K. M. KAPADIA
(1908-1967)
Kaniyalal Motilal Kapadia was a founder member of the Indian Sociological Society and was its Secretary between 1955 and 1966. He rendered invaluable service to the progress of the Society and made sustained efforts to maintain the quality of its journal, Sociological Bulletin. He died at his residence in Bombay on October 30, 1967 at the age of 59, after a period of prolonged illness. In his death the Society has lost a devoted worker, and the academic world a kind and able scholar.

Professor Kapadia came to sociology with a background of Sanskrit and Indology. Even as a schoolboy he had read many Vaishnava texts in Sanskrit. He studied Sanskrit at Wilson College, Bombay from where he passed his B.A. with a 1st class in 1930. Subsequently he was appointed a Dakshina Murti fellow in recognition of his merit.

He met Professor G. S. Ghurye in 1930 and discussed his plans for doing a Ph.D. at the Bombay School of Economics and Sociology, University of Bombay. At the suggestion of Professor Ghurye, he undertook a study of Hindu kinship on the basis of text materials in Sanskrit. He was awarded the Ph.D. degree in 1938, and the thesis was published under the title Hindu Kinship in 1947. Kinship, marriage and family came to be his major area of specialization in which he made a contribution and a name. His interest in the field became strengthened as he began teaching (in 1943) Indian social institutions and Indian social thought for the M.A. course in the University of Bombay. In 1955 he published his book Marriage and Family in India which soon came to be regarded as the only text-book in the field covering diverse situations in the country.
The first edition of the book was sold out in less than three months after its publication. It has run into three editions, and the fourth edition is in the press. A singular feature of the book is that it acts as a bridge between the Indological approach and empirical Sociology.

Kapadia's insights into contemporary family organization and marriage are also to be found both in small brochures and papers, which he published from time to time (see bibliography). He not only made a critical study of the then topical issues of the Hindu Code Bill and the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Bill but also undertook an extensive survey of teachers' opinions and attitudes on different aspects of Hindu marriage and family.

Towards the last decade of his life, however, Kapadia turned his attention to much wider problems of society, such as urbanization, industrialization and the general transformation of Indian society. He chose the 'Passing of the Traditional Society' as the theme of his presidential address at the Anthropology and Archaeology section of the Indian Science Congress at its golden jubilee session held at Delhi in 1963. On the basis of his empirical investigation (analysis of 3742 schedules) in South Gujarat, he described the changing pattern of occupational mobility and drew its implications for regional political organization and rural development. At the time of his death he was working on the impact of industrialization and urbanization in South Gujarat, and has left behind several unpublished manuscripts.

He combined in his research both intellectual interests and a sense of social responsibility. He undertook a study of juveniles and encouraged his research students to work on different social problems. He has guided the research of 17 Ph.D. and 4 M.A. students.

Kapadia had to work his way through the odds of economic hardship and ill health. Born of humble parentage (on 17th October, 1908), he had to earn and learn at the same time. While he was a Ph.D. student, he was working as a part-time teacher of
Sanskrit in Bhatia High School, Bombay. He wrote a text-book on Sanskrit Grammar in Gujarati which even today remains one of the best in the field. He was a teacher in a High School in Navsari for some years, till he was appointed a Lecturer in Bombay University in 1943. He became Reader in 1951 and succeeded Professor Ghurye in 1959 as Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology.

He was a chronic patient of asthma, since 1936. It is astonishing the way he had come to live with it throughout the most creative period of his life. His wife Mrs. Jayagouri Kapadia took tender care of him and his four sons and two daughters attended to him dutifully. His eldest brother who lived with him looked after the house. He was a family man in every sense of the term. Professor Kapadia will be remembered for the affection and kindness he gave to one and all who came into contact with him. He had great regard for his colleagues and respect for his teacher, Professor Ghurye.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE PUBLICATIONS OF K. M. KAPADIA

Books


Papers


M. S. A. Rao