

Book Review

Minorities and Police in India

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Asghar Ali Engineer known for his strong secular credentials and had extensive experience of analyzing the causes of communalism in India and communal riots. Mr. Engineer has now come out with this book which deals with issue of complex relation between Police and minorities. The book basically a collection of selected research papers presented at seminar on “Police and Minorities: Lessons for Human Rights Education” organized jointly by the Human Rights Education Programme of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and Center for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai in New Delhi. The authors in the book have been almost successful to show the attitude and behavior of the police towards minorities and how they think about them. The content of the papers written by various authors who belonged to different fields reflect the common stereotypes approach amongst police personnel against minorities.

The book is a timely contribution to the ongoing debate on “Indian Police is the biggest Human Rights violators”. The role of the police while dealing with minorities, particularly during communal conflicts thus remains controversial. There are views suggesting that the police personnel themselves have become much communalized over the years. Not only police but paramilitary forces have failed to quell communal riots and disturbances. The role of PAC in Uttar Pradesh had been highly shameless while dealing with communal riots. Asgahar Ali engineer’s paper “Making and Unmaking of Muslim Stereotypes written on the basis his vast experience of conducting enquiries into incidents of communal riots and conducting training programmes for police personnel. Amarjit S. Narang’s paper on “Minorities and Police in India” provides an overview of the situation and analysis of nature of functioning of police when protecting minorities and dealing with them as groups, particularly in situation of communal tension in the context of state obligations towards minorities as per settled international norms and India’s Constitution and politico-legal commitments. K S Dhillon’s paper “Democracy, Pluralism and Police in

India traces the development and transformation of police and its nature from colonial to independent India. Mr. Dhillon discuss in length that there had been no sincere efforts were made to sensitize the police forces towards diversity and India's secular philosophy. Mr. Dhillon further goes on to say that Indian police were not able to live down their historical legacies.

R K Raghavan in his essay "Maintaining Social Order" delineates the system of police functioning in handling situations of social disorder, including inter-religious riots. Raghavan says Indian police still has to go to miles to attain the certain degree of professionalism. Raghavan argues that Indian police has been facing a variety of challenges i.e. proper training, orientation programme, sufficient manpower and autonomy. Raghavan expresses dismay over the issue of non-implementation of National Police Commission recommendations. As long as politicians politician look upon the police as a tool to settle political scores nothing will alter.

Arshi Khan rightly pointed out in his paper "Police Prejudice against Minorities" that attitude and common thinking of police personnel is crucial while dealing with minorities. Nothing on ground will change until and unless hostile attitude of police personal against minorities not get rid of. Attitude of the police is crucial in the case of protection of minorities' rights. Advocate H S Phoolka's paper "The Infamous Carnage of November 1984" basically a case studies of anti-sikh riots in Delhi. Phoolka is also an eminent human rights activist and present paper prepared after his extensive survey among riot hit area in Delhi. He concluded that it was the violence against Sikhs in Delhi was not communal riots but systematic carnage. The attitude of the police at that time so atrocious that it cannot be called merely a bias and prejudice, Mr. Phoolka added.

Ajay Mehra in his paper has tried to trace out the history of police reform in India from 1950 to till date, he express his dismay why the political class is not interested to implement the police reforms report. He stresses political leaders wants that police must be remain under their clutches so that they continue to settle their political scores. He highlights various useful police reform reports were consigned to cold storage.

Nevertheless, the book is a good collection of papers and the same are very high quality with authoritative details and lucid arguments. The readers with passion to work for human rights and political correctness will find the book very useful. The book is quite distinct because it has a comprehensive account of various communal issues in police system while dealing with minorities and the same has been produced in a balanced manner. Writing about the police system is not an easy task as whole system raises a finger upon your intention 'how dared to suspect the braveness of our police force'? But the editors have done an excellent work while compiling these selected essays in single book. The contents of the papers in

the present book reflect this multi-disciplinary and societal approach. The book will help in generating a fresh debate and demand of much needed police reform, and also sensitize police and administration towards their social duties.

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