

The Othering in Yoginder Sikand's *Beyond the Border*

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Abstract

*The problem of 'othering' secures a prominent place in the twenty-first century which is facing myriad challenges such as territorial disputes, sectarian violence, military conflicts, etc.,. The world is torn with global, national and regional conflicts based on group-based difference. 'Othering', which leads to marginality, can occur on a group basis or sometimes at the individual level where people are likely to experience the discomfort of being in some place or with people where they do not feel the sense of belonging. Also the idea of 'othering' is central to sociological analyses of how majority and minority identities are constructed. Hence it is essential to explore the conditions under which the processes of 'othering' seem to arise which results in specific group-based identities and how these identities become institutionally embedded. Yoginder Sikand's travelogue *Beyond the Border* is based on his journey to Pakistan in which he explores the ground level situation of Pakistan society, culture and people. He vividly brings out the socio, cultural and religious aspects of Pakistan where people find themselves in an environment of 'othering' and how they cope up with the situation. Sikand, to some extent, tries to dispel the myths about Pakistan as the terrible 'other' that have filtered into the Indian psyche. The book offers valuable insights into the prevalent mindsets in both countries. This paper focusses on the forces that contribute to 'othering' and the possible interventions that might mitigate some of the problems arising out of 'othering'.*

Keywords: othering, nationalism, secessionism, assimilation, identity, inclusion, belongingness

Twenty-first century is facing myriad challenges among which the problem of 'othering' secures a prominent place. The world is severed with global, national and regional conflicts due to group-based difference. The terrorist attacks or the attack on the 'other' shows the lack of cultural and geographic integration of ethnic and racial groups and the persistence of discrimination. This paper investigates some of the reasons behind 'othering'. First, it explores the conditions under which the processes of 'othering' seem to arise which results in specific group-based identities and how these identities become institutionally ingrained. Finally the paper examines the responses to 'othering' and the possibility of bringing solutions to this perennial problem.

The term 'othering' includes a set of common processes and conditions that result in group-based inequality and marginality. It can be defined as a set of processes and structures that engender marginality and inequality is based on group-identities. The 'othering' can include religion, sex, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability, etc., It also includes territorial disputes and military conflicts. Group-based identities are central to these conflicts which are based on religion, ethnicity, cultural, geographic and political histories.