*Book Review*

NAVIGATING MENTAL HEALTH: A REVIEW OF DR. JAMES T ANTONY’S VISION FOR INDIAN PSYCHIATRY

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The words of Mahatma Gandhi, "A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members," resonate deeply within the pages of James T. Antony's *A Roadmap for Psychiatry in India*. This book serves as a poignant reminder that the true measure of India's progress lies in its ability to provide compassionate, comprehensive care for its weakest members, which includes the mentally ill population. Antony's work underscores the urgent need for systemic reform and a return to empathetic, holistic treatment approaches, highlighting the moral and ethical responsibility to support those who are the most vulnerable in society.

*A Roadmap for Psychiatry in India* by Dr. James T. Antony is a seminal work that delves into the multifaceted challenges and opportunities within the field of Psychiatry in India. The book offers a comprehensive analysis of the current state of mental health care in the country, providing valuable insights and proposing actionable strategies for improvement. Antony, with his extensive experience and expertise, crafts a compelling narrative that is both informative and engaging, making this book a crucial read for mental health professionals, policymakers, and anyone interested in the mental health landscape of India.

The book is a 250-page treatise published by YesPress Books, priced at 410 Rupees. It

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comprises 19 chapters, including a prologue and an epilogue, each meticulously detailing different aspects of Psychiatry in India. The author begins by establishing his credentials as a distinguished teacher of Psychiatry, renowned for his exceptional ability to impart complex concepts with clarity and compassion. His dedication to education and mentorship has profoundly influenced countless students and professionals in the field. The first chapter itself serves as a testament to the revolutionary journey of Psychiatry from “Bethlehem,” through “the Madhouses Act” of 1774, Philip Pinel, William Tuke of York, Dorothea Dix, and the “Mental Hygiene Movement” of Clifford Beers. Perhaps one argument that could exasperate the young ‘biological’ psychiatrists of the twenty-first century is that the American-trained psychiatrists who came back to India during the mid-nineteen-sixties didn’t want to have anything to do with mental hospitals. This culpability keeps echoing throughout the book in various chapters, with the need to ensure the survival of mental health centers.

The book provides a historical perspective on Psychiatry in India, tracing its evolution from the days when mental health facilities were scarce and rudimentary. The author recounts his experiences at the Central Institute of Psychiatry (CIP) in Ranchi, previously known as the European Pagal Khana, highlighting the

transformation of psychiatric care over the years. He discusses the transition of mental hospitals from custodial care centers to institutions focused on comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation.

He critiques the current trends in Psychiatry, particularly the influence of mainstream medical practices from the United States. He warns against the impersonal attitudes that have crept into psychiatric care and stresses the importance of maintaining a holistic approach. He emphasizes that countries like India should be cautious in adopting practices that may not align with their unique socio-cultural context.

The book delves into the practical aspects of psychiatric care, focusing on the need for general practitioners to be well-versed in mental health issues. Antony advocates for a revival of the old system where neighborhood general practitioners played a crucial role in initial patient care. He underscores the importance of empathy and supportive psychotherapy, especially for patients with severe mental illnesses. He addresses the slogan of community psychiatry that emerged in India in the mid-1980s, examining its implications and shortcomings. He argues for the necessity of specialized institutions that provide long-term care and protection for mentally ill patients. Drawing parallels with Japan's mental health system, he highlights the need for India to establish adequate mental hospital beds to cater to its large population of psychotic patients.

The book discusses the mental health policy, its objectives, and its disconnection from earlier programs and the Mental Health Care Act of 2017. Antony calls for a cohesive approach to mental health policy that ensures the welfare of every mentally ill patient. He emphasizes the need for a national campaign to secure better care for the mentally ill and criticizes the current lack of advocacy for their cause.

In the final chapters, the author outlines a roadmap for the future of Psychiatry in India. He advocates for a holistic approach to patient care, emphasizing empathy and understanding. He stresses the need for psychiatrists to actively engage in designing and managing mental health institutions that cater to modern requirements. He also calls for a re-evaluation of current practices and policies to better align with the needs of India's mentally ill population.

The epilogue reflects on the historical changes in psychiatric care, from the compassionate approaches of the 19th century to the economically driven practices of the modern era. He urges Indian psychiatrists to reclaim the holistic, empathetic approach that is deeply rooted in India's cultural traditions of Advaita and yoga. He emphasizes the importance of a value system that places patient welfare above economic considerations and calls for a new generation of psychiatrists who are committed to holistic care.

*A Roadmap for Psychiatry in India* is a comprehensive and insightful exploration of the challenges and opportunities in the field of Psychiatry in India. Antony's extensive experience and deep understanding of the subject make this book an invaluable resource for mental health professionals, policymakers, and anyone interested in the mental health landscape of India. His call for a return to personalized, holistic, empathetic care and the establishment of adequate mental health facilities is a timely and essential message for the future of Psychiatry in India. He emphasizes that it's time to reimagine and rebuild the earth and skies of Indian Psychiatry with compassion, holistic care, and unwavering commitment to the well-being of every individual. None but Antony could have written this book, drawing from a lifetime of experience and a profound commitment to transforming the landscape of mental health care in India. His insights and proposals reflect a deep understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities within Indian Psychiatry, making this work both authoritative and visionary. While his vision is commendable, the practical implementation of his proposals may face significant challenges due to systemic inertia and resource constraints. The book is a powerful critique of
 the current practices, yet it remains to be seen whether the Indian mental health system can rise to meet these ambitious goals.