

*New Book***Crisis of Present Day Liberal State****Rakesh Gupta***

Bhupen Sarmah, Joydeep Baruah, ed. (2014), Neoliberal State, and its Challenges, Aakar Books, OKDISCD, Guwahati

Liberalism has faced recurring crises since John Locke, who is credited with the liberal ideology/thought. The liberal State as well has this as part of its being. The rescue operations since Bentham and J.S. Mill till date have not provided with any resolveable solution as shown by its frequent visceral examination. The grammar of Politics of Laski began the exercise of removing meeting the crises by injecting a Fabian dose (a la j. S. Mill and Rousseau problematique). That background brings us the book's Preface. The editors of these texts, read in a seminar organised by OKDISCD, Guwahati, map the 1960s and 1970s from the perspective of the then liberal state's welfare policies thus: 'the theoretical contestations that started in the 1960s and 1970s against the overall 'statist development paradigm' and its failure, (p. 8) led to policies of monetarism (p.9) and currently the Neoliberal state has to contend with the contradiction between its predatory nature and demands of Keynesian redistributive justice, p. 13). This perspective forms the context of the book's papers under three heads, viz, Neoliberal way (one paper), Neoliberalism and the State (six texts), and Neoliberalism, Class and Power Structure containing four exercises.

The first paper by Neil Devotta on liberal and illiberal ideology and South Asia surveys the Neo liberal agenda, best spelt out by Harvey, and agrees with Radice about its resultant reckless consumption in South Asian authoritarian states like Sri Lanka, armoured democracy in Pakistan, slander politics of Bangladesh and slipping well being of Indian state to maintain that this has negative consequences for Europe and American governance. The impact on Sri Lanka, her special focus, is that Rajapaksa is swapping authoritarianism with terrorism.

Samir Das' paper based on Deleuze and Guattari considers the sovereign gaze as abstract terms like development and nation but ignoring the people as non-existent (p. 46). He critiques Bhakra (1959) and Farakka projects (1975), the Posco project make the people or aggrieved disappear (p.49) entailing the problem of disillusionment further accentuated by the mismanagement in the chars in Bengal. They bemoan the fact that Indian sovereign state does not recognise the people's inalienable right to a home

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(p.56). The state cannot bridge the gap between the existing being and a being in the making for which they attempt to manufacture consent.

Radhika Kumar in her piece on developmental theory links it to Macro economics of Man Mohan Singh (1992) and this has not helped marginalised groups owing to cuts on welfare spending. Naidu's Andhra Pradesh in his earlier *avtar* focused on fiscal discipline as a facilitator and not a provider state administration. In the agricultural sector inequalities had increased in the Rayalseema and Telangana region owing to the promotion of well irrigation under water users' associations whose antics, along with other factors have led to farmer suicides, which almost is like an obituary of the developmental state despite Andhra's new bourgeois.

Santana Rakshit focuses on disconnect between Keynesian and Neoliberal policy framework. He has done a pedantic exercise and gone into theoretical literature on the issue. He finds the disconnect between the two in terms of a predictable Janus face-half market and half human (p. 81) leading to casino type ruling (p. 88) based the dual inclusion and administration, viz, one for the upper and the other for the poorer people-one for Neoliberal juggernaut and the other for benevolence in the governing elite.

Asok Kumar Ray juxtaposes the welfare and the Neoliberal post colonial state to critique this moment on the basis of critiques of Chomsky, Stieglitz, Tariq Ali and Susan George. The crisis of this construct or contest led to changes in political governance in favour of market and the corporates. He highlights the disconnect between the liberal 19th century and its 20 century versions in which the non state actors remain irrelevant in contrast to the conglomerates' role power of controlling market outcomes.

Sudipta Bhattacharya notes that in India the decline of the welfarist agenda led to alienation of the population and brought the Society back in, or, it's Faultlines came up in line with the pattern elsewhere. Despite India's stagnating industrialisation, he argues for this world against the Neoliberal policy that allows free flow of high capital, speculative and real setae criminality, and final dawn of autocracy with reference to South-East Asian States and supports the theorisation of Rosa about fascism(p. 129) in this context. The view may perhaps be more appropriate to say that these are dependent fascist states- different from Germany and Italy- that had been appeased by Britain and France, respectively during the interwar period.

Joydeep Barua's on Indian Neoliberal urban order notes the ticking bomb of urban population by 2025 forcing a new arrangement of city-capital syndrome where localisation over the head of the state planning is the new feature of capital flow of hybrid form. The power of the city increases owing to capital flows coexisting with urban poverty and squalor. He notes this observed divide along with the rural urban divide. He critiques land reform and urban ceiling legislations of the regimes. The new urban order that visualises cities as new magnates of capital finds Guwahati to be a key to look east.

In the second part of the book, specific issues are highlighted to establish the ideology

of the new phase noted in Part I and II. Free market land use, investment induced displacement, constitutional provisions of land acquisition laws and water policy are highlighted. The article on land use rejects kulak-dual linkages. The other articles highlight the limitations of the present state of state power or its flawed responses in different stages of development.

Most of the papers of the volume take a position in favour of social sciences being products of the system they sprout from. They carry with them their birth marks and any straight jacketing of future of people's or states' policies is fraught with ideological refraction. This volume, given present day highways of neuter world may find trenchant criticism, closeted praise and shelf life. That life will persist as highways turn to byways in a new world of contradictions that they try to fly past. A general remark is in order. Those who subscribe to an ideology permeated world vision need realise that some among the Marxists also prepared the ground for an ideology free social science- which is just a myth.