

Gurbhagat Singh in his paper on 'Comparative Literature: Towards a Non-Logocentric Paradigm.' It is true that there is a common feature in all art or literary invariables occurring in all literature as explained by two famous comparative critics, Rene Wellek and Rene Etiemble. This does not mean that one would be happy and contented only with locating points of identities while studying CL. But, to think of universalist theory springing up from the hegemonic needs of the rising industrial-capitalist class of Europe, will be a little far-fetched and, at the same time, it is not true that only a transcultural non-logocentric methodology will help to understand the uniqueness of literature. Literatures

have both their identities as well as diversities. Surely, we must not deceive ourselves by ignoring the departures under the pretext of the unity of experience. Nonetheless, we should not allow ourselves to be victims of regionalism either. The methodology of CL ensures that all literatures have their own specificities and yet each individual literature is linked with the other to prove the existence of the paradigm of universality. However, the universalist argument does not hold where the variability rate is high. But, in the Indian context in spite of the multiplicity of ideas, multilingualism and multi-level meaningfulness of existence literature in different Indian languages creates

visions that transcend the barriers of diversities and bring us nearer to one another to point out our basic unity. This can be equally true in respect of world literature.

In sum, this collection of essays on the theory and practice of CL will provide fresh insights into the study of CIL in respect of commonality and difference. These papers truly convince us that through CL alone can Indian literary pedagogy be modernized. The time has come to create our own methodology to study CIL. We must realise that no method comes out of an empty laboratory: its making must be fed with existent data. Initially, the data were French plus, and accordingly a methodology was devised for the study of CL.

But it cannot be used in Asia and Africa. A methodology is to be created on the basis of a text which depends upon the socio-cultural context in which it has grown and hence methodological variability is to be kept in mind because of the variation in data. This book, like a few others in the field of CIL, has initiated successfully the exercise for developing a valid theoretical frame work to study CIL and realise that our sky is big enough to allow diversity and our earth small enough to guarantee the underlying unity of myth and experience.

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Ethnic Identity and Regional Movements

Ramashray Roy*

REGIONAL MOVEMENTS: POLITICS OF LANGUAGE, ETHNICITY IDENTITY

By Sajal Basu

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Rs. 250

How does one view regional movements that are based on linguistic, ethnic and other socio-cultural differences? Are they symptomatic of separatist and secessionist tendencies? Or, do they also contribute positively to the process of cooption and incorporation of peripheral socio-economic groups into the mainstream political arena and promote their integration? And, if regional movements have differential impact on the course of political development, what are the factors that make for such differential impacts? These are some of the theoretically important questions that the book under review seeks to explore and answer. In exploring these questions, Basu covers a wide range of movements in order to come to the correct answers.

The point of departure for Basu is the prevalence of Eurocentrism in social sciences and its spillover in the political realm too. He quotes favourably G. Ghevergese *et al*, who feel that Eurocentrism has "damaged the Non-European societies through colonisation of their intellectuals, impoverished academic disciplines which remain unaware of alternative sources of knowledge outside the mainstream development" (p. 129). Basu feels that even

political leaders consider the problems impinging on the process of nation formation in the European frame of analysis. As an evidence of this, Basu refers to the tendency of the leaders at the helm of national affairs to consider regional socio-cultural demands as inimical to unity and harmful for nation building.

Basu finds faults with both liberal and Marxist perspectives on the nature and role of regional movements vis-a-vis national integration. Apart from the fact that Western scholars see an inherent contradiction between primordial loyalties and civil responsibilities leading to turbulence and disintegration (p. 25), both Marxists and Liberals have failed in making a proper assessment of ethnic behaviour. They firmly believe that regional and parochial loyalties would be gradually replaced by class loyalty (p. 105), despite persistent evidence to the contrary. Most importantly, Western perspectives on the development of the sense of nationality suffer a fundamental drawback in that they lose sight of the fact that, as Rabindranath Tagore has pointed out, Samaj, not politics in India, has been the dominant element in regulating public order. Ignoring this, they talk of common memories and shared past or shared

amnesia. Basu aims at providing a corrective to the inadequate Western perspectives on nation building and regional movements from Tagore's vantage point.

Space prevents a detailed discussion of the way Basu conducts his exploration or adduces his evidences or attempts even a summary of the points he makes. However, it is necessary to ask whether he makes his point effectively. There is no doubt that Tagore's insight pertaining to two distinctive constitutive principles of organizing society is profound. There is also no doubt that Indian society, since ages, fitted the Samaj model. However, the point is

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whether this model is any more operative in Indian society. For the last fifty years, at least, India has been experimenting with the model of development, at the centre of which is the self-defining subject who makes the pursuit of self-interest the hub of his life activities.

In this view, society loses its traditionally attributed significance and is reduced simply to a mechanical aggregate of self-defining subjects who use (or abuse) it for realizing their own purposes. If it is this perspective on society that is the dominant framework, not only for theoretical but also for pragmatic purposes, then, it is not clear as to what extent Tagore's insight helps us in understanding the phenomena of nation-formation and regional movements. As a theoretical model, Tagore's insight, no doubt retains its attraction; however, as an operation category of constructing reality, it

loses much of its relevance.

Also, the emergence of self-defining subjects means the central importance of the phenomenon of self-determination of the individual in modern times. And, since self-determination and the pursuit of self-interest are organically linked, relations among individuals come to be characterized by conflict and collaboration. Every collaboration forms a group – a combination of "I's" into a "we" counter-balanced by a "they". But every such formation, as Duv Ronen points out, is tentative, temporary and shifting. In the competition for the good things of life, individuals form groups to press for their demands. These groups change their nature and could be constituted on different bases, depending on the stakes involved in the conflict for access to societal resources. It is in this context that any single factor explanation of a movement or, alternatively, rejection of any factor as being insignificant is erroneous. It is also in this context that it is difficult to maintain that "ethnic assertions" symbolise attempts to escape the homogenising influences of the political arrangement of nation state and that they are expressions of the quest for a human identity, invoking complex and solid linkages that nurture a sense of human belonging and providing possibilities of recapturing all the rich diversity of human culture (p. 121).

Despite these blemishes, the book is laboriously researched, clearly written, well argued and tastefully brought out. Appendices spread over ninety pages enhance the value of the book.

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