

Discussant's Note on Paula Banerjee's Paper on Refugee Movement in West Bengal

Dipankar Sinha

Professor, Department of Political Science, Calcutta University

- ◆ Methodological take as the work is at the initial stage.
 - ◆ Prolific literature on Partition and refugee movement (RM). But scope for situating RM as constitutive element of popular movement remains. It is a much needed venture.
 - ◆ Exceptional dynamics: victims coming to terms with victimhood and at the same time struggling to get rid of it. Marked by resistance, negotiation, conflict---generating a new kind of everyday commonsense reasoning.
 - ◆ Also, coming to terms with sense of dispossession and seeking to overcome it. The twin processes permeating subjective, inter-subjective and collective levels.
 - ◆ Methodological technique appropriate would be narratives. Archival value stressed by the researcher is important but her work need not be confined to it.
 - ◆ Narrative: text structured by time sequence of events it represents. It is *story within a story within a story*. In more theoretical terms it is critically reflective mode, as told by the subject. It is also purposive in orientation, with some kind of 'anchor' in *subject intervention*.
 - ◆ Refugee narratives are intertwined with everyday personal and collective, positive and negative experiences, as lived and *negotiated*. The discussant's study of Bijoygarh and Samargarh colonies reveal a journey towards empowerment in more senses than one. Symbolically it reveals a journey from shanties made of tree leafs to multi-storied houses within a span of five decades.
 - ◆ Cardinal feature of narrative as identified by researchers: explicit/implicit arrangement of causally-linked set of human actions and events, with constructions transformed into understandable composite.
 - ◆ 'Narrative turn' of immense importance in social science research in India: still groping to find ways and means of negotiating narratives. >Torn between two reigning methodological pulls--- positivist-empirical mode of inquiry and postmodernism.
 - ◆ One may find commonality between the two which are otherwise 'antithetical'.
 - ◆ The former dismissing narratives as 'anecdotal' and the latter at best concerned with little narratives; both are dismissive about grand narratives. This is where historians can chip in.
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