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## Book Reviews

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Gaurav J. Pathania, *The University as a Site of Resistance: Identity and Student Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2018, 1–236 pp. ₹895 (Hardback). ISBN: 0-19-948841-X.

The book is an interesting read as it has explored the many facets of social movement that had led to the formation of Telangana state. The book has tried to explore the ways in which Osmania University (OU) became a site of resistance for the formation of Telangana state. Pathania has traced the history of this struggle back from 1968, when the Telangana Non-Gazetted Officers' Association raised the issue of 'Telangana Safeguards' in jobs for indigenous Telangana people, who were often left out in jobs when compared to the Andhras. The issue was taken up by the OU students Union to rethink about indigenous identity that was compromised in the state of Andhra Pradesh. There was a realization of asserting for 'Telangana' identity through gaining a political mileage. Eventually, it was through the activism of student's politics that, in 1969, Telangana Praja Samithi (TPS) was formed. The book has explored different political facets of the Telangana movement that was rooted within the student's politics. The university spaces, one like OU, became an active stage for students' politics. The political narrative developed in these university spaces got echoed in mainstream politics as well.

However, the most striking dimension of the book is that unlike the study of many other social movements, which have rooted their base in class-led movement, in middle-class or in NGO-led movement, this book has highlighted the cultural aspects that were unique for the Telangana movement. The Telangana movement witnessed a constant negotiation with multiple ideologies and cultural practices along with political resistance that eventually led to the formation of the new state. Thus, the culmination of the movement through the formation of 29th Indian state, Telangana, was not just a 'counter-narrative' that was to be pitted against a set of political demands; rather, it was the coming together of countless narratives from different participants including the leftist, Dalit-OBC's groups as well as from many other subgroups that had eventually emerged.

Cultural dimensions such as folk, theatre and art together were important components of student-led Telangana movement. The book has discussed about folk performances like Gaddar, which were translated into a 'revolutionary genre' within university spaces. These performances became the contested space to bring up symbols of identity and oral tradition of the oppressed people. The coming up of such folk performances became a counter-narrative to celebration of festivals such as Ugadi, Sanskriti and Yeruvaka by Andhra state government that often used these festivals to keep united the Andhra identity. The other form of cultural resistance came in the form of celebration of Batukamma festival, which was mainly a Telangana festival, and it was ignored within the Andhra culture. The cultural assertion saw itself brimming within the university spaces where the student network worked closely with the cultural identities, particularly of the marginalized community. The usage of musical instruments like *Dappu*,

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which very well asserts the 'lifeworld' of the lower caste, got visibility in public spaces of the university. Further, the composition of Beef Anthem, formation of musical band Bhim Drum etc. became popular in OU, which reflected the voicing of marginalized identity within the sociopolitical movement of Telangana state formation.

Besides highlighting the cultural artefacts and performances that became the centre of the student movement for statehood of Telangana, the book has extensively discussed about the lifeworld of the students on the campus. Such an in-depth ethnographic account about student activists is a unique discursive engagement in the study of social movements itself. The book has done an extensive study of campus networks and has given a detailed account of significant spatial locations like dhabas, campus police stations, etc., which otherwise are often reduced to the state of banality in a political discursive engagement. Interestingly, Pathania has discussed dhabas as the 'strategy forums' where the campus networks would actually unfold themselves. They became a hub for political discussion and a public space where different political groups would be formed. The spaces like dhabas were qualitatively different from formal spaces like classroom and library. Dhabas were like the 'third space' that could mediate with identity, lived experience and multiple narratives. A 'thick description' of dhaba activities from drinking tea to reading Telugu newspaper explains the collective consciousness that was formed in these informal yet significant spaces.

The book is an interesting read as it brings about a new dimensionality to the ways in which social movement can be understood from a cultural lens, besides its sociopolitical aspects. Further, in establishing university as a site of resistance for the marginalized community, the author has put forth the important ways in which university spaces per se could be re-imagined. The book has also interestingly pointed to the blurring of spatial segregation in university spaces like a knowledge space or spaces like dhabas. The enmeshed patterns of everyday life with the political spectrum have led to the eventual formation of 'organic intellectual'. This has led to a sustained struggle of Telangana movement over a period of time without which the movement would have otherwise fractured. The university as a site of resistance also became a space for critical debates on Telangana issue within intellectual circles that kept the movement revitalized. The academic engagement with the movement was important in systematically rationalizing the demands of Telangana state formation.

The book has, thus, explored the meanings of university per se by bringing in a holistic reflection on what ethos a university stands, besides understanding it as a mere site for knowledge production. It would have been nice if, towards the end book, the author would have provided a post-effect of formation of Telangana on the university itself. This could have been done by looking into the marginalized identity within university space post division. Overall, the book has neatly developed university as a space that had become a microcosm of the larger macrocosm of Telangana identity. The ethnographic richness to understand university spaces has explored the many possibilities within which university stands for voicing the cultural richness of marginalized communities.

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Aakash Singh Rathore, *Ambedkar's Preamble: A Secret History of the Constitution of India*. Penguin & Vintage Publication, 2020, 236 pp. (hardcover). ISBN 978-0-670-09324-3.

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Ambedkar said in his speech on 26 January 1950s 'the Life of Contradictions' remains relevant even in today's time where inequality in the society emanated from the capitalism and the hyper nationalism often shown by the Hindutva juggernaut. Rathore's new book in this context is a timely intervention that sheds light on these realities with Ambedkar's thoughts and ideas in terms of the preamble.

The book, *Ambedkar's Preamble: A Secret History of the Constitution of India*, tries to explore how and why the preamble of the constitution of India is basically an Ambedkarite preamble. It also reflects Ambedkar's writings and speeches. The author tries to decode six philosophical and central concepts, justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, dignity and nation, to establish Ambedkar's indisputable authorship of the preamble and discover his original intellectual genesis.

Rathore challenges the belief that the preamble was given by Jawaharlal Nehru, quite popular among 'The UPSC aspirants'. It is important to note that the Objectives Resolution stimulated by Nehru eventually helped form the constitution. However, Nehru was not the sole person preparing the preamble of the constitution. The author deeply examines historical and constitutional debates with the sociopolitical environment to credit Ambedkar as the key author of the preamble.

In general, it is widely accepted that Ambedkar was the chief architect of the constitution. The author uncovers the story of his role as chairman of the Drafting Committee, which has not been widely discussed by academicians and legal historians. It is believed that Ambedkar has been systematically ignored for over seven decades. Rathore confidently claims that Ambedkar is the sole person who has written the preamble of the constitution and there is no question of joint authorship in the making of the preamble. This is repeatedly and incorrectly credited to B. N. Rau rather than to B. R. Ambedkar. In this regard, Jawaharlal Nehru said, 'He is often spoken of as one of the architects of our constitution. There is no doubt that no one took greater care and trouble over constitution-making than Dr. Ambedkar' (p. xvi).

There have been many lively debates on the opening phrase of the preamble, 'We, the People'. The preamble also has objectives and goals. The objectives part of the original preamble read, 'having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC...' (p. xix). There have also been debates on the 'invocative' part, which generally invokes the name of God. Some members of the Constituent Assembly wanted to add 'god' and 'Mahatma Gandhi' in this regard, two contenders for the invocation part demanded first by Shibban Lal Saksena, who proposed, 'In the name of God the Almighty, under whose inspiration and guidance, the father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi, led the Nation from slavery...', and secondly by Pandit Govind Malaviya, who offered, 'By the Grace of Parameshwar, the Supreme Being, the lord of the Universe [called by different names by different peoples of the world]...' (p. xx). However, Gandhi and Malaviya's proposal for adding 'Thanks God' was rejected by the Constituent Assembly.

The original preamble consisted of 44 simple words, if we do not consider the declaratory and objective parts. Rathore in this book only considers six words, justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, dignity and nation, to examine and understand Dr Ambedkar's preamble. One can raise a legitimate concern here: Do these six words reflect Ambedkar's lived experiences?

In the first chapter, which deals with 'Justice', Rathore explains well Ambedkar's understanding of justice. Ambedkar's proposed preamble attempts to protect all citizens through assuring about elements of sociopolitical and economic rights under the notion of justice. Ambedkar's idea of justice is very

similar to John Rawls' concept of 'Justice as Fairness'. Rawls argued that both political and moral in conception, formulated keeping in mind the basic structure of modern constitutional democracy (Rawls' book, *Theory of Justice*, 2000). The book highlights that Ambedkar's notion of justice emphasizes addressing inequality within society in order to create an egalitarian society. Being a Dalit, Ambedkar had experiences of injustice during his school days and when he worked as a lawyer. He explains his lived experience in his 25-page biography, *Waiting for Visa*. Ambedkar's idea of justice is inclusive in socio-economic and political terms; in this regard, Professor Valerian Rodrigues, in his essay 'Ambedkar as a Political Philosopher', lists out justice, liberty, equality, community, democracy, authority, legitimacy and recognition as his lifelong pursuits. In this regard, Nehru, in the tripartite division of the social, economic and political, gave substantive meaning to the term 'justice' by speaking of the removal of inequality. Where Nehru's text spoke of securing justice, social, economic and political, Dr Ambedkar's text interpreted 'Securing Justice' to mean removing social, political and economic inequalities (p. 28).

The chapter on 'liberty' reflects Ambedkar's deep understanding of liberty; when he defined social democracy, he said, 'it means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity'. In this sense, to separate one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. In the formation of the preamble Nehru's Objectives Resolution spoke of freedoms and not liberty, and in Ambedkar's 'proposed preamble' one can find references to freedom and liberty both in states and for minorities (p. 32). In the book, the author explains the conceptual association of 'freedom' with 'Swaraj', which dominated the twentieth century. Spiritualization of the concept of freedom is associated with the Hindu majoritarian agenda, argues Rathore. To prove his point, he takes a dig at Gurpreet Mahajan's book, *India: Political Ideas and the Making of Democratic Discourse*, and highlights the notion of freedom as she also defines it in the context of spiritual nationalism, which further links with Swaraj in post-independence India. To anchor his argument further, Rathore cites another noted scholar, Ananya Vajpeyi. In her book *Righteous Republic*, she also focuses on 'Swaraj as being essential to the project of the construction of the Indian Republic' (p. 36). Vajpeyi finds freedom as something embedded within the idea of Swaraj. Extending the debate on different notions of freedom and Swaraj, Rathore picks a historically popular expression given by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, 'Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have this'. Here, Rathore brings Ambedkar's strong views to counter the Hindu majoritarian notion of spiritual freedom. Ambedkar said, 'if Tilak had been born among the untouchables, he would not have raised the slogan "Swaraj is my birth right," but he would have raised the slogan "Annihilation of untouchability is my birthright"' (p. 37).

Ambedkar continues with his disagreement on the notion of Gandhi's Swaraj and Savarkar's Hindu Swaraj. Ambedkar believed that if there has to be something called Swaraj, it has to be 'a Government of the people by the people and for the people'. Rathore also emphasized that liberty must be seen as birth right, being enjoyed by every Indian, rather than Swaraj which also shows a potential for Dalit and non-Dalit for their liberation. The same notion is also reflected in the Ambedkar's preamble of Indian constitution.

Rathore devotes a chapter on equality to explore Ambedkar's understanding of equality. Ambedkar not only emphasized socio-political inequality but also emphasized economic inequality, which is deeply embedded in the Indian society. As one can see in the 'proposed preamble' through state and minorities in 1947, Ambedkar wanted to address economic inequality, which is more significant for oppressed groups and minorities in India. Therefore, it is quite obvious why Ambedkar created several important clauses and articles related to equality. It is interesting to note that even after seven decades of independence, the idea of achieving a society based on equality remains debatable and unresolved. Sporadic changes and amendments in the clauses related to equality, that is, Articles 15 and 16, keep happening. Ambedkar believed that the sources of inequality in the society are the Hindu religious textbooks that

maintain the caste system, and these control the sociopolitical and even spiritual life of marginalized communities. Ambedkar's idea of equality was largely inspired by the philosophical approach of Buddha, Kabir and Phule and later was reflected in the making of the preamble of the Indian constitution. Ambedkar details in his milestone literary work called *Revolution and counter-revolution in Ancient India* the struggle for equality in ancient India, where he states that this phenomenon is ages old and there are always struggles to fight it. Thus, Ambedkar in his efforts to bring equality in the society suggested and brought key reform-based bills and acts, such as the Hindu Code Bill and Affirmative Action in the Indian constitution. This shows how close the idea of equality was to Ambedkar's heart and mind. Because of such approach, he is often identified as one of the most radical egalitarian thinkers of the twentieth century.

In the fourth chapter, Rathore introduces Ambedkar's idea of 'Fraternity' in the preamble and unravels many true stories related to it. He shares that one of the Constituent Assembly members, Thakur Das Bhargava, expressed his gratitude to Ambedkar for incorporating such a novel idea like 'Fraternity' in the constitution through the preamble. Ambedkar added this 'Fraternity' clause on 6 February 1948 without any precedent. One can legitimately raise a question as to what fraternity means. According to Rathore, Ambedkar describes 'Fraternity' as something that creates brotherhood among all Indian citizens as one people. It promotes the principle of unity and social solidarity among peoples. Rathore pointed out that the centrality of the idea of fraternity Ambedkar used to apply in every debate in the Drafting Committee meeting and constitutional Assembly debate. Ambedkar used the word 'fraternity' very sensibly in his writings like 'Annihilation of Caste', 'Hindu Social Order', 'Riddles of Hinduism', 'Buddha and Karl Marx' and his masterpiece work, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*. The author also highlights Ambedkar's imagination of an ideal society based on liberty, equality and fraternity, which seems to be inspired from the French Revolution. In an interview with All India Radio in 1954, Ambedkar made it clear from where he derived the idea of liberty, equality and fraternity. He said, 'My social philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three word liberty, equality and fraternity from French Revolution but not, I have derived them from the teachings of my master, the Buddha' (p. 100). On 4 November 1948, Ambedkar introduced to the Drafting Committee a new draft constitution with his famous appeal in terms of 'Constitutional Morality', which refers to calling public officials and public servants to transcend the values and principles that they had been imbued with in Indian social life and adopt the values and principles laid out before them ever so succinctly in the preamble. While Ambedkar calls it 'Constitutional Morality', the philosopher John Rawls calls it 'Public Reason' in its stricter sense (p. 109). For Ambedkar, the word fraternity is an inadequate expression. The suitable word what the Buddha called is *Maitree* which means love to all living beings. According to Rathore, Ambedkar finally cracked the code to find the secret history of fraternity. He explains, 'Love is not enough; what is required is maîtrei. It is wider than love. It means fellowship not merely with human being but with all living beings'.

In the chapter on 'Dignity', the author explains that Ambedkar gives more importance to dignity. The meaning of the word dignity has been put in the preamble by Ambedkar with its unique belief. Ambedkar understands dignity in terms of the Hindu social order. However, leftist and socialist ideologues hold a common view that their idea of equality contains all the necessary elements of dignity, and so it need not be separately required. The author also brings out differences in the understanding of 'dignity' between Ambedkar and Gandhi. Gandhi held views on dignity in the context of the Indian civilization, which is based on the principle of non-violence and the condition of a dignified and peaceful existence. This could be best understood by the village life in India, Gandhi believed. On the contrary, Ambedkar countered this notion of dignity presented by Gandhi. He argued that 'the village is a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow mindedness and communalism' (p. 124). On 6 February 1948, after a long debate

related to caste, the idea of dignity saw its first interpretation in the preamble. The ‘dignity’ component of the ‘fraternity’ clause was read on 6 February. It says that fraternity would be complete when we assure the dignity of every individual without any distinction of caste or creed. On 16 January 1950, the idea of fraternity was defined: ‘Fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and unity of the nation’. But originally, Ambedkar linked dignity with caste which had broader meaning and was seen by him as a necessity for the dignity of every individual (p. 126).

In the last chapter of the book *Nation: The Future of a Delusion* Ambedkar describes ‘Nation’ as ‘how people who are divided into several thousands of caste can be called a nation?’ To build a nation, we need to see dignity of the individual as a basic condition. Ambedkar and the Drafting Committee, in response to the recommendations to amend the preamble to read as ‘assuring unity of the nation and the dignity of the individual’, declined to accept the amendment and argued that ‘unless the dignity of the individual is assured, the nation cannot be united’. Ambedkar warned the Constituent Assembly that ‘Democracy in India is only top-dressing on an Indian soil, which is essentially undemocratic’. In the chapter, the author also discusses different ideas on nationalism given by Tagore, Gandhi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Marxists and M. S. Golwalkar on Hindutva nationalism. Rathore highlights the philosophically popular expression ‘life of contradictions’, which Ambedkar very categorically shared in the parliament on 26 January 1950 while adopting the constitution, and Ambedkar pointed out that when we resolve the ‘life of contradiction’, from then only India would start its nation-building process as a nation.

To sum up the review of the book, it would not be exaggeration to say that Aakash Singh Rathore has brought out a fine analytical work on Ambedkar which unravels many unknown facts about the making of the ‘Preamble’ of the Indian constitution. This book reflects deeply on the origin and development of six particular expressions that Ambedkar made painstaking efforts to define; these have great importance in the context of Indian society. One could argue that where the soul of egalitarian society lies in the constitution, this book beautifully brought out that the Preamble, for which Ambedkar fought tirelessly, is the exact place where the soul of egalitarian society rests. In a nutshell, Rathore’s book confirms it is indisputable that Ambedkar’s preamble is original in its meaning and approach. Rathore’s efforts are highly commendable.

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