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R. Srivatsan. 2015. *Seva, Saviour and State: Caste Politics, Tribal Welfare and Capitalist Development*. New Delhi: Routledge. xiv + 198 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. ₹695 (hardback).

DOI: 10.1177/0069966717713408

Srivatsan's new book provides a bold and creative analysis of the concept and practice of *seva* (service). The book takes on the ambitious task of unravelling the story of how *seva* was adopted as an underlying ethical principle by the political elite during the national movement in early 20th-century India for a clear instrumental purpose. The resulting analysis is more fascinating than any other recent work on the subject. The book consists of an Introduction, four chapters and an Epilogue. While there is an underlying thread that connects the parts, each of these chapters are stand-alone pieces of scholarship that provide interesting perspectives on upper-caste social reform movements, Harijan politics and its contestation and tribal welfare in early 20th-century India.

The introductory chapter outlines the author's strategy and traces *seva* in contemporary historiography by drawing upon two distinct intellectual positions represented by the Cambridge India specialists and the Subaltern Studies historians. The author maps his own position in this debate and argues that far from being a benign expression of 'associational culture', *seva* is a 'historical universal'—an 'ethical principle that helped the caste-Hindu elite find an internally valid and self-respecting way to move out of caste boundaries' (p. 24). While the author admits that the current principles of welfare do not adhere to the caste principles of *seva*, he argues that the structural form of charitable service continues to retain the unaccountability of those caste principles (p. 32).

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the evolutionary trajectory of *seva* during the late- 19th and the early- 20th centuries and demonstrates how its practice helped in consolidating Congress and caste-Hindu hegemony during the freedom movement. Drawing attention to the common-sense notion of *seva*, the author says that in Brahmanical legend, *seva* is usually associated with a menial or polluting act of service, which, however, acquires a sacred potency in special contexts. It demonstrates how the Hindu social reform movement and the nationalist movement deliberately orchestrated a reversal of roles between the *sevak* and the recipient of *seva* for achieving specific political ends.

Chapter 2 provides an interesting biography of Swami Balananda and the endorsement of his social work amongst the Kondareddi tribe in Andhra Pradesh by the government, in order to show how the ethical and administrative framework of development thinking in the newly independent postcolonial state rested on the foundation of *seva*. The author juxtaposes two images of the Swami: one emerging from governmental archives that paints him as a ‘messiah of the Kondareddis’, freeing them from indebted bondage to the moneylending contractors, and the other emerging from the memories of the local people who describe him as a corrupt and violent man. The author argues that the appreciation of Balananda in governmental archives is reflective of the emergence of a model of modernisation and ‘development’ of tribal culture that was based on two new principles that were different from those of colonial anthropology, namely ‘diffusion’ and ‘acculturation’.

Chapter 3 draws attention to the differences and continuities in the discourse of tribes in colonial and postcolonial anthropology by providing a comparative picture of the perspectives of understanding of the hill tribes in the Godavari uplands by the Madras Presidency government before the 1940s and the nationalist government after this period. Chapter 4 provides a peek into two interesting debates in the late-19th and the mid-20th centuries that demonstrate the change in focus that occurs in anthropology and the discourse on tribes with the rise of nationalism. The first part discusses Risley’s scientific hypothesis about the racial basis of Indian caste and tribal culture, proposed in the 1890s, which could be verified through the scientific measurement of the nasal index of the natives and its contestation and refinement in the late-colonial census administration work of B.S. Guha and Mahalanobis. The second part reviews a debate in the 1940s on the question of tribal protection, in which G.S. Ghurye attacks Verrier Elwin’s proposals for an area earmarked as a ‘zoo’ in which the Baiga could pursue changes in their ways of living at their own place.

The Epilogue revisits the contrary visions of Ambedkar and Gandhi, raised in Chapter 1 with regard to the upliftment of Untouchables by analysing a letter that Ambedkar wrote in 1932 to A.V. Thakkar, who was the secretary of the Anti-Untouchability League (AUL). In this letter, Ambedkar criticises Gandhi’s framework for Harijan welfare, which, according to the former, was based on the improvement of the individual’s

conduct by establishing schools, libraries, promoting vegetarianism, etc. Ambedkar instead called for a change of the environment of the Depressed Classes which was the root cause of their misery and thus advised the AUL to work towards the promotion of civil rights, creation of economic opportunities in government and private sectors, encouragement of social bonding between caste-Hindus and the Depressed Classes and recruitment of members from the Depressed Classes into the AUL. The author compliments Ambedkar for problematising both Gandhian welfare activism and Marxism and charting out an independent political thinking that accepts the notion of welfare and revolutionary violence wherever needed.

The book has its limitations. By the author's own admission, he pays no attention to the question of women's reform at all. There is also no reference to how the discourse about the welfare of religious minorities took shape and if at all the paternalistic ethic of *seva* had any role to play in this. There is surprisingly also no mention of the ways in which the discourse of *seva* evolved in the Hindu nationalist movement, which acquired momentum in the early 20th century. Moreover, the author appears to be dismissive of the altruistic, affectual and dynamic aspects of *seva* that represents impulsive and spontaneous giving without any strings attached. *Seva, Saviour and the State* does deliver on its promise to unravel the story of how *seva* reinforces the elite politics of hegemony, but the picture is far from complete.

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Ashleigh Barnes, ed. 2015. *Feminisms of Discontent: Global Contestations*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. xxii + 252 pp. Notes, references, index. ₹850 (hardback).

DOI: 10.1177/0069966717713892

Discontent is a powerful intellectual tool which is necessary for the continued relevance and rejuvenation of any serious political project and the same holds true for feminism. As feminism has gone mainstream, accruing respectability and inclusion, it has also given rise to doubts about its continued relevance. In the process of its mainstreaming, feminism became restricted to a dualistic understanding of sex/gender, hardened