

## BOOKS

## Unravelling the Crises in Politics, Governance &amp; Philosophy

Reviewed by D. Jeevan Kumar\*

**D**r. Anil Kumar Vaddiraju is serving as Associate Professor and Head, Centre for Political Institutions, Governance and Development at the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru. His latest book is a compendium of his articles published earlier at different points of time in different journals. The topics covered range from the condition of women agricultural labourers in India to local governance, to hermeneutics in the contemporary world, to modernity and democracy in India. The articles reflect some of his theoretical and empirical concerns over the years, which have evolved over time and bear the birthmarks of the time in which they were written.

The author says the articles have been grouped under the title, '**Politics, Governance and Philosophy**' because these words reflect his academic concerns over time. According to him, "*These articles are not only products of their time; they also speak to our times. They speak to the crisis in our times: the crisis in politics, governance and philosophy.*"

The first four articles in the book appear in the section on **Political Philosophy**. They deal with

- (1) Hannah Arendt and Modernity: Revisiting the Human Condition;
- (2) Gramsci and Freire: Bridging the Divide in the Indian Context;
- (3) Social Power and Political

**Politics, Governance and  
Philosophy**

Anil Kumar Vaddiraju, Eliva Press,  
Moldova, Europe. 2022

Pp.150. Rs.4305

- Movements: The Quest for Rights; and (4) Interpreting the World in a World of Interpretation. The rest of the articles are included in the second section titled, **Politics and Governance**. They deal with (5) Ecology and Proletarianization; (6) Agricultural Labour and the Gender Dimensions; (7) The Mandal System in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh; (8) Urban Governance and the Right to the City; (9) A Tale of Many Cities: Governance and Planning in Karnataka; (10) Urban Governance in India and China; (11) Inequality and Exclusion; (12) Learning to Read, Reading to Know; and (13) Modernity and Democracy in India.

The themes in the book also reflect the crises in the alternatives to the contemporary world, for example, the crisis in Socialist theory and

practice. A comparison of Gramsci with Freire speaks about the role of knowledge and intellectuals; the question of interpreting the increasingly inter-connected world raises many questions as to whose interpretation of the world is authentic. They raise questions for lay people and intellectuals alike. The article on Hannah Arendt speaks about the crisis in what came to be known as modernity. The author's reflections on Indian modernity are presented here viewing the same essentially as an unfinished project.

The author confesses that the themes in the book do not sit cogently with each other. Nonetheless, they reflect his worldview, his understanding and analysis of issues in policy, governance and development, and most importantly, his solutions to some of our persistent problems. Some of them are worth recounting:

- The role of the hermeneutically informed theorist is to make hermeneutics perform a more this-worldly function so that complex strife generated often through politics of recognition is reduced, and the world becomes more democratic and humane. (p.43)

- The sorry state of urban affairs can be traced to the 'exclusionary urbanization' process in the country.

\* Dr. D. Jeevan Kumar is Hon. Professor at Karnataka State Rural Development and Panchayat Raj University, Gadag.

As big cities are favoured over small towns, governance and planning in the latter languishes. (p.103)

- 'Right to the City' means more than just access to its resources. People, particularly the marginalized, not only have the right to inhabit a city, but also the right to design, reshape and transform it. (p.85)

- While the Mandal system did bring administration closer to the people, there is enormous scope for further reforming the intermediate tier of the Panchayati Raj system. (p.82)

- Networked Governance has a long way to go in countries like India and China. Social Capital can be a useful tool for the promotion of effective governance. (p. 105)

- Any attempt to understand and explicate exclusion has to pay attention to interdisciplinary approaches. (p.126)

- We argue for the importance of giving a rightful place to understanding the predicament of female labour, given the persistence of multi-fold oppression, due to patriarchy, class and caste. A gender-based state policy will help in ameliorating their status. (p.59)

- The unresolved agrarian question, slow pace of industrial development and distorted growth of the Service sector have all led to an asymmetry between economic development and political democracy in India. As long as this distorted development continues, we will be stuck with the impasse of backward-looking nationalism and authoritarian populism. (p.137)

Dr. Anil Kumar deserves to be complimented for putting together, in one place, a collection of his writings in various journals. But he would be well advised to look for another

publisher to bring out his next anthology, as the printing of the book leaves much to be desired. And for a slender volume of about 150 pages, it is definitely over-priced. □

## WTO Deal

After nearly hitting a deadlock over fisheries subsidies, the 164 member nations of the World Trade Organization (WTO) forged a bouquet of deals during the early hours of 17<sup>th</sup> June in Geneva. The four day Ministerial conference which started on 11<sup>th</sup> June was to end on 15<sup>th</sup> June. It was extended by two more days to push trade ministers to finalize a deal to maintain a sense of purpose at a multilevel organization that is fighting for its relevance. The deal included patent waiver to fight the pandemic, limited only to production and exports of vaccines; India's demand to allow it to export food grain from its public stockholding could not be agreed upon. On fisheries, though millions of Indian fishermen will not face any cut in State subsidies, countries were able to agree only a partial deal to cut down illegal, unreported, unregulated especially by China and countries of the European Union.

### Outcome of WTO Ministerial Conference-2022

#### Agriculture & Food security

India wanted permanent solution to public stockholding for food security purposes. No exemptions for food purchases by WFP from export restrictions. Permission for exports of food grains from public stocks on government to government basis.

What India Got: No export restrictions on WFP purchases; internal food security concerns to take precedence. Solutions to public stockholding again deferred to next ministerial meeting.

#### E-Commerce

India wanted no extension of customs duty moratorium on electronics transmissions.

What India Got: 18-month extension of e-commerce moratorium; review of scope, definition and impact of moratorium.

The outcome of the WTO is not only emblematic of the importance of a multilateral trading system but is also seen as an image makeover effort by India to be seen as a deal maker than a deal breaker. It is reported in news papers that Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said this was perhaps the first ministerial where India set the agenda.

{Source- Shreya Nandi & Asit Ranjan Mishra,  
*Business Standard*, June 18,2022}