

The Asian Tsunami and Post-Disaster Aid. Sunita Reddy (ed.). Springer, Singapore. 2018. 330 pages. Price: US\$ 119.

For a disaster event that shaped the international humanitarian system of the 21st century (for example, following the 2004 tsunami, the United Nations reformed its humanitarian architecture, which was implemented the following year after the Kashmir earthquake), the retrospective analysis of humanitarian relief and recovery assistance after the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 remains woefully inadequate. This book is a commendable effort to fill the gap. Published nearly a decade and a half after the event, it provides a longitudinal view of the effectiveness of post-tsunami relief and recovery assistance. The book also broaches some important questions related to post-disaster aid, but stops short of answering them.

The Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 was an unprecedented disaster in many ways. With 227,898 lives lost, in terms of mortality, it was the single worst tsunami in recorded history. While five countries – Indonesia, India, Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Maldives – were directly hit, the effects were felt as far as the eastern coast of Africa. In addition to the local residents, a large number – up to 9000 – of those killed were foreign tourists. The scale and the sheer expanse of the disaster evoked tremendous global solidarity in responding swiftly and generously. The international aid to provide immediate disaster relief and support long-term recovery was enormous, exceeding US\$ 14 billion according to some estimates.

In three well-balanced parts, this book deals with: (1) the distributive aspects of post-tsunami aid, including during conflict situations; (2) the impact (or lack thereof) of post-tsunami aid on the notion of ‘build back better’; and (3) coping systems and aid effectiveness. The three parts are preceded by a cogent and well-considered distillation of the entire volume by the editor.

The first paper in Part I sets the tone for the rest of the book. It shatters the myth that a disaster is an equalizer. Through an in-depth analysis of Development Assistance Database, the author Randall Kuhn presents patterns of inequality, expressed through the notion of ‘dollars per affected population’ for different tsunami-affected areas of Sri Lanka. He reveals that the Southern and Western provinces of Sri Lanka received disproportionately more aid. He also shows that there are large variations in these patterns depending on the funding agency. Aid distribution by multilateral agencies was more equitable compared to bilateral agencies and international NGOs. The remaining papers in Part I present analyses from Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka, and cover a wide range of issues: impact of legislation on the quality of response; post-tsunami recovery process among the fisherfolk, an anthropological perspective of recovery at the local level, and interaction between post-tsunami recovery and post-conflict recovery. They also highlight the complexity of the recovery process at the local level and present important insights: one, how spontaneous humanitarianism quickly degenerates along the pre-existing fault lines in a society, dashing all hopes of an equitable recovery; two, how the externally aided recovery programmes supplant rather than supplement local capacities, thereby increasing vulnerabilities; three, how post-disaster recovery programmes can sometimes erode the agency of local communities to manage their own natural resources; four, how lack of understanding of the basic ‘cultural infrastructure’ leads to less than optimal recovery outcomes, and five, how post-disaster recovery when completely divorced from post-conflict recovery can threaten its sustainability.

In the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami, the United Nations Secretary General’s Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, former US President William J. Clinton popularized the notion of

‘build back better’. Part II of the book presents a nuanced perspective on the topic that goes beyond the physical manifestations of build back better, to cover the broader societal aspects of building resilience through recovery. It provides a detailed analysis of the societal impact of post-disaster recovery in the Andaman and Nicobar islands. The analysis shows that in many cases post-disaster relief, its unequal distribution as well as its inappropriateness create new dependencies and generate new vulnerabilities. An analysis of housing reconstruction in Sri Lanka, and people’s perception of its quality on a range of parameters throws up important findings. Eighteen months after the tsunami, on most parameters such as access to services, size of the houses, their design, etc., most people found that they were worse off than before the tsunami. This despite the fact that housing reconstruction was one of the most well-funded components of the post-tsunami recovery programme.

The third and final part of the book presents cases from Thailand, Sri Lanka and India, to discuss issues of people’s coping strategy and effectiveness of aid.

This book will prove to be an important resource for scholars and practitioners alike. Scholars trying to understand the complexity of post-disaster recovery will derive great insights from the book, and the practitioners would be warned of the pitfalls of an inadequately conceived and hurried reconstruction programme. At the same time, the book leaves the reader wanting for more; it leaves two important questions unanswered.

One, why have the awareness generated by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the unprecedented investment in tsunami early warning system not translated into sustainable reduction in mortality risk from tsunamis? The importance of this question can be underlined by the fact that in the 14 years after the event, nearly 25,000 people have died from tsunami disasters in the Asia-Pacific alone. This does not include the death toll from the volcano-induced tsunami in Indonesia that occurred in December 2018.

Two, a recurring and incontestable refrain in the book is for greater local ownership and sensitivity to the cultural context in aid delivery, but it does not adequately address the issue of ‘tyranny of rush’ after a disaster. How can the political imperative of ‘quick recovery’ be reconciled with the seemingly

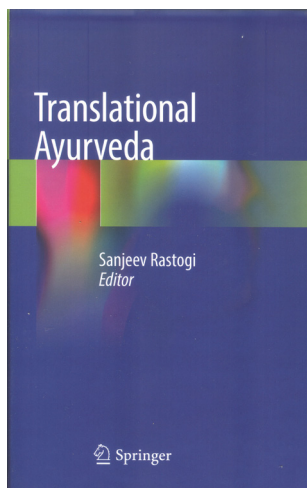
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competing objective of ‘sustainable recovery’? What are the kinds of local capacities that will be required before a disaster, in order to effectively implement the subsidiarity principle in the delivery of post-disaster relief and recovery programmes?

These are big questions. Perhaps the editor and her colleagues could grapple with these issues in a follow-up volume to this insightful book.

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Translational Ayurveda. Sanjeev Rastogi (ed.). Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore. 2019. xv + 212 pages. Price: 111,99€.

Ayurveda, the traditional Indian system of healthcare, has seen many ups and downs with respect to its education, practice and research in history. Several studies have shown a generally declining quality of Ayurveda education concerning clinical competencies among its graduates. This is primarily because the theories and principles documented in classical textbooks of Ayurveda have not yet been properly rendered into a directly applicable format. Physicians produced out of such a system often tend not to practice Ayurveda the way it should be practiced, for, they do not see practical

applicability in these theories taught to them in colleges. Similar is the case with research: there have been multiple approaches of investigating Ayurveda. While initial efforts were to identify, isolate and look at pharmacological activities of various molecules present in the medicinal plants under various laboratory settings, early clinical studies aimed at evaluating the effects of one formulation in a given clinical condition. However, of late, these approaches are being seen as reductionist and newer approaches that aim at evaluating the effects of polyherbal formulations on the biological systems have seen an upward trend. Similarly, evaluating the complex clinical interventions through ‘whole system’ approach are also being tried.

In this context, the book ‘Translational Ayurveda’ assumes importance as it keenly observes, records and analyses these trends. The book is not prescriptive in its nature, but as stated by the editor, seeks to show ‘the existing gaps between classical and contemporary Ayurvedic health-care wisdom and the realistic health-care needs of the people’. Authored by sixteen established authors and edited by Prof. Sanjeev Rastogi, the book tries to look at the contributions of different approaches to decrease human suffering and suggests ways forward.

The book consists of twelve chapters authored by various experts in the fields of Ayurveda education, integrative practice, clinical research, laboratory research and even administration. The book is divided into two parts: ‘Fundamentals and Modalities’ and ‘Clinical Practice’.

The first chapter, authored by Sanjeev Rastogi and Francesco Chiappelli, explores the translational potentials of Ayurveda and summarizes the past and the current trends of research in this direction – both fundamental and applied. It argues that the research so far has generally not been of much help to the suffering humanity as it has not been patient-centric. A clearly focused outcome-based research is the need of the hour – is the core argument the authors put forth.

The second chapter authored by R. H. Singh explores the translational studies specific to fundamental research. The basic Ayurveda principles such as *Tridosha*, *Agni*, *Prakriti*, *Kriya-kala* and others have been explained along with their relevance in current practice. He argues

that the current methods of pure science may not be ideal to explore Ayurveda. A few examples of model translational studies have also been given to show how certain basic principles of Ayurveda have been validated through scientific methods.

While the third chapter places the concept of *Prakriti* (Ayurveda constitution) in the context of personalized medicine and explains the approach of Ayurgenomics with the help of recent studies, the fourth chapter, authored by Chandra Kant Katiyar, addresses the traditional pharmaceutical processes and their uniqueness in the sphere of drug delivery systems. The exclusivity and scientific basis of different classical dosage forms are explained with simple examples that anyone can understand. Interestingly, he argues that commercialization of Ayurvedic medicines has added value to the pharmaceutical products by adopting modern dosage forms, manufacturing technologies, quality control and safety and efficacy evaluation.

The fifth chapter gives a comprehensive description of classical methods and parameters of understanding a drug and its clinical effect. While describing the concepts such as *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya* and *Vipaka*, the author cites some recent intriguing validation studies in relation to collection practices of different herbs, practices of co-prescription (*Anupana*), effects of diurnal variations and lunar cycles.

In the sixth chapter, authors explore the question of *Rasayana* therapy and its clinical applicability and insist on rational understanding of this therapy for the benefit of masses. While recounting recent studies on *Amalaki Rasayana* and *Rasa Sindura* in different experimental models, the authors do not forget to record the gaps existing in the current understandings of *Rasayana* therapy and its effects. The rational protocols for its use including the dose and duration determination, standardization, indications for use in healthy and sick population – all need clear evidences – is what the authors argue.

The second part of the book begins with a chapter on cancer. Authors try reinterpreting cancer biology in terms of Ayurveda theories and pose some important questions pertaining to what should be the next steps in understanding this disease. The eighth chapter is on diabetes. The chapter presents a brief review of