

## Book Reviews

*Lancy Lobo. 2002. Globalisation, Hindu Nationalism and Christians in India. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications, pp. 240, Rs. 450 (hard back). ISBN 81-7033-716-X.*

Globalisation and resurgent Hindu nationalism are the twin phenomena which represent the socio-economic and political face of India in the new millennium. Against this backdrop, Lancy Lobo attempts to deconstruct the rising incidence of atrocity on Christians in India.

The percentage of Christians in the total population of the country which was 2.4 in 1981 showed a slight decline by 0.1 percentage point. High literacy rate and low fertility rate among middle class Christians are factors behind this falling number. But, according to Lobo, active intimidation and forced re-conversion of Christians by Hindutva forces along with state discrimination, play a more significant role in reducing the existing number of Christians. He shows that, during the last four years, incidents of atrocity on Christians have risen geometrically, particularly in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-ruled states. Instead of Muslims, Christians are now made targets of exploitation due to the latter's soft nature and lack of retaliatory mechanisms. Ever since the BJP has come to power in Gujarat, violence against Christians has risen. From isolated incidents of vandalism, arson, assault against Christians, one can construct a pattern in the strategy of Hindu nationalists all over the country. According to Lobo, communalization through contestation of local sacred space, inciting communal hatred by extensive distribution of hate literature, blowing local problems out of proportion and casting a communal angle to it, communalization of the Pope's visit to India, negation of Freedom of Religion Bill, etc., are a few systematic atrocities against Christians in India. And the role of the state is undoubtedly anti-minority, whereby it always attempts to downplay the violence and arson.

Globalization is an external force emanating from the First World capitalism and impinging upon India. In the economic sphere, globalization ideally leads to an unprecedented flow of people, technologies, money, goods, images across national borders. But, the internal logic of capitalism - its relentless search for market and profit maximization motive - heightens class polarization and pauperisation. In the cultural sphere, primordial identities like religion, caste and ethnicity feel threatened. To find a scapegoat for globalisation and its negative impact as well as to undermine secular democracy through a cultural backlash, the Hindu nationalists have targeted Christians and are committing continuous atrocities on them.

After providing exhaustive details of atrocities against Christians in India, Lobo reviews the response of Christians to the growing atrocity against them. He suggests two responses by the Church that can be realised in the future: the first stresses an increased inter-cultural dialogue and communication, and the second asks for a paradigm shift from a paternal to a participatory model of interaction among the Christians themselves. Lobo concludes by saying that the Church has to respond not only to Hindu nationalism but to globalisation as well. And this has to be done in a progressive and proactive manner.

This book deals with a burning issue that haunts contemporary Indian society. In the aftermath of the Gujarat riots, the book should become a compulsory reading for all social science scholars. However, emotional treatment of the subject has, at times, lead to over-simplifications and hasty generalisations.

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