

Note de lecture de :

SHAH Ghanshyam, RUTTEN Mario, STREEFKERK Hein, eds.: *Development and Deprivation in Gujarat, In Honour of Jan Breman*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2002, 345 p.

Extraits.

Preface and Acknowledgements, p. 10-13.

J. Breman, of the University of Amsterdam is one of the leading scholars on Gujarati Society. He first came in 1962 to conduct fieldworks for his thesis. His commitment to the well-being of the downtrodden has influenced many scholars, activists and policy makers in India and in Europe.

He is one of the founders of the *Centre for Asian Studies Amsterdam, CASA*, in 1987, and of the *International Institute for Asian Studies, IIAS*, 1993. On the past 40 years, 11 Ph.D. theses have been completed at the University of Amsterdam on Gujarati Society alone, and 2 Ph.D. are in progress. During their fieldworks, most of these Dutch Scholars were affiliated to the *Centre for Social Studies, CSS in Surat*. This combination of personal relations and institutional linkages between the CSS and foreign scholars has been of great importance in stimulating the research on Gujarati society.

Contributors are friends and admirers of Jan Breman's work and intellectual commitment. Together, they cover a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds including sociology, anthropology, history, economics and political sciences. Moreover, some of the contributors are social activists. They represent three generations of scholars working on Gujarat society.

The book is published on the occasion of *J. Breman 65th birthday*, the official retirement age from academic life in the NL. However, JB is in the process of publishing two new books on Gujarat.

Non signé.

Part I: Introduction

Capitalist Development and J. Breman's Study of the Labouring Class in Gujarat, 17-36.

1. Breman's Study of the Labouring Class

With his first book *Patronage and Exploitation* in 1974 to his last published with Arwind Das *Down and Out*, in 2000, he has relentlessly documented the conditions of those who live within the underbelly of capitalist progress: migrant workers and workers in the informal sectors (p. 18)... He has argued against the prevalent social Darwinism which had relegated the poor to the level of a sub-species.

Jan Breman was born in a Dutch working class family in Amsterdam in 1936. He and his parents experienced the hardships of the Great Depression years of the 1930's.

He was the first in his family to receive a scholarship to enter the College. Then he entered the University of Amsterdam where he met Prof. W.F. Wertheim, an eminent scholar of Asian societies who had published *Indonesian Society in Transition* in 1956 and who encouraged his students to make fieldwork in Asia. However, the strained political relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands in the 1950's and early 1960's making it impossible to do fieldwork in Indonesia, J. Breman came in Gujarat in 1962 as a postgraduate researcher after he had learnt Gujarati in the SOAS, London.

Prof. I.P. Desai (Head of the Dpt. of Sociology, Baroda; has studied migration and occupation pattern in a village in 1964) and M.B. Desai (Dpt. of Agricultural Economics, Baroda; has studied agrarian relations and farm labour in South Gujarat in 1948, 1951) guided

the Dutch students. J. Breman embarked on a journey grappling with the question of social transformation of the rural proletariat in south Gujarat.

Coming from a working class background myself, I knew right from the beginning that my study would concentrate on the segment at the bottom of the caste hierarchy and the rural economy... The relationship between the dominated landless and dominant landowners became a logical focus of my investigations. (Breman, 1993a: vi), p. 20.

Breman's study of 'agrestic serfdom' in the villages of Chikhligam and Gandevigam resulted in his first book on the bonded system called *hali* and then to further lead him to debate the shifting and changing forms of 'bondage' that workers found themselves in sugar cane fields, brick kilns, etc. p. 21.

He strongly favours the anthropological method (here, as opposed to sociological surveys). His focus on patterns of labour relations... brought him closer to political economists than to traditional anthropologists and the historical method has always been important to him. The emphasis of his sociological scholarship continues to be on questions of the mode of production and the plight of those who migrate in search of employment and subsistence.

Being a sociologist by orientation, an anthropologist by method, an economist by subject of study, and an historian by approach, he follows in that sense a multidisciplinary approach. Having previously analysed labour trend in Indonesia, he also emphasized the need for a comparative perspective in the empirical study of Asia's transformation.

His work has contributed to an understanding of the consciousness of the Gujarati elite as to laying bare the disenfranchisement of the subordinated.

Although he championed the interest of migrant workers, he did not shirk the issue when it appeared that they have been some of the worst perpetrators of violence against the Muslims during the communal riots in Gujarat in 1992 (Babri masjid) and in 2002. p. 23. He wrote about the levels of violence that were endemic among the single male migrant labour force that lived in Surat...

Breman perceives the great disparities in wealth and power, the deforming legacies of neo-colonialism and the rise of ethnic nationalism in a period of globalisation as bleak trends in the contemporary world... (1997a,b, 1998). p. 25.

2. Capitalist development, p. 25-27

Mario RUTTEN and Pravin J. PATEL

Indira HIRWAY and Piet TIERHAL

3. Agrarian Change, p. 27-30.

David HARDIMAN; Satyakam JOSHI; Stany PINTO; Harshad DESAI and Chandu MAHERIA; Uma KOTHARI, Miranda ENGELSHOVEN; Amita SHAH.

4. Industrial Growth, p. 30-33.

Douglas E. HAYNES; Sujata PATEL, Hein STREEFKERK; Hasmukh SHAH; Shalini RANDERIA.

Prof. J. Breman, who has studied Gujarat for almost four decades, has explicitly focused his inquiry on the down-and-out, oppressed strata of Gujaratis. The contributors of this volume share his perspective and concern for the struggling masses of Gujarat. The four parts of this volume are therefore in line with the main research themes taken up by Jan Breman in his study of Gujarat society.

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