

Globalization and Identity Politics

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The removal of trade barriers and the liberalization of the business rules in India, known as globalization after the collapse of the 'Soviet' Russia and of the Cold War system created conditions for the arrival of large number of Transnational Corporations and speeded up the uprooting process of the peasantry and closure of small scale business units using old methods of production. This has led to rapid urban migration, job shifts and crisis of old values. In political terms, it has created multiple forms of identity reflected in terror acts, dalit politics, peasant protests, regional autonomy/separatist movements, and religious mobilization. However, the development of the religious identity among the religious communities is the most important phenomenon that reflects starkly in the formation of bi- polarity in the polity, and in pan- Indian expansion of terror act and in religious mobilization on different flimsy issues. It has subtly created religious segregation in social domain. Such development has worried academics that have aptly analyzed the different facets of this phenomenon and the reasons behind it. This *book is a mirror image of such concern and is a collection of national seminar papers funded by the UGC. Some of the papers, out of 16, Introduction included, divided into five parts, however, may be specifically mentioned for their excellent analysis and newness.

Beginning with Introduction, Bhupinder Brar discusses the three different conceptual paradigms of globalization namely of hyperglobalist, of sceptical and of transformationalist who visualize a borderless world, a future for cultural nationalism and who are pragmatists respectively. He, then, moves over to the historical backdrop of identity politics in India woven around the idea of nation, region and locality (p.3) with three alternative positions of primordialism, of instrumentalism and of constructivism. Finally, he takes account of the spectre of marginality palpable in the society and the concern of the academics, and the optimism of development under the globalized market economy. While positing such account of the situation he has given an excellent survey of the literature as well. However, had he included Marx's analysis of the impact of globalization on society across nations, it would have been an entirely new and interesting reading.

Moving away from general to the specifics, two papers on Kashmir, of Rehka Chowdhary and of Ashutosh Kumar which are highly topical, take a detailed and an in-depth account of the identity formation and of its struggle for autonomy. While interesting aspect in Chowdhary is an analysis of shift from secular identity to religious identity (p.76, 79); in Kumar one finds emphasis on economic and constitutional factors that facilitated the identity formation. Both of them, however, emphasize that autonomy has been the main agenda of Kashmir and of its contemporary movement and its denial, including the denial of free elections has been the primary cause of violent struggle of the people. None of them, however, have taken stock of the counter terror measures and of the role of the coercive state apparatus in the consolidation of religious identity and in perpetuation of the contemporary 'movement' for their own vested interests. Neither is their analysis of the role of civil society in

curtailing the Leviathan power of state usurped to 'protect' the civil liberty of citizens.

The next interesting paper is of Jagpal Singh whose empirical study on the most backward castes in the Jodhpur region of Rajasthan mostly on barbers, Mali and Kumhars announces that in the process of their upward mobility the MBCs have rejected the Sanskritization process and have rather opted for many other alternatives. One of it is their own cultural assertion, of the low caste and their belief that their culture is not inferior to that of the high caste (p. 167). To assert it the barbers set a Sai Bhaktipith Trust, and appointed their own Sainacharya, a parallel institution to the upper caste dominated Shankracharya. This finding is a new empirical area specific academic work that has similarity in UP, in Maharashtra and in other parts of India. But can one say that this process is entirely new. Or hasn't such process existed even in past when lower castes had asserted their cultural autonomy without adopting Sanskritization process. Or isn't it a Sanskritization process in different garb in spite of the fact that the founders of this pith did not believe in religious activities.

Another specialized paper is of R S Yadav who has highlighted different facets of foreign direct investment in India. Through the data, he has demonstrated that energy, transportation, communication, food processing, chemicals, tourism, hotels and service sectors have attracted foreign investments; but in comparison to other countries it is meagre. And a huge gap exists between the approval and the actual investment; further, the NRI investment is just 3.7 percent (in between the years 1991- 2002) and the FDI has encouraged mergers and acquisitions of already established industries rather than to promote competitiveness in the indigenous industries (pp. 193-195). It has worsened the regional imbalance.

Kanungo's paper, similarly, brings in the different facets of diaspora particularly of Hindutva that argues that unlike the secular Nehruvian post - 1965 immigrants in America, Canada and in Europe, the recent immigrants are tied to the complex network of Hindu fundamentalism.

The best aspect of the book is its combination of general and of specifics that surveys the political and economic developments in post- 1947 (Harshe, Brar) period and takes stock of specific identities of regions (Chowdhary, Kumar, Josh), and of castes (Singh, Jodhka). It is an interesting and new addition to the literature of identity politics under the aegis of globalization. □□□

*GLOBALIZATION AND POLITICS OF IDENTITY IN INDIA

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