

critical and democratic in nature. It is the teacher who becomes the medium and facilitator through which it is transacted and passed on to the students.

The book under review invokes the fundamentals of education which are slowly getting trampled by privatisation, cut-throat competition and the diminishing core human values, like humility, warmth and respect for differences. The book endears us to the imagination of a teacher who has the capacity to bring about a change in the student making her critical without making her lose her sensitivity and sense of wonder. Pathak tries to reflect on the (moral) responsibility of the teacher which is not only limited to a classroom setting but even beyond that.

As far as the target audience is concerned, this book is meant for those who perceive teaching as a journey of learning and unlearning. It is suitable for those who are optimistic that education still holds the promise to heal the wounded spirit of those who lack guidance and supervision in the area of exploration and discovery of self and others. It is a truly refreshing book marked with a sense of positivity but without losing criticality. It questions the taken-for-granted assumptions about education which makes learning an exercise in banality. It is a must-read for those who are ready to take the plunge in celebrating the vocation of teaching.

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Yemuna Sunny, *Sprout: A Social Geography of Rajasthan*. Bhopal: Eklavya. 2014. 147 pages. ₹255. [Paperback].

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With *Sprout: A Social Geography of Rajasthan*, Yemuna has again come to us sprouting a hope of the possibility for an alternative school geography. *Sprout* is a fascinating intellectual journey to understand the geographical reality around us. Mala, Abdul and Mini are our guide who take us to places, different contexts; ask questions to us; explain things; and narrate the grand stories of negotiations between nature and human societies of Rajasthan with the help of various theoretical tropes. From different topographies to palaces and courts to trade and cities to social

cohesions and antinomies, *Sprout* has nine chapters through which it conveys a new geography to us.

The epistemological methods and sensibilities of this book penetrate the geographical reality around us to find those hidden configurations which actually keep constructing, maintaining and sustaining this reality. This new geography tries to understand and explain the intricate relationships among physical space, time and human agents. The focus is on an entire web of these relationships which is actually the essential condition wherein human life takes place. This is where all production, distribution and consumption takes place. The class relations, caste relations and different political, social and economic forms of power and authority emerge. And all such relations have been changing across time and space. The book tries to understand such interactions and resultant relations, and their role in constructing a particular geographical reality.

In the first chapter, Mala, Abdul and Mini begin with unpacking those processes through which a geographical reality is constructed and reproduced through constant interactions between humans and nature. With the help of a pictorial map, they unravel the deepest layers of the earth, where the activities of plate tectonics and consequent effects on Rajasthan are explained. Many other geological dimensions and their changes are understood through the process of sedimentation and resultant fossils of flora and fauna. This historical journey through time and space is done in an extremely interesting and lively way.

The second chapter delves into the negotiations between Thar Desert and people living within this region. We come to know that these negotiations have formed a particular pastoral lifestyle in the region. This pastoral way of living led the entire community towards a livestock economy. Different communities emerged that had developed a specialised expertise in different animal rearing and breeding. For example, the Maru Raikas are excellent camel herders, while the Godwar Raikas are sheep farmers. Pastoral communities developed social relations with communities and farmers of villages on their routes of summer migration. Various kinds of social and economic exchanges started to take place between them. It is also very interesting to know that this pastoral lifestyle paved the way for the development of common grazing lands (like gochar, sawaichak, oran, etc.) and consequent norms, customs and power relations. Technological interventions over a period of time have meant that many pastoral communities are settling at one place permanently, they are using modern transportation facilities to move during summers. Other castes now are also trying their hands at animal rearing.

Chapter three makes us understand the different geographic contexts that make western Rajasthan a desert. Further, it explains the huge temperature variations on both diurnal and seasonal basis. It helps to understand the drama of extreme weather conditions, that is, experienced by the people of Rajasthan. From chapter four onwards, all the chapters focus on the changes in social structures across different times and geographical contexts as well as its implications. This includes the relations between human society and nature as well as between various communities. How are these relations changing? How did relationships among people become unequal gradually? How were newer boundaries and ownerships claimed and newer geographic spaces evolved? These are some of the major questions that have been dealt in these chapters through a focused study of relationships between state and society.

For example, chapter seven helps us understand the nature of social reality through a careful study of sedimented layers of customs, values, rituals and beliefs. The *bhajans* of Mira, for instance, broke the silence on the oppressive practices of Rajputs of Mewar. These bhajans became a means of protest against Rajputs and rallied the underprivileged communities to raise their voice. In chapter eight, we learn about the various important implications of the geographical location of Rajasthan: lying on the trade routes between the Arabian Sea, on the one hand, and the Indo-Gangetic plains and Central Asia, on the other. We come to know about two major implications of this geography of Rajasthan: The emergence of cities on the trade routes and the emergence of the Baniya or the trader as a caste/class. This is an interesting story that tells us how the Baniyas became a crucial link between the rulers and the people as well as between big and small cities.

At this juncture, we must try to evaluate the efforts of this book. We must understand that what kind of contribution has been made by this book to school geography in India today.

Generally, the following three crucial issues need to be addressed by geography education in India:<sup>1</sup>

1. *Geography education in India shall be reflective of the current state of the art in the discipline. It must adopt the newer development in epistemology of the discipline and try to orient the children towards the same.*
2. *It needs to be very sensitive in terms of the application of educational principles to the subject material and teaching-learning processes.*

3. *It needs to be defined itself not so much in utilitarian terms. It needs to be defined in terms of broader aims of promoting a more just and equal society in India.*

It seems that the present book stands the test of these criteria very well. It reflects knowledge of current state of the art in the discipline. It has reinterpreted the geographical knowledge by shifting its attention towards interconnections of the social and spatial as we have seen above. The dualism of 'physical' and 'social' has been dissolved. It shows a pedagogical sensitivity as well as puts efforts to inculcate the abilities of questioning and critical thinking in the light of larger and general aims and objectives of education-critical citizenry with democratic values by sensitising them towards inequality, discrimination and injustice produced by the existing social structures. It has also demystified the maps and made them child-friendly. Pictorial maps are less abstract and work as a good geographical tool for young students. The exercises are inbuilt forming an integral part of the entire chapter. They seek the collective or individual participation of students and facilitate them in their journey of knowledge construction.

However, there are certain minor issues with the book. At one or two places, a few typographical errors were observed. The flow of ideas in the last chapter of the book seems to be comparatively faster. These ideas demand more nuanced treatment. Furthermore, a segment on newer political structures and consequent changes in social geography of Rajasthan could have been incorporated in the book. This would have helped the young learner better to appreciate the post-independence history of Rajasthan where princely states were abolished and how the aspirations of the subaltern communities were met in the new arrangement of social and political power.

### Note

1. These three criteria are inspired from the reading of Marsden. For details, please see Marsden, W. E. (1988). Continuity and change in geography textbooks: Perspectives from the 1930s to the 1960s. *Geography*, 73(4), 327–343.

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