

that of an 'honest' but 'incompetent' and/or an 'indifferent' one. In a number of places he evaluates what constitutes 'bureaucratic successes' and how oftentimes it is consciously secured even at the cost of societal harm. He talks about the ACR system, and how it is misused to promote mediocrity/ intra-service 'tugs of war' but also simultaneously exposes the myths bureaucrats create about 'unbearable political pressure' pointing out that it is used to explain away their own flexibilities oriented towards securing career (or other) interests and brings out that not once in his long innings did he ever experience even a hint of such a pressure. Only the willing are so pressurized! He brings out that ethical behaviour is both possible and viable for organizations, institutions, individuals and societies. And there are actually no costs attached. Only the will should be there. And the willingness to always proclaim: 'follow me'.

There are two takeaways from the book: It can act as a useful tool kit for those who aspire to 'serve' while in public service. The second is implied. Luke was in service between 1975/2005. He feels and so do others, that Gujarat was a well administered state. If the fun and games he describes took place there, what would have been the case in the 'Ahem! Ahem!' states? The votaries of a large State could profitably ponder. The scale of the state has exploded manifold faster than population/economic growth during the last 40 years. As has been the distress and the problems. Are only politicians to blame?

T.C.A. Ranganathan, an alumni of Delhi School of Economics and a former CMD of Exim Bank, is currently a freelance writer.

Hinduization of Seva

Bhangya Bhukya

SEVA, SAVIOUR AND STATE: CASTE POLITICS, TRIBAL WELFARE AND CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

By R. Srivatsan

Routledge, New Delhi, 2015, pp. 198, ₹695.00

R. Srivatsan's theoretical intervention through his recent book, *Seva, Saviour and State: Caste Politics, Tribal Welfare and Capitalist Development* is about the politics articulated within the concept and practice of seva—politics of caste, politics of Hindutva, politics of secularism, politics of nationalism and politics of development.

Gopal Guru says in his Foreword that this book provides a theoretical, philosophical and historical basis for understanding the entity called the state in India. The Indian state evolved its developmentalism and welfarism on the foundation of seva in the first half of the twentieth century. The author argues that seva was essentially a political instrument used to achieve nationalist commitment to social reform, development and welfare to critique colonialism, to express aesthetic of activism and asceticism, and to express national commitment to. But in all these expressions necessary measures were taken to maintain the status quo of domination in a newer way. Rather upper caste domination was reinforced more powerfully through seva. Also the author argues that welfare in India is an expression of seva or charity, not a legal right of a citizen.

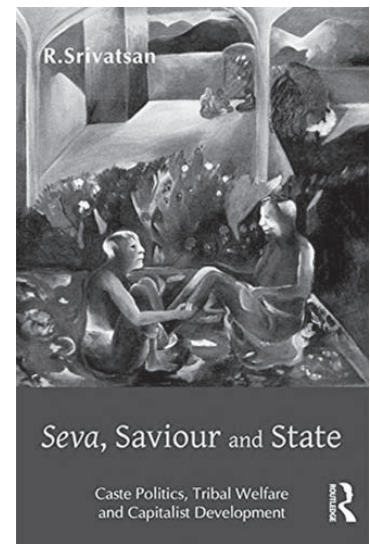
Besides fighting against colonial rule, the Indian freedom struggle had a normalized and naturalized form of domination on which the new India was built. As pointed out in this book, the concept of seva

had an interesting trajectory during the national movement. The discourse of seva in Hindu religious text ensures service to the dominant caste by the subaltern castes; particularly charity to brahmins has occupied great prominence in Hindu tradition. This was reversed from the last decade of the nineteenth century. Tilak, Ranade, Bhandarkar, Gokhale, Vivekananda and others were important personalities in this respect. Vivekananda's *Karma Yoga* that preached that duty to the community is the only practical route to salvation was

the foundation for such a shift. This was elaborated further both in terms of discourse and activism with the entry of M.K. Gandhi. Gandhi strongly believed that the colonial state can be weakened only through the strengthening of community; therefore he embraced community construction works throughout the national movement. However the paradigm shift (from service of the dominant to service of poor) was largely due to the crisis in Hinduism created by colonial rule. Of course this takes the subaltern castes to the receiving end.

B.R. Ambedkar's critique of Hinduism led Gandhi to talk of *Harijan seva* in a big way which aimed to eliminate untouchability, open temples to the untouchable and to address other disabilities such as drawing water from public wells. Ambedkar primarily critiqued Gandhian concept of seva as it was based on the assumption that an untouchable suffers because he has been vicious or sinful. Such programmes ensured only individual well-being and not the total transformation of the community. He suggested a set of programmes for Gandhian seva but they were not taken into consideration. This story of seva is illuminatingly brought out in the book. The debate on seva between persons and groups enriches our knowledge on the politics of seva. The author clearly shows the ways in which the domination of the Indian National Congress and Hinduism was established through the programme of seva. Further he says seva serves as the practical form of hegemony in one strand of the freedom struggle. The author raises very important questions in this chapter: what are the roots of the discourse of seva? How did seva function in the nationalist movement? What is the relationship between seva and capitalism? What was seva's relationship with Hinduism? What is the relationship between seva and government?

Another most interesting aspect of the book is the case of Swami Balananda, based on field study. Balananda was a Gandhian brahmin social worker who spent most of his life working with the Koyas and Konda Reddis of Bhadrachalam agency of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh state. Balananda began his works among adivasis by setting up cooperative societies to meet agricultural needs but soon he could establish his sway over all aspects of adivasis. The adivasis have articulated interesting memories of Swami Balananda's activism. He was remembered as a sadhu by them and sometimes even as Alluri Sitaramaraju who fought against British exploitation in the agency. The author has superbly documented those memories. Balananda through his seva aimed to achieve two obscure but vehement objects. One, he used seva to introduce brahmanic values and brahmanic gods and goddess among the adivasis. This process of brahmanization



Ambedkar primarily critiqued Gandhian concept of seva as it was based on the assumption that an untouchable suffers because he has been vicious or sinful. Such programmes ensured only individual well-being and not the total transformation of the community.

gradually culminated in creating anti-Nizam feelings among the adivasis, who was a Muslim ruler. Second, he designed the spirit and programme of seva to integrate adivasis with the larger caste-Hindu society by encouraging non-tribes into the adivasis areas and by introducing modern forms of agriculture among the adivasis. This was indeed done in collaboration with the government. The book shows how government and seva activists were working hand in hand when it came to adivasi development.

The book gives an elaborate illustration on the discourse of tribe and how this sets a foundation for planning tribal development both in colonial and postcolonial India. The author says that the imagination of tribes and their territory by the colonial state and national state vary in certain degrees but find convergence in many respects during the last decades of colonial rule. The colonial state imagined tribes as rebellious folks and their territory as dangerous archipelago whereas the national state perceived tribes as the most marginal, impoverished, unhealthy siblings of the Hindu mainstream and their territory as undeveloped backwater of a politically contiguous national territory. However the anthropological studies of the late colonial period reshaped the colonial perception of tribes that saw them as poor and backward mentalities who could be transformed through the colonial governmental rationality. The author describes the nationalist concept of seva as *moral tone*, and how it changed.

The author devotes a chapter to trace the trajectories of discourse of tribes both in colonial anthropology and colonial government and how this discourse shapes the nationalist construction of tribes. The racial theory of Risley ruptured caste hierarchies to some extent by opening up a debate on superior and inferior position of race/castes. This continued to reflect even in the assimilation and isolation theories on the tribes proposed by G.S. Ghurye and Verrier Elwin respectively. The author maintains that these anthropological constructions of tribes find place not only in tribal development but also in nation making or national unity.

In the epilogue the author shoots at the Gandhian seva from Ambedkar's shoulder. Ambedkar through a letter to the Anti-Untouchability League makes a serious critique of Gandhian seva in which he traces not only the genealogy of nationalist voluntary activism but also gives a set of proposals for total transformation of the untouchables of India. As underlined in the book, Gandhian seva is essentially rooted in Hindu fundamentalism, and unfortunately it has become an epistemological base to most social voluntary activism in India.

The book thus offers us a thought provoking genealogy of the discourse of seva in India. However, it would have been more illuminating if the author had taken a little care about the effect of those discourses on the subaltern castes and communities. The author's deep engagement with activism has enriched the book both theoretically and empirically.

Bhangya Bhukya is Associate Professor in the Department of History, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad.

What Works In Asian Scenarios

Avinash Godbole

THE GLOBAL RISE OF ASIAN TRANSFORMATION: TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN ECONOMIC GROWTH DYNAMICS

Edited by Pongsak Hoontrakul, Christopher Balding and Reena Marwah
Palgrave Macmillan, New York, pp. xxii+272, \$115.00

Asian economic transformation has been underway despite the hiccups of the 2008 crisis that nearly brought the world economy to a standstill. Asia, at least that part of Asia spanning from India to Japan, now has dynamic leaders in Xi Jinping, Shinzo Abe and Narendra Modi, who are highly nationalist on one hand but also fairly pragmatic as seen in the last couple of years. China, as the biggest rising power in the region, has also undertaken initiatives like the One Belt One Road (OBOR) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) that promise to transform the structure and the nature of intra-Asian business, networks, communication and connectivity.

Leading into these times, *The Global Rise of Asian Transformation: Trends and Developments in Economic Growth Dynamics*, presents a well rounded backgrounder to what works and what does not in Asian political and economic scenarios. As detailed in the preface, the audience that the book seeks to address is middle-level managers and MBA students who seek careers in Asia. However, it is a good read for the students of political science and international relations as well, since its thrust is on the drivers and processes of change in Asia. What this book does it to identify the areas where the future of growth in Asia is and it also backs up its claim with more than adequate amount of statistics and charts. However, the study is largely limited to the Asian geographic area between and including India and China and how the ASEAN members relate to these two Asian powers.

Pongsak Hoontrakul, who is either sole or joint author of all but one chapter in this book, identifies the five megatrends around which Asian economic future hinges. These include, i) life after quantitative easing, ii) new technologies (including ICT revolution), iii) individual empowerment and growing demands, iv) Asia's internationalization, and v) changing demographic patterns (p. 1). It also looks at five game changers that will impact productivity in the years to come. These include, 1) rising pressures on ruling systems, 2) the energy landscape reshaped by the shale gas revolution 3) the transformation of global trade and financial flows, 4) infrastructure connectivity, and 5) talent, human capital and the middle income trap (p. 2). It has to be said that the book does adequate justice to these

