

Cracks in the system

A politician tries to rekindle interest in ideologies

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By any measure, this is an ambitious book, authored by one who is steeped in our politics. He had a long innings both as a minister in the Centre and as a member of Parliament in the Lok Sabha. His oratory skills were well known and got him the Best Parliamentarian award in 1998. He was close to P.V. Narasimha Rao in the early years and was also drawn to Varavara Rao, Telugu poet and activist. Later, he came under the spell of Ram Manohar Lohia and carried on the socialist legacy during his long career.

Reddy belongs to that generation of politicians who viewed politics through an ideological prism. As he writes in the Preface, he is “deeply disturbed in recent decades by the fact that ideological debates or discussions are no longer in fashion. In fact, they are being eclipsed by the obsession with technocratic prescriptions and mathematical formulae.”

With *Ten Ideologies*, he wants to rekindle “intellectual interest in political processes.”



■ **Ten Ideologies: The Great Asymmetry between Agrarianism and Industrialism**
S. Jaipal Reddy
Orient Blackswan
₹795

Does he succeed? Well, yes and no.

In Part I, he explains how four great movements, the Renaissance, Humanism, Reformation and Scientific Revolution, shaped nations. The analysis is not rigorous, and Eurocentric. In Part II, he stresses on 10 ideologies we must be interested in: Nationalism, Democracy, Liberalism, Capitalism, Evolutionary Socialism, Revolutionary Socialism, Feminism, Environmentalism, Nuclear Pacifism and Globalism.

One may critique his choice of ideologies or their definition. Under well-defined polit-

ical texts only liberalism, capitalism and socialism may merit as ideologies. Nationalism is emotive and becomes strident while confronting rivals. Feminism, environmentalism and nuclear pacifism are sectional demands which cross geographical boundaries. As for globalism, Reddy is rather vague and mixes up philosophical dimensions of global harmony with globalisation brought about by the spread and reach of multinational corporations.

The disappointment with the book is that, it fails to achieve the stated objective – restore “ideology” in Indian politics.

While Reddy displays vast knowledge of ideologies, he has missed the recent debates on ideology carried on by social thinkers like Francis Fukuyama who is revising earlier stands as democratic societies fracture “into segments based on ever-narrowing identities.” Developing countries are not immune to these tectonic changes. Reddy is justified in lamenting the lack of ideology in our current politics, but fails to provide a way forward.