BOOK REVIEWS

MODERNITY AND ETHIC PROCESSES IN INDIA , D. V. Kumar (eds). Rawat Publications, (2015) Jaipur: [ISBN: 9788131606391], pp.223. Price: £775.

Modernity backed by tremendous political and intellectual support spread across the globe in a relatively 'unproblemmatical' manner. There is hardly any society which has remained immune to the influence of modernity and the degree to which it has impacted different societies is quite profound. When modernity spread everywhere, it came in contact with different socio- economic $ political realities prevalent in different societies. But hoe one would explain them in care of even the 'modern' and advanced societies, is the question that has not been satisfactorily addressed. Modernity which was expected to have struck a blow to ethnic identities seems to be in a state of helplessness. How one explains this paradox is the question which has been engaging the attention of the scholars for quite some time now. Though many explanations have been offered, there appears to be a sense of inadequacy in terms of arriving at a comprehensive understanding of the dialectical tension that exists between modernity & ethnicity.

This book, in essence, is a laudable endeavor to dwell on the relationship between modernization and ethnicity by not only critically examining various theoretical formulations available but moving beyond them in an attempt to arrive at more meaningful and satisfactory explanations. It also seeks to contextualize these explanations in concrete empirical situations. The book is divided into thirteen chapters. The chapters offer scope for understanding the relationship between modernity and ethnic processes in India.

The first chapter entitled as 'ethnicity in an era of globalization', is the keynote address of T.N. Madan, delivered at seminar. He has made certain general and suggestive remarks about the topic modernization & ethnic processes in India. He examined some of the important consequences of globalization in terms of not only weakening of the nation- state but also strengthening of ethnic consciousness and identities. The sense of loss of certainty of identities caused by the process of globalization has ironically led to the consolidation of group identity which is visible not only in India but also elsewhere. He contended that globalization as a process offered a number of challenges, one of which was reconciling the local with global.

The second chapter presents the inter twining of the three notions of nationality, ethnicity and modernity. T. K. Oommen in his cogently argued article nationality, ethnicity & modernity clearing the ground refers, to begin with, to the enormous confusion that is found about the interchangeable use of the terms ethnicity and nationality. The author asserts that nations should be viewed as groups of people who share a moral claim over a homeland and language. He suggested that ethnic groups need to be viewed as groups who are dislocated from their original homelands. Then he goes on to explore four different axes (structural differentiation, rationalization, history-making project and modern life) around which the nation of modernity is articulated. Lastly, examining the relationship between modernity and ethnicity and nationality, he says that the assertion that modernity has supplanted ethnic and nationalist consciousness needs, to be critically interrogated. He further

added that there are rich empirical variations which need to be factored into any examination of the relationship among them.

The storyline of next chapter that is Ravindra K. Jain's article on hierarchy, hegemony and dominance: politics of ethnicity in Uttar Pradesh 1995, written in the context of the growing power of BSP in the 1990s is concerned with the political scenario that was prevalent in the UP then. The rise of BSP was an extremely sociologically interesting phenomenon which was sought to be captured by him in an analytically insightful manner. In his article he discusses that the former hierarchical caste system characterized by 'integral hegemony' has been transformed into one of ethnicised status groups and 'minimal hegemony', a process that has been primarily political. Ethnicity, for the author was like a sliding-scale concept always responding to realpolitik as witnessed in UP. The substantive reality of caste transforming itself into ethnicised status-groups in UP has been brought out in a highly insightful manner by Jain.

In the next chapter Avijit Pathak, in his deeply engaging article Feasibility of Modernity interrogates the grand narrative of modernity which has captured the imagination of social scientists in general and sociologists in particular. The chapter is divided into five parts. The first part deals with the core values of modernity, and the second section is concerned with the other side of modernity, that is the arrogance of modernity. He has presented both the empowering aspects of modernity which, as he says, is here to stay as we cannot go back in history and its alienating and debilitating aspects. On the one hand, it offers us freedom, freedom to question oppressive social practices and traditions and outcomes and has enhanced our reflexivity. On the other hand, it seeks to delegitimize alternative modes of thinking and identities which have given a source of security and psychological solace for the people and in the process making them feel alienated and nervous. The essential point that emerges from this article is that there is a great need to engage with modernity in a critical, creative and reflexive manner. The chapter contends that modernity in India has its specificity and uniqueness. But then, we should also be careful enough: we need not feel excessively proud of it. In fact our modernity also has immense problems.

The fifth chapter by Ananta Kumar Giri entitled as Transmodernity, Postnational and Post-ethnic Transformations presents a view of about hoe ethnic mobilization in India followed the modernist logic nation-state. The same process is visible in many parts of the north-east India also. At the same time, the history of multi-directional cultural exchange and flows also need to be recognized. Transmodernity refers to the creative engagement between tradition and modernity and at the same time going beyond the limit of both of them. Transmodernity enables cultures to respond from the perspective of their own cultural experiences. It also offers the possibility of rethinking ethnicity and, in fact, can lead to post-ethnic consciousness 'where ethnic groups are not only interested in maintaining their boundary but in boundary-crossing inter cultural dialogues and communication'. It is noteworthy that climate change has put pressure on all of us in terms of a new art of survival and transformation which call for new art of sharing of resources and sovereignties. For this, there is need for greater creative collaboration across state and ethnic transformations can facilitate this (pp97).

The next chapter, "Ethnicity, Nationalism and Modernity: Exploring the Linkages" D.V. Kumar, Argues that nationalism and ethnicity have become key categories to make sense of what is happening around us not only in the so-called Third world countries but also the modern and 'progressive' societies in the West. In our contemporary world system, it has

been increasingly observed that ethnic and nationalist conflicts have become a major force. One only had to look around to see the enhanced salience of ethnic and nationalist conflicts. His article explores the dynamics of ethnicity and nationalism in the context of enhanced process of modernization.

The seventh chapter insists that the assertion of ethnic identities can be seen in the context of protest against the modern nation-state dominated by single identity. Enlightenment modernity seeks to subvert everything that do not fit into its framework and ridicules the different forms of social and ethnic identities. Modernity leads to intersectionality which is manifested in ethnicity. It further argues that modernity has created multiple forms of exploitation – class, regional and religious. Ethnicity is the outcome of multiple forms of oppression and discrimination faced by a community. Ethnic group in most cases is a minority group based on racial, linguistic, religious discrimination. It concludes that most of the ethnic assertions are due to the perception and projection of the modern nation – state as being discriminatory and oppressive in ethnic terms. Concluding the chapter he narrates that while the elite in internalizes the values of modernization, the majority feel the process of modernization as stumbling block to their realization of life world. This tendency is more manifested in the postcolonial societies rather than in the industrial societies. The outcome of this incongruity leads to the generation of ethnic consciousness, virulent form of ethnic mobilization and fierce ethnic conflict in postcolonial societies.

The subsequent three (eighth, ninth, and tenth) chapters are based on field work, oral History and survey respectively. The eighth chapter is quite relevant from the perspective of the main theme of the volume. The chapter examines the role of Malayalee associations in representing the Keralite migrants to the host community and the everyday state in Goa. It highlights ethnicity as the meticulously crafted and constructed identity form and suggests that the ethnic associations do not always work as pressure groups solely concerned with the articulation of particularistic interests, which may however be treated as a continuous issue. The next chapter portrays the role of the Naga Club in the emergence of Naga ethnic identity. This chapter reconstructs how similarities of socio-cultural construct of different tribes, who were living under a common rule by an alien colonial power, were used by Naga Club to form the basis of a common Naga Ethnic identity. Contemporarily, the chapter examines that one can witness the involvement of various Naga insurgent groups which is a reflection of Naga ethnicity. The tenth chapter makes an attempt at focusing on the forest management policies of the government and their impact on the life of the people bringing about socio- economic development and conflict in Khasi and Jaintia Hills ever since the colonial rule. The chapter deliberates on the issue of appropriate utilization of forest resources and reaches the result that the ill convinced policies of the government have done irreparable damage to the ecological balance and sustainability of resources.

The next chapter excogitates the relationship between modernity and ethnicity in contemporary India. In India we have found that after independence, under the framework of a liberal democratic polity, in spite of having individual rights, communities and collective identities have remained powerful and continued to claim their recognition and rights. So, this chapter tries to address the role of the modern state and other institutions to nurture the ethnic identities under the purview of liberal democracy. It is analyzed that there are economic, political as well as ideological structures which also form ethnic identity. So, the process of modernization and ethnicity has an integral relationship which cannot be ignored easily.

The key argument of twelfth chapter is that there are not only different routes of

modernity but also differential ways of using tradition; it is not merely that tradition gets itself transformed in modern context. However this modernity encounters the state government's secular policy that attempts to concert sacred sites of the ancient polity onto heritage sites. The chapter acknowledges that the cultural core around the center of traditional polity is a modern politico-cultural space around which a certain form of sociality among people is being constructed. The chapter thus documents that the tradition acts as a model that gives direction to politics in present.

The last chapter deals with a close link between modernity and ethnicity. Without going to the debate on the appropriateness of the aforesaid theories, the chapter explores the effect of modernity on the process of ethnic identity formation of Rajbangshis. The chapter contends that identity formation is not a one-day event, which can be done just switching on one's idea in one direction. It takes several years as it does with the case of Rajbanghis. Literary, the word 'Rajbangshi' means 'the royal community'. They are actually descendent of the medieval Kamata and Koch kingdom. To survive in the new colonial socio-economic structure, in which British counted them as semi-tribal, Rabangshi gentry forced to start movements for their lost power and status. However the movements of divergent interest never become too powerful to reach destiny. Modernity became a catalyst of such movements but root originated from somewhere else.

The book offers the scope for understanding modernity and ethnic processes in India in future studies by placing empirical knowledge in deeper, historical, comparative frameworks. The book, in essence, is a laudable attempt to move the modernity debate forward in a manner that can meaningfully engage students, teachers, researchers and Practitioners.by familiarizing the readers with knowledge of relationship between modernity and ethnic processes in India both at conceptual and empirical levels. The authors have efficaciously accomplished what they set out to do, that is, try and deal with the dialect of the volume, by examining the concrete situations obtaining in different parts of India. This book seems promising to benefit Sociologists, Anthropologists, Economists, and Various Researchers.

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