




Border, Globalization and Identity

*Edited by Sukanta Das, Sanatan Bhowal,
Sisodhara Syangbo and Abhinanda Roy*



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BORDER IS IN THE MIND

ABU SIDDIK

Border in the physical and geographical sense refers to boundary, frontier, and limit. These nouns all denote a line or area separating one piece of territory from another. A border is basically a line that separates political, spatial, and territorial entities. Border in the figurative sense, however, means margin, edge, verge, brink, rim, and brim. All these words refer to the line or narrow area that marks the outside limit of something. Here I refrain from intervening in the arena of specialist political geographers discussing multiple ideas of physical borders across the world. This paper is limited to the metaphorical level, examining the thematic resemblances between Rabindranath Tagore's 1911 poem 'Gitanjali 35' 'Where the mind is without fear', Robert Frost's 1914 poem 'Mending Wall', and Philip Freneau's 1788 poem 'The Indian Student: or, Force of Nature'.

Border is everywhere in an apparently postmodern, borderless global village. Daily print and electronic media are flooded with news of globalization, cultural integration, multiculturalism, cultural plurality, unity in diversity, racial tolerance, gender equality, economic inclusion, financial freedom, and so on. But lived daily experiences are markedly different from imagined ones.

I attempt to argue in this paper that border is everywhere, ever-increasing, and ever-widening – and it resides in our minds. In the Indian context, cultural plurality and heterogeneity are at stake. Marathas harass wretched Bihari and Bengali labourers in paradisaical Mumbai. North-eastern students are attacked in prosperous Indian cities. There are frequent attacks on South Asian students in such 'civilized' countries as Australia. Caste prejudices are rampant, vulgar, and dehumanizing. Atrocities on the marginalized are taken for granted. The media are deluged with daily doses of horrifying incidents. A Dalit steps into a temple, s/he is humiliated, and the temple is cleansed and purified. A Hindutva *fatwa* warns Muslims to renounce the *Qur'an* and beef or go to