

Kishalay Bhattacharjee, *Where the Madness Lies: Citizen Accounts of Identity and Nationalism*. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2023, 287 pages, ₹950.

DOI: 10.1177/23210230231203793

Recent literature on the idea of citizenship in India has mostly focused on the legal and moral aspects of statelessness, for which ideas of territoriality, boundedness, law and documentation remain central factors. With citizenship, seen as a relationship between the state and its people, even critical works have most often used the state and its apparatus as their lens. Kishalay Bhattacharjee's book inverts this state-centric gaze, as indicated by 'citizen accounts' in the title. It is a detailed exploration of the substantive aspect of citizenship including emotional identifications and cultural value systems. His book is an attempt to engage with the idea of belonging and everyday citizenship experience from the perspective of the citizen.

Bhattacharjee's concern is not with the theoretical aspects of citizenship and nationalism. Instead, the primary analysis in this book is about how citizenship is understood and felt by the citizens. From autobiographical narration, to one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions, memoirs, reportage and archival accounts, this book takes the reader throughout the country listening to its inhabitants. In the chapter titled 'The I of Identity', Bhattacharjee uses an autobiographical narrative to make sense of the concept of 'Identity.' He argues that one's thinking of oneself is premised on acts of memory; the 'perception of time' of both present and past; and a possible relationship between the two. As Bengali-speaking migrants who went from Sylhet to Shillong at the time of partition, the author's family, among many others, had simultaneously felt othered and also at home in Shillong. Bhattacharjee also considers the question of social inequality with respect to identities of caste, tribe, minorities, etc. He argues that while these inequalities have been taken into consideration in the work of scholars and within the constitutional framework of the country, there exists a serious lack of both work and recognition of non-tribal 'victims of ethnic cleansing' and tribal victimhood at the hands of other tribes. Through the story of his parents' migration and settlement, and a complex history of partition, Bhattacharjee rightly argues that myriad people who migrate in and out across time and space tend to retain their culture, language and distinct modes of being. He makes a good case for the use of personal accounts and community memoirs in evaluating citizenship experience and thinking about 'Identity'.

In the chapter 'The City in Citizenship', Bhattacharjee takes the reader through five cities and into the vestiges of history, and weaves in a tapestry of rivers, forts, people and places. He situates individuals in the larger context of the city of their birth, or of the one from where they last arrived. Thus, the reader enters Jalandhar via Harappan civilization, and views present-day Jalandhar through the eyes of a Dalit writer, journalist and activist who came to the city after partition. In Banaras, one is made privy to a conversation taking place over tea at 'Assi' Ghat. In an animated discussion, a journalist, a Dom, a Hindu Mahant and a Muslim man discuss the ancient history of the city – and to whom it belongs. In Guwahati, we follow the author interviewing a migrant journalist about her 'outsider identity'. 'What is Assamese-ness' is the template of another discussion that is reported. The city of Hyderabad is presented through the personal account of a 'Kuchipudi dancer' who feels she belongs to Hyderabad, even though she is of the community of temple dancers of Andhra Pradesh. While in Hyderabad she is revered as an artist of repute, the marginal status of her origin looms large in her story.

In Hampi's case, the author suggests that revisiting Vijayanagara's history will challenge the dominant idea associated with an 'immutable Hindu identity' of the city. He uses the experiences of a Muslim farmer whose family had been living in Hampi for generations to argue that the citizenship experience in Hampi is one of 'sensual hybridity and syncretism.' Through these descriptions, the author argues that due to 'varieties of hereditary' and 'migration histories' plural identity can be understood as one of the basic conditions of the citizenship experience in India.

Bhattacharjee unfortunately does not dwell on the category of 'madness' that the title of this book promises. He writes that this is not a theoretical work, but introducing a category such as 'madness' without definition or explication is using a value-laden category too loosely. The third chapter is titled 'Where the madness actually lies', and takes up the citizenship experience of five communities: Kayas, Manipuri Gorkhas, Indian-Chinese, Adivasi Coolies and Chakmas. The Kayas, an economically well-off migrant community of Marwari traders, are considered outsiders in Assam. Manipuri Gorkhas, largely a Nepali migrant community, but also specifically soldiers who arrived in Manipur in 1824 as then King's recruits, are seen as foreign immigrants, and labelled and discriminated against for this. Indian-Chinese, perceived as threats to national security in the aftermath of 1962 Chinese aggression, were placed in detention in disused Prisoners of War camps. Many such Chinese-origin Indian citizens, born and brought up in India could never return to their regular lives. Adivasi coolies came to Assam from mostly

Chota Nagpur and were recruited as cheap labourers by British plantation owners. The Adivasi coolies, despite being voters and working in tea plantations and gardens for more than 150 years, have been at the receiving end of violence. Finally, he talks about the Chakmas from Bangladesh who fled persecution and settled in India. He writes that Chakmas are deliberately denied governance structures including healthcare, education and even elections despite their legal citizenship status in India, and even Scheduled Tribe status in Tripura and Mizoram (p. 152). Bhattacharjee's analysis, therefore, challenges the conventional dichotomies of insider-outsider, original inhabitants and foreigners. But why 'madness' is used as a conceptual category in speaking about citizenship experience is a discussion that is missing entirely.

This book successfully reveals the nuanced and diverse nature of citizenship experience in India. This is partly because it chooses to speak for and about a heterogeneity of cases and experiences, but also because in exploring the intricate relationship between identity, citizenship, and nationality, it lets the citizens speak of their own imaginaries, ideas, and feelings.

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