

identity and belonging mapping the margins

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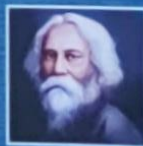
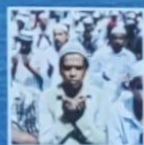
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identity and belonging : mapping the margins ABU SIDDIK



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Identity and Belonging: Mapping the Margins has 14 chapters. It broadly demonstrates multiple aspects of identity and belonging. Chapters are varied in scope and reach but their primary aim is to focus on the issues of identity or lack of it, and how one's identities affect her in the multiple transactions of life. The majority champion it, minority defends it. Identity, the book argues, both determines and damages one's sense of belonging. And identity is coloured by race, religion, region, caste, class, colour, gender, nationality, ethnicity, language, literature, digital access, etc. Identity is a marker of freedom, but at the same time it is a marker of boundary too. It attempts to survey the marginalized people like the Indian Muslims, Indian tribals, black Americans, women victims of the partition with empirical evidences, textual analyses and with the insights of India's two cultural icons Vivekananda and Rabindranath. It also tries to delve into the myriad nuanced issues that configure, disfigure, and reconfigure one's identity and sense of belonging in our rapidly changing globalized, digitalized, totalitarian world.

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Introduction

An identity is questioned only when it is menaced, as when the mighty begin to fall, or when the wretched begin to rise, or when the stranger enters the gates, never, thereafter, to be a stranger.

James A. Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work*

Only in my Name

Let me be first freed from the big philosophical question 'who I am?' It obviously leads me to the depths of Indian philosophical queries, thoughts and pursuits. 'Know thyself' is the key motif for our existence on earth. And knowing one's self or identity is very difficult. Rabindranath Tagore, that is why, agrees, "It is not easy to know oneself. It is difficult to organize life's various experiences into a unified whole. Had God not given me long life, had he not permitted me to reach seventy years of age, I could hardly have got a clear picture of myself (qtd. in Uma Das Gupta 2010).

Radhakrishnan says, though in some sense the Upanishads are the continuation of the Vedic religion, they are in another sense a strong philosophical protest against the religion of the Brahmanas. It is in the Upanishads that the tendency to spiritual monism, which, in one form or another, characterises much of Indian philosophy, was first established whose intuition rather than reason was first recognised as the true guide of ultimate truth (qtd. in Jacob).¹ We have come from Him, and to Him we must return in the end. And our purpose is to praise Him and serve His cause. Without serving Him we cannot have access to the illumination of our soul, or to the glory and greatness of our life. So pray and praise Him day and night. On earth we will get tranquility and peace of mind, and in after life we will get a coveted entry into heaven and live with its manna and houris. Bereft of these soul-searching illuminating activities, life will lose its meaning and magnitude. It will have no mooring either. Eternally lost, we must live in chaos and anarchy and things will be falling apart