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Humanizing Anthropology

Sachchidananda (1926–2012) and His Contribution to Tribal Studies

Dheerendra Singh

Sachchidananda, Professor of Sociology and Social Anthropology, India, passed away on January 31, 2012. He was born on 28. 11. 1926, in Chhapra, Bihar, the place which is also the birthplace of several authorities and scholars. Son of Thakur Prasad, professor at Patna Training College, Patna, Sachchidananda studied History with famous teachers and scholars of that time, e.g., S. C. Sarkar, Y. J. Tarporewala, K. K. Datta, and S. H. Askari. In 1945, he passed the B. A. (Hons.) examination in History as the best in the first class and with distinction. This entitled him for two gold medals as well as to a postgraduate scholarship. At the M. A. examination in 1947 in History, he repeated his performance and was appointed Lecturer in History at Patna College in the same year. In 1950, however, he was selected by the Bihar Public Service Commission for the award of a State Scholarship in Anthropology. He was granted study leave for two years and left for the United Kingdom later in 1950, along with his wife.

He joined the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and registered for M. A. in Anthropology under the guidance of Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf. He took advantage of the intercollegiate system at the University of London and took courses at the London School of Economics, the University College, and the Institute of Archaeology. At these places he had the good fortune to study Anthropology with such famous schol-



Fig. 1: Prof. Sachchidananda – at A. N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies.

ars like Raymond Firth, Isaac Schapera, Edmund Leach, Lucy Mair, Darryl Ford, John Barnes, Mary Douglas, and Gordon Childe. He submitted his M. A. thesis “The Tribal Village in Bihar” in 1952 under the tutelage of Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf. The Department of Cultural Anthropology, University of London, attracted a number of Indian scholars like Irawati Karve and S. C. Dube as Visiting Lecturers. D. N. Majumdar and M. N. Srinivas visited the department for giving seminars. It was at that time that Sachchidananda developed close relationship with these Indian scholars. In September 1952, he attended the World Congress of Anthropology and Ethnological Sciences at Vienna, Austria.

On completion of his studies in November 1952, Sachchidananda came back to India along with wife and little son Nisheeth Kumar. He was transferred to the Ranchi College, Ranchi, where the new Department of Anthropology was to be established. The new Postgraduate Department of Anthropology started to function from July 1953 on. In 1955, he attended the first Sociological Conference at Dehradun where his paper “Caste and Class in Tribal Bihar” attracted a good deal of attention.

As years rolled on, his researches got significant academic recognition, honour and fame came her way. In 1977–78 he was elected President of the Section of Anthropology and Archaeology of the Indian Science Congress, the highest honour for an Indian anthropologist at that time. In 1973, he was invited by the Bernard Branch College of the City University of New York as Visiting Professor of Anthropology. He also attended the 19th World Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences at Chicago. In September 1976, Sachchidananda was invited by the Korean National Commission for UNESCO to work as a member of faculty for a two-week training programme at Seoul. The course was attended by high-ranking development officials from ten countries in South Asia and Far East.

Sachchidananda is widely known for the study of tribal culture, socioeconomic change, social structure, and Dalit studies in India. In 1964, his book “Culture Change in Tribal Bihar, Munda, and Oraon” was widely appreciated and reviewed in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (D. M. S. 1965), *The Journal of Asian Studies* (McCormack 1966) and *American Anthropologist* (Khare 1965) by mentioning that “it only opens up fresh avenues for more detailed research work” (D. M. S. 1965: 291). His other work “Profiles of Tribal Culture in Bihar” was published in 1965 and reviewed by Inglis (1967) and Levitt (1969), mentioning that “it brings first-hand information about tribal peoples within reach of the general public and for the

social anthropologist interested in exploring current theoretical problems in the discipline” (Inglis 1967: 416). Sachchidananda had opportunities to visit tribal areas from Manipur, Tripura, and Assam to Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. He obtained the degree of a doctorate of Literature from the Patna University on a thesis entitled “The Tribal Village in Bihar – A Study in Unity and Extension” which was published as a book (1968) and reviewed by Tiemann (1970) in *Anthropos*, mentioning that “it is welcome because so far no studies of tribal or non-tribal villages in Chotanagpur have come forward” (676).

In 1979, another important book “The Changing Munda” was published and reviewed by Onimus (1982) and Ponette (1983), the latter indicating that “this well written book is now an indispensable reference work. It gives a good and fairly complete picture of the Munda tribe in all aspects of its struggle for survival against the severe onslaughts that assail it” (301). In 1980 “Elite and Development” was published – with the coeditor A. K. Lal – and critically reviewed by Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi (1982) who wrote that “the contributions in *Elite and Development* are of unequal value, their sum gives a representative picture of Indian elites. The Indian sociologists’ critical use of Western models will be of interest to their Western colleagues enabling the latter to check the validity of their theories” (619).

In 1984, Sachchidananda coauthored with B. B. Mandal the book “Industrialization and Social Disorganization. A Study of Tribals in Bihar” which was reviewed by Delège (1988) for *Anthropos*. Sachchidananda’s other book “Social Change in Village India” (1988) was reviewed by van Willigen (1990), who concluded that “[the book] is of interest to those who would like an orientation to the phenomenon of caste violence, caste group development in rural settings, and the roles of voluntary agencies in social service and development” (788).

Sachchidananda retired as professor in the early 1990s from the A. N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies (ANSISS), Patna, and was awarded by the University Grants Commission with a Emeritus Professor Fellowship. Till his last breath, he was involved in various academic activities as a member of various governmental and non-governmental organisations. He left an immense archive of handwritten notebooks, and yet there will be much to be investigated, both of his scholarship and his incomparable humanity.

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Nollywood als Ausdruck eines kulturellen Heilungsprozesses?

Eine kritische Analyse des Oralitätsbegriffs im Kontext nigerianischer *homevideos* von Nkechinyere Mbakwe – Ein Rezensionartikel

Ilsemargret Luttmann

Den nigerianischen *homevideos*, bereits seit mehr als 10 Jahren unter dem Label Nollywood bekannt – in Anlehnung an das Phänomen der Hollywoodfilme und die daraus abgeleitete Wortschöpfung Bollywood –, sind in den letzten Jahren immer mehr wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen gewidmet worden.¹ Das wachsende Interesse erklärt sich zunächst aus dem ungeheuren Produktionsvolumen mit über 1.000 Filmen pro Jahr, das Fragen nach ihrer kulturellen Aussagekraft und ihren besonderen Inhalten bzw. filmtechnischen Mitteln aufwirft. Sie erfreuen sich größter Beliebtheit beim nigerianischen Publikum, auch wenn die technische Ausführung sich auf einem sehr niedrigen Niveau bewegt. Die privaten Produzenten sehen in ihrer Arbeit in erster Linie ein wirtschaftliches Unternehmen, das an Rentabilität orientiert ist. Folglich bleibt ihnen nur eine äußerst kurze Zeitspanne, in der sie mit einem kleinen Budget ihre Filme herstellen. Nollywood ist auch ein Exportschlager, denn die Videos finden reißenden Absatz in Sierra Leone, Ghana, Kenia, Tansania und vor allem in der nigerianischen Diaspora in Europa und in den USA. Sie verkörpern also ein Konsumgut, das den Bedürfnissen einer internationalen afrikanischen Gemeinde entspricht und den Rezipienten einen hohen Grad an Identifikationsmöglichkeit bietet.

In diesem Kontext ist auch die Arbeit „Oral Nollywood. Trauma und Heilung“ von Nkechinyere Mbakwe angesiedelt,² wobei, wie im Titel ersichtlich, der Fokus auf die fortwährende Wirkung oraler Strukturen gerichtet ist und der Film in seiner heilenden Kraft zur Überwindung eines Traumas untersucht wird. Spezifische Inhalte und filmästhetische Mittel stehen hier also nicht zur Diskussion, sondern vielmehr die Beziehung zwischen Film und

1 Siehe u. a. Haynes (2000, 2006, 2007, 2010); Wendl (2002, 2003a und b, 2004, 2007); Wendl ([Hrsg.] 2004); Okome (2010); Şaul and Austen (2010); Krings (2005).

2 Mbakwe, Nkechinyere: *Oral Nollywood. Trauma und Heilung*. Berlin: AfricAvenir International, 2011. 143 pp. ISBN 978-3-9812733-6-6. Preis: € 14.00.