduate students in Sociology and Anthropology in Indian Universities, in Net/Set Examination, Indian Civil Service and also in State Civil Service

Examination. No other book of such handy nature is available in the market which can give a total idea of any scholar of eminence. These will also help the researchers to understand the life and works of Founding fathers of Indian Anthropology who contributed a lot in this discipline during 20th century. These two books are very much valuable for all of us to know the development of Anthropology in India.

In the world of Anthropological writing, Gautam Kumar Bera has a deservedly high reputation. In the smaller and more intimate world of his fellow colleagues and academic friends he is equally admired as a writer whose essays ranged well beyond the frontiers of traditional Anthropology. With a poetic genius his writing rises to the level of grand metaphor reflecting on organizing, and orchestrating the institutions of Anthropology in India. It seems to me that this passage beautifully summed up G. K. Bera's own poetic and philosophical credo.

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