

Tina Uys and Sujata Patel (eds.): *Exclusion, social capital and citizenship: Contested transitions in South Africa and India*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2012, xv + 670 pp., Price not mentioned (hb). ISBN 978-81-250-4778-0

Citizenship is generally understood as a political category and has been discussed extensively by political scientists mainly in terms of the rights and obligations bestowed by the state. But essays in this volume have something different to offer on account of citizenship. The vast canvas of twenty-five chapters of the book bundled under three sections is dedicated to discuss the themes on exclusion, citizenship, and social capital. Although there is no essay which compares a particular issue in South Africa and India, under each theme, essays from India and South Africa are put together and the reader can generate an interesting comparative image about the different manifestation of the same theme in people's life located in two different political/geographical boundaries. The introduction to the volume facilitates this by offering a commentary on the similarities and differences between the contexts – India and South Africa. This forms a backdrop on which the entire discourse on these themes is built. The editors also caution us about comparative accounts, not just in terms of difference in the manifestation of the themes, but also in terms of the methodological viability in comparing difference in the experiences of the people.

The first part, titled 'Contesting Meanings of Social Exclusions', has nine chapters devoted to discussing the meaning of social exclusion in the multiple facets it assumes in people's life. Some discussions locate this at the transformation guided, by and large, by capitalism and its later incarnations. A.R Vasavi's thesis on the agrarian distress, Jan Breman's discussion on the formation of informal sector, and Charles Puttergill's analysis of the emergence of new middle class give the reader an idea about the directionality of new capitalistic social transformation experienced by the people in the two countries. Readers may come across contradictory explanations about the same social forms in different essays. In an individualised agrarian context, community obligation creates imbalances. But, on the other side, community bonds are effectively employed as a social insurance to resist the inaccessibility of food in the rapacity of the capitalist market as shown in Schalekamp's piece on food security. The collection gives the feel of complexity and contradictions of social reality to the reader rather than giving coherent set of explanations. In a similar vein, S.S. Jodhka's work on caste shows how caste is a different experience for Sikhs, unlike Hindus. Bhangya Bhukya's argument on the idea of 'tribe' as an external construct of exclusion is a brilliant article, but considering the spirit of this section some work which would shed light to the exclusionary experience of adivasis situated in their engagement with development process would have been more appropriate.

The second part, titled 'State Citizenship and Rights', has eight chapters discussing the kind of engagements employed by the people to claim citizenship. A recurring theme in the discussions on this process is the outburst of violence. Instead of realising historical trajectories in forming structure of inequalities, people tend to mistakenly identify an 'other' as a potential threat. This is particularly true in the context of ethnicity/identity based politics.

State mechanisms to tackle such challenges remain inefficient and sometimes feed the cause of violence by being insensitive to the basic democratic conduct. Liela Groenewald's conversation on the urban debate, S. Bekker et al.'s discussion on xenophobic violence, and Archana Upadhyay's arguments on terrorism in North East India together offers an analytical account on ground realities in this regard.

It would be of interest to know how religion is being used as a tool in claiming citizenship within a secular state. The contradiction in religious modality, which focuses on individual to treat structural causes, is also unfolded in the essays on Christianity and citizenship and Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

The two articles dealing with gender and citizenship unearth the struggle of women despite the progressive achievements made. These discussions point out that high educational attainment or property rights or even collective mobilisation by itself will not guarantee women's liberation unless guarded against mutated retreat of patriarchal norms or mechanisms, which undermines transformative potential of collective mobilisations of women. Tinya Uys et al.'s self-reflexive piece on academic citizenship shows that social scientists, by default, do not gain citizenship but have to introspect about their engagement with the larger social reality. However, such engagements are at stake with the development of new marketised universities, which uphold the neo-liberal market logic.

The third part, titled 'Networks, Social Capital and Politics', contains eight essays analysing people's experiments with networks in tackling power. There is ample discussion on the use of primordial identities as the axis of social capital. Such ties may be formed to negotiate communities' share in the modern social life, but they end up in fostering the old values and glorifying the roots, which ultimately promotes inter-group tensions. This has also undermined the grand alliance of the oppressed classes against the ravages of capitalism. Chapters on 'Identity and Belonging in South Africa', 'Private Muslim Girl's Schools', 'Dalit Politics in Bombay', and 'Caste as Social Capital' provide incisive analyses of this discourse. But, in this part, one could also see discussions sharing experience of network formation and mobilisations with progressive ideals, that too under the aegis of state. A bemused reader with such polarised experience is offered another stimulating piece which supplies a tool – regenerative and degenerative social capital – to analyse the nature of social capital. Two articles appear quite odd in the context of the discussions in this session: one discusses ecotherapy, a nature-spiritual engagement to bring back the former combatants to the society's fold, and the second shares reflections on mutated patriarchal norms that strains the work-family integration.

In brief, the trans-disciplinary treatment, comparative social contexts, richness of first-hand lived experiences from field, together with valuable insights on social transformation where old social forms and modern development ideals dialectically engage make this volume a must read.