

Editor's Note

Social science research is often reactions to contemporary issues of immediate concern and plays the role of a social engine. Even history, which is supposed to deal with issues of the gone past, is largely a response to the living present because of 'our own position in time' and the 'view we take of the society in which we live', as E.H. Carr has put it. The continued interest shown by the West on Afro-Asian issues affirm this fact, though their study of the east is to find justification for their own past record of domination and exploitation and to escape from the hegemonizing present. This may also be attributed to the dearth of serious academic initiatives in the East or partly to the continued existence of the spirit of orientalism. But the third world responses to several vital social issues is frustrating; many are indifferent to take up them seriously and to link academic research with social activism. Most of such researches are hence of peripheral value; some people are even unaware of using theory in explaining data. Theoretical incapacity notwithstanding, the inability to analyze things from recent social science perspective makes most of the researches truly meaningless.

The present volume contains articles from fresh and novel areas of live and ongoing research. It is promising either, as they contain 'thick description' of the problem under study and attempt to explain things differently. In recent times people have shifted to micro research, though within the largely existing macro fields, for analysing social structures/relations or cultural practices. Pursuing the micro is certainly rewarding for the rich and uncommon data they could provide and for treading fields hitherto unexplored. Scholars were often sceptical of exploring the 'small' and the 'local' for the fear of losing a global perspective. But we have started to realize that what is important is the way we look at things; pursuing the simple, ordinary, everyday things from a social science perspective may certainly be rewarding as it would help position ourselves in the contemporary global politics.

This is the point in which we look at the developments of our own times – politics and economy in particular – in both realms we are fast moving towards the extreme right. It is greatly distressing as it widens the already existing divide – in terms of caste, class, race,

and gender. In the garb of creating a global society the new technological innovations contribute heavily towards dividing the world into mutually antagonistic interest groups in which the 'developed' people have been the principal beneficiaries. The sweeping exploitation of the east by the west is now a matter of the past; the role of the east itself has changed greatly – now it has gained considerable autonomy as an economic force, though its earlier role of collaborator and comprador continues to persist. The fact that the national bourgeoisie is in no way qualitatively better than the imperialist has created a challenging situation before the social scientist – it is expedient to explore and expose the Right-wing forces and the means through which they impinge on the growth of a true civil society by promoting social divide and social tensions.

The Indian situation makes things even more problematic. The fast rightward turn of the economy is as disturbing as the furiously right-going politics – whether on claims of national unity and cultural integrity. The traditional and the hard-earned values of tolerance and diversity are under threat now and the secular ethos are in great peril. The Hindu rightwing is all the more organized and powerful enough to protect global capital and to silence forces which challenge it. Sincere academic activity in this context is not simply explaining things but to take sides with the victims of resurgent capitalism. History reminds us that slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity are not obsolete yet.