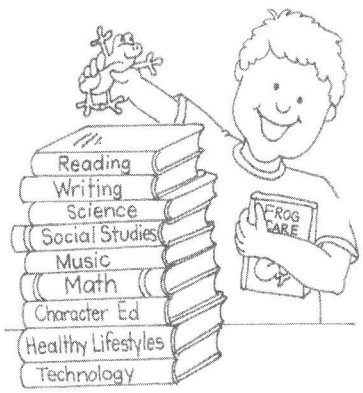
EDUDOC SERVICES: BOOK REVIEWS



Book Reviews

April - 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Book Reviews aims to identify the books published recently on all the subjects relevant to NCERT.

Book Reviews have been selected from Learned Periodicals & Newspapers received in **LDD** during the month of **April, 2019.**

Book Reviews are arranged under broad Subject Headings. Details about the Author, Title, Place of Publication, Name of Publisher, Year, Pages, Price, ISBN followed by analytical review with exact reference to periodicals in which reviewed appeared. It will be our endeavour to bring out this Book Selection Reference Tool.

Book Reviews will be useful to our faculty members in selecting / recommending relevant books for our library and also to keep abreast of latest publications in their specialization.

We eagerly await to receive your views and comments.

Chairperson, LDD

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othering and the addressing of the nebulous areas in between would have added to the historical heft of the book. The volume unfortunately contained typographical errors that stood out even on a casual reading of the text. Nonetheless, if the book is to be assessed by its own self-declared objective, 'The ultimate goal of the volume is twofold: to bring forth the little or unknown specifics of evenements; and hence also to enrich the spanning arc or structure of the transtemporal connectivity between these geo-cultural regions' (p. 10), it surpasses all expectations. A shot in the arm to a languishing field of study, it helps move regional studies out of the grip of Eurocentrism, and demonstrates how this part of Asia achieved its own longue durée dynamics and turning points.

Deeksha Bharadwaj
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MANJIL HAZARIKA, *Prehistory and Archaeology of Northeast India: Multidisciplinary Investigation in an Archaeological Terra Incognita*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017, 325 pp.

DOI: 10.1177/0019464618820150

Despite its tremendous archaeological potential, Northeast India, which encompasses the modern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim, remains a relatively neglected field of research on the country's material past. Manjil Hazarika addresses this lacuna by reconstructing the prehistoric archaeology of this region, particularly 'the subsistence strategies and ways of life of the early farming communities in the region, and their movements, dispersals and settlements' (p. 12). What is distinctive about Hazarika's methodology is his multidisciplinary approach, one which combines evidence from ethnography, linguistics, anthropology and genetics to interpret the scant archaeological data so far available. Consequently, not only does the author display familiarity with theoretical issues in world archaeology but also grapples with linguistic palaeontology.

Divided into seven chapters (which includes an introduction and a conclusion), the bulk of the book is devoted to a review of the 150 years of archaeological research undertaken until date, specially pertaining to the Palaeolithic and Neolithic material from the region (Chapter 4), and the author's own field explorations in the Garbhanga Reserve Forest on the Assam–Meghalaya border (Chapter 5). The remaining chapters provide the framework for situating the archaeological data through the reconstruction of the paleoecology of Northeast India (Chapter 2), assessment of the theories on the dispersals of ancient linguistic groups (Chapter 3), and the identification of Northeast India as an indigenous centre for the domestication of plants and animals (Chapter 6).

A peculiar feature of the archaeology of Northeast India is that a neat sequence of cultural development from the prehistoric to the historical stage cannot be identified in the archaeological record. A well-stratified chronological sequence of the Palaeolithic cultural material is yet to be established, the transition from Palaeolithic to Neolithic is not evident in the archaeological record, and in the absence of a defined Chalcolithic or Bronze cultural phase, there is a cultural gap from the end of the Neolithic to the beginning of the historical period.

Against this background of the archaeology of Northeast India, Manjil Hazarika makes a strong case for the association of the earliest humans of this region with the Hoabinhian industries of Southeast Asia of the terminal and early Holocene. He argues that the Northeast would have provided a conducive environment for makers of this technocomplex, who settled in upland ecological surroundings, close to water sources and produced artefacts made of bamboo and wood. He demonstrates the predominant influence of the Neolithic culture of south China (through Southeast Asia) on the rather late origin (c. 2500–1500 BCE) and development of the Northeast Indian Neolithic, which is archaeologically evident through the distribution of cord-impressed pottery. Even though several questions connected to the introduction of rice agriculture in Northeast India remain unresolved, Hazarika demonstrates, by a combination of linguistic, genetic, paleo-botanical and ethnobotanical data, that this was an important zone for the domestication of rice. He shows how current research indicates that the speakers of the ancient Austroasiatic language family (which originated in or very near Northeast India) were one of the most likely candidates to have introduced the cultivation of rice, particularly *Oryza nivara*, one of the closest wild relatives of cultivated rice. Perhaps, the author could have incorporated more tables and summarised the long section in which he contextualises the Northeast Indian Neolithic vis-à-vis the Neolithic cultures of other parts of the subcontinent and different regions of Asia, as the detailed account distracts from the focus of the project.

Hazarika's own ethno-archaeological investigation into the settlement and subsistence patterns of the Karbis, a Tibeto-Burman linguistic group residing in the Garbhanga Reserve Forest, enables him, specifically, to interpret the archaeology of the large site of Bargaon in the hilly terrain inside the forest, and more generally, to reconstruct a possible model of prehistoric early farming culture of Northeast India. From the archaeological assemblage at Bargaon, it can be inferred that its ancient residents (who may have been the direct ancestors of Karbis) processed plant food, consumed buffalo and may have imported fine-quality pottery from the nearby plains. Like the Karbis, they may have prepared rice beer, which explains the discovery of a large number of spouts. An interesting aside is Hazarika's documentation of the Karbis' beliefs and religious practices relating to prehistoric stone Celts. Hazarika's hypothesis is that similar to the Karbis, the prehistoric farmers of the Northeast may have practiced shifting cultivation on the smaller hills and hillocks, which was accompanied by makeshift settlements and the use

of limited, perishable material and which therefore explains the absence of a stratigraphic sequence in the archaeological record.

Without going into the details of the archaeology of the historical period, the author effectively demonstrates continuities between the prehistoric and the early historical, as seen in the exchange network systems, for example. The book, which will remain an essential sourcebook for the prehistoric archaeology of Northeast India, is important for highlighting the cultural interactions between different sectors of Northeast India as well as that between Northeast India on the one hand and the neighbouring areas of South, East and Southeast Asia on the other.

Sanjukta Datta
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AAKASH SINGH RATHORE and RIMINA MOHAPATRA, *Hegel's India: A Reinterpretation, with Texts*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017, 310 pp.

DOI: 10.1177/0019464618820136

The first third of this highly recommended book consists of interpretive essays; the remainder contains Hegel's texts. Rathore and Mohapatra are cognizant of Hegel's shortcomings and limitations, his failures of vision, knowledge and imagination. Nevertheless, they also recognise his achievements. Prior to the twentieth century, no other Western philosopher engaged Indian thought so deeply and consistently. Hegel thought *against* India, but also *with* it. Immediately prior to the culmination of his system in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, the final volume of the *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel discussed the Bhagavad Gita. India is outside of history, for Hegel, but it stands next to the absolute idea.

Given Hegel's dismissive conclusions about India, Rathore and Mohapatra ask what explains his sustained engagement. Hegel wrote 80,000 words on India, as much as he wrote on the Greek world. Although many othered India, 'Hegel was not just *othering*, he was *bothering*' (p. 25). The revised 1827 *Encyclopaedia* contains material on India not included in 1817. Rathore and Mohapatra note that Hegel's critique of Brahmanism is similar to that of noted Indians.

Some believe that Hegel's interest in India resulted from a proxy war with the Romantics, who were enthusiastic about India. Rathore and Mohapatra maintain that it does not explain Hegel's obsession with India and his evolving approaches to it. Indian thought intrigued Hegel on its own merit, and he was haunted by it. It 'represented a sort of nagging twin that he badly needed to shake off throughout the development of his own philosophy' (p. 4). Rathore and Mohapatra doubt that he ever exorcised this twin.

Hegel recognised similarities between his own philosophical system and Indian thought. Nevertheless, there are two main points of difference.

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structural inequities make for a jarring read. This resulting incongruity coupled with the dubious use of scientific language and data unfortunately renders the book little more than an exercise in re-articulating age-old wisdoms – and moreover, cashing in on a charged and divisive political climate.

There are indeed many individuals in need of a proverbial sword and shield to fight off their demons and Peterson fervently seeks to provide them with these implements, but his primitive fear of the proverbial monsters that lurk beyond our walls blinds him to the grating presence of those that have remained *within* their confines ever since they were first constructed.

Safee Ali
Writer, Toronto

THE UNDOING DANCE by Srividya Natarajan. Juggernaut, Delhi, 2018.

AS far as controversies go, the devadasi and the debates about her history continue unresolved more than seven decades after an act to prevent the dedication of girls and women to temples was passed. The tradition is centuries old. Almost every significant temple in southern India has a *sthalapurana* that serves to legitimize the courtesan's connection to both the deity and the royal patron who endowed the temple. Srividya Natarajan's *The Undoing Dance*, a tale of several generations of devadasis, also begins with such a legend – manufactured, the book goes on to tell us, to lend legitimacy to the king, not just the courtesan. Her fictional history spanning three generations of the last of this devadasi family promises to afford a glimpse into lives that are otherwise lost.

Whatever the social epistemology of the local legends might be, the debate over what the very term 'devadasi' represents is still fresh. In January 2018, a well known Tamil poet was in trouble for referring to a research paper that described Andal, a 12th century woman saint poet as a 'devadasi who died in Srirangam'. He had to subsequently retract and clarify that 'devadasi' means a 'female servant of god' and not 'prostitute'. Andal is the only woman among the twelve Alwars – Vaishnava poets of Tamil literature. The conservatives were offended that a saint-poet was called a devadasi, and those who were sympathetic to the devadasi were justifiably irritated by the poet's apology. But why is it impossible that Andal could have been a devadasi?

The devadasi was not just an artist – a dancer, a singer and perhaps a poet. She also clearly represented an expression of sexuality regulated through social, cultural, religious as well as economic strictures of her time. Her story has been both glorified and vilified. I draw on this recent episode to speak of the relevance of Natarajan's historical fiction.

In her telling, Natarajan helps to re-entrench those lines already drawn. Those sympathetic to the cause of the hereditary caste practitioners of music and dance will find in The Undoing Dance exactly what they are looking for. Those who unhesitatingly believe in the hoary tradition of Bharata in 'bharatanatyam', will see nothing wrong in the sanitizing of the form as it moved to a 'middle brow' proscenium. Fiction has the power to bring history alive, to do more than elucidate history's theories. The Undoing Dance perhaps could have made more of fiction's possibilities.

The Undoing Dance is a book about many things: the turn of the century plight of the Isai Vellalar community to which the devadasis belong, the Brahminical hold over the cultural life of Madras and the edging out of hereditary practitioners. It is also about the crude transformation of 'tradition' and craft to serve the 'pure vanity' reproduced in the industrialization of the art of dancing and the fervour of nation building with which modernity recast the art and the lives of its practitioners. The author chooses her narrative voice carefully, speaking through several characters whose lives weave in and out of the central narrative of the devadasis' fate around the time of independence. It speaks elegiacally of the sudden twists in the lives of these women whose identity, caste, profession, livelihood, sexuality and more fundamentally, their art were all faced with an impending and permanent loss.

It is through Rayaji, the last of these traditional practitioners and her generation, that Natarajan voices the fullness of both lament and hope. In the early part of the last century, while Victorian and Hindu 'puritans' alike both pity and denigrate the devadasi, Rayaji sees some of her community 'leave the fold' to join the reformists. Her daughter Kalyani marries a Brahmin man to escape her past and thus enters the puritanical world of brahminical orthodoxy that regulates both the art and private lives with the same exigencies. Hema, her husband's daughter, Padmasini the upper caste dancer, Vijaya the Brahmin mother-in-law, Balan her husband, are all characters we know, partly predictable and wholly real.

Natarajan's writing is the most lyrical when she describes the dance rather than when she speaks for the dancer. One gets a sense of what it means to 'move like light on a river', to improvise 'like a poet full of

drink', of what goes into the making of the dance. Her metaphorical richness slips a little when she moves into the skin of the character. When the pressure of propriety demands that Kalyani give up dancing, the image of amputees with phantom limbs somehow seems less evocative. The natural resonance is lost when the characters are made to speak in the voice of their tropes. For instance, when devadasis describe themselves as 'fertility walking on two legs', or when the rigid Brahmin orthodoxy of Kalyani's mother-in-law Vijaya marks itself through bitter four letter expletives, it is the trope that speaks, not so much the character in the narrative.

The concerns of history and the threads of the story seem to stand apart from each other in the tapestry that Natarajan tries to weave of love, betrayal, art, loss and transformation. It is a well told tale of lives entangled in their love or revulsion for an art form whose instrument is the woman's body, an instrument on which desires both public and private play themselves out through history. One wishes perhaps that The Undoing Dance spoke more of the instrument, the dance, the form and its power. The dance is memory and Natarajan describes its transmission – from one inscribed body to the next – through minor glimpses in her narrative. A bent iron bar in a window, a girl's waist bound in red cloth, thighs burning after every class, learning the steps, doing the 'abhinayam without a mistake'. Isn't there more to it? Why can't the Brahmin girls dance like the devadasis? Why do they 'act' when the devadasis can 'enact'? What is the knowledge the dancer holds in her body? No insights on these questions arose as I reached the end of The Undoing Dance.

I read *The Music Room* by Namita Devidayal nearly ten years ago. Fragments from her description of what her music is and what it meant to her teacher, how that music held together through generations and through history, still remain with me. I wanted to read a book like The Music Room, about dance. I wish I could say this was that book. I wish The Undoing Dance had been about the dance and not just about the dancer's social being. What is lost in the telling of Natarajan's tale is the interiority of the dancer, the possibility of a vocabulary of what a dancer 'sees', 'creates' in her mind and how her body evokes that truth. Perhaps that is asking for more than what is possible. Perhaps dance is inherently more 'social', a dancer's interiority more public than private.

There is no doubt that the erasure of the history of the devadasi needs to be looked at with a new lens. Somewhere in the mists of time where the origins of this dance are buried, there are many legends and elegies of the women and men who practiced it, shaped it and gave it life.

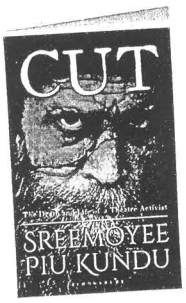
Natarajan draws the line in her narrative clearly and with a zeal that is at times the undoing of the fictional form within which she has chosen to critique this rather important and controversial history. Intelligent and witty writer that she is, she might have done better to allow the voices of her characters to speak in a voice more natural than the imposed tone that they sometimes adopt. It is clear who the targets are, and whose side the author is on. Where one voice could speak through many, it speaks instead *for* them. In a fictional telling, that is something better left to the reader. The truth that fiction speaks is also partly held in what it conceals.

Aparna Uppaluri
Dancer; works on gender justice
at the Ford Foundation, Delhi

EMERGENCY CHRONICLES: Indira Gandhi and Democracy's Turning Point by Gyan Prakash. Hamish Hamilton, London/Penguin Viking, Delhi, 2018.

Gyan Prakash, who teaches history at Princeton, is perhaps the first professionally trained historian to write an account of the Emergency. Most previous descriptions of those fateful months when democracy stopped in India have been by well informed journalists or politicians. The expectations from this book are, therefore, different: in the blend between narrative and analysis, the stuff of good history writing, the balance, the expectation is, should tilt towards analysis or the narrative should be so deep and deft that an analysis should emerge from the retelling.

Prakash begins his book in dramatic fashion with a vivid description of a little known but telling episode of the Emergency to which he was an eyewitness. So was I since as Prakash's contemporary at Jawaharlal Nehru University I was present on campus and watched the drama being enacted from the windows of the university library. This is the abduction of Prabir Purkayastha from the campus on 25 September 1975. Prabir, as we all knew, was an activist of the Student Federation of India, the student front of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). JNU was a small campus those days and all of us knew Prabir as a quiet and thoughtful young man, who unlike many of his comrades on campus, was very well read. He was picked up from the campus on the mistaken notion that he was D.P. Tripathi, a very important leader of the SFI, second



Sreemoyee Piu Kundu

Cut: The Death and Life of a Theatre Activist | Bloomsbury India | 272 pages | Rs 399

The Best In His Line

A well-lit magnetic thespian and his lifelong influence over typecast and rounded others

BY ANJANA BASU

IT begins with a death, a jostling on one of Mumbai's notorious local trains and a bunch of irate women who somehow fail to realise that the man with flailing arms is having a heart attack. Legendary firebrand theatre director Amitabh Kulashreshtra slips out of life and releases a can of worms. Not that the worms were absent during his lifetime—he was in court for sedition, attracting the rage of Hindu right wing forces who objected to his stand against Dalits. However, trending as that subject might be, *Cut* is not a novel about sedition in politics, though it may certainly be about sedition in love with the world of Marathi theatre as its backdrop.

Sreemoyee Piu Kundu puts together a narrative that is divided into three acts, much like a play, the tale of a dead theatre activist, and the women in his life. Sarla his wife, Maya or Mrinalini, the Bollywood heroine with an abusive father and its obvious promiscuous fall-out, Marie Bourdaine, who flits through two chapters without creating too many waves but, establishing a Peter Brook kind of status for Kulashreshtra. Avik and RK are the men who flutter around Maya and Sarla, unable to make an impact against the overwhelming presence of the man who dominates the stage. The stories move backwards and forwards, crossing and re-crossing each other.

> Kundu's women are defined by sex—a symbol of exploitation and power. The background she sets it against is evocative, her characters well fleshed out.

Some of these stories we have met before. In Rituparno Ghosh's film *Abohoman,* for instance, the tale of an actress-wife betrayed by her protegee. Maya Shirale is typical, down to her fake eyelashes and migraines, as is Avik Dasgupta, the rebellious Bengali director. We also know theatre firebrands like Kulashreshtra, who take up causes, like Safdar Hashmi, ruffle feathers.

Kundu blindsides us with Kulashreshtra's autobiography of the same name which is flipped over by Sarla, Maya, Marie and Avik in a quest for answers. Blindsides because in the end the book is about another kind of story, the story of comradeship between a man and a woman rather than a political cause. 'Cut' is the title of the play that Kulashreshtra was carrying with him in a cloth jhola at the time he died and which gave rise to a host of Chinese whispers until it was finally 'liberated' for a hefty bribe.

Kundu's women are defined by sex—it looms large in their scheme of things and is a symbol of power and exploitation, graphically described. But the background she sets it against is well-researched and evocative and her characters are fleshed out, talented though deeply flawed.

Kulashreshtra appears to have had a powerful effect on those who came into contact with him—whether it was absolute passion or utter hatred. And regardless of this boiling cauldron of emotion, ultimately everyone forgives him. However, because the reader sees him through other people's emotions, Amitabh Kulashreshtra seems to slip between the lines and the fascination for him is another kind of sedition that the reader cannot quite grasp. But then, sedition tends to undermine all kinds of belief. ☐

ON THE RACKS

C. Whitlock & R. Evans

10 Women who Changed Science and the World | Hachette

'Oxford Housewife Wins Nobel', read the headline when Dorothy Hodgkin received the coveted prize in 1964. This collection chronicles her and other female scientists who defied the glass ceiling to make the planet a better place. However, diversity is not one of its strong points—most of the women featured are White or from the First World.

D. Bricker & J. Ibbitson

Empty Planet | Hachette

In a generation or so, even formerly populous nations will experience a drastic decline in birth rates. While it will benefit the environment and bring higher wages, an ageing population will reduce the tax base and increase healthcare costs. The authors diagnose this new world and suggest reducing isolationism and promoting immigration to deal with the disruption.

Tanaz Bhathena

The Beauty of the Moment | Penguin

High school is memories that can be bundled into a single moment of feeling. The author takes us through two heady narratives: a boy and a girl, both NRIs, alternatively tell us how their lives intertwined with a Canadian school and its many characters. The familiar ingredients of this book include young love, diaspora blues, jealousy and reconciliation.

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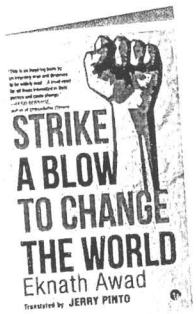


Strike A Blow To Change The World | Speaking Tiger | 282 pages | Rs 399

Ways Of Holding The Chin Up

To break millennia-old oppression, violence is a useful tool, says Awad. His life's fight for Dalit rights is a fight to install equality in their minds.

BY AAKASH SINGH RATHORE

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES, as a literary genre, have never received the sort of academic and critical attention that they merit. From the 4th century, from profoundly introspective autobiographies like Augustine's *Confessions*, up to the contemporary, propagandistic memoirs of present political leadership, they have given us exemplars, real-life heroes and heroines, archetypes to admire and imitate.

Novelist Jerry Pinto has been on a tear translating, among other genres, Dalit autobiographies from Marathi into English. Having translated Daya Pawar's masterpiece *Baluta* in 2015, Pinto has presented us with a translation of Eknath Awad's powerful and inspirational *Strike a Blow to Change the World* (2018).

Despite Gandhi's claim in *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927), India actually has had a long history of autobiographical writing, dating at least as far back as *Baburnama*. The genre of Dalit autobiography could be said to have begun with Ambedkar's unfinished *Waiting for a Visa* (circa 1937). But in spite of so much diversity—social, religious, ideological—within Indian autobiography, there seems to have been one consistent idea. That is, the disavowal of violence. Even where the authors may have resorted to violence in their earlier years, they eventually come to reject the strategy in favour of non-violence.

Not so, however, in Awad's *Strike a Blow*. Not from the very start, with the title itself; not throughout the eventful narrative, or at its end. It is this deeply challenging aspect that raises it to the level of an utterly indispensable autobiography. We could place it among classics like *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965), which forced us to question the viability of the then dominant ideology of Martin Luther King's non-violence during the blood-soaked civil rights movement.

Although Awad did not know it, Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), on the necessity of violence for decolonisation, seems to resonate well with Eknath Awad's own life. According to Fanon, violence righteously exercised by the oppressed has an emancipatory, cathartic power that allows a colonised (read, caste-oppressed) subject to physically and psychologically liberate herself. It allows her to recreate herself with a new, positive identity grounded in equality, ultimately laying the ground for self-respect. And self-respect is a foremost concern articulated throughout Awad's own struggle. That he, like Malcolm X or Frantz Fanon before him, links achieving self-respect to righteous violence is a truly challenging motif of the book.

> Like the works of Fanon and Malcolm X, Awad's autobiography functions as a guide for achieving self-respect. In this way, it takes on a remarkably universal character.

The work is riddled with episodes of sacrifices towards the goal of self-respect. For example: "When the Dalit begins to discover selfhood and self-respect, she begins to speak out. When she speaks out, there's always a backlash and atrocities happen.... For four wounds inflicted, only one may be returned, but even this change is very significant." Or again: "At every festival or village event, the Mangs would play the *haalki* and *sanai*.... The Mangs were not paid for their *Mangbaajaa*.... And so, the bonfire of [a] village's musical instruments was set alight. When those beautiful *shehnais* were burning, I felt bad but it was the self-respect that I could see generated in the Mangs through these flames that was of prime importance."

In a certain sense, Awad's book functions as a guide for achieving self-respect, taking on a universal character. The term itself appears dozens of times, and always within the most poignant of events. For example, in passages describing families suffering from hunger but refusing to eat carrion, in numerous descriptions of the coerced shaving of the heads of institutionalised religious Mang beggars (the *potraj*), and whenever the question of education arises.

Indeed, Awad even saw his long years of development work and social activism as geared ultimately toward helping Dalits to attain this immaterial virtue: "It is not possible to solve the problem of untouchability by providing the Dalit with food and building a few cement houses for them. It is much more important to awaken their sense of self-respect."

Within Dalit intellectual circles, there is a legitimate apprehension regarding Dalit autobiographies—their alleged representation of Dalits as victims lacking agency, the commodification of suffering, their consumption by a 'high-caste' audience, and so forth. At the same time, when viewed from the vantage point of art and creative expression, works such as Awad's (or Daya Pawar's) scarcely seem to wear their particularity or locality as a defect. On the contrary, taking autobiography as a universal literary form, rare achievements like *Strike a Blow to Change the World* are masterworks of the genre. ⊡

(Rathore is author of A Philosophy of Autobiography: Body & Text*)*

ECOLOGY

Taming the rivers

Hindu ; 21/4/19
Pg. 24

With the monsoon as leitmotif, a historian explains the lessons we must imbibe from our past to save diminishing water resources

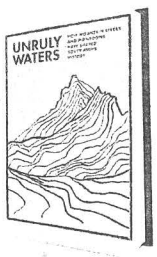
SUJATHA BYRAVAN

"Above the dark grey ridge rises a world of mountains which seems to belong to the heavens rather than the earth." So, writes the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin upon discovering the source of the Indus and the Brahmaputra. Sunil Amrith is just as lyrical in *Unruly Waters*, using the lens of water to take the reader deep into South Asia's colonial past and through the post-independence period to contemporary times – the leitmotif all along being the monsoons.

Water strategy

Extensively researched, yet simply written, the book provides many historical details and narratives around the lives and contexts of its themes. These include the taming of river waters by colonial engineers like Sir Arthur Thomas Cotton, the transformation of Punjab, the frequent famines in various parts of South Asia, the building of the railways, the establishment of the astronomical observatory at Colaba in 1826 by the East India Company, which later became the Meteorological Centre, the damming of rivers, the World Wars and their effects on colonial India, the Indian Ocean expeditions, the changing political situation in India over this long period and new threats to India from climate change relating to water. The picture that unfolds is that controlling and strategising around the use of water has long been an obsession of those ruling India. Building canals, digging wells, learning to study the monsoons, anticipating and controlling floods, displacing people to make way for big dams and so on make up the many fluid ideas of the book.

Many large interventions in waterworks in the subcontinent date to pre-Mughal times, going as far back as the Harappan civilisation in the 3rd millennium BCE, when drainage and storage systems were engineering marvels. Water tanks and canals were also prevalent in other eras in different parts of the subcontinent. Amrith does not linger in these periods, preferring to focus instead on the18th through 21st centuries. British India offered a lot of opportunities to aspiring, ambitious engineers and by the beginning of the 20th century, about a fifth of cultivable land was under irrigation. Most of this was in Punjab, but there were also many large canals in the Gangetic plain and over 600,000 wells dug in the Madras Presidency. Still, the British fixation on parsimony was the driver for many of the famines faced by India. The Land Acquisition Act of 1894 was supposed to ease the construction of the railways, but its timing was also suited to the proliferation of colonial engineering projects for water.



Unruly Waters: How Mountain Rivers and Monsoons have Shaped South Asia's History
Sunil Amrith
Allen Lane/ PRH
₹799

'Hydraulic sabotage'

Amrith also has something to say about China, especially about the damming of rivers, the country's development and the visits by Indian officials, which left a marked impression on them. In June 1938, "retreating Chinese troops breached the Yellow River dikes in Henan province, an act that was referred to as the single most environmentally damaging act of warfare in world history." More than 800,000 people were reported killed and four million displaced by this deed of "hydraulic sabotage."

Many of the problems we have seen over India's growth began much earlier than one may realise. The people in Belgaum, for instance, were displaced by the growing demand for water from cities. The scale of indebtedness we see today in rural India was already occurring in the 1930s with farmers relying on the monsoons and borrowing money to handle their growing vulnerability.

A large number of historical figures and their motivations and contributions are highlighted. For example, there was Henry Blanford, the first head of the Meteorology department in 1875; John Eliot, who developed the first Climatological Atlas of India; and M. Visvesvaraya, an enduring hero for his pioneering contributions as a hydraulic engineer. Late in his life, Jawaharlal Nehru, who once termed big dams as "modern-day temples" now referred to them as the "disease of gigantism" and advocated for smaller projects.

Unruly Waters appears at a time when there is a new scramble for water resources in the region. India and its Himalayan neighbours, including China, are proposing hundreds of dams across the rivers that arise in the peaks. This big dam building spree continues and will undoubtedly cause ecological havoc to the fragile mountain ecosystems and any benefits would be short-lived due to worsening climate change through this century.

According to a recent report from the Drought Early Warning System, developed by IIT Gandhinagar, about 42% of the country's land area is facing drought. With ground water levels already low and falling further in many regions, India faces severe threats to water and food security from mal-development and climate change. The future looks bleak unless the region is able to make some massive changes to its approach to water, development and poverty.

8

Capitalism, Socialism, and the Transition from One to the Other

ROHINI HENSMAN

BOOK REVIEWS

Socialism and Commodity Production: Essay in Marx Revival by Paresh Chattopadhyay, *Leiden, and Boston: Brill, 2018; pp xiii + 300, ₹8,175 (hardcover).*

The subtitle of this book is unduly modest: it is not really an "essay" but a substantial and extremely scholarly exploration of what Marx, Engels, and others have written about socialism in several different languages. Above all, it is an extremely timely critique of Marx's followers who use the term "socialism" and "socialist revolution" in a very different and even opposite sense to what Marx means by these.

Marx's Analysis of Capitalism

In Chapter 2 on commodity production, Paresh Chattopadhyay explains that the question of commodity production is relevant to Marx's conception of socialism, because socialism is the negation of capitalism, and the commodity, combining use value with exchange value, is the cell-form of bourgeois society. He outlines Marx's analysis of capitalism. Concrete labour produces the commodity as a particular product with a particular use, but the very same labour is also abstract labour, because through exchange it is qualitatively equalised with the labour embodied in every other commodity. This equality is expressed by money, the general equivalent and measure of value.

Generalised commodity production or capitalism is marked by the fact that labour-power itself—the workers' capacity to labour—becomes a commodity which has to be sold to the capitalist for wages, because workers themselves do not possess the means of production. Workers are then forced to work under the direction of the capitalist to produce more value than they are paid as wages, and this surplus value or profit is used for expanded production—that is, accumulation of capital—by the capitalist. Accumulation becomes the driving force of production under capitalism, while workers suffer alienation from their own products, which do not belong to them, and their own labour, which is performed under the command of others.

In Chapter 3 on simple commodity production, Chattopadhyay shows that Marx recognises the existence, under both capitalism and pre-capitalist modes of production, of producers like small peasants and artisans who produce for the market but are neither employees nor employers. However, he does not characterise this as a distinct mode of production.

Compared with this detailed exegesis of Marx's analysis of capitalist relations of production, Chattopadhyay says very little about Marx's conception of the bourgeois state, apart from mentioning that it is a centralised apparatus with a bureaucracy and standing army.

Marx and Engels on Socialism

Chapter 1 on socialism in some ways is the heart of the book. Chattopadhyay begins by explaining that Marx uses the term "socialism" interchangeably with "communism" (pp 27–28) and that Marx saw capitalism as a preparation for and even a "transitional phase" to socialism. He divided socialism into two phases. In both, classes have been abolished, and production is carried out by "associations of free individuals" (p 47) among whom there is "free exchange of activities … determined by collective social needs and aims" (p 51). Collective decisions will be made to allocate society's available labour time in such a way as to meet the need for replacing and expanding the means of production, as well as meeting individual needs. Engels makes a helpful distinction between rule over persons (which is what the state is for) and the administration of things and direction of the processes of production (which can be called government); he concludes that there will be no state in a socialist society (p 46), but government decision-making will be radically democratic. The whole of Chapter 5 is devoted to the problem of socialist accounting—calculating how to allocate resources for production in such a society—and refers to Marx's important observation that in a socialist society, labour time will be minimised and free time maximised (pp 152–53).

In the lower phase of communism/socialism, according to Marx, workers will receive a token indicating how much labour time they have contributed to total social labour time after a deduction has been made to contribute to the costs of replacing and extending society's productive apparatus, maintaining a reserve fund, paying for healthcare and education, and providing for those who cannot work. The tokens will allow them to withdraw an equivalent amount of labour time in the form of consumption goods (p 55). Chattopadhyay does not quote what Marx goes on to say in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*: that the person who is physically and intellectually superior will receive more than the person who is inferior, and the worker who is unmarried and has no children will be richer than the married worker with children (Marx 1974: 346–47). Marx could not know, but now it is known that the best bourgeois welfare states do better than this, providing benefits like allowances for children and people with disabilities. One might comment that even in this lower phase, at least the basic needs of all members of society should be provided for regardless of how much they work, plus something more for discretionary spending.

In the higher phase, individuals will contribute according to their ability and receive according to their need, and

work will be transformed into a source of satisfaction and pleasure (p 55, 58). Although, as was said earlier, they should receive according to their need even in the lower phase, Marx is right to think that it would take time to transform work into "life's first need." Automation and robotisation would have to eliminate all work that is hazardous and unpleasant (like cleaning sewers), working conditions would have to be radically improved, the division between intellectual and manual labour abolished, and people matched with the jobs they do best and enjoy doing.

This is indeed an attractive vision of socialism, but how do we get there? Obviously, it requires a revolution—overthrow of the existing power and dissolution of the old relations—which, according to Marx, is "a political act" (p 27). Who will achieve this revolution? Marx and Engels were very clear that the proletariat as a whole would carry it out: "the emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself" (p 37). But how? Chattopadhyay establishes that they conceived of it not as a momentary event but as an epochal process (pp 38–41). What political form will the transition take? There is considerable confusion in answering this question. According to the *Manifesto*, the first step is raising the working class to the position of the ruling class (p 39), but this could well mean a democratic republic with universal suffrage in a country where the proletariat constitutes the majority of the population. Marx later refers to the "dictatorship of the proletariat," but what does he mean by this?

The Paris Commune seemed to clarify but also complicate this question. In *The Civil War in France* (1871), Marx describes the "commune" both as a working-class government and as a form of class rule. Consisting of elected representatives who were paid no more than workers' wages and could be recalled at short notice, it was legislative and executive at the same time. It dissolved the standing army and replaced it with a "national guard" consisting mainly of working people (pp 43–44). As a government, therefore, it was radically more democratic than a democratic republic, but its national guard was no match for the standing army of its enemies: the commune was defeated, the communards slaughtered. In subsequent writings, Marx refers to the transition period as "the "prolonged birth pangs" within the womb of capitalist society" (pp 39–40), suggesting that it takes place under capitalism. This is confirmed in his 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, where he observes that

> vulgar democracy, which sees the millennium in the democratic republic ... has no suspicion that it is precisely in this last form of state of bourgeois society that the class struggle has to be fought out to a conclusion. (p 44)

Finally, Engels wrote in 1891 that "the working class can only come to power under the form of a democratic republic. This is the specific form of dictatorship of the proletariat" (p 44).

Other Conceptions of Socialism

Chapter 6 on anarchist communism is noteworthy because it points out, contrary to popular belief that anarchist conceptions of communism have a great deal in common with Marx's conception. There are also chapters on guild socialism and market socialism, which Chattopadhyay classifies as forms of capitalism on the grounds that commodity production and wage-labour persist under them. But the running thread in the book, from the prologue through the chapters on socialism and Marx's followers, to the epilogue, is the argument that what is claimed by many Marxists to be "socialism" in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and other countries is emphatically not socialism in Marx's sense.

This argument can broadly be divided into two. One part of it is that almost immediately after the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, instituted a regime of "minority rule" (as opposed to the rule of the working class as a whole), which, therefore "could not afford to be democratic but *had to be* repressive in order to survive" (p 4). They refused to share power with other socialists, with Trotsky accusing the Workers' Opposition of making "a fetish of democratic principles" and placing "the workers' right to elect representatives above the party" (p 9), although Marx and Engels never allowed for a party to substitute for the working class, even during the transition to socialism. Coercion was used against dissenters as well as the peasantry; the Soviets were gradually reduced to being a mere rubber-stamp for party policies (pp 254–55); and when members of the Kronstadt Soviet fought for the original revolutionary slogan of "All Power to the Soviets," they were massacred (pp 262–63). Even the demand for a constituent assembly—a key democratic demand for over a century, which the Bolsheviks too had fought for—was subverted. When Lenin found that less than a quarter of the elected representatives to the assembly were Bolsheviks, the assembly was dissolved and a peaceful demonstration in support of it was fired on, killing and injuring several people (pp 11–13).

The other part of the argument is that production relations remained capitalist throughout the existence of the USSR. Chattopadhyay contrasts socialist production, carried out by an association of free individuals, with the centralisation of all capital in the hands of the state (pp 16–17). During Lenin's lifetime, the economy of the USSR was still seen as being in transition to socialism, and only in 1936, under Stalin, was it proclaimed to have achieved socialism. Yet commodity production, wage-labour and the law of value persisted (pp 132–38). Chattopadhyay concludes that

> All the post-1917 régimes calling themselves "socialist" have been characterised by the separation of workers from the conditions of production, resulting in the existence of the commodity mode of production (with wage labour) as the basis of production. In a word, their mode of production is capitalist. (p 276)

A limitation of the book is Chattopadhyay's reluctance to criticise Marx in any way. He changes masculine pronouns in the original to gender-neutral formulations, but making women visible is not just a matter of semantics. For example, Marx's analysis of the production of labour-power leaves out the crucial role of domestic labour, performed mostly by women, and this introduces a mistake in the way he calculates the

value of labour-power under capitalism; but Chattopadhyay does not point this out, although a discussion of domestic labour is relevant to any vision of socialism. Again, while quoting Marx's dictum that the class struggle will be fought out to a conclusion, that is, socialism or communism, "under the (bourgeois) democratic republic," he avoids pointing out that this is contradicted by Marx's assertion that there will be "a long period of transition between capitalist and communist society," during which the state will take the form of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Clarity about this issue is important for revolutionary socialists, and it cannot be achieved without pointing out that Marx himself was unclear about how the transition would take place.

Chattopadhyay also seems unfamiliar with the debate among Trotskyists on the characterisation of the Soviet Union, assuming they all agree that the USSR under Stalin was state capitalist (whereas in fact, this is a minority position), and never mentions Cliff's (1974) analysis. However, he is right to criticise them for believing that the Bolshevik regime before Stalin took over, was a workers' state, and to praise Gorbachev's attempt to introduce democratic reforms (pp 278–80).

Propagation of the belief that the repressive and exploitative regime in the Soviet Union constituted an example of actually existing socialism/communism has done more to discredit socialism than all the anti-communist propaganda of the West. At a time when there is renewed interest in socialism, this book is an excellent and much-needed attempt to lay that myth to rest.

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A Sensible Tale of Three Powers

ZORAWAR DAULET SINGH

This Brave New World: India, China and the United States by Anja Manuel, *New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016; pp xi + 349, $27.00/₹699.*

In 2005, Robert Zoellick, then a senior official at the United States (US) Department of State, publicly called upon China to become a "responsible stakeholder." This famous exhortation was made at the near zenith of US power in the post-Cold War era. The blowback from Iraq and Afghanistan had not become fully apparent. Neither had the boom in the global economy shown any signs of dissipating. In short, America could imagine a world where the socialisation of rising powers of Asia into a system would be little more than rearranging the furniture around.

In her previous avatar, Anja Manuel served at the Department of State during those heady years (2005–07) and the liberal world order ideas espoused by Zoellick must have resonated with her. For her thesis is precisely this: China and India, despite their political contrasts and power differentials, should be seen more as contributors to the global order and less as chess pieces where one or both are employed in a strategy to manage the power shifts underway. Manuel rejects the idea that the "international system cannot shift peacefully to accommodate new large powers" (p 8). She instead is of the opinion that "we must stop our hand-wringing about China and seek instead to forge harmonious relationships with both giants" (p 3), and "we must coax each giant, through patient interaction and cooperation, to accept a responsible international role" (p 9).

Manuel succinctly narrates how Indian and Chinese leaders think about their past and the lessons they drew from the oppressive period of Western domination over Asia. India, despite a degrading and economically emasculating colonial experience, found an unusual peace with its traumatic past, unlike China which drew more abiding lessons and acquired a prickly identity along with a deep resolve to restore its historical primacy. Much of the book then dwells on the unplanned or enforced transformations that India and China undertook as they re-oriented their economies by greater engagement abroad and opening up at home. The balance sheet of accomplishments and tribulations in this journey are conveyed through empathetic anecdotes and catchy statistics. By emphasising the enormous domestic challenges—inequality, corruption, demographic shifts, ecological degradation, and political instability—that are now part of the Indian and Chinese pathways to great power status, Manuel is also perhaps telling American readers how different Asia's rising powers are from its predecessors who had the luxury of going global after solving domestic problems.

Yet, going global they are. India's aid grants to other countries are already the same as China's, despite a much smaller economy. China is already the second-largest global investor after the US. Manuel is particularly impressed with the institution-building by the rising powers in recent years. In contrast, "our economic, political, and security institutions are stuck in the past. We haven't yet found a way to modernise global governance or to integrate China, India, and other rising powers effectively into the system" (p 232). The BRICS (an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) are, thus, legitimate reactions to stasis in the ancien régime. They are "warning shots: unless we reshape outdated postwar institutions, India and China will ignore or leave them" (p 241).

Labouring over Sex Work

MEENA GOPAL

BOOK REVIEWS

The Gendered Proletariat: Sex Work, Workers' Movement and Agency by Swati Ghosh, *New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017; pp xxxiv + 227, ₹895.*

With a title that is alluringly provocative, Swati Ghosh, in *The Gendered Proletariat: Sex Work, Workers' Movement and Agency,* makes a painstaking foray into the economic analysis of sex work, and provides an understanding of worker status of the sex worker. Although it is feminists who initially undertook an analysis of sex work, says Ghosh, their focus was on "sex" rather than work. It was only later political activism by sex workers that specifically addressed the conditions of work, thereby shifting the terms of the discussion to the domain of work. The motivation for her work, therefore, seems to be to take forward feminist arguments giving theory a greater space to discuss sex work, rather than arriving at any resolution. Even so, as one followed through the details of the book, there was a mounting expectation of the connections being established between the analysis of sexual work, the nascent movement, and the agential capacities of the collective and individuals within the movement. In taking forward her stated objective, the book adopts a "political-economic perspective of value theory to problematize and offer a theoretical exposition on prostitution" (p xxii), qualifying the author's specific Marxist feminist analysis of sex work within the value frame.

The book is portioned out into three sections: the first is a theoretical analysis of sex work through the value frame; the second traces the genealogy from the sex worker to the prostitute, concluding in the sex workers' movement for rights, recognition and welfare; and finally, a return to understanding of sex work as work through a discussion on agency. The book itself reflects the experience of "the brothel prostitutes" (p xxxi) of Sonagachi in Kolkata. Although the author spent two years (from 2004) conducting ethnography of the lives of sex workers, her methodology leans towards a rhetorical reading of diverse documents produced by official and research agencies, published material, reports, pamphlets, and newsletters of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the "forum of prostitutes," the Durbar Mahila Samanway Committee (DMSC) that provided another lens to the world of sex workers. What was disconcerting yet curious—since the researcher has not stated her own position anywhere in the text—was the interchangeable use of the terms "prostitute" and "sex worker" (p xxxi). This, despite the explicit mention that the genealogy of agency, political action, and the movement was attributed to and belonged to the "sex workers." Can even Marxist feminists afford this rhetorical confusion and political dislocation?

Economic Value

The first section provides a laborious exposition asserting the economic value of sex work, beginning with feminist discussions, and wading through various economic models and studies on labour markets based on skill and stigma, the pricing of "disagreeable" labour, and the marketisation and regulation of sexual labour. Through some of these she focuses on the role of the body and its inalienability, concluding that all remunerative labour cannot count as work. There are constant interjections, justifiably so, about rights-based articulations that point to the limitations of mere economic theorising. Intertwined in this discussion are the Marxian categories of value, abstract labour, exchange value, and so on, deployed to understand sex work. Sexual service in prostitution, limited by the creation of private use-value in service to individual clients, remains concrete labour unable to generate value. The author defines it as a socially useful reproductive labour, unable to generate value in a capitalist system, depicting the sex worker as gendered proletariat. Following this impasse, she extends this discussion to characterise sex work as affective labour within the neo-Marxian value frame, invoking Gayatri Spivak's deconstruction to keep the conceptualisation within the theoretical space of Marxian value theory. The unravelling of women's sexual services as affective labour still establishes it as surplus labour, unable to become abstract labour within the capitalist system. The sex worker's labour remains private labour providing services to clients, concrete in its character, but bringing into the discussion "affect" as a new category of use value.

In a section titled, "Is Sex Work Commodity Production?" (p 23), the author takes great pains, citing the work of Andre Gorz, to portray the impossibility of incorporating prostitution within the system of commodity production, despite the paradox of having monetary value. This is so because the work involves an act of "giving oneself" and submitting to the demands of the client, thereby producing a private service, delivered privately to the client. The author then goes onto make several assumptions (that do not indicate empirical reference) while discussing sex work as work: "In sex work, production, delivery, and consummation of the service is in person, within a private sphere of intimacy that cannot be standardized or estranged" (p 25). She also states,

> The prostitute is paid for the delivery of service and the client pays the price of satisfaction delivered to/through his body. Her claim, if she ever makes one, for sexual satisfaction is not justified under the consensual contract and generally never granted. (p 32)

There are also some tangential analogies to some embodied services—teaching, therapeutic healing, being a masseuse, domestic labour, and construction work—to demonstrate how sexual service cannot attain the attributes of commodities, or be comparable to impersonalised wage work. Again, the expectation was that

the following sections answer some of the questions coloured by the author's own assumptions regarding sex worker–client interaction. Picking on the queer-feminist discussion on the heteronormative character of the institutionalisation of sex work, and labour scholars' work on the contemporary transformation of work itself, could have added to complexity of discussions and raised interesting questions.

Drive for Worker Status

In contrast to the first, the second section is quite straightforward as it traces the colonial control over prostitute bodies through penal measures, public health policies and other modes of disciplining, distinct from an earlier period of state patronage. This situation changes in the postcolonial period when a larger complex of institutions combined with the emergence of the HIV-AIDS prevention efforts, providing the ground for the production of the prostitute as a worker from within the intersection of multiple discourses. Here again, the locale is limited to the geographic space of Sonagachi in West Bengal, where the voice of the prostitute was first heard, when they began a movement for decriminalisation and sought workers' rights for themselves, organised a national conference, and produced a manifesto.

Through the route of health and welfare initiated by the state health agencies, international funding organisations, and local NGOs, sex workers or *jouno kormis* began an organisation to engage with the administration, politicians and the local mafia. They often took to the streets, seeking support of the media and society, as workers appealing to rid themselves of social stigma. Sexual health became the route through which the

> prostitute's forum took this opportunity to shed off social stigma associated with their profession and started referring to each other as *jouno kormi* or sex workers. The worker status gave them the impetus to make claims as professionals. (pp 117–18)

Through brief descriptions of "trade" that was managed out of brothels, and the "business" of unimaginable scale controlled by land and political mafia, the discussion focused on peer educators engaged by the sexual health projects, who kept the interventions alive, bringing the self-identified sex workers into an empowered state of existence seeking first and foremost, citizen status. This discussion sketches a complex web of forces where the women engaged in sex work in Sonagachi attempt to organise themselves out of their marginality to voice their concerns. But the discussion does little to indicate why "worker status" was their aspired self-identity, rather than being self-employed or being in trade and business as in other parts of India.

The state, in transforming from the colonial to the postcolonial, only changed the mode of control and surveillance from coercive to persuasive. But, the poignant description of "watch and care" (pp 128–29) where sex workers reported their sexual health status to each other, after seeking healthcare, creating a comradeship and sisterhood, speaks volumes of the formation of community and class. This fragile yet valuable process seemed dislodged by the urgency in expecting the movement to have delivered more than it could have on its own. Despite acknowledging the path traversed in demanding rights, organising meetings and holding political demonstrations, the author is quick to dismiss this as "not the subjects in resistance against the hegemonic control of the state" (p 136). She poses these as efforts of complying with state health and welfare policy, as "a micro-technique of surveillance and control—a form of governance rather than an emancipatory experience" (p 137). Nascent efforts of movements of marginal people, even if they are within the liberal frame of rights, do count as strategies in challenging state and society and making a claim to citizenship. In fact, the book is peppered with inconsistencies; at one moment the movement is lauded as being pioneering in bringing visibility and voice to sex workers and to the forum's collective efforts at preventing trafficking, offering financial support and engaging with trade unions and the state as exemplary, while at another there is a summary conclusion that they were ineffective in salvaging a citizen–subject position to the sex workers, and just stopped short of claiming agency. What this dismissal has proved is that there are many lenses through which a movement can be viewed and assessed, which illustrates where one is located in making those assessments and to what end.

Agency of Sex Workers

The final section of the book explores this notion of agency of the sex worker(s), but in the new context as politicised beings, which the author concludes was the only achievement that the movement realised. Using a discussion of the "Sex Workers' Manifesto" and exploring the specificities of motherhood, the author, in the context of politics, looks at agency as collective action and individual decision-making respectively. The manifesto created in 1997, very radically reoriented the sexuality discourse in India, affirming that it is patriarchy and heterosexuality that shapes the discourse, and seeking solidarity with women across these structures of dominance. Assessing a manifesto created two decades ago, without surveying contemporary articulations and declarations of the numerous forums of sex workers seems a bit unreasonable. In another fashion, the agency of sex workers in being mothers and seeking domesticity is viewed as challenging the normative but constantly negotiating its limits, being bound by their material existence. Here again, assumptions of heteronormative familial norms seem to loom large in the discussions on choice, desire and fulfilment.

The book ventures out to explore, quite courageously and laboriously, a distinct aspect of stigmatised labour. Despite some arguments being repeated throughout the text and a perceived absence of integration of the three sections, the book poses several important questions that we may consider. It challenges us to view the sex worker in a milieu of work where its complexion has undergone tremendous change—that proletarianisation is no more the outcome for achieving its revolutionary potential, but pauperisation. Further it foregrounds the core question that the author comes back to repeatedly: How does the woman sex worker become free when her work is subsumed within

a heterosexual patriarchal order and capitalist system? And finally, the dovetailing of theory with politics; how can a movement that is emerging from the web knit of societal stigma, state machinations of control and criminalisation, international agendas, as well as the women's movement's shifting sense of support, be burdened with the urgency to understand and articulate their worker status? Swati Ghosh's passionate venture to explore this dimension of the lives of sex workers incites us to seek our own answers.

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Betwixt and Between
Shifting Identities of a Provincial Town

SIDDHARTH MENON

Shiptown: Between Rural and Urban North India by Ann Grodzins Gold, *Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017; pp xiii + 332, ₹4,369 hardcover.*

Ann Grodzins Gold's *Shiptown: Between Rural and Urban North India* is an ethnography of a small town in provincial North India called Jahazpur. In this book, Gold carefully documents and analyses the familiarity and kindness of everyday living practices that are derived from close proximity in living conditions when devoid of political manipulation. This is the larger argument of the book. Gold contends that places like Jahazpur do not have a static, fixed history. Rather, these places come into being through quintessential daily practices, processes, and patterns. As Gold notes, Jahazpur literally translates as "shiptown." She describes shiptown as a "town in motion, a town as transport, a town providing specific form of transport linking rural with urban" (p xi).

In other words, Jahazpur is an in-between place. This thread of in-betweenness weaves its way throughout the book, seamlessly flowing in and out of pages, chapters, and sections, binding them together. Jahazpur also happens to be a *qasba* (town): a walled and gated one that has historically provided mercantilist and bureaucratic services in this part of the country. Gold argues that the qasba is a unique kind of North Indian place with its own peculiar characteristics and is often difficult to categorise. It is somewhere in the middle of the rural–urban spectrum, it is definitely both and not exclusively either. Jahazpur is also a market town, whose economic activity is kept lively and vibrant by this rural–urban interface.

There are two aims of Gold's book. First is to provide knowledge about small-town life in provincial India by illustrating the differences between Jahazpur and its surrounding rural landscape. Gold argues that Jahazpur is a local hub where agropastoral farmers from the hinterland and traders from the town centre interact. These two-way relational networks make it a "peopled place" (p 1). Second, Gold aims to add to the burgeoning literature on ethnographic practice. She does this by providing an honest, reflexive account of her trials and tribulations in the field, and her dependence on the kindness of others in order to produce knowledge.

Gold's story about Jahazpur has eight interrelated but distinct chapters that have been divided into two complementary sections. Part I titled "Origins, Gateways, Dwellings, Routes, Histories" aims to paint a colorful picture of life in Jahazpur through five different brush strokes. Each of these chapters adds a new intriguing piece to the puzzle of the place. Part II with the title "Ecology, Love, Money," begins to piece together this puzzle by highlighting various actors of the town—people, landscapes, built environments, markets, temples, and mosques—and how they coalesce to form the place Jahazpur.

Rural–Urban Continuum

The theme of rural-urban interconnectivity and interdependence bleeds across chapters. In Chapter 2, Gold uses the five and a half gates of the walled qasba as analytical frames of entry into her field site. She not only uses these to look within her field site but also to reflect back on her own academic career in the United States. These material gates become metaphoric and reflexive passages that intrinsically connect her ethnographic object of study with her professional subjectivity, thereby blurring boundaries between the two. Each gate offers bidirectional routes and lenses on everyday qasba life: the Royal gate refers to commercial passages, the Delhi gate to historical ones, the Bundi gate to sociological passages, the Mosque gate to pluralistic passages, the Hanuman gate to ecological passages, and the small window gate refers to ethnographic passages. She connects journeys through these gates with the quintessential passage between the rural and urban lives of people in the town.

In Chapter 3, Gold offers a particularly compelling analysis of the gendered production of space in the suburban colony of Santosh Nagar in Jahazpur. Drawing on the work of feminist economic geographer Doreen Massey, Gold argues that Jahazpur as a place is not made by a focus on a narrow, internalised history of the town. Rather, the place is (re)made by coagulation of social relations, kinships, and ties forming together at a given time. It is not a static place, but something that is constantly forming, relational, and always becoming. What stood out most in this chapter was the close relationship Gold developed with her research participant and "friend," Suman. Gold recognises and acknowledges the role Suman played in developing a nuanced understanding of place, space, community, and gender in Jahazpur. She locates this unique relationship somewhere between friendship and intimacy, which she frames as an important element of her feminist methodological practice.

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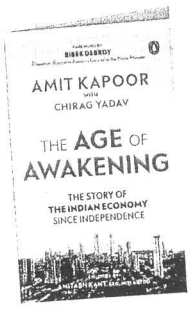

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Dreamy Wakefulness

Seven decades are masterfully and palatably crunched, but expends pages on the well-known

BY ASHISH GUPTA

ENCAPSULATING seven decades of socio-political and economic history of a country like India, with its complex diversity and cultural heritage, is itself a daunting task, but to attempt it in a 270-page book with just 19 chapters would seem nothing short of being foolhardy. So it is clear that the authors are neither trying to provide a complete picture of the country's history, nor satiate the appetite of every discerning reader.

What's more, the pace never slackens, as the authors embellish policy issues of governments and personal decisions of Indian leaders, with quirky anecdotes and little-known nuggets. For instance, the opening paragraph of the chapter *Dumb Doll*, where a high-ranking Congress leader asks a holy man what the stars foretell as the plane carrying Lal Bahadur Shastri's body arrives in Delhi from Tashkent. His answer: 'A hat-trick', implying that the next prime minister too will be from the same city, Allahabad. Or how, during Partition, dictionaries were ripped apart in libraries, with the portion carrying words A-K going to India and the rest to Pakistan, to ensure meticulous division of public assets.

The analysis, too, is lucid, balanced and sometimes rather surprising. Jawaharlal Nehru's infamous 'licence and permit raj' and his excessive focus on public sector units are criticised, but the authors are cognizant of his numerous contributions in building a young nation. PM Shastri gets the epitaph of being the country's "first economic reformer" who tried to infuse fresh thinking into the country's development strategy by allowing a larger role for the private sector and foreign investment.

> The analysis is lucid and sometimes surprising. Shastri is called India's 'first economic reformer' who tried to encourage the private sector and foreign investment.

Other PMs find themselves in subsequent chapters: Indira Gandhi's successful fight with the syndicate, her election strategies, war with Pakistan, declaration of Emergency and her return are discussed in great detail. Similarly, the reform agenda of Rajiv Gandhi (*Pangs of Change*), the liberalisation story of Narasimha Rao and his able lieutenant Manmohan Singh against all odds (*The Perfect Crisis*), Atal Behari Vajpayee's decision to further the reform focus, his road projects, and the Kargil War (*Clash of Ideologies*). Manmohan Singh's two terms (*Too much of a good thing*) and, finally, Narendra Modi's four-year term (*Great Expectations*) brings together the drama of triumphant breakthroughs and great failures of these leaders.

Yet, by the time you finish the book, you are left with a sense of deja vu. Much of this information has already been documented and there is little discussion on what should be the right economic model for India as even the West wrestles with a crisis of capitalism. The great financial crisis of 2007-08, the rising inequality between the rich and the poor, the paucity of jobs because of increasing automation and new technological breakthroughs, growing global protectionism, have all exposed the soft underbelly of a free-market economy and raised questions about its viability as an economic model. Perhaps a new economic model is called for, but for those answers and many more we will have to wait for the authors' next book.

ON THE RACKS

Manjiri Prabhu
Voice of the Runes | Bloomsbury

A compulsive paperback reading tells you what's exactly in store: a 36-hour spiral through history and myth, packed in the end-of-the world conspiracy mode, a la Dan Brown. Our protagonist, Re Parkar, allies with a handful of trustworthies to understand and uncover a Nordic mystery, taking the reader through its tasty intricacies.

Zarrar Said
Pureland | HarperCollins

An assassin lays out his motives for killing Nobel Prize-winning physicist Salim Agha—a man who makes a brilliant career in the West but gets only rejection in Pureland, his country which is taken over by 'the Caliphate'. Said lays a cloak of make-believe on an unnamed Pakistan, and the treatment of Dr Abdus Salam (the book's dedicatee) for being an Ahmadi. Said is a true inheritor of the fearless art of Mohsin Hamid and Mohammed Hanif.

Sonali Dev
A Distant Heart | HarperCollins

The cosseted, precious daughter of a rich politician; the son of a policeman who died saving the leader, a boy now a servant in the house. The inevitable friendship (and more) is sparked, while comings, goings and 'feelings' are captured in chapters named after the protagonists and suffixed 'present day' or 'a long time ago'. It is as if they stay in a vacuum though, for a pulsating Mumbai is absent.

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BOOK REVIEW

Schooling, Socialisation and Identity
A Textbook for B.Ed. Course

PUBLISHER: NCERT, New Delhi
YEAR: 2014
PAGES: 142, PRICE: ₹ 125

Socialisation is a lifelong process that facilitates internalising the norms and principles of society, the way society functions and expects us to conduct ourselves. Almost all the behaviour patterns learned by us are a reflection of our interaction with different representatives of society. These important representatives come in the form of family, school, peers and media. What we call human nature is actually the learned behaviour with different representatives and at different levels. The society, the school and others are therefore responsible in establishing the identity of the individual and this identity becomes an integral part of the personality.

The book under review titled *Schooling, Socialisation and Identity — A Textbook for B.Ed. Course,* published by NCERT has been written with the central theme of social identities, their importance and nature of their formation.

The book aims at generating awareness about the role society and school play in establishing the identity of an individual and the need of better understanding between the teacher and the learner.

This book has been skillfully conceptualised in seven chapters.

Chapter 1 on 'Self and Society' starts with the basic contention that society is the whole, the individual is a part and the behaviour of the individual has to be seen and understood in the light of the whole, i.e., the society. The making of the self and mind and the contribution of culture for acquiring complex skills, knowledge and their transfer has been conveyed competently in this chapter. There is a clear mention of the importance of social psychology

in shaping up the behaviour of an individual in the dynamic ongoing social process. The vital part of the message in this chapter is the focus on the dynamic relationships of human beings and the society as stated in the theory of George Herbert Mead whose book *Mind, Self and Society* has been recognised the world over.

Greeting another person as per the culture has been discussed well and supported with an activity. The relationship between society, mind and self with essential point of enquiry and social theory has been explained using simple language and day-to-day examples.

The chapter also briefly covers the role of social institutions and socialisation, kinship, marriage and family, many faces of community, neighbourhood socialisation, cultural capital, etc. There are seven activities to support the various dimensions of self and society. The relationship between the self and society, various dimensions of socialisation and the role played by cultural capital in different contexts has been explained well.

Chapter 2 on 'Socialisation and its Dimensions' starts with the constitutional provisions and commitment of the Constitution to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 years. Addition of Article 45 of the Directive Principles of State Policy, 86th amendment of Constitution, Article 21A to introduce Right to Education Bill–2005, Free and Compulsory Education Act (April 2010) have been kept in mind while framing this chapter on socialisation and its dimensions, social inequality and constitutional equality. The pain and longing of a child who wants to go to school has been beautifully illustrated through a poem titled "Watch you going to School".

The identity of the child as a citizen of India, the rights of the child irrespective of the State he/she is born, the laws governing the State and the consequences of the violation of the laws, has been explained well in this chapter. There is also a mention of plurality and diversity at the time of partition of the country and national movement. In addition, the chapter makes a passing reference of distinct religious groups in India and their strengths in making India a culturally and traditionally a rich country. Growing up gendered, boys and girls going to separate schools, skewed male and female sex ratio in the country, caste system and diversity of India from various perspectives have been well elucidated. The chapter is supported by five relevant activities, pictures and a case study.

Chapter 3 covers 'Self, Person and Identity'. The focus of this chapter is on the issue of identity. The interconnection between the self, person and the identity has been beautifully put across. Several questions which arise while establishing the identity and the concept of self have been answered with the help of some statements

which are actually the expressions of children, adolescents and young adults. The development of self which includes self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy and the relation of self with family, peer, school, teachers, etc., have also got a mention in this chapter. The parenting style and parent–child relationship, teacher and schooling experiences have been covered quite well.

Three case studies to understand the role of teacher and its relation as well as influence on children has been stated aptly. The chapter has elaborated on the concept of identity, its diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement. The beliefs as shared by famous psychologist Rogers and Maslow having unlimited potential to promote the goal of self-fulfilment have been explained rationally. The sense of self and the understanding of the conflict arising out of beliefs, value systems, ideology and public personal image have been effectively covered keeping in mind the heterogeneous, diverse nature of the surroundings, the processes of globalisation, urbanisation, internal and transnational migration, growing complexity of cultural relationships, etc.

Chapter 4 is based on 'School Culture and Hidden Curriculum'. This is a very relevant chapter of the book being reviewed. We are aware that the curriculum of the school which means the content to be taught is pre-decided. However, the teaching in every school goes beyond the specified framework of curriculum. The ethnicity of the school, even though not particularly mentioned in the curriculum plays a significant role as it has the natural message and the culture of the school set in it. In this chapter, case studies have been cited explaining the intended purpose of assessment for giving children credible feedback on their progress. What has been very beautifully explained in this chapter is the fact that children who are valued and recognised for their academic achievements by teachers and labelled as superior may not have other abilities which children labelled as academically inferior may possess.

The role of social faculty in creating these hierarchies has been explained well and supported by some reflections. The best part of this chapter is questioning the idea of able-bodied and able-minded. A pictorial presentation of a case and excerpts of an interview published in a magazine make an interesting reading. There is so much emphasis on inclusion in education these days. This chapter reinforces the importance of recognising the socio-economic and structural conditions of operation which can have far-reaching impact on impairment and disability. The powerful force of hidden curriculum with good intentions for the stakeholders has been explained well.

Chapter 5 is on 'Schooling and Identity Formation: Role of Schools'. The importance of the role of a school

in identity formation of the person is an established fact. The phase of transition for a child while shifting from home to school and forming new identities has been covered quite well and supported with an interesting case study. Defining the role of school as a social institution, the expected functions of the school and shortcomings if any have been explained in the light of the views of thinkers like Michael Apple, Avijit Pathak and Krishna Kumar, who have opined that conventional schools may simply be teaching children how to be submissive and how to accept mindless instructions from the powerful, as many activities according to them have little purpose.

There is a detailed mention of the identity in rural schools and different types of school. The importance of communication between teachers and students and the role it plays in establishing relationship between teachers and students has been adequately explained. The role of mother tongue as medium of instruction, its importance in better teaching-learning has been rightly emphasised. This chapter is supported by activities, pictures and a case study.

Chapter 6 is on 'Role of Education: Towards a just Peaceful Living'. It gives an overview of the modernity and globalisation. This chapter talks about their effect on changing the social, political, economic and cultural fabric of the nation which has come to us with advantages as well as disadvantages. Conflicts arising out of modernity and globalisation and the need of educating children to accept differences and understand issues at a deeper level have been explained in simple and logical manner. The chapter emphasises the need of determining the nature of education and its impact on the classroom teaching techniques and assessment. Articles 29 and 30 of the Indian Constitution on minorities and cultural diversity have been aptly quoted while explaining the issues like cultural identity and critical pedagogy. The differences and the diversity prevailing in our society in schools and classrooms and the role a school can play in addressing inequalities has been clarified in simple and understandable manner.

Chapter 7 deals with 'Evolving Identity as a Teacher'. The need and the importance of the process of socialisation and the role played by teachers have been clearly brought out in this chapter. The identity of the teachers in relation to their professional responsibilities has been elaborated quite well.

There is a fairly elaborated account of pre-service education, values and beliefs of a teacher and the socialisation process. Talking about the identity of the teacher, this chapter highlights the ethical and moral dimensions of this identity as well as the importance of the role played by the teacher as a facilitator and co-learner. Related activities have been incorporated in this chapter to make it meaningful and interesting.

This book as a textbook for B.Ed. course can be termed as an outstanding work done by NCERT because of its relevance in terms of quality of content and simplicity of presentation. Keeping in view the price of the book, the paper quality, the printing clarity and quality contents, the book is very useful for the student-teachers, teachers and teacher educators. All the seven chapters in the book are meaningful and supported with important case studies.

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along with wave energy resource assessment and the fundamentals of waves based on linear wave theory and the relations between various wave parameters.

The energy from currents, salinity gradient and ocean thermal energy conversion is discussed in chapter 6 along with technology types and environmental impacts. Commercial progress in various ocean energy plants is also discussed. Ocean energy resource assessment is a significant challenge faced by wave energy plant developers. The book covers in detail the various methods of wave and tidal energy resource assessment along with the details of instruments used to obtain *in situ* data and information through satellite and airborne remote-sensing technologies, including X-band and high-frequency radar. Although tools for observing the oceans have recently been revolutionized due to technological developments, such as remote sensing by sensors carried by satellites and *in situ* measurements using autonomous vehicles and instrumented moorings, the role of research vessel still continues to be most important in ocean sciences. The different measurements from the research vessel are also covered in the book.

Direct observations from buoys remain the most reliable sources data, but *in situ* measurements are costly, time-consuming and difficult to cover the entire oceans. Ocean modelling is a commonly used tool which is also economical and plays a vital role in the generation of oceanographic data and resource assessment. Accordingly, chapter 8 is exclusively devoted to ocean modelling for resource characterization. General features of ocean models, numerical methods, input parameters, boundary conditions along with the tools for model pre-processing and post-processing are discussed in detail. For minimizing the environmental impacts and maximizing electricity generation, optimization needs to be done. Chapter 9 introduces the optimization theory, intra-array and inter-array optimization, and the various optimization tools. Resource variability influences electricity generation, and how the resources vary intra-annually, inter-annually and due to climate change is also discussed in the book.

Technology readiness level used to estimate technology maturity should have been provided in the book for all the major technologies developed for extracting electricity from the ocean. A number of ocean energy converters have been developed since the 1940s and a few of them have been commercially demonstrated in actual sea conditions. More than 200 wave energy converters were under development in 2017, with varying degrees of maturity. Even though several concepts have been tested, due to the harsh ocean environment, at present some of the concepts are not commercially viable and some of them have failed. It would have been better had the authors introduced another chapter on lessons learned from the development of various ocean energy converters.

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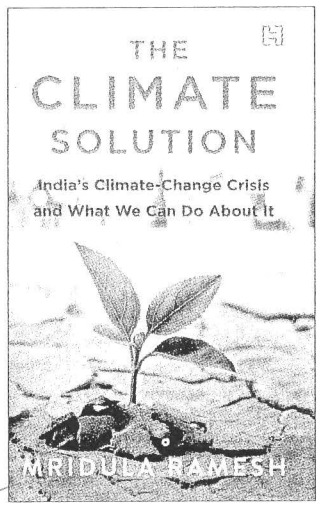

The Climate Solution: India's Climate-Change Crisis and What We Can Do About It. Mridula Ramesh, Hachette Book Publishing India Pvt Ltd, 4th/5th Floors, Corporate Centre, Sector 44, Gurugram 122 003. 2018. x + 325 pages. Price: Rs 550.

During the past 20 years, many books have been written that deal with global warming or on its impact on society. Most of these books are by foreign authors from developed countries – mainly journalists or scientists. Some of these books try to convince the reader that climate change is a natural phenomenon and that the society can learn to adapt to it. The books written by scientists tend to convince the reader that human beings are responsible for the rapid warming of the earth during the past 50 years. The books written by journalists tend to focus on the politics surrounding the attribution of climate change to human actions. Most of these books do not discuss, in great detail, what we can do to arrest global warming.

There are very few books written by authors from India that discuss the challenges faced by Indians in dealing with climate change. Hence this book is unusual since its major focus is on India and is written by an Indian author (founder of Sundaram Climate Institute, Madurai, Tamil Nadu). The book will benefit those who want to know about climate change and what they can do about it. The author begins by stating that 'we are playing Russian roulette with our collective future'. The first part of the book explains climate and environmental changes in eight chapters, while the second part discusses what we can do to deal with them in 11 chapters. The first chapter highlights the fact that although India contributes about 6% to global emission of carbon dioxide, the adverse impact of global warming on the country will be much higher than on developed countries. At this point the author expresses her concern about climate change and environmental change together, and this can confuse the reader. Most of the environmental change in India is not on account of global warming. The author mentions that the global vertebrate population has halved in the past 40 years, but this is not directly related to the increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere but more directly related to the rapid increase in human population. The author highlights that the rate of global warming in the 20th century is unprecedented. During the past 100 years the global mean temperature has increased by 1°C, while when we came out of the Last Ice Age 15,000 years ago, the global mean temperature increased by 1°C in 1000 years. In the second chapter the author has highlighted the challenge all nations will face if they want to limit global warming to within 1.5–2°C above the value in 1850. In the third chapter the

author shows that the impact of global warming is not uniformly same on all countries. Hence political leaders of different countries have not found it easy to agree on a way to limit the emission of fossil fuels in the next 30 years. The fourth chapter looks at the impact of global warming on heat waves, floods, droughts and vector-borne diseases. At this point it would have been useful if the author had pointed out that most of the increase in floods and vector-borne diseases in India in recent years is mainly on account of rapid urbanization. We cannot attribute all increase in floods and diseases to global warming. This is because we know that even a moderate rainfall event with an intensity of 50 mm/day leads to flooding in many urban areas in India on account of poor urban planning and governance. In chapter 5, the author highlights the tendency in many states of India to grow sugar cane and rice in areas that are prone to drought. She has discussed the problems faced by small farmers and has argued that global warming will aggravate these further. Chapter 6 provides a good discussion on problems related to poor transport infrastructure, waste disposal and water availability in the Indian cities. In chapter 7, the author argues that many global conflicts are related to climate change and water shortage, while in chapter 8 the vulnerability of women to climate change is underlined.

The second part of the book deals with the solutions to issues raised in the first part of the book. The author proposes innovative solutions to the rapidly declining water resources in India and the value of precision farming. She suggests that buses may be a better solution to the urban gridlock than metro-rail. She also mentions how some Indians have been able to turn urban waste to a resource. In chapter 14, there is a strong case made for solar and wind power. Chapter 15 deals with saving water and treatment of sewage. The impact of our diet on climate is discussed in chapter 16. In chapter 17, the author outlines her vision of India in 2025. Chapter 18 identifies 'climate heroes' who have protected the environment, while the last chapter provides a check list of what we can do.

This book is very different from the others on climate change, since the major focus is not on the devastation that can be caused by climate change but on what we can do to tackle it. The focus of the book is on the environmental crisis facing India and hence the subtitle 'climate crisis' is misleading. Many of the environmental issues like air and water pollution and waste disposal are local in nature and demand local solutions. They are not caused by the global increase in carbon dioxide. The global warming problem demands a solution at a global level, while most of the environmental problems we face in India are related to poor local governance. Those who read this book may not able to discern the subtle difference between a climate crisis and an environmental crisis. The writing style of the author is fluid, and hence will be a good introduction to environmental problems in India and their link to climate change.

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a heterosexual patriarchal order and capitalist system? And finally, the dovetailing of theory with politics; how can a movement that is emerging from the web knit of societal stigma, state machinations of control and criminalisation, international agendas, as well as the women's movement's shifting sense of support, be burdened with the urgency to understand and articulate their worker status? Swati Ghosh's passionate venture to explore this dimension of the lives of sex workers incites us to seek our own answers.

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Betwixt and Between
Shifting Identities of a Provincial Town

SIDDHARTH MENON

Shiptown: Between Rural and Urban North India by Ann Grodzins Gold, *Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017; pp xiii + 332, ₹4,369 hardcover.*

Ann Grodzins Gold's *Shiptown: Between Rural and Urban North India* is an ethnography of a small town in provincial North India called Jahazpur. In this book, Gold carefully documents and analyses the familiarity and kindness of everyday living practices that are derived from close proximity in living conditions when devoid of political manipulation. This is the larger argument of the book. Gold contends that places like Jahazpur do not have a static, fixed history. Rather, these places come into being through quintessential daily practices, processes, and patterns. As Gold notes, Jahazpur literally translates as "shiptown." She describes shiptown as a "town in motion, a town as transport, a town providing specific form of transport linking rural with urban" (p xi).

In other words, Jahazpur is an in-between place. This thread of in-betweenness weaves its way throughout the book, seamlessly flowing in and out of pages, chapters, and sections, binding them together. Jahazpur also happens to be a *qasba* (town): a walled and gated one that has historically provided mercantilist and bureaucratic services in this part of the country. Gold argues that the qasba is a unique kind of North Indian place with its own peculiar characteristics and is often difficult to categorise. It is somewhere in the middle of the rural–urban spectrum, it is definitely both and not exclusively either. Jahazpur is also a market town, whose economic activity is kept lively and vibrant by this rural–urban interface.

There are two aims of Gold's book. First is to provide knowledge about small-town life in provincial India by illustrating the differences between Jahazpur and its surrounding rural landscape. Gold argues that Jahazpur is a local hub where agropastoral farmers from the hinterland and traders from the town centre interact. These two-way relational networks make it a "peopled place" (p 1). Second, Gold aims to add to the burgeoning literature on ethnographic practice. She does this by providing an honest, reflexive account of her trials and tribulations in the field, and her dependence on the kindness of others in order to produce knowledge.

Gold's story about Jahazpur has eight interrelated but distinct chapters that have been divided into two complementary sections. Part I titled "Origins, Gateways, Dwellings, Routes, Histories" aims to paint a colorful picture of life in Jahazpur through five different brush strokes. Each of these chapters adds a new intriguing piece to the puzzle of the place. Part II with the title "Ecology, Love, Money," begins to piece together this puzzle by highlighting various actors of the town—people, landscapes, built environments, markets, temples, and mosques—and how they coalesce to form the place Jahazpur.

Rural–Urban Continuum

The theme of rural-urban interconnectivity and interdependence bleeds across chapters. In Chapter 2, Gold uses the five and a half gates of the walled qasba as analytical frames of entry into her field site. She not only uses these to look within her field site but also to reflect back on her own academic career in the United States. These material gates become metaphoric and reflexive passages that intrinsically connect her ethnographic object of study with her professional subjectivity, thereby blurring boundaries between the two. Each gate offers bidirectional routes and lenses on everyday qasba life: the Royal gate refers to commercial passages, the Delhi gate to historical ones, the Bundi gate to sociological passages, the Mosque gate to pluralistic passages, the Hanuman gate to ecological passages, and the small window gate refers to ethnographic passages. She connects journeys through these gates with the quintessential passage between the rural and urban lives of people in the town.

In Chapter 3, Gold offers a particularly compelling analysis of the gendered production of space in the suburban colony of Santosh Nagar in Jahazpur. Drawing on the work of feminist economic geographer Doreen Massey, Gold argues that Jahazpur as a place is not made by a focus on a narrow, internalised history of the town. Rather, the place is (re)made by coagulation of social relations, kinships, and ties forming together at a given time. It is not a static place, but something that is constantly forming, relational, and always becoming. What stood out most in this chapter was the close relationship Gold developed with her research participant and "friend," Suman. Gold recognises and acknowledges the role Suman played in developing a nuanced understanding of place, space, community, and gender in Jahazpur. She locates this unique relationship somewhere between friendship and intimacy, which she frames as an important element of her feminist methodological practice.

A striking part of Chapter 4 is Gold's analysis of the use of sound as an attempt to fill up public space in the town. Here, she analyses religious festivals and parades as a public celebration of religion in the town's streets and squares, which is generally a part of the private sphere in a secular state. Drawing on Uni Wikan's concept of ethnographic resonance, Gold urges us to analyse meanings that are not necessarily embedded in language. Rather, she calls on social scientists to move their analysis beyond the spoken word by stressing on the importance of feelings and emotions, and the use of one's own sensibilities to learn nonverbally. Jahazpur has historically been a place of religious pluralism, sustained tolerance, and mutual respect between the town's Muslim and Hindu residents. Yet, these historic linkages are now being challenged and contested by the younger generation of the town's residents who seem more susceptible to sectarian politics.

In Part II of the book, Chapter 6 stands out for its analysis of environmental conservation efforts in the town and weaving together the religious discourse. Gold analyses the case of the town's contaminated Nagdi river. Paradoxically, while the Nagdi remains polluted, two sacred groves of the town are protected and preserved. Findings from this chapter push back against romantic notions of close links between religious devotion and environmental conservation. Gold argues that in the case of Jahazpur's sacred hilltops, environmental conservation is a mere side effect of religious piety. She draws on two points to make her case. First, she argues that religious devotion becomes an obstacle in preserving the Nagdi. Since sacred groves on hillsides belong to a unified religious community (Muslim or Hindu), they are easier to manage and preserve. But the river is a common property that flows through both communities. Therefore, managing and preserving it requires coordination across religious barriers, which has been a difficult task. Second, the materiality of water, as compared to trees, makes its preservation more difficult. Trees and forests are easier to manage and protect while flowing water proves to be a challenge.

Studying Ordinariness

The book ends with a short epilogue that attempts to tie up the loose ends of Gold's ethnography. As Gold suggests, this book is not meant to be an exhaustive, all-encompassing account of daily life and practices in Jahazpur as the place is known today. Rather, it is an attempt to illustrate paradoxes and anomalies of life in a small town in North India that continues to breathe, live, and celebrate the differences of its inhabitants, much like the miraculous discovery of buried Jain images by Muslims in the town's centre, historically a market space (Chapter 5). Gold succeeds in this bold attempt to capture the textures and colours of everyday life in Jahazpur. The interesting thing about the town, as an object of ethnographic study, is its ordinariness. There is nothing unique or special about Jahazpur. It is an example of one of the many small towns scattered across the rural Indian landscape which account for more than 60% of India's total population (Chandramouli 2011).

Gold's work has been successful in highlighting the creativity, plurality, and ideas of quotidian life in such a place. This is especially relevant today with the onslaught of radical and divisive Hindutva political ideologies devised to break and polarise the religious plurality of places like Jahazpur. In this regard, the book makes a significant contribution to the growing literature on geographies of peace and religious cohabitation in places around the world, which remain scantly theorised in the social sciences. How provincial towns like Jahazpur and Varanasi respond to these malevolent, pseudo-religious political manoeuvring (Williams 2015), will prove crucial in deciding where the Indian republic's tryst with secular democracy turns to next.

However, Gold's book would have benefited tremendously had it been a few pages shorter. In particular, Chapter 7, that engaged with the wedding ceremonies of Bhoju Ram Gujjar's (her research collaborator) three daughters, could have been more succinct. Here, Gold practised a mode of immersive participant observation in the wedding activities of the household where she is both a keen observer of rituals and ceremonies, as well as joyful participant in the proceedings. Her narrative style experimented with three modes of ethnographic representation: experience, which dealt with raw first impression field notes; chronicle, a recounting of selected rituals and events from field notes and interviews; and interpretation, where she provided analytical commentary on different aspects of the weddings. The thick ethnographic descriptions and diverse representational styles made it difficult to keep track of the main argument of the book. Additionally, a more robust epilogue or conclusion would have helped situate the chapters of the book by highlighting its connections with its core argument.

In conclusion, Gold provides a rich, textured account of ethnographic practice, deeply situated in the peculiarities of Jahazpur without ever prescribing any specific methodological template. *Shiptown* is a book filled with juicy vignettes, captivating narratives, and colourful conversations as Gold documents, analyses, and produces knowledge about life in Jahazpur in close partnership with her research collaborators, Bhoju Ram Gujjar, and his daughters. The book draws the reader into the heady, intoxicating mix of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and materials that make up the town of Jahazpur, which sometimes feel overwhelming, but warm and welcoming nonetheless. Gold has been able to bring Jahazpur to life on the pages through lucid prose and a seamless flow of the text. The book will benefit young scholars in the humanistic social sciences, particularly those interested in situated, reflexive ethnographic practice.

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TECHNOLOGY

The Hindu; 21/4/19 Pg - 25

The devil is in the DNA

Facebook's problems lie in the way it is built, argues an early investor

JINOY JOSE P.

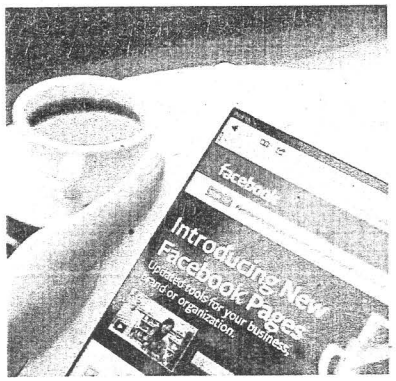
Tech is the Young Adult of non-fiction now. There is an influx of books and readers, and everyone is predicting a catastrophe or two. *Zucked: Waking up to the Facebook Catastrophe*, the latest to join the club, comes from Roger McNamee, an early investor in Facebook who also happens to be a venture capitalist and musician.

McNamee was an insider and that adds more value to the concerns he raises in the book.

According to him, one of the major flaws in the business model of Facebook is that the technology giant does not consider itself as a media company but as a platform. This means it is not responsible for the actions of third parties which use the platform to meet their demands. This could also mean that Facebook does not think it shares the blame for all those mighty mishaps – from the Cambridge Analytica data privacy scandal to the way FB posts played a role in the slaughter of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, of which even the United Nations took note – that prompted many to call it the digital equivalent of a Frankenstein monster.

Why can't they clean up?

Now the most important question: If these errors are inherent, why can't Facebook – which means founder Mark Zuckerberg, COO Sheryl Sandberg and team – rectify it? McNamee wants Facebook to take a cue from the example of Johnson & Johnson when a few bottles of its Tylenol was poisoned by someone in Chicago in 1982. J&J quickly pulled out all the bottles from every store in the region and did not reintroduce Tylenol till it had perfected tamper-proof packaging.



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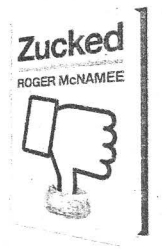
Facebook doesn't appear to be ready to clean up. Instead, it blames third parties who are cashing in on its own inherent disregard for private data. In short, the problems of Facebook are not a case of "unintended consequences of well-intended strategies." So it will be very difficult for Facebook to mend its ways because change means demolishing its current architecture and starting afresh. The data-gorging business model of the likes of Facebook and Google do not necessarily allow for that because as McNamee points out, surveillance, the sharing of user data and behavioural modification are the foundation of the success of the tech giants. "Users are fuel for Facebook's growth and... the victims of it."

Cut to the chase, the victims must speak up for a better, transparent and inclusive digital experience. In 14 engaging, anecdote-rich chapters and an info-rich and insightful collateral dossier, all of which obviously reflect his personal biases and prejudices, McNamee cobbles up a deeply entertaining account of why we must not take Facebook at face value.



Zucked: Waking Up to the Facebook Catastrophe
Roger McNamee
HarperCollins
₹599

value of labour-power under capitalism; but Chattopadhyay does not point this out, although a discussion of domestic labour is relevant to any vision of socialism. Again, while quoting Marx's dictum that the class struggle will be fought out to a conclusion, that is, socialism or communism, "under the (bourgeois) democratic republic," he avoids pointing out that this is contradicted by Marx's assertion that there will be "a long period of transition between capitalist and communist society," during which the state will take the form of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Clarity about this issue is important for revolutionary socialists, and it cannot be achieved without pointing out that Marx himself was unclear about how the transition would take place.

Chattopadhyay also seems unfamiliar with the debate among Trotskyists on the characterisation of the Soviet Union, assuming they all agree that the USSR under Stalin was state capitalist (whereas in fact, this is a minority position), and never mentions Cliff's (1974) analysis. However, he is right to criticise them for believing that the Bolshevik regime before Stalin took over, was a workers' state, and to praise Gorbachev's attempt to introduce democratic reforms (pp 278–80).

Propagation of the belief that the repressive and exploitative regime in the Soviet Union constituted an example of actually existing socialism/communism has done more to discredit socialism than all the anti-communist propaganda of the West. At a time when there is renewed interest in socialism, this book is an excellent and much-needed attempt to lay that myth to rest.

Rohini Hensman (*rohinihensman@yahoo.co.uk*) is the author of *Workers, Unions, and Global Capitalism: Lessons from India* and *Indefensible: Democracy, Counter-Revolution and the Rhetoric of Anti-Imperialism.*

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A Sensible Tale of Three Powers

ZORAWAR DAULET SINGH

This Brave New World: India, China and the United States by Anja Manuel, *New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016; pp xi + 349, $27.00/₹699.*

In 2005, Robert Zoellick, then a senior official at the United States (US) Department of State, publicly called upon China to become a "responsible stakeholder." This famous exhortation was made at the near zenith of US power in the post-Cold War era. The blowback from Iraq and Afghanistan had not become fully apparent. Neither had the boom in the global economy shown any signs of dissipating. In short, America could imagine a world where the socialisation of rising powers of Asia into a system would be little more than rearranging the furniture around.

In her previous avatar, Anja Manuel served at the Department of State during those heady years (2005–07) and the liberal world order ideas espoused by Zoellick must have resonated with her. For her thesis is precisely this: China and India, despite their political contrasts and power differentials, should be seen more as contributors to the global order and less as chess pieces where one or both are employed in a strategy to manage the power shifts underway. Manuel rejects the idea that the "international system cannot shift peacefully to accommodate new large powers" (p 8). She instead is of the opinion that "we must stop our hand-wringing about China and seek instead to forge harmonious relationships with both giants" (p 3), and "we must coax each giant, through patient interaction and cooperation, to accept a responsible international role" (p 9).

Manuel succinctly narrates how Indian and Chinese leaders think about their past and the lessons they drew from the oppressive period of Western domination over Asia. India, despite a degrading and economically emasculating colonial experience, found an unusual peace with its traumatic past, unlike China which drew more abiding lessons and acquired a prickly identity along with a deep resolve to restore its historical primacy. Much of the book then dwells on the unplanned or enforced transformations that India and China undertook as they re-oriented their economies by greater engagement abroad and opening up at home. The balance sheet of accomplishments and tribulations in this journey are conveyed through empathetic anecdotes and catchy statistics. By emphasising the enormous domestic challenges—inequality, corruption, demographic shifts, ecological degradation, and political instability—that are now part of the Indian and Chinese pathways to great power status, Manuel is also perhaps telling American readers how different Asia's rising powers are from its predecessors who had the luxury of going global after solving domestic problems.

Yet, going global they are. India's aid grants to other countries are already the same as China's, despite a much smaller economy. China is already the second-largest global investor after the US. Manuel is particularly impressed with the institution-building by the rising powers in recent years. In contrast, "our economic, political, and security institutions are stuck in the past. We haven't yet found a way to modernise global governance or to integrate China, India, and other rising powers effectively into the system" (p 232). The BRICS (an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) are, thus, legitimate reactions to stasis in the ancien régime. They are "warning shots: unless we reshape outdated postwar institutions, India and China will ignore or leave them" (p 241).

The book is a smartly structured and sensitively argued narrative. The intended audience is the Western, particularly the American reader who has been given an overdose of China's rise and almost nothing of India's more modest but still important story. By introducing India to such an audience without resorting to the clichéd "free India versus repressive China" thesis is refreshing.

Partners in the World Order

India has been presented—warts and all—without crudely juxtaposing a rival "other." Manuel does not fawn over India's democracy; nor is she aghast with China's authoritarian system. Each serves a purpose in her world image, and both are opportunities for American multinational companies, some of whom the author's consulting firm also advises. While India is presented as the "like-minded" and friendlier of the two, China's vital importance for the US is evident throughout this book. Furthermore, Manuel adds, "(a)s India expands its global role, we may have more disagreements" (p 276).

It is important to discern these arguments sensibly. That India is being increasingly seen as a potential player in a changing Asia will ring positively to Indian ears. Yet, this is not a clarion call for a balance of power approach—to rope India into an anti-China camp—that many in Delhi seem to relish, often without forethought of what such a role would entail and its implications for India's values, identity, and interests. Manuel is convinced that such a "strategy alone will not succeed, just as it did not succeed for Britain" who lost its great power status in devastating world wars with a rising Germany (pp 273–74).

When situated with the contemporary political winds in the US, the idea of an early Sino–American modus vivendi appears unlikely. Not only do US policymakers appear determined to secure the competitiveness of American multinational companies, but they are also now equally obliged to negotiate trade agreements that bring real economic advantages to middle and working class America. So, while it might appear overtaken by rapidly unfolding events and the upending by the Trump administration of any meaningful quest to socialise or collaborate with rising powers to manage the international order, *This Brave New World* nevertheless offers a compelling alternative to a US grand strategy driven by narrow power politics and coercion. Yet, having seen the real face of the American power and the whimsical nature of its foreign policy (not for the first time, one hastens to add), would the rest of the world embrace a softer version of US foreign policy, post-Trump, without a substantive say in the global governance system? It is unlikely. Still, Manuel leaves the reader with an appealing and ambitious image of how a dominant power can shape the rise of the rest without resorting to an ultimately self-defeating foreign policy vision. Manuel comes down firmly in the camp of the liberal grand strategists, who advocate an accommodative posture with Asia's rising powers in pursuit of a bigger prize: an open world economy and a non-violent transition to a new world order.

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Indian Literature, Jan-Feb, 2019, Vol. LXIII, No. 309

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A Two-in-One Tale: The Long Short Story

"Get on with your story," Shiva said, turning to me.

'Yes, start" said the rest. 'But don't go overboard.'

'Not a single word in exaggeration, let me tell you,' I assured them. 'Here goes'.

The above conversation from the long short story "The Witch" by Kamalakanta Mohapatra, translated from Odia by Leelawati Mohapatra and Paul St. Pierre, presents an apt figure to connect with the pieces of fiction in *Tell Me a Long, Long Story*, edited by Mini Krishnan, a compelling anthology featuring a rare literary genre—the long short story. This first-ever collection of that kind from India showcases twelve languages and some remarkable writers from different parts of the country: Bolwar Mahamad Kunhi (Kannada), Chetan Raj Shrestha (English), Gopikrishnan (Tamil), Habib Kamran (Kashmiri), Ismat Chughtai (Urdu), Kamalakanta Mohapatra (Odia), K.R. Meera (Malayalam), Kolakaluri Enoch (Telugu), Mahasweta Devi (Bengali), Shripad Narayan Pendse (Marathi), Nirmal Verma (Hindi), and Waryam Singh Sandhu (Punjabi).

Tell Me a Long, Long Story: 12 Memorable Stories from India. Ed. Mini Krishnan. Aleph, 2017. Pp. 316

The long-short literary form happens to find an apt description, too, in "The Witch," where the narrator presents a prelude of sorts, which states that it is a "two-in-one story" he is going to tell—a single story that at once deals with *the police* and *the witch*. The long short story has a multi-layered text with a moving character play, somewhat ghost-like in its indecipherability, but it is curiously embedded in a form not looser than that of a short story. The book's blurb explains its genre: "Neither as brief as the classic short story nor as long

as the novella, it is a piece of writerly art that can be read in a single sitting, yet allows the writer to properly explore setting, character, atmosphere and plot. In the hands of a master, 'the long short story' is just the right length to provide an extraordinary reading experience."

Mini Krishnan has many years of experience as an editor of translations. It was during her hunt for novellas from different Indian languages she noticed the long-short form. It is hardly translated. Appearing mainly in festival specials or annual issues of weekly magazines in Indian languages, their length ranging from 8000 to 20,000 words is their biggest hurdle in getting translated. They are not short enough for a normal English periodical or anthology featuring short stories. But they are not long enough for a book publisher to take interest, either. Major writers contribute long stories to the thick special issues of periodicals in their languages, obliging the editors who have been publishing their shorts, knowing quite well that, except in their own complete collections, they may not even get reprinted or anthologised. Getting them translated is, normally, not even a remote possibility.

While trade publishers of translators largely ignore the long-short form, Mini Krishnan has painstakingly selected twelve stories in this genre, giving the reader a taste of what our languages can offer towards creating a pluralistic imaginary for the country, which has become so critical for the survival of democracy in our times. This anthology presents writers dead and alive, old and young. Some of them are fiercely feministic; some others call our attention to the dangers of anthropocentricism. Some celebrate fantasy; some others bring you down to the ground of reality. One deals with a world generally understood as past even as it exists among us unnoticed. Another presents a disjointed world but still fills us with a sense of a future of hope. All of them have one thing in common—a full-fledged study of character.

The democratic intent of the anthology is evident in the celebration of the "creativity, intelligence and practical wisdom of the non-lettered" alongside the aspiration for freedom, contemporary lifestyle and complex manoeuvres of urban life. They come together to present in an extraordinarily explorative manner, India's many-centred modernity that ceaselessly asserts the inherent diversity of this nation.

The opening story, "Seed" by Mahasweta Devi, translated by Ipshita Chanda from Bengali is a stark exploration of how human beings get drunk with power and turn inhuman. But it also shows how emergencies can lead to revolutions. The low caste Dulan's story reveals how life's seeds are often sown in the fields of death, but an unexpected yield may be harvested from

them by the courageous reclamation of the true human material by a single individual.

"Seed" launches the inner structure of *Tell Me a Long Long Story*. It leads to Shrestha's English story, "The King's Harvest," as though it is building the book's deep structure further by following the agrarian perspective introduced by Mahasweta Devi. It seeks to interpret the meaning of 'loss'. Sometimes, when one loses something, one does not fully comprehend the implications of that loss for one's future. Like Tontem, who finally returns to tend his priceless land, as per the will of his dying monarch, it takes much waiting and many journeys before one might understand the true price of the king's harvest, and how one's illusions are "protected by a conspiracy of the fates."

Tontem's steady steps to reach Yeigang lead us directly to Nirmal Verma's "Signs" translated by Pratik Kanjilal from Hindi, and we see that if Tontem is one of "the most fortunate among men," there is also someone like Amar Babu who lived through the Partition of India and lost his love to the other side. Amar reminds us that "everyday events bring so many signs swaddled in their folds. We understand what they mean long after they are history. Only an unnamed sadness remains, which steals upon you unawares."

This sadness about losing a chance is at the heart of Bolwar Mahamad Kunhi's Kannada story translated by Keerti Ramachandra. It is when Mehrunissa realises that she will remain Puttaba Sahukar's widow and a mother-figure in Samad's eyes, that her period of mourning becomes interminable. Then she can only pray to kill her desire:

> Oh Allah!
> Let fall the red, scalded sun on a sinner like me
> Make me tread boiling water
> Pour molten copper over me.

The next story, Habib Kamran's "Bulbuls" translated from the Kashmiri by Neerja Mattoo, leads us to a philosophical understanding of life's cycles, and helps us deal with our profound sorrow about Mehrunissa's plight. It follows the life of a bulbul family through the nest-making by the parents to the early days of the fledgling's life. At some point, much to the worry of the narrator, the baby bulbul was abandoned by the parents. The next morning, the young one takes wing, leaving the nest empty. The processes of the natural world might appear so strange to the human eye, but it provides a clue to the freedom of existence—perhaps a non-anthropocentric lesson about the cycles of life that Mehrunissa could take before committing herself to a long future of repression.

The theme of desire takes a newer dimension in K.R. Meera's "The Deepest Blue," a Malayalam long story translated by J Devika. It is the tale of an ordinary homemaker who discovers the depth of her passion in the most unexpected manner and accesses it for once with all her courage. A powerful story about memory and desire, wherein the protagonist describes her own story thus: "This is not fiction, this is experience."

Shripad Narayan Pendse's "Jumman" translated by Shanta Gokhale from the Marathi takes 'experience' worth discussions beyond the human world. It sketches the love relationship between a poor man and his goat, as the poor beast goes on to become a god and then a sacrificial victim due to some bizarre human interpretations and interferences.

The play of the absurd in Pendse directly leads to Mohapatra's "The Witch" in which "a middle-aged man with a wife and children and landed property" chooses to disappear. This ghostly vanishing act finds its daring antithesis in Sandhu's Punjabi story, "The Fourth Direction" translated by Nirupama Dutt, where we see Raj Kumar, living up to his name, and "walking fearlessly in the forbidden fourth direction."

Maybe, such courage, as what Raj Kumar finally gathers, alone will help us dream of "A Place to Live." But, Gopikrishnan's Tamil story translated by Vasantha Surya tells us that dreaming is not so easy as it is coupled with the responsibility of implementation. This narration of a couple's life, from October 1980 till Gandhi's birth anniversary in 1984, reveals the gaps between one's aspiration and one's capacity. Having gone through the struggle of leading a middleclass tenant's rather pest-infested life, the protagonist, on an impulse, decides to gamble to bridge that gap. That he took such an illusory route toward his so-called dream on Gandhi's birth anniversary pricks his conscience, but his practical situation makes him linger in it, and hope that he would win the lottery.

The practical reality of human beings caught in existential situations is indeed the subject matter of Kolakaluri Enoch's "Hunger" translated by CLL Jayaprada from Telugu. When hunger strikes, one jumps even into death—frog and human alike. And, one lies there, "one that had cried, leapt, jumped, thought, wept, laughed, and one that had been troubled by hunger," but is "hungry no more" thanks to one's violent death.

The last story in this anthology is Ismat Chugthai's "Lingering Fragrance" translated from the Urdu by Tahita Naqvi. In many ways, it is a culmination of the different themes that had been dealt with in the book. But it ultimately speaks of the enduring nature of love, and of the importance of nurturing someone with a staunch belief in such love. Relinquishing all his ancestral rights, Chamman chooses to accept his son born from his out of the

wedlock relationship with a bondmaid whom he loved dearly and leaves his opulent home. Chamman makes the reader circle back to the first story in this anthology, where Mahasweta Devi's hero, Dulan, reflects: "To be a seed is to stay alive."

This anthology not only features some of the finest writers, but also some of the finest translators in the country. The editorial imagination that organises and animates the compilation of the stories in this collection is remarkable. Together they make an arrangement wherein a set of long-short stories startle their readers out of their stupor, and awaken them to the astonishingly transformative uses of the rhetorical devices, truth of insights, and nuances of emotion that this genre of fiction can offer us in our mirror-imaged times. Mini Krishnan's volume is a must-read and must-keep.

Rizio Yohannan Raj

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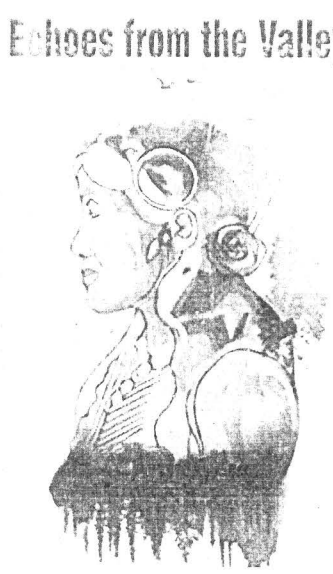
2019

Voices of Assamese Women in Fiction

The title is a bit confusing as the phrase 'the valley' signifies Kashmir to most in north India. The sub-title clarifies that the 'valley' in this case is Assam. It is a collection of stories by Assamese women writers, translated and compiled by Parbina Rashid. Why is her name not mentioned on the cover? Is it just plain omission or something more deliberate? One can only guess. When the editor says that she had to sift through hundreds of short stories to finally select eleven that are included in the book, one can only marvel at the heritage of short stories in Assamese. As one reads the stories, one marvels at the blend of the old and the new, the rural and the urban, all seen through the eyes of the women.



Echoes from the Valley—Stories by Assamese Women Writers: Translated and compiled by Parbina Rashid. Delhi: Media House, 2017; Pp. 216; Rs 250.

The first story "Let's Talk" by Sneha Devi takes up a typical situation; Barun and Kalyani love each other but cannot get married because they are distantly related. Is it worthwhile to keep up such social barricades when they come in the way of one's happiness, the story seems to ask. Typically, Barun gets married whereas Kalyani remains single. Indira Goswami's "Purification" is one of the most powerful stories in the collection. It is a society where caste considerations play a major role, a woman from the upper caste can have physical relations with someone who belongs to a so-called lower caste, but will she give the relationship recognition? The negative answer is conveyed in an oblique but sharp manner. So sharp that poor Mahajan who is keen to be the father of her child, is almost distraught with grief!

There are many kinds of discrimination faced by women in a patriarchal society that prevails in most parts of India. The most common one

is not being allowed to have any kind of interaction with anyone from the opposite sex, outside marriage, even an innocent one. Any transgression is punished ruthlessly as in "An Incomplete Story" by Rita Chowdhury. In the context of discrimination one cannot ignore the treatment meted out to people from the North-east, especially women who are considered easy game. One reads and hears about it all the time. "Kalindi Your Black Currents" by Moushumi Kandali takes up the plight of a young girl in such a situation. What makes the story stand out is the blending of an appropriated version of the Durga-Mahishasura story with the story of the girl. "A Few Days in Banphool's Life" by Anuradha Sharma Pujari looks at another kind of discrimination. Banphool, a young dalit girl, wants to go to school but she is poor. Finally, when her father's employer opens a school for poor children, the teacher there asks her to clean the drain. Caste barriers are very hard to break!

"The Glass Pyramid" by Manikuntala Bhattacharjya looks at man-woman relationships. Relationships that evolve and then break. In this instance the woman emerges stronger and has the courage to move on from the man whom she had loved once, who had left her to marry a woman his family chose for him. The concluding story "Urge" by Jui Bora Borgohain is similar in theme but there the similarity ends. It is the story of Sita who returns to her mother Basumati, after being asked to go through the fire test.

As one looks at the stories, one realizes that the questions they ask, the topics they address, are universal. Things like time, place and person do not matter; even when they do, they are secondary. So, even when the reader comes from a different socio-cultural background, he/she can relate to the stories and the problems addressed in them. The language of the stories is simple and poignant, not lost in translation.

Having said that, this reviewer wishes to put on record the fact that the editing of the book leaves much to be desired. There are many instances when words run into one another. Quite a few times wrong words are used, for example 'shift' when it should have been 'sift'(p. 155), 'sign' when it should have been 'signature' (p. 170) and so on. It is a pity that a good book like this loses out because of the quality of production.

There is a special degree of sensitivity in women's writings that sets them out. A woman's perspective is different, it notices small things and incorporates them into a larger vision of life. The idea of putting together stories by women writers from a state/region is a very good one. One hopes that more such collections are published so that one can read them and make a comparative study. That would be a small but significant gesture towards regional unity on a socio-cultural level.

Purabi Panwar

Sadhna Shanker

Ascendance | Rupa | 327 pages | Rs 395

A Separation Awaits

An Indian flavour imparts this fiercely imagined science fiction a special charge

BY PEGGY MOHAN

HAVE you ever noticed how your reading habits develop a go-to sameness, and you head for books, often by the same author, in the hope of reliving an old high? From time to time I would find myself checking out sci-fi, for the ideas and imagination it offered, going through the likes of Isaac Asimov, and then Stanislaw Lem and Olaf Stapledon, who zoomed out to give me a view of the universe. But then I would drift away. I found their characters flat, always overshadowed by the Big Idea. I couldn't find myself inside the frame. The writers belonged to a Western world, one they saw as the default setting. Didn't we also have a place in the future?

Then I was handed *Three Body Problem*, by Liu Cixin. I had the real stuff. And the real stuff was now from China. It was also as techy, and saw the outreach to life on other planets as beginning with China, in fact with a Chinese woman who had been put in charge of a secret astronomy project far in the Chinese hinterland. Bold and extremely intelligent, and dispirited by the land she saw during the Cultural Revolution, she and the story she set in motion could be mean and edgy. But I still couldn't find myself inside the frame. Instead of a White Western world I had got myself a strong confident Chinese world. Was the future always to be about someone else?

Then I read the blurb of a new book set in a world where women and men lived permanently separated by an opaque wall! What's not to like in a world like that, I wondered. Men, for sure, would welcome this relief!

Sadhna Shanker's science fiction tale *Ascendance* is set in a distant future. Earth is finished, and humans have relocated to another world, continuing the separation of men and women that began in the last days of Earth. They now live on two separate sides of the planet, in an uneasy truce after centuries of bitter warfare. Each side feels complete; women and men do not need each other to have babies. Indeed, there are very few babies, as everyone can live forever. And then... there is a murder.

In *Ascendance* you find the odd throwaway word, like vish or amar that rings a bell, and ambiguous names. A baby, made to order, is named Tara. Maya is an ancestral 'woman's consciousness' who lives in the computer system, with memories of Earth. Shanker has been generous in giving space to other future people. Here was a futuristic world where I did not feel like just an onlooker. And it opens out into more than just a clever fantasy, becoming something deeper—a comment on our world. You look up, see your home, the networked lives we live, the relationships we take for granted.

Shanker conjures this other world in fine detail, with characters complex and conflicted, and a plot that moves forward from surprise to surprise. Even by the end, you can't guess how the two sides could resolve their differences, you know that you need to hold on tight and trust her imagination. Because the ending, when it comes, blows you away!

> *Ascendance* opens out into more than clever fantasy; it's a comment on the world we live in. At last, it's futuristic world where we are not just onlookers.

ON THE RACKS

Swati Ghosh

Design Movement in Tagore's Santiniketan | Niyogi Books

Every province in India has its own tradition of hand-drawn design. In Bengal, 'alpanas' adorn floors and walls. In this exquisitely illustrated and deeply researched book, Ghosh shows how a folk practice was elevated to cultural artefact in Tagore's Santiniketan. Combining influences from across India, practitioners like Gouri Devi and Nani Gopal Ghosh extended the alpana's limits, watched over by the likes of Nandalal Bose.

Amrita Mahale

Milk Teeth | Antext

Matunga, Mumbai; the 1980s. Ira and Kartik, childhood friends, form a deep bond of friendship and promise each to the other. In the '90s, Ira is a journalist, living, then reliving, a passionate love in all its physicality. Kartik has a corporate job, and a secret life. Mahale's first novel is a very good one, brought alive by a Mumbai swirling with life, ideosyncrasies and Indians eyeing modern ways of being.

Akil Kumarasamy

Half Gods | HarperCollins

A butcher from Angola who finds solace in New Jersey, an entomologist in Sri Lanka searching for his missing son and a baby girl renamed after a Hindu goddess but raised as a Muslim. Kumarasamy's first book brings together these characters in a set of ten interlinked stories with evocative descriptions and a dash of nostalgia.

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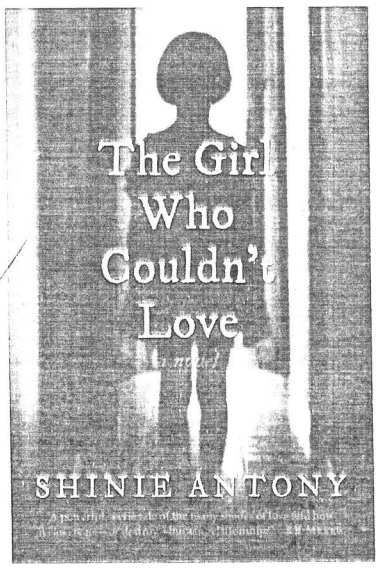
Indian Literature, JFM-Feb-2019, Vol-LXIII, No.309

Daddy, I've Had to Kill You

"You do not do, you do not do
Anymore, black shoe
In which I've lived like a foot
For thirty years, poor and white,
Barely daring to breathe, or Achoo.
Daddy, I've had to kill you
You died before I had time—
.....
.....
—Sylvia Plath, "Daddy," *Collected Poems* (HarperCollins Publishers Inc, 1992)



The Girl Who Couldn't Love, novel by Shinie Antony. New Delhi: Speaking Tiger, 2018. Pp167, Rs.299/-

As a sequel to Plath, one could read this story of an absolutely brilliant and equally neglected girl child who didn't just consider killing her father, but actually killed him. At the instruction of a psychotherapist, Plath had killed her father only metaphorically. Struggling to get exorcised out of a damning influence, she merges the image of her biological father with that of Hitler who incidentally called himself 'the Dad of the German race.' She subjectified and domesticated the violence of history and felt deeply identified with the war victims. That was her way of doing it. Shinie manipulates the complex relationship between the victim and the victimizer more on the plane of Jacobean tragedy. This kind of importunate and macabre, gothic and placental treatment of love and death is natural to many such sensitive people who are doomed to go on living with splinters of shattered images, especially of parents. Brimful of their own pains and passions, sometimes they seem to be leaping out of their skins in their almost demonic thirst for love, life, art and intensity. And in certain cases, they enact their revenge tragedies through misplaced violence. Violence in any case is a spear pointed at both ends, and immeasurable is the angst of daughters whose love-hate relationship with their larger-than-life, superbly talented and equally demonic fathers. Such a father drives, Roo, the

protagonist of the novel to the point of killing not only him, but also a lover who turns out to be a half-brother, son of the same Bedee, whom Roo's father had adopted out of seeming compassion, but eventually used as his sex-slave. The plot is complex and so is the treatment, bubbling with profound insights into the pathology of crime stemming from childhood trauma. Almost Dostoevskian is the vision of this little book which also underlines the irony so powerfully staged in Muktibodh's great poem, "The Void":

> The void inside us has jaws,
> Those jaws have carnivorous teeth,
> Those who cross my path
> Find this void
> In the wounds
> I inflict on them.
> They let it grow,
> Spread it around,
> Scatter it and give it away to others,
> Raising the children of emptiness.
> The void is very durable.
> It is fertile.
> (*Translated from Hindi by* Vinay Dharwarkar, from *Modern Indian Writing in English Translation*. New Delhi: Penguin India, 2011).

Basically this is a story of these 'children of emptiness,' whose parents stop even pretending to love each other.

The irony of life is that we know and we know not. All the major tragedies in the world focus on this large disconnect between appearance and reality, as Shakespeare would have put it, and also between the body and the mind, the Mūlādhāra and the Sahasrāra as the Yōgaśāstra would put it. Though it is not very fashionable to talk in terms of 'instruction and delight,' the dual motives of art, but I dare take you to the old world charm of deriving lessons from negative examples because the protagonists of this very well-crafted novel, are all deeply soaked not only in Shakespeare, but also in Webster and Ford. They lived through characters in books both classical and popular and they keep reading all the time. Even in moments of intense togetherness, they play hide and seek behind characters depicted in great books. This helps them live beyond the boundaries of a life under-performed.

Love in these times of public and private break-downs, seems a more distant proposition than it was in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, which the novel keeps referring to, because we do not even have faith to hold on to. Lacking in faith in all kinds of father figures, all kinds of institutional heads, leaves us floating like spiritual orphans. Early in life, the Rudra in Rudrākshi (Roo) comes out to play basically because of the deep disjoint that happened between body and mind, her body and Rūh ('soul' in Urdu, that her nickname Roo echoes). This sudden leap from the meadow of innocence to the cave of

experience happened when she was younger than the chimney-sweep in Blake. One can smile and smile and be a villain. One can go on quoting passages after passages from Shakespeare and yet be a maniac. Humankind cannot bear too much reality. Some make-believe to hold on to, is a must. Shattered images often leave one in a not so comfortable company of splinters. Our inbox gets filled with messages like this, yet we go on reading; so powerful is the rendition and so delightful the flow of dialogues.

The world of Jacobean tragedy was one of whispered intrigue in dimly lit corners, of revenge and counter-revenge, an accidental slaughter, a world where advancement at court depended on "success as bawd." We also live in similar circumstances, all the time witnessing pander-figures being promoted to the status of anti-heroes. So deep is Shinie's inter-textual dialogue with Jacobean tragedies; but quite unlike them, her images drawn from nature are quite refreshing. Though the action is mostly confined to rooms and often to hours between midnight and dawn, her connect with nature, especially the cawing crow, is complete. Roo is fascinatingly sharp-tongued and witty. And the push and joy of her language makes her a classic illustration of the libidinal/semiotic thrust in women's language that Helene Cixous, Irigary and Kristeva keep referring to as the springboard for subversive thought. For example, "At some point his jokes will fall flat and my introvert ways will begin to pall. I will become too silent and he will be an out-of-work clown. That is just the way with men and women, the razzle and the dazzle and the empty pockets, with no more unending silk ribbons to pull out. And really, one part of me waited almost eagerly for that moment, that first dying of the ardent light in his eye, the first curling away of his fingers from mine....I am a woman, any woman, it is the survival of the species thing, suddenly lusts...." "We make heroes out of ordinary people when we are in need of a hero, not the other way around."

Anamika

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BOOKS

ANATOMY OF A CONFLICT

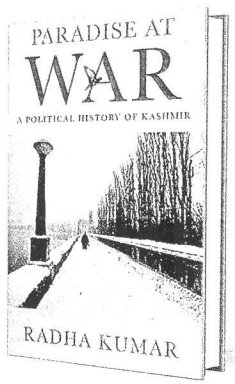
By Sumit Ganguly

There are two critical dimensions to the conflict in Kashmir. At one level, it has been, and remains, a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan. At another, it has involved New Delhi's fraught federal relationship with the state. Since the emergence of the two countries in 1947, these two currents have intersected periodically, with rather infelicitous consequences. Pakistan, unreconciled to the status quo in Kashmir, has, from the outset, sought to sow discord within the Indian-controlled portion of the state. Its efforts, however, had been largely fruitless until the late '80s, when a mostly indigenous insurgency erupted in the state.

In the past decade, Kashmir, once again, has been aflame. The political turmoil that currently roils the state is markedly different from the unrest that had gripped it in the late '80s. Obviously, there is little question that Pakistan is continuing its nefarious strategy of running a range of terrorist networks in the state. A number of incidents, including attacks at Baramulla, Pathankot and Uri, over the past few years underscore its continuing dalliance with terror.

The political violence haunting the state now stems less from insurgent attacks and more from widespread street protests involving young, frustrated men who have known little else but roadblocks, curfews and cordon and search operations. Unfortunately, the government in Delhi has abjectly failed to devise a viable strategy to deal with their anger and has treated the situation as a mere law and order problem.

For those interested in understanding both the background to, as well as the immediate precipitants of, the violence that is rocking the Valley, Radha Kumar's *Paradise at War* offers a compelling and candid read. Kumar, who was a member of an earlier government-appointed group assigned to examine the grievances of the inhabitants of the Valley, has a supple grasp of the historical background to the current crisis. In the early chapters of the book, even when covering ground familiar to those interested in the state's politics, she provides granular, novel details about a number of critical turning points in the evolution of its tortured politics. For example, she reveals intriguing details about how a most unlikely figure, Gen. Zia-ul-Haq, had actually started a back-channel negotiation over the Siachen Glacier conflict using Prince Hassan of Jordan as an interlocutor. These discussions, which had made some progress, sadly came to a close with Zia's death in a mysterious plane crash in 1988.



PARADISE AT WAR: A Political History of Kashmir
by Radha Kumar
ALEPH
₹799; 394 pages

Though published before the Pulwama attack, the book examines the roots of the Valley's current crisis

In subsequent chapters, she also demonstrates substantial understanding of the intricacies of Kashmir's politics. She discusses in detail some of the most promising internal negotiations between the central government and the insurgents, particularly the Hizbul Mujahideen, in 2000. These talks, which held much promise, sadly foundered when the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI-D) decided that their rapid pace was not to its liking. Worse still, the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference, which had not been taken into confidence, expressed reservations about their progress and undermined the initiative. Shortly thereafter, the Lashkar-e-Taiba, probably at ISI-D's instigation, resumed its attacks, and the nascent negotiation process fell apart.

Kumar is on equally secure grounds when she discusses more recent developments and their ramifications. Her analysis of the aftermath of the hanging of Afzal Guru is bereft of any ideological cant. Instead, she carefully shows how likely political considerations on the part of the Manmohan Singh regime had led to the denial of the commutation of Guru's death sentence. The outburst of popular violence that began in the wake of his hanging has failed to ebb to any significant extent since then.

Though published before the Pulwama attack, it provides the reader with a compelling account of the sources of disaffection within the state. For those interested in understanding the complex roots of the current crisis, her analysis is a most useful start. ■

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religious establishment and the temporal state (*din vadowlat*), which was at the heart of Persian political culture and at least since the Sasanian era, was only renewed in the Safavid era, and then again in the Qajar period. Up to the middle of the 20th century, the clergy remained in partnership, at least implicitly, with the dynastic state and the nobility.' If we add to this the Shi'i consciousness with its 'utopian perspective' and 'the myth of divine justice', we will have a better understanding of the Mahdi cult and the movements of protest in modern Iran. According to the author, 'Starting with the Safavi order itself in the fifteenth century and followed by the Noqtavi, Sufi Ne'matollahi, the Shaykhi doctrine and later the Babi movement, the Mahdi cult in Shi'ism contested clerical authority and its overly legalistic reading of religion.'

In the same line of thought, Abbas Amanat describes the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911 as 'a form of secularized messianism' during which 'both the western-inspired reform and the indigenous messianic trends converged into a relatively coherent discourse giving voice to an emerging urban intelligentsia and their demands to end arbitrary rule, open the political space, and create modern legislative and judicial institutions.' So, what went wrong in the Iranian modern history which ended up with the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and four decades of religious authoritarian rule? Abbas Amanat tries to answer this question at the end of his voluminous book in a short epilogue where he explains briefly the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the post-revolutionary Iranian society. According to him, the Islamic Revolution 'completed the dismantling of the old landed elites' which had started with the Pahlavis. More important, state modernization not only changed the patterns which were set by the Safavids, but it also helped to build 'an oppressive autocracy' reaffirmed by the Islamic regime after the Revolution.

Amanat, however, ends his book on an optimistic note on post-revolutionary Iranian society composed of 'a vibrant and eager younger generation better informed about the world outside, and by and large immune to the state's militant ideological hegemony.' These emerging generations, affirms Amanat, are products of Iran's collective memory that 'helped define and redefine a national identity defiant of repressive authorities.' They are, as the great Persian poet Hafez says, the 'memorable echoes under the revolving dome' of Iran.

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SHEIKH MUHAMMAD ABDULLAH'S REFLECTIONS ON KASHMIR by Nyla Ali Khan. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2018.

IN addition to her seminal work *The Life of a Kashmiri Woman* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014), Nyla Ali Khan has once again brought to the fore a critical intellectual contribution to unpacking the historical trajectory of the Kashmiri subaltern. *Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah's Reflections on Kashmir* clearly articulates the 'progressive' nature of the Kashmiri subaltern. It epitomizes the early politicization of Kashmir's indigenous political space and the spawning of what can be aptly termed an 'organic intellectual'.

Although, historically labelled as a paradox, the contribution of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to the political conscientization and mass mobilization of the native Kashmiris cannot be denied. While many scholars have captured the life and political trajectory of Abdullah, Khan offers a more nuanced approach by bringing Abdullah's voice encapsulated in his letters, speeches and press contributions to the fore. This significant corpus offers the contemporary scholar, historian, politician, and lay person a basis for analysing Abdullah's ideas, philosophies and vision for a progressive Kashmir.

While acknowledging Abdullah as her maternal grandfather (p. 5), Khan's balanced approach exhibits the academic rigour needed in scholarship by pursuing Abdullah as 'a fallible human being' (p. 1), confronted with political choices that may have rendered him in an unpopular position. In addition, Khan's voice resonating in both the contemporary media, online spaces, as well as her many publications, finds a fitting space in further entrenching her own ideological view that the 'depoliticization of the indigenous political space and the criminalization of dissident politics on both sides of the border are particularly troubling' (p. 177).

Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah's Reflections on Kashmir must be situated in an era of political abyss, where the 'voices' of the native Kashmiris were silenced due to a lack of political conscientization of the masses and an oppressive regime. This draws immense significance for the contemporary Kashmiri subaltern that have found themselves immersed in a political vacuum within a depoliticized fragmented Kashmiri society, culminating with the erosion of indigenous politics and the delegitimization of the voice of dissent. It is within this context that Abdullah's function as an organic intellectual in steering the growing aspirations of the Kashmiri subaltern and the strategic use of the

Political History

Reading Room Party in sustaining a public discourse space, becomes critical for the contemporary Kashmiri subaltern.

Embedded in Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah's Reflections on Kashmir are the many nuances that speak to the legitimization of the voice of dissent, and a politics of the people, which is pluralistic and progressive. Khan's opinion that 'a consciousness cannot be built without a mechanism of political training, ideological education, and progressive action' (p. vxi), is further substantiated with a close reading of Abdullah's letters and speeches. It also echoes the political sentiments of the early 1930s and 1940s, in which socialist ideals on political education were finding its fitting position as an agent of socio-political and economic reform.

Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah's Reflections on Kashmir is divided into five key chapters. In the first chapter, Khan provides a historical contextualization for the reader. Khan begins by briefly capturing the rise of Abdullah amidst a rather controversial political milieu. This is followed by a historical exposition on the formation of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and its evolution into the National Conference. The underlying ethos is the shift towards a more secular ideal, which resembled the pluralistic nature of Kashmir. It served to unite the Kashmiri subaltern around a philosophy of 'collective politics' as opposed to the division along religious lines. To further contextualize the shifting socio-political dimensions of the Kashmiris, Khan alludes to the 'Quit Kashmir Movement' (pp. 12-14) and the 'Standstill Agreement' (pp. 15-18). The reader is provided with a succinct background that provides them with a glimpse of the critical position that Kashmir played amidst India and Pakistan establishing themselves as nation states.

The second chapter sees Khan bring to the fore five key letters written by Abdullah. These letters addressed to different entities capture the thoughts of Abdullah in his own words at different historical junctures in Kashmir's early trajectory. While it would be impossible to highlight the content of all five letters in this review, the letter addressed to Chaudhry Noor Hussain in 1960, highlights Abdullah's continued commitment to the people of Kashmir and his colleagues:

'You are aware of our people's struggle for freedom carried on through the last three decades. Destiny left it to me to spearhead that struggle through suffering and sacrifices, in which particularly people of the Valley, Poonch, and Mirpur had the major share. It has been my proud privilege to suffer with my people and for them. Nothing can be a nobler and higher aim of human life than a dedication to the cause of emancipation of an enslaved and downtrodden people' (p. 28).

Abdullah's continued association with his colleagues and the people of Kashmir, amidst his own disposition of being imprisoned serves to further enhance the 'organic', 'internal' space that Abdullah occupied. A space that is reminiscent of being the people's leader and an influential voice.

The third chapter sees Khan's construction of fifteen speeches by Abdullah dating from 1953 to 1970. These fifteen speeches capture the historical trajectory of the Kashmiri subaltern and the evolving nature of Abdullah's thoughts. For example Abdullah's speech at Hazratbal, Srinagar on 15 March 1968 articulates his political trajectory and recants some of the feelings of his detractors (pp. 61-65). It further serves as an exposition of how Abdullah evolved his ideas in response to the shifting socio-political terrain.

The fourth chapter focuses on a Press Conference on 6 March 1968 held in honour of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah (pp. 119-124), and an interview of Abdullah for the Supplementary Issue (1968) of the *Shabistan Urdu Digest*, New Delhi (pp. 119-174). The latter serves as an extensive engagement with Abdullah focusing on his trajectory as a politician, his ideologies, and brief reflections on his personal life.

In the final chapter, Khan provides some concluding remarks on the book. Khan summarises the book by arguing for a new logic to prevail within the Kashmir context. Khan, similar to Abdullah, reaffirms that 'the espousal of violence as a means to redress political injustice and socio-economic inequities' will not solve the Kashmir issue, instead it will destroy those who 'rationalize and romanticise it' (p. 176). Khan reaffirms the need for the recognition of all actors, 'the redress of wider political, socioeconomic, and democratic issues in Kashmir requires reconceptualizing the relationship between political actors and civil society actors' (p. 178).

Khan brings to the fore a very important collection of historical data that can be used to further engage a critique of early Kashmiri subaltern formation and the politicization of Kashmir's indigenous political space. Over the past decade, we have witnessed a renewed activism in Kashmir. The noteworthy uprising spawned by young Kashmiris in 2010, equipped with nothing

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Seminar, NO. 716, April 2019

drink', of what goes into the making of the dance. Her metaphorical richness slips a little when she moves into the skin of the character. When the pressure of propriety demands that Kalyani give up dancing, the image of amputees with phantom limbs somehow seems less evocative. The natural resonance is lost when the characters are made to speak in the voice of their tropes. For instance, when devadasis describe themselves as 'fertility walking on two legs', or when the rigid Brahmin orthodoxy of Kalyani's mother-in-law Vijaya marks itself through bitter four letter expletives, it is the trope that speaks, not so much the character in the narrative.

The concerns of history and the threads of the story seem to stand apart from each other in the tapestry that Natarajan tries to weave of love, betrayal, art, loss and transformation. It is a well told tale of lives entangled in their love or revulsion for an art form whose instrument is the woman's body, an instrument on which desires both public and private play themselves out through history. One wishes perhaps that The Undoing Dance spoke more of the instrument, the dance, the form and its power. The dance is memory and Natarajan describes its transmission – from one inscribed body to the next – through minor glimpses in her narrative. A bent iron bar in a window, a girl's waist bound in red cloth, thighs burning after every class, learning the steps, doing the 'abhinayam without a mistake'. Isn't there more to it? Why can't the Brahmin girls dance like the devadasis? Why do they 'act' when the devadasis can 'enact'? What is the knowledge the dancer holds in her body? No insights on these questions arose as I reached the end of The Undoing Dance.

I read *The Music Room* by Namita Devidayal nearly ten years ago. Fragments from her description of what her music is and what it meant to her teacher, how that music held together through generations and through history, still remain with me. I wanted to read a book like The Music Room, about dance. I wish I could say this was that book. I wish The Undoing Dance had been about the dance and not just about the dancer's social being. What is lost in the telling of Natarajan's tale is the interiority of the dancer, the possibility of a vocabulary of what a dancer 'sees', 'creates' in her mind and how her body evokes that truth. Perhaps that is asking for more than what is possible. Perhaps dance is inherently more 'social', a dancer's interiority more public than private.

There is no doubt that the erasure of the history of the devadasi needs to be looked at with a new lens. Somewhere in the mists of time where the origins of this dance are buried, there are many legends and elegies of the women and men who practiced it, shaped it and gave it life.

Natarajan draws the line in her narrative clearly and with a zeal that is at times the undoing of the fictional form within which she has chosen to critique this rather important and controversial history. Intelligent and witty writer that she is, she might have done better to allow the voices of her characters to speak in a voice more natural than the imposed tone that they sometimes adopt. It is clear who the targets are, and whose side the author is on. Where one voice could speak through many, it speaks instead *for* them. In a fictional telling, that is something better left to the reader. The truth that fiction speaks is also partly held in what it conceals.

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EMERGENCY CHRONICLES: Indira Gandhi and Democracy's Turning Point by Gyan Prakash. Hamish Hamilton, London/Penguin Viking, Delhi, 2018.

Gyan Prakash, who teaches history at Princeton, is perhaps the first professionally trained historian to write an account of the Emergency. Most previous descriptions of those fateful months when democracy stopped in India have been by well informed journalists or politicians. The expectations from this book are, therefore, different: in the blend between narrative and analysis, the stuff of good history writing, the balance, the expectation is, should tilt towards analysis or the narrative should be so deep and deft that an analysis should emerge from the retelling.

Prakash begins his book in dramatic fashion with a vivid description of a little known but telling episode of the Emergency to which he was an eyewitness. So was I since as Prakash's contemporary at Jawaharlal Nehru University I was present on campus and watched the drama being enacted from the windows of the university library. This is the abduction of Prabir Purkayastha from the campus on 25 September 1975. Prabir, as we all knew, was an activist of the Student Federation of India, the student front of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). JNU was a small campus those days and all of us knew Prabir as a quiet and thoughtful young man, who unlike many of his comrades on campus, was very well read. He was picked up from the campus on the mistaken notion that he was D.P. Tripathi, a very important leader of the SFI, second

only to Prakash Karat, who later rose to become the general secretary of the CPI(M). The immediate reason for this kidnapping was an altercation that Tripathi had had with Maneka Gandhi (wife of Sanjay) earlier that morning. Prabir had been present when this had taken place. Maneka had threatened punitive action and within a few hours the abduction took place.

This incident, as Prakash notes, was typical of what was going on during the Emergency which had been imposed at the end of June. It exhibited the arbitrary use of state power, the whims of the Gandhi family, especially the ruthlessness of Sanjay Gandhi, the collusion of bureaucrats and also on occasions their craven incompetence. The abduction is the scene-setter. Prakash writes, 'Indira [Gandhi] did not concoct the Emergency regime out of ether; nor did Prabir Purkayastha's daylight abduction from JNU come out of nowhere. *Historical forces with roots in the past and implications for the future* were at work in the extraordinary turn of events of 1975-77. They signalled a twist in the functioning of the postcolonial state she had inherited from her father and his associates in the national movement' (italics mine).

The italicized words in the quotation above are what distinguishes Prakash's book from previous accounts of the Emergency. The tendency is to see the Emergency as a fallout of a series of conjunctural happenings – the Allahabad High Court judgement, the JP movement, the railway strike and so on. The analytical focus of Prakash's book is to locate the Emergency in certain structural contradictions embedded in the Indian polity.

Prakash situates these contradictions in the Constitution which has embedded within it a tension between the freedoms of a sovereign people and the priorities of the state. The former created spaces and opportunities for social and economic transformations for and by the people, while the latter wanted to confine such movements within the parameters of law and order, security and state-making. The first pertained to the people; the second to administrators and governance. This tension was somewhat inevitable in a new republic born out of a long mass struggle which was eager to avoid what Ambedkar in his closing speech to the Constituent Assembly memorably called the 'grammar of anarchy'. The challenge was to maintain 'a fine balance' – Prakash's phrase – between these two facets of the Constitution. The balance held under India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru only to be seriously ruptured under his daughter Indira Gandhi.

The latter inherited an India plagued by severe food shortages when India lived, according to a quip by Amartya Sen, from 'ship to mouth' and of tumultuous social discontent. In the first general election under her premiership, the Congress suffered major setbacks in many provinces. To win back the popular vote and to consolidate her power, Indira Gandhi in the late 1960s pursued a policy of left populism. Within the Congress, she broke from the traditional leadership and in policy making she nationalized banks, abolished privy purses of princes and nurtured the friendship of Soviet Russia. In all this she was advised and guided by her principal secretary, P.N. Haksar who was supported by some ex-communists, among them Mohan Kumaramangalam and Ashok Mitra. It is now clear from the biography of P.N. Haksar by Jairam Ramesh, which is based on Haksar's papers (*Intertwined Lives: P.N. Haksar and Indira Gandhi*) that PNH (as Haksar was often called) set about centralizing power and policy making in the prime minister's office and began meddling with the bureaucracy and the judiciary.

The *raison d'etre* for all this was to facilitate and hasten India's social and economic transformation. *Garibi hatao* was the slogan that won back popularity for Indira Gandhi. Jairam Ramesh's narrative makes it clear that Haksar and his cronies with the blessings of Indira Gandhi were bypassing the processes of democratic decision making and building a cult around her. The liberation of Bangladesh only further consolidated Indira Gandhi's position. Haksar was perhaps unaware that he was putting in place the scaffolding for the Emergency of which he, ironically, was to be a victim. He had successfully tilted the balance in favour of governance and the state albeit in the name of social and economic transformation of the people.

In economic terms, Indira Gandhi paid the price of populism through rising prices and the consequent social discontent (the JP movement was one manifestation of this); in political and constitutional terms there were challenges to her arbitrary use and concentration of power (the Allahabad High Court judgment was one fallout of this). Running out of options and ill-advised, she suspended democracy through the imposition of an emergency. The excuse was that against 'disorder' the country had to be governed and administered. One of the facets of the Constitution had been taken to its logical and extreme limit.

Prakash is very good in providing the long context of the Emergency. But there is one question to which his book does not provide an adequate answer. Why did Indira Gandhi turn against the left? One convenient answer was that she was entrapped by her younger son Sanjay, who it is believed had some kind

of 'hold' on her and it was he who called the shots during the Emergency and he was virulently anti-left. Till someone unravels what this 'hold' was, this kind of explanation is deeply unsatisfactory. Jairam Ramesh's book suggests that Indira Gandhi had felt let-down by Haksar – by 1973-74 she no longer trusted him or thought of him as being competent. She began to move out of the shadow of her leftism. She was more interested in power than in socio-economic transformation of the people. Sanjay Gandhi with his views was a convenient hammer with which to clobber the left. The son did not use the mother: the mother used the son. Or perhaps it was symbiotic.

Following Prakash's analysis it is possible to argue that the tension he locates in the Constitution remains and this makes it possible for India to be governed through a process in which democracy is perpetually fragile and an undeclared emergency an ominous and perennial possibility.

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IRAN: A Modern History by Abbas Amanat. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2017.

AN impressive number of books over the last four decades has considerably changed our understanding of modern and contemporary Iran. But this understanding has been slow to take shape and have an impact. The general reader and those of us interested in Iranian history beyond what comes up in the news on a daily basis have long needed a good synthesis of the recent scholarship on modern and contemporary Iranian history. The publication of Abbas Amanat's *Iran: A Modern History* has now largely met this need. Abbas Amanat, a professor of history and international studies at Yale University and the director of the Yale Programme in Iranian Studies is a well known figure among scholars and students of Iranian Studies. He has revolutionized Iranian historiography with his treatment of the *longue durée* of Iranian history.

In his last book, Professor Amanat explores the roots of Iranian modernity over half a millennium. He tries to establish a 'relationship between the rise of a state with an enforced religious creed – in this case, the Safavid Empire upholding Shi'ism – and emergence of a modern nation state in later centuries.' As a result, the author deals with the subject in a chronological order, with an emphasis on historical figures and events. These highlights are in turn fleshed out by a comprehensive analysis of what Amanat considers to be the underlying causes for change in modern Iran. In addition, the author makes an insightful and penetrating investigation on the political and intellectual developments of each period, particularly the Qajar and Pahlavi eras, which were represented by major political transformations and social changes in Iran. Though all of this is presented in a volume of nearly 1000 pages with numerous footnotes, a bibliography and pictures, yet it is very accessible, leaving the reader not only with a clear understanding of what happened in modern Iran, but also why it happened.

Undoubtedly, this is an ambitious book – not just another history of modern Iran, but *the* history. In many respects it succeeds. Professor Amanat positively gallops through a comprehensive account of Iran from the Safavid period to the present. He has not selected only the juicy bits – the geo-strategic significance of the Safavids, the nomadic unrest and the foreign occupation of Iran, selective projects of modernization under the Qajar dynasty, the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911, the social, economic and political transformation of Iran under Reza Shah and his son Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, and finally the Iranian Revolution of 1979 with its huge ideological chasms and political tensions. He fills in what happened in between with important political and intellectual developments, such as dissident Shi'i messianic aspirations or the rise of new ideologies, ranging from Marxist-Leninist to ultra-nationalist and Islamic extremist in the second Pahlavi era and voices of dissent in the Islamic Republic of Iran, so that events are joined up and the narrative complete.

A closer look at Professor Amanat's book reveals his acute interest in the concept of political authority in Iranian history and the Persian theory of government. As he writes in his introduction: 'Crucial to the rudiments of political authority in Iran, and perhaps the oldest in its political culture, is the idea of the shah, the universal title for Iranian kings up to modern times…The Persian theory of government envisioned certain checks and balances to restrain the brute and bridled exercise of power…Few shahs over the long course of Iranian history managed to maintain the formidable 'balance' of both the polity and society at large without being isolated to the point of checkmate.'

Next to the royal authority, Ababs Amanat points to the persistence of messianism, 'as a distinctive feature of Iranian religious culture', in the making of Iranian history. This meant that 'the sisterhood of the

BOOKS

HOW INDIA VOTES

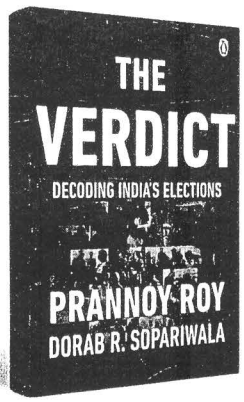
By Rahul Verma

For many of my generation who fancy themselves as pollsters, Prannoy Roy and Dorab R. Sopariwala invoke both awe and inspiration. The duo, by far, is the gold standard of election analysis in the Indian television space.

Their long-awaited book, *The Verdict*, offers a succinct analysis of India's elections using a wealth of statistical insights. The book not only generates lots of new hypotheses about Indian politics, but also rescues the art and science of election polling from further becoming an object of derision. They analyse the 833 opinion and exit polls conducted in India since 1980 and demonstrate that, contrary to public perception, pollsters have done a fairly decent job in predicting election outcomes. The authors show that the success rate of exit polls is higher in comparison to opinion polls and both are much better at predicting the outcome of Lok Sabha elections than of state assemblies.

The chapters on polling and forecasting are the strongest. They detail how to separate a good poll from a bad poll and how to make better forecasts using major predictors—by election results, bellwether constituencies, preceding assembly or Lok Sabha elections, among others. In doing so, the authors break certain myths about Indian politics and give a preview of the emerging contours of our electoral system.

In Roy and Sopariwala's world, "the Indian voter is always ahead of politicians". And while India has largely retained the same electoral system, the rules of electioneering have undergone a fundamental transformation. They show that, contrary to popular belief, Indian elections often result in landslide victories (i.e., the winner getting double the share of the runner-up). However, the rate of landslide victories has declined sharply over the years. They also show that, on counting day, the leading party is also likely to see a bump (i.e., more seats than estimated, even at the time when results are pouring in from all seats) in its final seat share, suggesting that Indian voters prefer decisive mandates. They provide evidence of the increasing competitiveness in our polity. The authors find that the average vote share of the winning party in the seats it contested has considerably declined, the margin of victory has narrowed and one per cent swings in votes now result in a larger turnaround in the number of seats a party wins or loses.



THE VERDICT
Decoding India's Elections
by Prannoy Roy & Dorab R. Sopariwala
VINTAGE
₹799; 394 pages

The book rescues the art and science of election polling from further becoming an object of derision

Roy and Sopariwala divide the Indian polity into three distinct phases, based on the re-election chances of incumbent state governments, and use this framework throughout the book. This is where, I think, the authors missed a historic opportunity to underline some fundamental tenets of Indian politics. The reader is not informed about the rationale behind the three phases and, thus, the empirical details in each chapter, while useful, do not offer themselves to an easy interpretation of the causes and effects of the changes in our polity.

While the authors can excuse themselves by classifying their book as a 'non-academic' work, not engaging with the emerging research on several topics—missing women voters, increasing competitiveness, Muslim representation, re-nomination patterns, incumbency status, among many others—weakens their own analysis. Especially as the research on many of these issues is far more advanced than the authors care to illuminate.

Despite these shortcomings, Roy and Sopariwala have made a seminal contribution to the study of Indian elections. The book is filled with statistics and yet is accessible to even those who have an aversion to numbers. This book presents a comprehensive summary of seven decades of Indian politics without losing the nuances and complexities—a rare achievement.

It is a must-read for all in this election season and particularly those of us who wish to theorise about India's electoral system. ■

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Hindu; 21/4/19; Pg-25 Dup

BUREAUCRACY

Power to make a difference

Two writers on the Indian Administrative Service and what it means to be a part of it

The Steel Frame: A History of the IAS
Deepak Gupta
Roli Books
₹695

Not Just a Servant

UMA MAHADEVAN-DASGUPTA

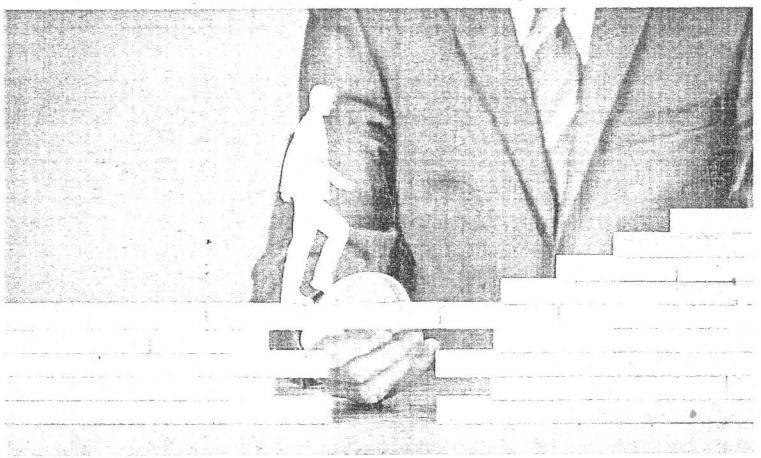
"You will not have a united India, if you do not have a good all-India service which has the independence to speak out its mind." The words of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel are written in stone below his bust at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie.

Deepak Gupta's history of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) begins by tracing the evolution of the administration system in India from the years of the East India Company and then the Indian Civil Service.

The British plan

It is always fascinating, if horrifyingly so, to read what British empire-builders thought of the work they had taken upon themselves. Gupta quotes Warren Hastings, first British governor-general, on the reason for changing the name of company agents from 'supervisors' to 'collectors' (1772): "You know full well how much the world's opinion is governed by names. They were earlier simple lookers-on, without trust or authority. They became Collectors and ceased to be lookers-on..."

The changing role of the IAS over the years since Independence has more immediate implications for the country today. Gupta notes the observations of former director of the national training academy, P.S. Appu, on the need for the IAS in 2005: first, that such a service can resist the arbitrary actions of those in power; second, by upholding the Constitution uncompromisingly, without fear or favour, it can enable millions of citizens to claim the rights guaranteed to them.



Getting there The IAS provides the scope to bring impact on a vast scale. GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

How the service should be reinvented for the 21st century needs more nuanced reflection. First, on the basic nature of the service itself: how new recruits should be selected, trained, and prepared for the challenges of public service; second, on the changing role of district administration vis-à-vis democratic decentralisation and local government; and third, on the greater need for state-specific policymaking by state governments in sectors that were, until now, addressed mainly through large centrally-sponsored schemes, such as nutrition, health and education.

A career in the IAS

Anil Swarup's memoir *Not Just a Civil Servant*, the account of an illustrious career of over three decades, shines with his fundamental sincerity and modesty. He worked in various sectors of the State and Central governments, and contributed diligently in each assignment. Experience gathered across these assignments is what helps in better policymaking at the senior level – giving a better understanding of what is likely to have impact, and how to roll out a new programme at scale. Swarup's landmark contributions were in the design and launch of the pioneering health insurance scheme for the poor called the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), and his work in the coal sector. Most moving is an anecdote about an early assignment in the cooperation sector. A young man comes to meet Swarup one day. A substance addict, he had been let go from his job. Now recovered, though after losing one hand to gangrene, he pleads for his job back. Swarup intervenes to help him, and forgets about it, as any good civil servant would do; years later, during a dental appointment, he finds that his dentist is a relative of that young man, and the family still remembers his act of kindness.

The IAS provides the scope to bring impact on a vast scale. But these little nameless acts of kindness, for which opportunities present themselves every day, humanise the scale. They remind civil servants that just by doing their work despite all the challenges, they can make a difference to real people.

Finally, perhaps we make too much of the IAS itself. It consists of a few thousand members out of a public sector that is made up of several million. Its contribution can only be the result of teamwork at every rung, especially the frontlines. State capacity is limited, while demands on the state are ever increasing. Despite the challenges, every day, millions of public servants, many of them overburdened and under-resourced, perform their duties in remote corners of India. The IAS is privileged to lead these millions of public servants in their work. The point, however, is to serve.

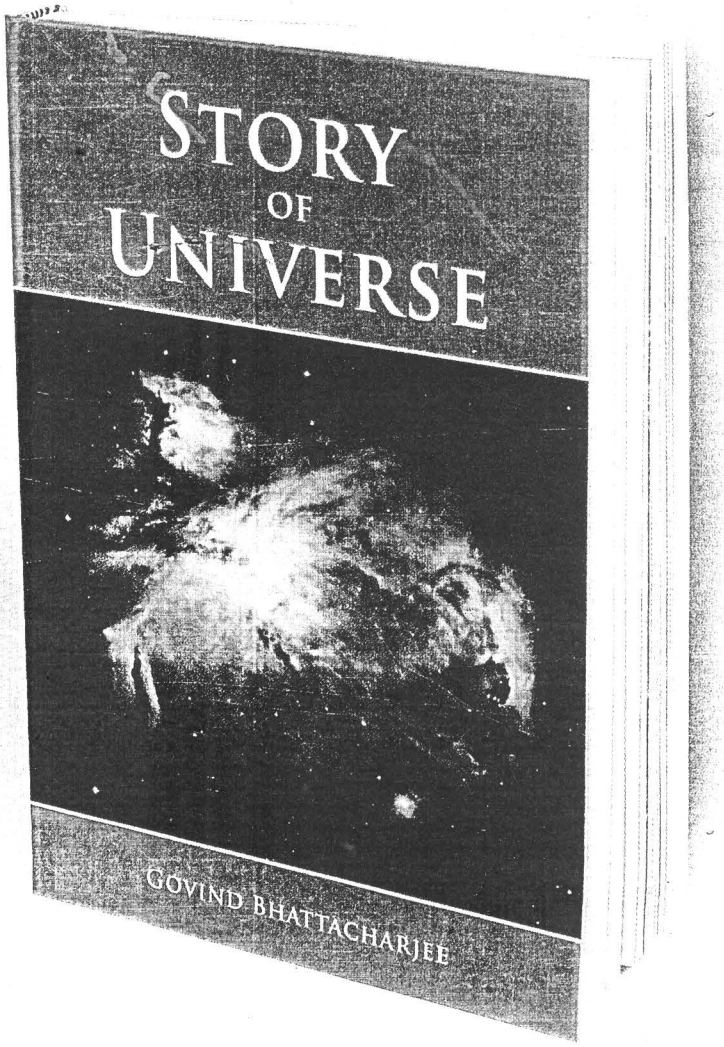
The Bengaluru-based writer is in the IAS. Views personal.

Science Reporter, Vol. 56, No. 4, April 2019

BOOK REVIEW

Not Just a Book, but an Exceptional Nourishment for the Intellect

by Vinod Varshney



Title: **Story of Universe**
Author: **Govind Bhattacharjee**
Publisher: **Vigyan Prasar**
Pages: **280**
Price: **Rs 150**

MOST people love stories. They may be of personal experiences, heroes and heroines, warriors and accomplishers, great successes and stupendous failures, dreams and pains, love and seduction, politics and religion, mythology and history — so many types to suit so many tastes.

The book under review narrates a unique story — that of the Universe, offering its mind-boggling details starting from origin to the current state and also gives scientifically plausible insights into what may be its future. The narrative is captivating and expands the horizons of imagination. Govind Bhattacharjee, an accomplished author, virtually takes readers on an intellectual tour of the Universe describing landmark events spanning several billion years unravelling unimaginable and unknown secrets of the Universe.

We can see only a tiny portion of the Universe — 'our earth, its surface & atmosphere, the blazing sun, the shining stars and the calming moon in the sky'. Astronomers having access to powerful telescopes and computers and skills to interpret data received in the form of spectral lines enhance their visibility millions time more. But what they see, visualise and wonder about may also be interesting to common people and must be revealed to them. This is exactly what this marvellous book accomplishes.

Yet one may raise a red flag on one count — the chapter 'The Lord is Subtle' will literally prove Latin and Greek to common readers so much so that many of them may think of consigning the book back to the shelf after relishing its first seventy pages. The chapter might be a must for esoteric readers as it details latest advances in the field of quantum physics and newest theories in cosmology without which the book would have remained a little less credible; but it certainly remains a terrible chapter for those who for the first time will be countenancing particle names like fermion, boson, lepton, meson, nucleon, kaon, muon, tao, etc and concepts like cosmological constant, curvature of space-time, Planck-length, Higgs field, Hubble's law, Gauge theory, quantum fluctuations, etc. The problem is theories of physics are becoming more and more complex making the task of communicating science to average readers so difficult. It becomes a challenging task to explain concepts, ideas and phenomena which are so far away from the average reader's day-to-day observation, thinking and imagination. Many theories related to the Universe are interwoven in deep philosophies making them even more abstract and difficult to grasp the core idea.

One of the most exciting parts of the book is where the Big Bang is described and how our mother Earth came into existence. What shape was the Earth 4.7 billion years ago and how it evolved during its infancy lasting millions of years? And how, when and why life emerged on this Earth and not anywhere else...

Readers, unconcerned with this typical problem, may wish the author had diluted this chapter sufficiently making it simpler to understand. A wild guess is, there are at least 500 words which a non-science person would find difficult to grapple with and at least 100 among them which even an average science graduate may not understand.

Those who would have the patience to wade through these thirty-three hard nut pages would be greatly rewarded as the book soon reverts to the same stirring flavour and would take the readers to the fantastic universe of knowledge.

The book raises hair-raising questions. Who can find answers to these questions and resolve the suspense surrounding them? Only cosmologists, physicists, mathematicians and those who can revel in philosophies emerging out of unending number of new theories. Stephen Hawking has been quoted, "... the Universe is not as simple as we might have thought." The author has made a gallant attempt to unravel the complexity of the Universe with the help of the latest theories, concepts and laws of nature. The *Story of Universe* in a way encapsulates the history and future of the evolutionary science related to matter, energy, time and space.

There are two things which especially make the book appealing: one, it systematically educates about the history of various theories even as interpreting mysterious ways of nature; and two, the use of enchanting prose capable of defining beauty of nature in terms of scientific facts. Sometimes the wonder of enormity or diminutiveness has been expressed in numbers like 10^{35} or 10^{-35} — which is again not easy for an unarithmetic mind to visualize the true vastness and smallness involved. But one should not forget, the author is discussing science which has to be described with precision and cannot dispense with arithmetical tools to express dimensions.

These minor things apart, one finds the author has offered pages after pages of wonder-evoking narrative of natural phenomena, a few of them estimated to have taken place billions of years ago. He has taken cue from the free flight of imagination of visionary scientists. Readers would finally come to know what scientists' conclusion is on how matter, energy and time came into existence. And the perplexing answer is from Nothingness! The concept of Nothingness as the source of all energy and matter fires such an insatiable intellectual curiosity that it would keep readers riveted to the book to finally know the ultimate truth.

One of the most exciting parts of the book is where the Big Bang is described and how our mother Earth came into existence. What shape was the Earth 4.7 billion years ago and how it evolved during its infancy lasting millions of years? And how, when and why life emerged on this Earth and not anywhere else despite the existence of an unimaginably huge number of planets, many of which are estimated to be of similar size, formation and structure as the Earth.

Scientists estimate that life emerged 3.7 billion years ago and then thanks to photosynthesis oxygen emerged on the earth 20 crore years later. It is indeed an interesting narrative to read on how our mother Earth came to acquire current shape and environment that supports billions of living species. "For millions of years, it has been absolutely dark over here, all sunlight being obscured by continuous downpour of the dust and rock particles on its surface from space." Then the first raindrops came and for endless millenia it rained continuously. The author has displayed his literary prowess throughout to colourfully describe the evolving scenario making the book pleasurable as well as nourishing to the mind and intellect.

As the book draws to a close, readers may find two even more captivating chapters, "The Golden Thread of Life" and "The Breath of Life" that deal with the theories related to the emergence of life on Earth, which had been lifeless for the first couple of billion years. There is mention also of societal and historical facts: "For hundreds of years the answer to the emergence of life would be sought in religion only.....People had to believe whatever religion had to say unless they wanted to be burnt at the stake or tortured cruelly."

The author underscores that science continued the search for truth and now life is considered a self-sustaining chemical system befitting Darwinian evolution. It was initially a single molecule that first crossed the barrier of inanimate and animate heralding the pathway to life.

The book is modestly priced. It will put no more burden on the pocket than the daily spend of fruits and vegetables in average middle-class families. This is so because it has been published by Vigyan Prasar, an autonomous government organisation with its mandate to spread scientific awareness in the country.

Anyone who cares to remain abreast with the latest in this field will do well to buy and read this book. It is definitely a must buy for all graduate-level science and engineering students.

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The Promise of Citizenship

ANUPAMA ROY

BOOK REVIEWS

From 'People' to 'Citizen': Democracy's Must Take Road by Dipankar Gupta, *New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2017; pp xviii + 205, ₹650.*

From 'People' to 'Citizen': Democracy's Must Take Road, an anthology of 10 meticulously crafted and persuasively argued chapters, by Dipankar Gupta, makes him an exponent of a road less travelled. The courageous call to take a road to democracy through citizenship makes this book important for all social scientists trying to make sense of the dilemmas and challenges thrown up by political and social contestations in contemporary democracies. Kymlicka and Norman (1994) had announced the "return of the citizen" in their article in the journal *Ethics*. They suggested that unlike the earlier periods of heightened consciousness about citizenship, the revival of interest in citizenship in the 1990s was accompanied and made necessary by the need to democratise it by accommodating multicultural and group-differentiated rights.

While Gupta does not engage directly with the works of scholars who saw these changes as marking a historical moment of transformation in citizenship, he presents a case for the "restoration" of citizenship's foundational principle of equality of status as the non-negotiable premise, "an inviolable initial condition," of democracy. This condition can be achieved, he argues, with the "protection of the individual," with other forms of differences following, at what he calls, "much lower social costs" (p xiii). Yet, this process is a fraught one and has to contend with competing ideas, and indeed, claims, to what it means to be a citizen, and the relationship between the citizen, the state, and the nation. While making these arguments, the book recalls and invokes T H Marshall's celebrated lecture "Citizenship and Social Class" delivered in 1949 in Cambridge University as part of the annual lecture commemorating Alfred Marshall.

The prefatory chapter in particular and almost all the chapters in the book find support in Marshall's unflinching faith in the equalising potential of citizenship—a promise which has roots in the concurrent histories of citizenship, democracy, and modernity. The chapters in the book are not arranged around particular themes, but it is possible to see them addressing different aspects of this relationship, around the four sites where they play out, namely the relationship between popular sovereignty and citizenship, welfare and social rights, cities and citizenship, and citizenship and modernity. This review will present the arguments of the book broadly along these sites, and in doing so will put them in conversation with similar and different arguments made by other scholars, but more specifically with those made by Marshall himself.

Transition to Citizenship

What marks the transition to citizenship? When and how do "people" become citizens, and what is it that holds them together? The literature on comparative constitutionalism, in particular, that which locates the constituent moment in the histories of transition to the "magnificent goal" of democracy (Baxi 2013), argues that the central motif of transformative constitutionalism is a conscious and meticulous refiguration of the relationship with the past. This refiguration distinguishes the "temporal register" (Mehta 2010: 16) on which constitutions are etched. Constitutions in this framework embody the momentous present, from where a vision of a future, emphatically different from the past, could be professed. This vision aimed specifically to repudiate and transform "legacies of injustice" (Bhatia 2019), by replacing colonial governmentality with the institution of popular sovereignty. By ensuring that the constitutional edifice provided the template for reconstruction of the state and society, it aims to repudiate the entrenched structures of traditional hierarchy which thrived on deference legitimation.

The transition from "people" to citizens for Gupta not only passes through, in fact, the constituent moment, this passage is imperative to ensure that the atavistic bonds of "blood, territory and historical hurt," which make the "people," are replaced by citizens bound by fraternity (p 5, 20). The solidarity of citizenship, he argues, is based on an ethics of citizenship which generates evaluative frameworks governing state intervention in creating democratic majorities through a series of "negotiations" between and among cultures. Interestingly, for Marshall, the solidarity of citizenship is established in a growing national consciousness and "awakening" public opinion, which produces the "first stirrings" of community membership. This, however, has no material impact on social inequalities and class structure, until the working class "learns" to wield "effective political power" (Marshall 1950: 42). For Marshall, citizenship is how equality travels historically and sequentially from the domains of civil, through political to social, alongside the processes of institutional differentiation and structuration of the state.

Gupta, however, is not concerned with the transformations in the domain of rights with which, he says, most authors singularly associate Marshall's framework of citizenship. Gupta is concerned with the transformation and democratisation of power, as the transition from people to citizens takes place, and how it is consolidated through "consensus domination," by reducing "multiple discordances in public life to consolidate citizenship ... by making certain forms of discrimination illegal and unacceptable" (p 35). Building democratic citizenship is then a sustained process of making a democratic culture, an act of leadership,

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a consciousness of creating something new, all the time "with citizens in the forefront" (pp 42–43).

Fragmented Citizenship

In 1992, Tom Bottomore reproduced Marshall's essay in a book along with his own essay on "Citizenship and Social Class: Forty Years On." In the foreword to the book, Robert Moore justified, what he said appeared to be a "Perverse Inclusion" of Marshall's essay in a series devoted to a critical analysis of the New Right in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s. If there was one central target for the New Right in these decades, Moore argues, it was citizenship. Yet, the inclusion of Marshall's essay made perfect sense, since Marshall's analysis of the historical trajectory of citizenship brought it to the "twentieth century terminus"—of the installation of social rights and the welfare state—when, as Marshall argues, citizenship and capitalism are no longer companionable and end up at war with each other. It is at this point when citizenship parts ways with capitalism, that it becomes possible to think of a universal right to real income, incommensurate with the "market value of the claimant," and the possibility of moving beyond "class abatement" to changing the architectural edifice of capitalism itself.

Gupta proposes in this work to "tropicalise" Marshall, which is to say, he sets out to see how citizenship would have prospered, had welfare measures, such as those in Britain and other European countries, were in place in India. It may be noted that Marshall's analysis of the development of citizenship in Great Britain was "dictated by history" rather than by logic. This would mean that he neither saw the British experience as a modular trajectory, nor did he believe that the historical sequence witnessed in Britain was the way citizenship would invariably develop elsewhere. Yet, regardless of the origins and flows of citizenship pertaining to specific historical contexts, Gupta's book sets out to foreground Marshall's argument that citizenship must be based on the foundation of "sameness" (p x), premised on "equality of status, first and foremost, and on its foundations he advocated that structures of inequality and differences be built" (p xiv).

The social component of citizenship, for Marshall, was associated with economic welfare and a share in the common heritage of society, which enabled a person to live a full life according to the prevailing standards in society. The institutions of the state associated with social citizenship were the welfare apparatus of the state and the educational system. This component of citizenship has been largely seen as having developed in post-World War II Europe as part of the process of economic and social reconstruction. The two elements of postcolonial transformations that Gupta points at in the Indian context pertain to: first, a targeted development policy planning, catering to poverty alleviation, and the second draws from the constitutional promise of equality, that is, reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (and later Other Backward Classes) in jobs and higher education institutions.

Gupta subjects both to scrutiny, evaluating them against the standards of democratic citizenship. While he finds that caste-based reservations can withstand the initial test of democratic citizenship for providing equality of opportunity, political laziness over the years had led to its degeneration into a "source of patronage" (p 45), and no longer about the fullness of citizenship. Poverty alleviation programmes and targeted planning, on the other hand, when tested for democratic citizenship, fail, since they promote fragmentary citizenship and are aimed ultimately at producing "sequestered groups who are treated patronisingly as beneficiaries." Arguing that the best way to serve the poor is to "forget" them, Gupta makes a case for devising efficient systems of universal delivery of public goods which would

serve all sections (pp 48–49); in other words, policies that are citizen-oriented and not poverty-oriented (p 55, 77).

Citizens and Cities

More recently there has been an attempt to move away from state-centred formulations of citizenship to examine it as a complex of multiple experiences based upon local, regional and transnational affiliations. A number of insightful works on cities as the "locus of citizenship development" and the "sites" where distinctive experiences of citizenship have been fashioned have come in this wake (Gordon and Stack 2007; Holston 2008). Holston (2008: 3) in particular looks at cities, which in the context of global urbanisation, become volatile, "crowded with citizens and non-citizens who contest their exclusions." Even amidst the most entrenched regimes of unequal citizenship, can emerge what Holston calls "insurgent citizenship" that "destabilises the entrenched." It is "the experiences of these peripheries—particularly the hardships of illegal residence, house building, and land conflict," which become both the "context and substance of a new urban citizenship" (2008: 3).

Marshall saw the city—in particular, the development of the medieval city—as important for horizontal mobility, but found them inadequate "local" units of membership, when seen from the terminus of "national" membership. Two chapters in Gupta's volume discuss the crucial dimensions of the centrality of cities, and the experience of cities as the locus of citizenship that they have also introduced in citizenship studies. The first of these has to do with what is often seen as the neo-liberal turn in citizenship, contrasting with both the welfare models of the post-war contexts and workfare model associated with citizens' participation in the workforce and strengthening of labour in employment and negotiation through collective bargaining. Among others, Turner (2017) has characterised the neo-liberal turn in citizenship as a model in which citizenship becomes consumerist-passive and the market, rather than civil society, becomes the setting for citizenship, as the state steps back and allows competitive market forces to occupy its space without accountability.

Gupta, however, sees in urbanisation a new opportunity for citizens to break free from "producerist governance," as citizens. Despite their varied interests—in a manifestation of "civic consumerism"—citizens would converge in a unity greater than in the past, merging their differences, as the state becomes their common point of reference to demand action against corruption, crime, and for social goods (pp 106–07). The development of the city and city planning, focusing on cities across the world, forms a significant part of this discussion, especially for the imagination of the historical and the contemporary city, the contest over city's spaces, and the different logics and terms of belonging that the city produces for its residents. The category of the "master plan" in this context is significant for the ramifications it has on citizenship practices in terms of who is it for whom the city is imagined, and what kind of, if any, civic membership is envisaged in the process of planning itself.

Redeeming the Citizen

What are the sites and modalities through which the "citizen" can be brought back in? Civil society, often seen as a route and domain of autonomous citizenship practices and as a school for civic education, argues Gupta, can only be a charmed circle of beneficiaries, if it relies on non-governmental organisations as its constituent. He proposes that it is time to "go back to the classics," to embrace and enhance citizenship. What would this road to citizenship look like, and what would the citizenship en route look like? The mere apotheosis of the masked individual—the citizen—is no guarantee for equality and freedom. Hannah Arendt described Western democracies around the period of World War II as "mass society," marked by the decline of the public sphere of politics, the emergence of bureaucratic rule or the "rule by nobody," and the rise of an amorphous, anonymous, uniformising reality that she called the "social."

For Arendt, the public sphere, "that sphere of appearance where freedom and equality reign, and where individuals as citizens interact through the medium of speech and persuasion, disclose their unique identities, and decide through collective deliberation about matters of common concern," was the only repository and guarantee of equality; and the political community was the best possible form of the public sphere (Arendt 1958). The rise of political conservatism, populist authoritarianism and neo-liberal ideology worldwide, has made the revitalisation of the public space essential. This revitalisation also requires the invocation of the republican virtue of political courage (Sparks 1997). Indeed, Gupta's emphasis on fraternity as citizenship solidarity may provide the frame within which the relationship between the citizen and the state may acquire the meaning which was promised in the transition to democratic citizenship and may also hold the key to its sustenance.

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Gandhi's Response to the Caste Imbroglio

SAMIR BANERJEE

BOOK REVIEWS

Gandhi against Caste by Nishikant Kolge, *New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017; pp xviii + 316, ₹695.*

Gandhi against Caste by Nishikant Kolge is a timely exercise seeking to explain the nature of Gandhi's intervention in the enormously complex caste imbroglio. Caste, as a vile conundrum, has continued to influentially mediate the Indian social transition and transformation processes. Lately, however, it is becoming a major plank for all sections of the Indian milieu to arbitrate the processes of apportioning and/or depriving, while carving out the country's social benefits pie. Many are even wondering whether there can be an India without the prop of the caste structure sustaining it. Simply put, caste continues to cast its baneful hold over the country and if India is to become an unprejudiced humane community, it has to eliminate this; but how?

It is this necessity of responding to the egregious caste system that is the concern of *Gandhi against Caste*, more specifically, how Gandhi responded in his efforts to eliminate this vexing systemic social problem. The study orbits around two fundamentals: First, systemic issues need systemic intervention strategies which might not be amenable to hasty solutions; second, systemic changes can occur through either gradual transformation or revolutionary transformation. The book seeks to deconstruct Gandhi's response to the dilemma of the systemic nature and constraint of caste and how to respond to this issue. The author also considers whether Gandhi was possibly reluctant to forthwith "throw out" the caste system and perhaps would have preferred to salvage some of its redeeming qualities; more specifically: was Gandhi against initiating systemic revolutionary social transformation without clarity regarding alternatives and the modalities of bringing about such transformation? After all no society can exist without clearly defined structures of relationships, and history has still to elucidate egalitarian, non-hierarchic, non-antagonistic social formations. However, history is also replete with the fact that agents and agencies of transformation have tried to retain a conspicuous desire to eradicate systemic exploitative practices from society. In a broad way, this book tries to inform us about the contribution of Gandhi to such efforts.

With a foreword by Rajmohan Gandhi, *Gandhi against Caste* is divided into five chapters devoted to understanding Gandhi's stand regarding caste. The last section is a critical analysis of a more recent introduction to B R Ambedkar's inspirational *Annihilation of Caste*. Being a revised version of the author's PhD thesis, it retains an engagement with copious research and a problem-solving orientation.

Concept of Strategy

While interventions to dismantle the hold of caste can be varied, they come with an agenda of intensions and expectations. In this study all these are clustered around the concept of strategy, more specifically, Gandhi's interventions, intensions and expectations vis-à-vis caste.[1] Obviously, interventions are accompanied by intensions and expectations. But the prospect is not simple when we attempt to theorise on the subject of intervening in social transition, particularly to impact well-entrenched structures and processes such as caste; more so, because we soon realise that such processes and structures influence each one of us in dissimilar, even contradictory ways as persons and social beings. Interventions, intensions and expectations keep evolving as if with a cadence of their own. Consequently, while the modes of intervention keep varying and evolving, the "whether to" and "how to" regarding intervention acquire a stiff relationship with intensions and expectations. Given the prevailing asymmetry in society, strategy tends to serve, or rather, oblige power and the contemporary ideology of hegemony. Whether the exploited can borrow such tools in their skirmishes with the authorities remains an open question. It becomes even more problematic when, as in the case of Gandhi, satyagraha becomes integral to the transformation-seeking agenda.

In view of the above, to analyse Gandhi's involvement as strategy might pose peculiar problems, particularly when analysing his post-South Africa involvements. Why is this so? Strategy is a complex political term usually deployed with the notions of "power" and "ideology." As a part of the political discourse of the oppressed, albeit led by the elite within the oppressed, intervention and in this sense, strategy, acquires twin identities: against the larger oppression; and those within the oppressed. Intensions and expectations acquire contradictory contours and significations within the exploited themselves, which very often become problematic for the intervention itself. This is apparent when the author says that Gandhi, at times, was clearly against caste, and at other times, ambivalent. Perhaps this is because strategy has been used as a conceptual and descriptive term; as a conceptual term to understand intensions and expectations, and as a descriptive term when referring to power and ideology. But such a treatment is not easy with Gandhi-led/inspired interventions and events. For Gandhi, an intervention as an event is the simultaneity of gain and loss, confrontation and compromise, manoeuvring and positioning; perhaps strategy is too deterministic a notion to apprehend such open-ended thinking which encourages the formulation of an

answer, rather than selection from a set of possible answers.

Theorised Problem

Within a movement or intervention, strategy helps explicate at three levels: progress, disappointment, and a mixture of improvement and failure. In the case of Gandhi, because of his worldview regarding the "other" and ahimsa, interventions as actions are both a gain and loss, not some mixture of gain and loss. Further, since the outcome of an intervention contributes discretely and distinctly to the personal and the social of the individual, for Gandhi, an intervention becomes a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition. And as for expectations and intensions, since they are always relative they are never resolved; they are, at best, appeased.

Gandhi's thinking regarding caste evolved over time. As a young boy, he was not happy that he had to take a bath if he happened to touch the boy who cleaned the toilets. When he wanted to go to England to study, he refused to accept the dictate of his Modh Bania caste, which prohibited crossing the seas. But on return, for the sake of his family, he was ready to accept a token reprimand so as to be accepted by his caste grouping. In South Africa, he was ready to throw his wife into the streets because she was not ready to wash the chamber pot which had been used by a person of low caste, albeit a convert.

The above ambivalence changes with his conceptualisation of satyagraha. This is when he starts recognising the problematic of the contradiction of "conflict and other," which hitherto had been a necessity and inevitability for intervention. On coming back to India, he also recognises that for a social formation, or country, or nation, there is no *tabula rasa*. Tradition identity and the future, all have to be recognised as existent and given. The moot problem was twofold: Does one drop the baggage of tradition and history lock, stock, and barrel, or salvage some of it? Of course, the question is who should be responsible for this decision. Whether it was the question of Brahmin cooks at Santiniketan, or the issue of cleanliness and sanitation at the Kumbh mela, or induction of untouchable castes at Sabarmati, he found that there were no easy solutions. Later, during the Vaikom satyagraha against untouchability in Hindu society, he elaborated on the first verse of the *Isha Upanishad* which explicates the problematic of owning and owing. He perhaps felt that a scrutiny of possession and its relationship with power could indicate a way to resolve the caste imbroglio.

However, Gandhi took two clear positions vis-à-vis caste. First, on a personal level, he reduced, rather eliminated it from his practices and thinking. It does not help to search for elements of benevolence and class in some specific individual incidents. It only panders to our desire to find fault with the "other." Second, there was the social side of Gandhi that was not under his total control, because it had to, by necessity, be a part of the larger social aspirations which he incidentally wanted to transform. This social could never have the liberty and the space of the personal. While he had to contend with assassination attempts by Hindu communalists, he also had to take positions against more revolutionary processes as preferred and initiated by Ambedkar and others. An analysis of the Poona Pact (we cannot go into details of that here) shows the compulsions of the tension between the personal and the social aspects within both, Gandhi and Ambedkar, and its impact on themselves; and of course this tension increases with an upsurge in the individual's social role. When confronted with this, for Gandhi, the spirit of satyagraha had to prevail. This spirit is best described by the famous couplet of Kabir: "Kabira khada bazaar mein, mange sab ki khair; na kisi se dosti, na kisi se bair" (Kabir stands in the marketplace with good wishes for all; he has no friends and has strife with none).

In effect, we can say that given the prevailing social conditions and the evolving ideology or world view of Gandhi himself, strategy as a conceptual tool for theorisation has a limited utility in helping analyse the essential and critical need for a middle path between confrontation and compromise, which Gandhi preferred to tread.

Politics and Political Compulsions

Gandhi was conscious but careful regarding caste. He recognised the prevailing social structuring done along caste lines. And he was careful about never forgetting its conspicuous, pernicious hold. He also accepted the need to restructure social relations. The question is: What should be the nature of this desired alternative relationship, particularly in terms of power which arbitrates all social relationships? In the Indian context, this means a conscious political engagement with caste. Since caste is a given, this engagement can either be politics of engagement with caste compulsions, or politics as compulsion, that is, recognising the need for devising meaningful sustainable alternatives. For Gandhi, this is not a simple process of replacing sectarianism with secularism, communalism with liberalism, or casteism with egalitarianism, and so on. For him, it was a fundamental question of replacing social and individual antagonism with genuine amity in the full glare of public participation. Perhaps this was a tall order. But given the hold of caste—which in India goes beyond religious affiliations—over every Indian's transactional and transcendental

aspirations, perhaps he preferred to have a hard look at the problematic of compulsions itself; in his case it seems he focused on the compulsion of gaining political freedom from imperial rule.

Be that as it may, conceivably his insistence on recognising the core nature of labour, the role of the community, the impact of consumerism and the market, the seminal discrete responsibilities of the individual as an individual and a social being, and so on, are parameters around which alternatives can be conceived to replace caste. Above all, Gandhi recognised the futility of criticism without creativity. And this creativity to flourish has to accept that in society it can neither ignore the notion of owing, nor give it coercive authority, in the way the caste system has done.

The book has a restricted objective. However, it raises some fundamental questions. Strategy means involvement in intervention events with some expectations, ideology and intensions. In the case of Gandhi while the intensions of removing caste was never an issue, the expectations remained fuzzy perhaps because of his ambiguity pertaining to the Varna system. Clarity about this uncertainty about Varna can be traced to his quest for a world view which, while rejecting social inequality and its consequences, was not ready to fall for some ideology of equal treatment. Gandhi remained cautious regarding the efficacy of liberal democracy and the role and power of the state. While he had an abiding faith in the individual, he remained wary about egalitarianism and individualism. For him the community had to come first, which means diversity, freedom from oppression, self-government and a collective willingness to nurture liberty through an understanding of wants and needs, ends and means, and rights and duties.

Social alternatives are not in the giving of anybody; these have to be crafted. Gandhi explains,

> I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave. (Gandhi, *Young India*, Vol 1, 1921, p 170)

Every community makes and accomplishes its own unique destiny. Gandhi in effect was inviting all of us to personally engage in constructing the society we want to live in.

Samir Banerjee (*sabumaa@gmail.com*) has been involved with Gandhian studies and his book *Tracing Gandhi: Satyarthi to Satyagrahi* (Routledge India) is forthcoming.

NOTE

1 Strategy indicates three intentions: intervention indicates aim, intension indicates the conceptual content, and expectation indicates the consequences.

Creating a Counter-public Sphere

KAMAL NAYAN CHOUBEY

Writing Resistance: The Rhetorical Imagination of Hindi Dalit Literature by Laura R Brueck, *Delhi: Primus Books, 2017; pp xiii + 218, ₹995.*

The emergence of Dalit literature in Hindi public sphere has not only raised serious questions on the dominant mainstream Hindi literary world, but also has expanded its domain with new issues, narratives, and aesthetics. Contemporary Dalit discourse in India is constituted by both the publication of a diverse form of literature (including autobiography, short and long fiction, poetry and drama) and critical networks of public debates. These networks are made up of Dalit literary and activist organisations, publishing houses that regularly print texts authored by Dalits, literary journals, magazines, etc. The book under review intends to present a comprehensive study of these different aspects of Hindi Dalit literature as an oppositional or "counter-public" sphere, which has provided Dalit intellectuals and writers a space to express their creativity and construct a counter-narrative against the hegemonic discourse of mainstream Hindi literature.

This book opens up with an introduction and has seven chapters, which are organised in two parts. The first three chapters constituting Part I of the book present Dalit literary sphere as counter-public space and explore debates and literary and political issues that arise among Dalit writers. It also analyses the emergence of Dalit literary organisations and their functioning to make space for their voices in mainstream Hindi literary world. Part II presents close readings of contemporary Hindi Dalit literary prose narratives through the study of the writings (primarily short stories) of some of the well-known Dalit writers like Omprakash Valmiki, Jaiprakash Kardam, Ajay Navaria, and Kusum Meghwal, followed by a conclusion. By discussing the prose narratives of these writers, the author of the book Laura R Brueck has tried to engage with the diverse aesthetic and stylistic strategies employed by them.

The emergence of contemporary Hindi Dalit literature is an important phenomenon in the Indian literary sphere. The Hindi Dalit literature in its contemporary form was established in the early 1980s with the early autobiographies, poetries and short stories of eminent writers such as Valmiki and Mohandas Namishray. Noted editor of the famous Hindi magazine *Hans*, Rajendra Yadav, played a crucial role in establishing many of the Dalit writers, as he published their stories and also wrote extensive and thought-provoking editorials in favour of this new genre of Hindi literature. However, before the emergence of Dalit literature in Hindi, it had already entrenched its roots in other regional languages like Marathi and Tamil. Brueck underlines that this delayed start of Dalit literature in Hindi has often been attributed to the unorganised Dalit political movement in North India until the late 20th century and with the absence of influential leaders such as B R Ambedkar in West and Periyar E V Ramasamy in South India. The contemporary Dalit writers are trying to reconstruct the historical lineages of the Hindi Dalit literature,

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including the writings of Kabir Das and Ravidas in the category.

Brueck presents a theoretical context for understanding the role of literary institutions as constituting a counter-public space for contemporary Dalit identity construction. She argues that the theoretical positioning of the Hindi Dalit literary sphere as a counter-public can help to contextualise the communicative space in which the debate over Munshi Premchand and others have taken place in the last several years. Nancy Fraser defined counter-public sphere and has been quoted in the book as

> parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs. (p 4)

The counter-public model is instructive in its positioning of the Dalit literary sphere as one that occupies a parallel and oppositional space to the Indian literary mainstream. This Dalit counter-public sphere creates both a shared space for the reflexive circulation of discourse that has been marginalised from the mainstream public sphere and also challenges the mainstream to recognise this competing discourse (p 80).

The book extensively discusses the burning of Premchand's book and denouncing his many important stories due to "derogatory" remarks against Dalit castes. In 2004, the Bharatiya Dalit Sahitya Akademi (BDSA) publicly burned many copies of Premchand's celebrated novel *Rangbhumi*. They were opposing the decision of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to include it in the syllabus of 12th standard, due to use of the term "Chamar" in the book. Interestingly, Brueck informs, that after one and a half year of the BDSA protest, the NCERT decided to replace the term with the less offensive "Dalit." This term Chamar was, however, not replaced from the story of Dalit writer Valmiki's story, which was also part of the syllabus. The author claims that this incident indeed underlines that the state itself "reifies the divide between authentic and inauthentic literary Dalit perspectives" (p 3). The author asserts that this whole episode and the extensive debates related to the question of "authenticity" of non-Dalit writers, to write on Dalit issues should be treated as cultural performance. She underlines that it is a method of newly emerged counter-public of Hindi Dalit writers to engage, oppose and redefine the limits of traditionally elite Hindi literary discourses.

Aesthetics of Dalit Literature

Dalit literature generally in all languages and particularly in Hindi has been treated as the literature of resistance and the aesthetic aspects of the construction of Dalit literary narratives have not been properly analysed. This book claims to focus on these aspects of Hindi Dalit literature by presenting a close reading of some short stories written by prolific and notable Dalit writers, Valmiki and Kardam. The author presents a deep analysis of Valmiki's "Pachchis Chauka Derh Sau" (25 fours are 150), written in 2000 and Kardam's "Lathi" (The Stick) written in 2005. These two and other Dalit writers want both Dalits and non-Dalits to think about the world around them in a new way, to challenge exploitation whenever they see it. But, the "crucial difference between the narratives of the Dalit counter-public sphere and non-Dalit writers is that the characters in Dalit narratives are more than sympathetic or symbolic objects. Rather they manifest the possibility of transforming society" (p 99). The author argues that in both the short stories one can find the use of "melodramatic realism," which is a combination of literary realism and melodrama. Literary realism focuses on the existing reality of society and makes heroes out of some of society's most persecuted victims. Melodrama has the power to raise the status of that persecution to elevated heights. Brueck emphasised that melodramatic realism serves as the chosen narrative mode for Dalit writers to represent their subjectivity, rage against injustice, and ultimately triumph in the awareness of the possibility of change (p 99).

One important aspect of Hindi Dalit literature is that the writers are using different characters and different linguistic styles to convey messages to their targeted readers. The author demonstrates this by closely analysing several stories by Valmiki, Susheela Takbhore, Suraj Pal Chauhan and Ajay Navaria. The Dalit writers have used many dialects and English vocabulary to express the alternative social identities by their characters. Further, the impact of elite language in close contact with rustic dialogue forces readers to feel more strongly the social and emotional distance between various Dalit psyches. Brueck asserts that by using this method they

> succeed in constructing a hierarchical coding that forces us to think more carefully about the simplistic egalitarian presumptions of Dalit literature than are revealed through content analyses. (p 121)

The author also deeply engaged with the undercurrents of nostalgia and the spectres of loss and alienation in many narratives of Dalit political awakening. She looks specifically at three short stories of Ajay Navaria: "Upmahadvip" (Subcontinent) written in 2004, "Bali" (Sacrifice) written in 2004, and "Es Dhamm Sanantano" (Eternal Law) written in 2003. They primarily narrate tales of Dalit characters, who have moved to the urban Indian cities. According to Brueck, these stories are unique in their theoretical considerations of alienation, as well as physical and figurative distances between rural and urban Indian spaces. She emphasises that Navaria has challenged the aesthetic exigencies established by the predominant architects of the Hindi Dalit literary counter-public. Indeed, Navaria's fiction participates in a contemporary critique of modernity. Brueck emphasises that "[T]he crisis of identity and alienation of Navaria's characters point to a recognition of the impossibility of universal subjecthood" (p 153). Navaria's stories alert us to personal challenges that arise almost like a side effect, from embracing the opportunities for betterment, including education, political awareness, and material consumption.

The author considers the challenges that Dalit feminist writers have raised against the normative masculinity tendencies of the Dalit literary sphere in both its hierarchical organisation and its literary creations. In this context the author specifically looks at the subgenre of rape-revenge narratives through the analysis of some stories of the noted Dalit feminist writer

Kusum Meghwal. The non-Dalit writers and male Dalit writers have presented rape as a brutal form of caste violence, where Dalit women have been presented as the passive recipient of this kind of brutal violence against them. Feminist Dalit writers and critics are working to rescue Dalit women's bodies from passive manipulation. In this context, the author has presented a deep analysis of two stories, *Mangali* and *Angara,* written by Rajasthani writer Meghwal, in which she presents an exemplary exploration of alternative possibilities for female agency. The Dalit female characters in her stories are not passive recipients of brutal sexual offences on their bodies but there is a "woman-centred revenge fantasy that allows Dalit women to disrupt the normative social script of sexual assault" (p 171).

Few Limitations

Undoubtedly, this book gives us an insightful understanding of different debates of Hindi Dalit literature and also presents unique literary aesthetic aspects of this literature. There are, however, some crucial limitations of this book: First, though the author claims that she has gone through different literary magazines and debates that have emerged in the Dalit counter-public, she presents a picture of homogeneous Dalit counter-public. The book does not discuss the debates related to right-wing politics and its growing impact on the Dalit intellectuals. Second, though the book eloquently engages with the arguments presented by many Hindi Dalit literary figures regarding the question of authenticity, there is no systematic discussion on the debates between Dalit intellectuals and non-Dalit intellectuals on the same issue. Third, though the author claims in the beginning that the book intends to cover different debates emerged in the counter-public sphere of Hindi literary world, it does not cover many debates which occurred in the literary world in general and Dalit literary world in particular. In this context, the impact of globalisation and capitalism in the lives of Dalit could be underlined as one such important issue. Fourth, though the analysis of many short stories underscores crucial aspects and differentiated voices within Hindi Dalit literature, there is no thorough engagement with the materials published in many Hindi magazines and journals or other expressions of literature like poetry, play, etc, for example: though the author mentioned *Hans* magazine as an important site for the expression of Dalit writings in Hindi, there is no clear analysis of any writing or debate published in this journal.

However, there is no doubt that this book is an important contribution and it gives readers an insightful understanding of the issues, debates and aesthetic aspects of the Dalit Hindi writings. It eloquently argues that even though there are some agreements on larger inspirational figures for Dalit literature, one could find diversified voices on the issues related to the impact of modernity or presentation of violence against women, etc. Through the scholarly and incisive exploration of the many short stories and their representation of characters, linguistic expressions and utopian imaginations of overcoming present exploitative situation, the author has presented a sympathetic but critical understanding of Hindi Dalit literature.

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Fukuyama and the Question of Identity

RAHUL VAIDYA

Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment by Francis Fukuyama, *Hachette India, 2018; pp xvii+218, ₹499.*

In his most celebrated work *The End of History and the Last Man* (Fukuyama, 1992), Francis Fukuyama was touted to have articulated the zeitgeist of the world. This zeitgeist was refashioning and championing of Hegel's version "where development resulted in a liberal state linked to a market economy" (p xii). The collapse of communism in Soviet Union and East Europe, the end of Cold War and emergence of United States (US) as the sole superpower, adoption of market economy by China and the march of globalisation—this rapidly unfolding chain of events was not just the victory of Reagan–Thatcher geopolitical or economic policies. It was a decisive resolution of ideological battles in the favour of the right. This was a repudiation of Marx and vindication of Hegel. No wonder, Fukuyama's arguments were music to the ears of the powers that be. Not only the conservative or neo-liberal sections, but also many social democratic parties worldwide had adopted this idealist argument of a certain march of history in favour of market and liberal democracy since the days of Euro-communism; so it was no wonder that New Labour and Clintonite Democrats on both sides of Atlantic happily joined this euphoria.

However, this "desirable destination" of history was far from settled. As latter events showed, it was the "Clash of civilisations" kind of world view of the likes of Samuel P Huntington and Bernard Lewis that best articulated the dark side of consumerist neo-liberal market capitalism. The terrorist attacks of 9/11, Iraq–Afghanistan wars, rising Islamophobia, anti-immigrant xenophobia, European Union and its Syrian refugee crisis, the rise of White nationalism, neo-Nazi elements in Europe, the US and many parts of the world, Brexit and the victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential election in 2016—all these have reversed the "global surge toward democracy" (p xi). The liberal reaction to this rising tide of far right populist nationalism/fascism has been fairly consistent—horror, moral indignation and denunciation. However, it has failed to achieve much in material terms except much sound and fury through media and social media. Fukuyama has again joined this new ideological crusade on the side of liberal democracy to sift through the present morass called "identity." Despite rehashing of many old arguments, his new book is pertinent not so much from the point of offering cogent solutions or honest introspections of euphoric neo-liberal/neoconservative thought about how their magic tree of free market and globalisation bore such evil fruits of neo-Nazism and racist mobilisations; but rather as a symptomatic reading of how Fukuyama's reflections reveal the structural compact that mainstream neo-liberal/neoconservative thought continues to share with far right politics.

Idealist Readings

It is important to highlight that Fukuyama constantly tries to put forth a linear conception of history and seeks to base it in spirit or idea of sorts. It is not surprising given the intellectual influence of Alexandre Kojève and his interpretation of Hegel on his works (Menand 2018).

"Twentieth century politics had been organised along a left–right spectrum defined by economic issues." But, "in the second decade of the 21st century, that spectrum appears to be giving way in many regions to one defined by identity" (p 6). It is this identity as the politics of dignity and its recognition that is the central theme. Fukuyama rightly evokes Hegel who argued that the struggle for recognition was the ultimate driver of human history. In this reading, society is a manifestation or end product of the inner self or the "idea." Hence, the material world or the economy is just a layout of status hierarchy, a master–slave dialectic of human labour and so on. However, both liberal and the communist utopias or the end destination shared the vision of "equality of recognition and thus human dignity and end of master–slave dialectic." However, it is precisely the struggle for recognition that has now taken a dangerous turn and seems to threaten the liberal project today. So all we need to do is to come up with "a better theory of human soul" (p 11).

Fukuyama invests a lot in the concept of thymos derived from Plato. It is considered to be the third part of the soul apart from the desiring and calculating parts. It is both the seat of anger and pride. Identity struggles of the oppressed seeking egalitarian dignity (isothymia) or regressive reaction seeking exclusive hierarchical honour, domination (megalothymia) stem from the same seat of thymos. Democracy is the victory of isothymia over megalothymia and it includes everything: American slavery, the American Civil War, workers' rights and their struggles, women's liberation, etc. This is nothing but idealist labouring to stick every material development to a fictional spiritual code. Fukuyama argues that the protestant revolution of Luther and its "valorisation of inner self over the external social being" of Roman Catholic Church were of critical importance in shaping up the modern identity. What is more, he fudges on the question of modernity as a result of material changes in economy or sphere of ideas arguing for both being equally important and one cannot conclusively argue in favour of one over the other. At the outset, Fukuyama's certain arguments like these may even seem Gramscian. But they are not. What is interesting is that not only his arguments stem from an idealist standpoint, but at times they take a biological, essentialist shape. The manner in which Fukuyama adopts a compromising stand towards genetic reductionists is telling as he argues that the "boundary line between nature and nurture is highly contested today, but few people would deny that the two

poles of this dichotomy exist. Fortunately, one does not have to establish the boundary precisely in order to develop a theory that gives us useful insight into human motivation" (p 15). And he goes even further to trace feelings of pride to a chemical called serotonin in the brain and chimpanzees exhibiting elevated levels of serotonin when they achieved alpha male status, etc.

One is reminded of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* and his harsh critique of professors and philosophers and their cravings to conjure up an admixture of modern science and idealism to further reactionary ideas. The actors and locations have changed. The motivations and political battles have not. Fukuyama is representative of this tradition of modern liberal/conservative thought where the modern and the liberal are given an ingenious conservative spin. Pseudo-concepts like thymos are brushed up and put forth as crux/motor of human behaviour and society as such with class, caste, race, gender and other material social–economic categories being subservient to them.

Antinomies of Modernity

Fukuyama celebrates Rousseau's secularisation of the inner self (and French Revolutionary politics) as a "critical stepping stone to the modern idea of identity." His survey of how under capitalism, the modern individuality came into being retains some useful insights. He argues that modern liberal societies being left in moral confusion as a result of disappearance shared religious horizon. The expressive individualism which led to Nietzsche's death of God, or Kafka and others in existentialism, nihilism, etc, is also responsible for modern crises of identity. Not everyone is capable or willing to constantly make a choice of values for themselves despite formal conditions for such choice coming into being under capitalism. The search for a common identity and shared values in vacuum left after the end of feudalism leads to the development of modern nationalism and political religion. Kant's or Hegel's liberal thought was not the only stream of thought operating in the 19th century. There was Herder's emphasis on common and not individual identity and nativism which evoked and celebrated the distinct character of location/geography and its culture that gained traction over time. The root of all these developments can be traced to the process of alienation under capitalism. The shift from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft (from village community to urban society)—the uprooting of organic, mythically golden and reassuring past under the forces of capitalist modernity which had a cosmopolitan and alien character became a constant lament for German writers well before the rise of Hitler in the 1930s. The themes of ethnonationalism, radicalisation of religion and especially the discussion of the Roy–Kepel debate[1] are key here: "is the rise of Islamist radicalism in the early 21st century best understood as an identity problem, or is it the by-product of the sociology of our age and the dislocations brought on by modernization and globalization?" (p 71)

While Fukuyama is right in invoking alienation as a cause for politicisation of religion or rise of nationalism, he does not sufficiently acknowledge the fact that liberal democracy and nationalism shared and shaped the conditions for capitalism together, and they were complicit in development of imperialism and the world wars. That Napoleon carried on ideals of the French Revolution was no accident or incidental detail in the long march and eventual triumph of liberalism. Time and again, the project of economic modernisation, nationalism/fascism and liberal thought (which legitimised them or overlooked them) crisscrossed paths (Singapore, US-backed dictatorships in Latin America, Franco's Spain are some of the examples). There was no Chinese wall separating them.

Blaming Left and Right

In latter parts of the book, Fukuyama has deployed a favourite weapon from the arsenal of non-partisan intellectuals: to blame both left and right and maintain equidistance. His objection against the left is that despite the recurring economic crises, the people have not responded to its message of class struggle. Rather, the populist far right has galvanised in times of crises and mobilised the people. He argues that instead of introspection and addressing the challenge of identity directly, the left has tried to cover its political failure by blaming false consciousness of the masses. Furthermore, the left has given up on its core agenda of class struggle and its collective identity of workers which enabled solidarity of people from various backgrounds. However, this core project of class struggle was undermined with oil crisis in 1970s and post-World War II welfare states in the West reversing their course towards neo-liberalism thereafter. Although Fukuyama notes these historical reasons, his main objection is to the post-1968 New Left which focused on identity. Seemingly here is a clear contradiction. Fukuyama's objection to the Old Left was it did not acknowledge questions of identity. And he is objecting to the New Left in even more aggressive terms. What is at work here then?

He admits and welcomes the aspect of democratisation of dignity involved and enabled through struggles of the oppressed such as Martin Luther King Jr and the civil rights movement for African Americans or women's liberation movement. What is problematic is the inward-looking turn these movements later on take. The premium put on authentic inner being or lived experience is Fukuyama's main objection. The therapeutic turn taken by state, religion and many other apparatuses which valorised this inner self and its novelty and exclusivity led to undermining notions of the collective and collective projects of enlightenment. Today, the public sphere has become increasingly obsessed with multiculturalism and political correctness which limits free speech and invites a reaction from the ultra right. This line of argument has a major problem of merely theorising the present without contextualising or historicising it. To argue that the struggles of the oppressed invite right-wing reaction is nothing but blaming the victims while ignoring the very oppression and

injustice against which the oppressed raise their voice. Certainly one can take many issues with the multicultural project; but invoking the wrath of the right can hardly be one of them as the long history of anti-Semitism and racial hatred does not really begin with multiculturalism.

To resolve this, Fukuyama argues for building a common civil identity based on common values (and not language, religion, race) against multiculturalism's celebration of multiple identities. He adopts a staunch assimilationist stand with strict citizenship laws, etc. According to him, this common identity based on national service (military or civil work like teaching, environment preservation) would turn the tide of the far right. Either he is being naïve or cunning in suggesting this. We are quite familiar with how such common symbols of patriotism and national identity are adopted in the framework and functioning of majoritarian discourse: the tricolour flag used for threatening minorities, common civil code and rights of Muslim women, etc. In fact, the entire journey of capitalism from colonialism to globalisation has been to preach the universality of European enlightenment values and abstract equality while enforcing slavery, ghettos and oppression. The far right today is merely taking this mainstream process to its logical conclusion which seeks to retain the formal apparatus of liberal democracy while excluding its application to certain sections treated as the other. The sad part is that not only the likes of Fukuyama but also many voices on the left are pursuing this daydream of common civil identity in the fight against the far right. What is required instead is waging battles against social oppression from the platform of class struggle.

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NOTE

1 Debate between Oliver Roy and Gilles Kepel, two of the French leading experts on radicalisation.

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