

BOOK REVIEW

REFUGEES, BORDERS AND IDENTITIES: RIGHTS AND HABITAT IN EAST AND NORTHEAST INDIA by Anindita Ghoshal. 2021. New York: Routledge. xxvi + 310 pp. ISBN: 978-0-367-32265-6 (hbk), ISBN: 978-0-367-32266-3 (pbk), ISBN: 978-0-429-31762-0 (ebk), Rs. 3876 (pbk).

The term 'refugee' is often considered as a homogenous category, which is problematic in nature, hence is viewed as a misnomer by the author. Here an attempt has been made to give voice to the pain of partition that refugees had undergone when the whole of India was celebrating its 'tryst with destiny', how that pain continues to lurk even today as the issues remained more or less unsolved, with emphasis on the region of West Bengal, East Bengal (now Bangladesh), Assam and Tripura. The author has used interpretative and hermeneutical methods to reach a coherent understanding of the subjective experiences and has to bring out inferences to explain the phenomenon at large.

The book is divided into five chapters with a prologue and an epilogue. The introductory section familiarizes the reader with Bengal, starting from the Mughal conquest of the region in 16th century until the loosening of colonial clutches, and discusses how the religious identity which acted as a major dividing force between Hindus and Muslims elsewhere, Bengal held the two together under a bigger and stronger socio-linguistic identity of 'being Bengali'. Ghoshal tries to bring out the dichotomy of 'identity as culture' i.e. refugees giving rise to 'refugee culture' versus 'culture as identity' i.e. differences in culture forced into one to be identified as a refugee. The first chapter, "Encountering The 'Refugee': Crafting the policies", focuses on how the praxis of two-nation theory led to a large population being displaced and disintegrated from their kith and kin and in the process ending up forming instead three nations and innumerable unforeseen identities like refugees (old, new and deserted), migrants (legal and illegal), displaced, evacuee and what not. In the second chapter, "Dealing with the refugees: rehabilitation, variation, discrimination", author tries to bring out a comparative analysis of the making of the refugees in West and East Pakistan. The major argument is based on the partial and biased attitude of Central government towards the Punjabi and Bengali refugees and how the latter suffered due to continued disparity. The silo mentality between Centre and State led to not just delay in the rehabilitation process but also prejudiced settlement of Bengali refugees to harsh and unaccustomed economic lives in Andaman, Bihar, Orissa and Dandakaranya region (mainly in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa). Unaware of the Bengali economic way of life, ministers often complained of refugees being reluctant to rehabilitate and hence fuelled theories like comparing 'hardy Punjabi migrant' to 'lazy Bengali migrants'.

In third chapter, "Creating a new refugee domain: Assam and Tripura", Ghoshal tried to show how Bengali refugees has been treated differently in states of Assam and Tripura. Despite Assam being a multilingual and heterogeneous society since inception, Assamese people never liked Bengali migrants before or after Partition and hence they treated both Hindu and Muslim Bengali alike and have remained hostile to Bengali community at large. This paved way for a call for ethno- linguistic Assamese exclusivism and ultimately to riots and pogrom. While Tripura, from the time of it being a princely state, had welcomed

Bengali migrants as they were viewed to bring a progressive influence to the state via Muslim peasant's contribution to the economy and Hindu Brahmin's expertise in administration. However, things did not unfold as predicted post-Partition and with the floodgates of migration being wide open, Tripura became the only state in northeast India where refugees outnumbered and marginalized the native population both numerically and culturally. The next two chapters: Becoming political: politicisation of refugees in West Bengal and Politics as defence: activation of refugees in Assam and Tripura deeply discuss the play of 'identity politics' by refugees and 'politics of identity' by Centre and State government. Ghoshal has tried to correlate the emergence of Left as a strong opposition in the State of West Bengal with the refugees' identity struggle in the political corridors, as the former sympathized and voiced the concerns of the latter and latter ending up as a major vote bank for the former. The move paid off well and Left ruled West Bengal for 35 years. Similarly when Assam came up with 'official language movement' of 1960 and the 'Medium of Instruction Movement' of 1972 in order to create an ethno-linguistic hegemony over Bengali culture, the refugees retaliated through political movements which were later joined by native tribal groups. However, in Tripura where refugees outlined the natives, it was the tribal whose concerned had to be raised who were not just denied of their land but also of the culture which I believe is possibly due to the process of Sanskritisation and what Bose (1941) called 'Hindu method of tribal absorption'.

In the Epilogue Ghoshal has astutely summed up the 'phase-wise' making of refugee identities with each phased exodus of 1946- 1950, followed by 1950-1956 and finally 1958-1971. She believed in Partition as not merely a division of geographies but of the people. But the major challenge lies in the extrapolation of the entire series of historical events to the present political scenario which has been done judiciously as she showed how the current debates of NRC are rooted in the inception of Census Act of 1948. The resurfacing of the debates about NRC in political rallies of 2019 and passing of Citizenship Amendment Act in the same year despite the country-wide protests are also touched upon with an inference that the Act is nothing but yet another attempt of the Central Government towards the Hinduisation of the nation. The key take away from the book is those who had been rendered as refugee during the process of partition are still vulnerable.

This diachronic study on the concept of 'refugee' and its evolving definition with changing political discourses had however suffers from a few snags. The book has a remarkable polyvocality to it and therefore giving a horizontal spread but at the same time it lacks the vertical depth of these voices. Hence it would have been appreciable to hear the local voices from below which cuts through different sections of society. Similarly the author did mention about changes that culture had undergone both of the nation-identity destitute and the host communities but the text would have been more interesting to see how each institution have been affected. And yet this text is a recommended read in the domain of Refugee studies and academicians from varying fields of anthropology, history, political science, public policy & administration and sociology.

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THE POSTCOLONIAL AGE OF MIGRATION by Ranabir Samaddar. 2020. New York: Routledge. [ISBN: 978-0-367-34256-2 (hbk) ISBN: 978-0-367-34257-9 (pbk) ISBN: 978-0-429-32469-7 (ebk)]. pp. 290. Price INR 995.

Migration through the cross juncture of global neo-liberal transformation, postcolonial politics and economy is critically seen in this book. The book is divided into 11 chapters where in the first chapter the author has tried to scrutinize a book *Age of Migration* from the postcolonial lens. The author has tried to argue how migration has become global in the postcolonial era in the book under review by revisiting the theme of age. In the subsequent chapter the author has worked on interrelationship of concepts, contexts and methods by tracing history of forced migration taking postcolonial era as the context and its implications on methodology. The context has been explained through the concept of internal displacement. In chapter three, the book has argued about the colonial origin of present form of migrant labour, patterns of migration and labour bondage underlining the importance of genealogical approach to study the migration controls. The author considers migrant labour to be critical in the history of labour forms. Next chapter touches upon a critical topic of refugee labour where the author has critiqued the existing literature and has dealt with the issue of migrant and refugee labour in present capitalist economy and subsequently the author deals with ecological context of migration against the postcolonial backdrop in the following chapter. Chapter six argues that how despite migrant labour being the backbone of economy its visibility or presence is quite like a shadow. Chapter seven focuses on northeast India, where the author establishes migrants at the center of security discourse. Issues like migration crisis and autonomy of migration are dealt in the eighth chapter which also includes two seaborne migrations, that is, the Mediterranean and the Bay of Bengal-Indian Sea. Chapter nine deals with the issue of statelessness via the evolution of issue of displaced Rohingyas into being stateless, particularly in India due to drive for registration of citizens' names. Through chapter 10 the author has discussed postcolonial history of power and responsibility in the world-wide establishment and asymmetry between the two. In chapter 11, the global scale critique of refugees and migration flows has been discussed.

The book is a reflection of present age of migration and contributes to approaches to build a coherent framework of migration theory and research methodology. The deeper experiences of migration are capable of analysing social transformation. This book has picturized migration in postcolonial frame historically, economically and politically. This book also reflects upon the development of new type of power on a global scale. Migration management has become extremely crucial and central for the policy making in countries and economies. This book will interest scholars of social sciences like anthropology, sociology, political science, economics, demography, gender studies, public administration etc.

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SANITY IN SANITATION: JAJAROO NI JHUMBESH by Jayanti S. Ravi. 2019. Penguin Random House. i-xxxiii+262 pp. ISBN 9780143447573. Price Rs. 399.

The book under review seamlessly weaves around the issue of sanitation and OD and the associated state policy framework. In doing so, the author who happens to be principal

secretary and commissioner, rural development, Gujarat also reflects upon the cultural milieu of the issue at hand. The landscape of the book is Gujarat and the method of deliberating upon the sanitation issues appears to be in the 'auto-ethnographic' mode. It also needs to be underlined that the book 'emerges' from the authors' experiences of/ in the rural areas of Gujarat where the author has been closely associated with the planning and implementation of the Swachh Bharat Mission in the official capacity.

The book consists of *Prologue: The Insanity of Sanitation* along with fourteen chapters. The *Prologue* outlines the crux of the book i.e. 'the tale of a renewed *Satyagraha* through *Swachhagraha*, for India (p. xxxii) Treat the 'luxury' of toilet as a 'necessity' (p. xxxiii). In a way, it explores and presents an ethnographic view of the rural population and its interaction with the sanitation programme and policies. The subsequent chapters are based upon the authors' day-to-day experiences with the rural population as and when she was in the 'field'. The book starts with chapter titled '*The Heralds of Change*' which describes how the flagship programme i.e., Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) which was launched on October 2014 by Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought the attention of the people of the country towards the accessibility of adequate sanitation facility in terms of toilets and to end open defecation by October 2019.

The book later on provides a vivid description of the authors' visits to the villages and her experiences. This chapter elaborates upon the experiences that she had at Unthkhari during the time of the construction of toilets. It emerged that various socio-cultural factors enable/ encourage (or vice versa) the construction of toilets. In the end, the chapter describes initiatives taken by the government to end open defecation. The chapter briefly describes other programmes like Housing for all under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) to name a few who are aimed towards ending open defecation. Based on her experiences, she has outlined various reasons for the rural people for not using or having toilets constructed at their homes. In one of the chapters of the book, she has pointed out that "how the mindset of the people of the rural areas are shackled by religious misbelief, irrational or outdated traditions and even the ignorance that seems lack of exposure and illiteracy" (p. 65). Moreover, rural people are also unaware about the health issues that arise due to the lack of sanitation facilities and practices.

The consecutive two chapters titled *Delving into the Agenda* and *Jousting Jajaroo Everywhere with Polite Intervention* focus on the overall health and well-being of the children. The author has pointed out that after noticing that the people care much more about their children than themselves, she started to educate them about the worse effects on children due to lack of sanitation facility at home. She also looked into the issue of Disability Adjusted Life Year (DALY), the problem of lost nutrition and stunting among the children in particular which mainly arise due to lack of safely managed sanitation services and facilities at home. The next chapter titled *Teaming up to beat the Tatti* discusses how the UNICEF, World Bank and TATA Trusts have become integral part of the various sanitation-oriented programmes. It also discusses how international organizations like WHO, UNICEF and its programme WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), JMP (Joint Monitoring Programme) are guiding and influencing the achievement of 'Open Defecation Free' by 2019. In line with the international programmes on sanitation, GujCATS (Gujarat's Community Approach to Total Sanitation) was launched as a regional recognition for SBM.

The next chapter discusses how a drive/ programme titled *Shuddhikaran* was designed and carried out in June 2015 so as to purge the information data related to sanitation and toilet

usages among the people of its 'loopholes'. As an introspective exercise of the bureaucratic system responsible and obligatory towards sanitation for all (of which the author happened to be a member), the *Shuddhikaran* drive made the author aware of the shortcomings with in the official process which were accordingly dealt with. The public-private partnership to address the chronic issue of OD is taken up in the next chapter wherein the author has outlined how Tata Water Mission along with UNICEF worked in tandem with the state bureaucracy so as to go for and achieve ODF in Porbandar, Narmada and Mehsana. The subsequent two chapters dwell upon how the flipboard and the leaflets spreading the message of SBM were used in various mass gathering events, street plays, school functions and other public functions. Programmes like *ChokhuChanak* and *Hello Saheli* spread the message further through radio and Door darshan. One-way video and two-way audio technique called SATCOM also came in handy for this purpose. The chapter titled 'Celebrating the Success' highlighted how the state of Gujrat made impressive progress towards achieving the SBM goals. Last but not the least, the chapter towards the end of the book is an introspection by the author herself how things were when she began and how with the energetic and positive spirit of the common mass coupled with the bureaucratic commitment, the goals of SBM are within reach of Gujarat in particular and India in general.

All in all, the book under review is a well written and is enriching the way it has addressed the issue at hand. This book will appeal to everyone the bureaucrats, academicians, researcher and students who have interest or are working in the field of sanitation. It is an indispensable collection for the healthcare workers as the book also provide some of the insights on health related issues that arises due to lack of sanitation services or facilities at home.

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SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: CONCEPTS, EXPERIENCES AND CONCERNS by Biswajit Ghosh (ed.). 2020. New Delhi: SAGE Publications India Private Limited. ISBN-13: 978-9353287399. 452 pp. Price Rs. 595. (Paperback).

The present voluminous edited book 'Social Movements: Concepts, Experiences and Concerns' by Biswajit Ghosh seems to be much timely and a suitable exposition. The book aptly prefaces the concern that, 'the social movements are not only a matter of intellectual concern' only but now are 'matters of everyday discourse' (p. xxiii). In the changing context, it thus becomes essential to revisit 'the way social movements have become an instrument of social change including assertion of identity and protest against marginalisation across time and space. The global society is also a place where protest is global' (ibid). Pertinently, the book attempts to make a fair assessment of the growing role of information technology, media, civil society, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), middle class, prevailing globalisation, neoliberal state and raging global capitalism viz a viz, people's miseries, forms of protests, state repression, and the taste of success and failure of people's movements. The present book is a compilation of 21 chapters, written by different scholars having expertise in the field, exhaustively covers all possible forms of social movements with most recent and discerning examples from India and the countries from across the world. The editor has diligently placed chapters into three distinct sections ranging from basic concepts and

theoretical underpinnings to experiences and concerns.

The first section, shortest one with five chapters, examines the concepts, theories and types of social movements. The initial two chapters discuss various approaches and typologies of social movements given by various scholars such as Blumer, Aberle, Weber, Marx, Hobsbown and P.N. Mukherjee, M. S. A. Rao and T. K. Oommen among others. Third chapter charts out the symbiotic relationship among neoliberal state, oppressive market and social movements. It explores classical thinkers such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Marx, Durkheim, and examines the concerns ranging from indigenous people's protests, Dalit movements, financial meltdown of 2008, Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011, and also the students' voices in Jadavpur University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Hyderabad Central University as strains of emerging new social movements. Chapter fourth locates the roots of social movements in social structure and their dialectical relationship with social change. The roles of ideology, leadership, organization and the state are critically examined, with umpteen examples from India, as major contours of any social movement. Fifth chapter, bringing newness to the discussion, examines Arab Spring of 2010-11 with respect to the role of global media, rising role of middle class, ethnicity and identity as nerves of new social movements.

Second section, the longest section with nine chapters, examines nine distinct forms of social movement. The chapters on peasant and farmers' movements, tribal movement, naxalite and maoist movement, Dalit movement and working class movement basically deal with conceptual nuances, historical phases and recent developments viz a viz neoliberal state and contemporary surge of internationalist capitalist monopoly. The chapter on 'women's movement' interestingly engages with most recent debates such as anti-globalisation stance, triple *Talaq*, lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer-intersex-asexual (LGBTQIA), and prevailing social media with regard to the women's struggle for gender just society. The chapter on 'environmental movements' explains multisided effects of environmental issues on human lives especially the vulnerable indigenous communities, and delves into the apathy of political parties and middle class to the cause of nature, and also examines the state's nexus with corporate global giants such as POSCO in Odisha and Vedanta in Tamil Nadu to exploit nature. It also explores the linkages of environmental movements with unending marginalization of the tribal communities, double marginalization of Dalit women, etc., and, explains many non-violent and unique ways adapted by the protestors to make their voices heard. The chapter on 'student and youth movement' critically examines the issues such as of Anti-Mandal agitation, Rohit Vemula, Aman Kachroo, Lyngdhoh committee and, a state of development deficit leading to Naxalite movement and similar instances in north-east India engaging students and youths.

Third and last section of the book specially focused to discuss social movements in global context with reference to the growing importance of smart network technology, NGOs and raging middle class in India and across the world. The role of transnational network technology, social media, and globalisation has also been examined to understand the localized protest movements such as Zapatista uprising in Mexico, and, the protest movement led by Kondh tribes in Odisha in India which got the international attention and subsequently succeeded in attaining their goal. It explores the role of middle class in spearheading the NGOs, popped up after 1990s a decade marking resurgence of India as neoliberal state, which facilitated the formation of acts like Right to Information, Right to Education and similar other acts related to land acquisition and settlement of displaced or indigenous people. The chapter on 'queer movement' sketched out the conceptual aspects and the discourse of LGBTQIA movements with its historical roots in Germany, United

Kingdom, America, and India. The chapter explains how have the queer movement shaped through various literary traditions, theater, art, and the proactive role of LGBTQIA organizations to fight out their villainy status as ‘the other’ and still continuing the incessant long-drawn battle to ‘go beyond hetrenormativity’ (p. 324) in mainstream and malestream society. The circuitous story of protests against section 377 and its abolition by the higher judiciary in India is one of the interesting examples elaborated by the author. The chapter on ‘globalisation and New Religious Movements (NRMs)’ made a detailed and novel exposition into NRMs with examples such as Church of Scientology, Vishva Nirmala Dharma, Brahma Kumari, Sathya Sai Baba, International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKON) and The Art of Living which witness an ‘advent of new age’ (p. 350) in religious landscape across the globe. NRMSs being more practical oriented, hybrid and esoteric in nature are said to be malleably addressing the disenchanting minds in a fast-paced and neoliberal modern world. For instance, the author aptly cited the words of The Art of Living wherein it is argued ‘mind has become commercial and it needs to be captured commercially’ (p. 347). NRMs, rides on global network technology, primarily emerged due to the discontent with modernity are syncretic, and are potentially infused with generational and universal appeal with a sense of ‘global consciousness’. The chapter on ‘social movements against displacements’ critically engages with the development induced displacement with illustrative examples of Koel-Karo, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Jaduguda Movement in Jharkhand and Nandigram Movement in West Bengal. It inquisitively examines, why and how do the ‘dams’ once called ‘temples of modern India’ turned into ‘temples of doom’ for displaced people? To this effect, it unpacks the state’s blind approach to industrialization and its nexus with profit oriented multinational private companies..

The book, at large, seems to have prioritized comprehensiveness over novelness as it hardly provides original exposition of any conceptual and theoretical sort in its knowledge domain. However, the chapters on environmental movement, development-induced displacements, new religious movements, and queer movements bring in interesting additions on board especially after the landmark works of T. K. Oommen (1977), M.S.A. Rao (1979), Ghanshyam Shah (2002), and recent work of Randhir Singh (2010) and, Savyasachi and Ravi Kumar (2013) on social movements in India. There are also some chapters which seems insipidly descriptive and repetitive. I could not resist noting that at many places the infoboxes have neither provided source nor reference year of the event described therein (see, p. 203, 254, 259, 278, 326, 328, 382 and 388).

In nutshell, the book, structured neatly and an easy to read, exhaustively compiles the available literature on social movements, and gives a much required updated readings at one place. The book would be useful for undergraduate and post-graduate students, research scholars, teachers, policy makers and to anyone having interest in understanding people’s protest and social transformation at large.

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PLANET, PLANTS & ANIMALS: ECOLOGICAL PARADIGMS IN BUDDHISM by Anand Singh. 2019. Delhi: Primus Books. 284 pp. Price Rs. 995.

In the times of Covid-19 world, this book is the most relevant reading for everyone to understand the aggression committed by the humans over nature and how the exploitation of environment has pushed humans to vulnerability. The author has not only taken stock of environmental degradation over the centuries as the work is aiming to understand the environment in terms of Buddhist philosophy. The work has been successful in establishing that the acquaintance of the societies with modern technologies has damaged the environment in name of progress, but no wisdom has been shown by humans to control the aggression and exploitation of environment. The obvious attitude towards this acute problem is troubling and dangerous.

In the initial pages the entire historiography in terms of Buddhism and environmentalism has been discussed with great details. The long tradition of debates pertaining to the environment has been presented meticulously which ranges from ancient to the contemporary times. The contribution of scholars like Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Immanuel Kant, J.S. Mill, A. Smith along with discussions on the environment is a wholesome serve for anyone looking for an historical growth of the environmental school. Subsequently, the issues like compassion, respect for biodiversity, Nibbana, anthropocentric attitude of men's superiority over nature, crisis of ecology, humanity, eco-insensitive, failure of western scholars to look beyond scientific temperament, absence of harmony between nature and man, absence of moral restraint, spread of consumerism, use of politics and religion for creating strife, war and blood-sheds etc. has also been presented well with beginning of ecological studies in Buddhism.

The book not only presents the debates and the problems of environmentalism, it also suggest to engage Buddhism (Council of all Beings) as a preferred and popularized tradition to get positive response from environmentalism by going through the counter-arguments of the Buddhism environmentalism. The contributions of the Buddhist *Sangha*, development monks and ecology monk to the environment of Thailand and the activities of Thai monks with regard to Thai Forest and community management of local resources is a way forward. The global approach to environmental issues with regard of Buddhism is evident throughout the work as the author has not only limited his work to a country or a zone. The author shall be appreciated for the efforts put in, to deal in detail with the environmentalism of Buddhism of various countries like Thailand, Japan etc. The global approach is an essential ingredient for penning down any work on environment and the author has thoroughly succeeded in approaching the issue in a wholesome manner.

The book is intelligently divided into eight chapters, namely- Animals, *yajna* and population dynamics, chapter two is Plants and Early Buddhism. Formation of Buddhist Environmental ethics makes chapter three and chapter four deals with Animals, Trees and Spirits in *Jatakas* along with environmental virtues. Ecological consciousness in Jainism and comparison with Buddhism forms the fifth chapter. Nature in Theragatha and Therigatha are described in great detail in chapter six. Chapter seven gives an insight into 'Ecology, Economy and Buddhism' and finally, chapter eight is entitled as Happy Planet: Buddhist Pedagogy in Globalised Context. Each chapter deals with a different and diverse theme of environment but definitely in terms of Buddhism. Nearly, all the components of ecology like animals, plants along with sacrifices, dynamics of population, the permits and limits proposed by Buddhism in terms of reproduction amongst the humans are attractive and an essential

way forward to tackle the contemporary blowing up of human population which is the sparking factor for creating all the problems and burdens on the planet earth. Overall, the essence of Buddhist philosophy of creating harmony amongst all the components of the planet has been highlighted in the work regularly. The two maps (Uttar Pardesh: Economic and India: Vegetation Features) are an additional pie for research scholars and readers. Each chapter is a fresh pool of information, historical developments, historiography, ecological tools, ecological landscapes or zones, spirituality etc.

The book serves the purpose to humanity and environment completely as it doesn't limit into the academic debates. Its extension into the contesting issues of ecology, priority debated between ecology and economy (what to be preferred over which), the requirement of balance between need and coexistence, idealism and pragmatism are remarkable attempts to secure the balance between the need and greed as the planet have sufficient for everyone's need but not greed. By applying this Buddhist pedagogy in global context, humans will surely be able to attain a Happy Planet.

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