EDUDOC SERVICES: BOOK REVIEWS



Book Reviews

February - 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 **February, 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.

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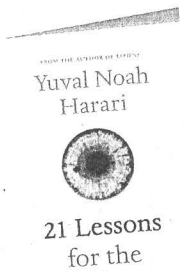
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21 Lessons for the 21st Century | Penguin Random House | 368 pages | Rs 799



Life Hacks In Vale Of Tears

As tech takes over, deepening misery, battering the human spirit, subduing truth, Harari advocates a meditative resilience, a constant debate

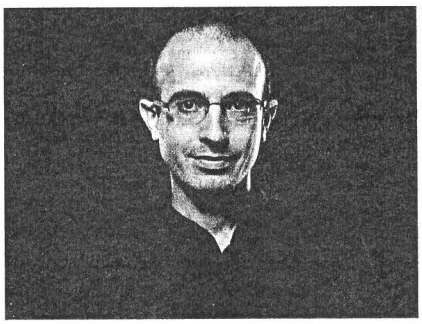
BY SUDHIRENDAR SHARMA

THE trouble with the world is that the stupid are cocksure and the intelligent are full of doubt. And, it is becoming increasingly so as machine intelligence powers its way beyond intelligent minds and algorithms begin to guide emotions. Far from maximising human potential, such technological transformation is upgrading computers to the extent that it will empower a handful of tiny elite over most others who not only stand to be exploited but are being made irrelevant. The cumulative impact of the emerging infotech revolution is fuelling global inequality like never before, while increasing social tensions and dividing humankind into hostile camps.

Unless the situation is peeled to its last layer, it may not be clear where the world is headed and how we should protect ourselves and future generations. From ecological cataclysm to the fake news epidemic and from chauvinistic nationalism to underrated bioterrorism, the world is fast becoming a theatre of the absurd where the bull of progress is raging wild with anxiety and anger. In the emerging social milieu internal lives of individuals are being compromised. Little do we realise that an unprecedented pressure on our personal lives had ignited the Arab Spring, and has now sparked #MeToo movement. There is more to come, as our internal psychological mechanism remains under duress.

In his clear-eyed and searingly realistic assessment, Yuval Noah Harari draws lessons that celebrate human wisdom but without discounting human stupidity. Enlisting 21 carefully distilled lessons into five over-arching themes, the history professor at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, traverses the world of despair emerging from unresolved technological and political challenges to underscore the significance of meditative resilience in a world of post-truth ignorance. It is a curious and reflective analysis of the existential challenges, lessons that are borne out of our complicity in political biases, unabashed privileges and institutional oppression.

Harari keeps it simple, locating lessons in our everyday acceptance of the so-called inevitable. Many social and political disruptions of our time can be located in ever more lonely lives we live in an ever more connected planet. Irrespective of how many virtual friends one may boast, it is an accepted fact that one cannot know more than 150 individuals. The facade of generating likes on social media is not without serious psychological repercussions. Humans may have got everything under their control, but in the new age they are finding it hard to make sense of all that technology has on offer.



> If you want to know the truth about the universe, about the meaning of life and your identity, explains Harari, the best place to start is by observing and exploring suffering.

As the title suggests, this is a collection of essays written over time to grapple with the present-day predicament of existence. Much of what Harari writes emerges in response to the nagging question, 'why there is so much suffering in the world and in my own life?' Harari contends that we are living in an age of bewilderment, when myths of all kind are collapsing—from religious myths about god and heavens to nationalist myths about the motherland and the nation-state, and from romantic myths about love and adventure to capitalist myths about economic growth and consumerism. Yet, society continues to nurture myths.

Truth is a casualty in the process. The truth is that truth was never high on the agenda of Homo Sapiens; instead, they have been busy constructing stories. Be it religion or politics, the focus is to fit ourselves into some readymade story so that we stay away from truth. This is how life has continued from generation to generation, making each animal play its part in the story. But without getting to know ourselves more, we will continue to believe stories. So if you want to know the truth about the universe, about the meaning of life, and about your own identity, explains Harari, the best place to start is by observing and exploring suffering.

While one might not concur with all the lessons on offer, the infectious enthusiasm with which Harari writes makes it impossible not to be carried away. The author of the global bestseller *Sapiens* has rooted his essays in everyday realities; however, this book remains ambitious in scale. The essential message is to join the debate about the future of humanity. History is unlikely to give us any discounts or exempt us from the consequences if we continue to pursue our busy schedules. The more people join the debate the better. The globalised world is in dire need of the empathetic imagination.

In spite of its capaciousness, Harari's book espouses a fundamental truth about our scarred times: that nothing can insulate us from the vagaries of a violent and vengeful world. ◻

(Sudhirendar Sharma is an independent researcher and academic)

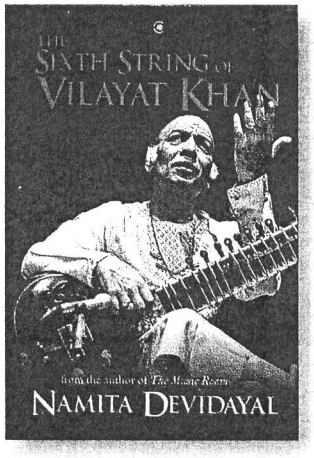
His music, his life

This fictionalised narrative portrays Ustad Vilayat Khan as an individual and a musician, often stressing on the contradictory nature of these selves.

BY **DEEPA GANESH**

DURING my high school days, HMV House was a favourite haunt. Thanks to informed managers who ran the music store, one always returned with more than what one had gone looking for. On one such expedition, the discovery of two priceless gems—Nikhil Banerjee's rendition of Raag Megh and Ustad Vilayat Khan's Raag Yaman—came to change the way I experienced and assimilated music. Even in those years, when I was not much of an informed listener, I found their music impassioned and ruminative. They became holy texts, and remain so.

Nikhil Banerjee and Ustad Vilayat Khan were also extraordinary human beings, as one learnt through available writings and talk within music circles. Nikhil Banerjee, the quiet and austere musician, was no more by the time I discovered him; Ustad Vilayat Khan, the radical and maverick, fought every kind of authority that spelt danger for his music. In a way, both these musicians had shunned fame and popularity in order to keep their art unsullied. The way they held on to their art was akin to what the Sermon on the Mount or the *Bhagavad Gita* said about condemning the superficiality of materialism and "seeking" God's kingdom first.



The Sixth String of Vilayat Khan
By Namita Devidayal
Context Books
Pages: 264
Price: Rs.699

I had the good fortune of meeting Ustad Vilayat Khan in 1999, on his last visit to Bengaluru. He was 71 then, but it was clear that he was still thinking of *riyaz* (practice) when he spoke to me about the billiards champion Willie Hoppe: "Every morning he locked himself in a room with a jar of milk and a few sandwiches. He practised for 18 hours. What's my sadhana of 14 hours before him...?"

When *The Sixth String of Vilayat Khan* by Namita Devidayal hit the stands, it spelt expectation and hope. Her earlier book, *The Music Room*, on the vocalist Dhondutai Kulkarni, was a moving experience. Also, none of the lists that put out maestros of Indian music have either Ustad Vilayat Khan or Nikhil Banerjee in them. To bring Ustad Vilayat Khan into public memory is an act of enormous significance.

The 264-page book, with 15 chapters, has mostly to do with the life of Ustad Vilayat Khan—his journeys, his intimate relationships, his quarrels and fights, his idiosyncrasies, and so on. As is the case with most biographies, this, too, has stories in abundance—some of him as a musician, and plenty that speak of him as Vilayat Khan the man. Vilayat Khan left home in search of a guru after the early demise of his father, Ustad Enayat Khan, a spectacular musician. He came under the tutelage of several gurus, among them D.T. Joshi, Bande Hasan Khan and Zinda Hasan Khan, Wahid Khan and Khan Mastana. He grew, in life and music, under his mother Basheeran Begum's watchful gaze, and her shrewd manipulation ensured that Vilayat Khan kept to his pedigree. The other person whose music had a great impact on Vilayat Khan was Ustad Amir Khan.

Ustad Vilayat Khan found a friend and disciple in Arvind Parikh, with whom he had a lasting relationship. In fact, speaking of Hazrat Nizamuddin's love for his disciple Amir Khusrau, Vilayat Khan wished the world to remember him and Arvind Parikh in the same way (this does not feature in the book, though). It is also a matter of surprise that Kolkata, where the maestro spent six months of the year and often remembered his father's disciple Sripathi Charan Das, who taught him Bengali, does not find prominence of place in the book.

There are repeated references to Vilayat Khan's weakness for women and worldly acquisitions. In fact, it appears as a constant refrain, lest the reader forget. Vilayat Khan loved to dress well, look good, went to great lengths to acquire his Mercedes, threw a party in celebration, moved in elite

circles, loved his food and drink, and loved to cook as well. There are stories about his interest in car mechanics and tailoring. He was mischievous and outspoken, radical as a listener but traditional as a student and as a performer. Nothing was an obstacle in his relationship with music—not fame, money nor opportunity. For a good part of his life, he lived in Bohemian abandon, and one day, the futility of it all made him give up city life and move to a quiet life in Shimla. In his short story "Family Happiness", the writer Leo Tolstoy speaks of wanting "the excitement and danger and the chance to sacrifice myself for my love"; in Ustad Vilayat Khan's case, this "love" was music. His estrangement with his brother Imrat Khan and son Shujaat and even his anger against Pandit Ravi Shankar were all for the cause of music.

There are two instances to support this reading in the book: one is how the Ustad held a pistol to the head of a musician who refused to teach him a piece of music; two, how, every night, he played music to an unwell Jawaharlal Nehru until he fell asleep. What is even more moving is how he would sleep with his sitar by his side as a young man, and how in his later years, he played an imaginary sitar in his sleep.

The book portrays him both as an individual and as a musician, often stressing on the contradictory nature of these selves. His metaphysical leanings as a musician and the worldly human being—the self and the other is drawn out in length. The narrative strategy of the book is similar to that of piecing together a jigsaw puzzle. Hence, as in the jigsaw puzzle, you see the lines, the schisms. But in the case of legends and extremely complex personalities such as Ustad Vilayat Khan, would it suffice to understand him in binaries and fractions? The narrative discourse of the life and music of Vilayat Khan, which I see as a seamless expression, should be more like a treasure hunt. You go on peeling the external layers of clues and directions to get to the essence, the treasure itself.

PICTURE WITH MANY DIVISIONS

Namita Devidayal does an amazing job of unearthing facts and unheard of stories, but the book presents the Ustad more like a picture with many divisions. The narrative tone seems to rest its faith more in the appearance than in the unseen registers.

From whatever writing is available on the Ustad, the other was always embedded in the self. It is evident in the way he answers questions in several interviews. Here is a sample: "I do not accept awards given by corrupt, biased and foolish persons. At first I rejected an award in 1964 proposed by the Sangeet Natak Akademi whose procedure for the selection of award nominees was based on prejudices. At the same time, I wish to make it clear that I am the saddest person after rejecting the Sangeet Natak Akademi award. Though I have been awarded by many countries for my art and performances, I am pained that I could not get due regard in my own country."

Also: "Really, I do not like innovations. Our classical music has innumerable ragas and raginis covering our finest thoughts and emotions as well. Those creating new ragas are unwise and propelled by a sense of cheap popularity. For example: Ravi Shankar. Yes, I am boldly saying that by his so-called innovations, Ravi Shankar is degrading the field of classical music."

Fritz Staal, the renowned philosopher, has an interesting observation to make about Indian rituals. He says they are neither meaningless nor mere symbols, but a language—just like individual words in a sentence have no meaning, but only as a cluster when they come together. Extending the same understanding to appearance and intent, Vilayat Khan existed in the sum total of all his practices. He was creating himself, narrating himself and finally transcending himself. Ustad Vilayat Khan, like Indian music, had no aesthetic culmination; he was constantly working on himself, and with that came all the inner turbulence and restlessness, manifesting themselves in various ways.

The author calls the book a fictionalised narrative: it is difficult not to gasp when the lady in powder pink chiffon is described as "enticing as the glass of champagne", and furthering stereotypes about women, the writer describes Chandbala as "in the backseat combing her long curly hair and peering into the mirror", etc.

The casual use of words such as "guts" to describe something as sturdy as conviction, or a sweeping phrase such as "post-feudal India", which is sensitive to neither time nor geography, are annoying.

The clinching passage comes in the early part of the book (page 58), when Namita Devidayal speaks of the choices an individual makes and sums up Ustad Vilayat Khan's life and art as what the musicologist Hans Utter called a "narrative of resistance".

I think the best piece of writing I have read so far on Ustad Vilayat Khan is by the musicologist Deepak Raja. In his essay "Ustad Vilayat Khan: The orthodox revolutionary", he writes: "Vilayat Khan's was a personality shaped by the conviction that it was destined to leave its mark on the world. He would not have been happy with just being the greatest sitarist; he had to be amongst the all-time greats of Hindustani music. This set him on a path of passionate absorption of the tradition, unrelenting innovation and the pursuit of superhuman standards of perfection in the execution of his musical vision.... He saw the artist as having a hotline to God, and artistic expression as a 'Revelation', which audiences ought to receive in a spirit of reverence. The core of elitism in his personality never allowed him to drift towards titillation, populism or kitsch.... He stuck steadfastly to his values, and willingly paid the price for so doing."

I remain an admirer of Namita Devidayal's earlier work, *The Music Room*. □

Population Challenges in India

MD JUEL RANA, SRINIVAS GOLI

Following the unparalleled decline in fertility, India's population growth has shown signs of deceleration in the recent decades. Despite this, India will overtake China and is slated to be the most populous country in the world within the next decade. Keeping in mind the rising concerns of population scientists over the non-standard demographic transition that the country experienced, it is high time to assess the achievements and the rough paths traversed since independence. Krishnamurthy Srinivasan's book critically studies the demographic changes in India in the context of national and international policies. It brilliantly highlights the lessons learnt from the population policies in the country.

Accroding to Srinivasan, historically, India had a lower fertility rate than the European countries (before the medical revolution in Europe). The low fertility recorded initially has been primarily due to India's traditional social and cultural norms and practices. Srinivasan argues that India's demographic achievements are far worse than those of China and the East Asian Tigers, despite the efforts long made by successive governments of independent India. Using this backdrop, the book discusses several aspects of population challenges from the population policy perspective. The chapters are laid out logically, beginning with a vivid narration of the shifting goalposts of family planning programmes in successive five-year plans and national population policies (NPPs). Second, a range of demographic challenges on account of the population changes are discussed. Third, the progress of different development indicators in India has been compared against the global benchmarks. Finally, major challenges on the demographic front in India have been summarised. Thus, the author tries to bring together a wide range of demographic issues in this book, making it a valuable contribution to India's population and development research.

Population Concerns in India: Shifting Trends, Policies, and Programs by Krishnamurthy Srinivasan, *Delhi: Sage Publications, 2017; pp 293, ₹850.*

Family Planning Programmes

Srinivasan critically analyses and meticulously interprets the changing approaches to family planning programmes in India from the British period to the recent past. In his view, neo-Malthusian thinking dominated the approach to population control programmes in the post-independent era. The size and growth of population had been one of the major concerns of researchers, social scientists, and policymakers. Under the umbrella of the neo-Malthusian movement, it was believed that checks on population would

combat the adverse effects of famine, epidemics, and poverty, and the propagation of modern methods of population control was emphasised. As a result the family planning programme had been introduced to control population growth along with improving maternal health in the First Five Year Plan. During the consecutive five-year plans and in the documents of the NPPs, various demographic targets had been put forward, but many of these targets had not been realised as these were highly ambitious targets. Therefore, the goals had been shifted time and again beyond the time frame of different five-year plans and population policies over the decades.

Based on his critical evaluation of the NPPs in India since their inception, the author opines that the country experienced a mixed bag of outcomes as far as progress in family planning programmes was concerned. Although family planning contributed to fertility decline in a major way, from the beginning, family planning methods in the country were skewed towards the sterilisation of women. This was because the government chose the cheaper action of sterilisation rather than the more expensive one of teaching the know-how of the use of spacing methods of contraception, despite successive years of economic growth. Further, the integration of family planning with reproductive and child health (RCH) services has stalled the progress of family planning in India in the past two decades. Discussion of population control cannot be complete without discussing proximate and distal determinants of fertility decline and the state-level variations in factors contributing to it. Srinivasan, however, has not devoted enough space to such discussions.

Major Population Issues

Srinivasan describes several diverse socio-demographic challenges, notably the institution of marriage, fertility, health, and quality of data as the major population concerns in India. He has highlighted the significance of culture on the issues of fertility, nuptiality, and stability of marriage. Also, he has underscored chronic problems such as child marriages and emerging issues such as live-in relationships and rising divorce rates in the country. He has mentioned four reasons for the breakdown of marriages: rise in individualism, economic independence of women, the rising costs of marriage, and movements towards gender equality. Also, he has argued that same-religion and same-caste marriages are more stable than their counterparts, but there is no demonstrated evidential bases for this argument. Srinivasan suggests the need to conduct studies to evaluate the economic benefits of same-caste and same-religion marriages commonly practised in India in comparison to practices in Western countries, such as live-in arrangements as well as the prevalence of high divorce rates and incidences of children reared by single parents. According to him, although same-caste and same-religion marriages could enhance economic progress, such practices would not yield benefits for all sections of society as it would only encourage the existing societal inequity in terms of the superiority of one religion and caste over the others.

According to Srinivasan, other major concerns are current demographic trends and diversity and its implications for the future. To govern the large size of its population, India needs an efficient political and administrative management system, especially in the large states. The high growth rate of population, child marriage and adolescent fertility, childhood malnutrition, and worsening child sex ratio, maternal, infant and child mortality in Empowered Action Group (EAG) states continue to be the burning population issues in India. Besides, the author justly raises his concerns about the quality of data for the estimation of demographic indicators in India. According to him, reporting bias and omissions in the age–sex information of the census and the civil registration of births and deaths are the important data reliability concerns. Good governance is crucial for the successful implementation of programmes, including health and family welfare as well as civil registration of births and deaths. He believes that technological development would pave the way to good governance by way of easy diffusion and circulation of information.

The Comparative Position of India

Srinivasan also compares five populous developed countries, namely, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) with five developing nations, namely, India, China, Brazil, Bangladesh, and Indonesia, discussing the

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various demographic and developmental indicators.

Demographic indicators such as fertility, mortality, the institution of marriage, sex ratio, human development and gender equity have been compared. Among the developing countries, India performs poorly in terms of fertility and mortality along with Bangladesh. The populations of China and India have the most unfavourable sex ratio for females mainly due to sex-selective abortions. Although gender inequalities are higher among other developing nations in general, conditions are the worst in India. Besides demographic indicators, a comparison has also been made with selected indicators of health infrastructure and energy. The availability of hospital beds and physicians is poorer in Bangladesh and India compared to other developing countries. At the same time, the condition of India is the worst in the case of open defecation. Although the availability of drinking water is slightly better in India, it has a long way to go to reach the standards set in the developed countries. Energy consumption per capita, particularly oil and electricity in India is much lower than the developed countries and India even lags behind the developing countries such as China, Brazil, and Indonesia.

In the penultimate chapter, Srinivasan dwells on the discourse on population and development in India and abroad. Against the backdrop of the ongoing debate, he expresses his concerns about the increasing pollution, strong national, religious and racial identities, and the rapid exploitation of non-renewable resources that would pose collective threats to human population. He warns that mankind is facing a collective danger due to greenhouse gas emissions and global warming, exploitation of non-renewable resources and increasing inequalities at the local and global levels. Hence, he argues that the motto of policymaking should be, "observe globally, think nationally and act locally" rather than just "think globally and act nationally." But, he has not convincingly argued whether it is only overpopulation or other factors such as social and economic inequalities and skewed distribution and wastage of resources that have also contributed to considerable pollution and climate change.

The Way Forward

The author proposes a few ways forward to address the challenges, particularly for India to catch up to the East Asian Tigers in realising its anticipated demographic bonus. First, the author emphasises the need for credible data sources. For that, his suggestion is to integrate the Aadhaar card (unique identification number or UID) with the CRS database, although there is no discussion on the quality of Aadhaar data itself. Second, to eradicate child marriage practices, he asserts the need for launching behavioural change campaigns. Third, for better maternal and child health service provision and family planning, he suggests that the maternal and child health programmes need to be separated from the family planning programme to meet the prevailing unmet need of family planning in India. This is required so that the quality contraceptive services, choices of methods and their easy access, treatment facilities of primary and secondary sterility become accessible to everyone. However, a majority of the research studies conducted worldwide still advocate the integration of family planning with maternal and child health services.

Fourth, against the background of the differentials in population growth across the states of India based on the NPP 2000 recommendation, Parliament has frozen the number of seats in the lower house up to 2021. Thereafter, the political representations and regional power balance may be changed as per the population size of the states. Hence, the author has called for a national debate on it and suggested that the number of seats of members of Parliament (MPs) be frozen permanently. However, the author should have brought in more discussions on this point, which would have benefited future debates on the subject. We feel that freezing the number of parliamentary seats may be against the constitutional rights of "one person one vote," but the issue is larger than the mere representation of the population. It is the representation of language, culture and ethnic values in a diverse and large country like India. The debate should not only revolve around the size of the population, but must include its diverse population composition. Fifth, the poor outcome of population policies in India is due to its centralised nature, being implemented in different states of India, which are in dissimilar stages of demographic transition. So, the states should be allowed and encouraged to formulate a separate population policy and implement it for better policy outcomes.

In summary, this book analytically brings out several prominent population challenges from the policy perspective in India against the global benchmarks. However, this book lacks its focus on specific issues and their critical evaluation; rather, it narrates the diverse population challenges. In particular, this book did not touch upon the unbalanced demographic transition, specifically the decline in fertility before the considerable fall in child mortality.

The book is dedicated to the millions of sterilised couples of India, claiming that their sacrifice contributed directly and indirectly to the development of the country. However, this may not go well with many liberalist, feminist, neutralist and revisionist scholars. The coercive and highly incentive-based sterilisation programme had in turn reduced India's fertility rates much faster than its socio-economic and mortality transition. Data shows that India has already reached the replacement level fertility rate, but its infant mortality rate is still relatively high compared to many developing and developed countries at this stage of fertility transition. Therefore, the link between sterilisation-driven family planning and development is not appealing. However, the book is a welcome addition to literature on not only population issues and challenges, but also the population and development debate.

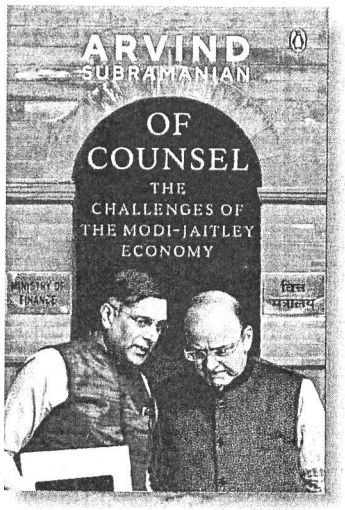
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Adviser's account

An insightful collection of writings and speeches of Arvind Subramanian when he was Chief Economic Adviser in India. BY **C.T. KURIEN**

DURING the first four years of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (BJP-NDA) government (2014-18), Arvind Subramanian was its Chief Economic Adviser (CEA). In that capacity, he introduced many innovative ways of communicating the economic programme of the new government, the chief among them being the Economic Survey placed before Parliament on the eve of the presentation of the Union Budget and whose format and contents he changed significantly. This was probably his major contribution, because he frankly admits: "I often found myself a lone voice...."

The present volume consists of selected writings of Arvind Subramanian and the speeches he delivered during his tenure as the CEA. A brief account of his background and convictions will help one understand the contents of the book. He teaches at Harvard Kennedy School. He has held positions in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and has been claimed by *Foreign Policy* magazine as one of the top 100 Global Thinkers. The assignment in New Delhi was his first experience of working with the government of a country.



Of Counsel
The Challenges of The Modi-Jaitley Economy
By Arvind Subramanian
Penguin Random House, 2018
Pages: lii + 347
Price: Rs.699

Arvind Subramanian maintains that the kind of problems that India confronts arise from the fact that it made a major departure from the experience of the present-day developed countries: it took up democratisation before economic development. India, therefore, was caught between socialism with commitment to redistribution on the one hand and stigmatised capitalism with "half-hearted embrace of the private sector and private capital" on the other. He did try to persuade the government to give up some measures such as minimum support price for foodgrains, and admits: "My failure in nudging these policies in the right direction was one of the biggest disappointments of my tenure." At the same time, he is excited about the new experiments with direct benefit transfers of cash payments to designated beneficiaries. Indeed, one of the causes he has championed is a universal or at least quasi-universal basic income.

With this background about the man and his mission, the main themes addressed in the book can be taken up. What strikes one as one goes through the substantive chapters is the brilliant mind at work, gathering relevant empirical data, analysing them with the help of theoretical insights and arriving at conclusions that may go against one's own reasoned positions. If this is a paradox, it can be easily explained. The divergence comes because of the basic premises: for Arvind Subramanian it all goes back to the "original sin" of departing from the capitalist path. According to him, "the two egregious economic sins committed in our past were... the Industrial Policy Resolution, which started the licensing of industry, and bank nationalisation in 1969". One can almost say that that the rest naturally follows.

BANK LOANS

A major problem that Arvind Subramanian confronted immediately after he took over as the CEA was that a large number of major corporates were unable to repay the loans they were liberally granted by public sector banks, thus making the position of both borrowers and lenders extremely vulnerable. He found that since 2007-08, the debt of the top 10 stressed corporate groups had multiplied five times, reaching more than Rs.7.5 lakh crore. This also resulted in the reduction in private investment, adversely affecting growth.

And the remedy: set up a Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency whose primary responsibility would be to write off the debts of these large companies. "It is an economic problem, not a morality play," he says.

The procedure would call for substantial recapit-

alisation of public sector banks and there are ways of doing it, including large profits the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has made and continues to make. To complement the process of rehabilitating the corporates, a carefully crafted bankruptcy law will also be required, and it has already been taken up.

AGRICULTURE SECTOR

An unusual but sensible comment that Arvind Subramanian makes is the need to move out of "the pampered cereal sector" to the "neglected non-cereal sector", mainly pulses, dairy and livestock. Dependence on cereals has been the traditional pattern in agriculture, and if moving the workforce out of agriculture is to be the development strategy, it can be stimulated by a shift to pulses and other commercial crops. Already, a cereal weariness has set in as can be seen in Punjab where agricultural growth was well ahead of the all-India average until the end of the 1980s but has been sliding down since then. That apart, pulses use less fertilizers, less water and incur fewer emissions, and will replenish the soil with nitrogen.

On the question of the "holy cow", he takes a reasoned stand that the costs of maintaining unproductive livestock should be taken into account and that there are additional social costs, too. "Stray cattle, and a lot of it, will have to be looked after; otherwise, diseases [foot and mouth] could spread, leading to health hazards."

Closely related is the question of subsidies and loan waivers. In both instances, the beneficiaries tend to be the larger farmers. The exemption of agricultural income from tax certainly favours those with larger incomes. In the case of fertilizer subsidy, only about one-third of the total goes to small and marginal farmers. On loan waivers, too, the beneficiaries are usually the larger farmers because the smaller ones rely little on formal financial institutions.

DIRECT TRANSFER OF BENEFITS

Arvind Subramanian also makes a strong case for direct transfer of benefits instead of subsidies. The idea of a Universal Basic Income (UBI), which is being discussed in many Western countries, was introduced in the Economic Survey of 2016-17. It has led to the spelling out of the concept and a discussion of its feasibility. A major defence of the UBI is that there is already an indirect transfer from the state to different sections of society through a wide variety of subsidies. While subsidies are easier to administer, they are also associated with significant leakages. The example of subsidised kerosene is quoted: "As much as 41 per cent of subsidised kerosene... is 'unaccounted for' and is probably lost to the black market. Dealers sell it to middlemen who mix diesel into fuel and resell it...." Also, many subsidies go to those who do not deserve it.

A good example is subsidy for electric power, which so far had been used largely by the more well-to-do sections of society. Reaching out to beneficiaries directly had not been easy until now, but the widespread starting of bank accounts, Aadhaar (nearly 1 billion citizens have already got their numbers) and the rapidly spreading use of mobile phones (about half of the population has cell phones) now make direct transfers much easier. But the fact remains too that there are only 40,000 rural bank branches to serve 600,000 villages.

Two closely related themes that are dealt with in the book are the changing patterns of globalisation and the ambivalent attitude towards environmental issues. The great enthusiasm that most countries of the world showed about globalisation towards the end of the past century and the early years of the present century waned considerably after the crisis of 2008.

The developed countries that were great supporters of globalisation in the 20th century have become weary; indeed, under President Donald Trump the United States is attempting to close its borders to people and goods from other parts of the world. India, which followed a largely closed economy pattern immediately after Independence, should not now return to it, says Arvind Subramanian. A domestic market-oriented policy will not generate the kind of growth India needs: only an export-led growth is sustainable and India should keep foreign direct investment flows open because that, in turn, will keep international markets open.

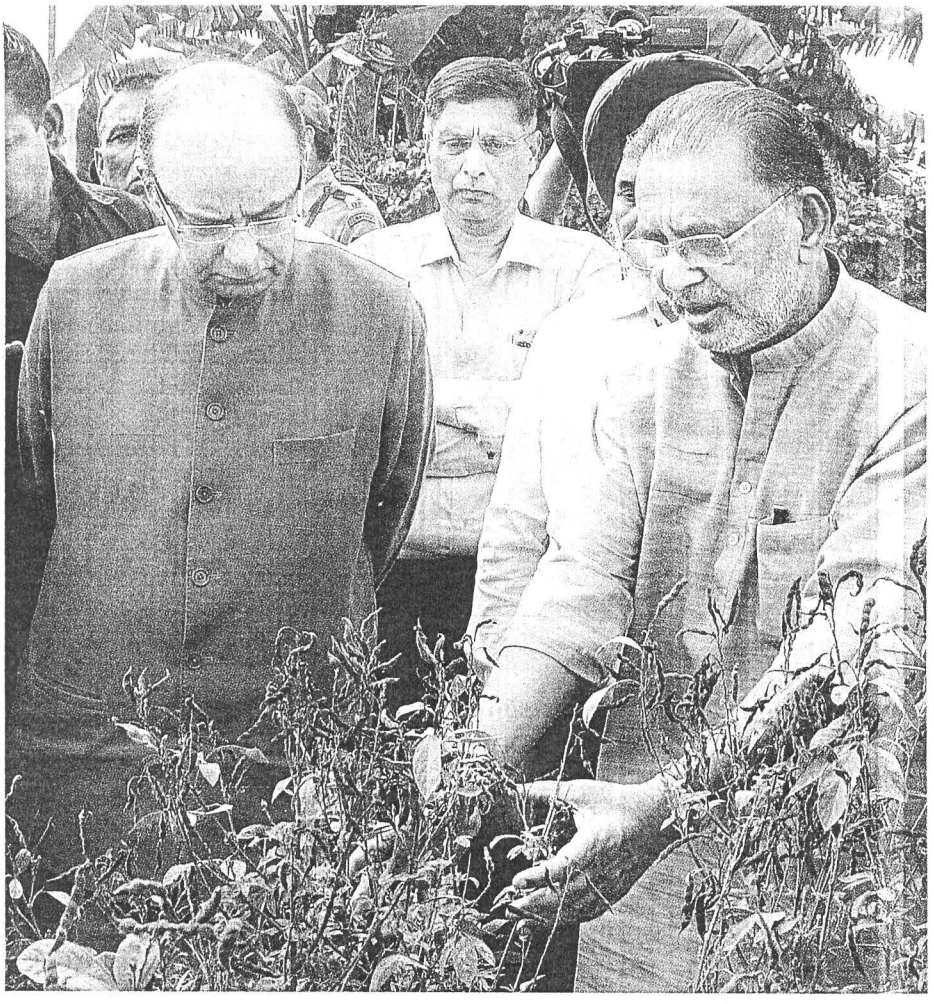
Rich countries, particularly the U.S., are also retreating from commitments made to global environment. While India should stand firmly committed to environmental concerns, it should change the strategy that it has been following. The advanced countries depended on coal for their growth, thereby causing damage to the environment, but are now insisting that the less developed ones should switch over to renewables.

However, India cannot escape from its dependence on coal in the immediate future. Hence, while remaining fully committed to a cleaner environment, India should change its negotiating strategy. An interesting aspect that Arvind Subramanian brings out in this discussion is the wide range of electricity tariff in a single State, Bihar.

DEMONETISATION

One of the biggest policy issues during the past four years was that of demonetisation announced by the Prime Minister in his famous television speech on November 8, 2016. Reading between the lines, it would appear that the CEA

Arvind Subramanian also makes a strong case for direct transfer of benefits instead of subsidies.



KAMAL NARANG

FINANCE MINISTER Arun Jaitley, Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian (centre) and Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh inspecting one of many new varieties of arhar pulses grown at the Pusa Institute in New Delhi on October 31, 2016. In his book, Arvind Subramanian comments on the need to move out of "the pampered cereal sector" to the "neglected non-cereal sector", mainly pulses, dairy and livestock.

had no prior knowledge about it.

In a short chapter dealing with it, he poses two puzzles. The first is why the ruling party received overwhelming support in the Uttar Pradesh elections held soon after demonetisation was imposed. And the answer he provides is that the poor were willing to accept the suffering caused by demonetisation because they felt that the rich would be hit even harder. This economic explanation of a political event was soon seen to be far-fetched when subsequent electoral events in the State showed that the ruling party's prospects depended on how united the opposition parties were. Is it possible that the continuing adverse effects of demonetisation on the poorer sections is part of the explanation for the defeat of the BJP in the 2018 Assembly elections in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh?

The second puzzle is, why the draconian 86 per cent reduction in cash supply did not have bigger effects on the overall economic growth. One can only say that it is too early to provide a clear answer to that question.

The book concludes with the author's observations on "Speaking Truth to Power"—not an easy task. This is partly because the CEA "must be fully supportive of the government without spinning on its behalf". Experts and administrators are not frank; they say what policymakers want to hear. And so, it is important to have disinterested voices from universities, think tanks, and so on.

If the subtitle of the book, "The Challenges of the Modi-Jaitley Economy", is taken seriously, it can be said that the reader will not learn much about it, and whatever has been said is not particularly complimentary.

> One of the causes he has championed is a universal or at least quasi-universal basic income.

I would strongly recommend that those who read this book, especially students of economics and those concerned with economic policies, study it keeping in mind a few questions. One of the conclusions and recommendations of the author is that a sustained annual growth of 8 to 10 per cent is possible and necessary for India. Is growth a number to be counted or a process to be evaluated? Is growth led by finance and transactions India's need today? Will growth that depends on services stimulate productive forces? Can the future of the rising generations be left to the corporates? Can a regime that crucially depends on the performance of corporates for its survival pursue an independent course of its own?

These are questions that Arvind Subramanian does not raise and could not have raised because of his unexamined commitment to a market-dominated economic order with pronounced inequalities in resource power. □

ELT Journal, vol. 72, no. 4, Oct. 2018

Digital Language Learning and Teaching: Research, Theory, and Practice

M. Carrier, R. M. Damerow and K. M. Bailey (eds.)

Routledge and TIRF 2017, 264 pp., Paperback £33.99, eBook £30.59

ISBN 978 1 13 869681 5

Carrier, Damerow and Bailey's book offers a wide-ranging perspective on digital learning, highlighting cutting-edge research and recent developments in the use of learning technologies in language education both in terms of theory and practice. In fact, one of the particular strengths of the book is how well the pedagogy and technology are orchestrated to reflect the essence of digital learning.

The book is part of a series that is co-published by TIRF (The International Research Foundation for English Language Education) and Routledge. It is organized in two main parts. 'The Research Perspective' comprises ten chapters based on the doctoral research studies of TIRF's grant recipients, with each chapter explaining the motivation for the research, the research question(s), the data collection and discussion, as well as the digital tools used and policy implications. This last part offers an explicit consideration of the implications for language education policy and practice as well as directions for further research. 'The Pedagogical Perspective' consists of nine chapters written by experts in the field of digital language learning and focuses on how the relevant theories and research can be applied to practice. All the chapters are concerned with significant current technology trends and provide useful insights into their relevance to the future of ELT.

The book begins with an introductory chapter by Carrier, co-editor of the book, which outlines the rationale underlying the collection and guides us through the various trends, principles and issues of digital learning. Carrier concludes that despite the ongoing debate on its range of benefits, 'digital learning is here to stay' (p. 9). If we as educators or policymakers understand its full potential and use it in an informed and pedagogically sound way, then digital learning can be a considerable aid to language teaching and learning.

The next chapters comprise research projects set in EAP contexts. Chuang evaluates an online self-study grammar programme that was informed by an analysis of students' errors. The results suggest that such implementations can have a positive effect on improving students' particular accuracy issues. Fitzgerald, Marin, Wu and Witten evaluate the use of a corpus-based learning platform, providing useful insights into how open educational resources can be remixed with open corpora material to support EAP. Finally, Li and Chiu investigate doctoral students' perceptions of a blended writing course, concluding that apart from a pedagogical transformation, cultural adaptation is also essential in blended learning environments and that students' cultural values should be intentionally embedded in the course design.

Two chapters focus on language learning beyond the boundaries of the physical classroom. Through a 'Nexus of Practice' perspective, de Groot explores how the teachers, the trainees, the institution and the technology intersect to afford access to meaningful interaction and language learning outside the classroom. Following this, Mehring investigates the flipped classroom model, providing useful insights into its pedagogical effectiveness but highlighting students' increased workload as a key consideration.

The following chapters look at the effect of multimedia on feedback and writing, respectively. Olesova and Richardson argue that both audio and text feedback can help students develop higher-order thinking skills; interestingly, audio feedback was found to be better received when delivered by non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) who share the same first language as the students. The authors highlight, however, that both NNESTs and NESTs can deliver effective audio feedback if attention is paid to speaking speed and clear wording. Ronan discusses the benefits of using a multimodal web-based platform (STEPS), finding that when students read and write online they are engaged in complex interactions both with the multimedia and their peers and that instructional practices of this kind can foster digital literacy skills—a priority that English language teachers should set and implement in the digital age.

Rubadeau sheds light on teachers' resistance to using the interactive whiteboard. Interestingly, the study researched tech-savvy teachers' resistance, finding that the reasons behind this include a perceived lack of organizational and technical support and low performance expectancy. A key message from the policy implications concluding the chapter is that institutions should shift away from the problematic 'emphasis on hardware first, software next and training last' (p. 111) and that adequate learning opportunities and extra software costs should also be factored in.

The last chapters in this part are concerned with digital stories and their impact on students' literacy. Stranger-Johannessen explores teachers' use of the online platform 'The African Storybook', to promote early reading in English at a time when literacy

rates in Africa remain low. Technology here acts as an intermediary, allowing teachers to read, project, download, translate and adapt digital stories for the children. Vinogradova explores how the use of digital stories as multimodal digital narratives can engage a culturally diverse group of ESL students. Informed by a pedagogy of multiliteracies—the ability to understand, compose and transmit multimodal discourse—the author finds that the production of digital stories can foster an engaging multicultural learning environment and facilitate the development of multiliteracies. This is an important finding and it would be useful to see whether and how a pedagogy of multiliteracies can also bring ESL students into the process of language acquisition.

Part 2, 'The Pedagogical Perspective', begins with Peachey's chapter on synchronous online teaching. Peachey discusses the various challenges of shifting from the physical to the online classroom and concludes that the advent of online platforms as well as a greater understanding of the specificities of online learning will help in moving language learning instruction online.

Robinson and Harrison argue that as demand for English increases, ELT should find ways of producing large amounts of high-quality, effective and affordable learning content, making a case for the importance of applying learner experience design (LXD), a framework that brings together human-centred principles of user experience along with SLA-informed pedagogy, quality content and human interaction. Sharma delves into the principles, variations, successful design and future of blended learning (BL) citing appropriateness, complementarity, positive attitude, and training of both teachers and students as key factors to successful BL pedagogies.

An interesting approach to BL is also discussed in Stanley's case study. Due to a lack of qualified teachers in Uruguayan primary schools, English is being taught by remote teachers combining synchronous teaching via videoconferencing with follow-up asynchronous work. Because there are two teachers, a classroom teacher who usually knows little or no English and the remote teacher, a new type of methodology is being developed that combines elements of BL, team teaching and distance learning.

Stannard looks at digital feedback on written assignments using screen capture software (SC). Informed by Mayer's (2001) principles of 'dual coding', according to which combining the oral and visual channels can minimize cognitive overload in learners' brains, Stannard concludes that SC can allow teachers to provide more nuanced feedback, especially when scaffolding students to produce a second draft.

Saville takes a systemic stance on digital assessment guiding the reader through the model of learning-oriented assessment and explaining how it can be implemented for more meaningful measurement of learning results. Saville predicts that tests as we know them will start to disappear and new models of digital assessment will be introduced. This shift will make the role of teachers even more important but it will involve a higher level of assessment literacy from them.

Carrier and Nye offer an evidence-based digital framework for teachers to guide them around their digital skills development. The authors rightly argue that too much emphasis is often given to the technology rather than the pedagogy behind digital learning and that identifying teachers' required digital competences can facilitate more effective, pedagogically led provision of teacher training.

The chapters concluding the book look at some significant technology trends and their future in ELT education. Lloyd, Rogerson and Stead look at the role of virtual reality (VR) in language learning. VR technologies are becoming increasingly immersive, and anecdotal responses from teachers and learners indicate an understanding of their potential, including increased opportunities for language practice, motivation and contextualized learning. As the hardware costs decrease and more empirical and longitudinal research is carried out, we will be better able to understand whether VR has a place in language learning or not.

Finally, Hockly and Dudeney focus on digital changes that are already underway and emphasize that the role of the teacher will not disappear in the near future, but will be considerably redefined to respond to different needs. For example, as big data and learning analytics become more refined, teachers will need to know their learners on a more 'human' level and offer the insight and empathy that machines will never be able to. The authors emphasize that pre-service and in-service training courses should take note of these trends but foresee that this is unlikely to happen by 2020.

Given the current wide range of edited volumes on digital learning, what makes this volume different? The first distinctive feature of the book is that all the sections consistently see the role of pedagogy (rather than the technology itself) as the driving force of effective digital learning. For instance, Carrier points out that digital learning requires a paradigm shift in methodology and pedagogical models, with institutions explicitly recognizing and supporting students' ability to learn and interact beyond the

boundaries of the classroom; Chuang explains that the design principles of technologies need to be informed by second-language aquisition theories, and CALL methodology; Carrier and Nye also point out that effective digital learning requires more student-centred pedagogies with the teacher adopting the role of the facilitator rather than the provider of knowledge.

Another important feature is that the collection is like an ecosystem, with structure and connections. All writers of Part 1 have been asked to follow the same structure in their chapters as well as to conclude with policy implications that generate ideas and directions for future reflection. Additionally, the implications mentioned in the chapters on empirically based research are in many instances echoed by authors in Part 2; for instance, both de Groot and Mehring emphasize that digital learning outside the classroom should be implemented in a guided and coherent way, and so does Sharma's chapter on BL.

The book's truly international spread is finally an important achievement as it gives voice to a range of different contexts across the globe, some of which we are not accustomed to reading about; from the UK, Spain and USA to Thailand, China, Japan, Russia, Uruguay and Uganda, the authors reflect on how learners' culture affect their digital learning and what policy implications this may suggest. However, with the exception of the Ugandan and Uruguayan primary school contexts, young learner digital learning remains somewhat underexplored here.

Perhaps what struck me about the collection is that there are no chapters specifically exploring issues associated with digital citizenship and responsible internet use, with perhaps the exception of the chapter by Carrier and Nye, although this has a general focus on the digital competences of teachers. The absence of concepts related to responsible, safe and ethical uses of digital technologies here simply reflects perhaps the state of research in educational technology in which issues of digital identity, participation, fair use, safety and welfare remain somewhat under-researched. While reading the volume I could not help but wonder: do students researching online know how to acknowledge and paraphrase their sources? When involved with mobile learning, can students manage digital distractions associated with mobile devices (McCoy 2016)? When we flip or blend our classrooms do we also empower students to deal with the inappropriate content they may come across online? The optimistic assumption that digital responsibility is a byproduct of using digital tools has been overwhelmingly questioned (Hobbs 2010; James *et al.* 2009; Livingstone *et al.* 2014). Therefore, acknowledging that these skills should be embedded in digital learning pedagogies would seem necessary to start a more comprehensive dialogue around both research and practice. Digital language learning needs a deeper programme of research to explore how learners enjoying the opportunities that technology affords can be empowered with skills and competences to tackle the risks that it entails.

That aside, on the whole, this is a very well-structured, well-developed and thought-provoking read for anyone with an interest in digital language learning. It fulfils its aims of bringing readers up to date with cutting-edge research, theory and practice, and it belongs on the recommended list of any module focusing on technology in language learning.

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The reviewer

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Language, Education and Neoliberalism: Critical Studies in Sociolinguistics

M.-C. Flubacher and A. Del Percio (eds.)

Multilingual Matters, 2017, 264pp., £34.95

ISBN 978 1 783 09867 5

At first glance, this is one of those books that many English teachers might well label 'not relevant to my interests and/or needs'. After all, it self-presents not as a book *about* ELT or *for* ELT teachers, but as an edited volume containing accounts of ethnographic studies of how teachers in a range of language contact and language teaching/learning environments have adopted neoliberal ideas. As Flubacher and Del Percio explain in their very useful introduction, this adoption of neoliberal ideas has its roots in our immersion in the current dominant version of capitalism, both in material terms and in discursive/symbolic terms. In material terms, it means an acceptance of (or perhaps merely coping with) 'the deregulation of the economy, trade and industry' and 'the privatization of state-owned assets', as well as 'the different roles for labor, capital and the state' that come with such developments (p. 4). Ultimately, any acceptance of these developments entails a certain identification with the ideology and values that underlie them, but more importantly for the contributors to this volume, it involves the incorporation of 'neoliberalism as a technology of governance' (p. 4) into one's sense of self. This means a person's complete (or near complete) acceptance of the market as the central organizing principle of all human activity. It also means being more individualistic, competitive, and entrepreneurial than perhaps was the case in the past, while devoting a lot of time to the development of one's skill-set. The significance of these changes in lifestyle and how they play out in selected contexts in the Americas, East Asia, Southeast Asia and Western Europe is the object of the 12 contributions to this volume.

There is a fair amount of geographic diversity in this volume (though see my comments below). First of all, there is a focus on English language teaching in EFL/ELF contexts such as China (Shuang Gao), South Korea (Joseph Sung-Yul Park), and the Philippines (Honey B. Tabiola and Beatriz Lorente), with the three presenting very different sets of circumstances while focusing on very different issues. Thus, while Gao focuses on the general spread of and implantation of English as the dominant foreign language taught in China, Park focuses on the introduction and spread of English-medium instruction in Korean higher education, and Tabiola and Lorente examine the teaching of English for the medical professions. In his chapter, Gregory Hadley also focuses on English in higher education, examining the management of academic programmes in Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom. In Jonathan Luke's chapter, there is shift from a locally based English-language instruction to a study-abroad context, with Luke documenting the experiences of Brazilian STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) students on a government-funded mobility and exchange programme in Canada. Meanwhile, Jill Koyama provides a behind-the-scenes look at the teaching of English to refugee children in a high school in the United States.

Apart from these chapters focusing fairly exclusively on English language teaching in one form or another, there are also contributions in which English is not the central concern. In Gao's chapter cited previously, the author also explores how the Chinese government, through its Confucius Institutes, has promoted Mandarin worldwide. Meanwhile, Halçy De Korne examines the revitalization of Isthmus Zapotec in Mexico amid residual colonial and national tensions; Nelson Flores focuses on the evolving dynamics of Spanish–English bilingual education against the backdrop of complex racial structures and practices in the United States; Alfonso Del Percio and Sarah Van Hoof examine entrepreneurial education for unemployed migrants in Italy; and finally, Martina Zimmerman and Mi-Cha Flubacher examine the experiences of Swiss Italian speakers in German-mediated higher education, who are caught between the heritage language and the hard-economic realities of Swiss multilingualism.

Running through these chapters, and indeed all of the chapters in this volume, are the material and symbolic/discursive realities of neoliberalism cited above. The various ethnographic approaches adopted by the authors provide the reader with up-close-and-personal glimpses of how neoliberalism is not just about economic policies and practices, nor even ideological shifts behind the scenes of these developments; it is also about the sociocultural/linguistic transformations—willing or unwilling, conscious or subconscious, profound or superficial—of individuals in the early 21st century.

For example, in Koyama's chapter, we live in first person what it means for ELT professionals to be caught between new technologies of governance (accountability regimes based on exam results imposed by the school administration) and their commitment to doing what they think is right with regard to their students, many of whom are recently

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arrived refugees. In one meeting observed by Koyama a teacher states that she is 'tired of talking about our students as numbers' (p. 172), further lamenting how the refugee English language learners 'get the worst of it' (p. 172). However, this same teacher then seems to acquiesce to newly imposed measures, wary of how resistance might lead to a loss of government funding for English language learning programmes. Koyama's research is highly specific to the United States, but the combination of anxiety and ambivalence experienced by the teachers in her study is not qualitatively different from that experienced by teachers elsewhere in the face of curricular changes that are based on neoliberal ideas and imposed from above.

In the discussion chapter that closes the volume, Mary McGroarty highlights the ways in which contributors have provided an effective roadmap for future research on language, education, and neoliberalism. She sees this roadmap in terms of three distinct themes: (1) the ways that languages (in particular, though not solely, English) are used as recruiting tools in many higher-education contexts around the world; (2) the increasingly close links between private business interests and public education providers; and (3) the role of language in the constant reinvention of selves that seems to be part and parcel of being a good citizen in neoliberal times. This is all very well for a publication that situates itself in critical sociolinguistics and is surely more about broader trends and goings-on in education as a globalized phenomenon than the specifics of English language teaching. But what about ELT practitioners? What does this book have to offer them?

For some time now there have been calls for ELT professionals to adopt a reflective approach to their day-to-day practices (e.g. Richards and Lockhart, 1994), which means moving beyond an exclusive focus on the what and how of teaching to a concern with issues such as why teaching is organized as it is, or why teaching outcomes are what they are. Further to this, there have also been calls for ELT professionals to adopt a critical approach, which means engaging in the type of reflection outlined above, while adding a concern with the causes and effects of injustice in society and how ELT either mediates or is mediated by phenomena such as economic inequality, racism, gender bias, LGBTQ-phobia, and so on. Adopting a critical approach means a move from an acceptance of the realities that constitute ELT at a given point in time to a scrutiny of what lies behind or beneath these realities. In my view, it is in this spirit that *Language, Education and Neoliberalism* needs to be read by ELT professionals.

For example, the chapters that focus on issues around race, ethnicity, and belonging specific to particular contexts serve as a reminder that education contexts are often embedded in multicultural environments which cannot but impact on day-to-day teaching and learning practices and processes. I am thinking about the historical racism against Latinos in the United States (Flores); the colonial legacy that Isthmus Zapotec speakers face in contemporary Mexico (De Korne); the ethnolinguistic shifts of Swiss Italian speakers in Swiss German education (Zimmerman and Flubacher); and how migrant children are positioned in education in the United States (Koyama). These chapters show very clearly the importance of identity in language teaching and learning in all contexts—both how individuals position themselves and how they are positioned by others. They also show how languages as identity markers can shift over time.

This comes through especially well in the Flores chapter, where the author shows how in bilingual education in the United States, Spanish has been wrested from its original function as a unifying element of working class *Latinx* identity (a language right), and turned into a resource for white middle-class students to add to their CVs. The lesson here for ELT professionals is not an obvious one, but it exists. In effect, no matter where they are in the world, teachers should be aware of the language, identity, and political economic issues that exist and how they intersect with the practice of English language teaching. Just as English language educators in the bilingual education context that Flores discusses need to know about the history of the *Latinx* population in the United States, so ELT professionals working in other parts of the world need to know about the local political economic and ethnolinguistic contexts in which they are immersed.

The world of work is never far away from education, and in this sense the contributions by Del Percio and Van Hoof and by Tabiola and Lorente, focusing on very different employment environments in Italy and the Philippines, respectively, are helpful in reminding us how language teaching and learning is all too often a strictly instrumental activity. These two chapters show how programmes set up to guide the unemployed into employment may be used by participants as a way to improve their CVs more than as a direct route to a job. In addition, they show how such programmes have an important gatekeeping function of imposing conformity in terms of communicative norms (Del Percio and Van Hoof discuss how students are told how to communciate) or English as the language of advancement (Tabiola and Lorente discuss how English is presented as a key element in students' human capital). In this way, they keep often

vulnerable individuals and collectives in their place as subordinates in society at large.

Finally, the chapters by Gao, Park, Hadley, and Luke, all of which deal with issues around the teaching of English in the world, show us how specific national education policies have a direct and deep impact on the experiences of English language teachers and learners. Thus, Gao and Park show how the positioning of English as a chief educational goal in China and South Korea is based on vague notions of global citizenship and, ultimately, the kinds of people that Chinese and Korean students are expected to be. Luke's chapter is also about idealized citizens, in his case STEM higher-education students who experience a high degree of frustration when they realize that their stays in Canada do not transform them into global academics on equal footing with Canadians. Finally, Hadley takes a very different line of inquiry, examining how English for Academic Purposes professionals are co-opted into corporate and managerial discourses and practices, which leads to increased exploitation as they are expected to do work that previously was not the purview of their job. These chapters all show how policy decisions with regard to English language education have come to be dominated by neoliberal ideas around individualism, competition, entrepreneurialism, and the constant management of one's image and one's skill-set.

In my view, this book offers much food for thought for anyone interested in how language education is embedded in larger economic, political, social, and cultural processes. Nevertheless, I would like to end this review by citing two concerns I have with its content. First, I see a tendency for authors to attribute to 'neoliberalism' particular characteristics of language education which in fact have a fairly long pedigree, and certainly one that predates what is known as the neoliberal era by a considerable amount of time. For example, in several chapters there are references to the way in which education has become more instrumental and more directly linked to business interests in recent years. And yet, arguably, it has always been thus in capitalist societies. Indeed, if we go back in time exactly one century, we find Thorsten Veblen's (2009 [1918]) denunciation of the encroachment of business interests in early 20th-century higher education in the United States.

The second issue I have with this book is the limited geographic scope of its contributions. Having done some editing in my lifetime, I know that it is not always easy to gather together under one title representative studies from all corners of the earth. All too often editors have to work with what they can get or what they already have, drawing on the professional contacts that they have when they are putting together a volume. Nevertheless, I find it somewhat surprising that in this volume there are no chapters on any part of the African continent, the Middle East or South Asia, and that the only South American reference is to Brazilian university students in Canada. This is quite a significant erasure of a good part of the world's population, to say nothing of a lost opportunity to highlight how neoliberalism—as an ideology, as policies, and as practices—has been about an extreme realignment of the world order over the past four decades. In this realignment, the aforementioned geographical regions have experienced major upheavals and changes, which we see (just to cite two examples) in the work of authors such as Chaise LaDousa (2014), focusing on English and social class in contemporary India, and Nkonko M. Kamwangamalu (2016), focusing on the promotion of African languages and the need to link their use in education to economic development. My more general concern is that with the aforementioned erasure of these and other geographical locations (which are also political, economic, social, and cultural locations), there is the risk of inadvertently contributing to the multiple inequalities that are so integral to neoliberalism in practice and are, no doubt, anathema to the editors of this volume.

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Reviews

Practical English Usage, 4th edn, fully revised

Michael Swan

Oxford University Press. 2016, 635 pp., + index,
£ 49.44 (PBK with online access)

ISBN 978 0 19 420241 1

Given that this is the *fourth* edition of *Practical English Usage* (henceforward: *PEU*), my first instinct while preparing to write this review was to go and search for the *ELTJ* reviews of the former three. To my amazement, I have discovered that there are none. The lack, to my mind at least, is not a case of a major oversight, but rather a reflection of the unique status of *PEU* as one of the few instant classics in our field, the ultimate reference book for a great many professionals, and an all-time favourite title on their grammar shelf.

The main marketing slogan, featured on the *PEU* back cover, is that it is '*your indispensable guide to problems in English*'—and this must be the first time in ELT publishing history where this sort of pronouncement actually underplays the value of a book in the eyes of several generations of its users. A little informal survey among my social media contacts, asking for their memories of using editions 1–3 of *PEU* (both as teachers and, possibly, as former learners of English), yielded comments like '*my last resort, my final answer, my best friend*', '*the best grammar reference book for non-linguists*', a book which '*all students of English should consult during the course of their studies on a daily basis*', and last but emphatically not least, '*my English grammar "Bible"*'. In view of such user attitudes, it is easy to see why there has been little interest to date in a critical evaluation of Michael Swan's *magnum opus*. Over its 38 years of being in print, *PEU* has gained a sort of religious cult status, enjoying an almost mythical reputation for containing all the answers to one's English grammar problems, as well as for its legendary ease of retrieval of *just* the information one needs. Unsurprisingly, *PEU* is one of the greatest success stories in the history of ELT publishing, having sold over 2 million copies worldwide (according to the publisher's blurb).

All of this begs the obvious, rather unsettling question: why review it now? My task as a reviewer is not made any easier by the fact that any serious appraisal of a *fourth* edition calls for at least some degree of comparative analysis and historical perspective, particularly as the first edition came out nearly four decades ago. The sheer size of the current volume reinforces the somewhat risky parallel with the Bible made above: nearly 700 dense pages, including 635 pages of the main text and a 36-page index at the end. While the number of pages is almost the same as in the first edition, the current volume has a noticeably larger page format and a lot more text on the page. It looks and feels like a much bigger project than its initial version.

The increase in the overall size is partly a reflection of the expansion in coverage, including in particular a massive separate section on vocabulary usage (315 entries), only five entries shorter than the grammar section (entries 1–320). The vocabulary section was missing in the previous three editions, which is not to say that the original *PEU* ignored vocabulary usage. On the contrary, *PEU* owes its immense success to the way it dealt with some of the thorniest lexical usage problems, including the difference between *above* and *over*, or between *fairly*, *quite*, *rather* and *pretty*, or between *farther* and *further*, and so on. In fact, flipping through the pages of any of the four editions, one cannot help but notice that a great deal of usage problems tackled by Swan cluster around certain tricky lexical items, or concern the lexico-grammatical interface, rather than being purely or mainly syntactic phenomena, such as clause order or question formation. Indeed, *PEU* has always implicitly demonstrated to the learner and teacher alike that what they think of as a grammar point is more often than not in essence a matter of the linguistic behaviour of a particular lexical item, together with its immediate neighbours—and should be described, taught and learnt as such. This is arguably one of

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Swan's greatest accomplishments, predating the seminal thinking and research on lexical priming (Hoey 2005, among many others).

Let me now turn to to the word '*Practical*' in the title. The fourth edition marks a major break with the tradition of the former three: instead of the straightforward, alphabetical listing of individual entries throughout the entire book, it introduces a reorganization of the entire core material into thematic sections: 28 in the grammar part, and 3 sections for vocabulary, the last of which, as its name ('*Word Problems from A to Z*') suggests, retains the *PEU* trademark, alphabetical organization. The marketing blurb on the back cover of the book announces that the change has been introduced 'after consultation with users'. The justification for this reorganization—and, ostensibly, its effect—is 'quicker, easier reference', a claim to which I shall return at length presently. One indisputable result is that *PEU* in its fourth edition is no longer a pure usage guide. It has become a hybrid of a usage guide and a learner's grammar manual, with each of the 28 sections dealing with a major grammatical topic. Among these, the reader will find the usual suspects, such as past and perfect tenses comparison, basic clause types, or information structure. Predictably, they take up the most of the space allocated. But there are also two sections that reflect current trends in grammar pedagogy and description, one labelled 'Speech and Spoken Exchanges', and the other 'Varieties of English'. Each of these 28 sections includes a brief general introduction, followed by a diagnostic box, entitled '*Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?*' which offers a list of problematic usages together with references to specific entries in this section, dealing with that very issue. There is also a list of contents at the end of each section. Each of these new features is no doubt useful in its own right, and the editors have gone out of their way to make the page look dynamic and attractive, including several different font sizes, colour coding of the two main parts, an extra colour for entry headings, and even an occasional illustration (e.g. timelines). And yet one cannot help but feeling a tad rueful about the original, minimalistic, black and white layout, and the masterful use of boldface, which somehow used to highlight key information more vividly than all these modern design features combined. It is arguably not just a matter of subjective preference, but a key question of ease of navigation. It is quite telling that the general introduction to the current edition features a whole page devoted to how to use the new Index (p. xi), and another one on '*How to find things: the Contents overview*' (p. xii). Instead of the original, super simple, 'bottom-up' organization (go to the alphabetical index, find what you need, get its entry number, and dip straight into the relevant page), we can now also go 'top-down' and search the lists of contents, except that 'many smaller topics will not show in the Contents Overview, because they do not have their own separate entries' (p. xii), in which case 'It is best to go to the Index' (ibid.). Call it old user's conservatism on my part, but I see the latter recommendation as unnecessarily complicating the retrieval path for the average user, rather than as added value. To put it rather aggressively, there are several other excellent student's grammars to choose from, but there is (or used to be) only one unrivalled, comprehensive and ultra-accessible usage guide, and that is the original *PEU*. I also feel obliged to note one other rather unfortunate editorial decision, which is the elimination of the original '*Typical mistake*' mini-boxes, usually one per entry, which I recall learning a great deal from as an advanced learner (incorrect usages are still presented in the body of the entries, which does preserve the valuable content but fails to focus the user on a key potential difficulty).

Having vented my old user's frustration, let me speculate that the fourth edition has been designed to accommodate the reading habits of the current, online reader, naturally predisposed to exploring the content in several different directions. Could it be that a future fifth edition will lose the physical, printed form altogether, and morph into a mobile application, with layout and content decisions reflecting above all else the logic and architecture of a smartphone screen ...?

This brings me to the other major innovative feature of this edition of *PEU*: the online version, available at www.practicalenglishusage.com (a unique access code, free for every purchaser of the print version, is provided on the back cover, and is active for ten years from the first login). The latter is an electronic, fully 'clickable' hypertextual version of the book contents as well as model pronunciations of relevant items (relatively few in the current version, but this is almost certainly going to change, if I am right with my fortune-telling above), and as many as 87 diagnostic tests. Co-written by Michael Swan and David Baker, these tests have obviously been curated from their earlier joint publication (Swan and Baker 2008), a fact that the editors curiously fail to mention in their web introduction to the fourth edition. Exactly as in that publication, the *PEU* online diagnostic tests are offered at three levels (upper-intermediate, advanced and expert) and are composed mostly of closed items of several different types, are equipped with a most useful automatic check functionality, and—if my random sampling is any proof—are bound to stretch users' grammatical intuitions and not-so-gently push

them to explore a number of the core entries (which are most usefully directly accessible from any given diagnostic test item). Every so often the authors have included an open test item, in parallel to the original '*Grammar Scan*'; these seem to work less well here than in the printed version as the software is, predictably, unable to evaluate any responses.

Having examined the extent to which the current version of *PEU* remains as *practical* as we wish it to be, let me turn to the other two words in the title, starting with *English*, which can be read in at least two ways. One is the question of which variety or varieties of English the book concerns, and the other—potentially more thorny—the issue of how to draw the demarcation line between English and non-English, between acceptable and unacceptable/non-recommended usages, or between what is to be considered correct and what not.

As for the varieties covered, we learn in the Introduction that PEU deals 'mainly with standard everyday southern British English' (p. ix). The author declares that contrasts between British and American English 'are given detailed attention' (ibid.), a claim substantiated not only in the relevant individual entries throughout the book, but also by devoting one of the 28 grammar sections exclusively to 'Varieties of English'. Separate entries in this section deal with key differences between the two main native varieties, though it should be noted that the reader is, commonsensically in my view, advised to focus on the similarities, particularly as British English is being influenced more and more by its US cousin. There is also some discussion of the most significant others (e.g. Canadian, Malaysian or South African), as well as a brief walk through key sociolinguistic issues, including dialectal vs. standard forms (entries 316 –317), language change (entry 318), and a few short but poignant remarks on the status of ELF (cf. entry 320.4), to which Swan denies the status of a distinct variety, seeing it instead as a way to depict a *process* of using English for international communication. This may be seen as a conceptual bridge between the two readings of the term '*English*'. It (probably) goes without saying that any modern usage book will naturally be under pressure from the realities and dynamics of using English across the globe by nearly 2 billion users. Accordingly, a certain number of amendments have been made to particular entries, for instance, the near disappearance of *shall* (cf. entry 318.9), the use of *data* as a singular uncountable noun (cf. entry 318.7), the increased tolerance for *their* as a singular determiner, or the decreased resistance to forms like *I'm loving it* and *I'm understanding Italian a lot better now* (cf. entry 318.5). It is clear that, as Swan himself emphasizes in the Introduction (cf. pp. ix–x), his underlying goal is not to coerce, evaluate or even codify, but rather to navigate non-native users through the rough and rapidly changing seas of usage, to help them achieve communicative aims (the most important of which surely is: be understood when speaking or writing, rather than necessarily achieve 100% accuracy). In this, PEU sits comfortably on the descriptive grammar bookshelf. Refreshingly, Swan advises his readers 'not to become obsessed with correctness, or worry every time they make a mistake' (p. x), a point that he develops further in the introduction to section 28, where he suggests that a particular usage should not be evaluated in absolute terms but rather seen as potentially 'correct in its place', i.e. its geographical, situational and interpersonal context.

Finally, let me turn to the third word in the title, i.e. *Usage*. To this end, let me quote Henry Widdowson's endorsement (on p. 2 of the cover), that 'the entries ... are not only informed by Swan's authoritative knowledge of English grammar, but by a sure sense of which aspects of the grammar are likely to be problematic, and how these can be most effectively explained'. The quote really says it all about what constitutes the core value of this unique project—both the selection of the usage issues to be dealt with and the approach to phrasing the explanations. Take virtually any entry and it is a masterclass in simplicity, clarity, relevance, demarcation, truthfulness, as well as conceptual parsimony, to echo Swan's own 'Design criteria for pedagogic language rules' (Swan 1994/2012). Particularly praiseworthy in my view is Swan's exceptional ability to minimize recourse to linguistic terminology or at least use traditional terms that are relatively simple and easy to understand. In his introduction, Swan notes that '[s]ome of these terms (e.g. future tense) would be regarded as unsatisfactory by academic grammarians, but I am not writing for specialists' (p. ix). Clearly, both the goal and the effect is to make the wording as accessible and straightforward to the user as it can possibly be. In short, *PEU* is a lesson for us all, writers and language teachers alike, in what to strive for when formulating and communicating pedagogic grammar rules for our learners.

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The reviewer

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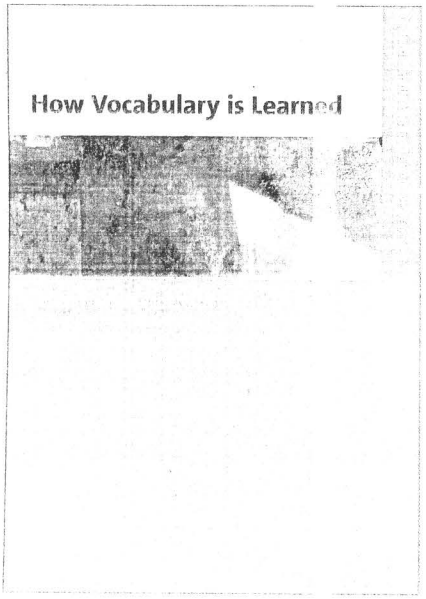
doi:10.1093/elt/ccy029

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Eng. Teaching Professional, Issue No-120, January 2019

How Vocabulary is Learned

by Stuart Webb and Paul Nation
OUP 2017
978-0-19-440355-9



A key element of any language course is helping the learners to develop vocabulary knowledge, so they can operate effectively in English. Knowing this truism is one thing, realising it in practice is something else entirely. *How Vocabulary is Learned* by Stuart Webb and Paul Nation can help us help our learners. It is that rare thing, a book that provides accessible theory and discussion of research findings, while also exploring practical applications. It gives equal focus to the why and the how and, as such, is a must buy.

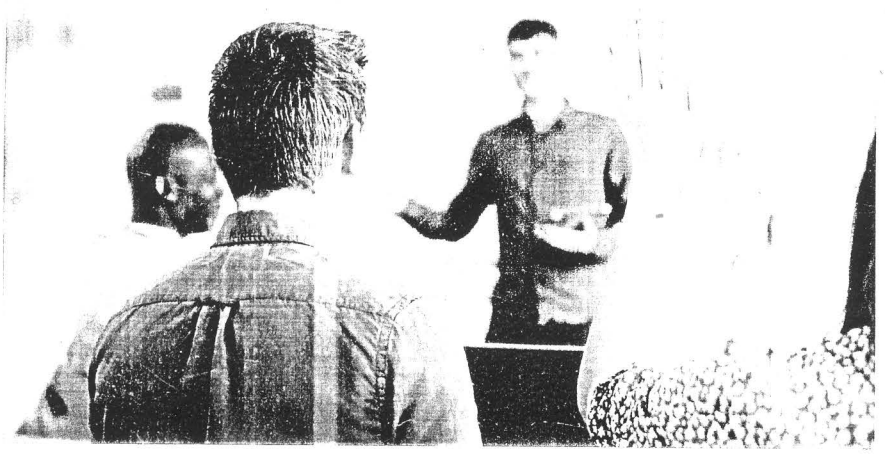
The volume starts by arguing that some words are more important to learners that others, an argument that has foundations in lexical coverage. Such coverage figures have allowed researchers to create word lists that, although seemingly out of fashion, still absolutely have a place in the language classroom. As well as introducing the most up-to-date lists, Webb and Nation discuss the pros and cons of various lists. This helps readers effectively judge whether a particular list is appropriate for their specific context. Further chapters deal with learning burden, the incremental nature of lexical development, and conditions that facilitate learning. Some readers might be familiar with research in these areas, but take it from me, there will be something new for most. For example, while other books have dealt with extensive *reading*, the additional focus on *viewing* here is particularly welcome, as this is a major avenue of current research and reflects typical learner behaviour. We know many of our learners like watching videos, but now we can set up such learning opportunities to transform journeys down even the deepest *YouTube* black hole into an educationally valuable experience.

As teachers, we want to provide our learners with the best advice and effective learning tasks. The discussion on analysing vocabulary learning activities will challenge us to consider the extent to which we currently do this. Most welcome is that, rather than merely listing effective activities, the rationale for each provides a model against which readers can apply a similarly robust analysis of the activities they currently use. Thus, readers can generalise the principles exampled in this book to their own context, which is likely to have significant practical benefits.

Discussions of best practice seem to go hand in hand with colleagues claiming *'but it wouldn't work in my context'*. Thankfully, Webb and Nation saw this coming! They have prepared evidenced advice on best practice for a range of contexts: EFL, ESL, young learners, large classes, beginners, advanced learners, intensive courses, and more besides. We know that consideration of context is vital to the success of any pedagogical intervention, and readers will be able to incorporate the nuggets gained from this book into their classes, irrespective of the particular context in which they work. This includes both classroom-based tasks to foster lexical development, as well as strategy work to facilitate sustainable learning. This is a vital area to consider if we want our learners to be independent, autonomous, life-long students.

Webb and Nation, who have years of teaching experience between them, understand the questions that many practitioners have: *Should I use L1 in the classroom? How can I utilise corpora to enhance learning?* etc. This book is formed from and around those questions and, as such, strikes at the heart of the issues we find most pressing. Overall, this book covers key areas related to vocabulary learning and teaching. It presents findings and research-based advice in an accessible manner. As a result, it is a valuable professional development tool, either for an individual who wants a better foundation in this important area, or as the centre of an institutional development programme. It will make an important addition to our bookshelves and is a must for any conscientious teacher.

Sam Barclay
Nottingham, UK

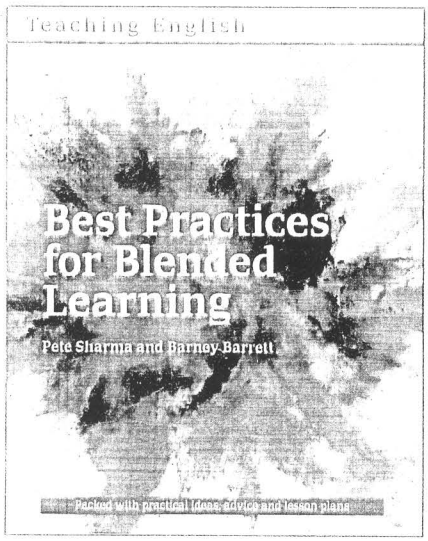


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Eng. Teaching Professional, Issue No. 120, January 2019

Best Practices for Blended Learning

by Pete Sharma and Barney Barrett
Pavilion 2018
978-1-911028-84-0



In this book, Pete Sharma and Barney Barrett have attempted to address the challenges that institutions and practitioners face when trying to implement a blended learning (BL) course. The pair recognise that one of the core issues at the heart of the BL approach is the absence of definitive rules when it comes to its effective implementation. As a result, teachers and institutions can be quickly overwhelmed by the sheer number of approaches and potential methodologies that exist. There is little doubt that there is an established need for a book that attempts to pull all these issues together and offer concise and informed guidance for those looking to set up a BL course.

The book is split into three sections, the first opening with an overview of what exactly is meant by the term *blended learning*. From there, the book presents a practical framework for those wishing to set up a BL course, as well as describing the main platforms available. The second section is more practical, as Sharma and Barrett introduce 20 practical ideas for BL, which cover everything from grammar and vocabulary to assessment. Finally, the third section looks at the future of BL and gives some tips for teacher training, before including some photocopiable material.

One of the most useful aspects of the book, for those new to the concept of BL, is the way in which it explains key terms, particularly the main models employed on a BL course. The '%' model refers to the percentage of the course which is supported by online work. For example, on a 70–30 course, 30% of the learning is done online. This can increase to a hybrid course (50–50) or up to 100% on an online course. Implementing a 'dual track' approach means that students have 24/7 online access to the online materials that supplement their taught classroom materials. These materials may or may not be related to each other, but both have a similarly holistic learning aim. Arguably, the most well-known model is the 'flipped classroom' approach, where the online learning materials are introduced before the lesson starts, and are then utilised in the classroom, with the focus being on deepening understanding of what has been studied before the lesson.

Sharma and Barrett understand that there are various challenges facing institutions who wish to set up a BL course, and they deal with each of them in turn. They identify the fact that employing a successful blended learning component takes a great deal of time and effort, and also acknowledge other considerations that need to be taken into account, such as appropriacy and the need for training for teachers and students alike. Their framework for creating a BL course is very useful, as it allows practitioners and institutions to work systematically through four clear stages that the authors believe will help to create a successful BL course.

Where the book really excels is in the easily digestible overviews of the various platforms available. From publisher-produced platforms to learning management systems, such as *Blackboard* and *Moodle*, to *Google Classroom*, each one is explained in detail with a summary of their fundamental advantages and disadvantages. Coupled with individual case studies, these chapters in the book allow the reader to reach an informed decision about which platform would work best in their situation.

The practical ideas that make up the second section are useful for those who want ideas to use with learning management systems. However, those looking for activities that they can pick



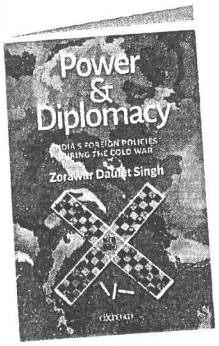
out and use instantly may be a little disappointed. Many of these activities ask for an awful lot of commitment, often far beyond what can reasonably be expected of a busy teacher. For instance, ideas such as recording screencasts or sending emails of sentences to practise at home all involve quite a lot of preparation and continual monitoring.

There is a telling part in the 'Tips for teacher trainers' chapter towards the end of the book that proves this point. When discussing a comment from an attendee at a training session who questioned the usefulness of the activities as they wouldn't have time to implement them, Sharma and Barrett interpret this as more of a reflection of the limitations of that teacher's circumstances rather than any failing in the training. However, taken more objectively, the comment identifies an inherent problem with the BL approach as a whole: it is more applicable to higher education establishments with the time, money and inclination to implement it, and many activities are simply impractical for teachers working in language schools, as they would take too much time to set up and monitor. Those who advocate BL need to recognise the work pressures and time constraints on the majority of teachers working in secondary education and language schools.

I believe that, used correctly and effectively, a BL approach certainly has a place in the ELT sector and, for certain institutions, BL platforms afford a range of fresh and innovative teaching opportunities. That said, this book is a good introduction to the difficult topic of blended learning.

Paul Carr
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books Zorawar Daulat Singh

Power and Diplomacy—India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War | OUP | 416 pages | Rs 845

Eyes On Offshore Lights

This book sees a shift in India's Cold War-era statecraft, from Nehru's non-alignment to Indira's realpolitik. But both stands weren't mutually exclusive.

BY SHYAM SARAN

IT is not often that a young scholar of international relations takes the plunge to offer original insights, based on extensive research, on the evolution of India's foreign policy, with particular reference to the Cold War period. In *Power and Diplomacy*, Zorawar Daulat Singh has not hesitated to question the analysis and assessments of prominent Indian and foreign scholars and has come up with some persuasive interpretations. He deserves commendation, even though his conclusions may be contested. Zorawar's main thesis is that during the first 30 years after Independence, Indian foreign policy was influenced not merely by material factors, such as economic and military capabilities and regional and international environment, but also the choices made at the 'apex', consisting of the prime minister and his/her small band of advisers.

The perceptions and attitudes of the leader, in this case Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, played an important role in determining choices made among a set of alternatives. Zorawar offers case studies of key junctures where differing world views of key actors, led to choices which the leaders handled differently. Nehru, he argues, saw India's role as a peacemaker, upholding India's security and its place in the world, by playing a role of moderating Cold War tensions and avoiding Asia becoming an area of East-West contention and possibly armed conflict. While he was not averse to taking advantage of East-West contention to advance India's interests, he stopped short of moving closer to the Soviet Union as he might have, once it was apparent that the US had decided to arm Pakistan to balance India. To him that would have meant India too becoming a participant in the Cold War. However, faced with the 1971 Bangladesh crisis, Indira Gandhi had no hesitation in aligning much more closely with Moscow to take advantage of the strategic opportunity the crisis offered India. Similarly, her unsentimental incorporation of Sikkim into the Indian Union is contrasted with Nehru's overall approach of conceding political space to the Himalayan states. She was a "security seeker", with a narrower focus on India's subcontinental interests and willing to exploit the balance of power. As Zorawar writes: "The central argument of this book is that this change in Indian statecraft resulted from a change in regional role conceptions from the Nehru to Indira Gandhi periods. Role conceptions emerge from policymakers' beliefs and images relating to their state's interaction with its external environment."



> Indira's incorporation of Sikkim is contrasted with Nehru's conceding space to Himalayan states but he faced 'realpolitik' problems too, like in the Goa action and the Indo-Nepal treaty.

Nehru and Indira followed different approaches in handling foreign policy challenges. But there are instances of Nehru's 'realpolitik' predilections, such as the incorporation of Goa into the Union in 1961 through armed action. The restoration of King Tribhuvan to political leadership in Nepal in 1950 and the terms of the Indo-Nepal Treaty do not reflect a non-intrusive stand towards the Himalayan state. Nor did Indira abandon India's international activism entirely, being a visible presence in international fora like the World Environment Conference in 1972. She played a role in energising the Non-Aligned Movement, culminating in the convening of the NAM summit in New Delhi in 1983. This is not to refute the main thesis put forward by Zorawar but to argue that his sharp delineations should not obscure the fact that we are dealing with leaders with complex personalities. Their foreign policy actions were also influenced by difficult challenges of nation-building. The impact of these domestic compulsions may not be very clear from the archives but they are a major influence.

The concluding chapter is recommended for its clarity of thinking and for the balanced appraisal it provides on the evolution of Indian foreign policy during the Cold War and beyond. The wholesale trashing of non-alignment as an appropriate foreign policy during a formative stage of the Indian state, its characterisation as a policy of moralism and idealism, as Zorawar argues, "simplifies and obscures Nehru's peacemaker role and its complex regional images" and misses the important shifts brought about by Indira. Part of the problem lies in conflating policy substance with its rhetorical packaging. I believe there are important continuities in India's foreign policy and these are anchored in India's geographical location, its historical and cultural sensibilities, its determination, since independence, to never again have the destiny of its people determined in foreign capitals and to see a role for itself in the world. This underlying reality is the template on which successive leaders have played their part, each with his/her own belief set and temperament. Power and diplomacy is an absorbing exploration of the drivers in India's foreign policy and contains pointers to where we may be headed in a changing world.

Access, Ownership, Control
Examining Women's Rights over Land

PADMINI SWAMINATHAN

BOOK REVIEWS

Understanding Women's Land Rights: Gender Discrimination in Ownership edited by Prem Chowdhry, *New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2017; pp 413, ₹1,095.*

The book under review is part of the series on Land Reforms in India, a project entrusted to the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. The specific objectives of *Understanding Women's Land Rights* edited by Prem Chowdhry include (i) a historical review of the land systems and of formal and customary laws in existence, from a gender perspective; and (ii) an assessment of the conditions on the ground, of the extent to which women actually own land. The volume begins with an introduction by the editor and thereafter covers 14 states of the Indian union.

The introduction provides a competent overview of the different themes emerging from the findings from each of the 14 states. Using these themes (rather than discussing each state-specific chapter seriatim), first, it is highlighted what is common among the states and what is particular to a state, reserving comments on the volume as a whole for the end.

Do Women Need to Own Land?

The association of ownership and control of land with empowerment and security is a recurring theme in almost all the chapters. Further, most chapters also emphasise the fact of an overwhelming majority of women workers participating in one way or the other in agriculture, with only a minuscule percentage among them owning any land. Not having ownership rights over resources such as land denies women farmers access to various government programmes and services, since the default beneficiary "farmer" in all such cases happens to be the male. Again, given the demographic reality of a larger proportion of women (than men) being reported as widows in census data, and a larger proportion of adult women surviving longer than men, it goes without saying that for such women, ownership and effective control of some property, either in the form of land or an ancestral home, becomes essential for decent survival.

Legal versus Social Recognition

All chapters uniformly endorse the point that despite the amendments to property laws to bring about gender equality in inheritance, whether by the centre or at the state level, and irrespective of aspects of religion, caste, class and region, the deep-rooted bias against conferring ownership rights over land and property to women has persisted. The authors have approached the problematic from different angles. The result, however, is the same: an across-the-board reluctance to formally confer ownership of land that is legally and rightfully due to women.

Ritu Dewan's discussion of women and land rights in Goa assumes significance in the light of the assertion that "this is the only region in India where women are guaranteed equal property rights" (p 107). Even so, Dewan concludes—based on an elaborate examination of Agricultural Census data that deals with operational holdings (and not ownership)—that "women do not get equal property rights even in a region that legally guarantees them an equal share in property" (p 113). To explain why guaranteed legal equality has failed to translate into gender equality in property holding, Dewan argues for a comprehensive understanding and interrogation of several interrelated laws from a gender perspective. Alongside, she also suggests a situational analysis of the context in which these laws are operationalised/not operationalised/half-heartedly operationalised, to produce the kind of adverse outcomes that one finds even in a state that is touted as a legal model for gender parity in property holding.

Itishree Pattnaik brings together a range of complex issues in Chapter 6 on Gujarat, the intertwining of which makes it difficult to lay the blame (of women's poor share in landownership) solely on indifferent/non-implementation of laws, amended to give women equal inheritance rights. Thus, in Gujarat it was found that (i) land was transferred to women when women became widows; (ii) several transfers took place to avail of tax benefits and registration fee exemption; (iii) transfers enabled households to escape the Gujarat Agricultural Lands Ceiling Act, 1960; and (iv) transfers could be merely "verbal" and/or could be "recorded." An important observation made by Pattnaik, and in several other chapters as well, is,

> It is doubtful whether the ownership has translated into authority/control, including decision-making about the use of land. Thus ownership and control are two different things and should not be used interchangeably. (p 145)

E Revathi's study of Andhra Pradesh again endorses the fact of women being given land, "either to circumvent the land ceiling law or to obtain benefits as farmers from different government programmes" (p 47). Revathi's approach has been to explore whether the level of socio-economic development has a bearing on women's access to land from their family. She finds that

> the divergence in the source of land accessed through the family (natal and marital) in the irrigated and dry land is more related to culture and geography than to socio-economic development. (p 47)

Even if women on the ground are aware of their legal rights relating to inheritance or about government resolutions such as Maharashtra's Ghar Doghaanche

Abhiyan (joint ownership of the house by both husband and wife), the translation of awareness into registration remains a struggle, as detailed by Dewan in her study of land rights in Maharashtra.

Land Rights in Tribal Societies

Rimi Tadu's exploration of land relations among the two prominent but diverse tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh, namely the Apatanis and the Nyishis, at once makes clear that there is recognition of women's prominent role in the agricultural economies of tribal communities, even if control over land is vested in men as per tribal customs. Tadu's nuanced discussion of how the status of tribal women needs to be situated and studied as an integral part of the day-to-day functioning of their societies, is critical to our understanding of why the call for formalising tribal customary laws together with superimposition of market-led modernisation could worsen the present "status" of women, apart from increasing the precarity of their existence.

That ownership of agricultural land among tribes is ruled by tribal customary laws under which women lack any right to own land, is a theme that is emphasised also in the chapter on Chhattisgarh by Ramesh Sharma. In addition, other customs that conferred better "status" on tribal women have eroded extensively and have been replaced with regressive practices; replacement of "bride price" with dowry being one such indicator and systematic denial of access to common property resources, being another. While the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act of 2006 recognises joint entitlement and ownership, "it is however silent on the issue of entitlement of single women whether through divorce, not getting married or widowhood" (p 191).

M N Karna's exploration of women's land rights in Jharkhand documents the diversity of practices among the 32 groups into which the tribal population is broadly divided. The author has studied three districts representing three different sociocultural groups, that is, three tribes. Irrespective of the fact that each of these tribes has differential experiences of the processes of modernisation, what binds them together is their reluctance to register land in the name of their womenfolk. Interestingly, the author notes, "most of them (the tribal men) have taken resort to their customary practices while rejecting the statutory land rights to women" (p 206).

Saroj Arora's exhaustive study of the status of women's access and ownership of land in Mizoram brings out how, despite being high on social development indicators, Mizo women had been denied inheritance rights by their customary laws. After years of struggle, the enactment of two important laws—the Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014 and the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 2015—has brought in some semblance of gender justice, though the outcomes remain to be tested. Similarly, the study by Sridhar, Arora and Khunenchu Magh of gender and land relations in Nagaland provides readers with a comprehensive account of the socio-demographic profile, social history, administrative structure and inheritance patterns among some of the Naga tribes, as well as the initiatives taken by the state for women's development. However, the story relating to women's ownership of land is the same as elsewhere in the country. Naga women are not allowed to inherit ancestral land; land is inherited by male descendants and in the absence of a male heir, the land goes to the nearest male kin of the same clan. Naga women have use rights to their father's clan/community land, but no independent right of ownership to the land that they cultivate or reside on. Women are not allowed to be members of a clan or *khel* (representing several clans) council (pp 289–90).

Access to Land in Special States

Abha Chauhan's study of the land question in Jammu and Kashmir, and Sohel Firdos's study of Sikkim highlight, among other things, how women in these two states lose their basic rights on marrying a "non-state subject." Additionally, in the case of Sikkim,

> *who is a Sikkimese woman is a question that is asked every six months as the state asks a woman to prove that she is unmarried every six months (unmarried certificates have a 6-month validity) or marry a Sikkimese man to earn a living or get state benefits.* (p 330)

To undermine a progressive decision made by the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir in 2002 to not deny women of their permanent residency on marriage to a non-state person, a bill was moved in 2004. The law as it stands today does not deny women permanent residency on marriage to non-permanent residents, but it "deprives the children of such women of all privileges that children of the state subject possess and enjoy" (p 162).

Thwarting Access to Land

Kanchan Mathur's discussion of the persistence of inequalities in access to land in Rajasthan, Ranjani Murthy's study of the situation in Tamil Nadu, and Indu Pathak's chapter on Uttarakhand, provide us with further dimensions of how women are denied access, ownership, and control over land through several official measures of omission and commission. Thus, for example, Mathur notes, "notwithstanding legal enactments put in place for enabling women to access land rights, effective rights are contingent on two factors, the socio-economic conditions (namely, pressure on sisters to relinquish their share of land in favour of their brothers) and the role of the implementing agencies," and that "one of the biggest challenges encountered in analysing gender issues pertaining to land rights has been the lack of sex-segregated data" (pp 315–16).

Murthy's chapter, among other things, points out how policy notes of land-related departments and state-initiated schemes aimed at women's empowerment do not specifically address the theme of women's land rights in their training programmes, in their orders and/or in the manner in which land data is collected and presented. The Uttarakhand

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chapter again endorses the point made by Mathur that, while

> it is appreciable that the Government of Uttarakhand had initiated the digitalisation of land records ... and computerisation of record of rights has been completed, gender-wise segregated data about ownership on agricultural land, distributed *pattas* by state government to women ... are not available properly in the government records. (p 399)

Contribution of the Volume

There is no doubt that this voluminous work covering 14 states brings together rich information, and gives readers a sense of the historical context and social relations governing rules of inheritance and division of property, and land, in particular, among household members. It clearly brings out that women continue to be discriminated whatever be the social class, region or religion to which these households belong.

However, many of the chapters are heavy and long on reporting, while their analytical content is extremely poor. The lack of an analytical framework to situate the details contained in the chapters constantly leads to the question: What exactly is the significance of these details? What is the author inferring from these anecdotes? Equally significant from an analytical point of view is the need to differentiate women's right to land in her capacity as an equal citizen from the need to give them ownership and control over land since an overwhelming number of them presently work in agriculture. The larger question not examined by any of the authors is the state of agriculture in the country, and how many farming households want to continue with farming. In this context, the question not canvassed by any of the chapters is: How many of the women want land because they want to continue working in the agricultural field, or is it that their requirement for ownership and control over land is a demand for economic and social security?

Several puzzling but interesting questions that arise from the different chapters, however, remain unarticulated by the authors. For instance, most of the north-eastern states have very high levels of literacy among both men and women and yet there is no interrogation of why this important endowment has failed to lead to any sort of empowerment through membership in village- or clan-level decision-making bodies, getting rid of oppressive and regressive customary practices, etc. In the absence of such an interrogation, asking for improving women's literacy levels to make women aware of their rights, rings hollow. Several chapters in the volume make a number of assertions that are not backed by evidence or relevant references. The volume also needs to be edited for language and typographical errors.

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Producing Exclusionary Spaces in Delhi

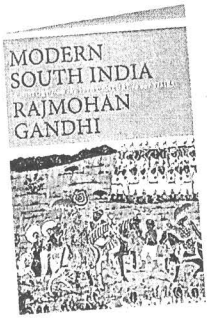
GEETA THATRA

Accumulation by Segregation: Muslim Localities in Delhi by Ghazala Jamil sets itself an admirable task—that of narrating the exclusionary spatial ordering and the everyday life of Muslims in Delhi. As the subtitle "Muslim Localities in Delhi" might imply, this book is not limited to the physical spaces, but encompasses the structural processes, subjective meanings, and dominant representations that confine Muslims to marginal locations in the city. Jamil traverses different registers of sociological analysis to foreground the geographies of exclusion and the quotidian experiences of Muslims in contemporary urban India.

Accumulation by Segregation: Muslim Localities in Delhi by Ghazala Jamil, *New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017; pp xiv+240, ₹750.*

Muslims in urban India have begun receiving the much-needed scholarly attention. In the field of urban studies, there is a growing interest in exploring the dynamics of contemporary urbanisation and the creation of divided cities. However, its impact on Muslims remains uncharted. Some of the existing scholarship on Muslims has focused mostly on the widening socio-economic inequities and/or the creation of "ghettos" in the aftermath of "riots," and the cases of Ahmedabad or Mumbai are prominent here. A more recent work *Muslims in Indian Cities: Trajectories of Marginalisation*, edited by Christophe Jaffrelot and Laurent Gayer (2012), has broadened the canvas in terms of the number and size of the cities studied. Exploring the enmeshed processes of urbanisation, capital accumulation, and spatial segregation in Delhi, Jamil's book makes a remarkable contribution. Although it adds to the abundant scholarly literature on Delhi, it is relevant because it offers a fresh perspective on the exclusion of Muslims, which is spatially manifested in contradictory and differentiated ways. For doing so, Jamil's theoretical framework combines the economic processes underlying urbanisation, representations in the media, and the often-neglected discursive practices of urban governmentality.

The approach of this book is incisive, sensitive, and compelling. The author pursues three interrelated analytical moves. First, mapping the social geography of the city through ethnographic fieldwork, Jamil shows how the spatial segregation of Muslim neighbourhoods is produced. She explores the urban processes that link the local space with the economy of the city and global networks, and suggests that the exclusion of Muslims is structurally entwined with capitalism. Second, traversing through the discursive practices of governmentality and media representations, Jamil argues that Muslims are reduced to "normative non-citizens," which has weakened their



books Rajmohan Gandhi

Modern South India: A History from the 17th Century to our Times | Aleph | 240 pages | Rs 599

Tipu's Sringeri Foray

This clear-sighted book ties major strands of south Indian history to modern times

BY M. VIJAYABASKAR

RAJMOHAN Gandhi's book could not have been timed better. The idea of south India as a distinct socio-territorial entity has a longer history, but has become more visible in recent political imaginations, with a growing perception by the Union government. Amidst such stirrings, Rajmohan Gandhi's book traces the history of the region since the fall of the Vijayanagara empire with entry of the Dutch, British and the French East India companies.

Anchoring the early narration around the evolution of operations of the British East India Company in the south, Gandhi, much like William Darlymple in his *White Mughals*, maps the shift in native-colonial relations from being marked by interactions on equal terms to one tinged with racial markings as the company established political control. Moving on to the late colonial and then to post-colonial developments, the book ends with short commentaries on latest events, the rise of the Hindu right-wing forces in particular.

Along the way, *Modern South India* mobilises a rich set of sources to convey aspects of the region's history that speak strongly to contemporary politics. It tells us why we must not interpret past events in the light of modern understandings of 'religion' and 'nation'. Gandhi does a remarkable job of this as he takes us through the wars for control over the region driven neither by the imagination of an Indian nation nor by religious imperatives. In fact, he shows how developments in colonial India coalesced to forge such a nationalist imagination much later. His mention of Tipu Sultan's support for the Sringeri mutt after it was desecrated and ransacked by the Maratha rulers is a case in point. He also shows how religious identities never stopped rulers from appointing members from other religions to head their armies or administration. Gandhi also manages to trace certain common threads across linguistic divisions in the southern region, like musical and poetic traditions, and the emergence of socio-spiritual movements against caste hierarchies.

> Gandhi doesn't say how the Dravidian or Communist movements generated political trajectories that continue to resist incursions of the Hindu right wing.

The book, however, is not without its share of problems. On occasions, the biographer in Rajmohan Gandhi tends to overwhelm the historian. This is particularly evident in his extensive treatment of Thiru Rajagopalachari. Though Gandhi concedes that like all histories this one too is personal and selective, readers are likely to find such selectiveness problematic. Rajagopalachari receives far more attention compared to personalities like Kamarajar or Periyar, though the latter leaders had a far more significant role in shaping the trajectory of Tamil Nadu. *Modern South India* also does not quite tell us how progressive movements like the Dravidian movement or the Communist movement in Kerala managed to generate political trajectories that continue to resist substantial incursions of the Hindu-Hindi right wing. It may well be because of a lack of engagement with vernacular sources. Most importantly, the book leaves us with an unanswered question: What is it about south India that makes it socially and economically more inclusive than the rest of the country? ☐

ON THE RACKS



T.C.A. Srinivasa Raghavan

Goodbye to All That | Speaking Tiger

Being single, 29, and the commissioning editor for a big British publisher's Indian operation is a dream job. Except that the protagonist's dreamy, late '70s existence in Delhi is buffeted by a sudden demand: find three best-selling authors in a year, or else.... So begins a hectic, reckless, comical adventure among the groves of academe. A sparkling debut suffused with the aura of old Delhi.



Swapna Liddle

Connaught Place and the Making of New Delhi | Speaking Tiger

"The planning of a city on what was...a tabula rasa was both an opportunity and a responsibility." Painstaking care was taken by the British in the conception of New Delhi, and this book, equally thoroughly, charts its progress—a slow build-up, heated debates over style, the gathering of resources and the concrete glimmers of majesticity. Speckled with atmospheric pictures, this is a minor gem.



Vivek Shukla

Gandhi's Delhi | Anuugya Books

In his itinerant natonalist career, Gandhiji travelled the depths of the vast subcontinent. In this book, a veteran journalist narrows the focus to Delhi and recounts, with anecdotal detail and some historical context, each of the Mahatma's sojourns in Delhi, down to the places he visited (for example Jamia, All India Radio building)—from his first visit in 1915 to that fateful one in January 1948.

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Indian Lobbying as a Catalyst of US–India Relations

SHAILZA SINGH

Indian Lobbying and Its Influence in US Decision Making: Post-Cold War by Ashok Sharma, *Sage Publishers, 2017; pp xxiii + 303, ₹895.*

One of the peculiar features of the political system of the world's oldest democracy is lobbying, a technique adopted by interest groups to influence the government's policy decisions, and which is institutionalised as a legal practice in the United States (US). American studies scholars in India are introduced to this fascinating aspect of American politics where different interest groups hire professionals—generally advocates but also others registered with the US Congress—to press legislators for favourable policy decisions. Lobbying, also described as private sector policy advocacy,[1] is a paid activity.

Ashok Sharma in *Indian Lobbying and Its Influence in US Decision Making* explores the linkage between the lobbying efforts of the Indian–American community in the US and positive developments in the US–India relationship in the post-Cold War period. During this period, the bilateral relationship witnessed a transformation, marking a departure from its Cold War dynamics and culminated into the US–India strategic partnership in 2008. The volume, divided into six chapters, presents a comprehensive account of the evolution of lobbying by the Indian American ethnic community with the purposive focus on its impact upon the US foreign policy posture towards India. The book falls into the genre of works that explain foreign policy through a domestic political explanation in contrast to the "systemic" or "structural" explanations of state behaviour.

Affluence as Political Clout

The tone of the study is set out by examining the entrenched nature of lobbying in American politics, an activity that gains its legitimacy through the rights guaranteed by the first amendment of the US Constitution which is a part of the Bill of Rights guaranteeing certain freedoms to the citizens. The theoretical roots of the nature of interest group activity are traced to the founding principles of US democracy, and their development in different stages is carefully laid out. The explanation highlights how lobbying, as a tool available to all sorts of interest groups as well as corporations, land firms, cities and foreign actors, is an ever-expanding and consolidating activity in the US. It witnessed an intensification during the democratic reforms politics of the 1960s, the civil rights movement and the movement against the Vietnam War, all demanding a more responsive government. It is argued that the US polity and society is conducive to facilitating lobbying by providing "multiple access points" (p 30) to the lobbyists at various levels of government. It has been further consolidated through occupying of the spaces, provided by a weak party system and complex functioning of the Congress, by professionally skilled lobbyists. Highlighting the acceptability of big business and the dislike for big government woven into the American cultural ethos, Sharma quotes Edward S Greenberg:

> Americans have been persuaded into believing that business ethics or business philosophy or the pressure group activities of business groups are all integral parts of social and economic system, which promotes public well-being. This also explains enormous influence that the business sector has come to exercise over American Government. (p 24)

Some other recent studies have underscored the fact that beginning as a democratic right, lobbying today has become a highly sophisticated professional activity, but dominated by big capital.[2]

Three broad characteristics of lobbying woven into the scheme of the book thus emerge: its pervasiveness in American polity; its domination by the economically affluent; and its capacity to influence foreign policy.

Indian Americans in US Politics

Against this backdrop, the book embodies the author's rationale expressed thus: "foreign policy decisions increasingly reflect ethnic interests rather than an overarching sense of national interests" (p 33). The author uses a descriptive analytical method and does not specifically outline the methodology. Hence, whether lobbying being a domestic-political factor is used as an intervening or independent variable is not stated explicitly. Looking at the lobbying efforts of some of the most influential ethnic groups like the Jewish, Greek, Irish, Latin American and African–American communities, the case for observing the growing influence of the Indian American lobby is made.

Mapping the migrational pattern of Indian Americans from the very beginning of the activity, a compelling account of the emergence of the Indian Americans as a political force in the US is given in the second and the third chapters. An in-depth analysis of the US census, immigration profiles of different immigrant communities over an extended period, and economic, educational and occupational profiling of the Indian Americans lead to the finding that before 1965 the Indian immigrants to the US constituted a smaller number and were of little political significance in the American society. However, people who migrated to the US after independence, facilitated by the Hart–Celler Act, post-1965 to be precise, predominantly belonged to the educated upper class who continued to maintain their position in the US as well. Most of them pursued higher degrees and also constituted the skilled professional workforce like doctors, engineers, scientists, academics and successful entrepreneurs. Owing to the English-speaking advantage, they assimilated well in the American society, and at the same time, because of a well-knit family structure and values they have been able to emerge as a united and distinct

community having a range of over 1,000 well-organised associations.

Political Activism since the 1990s

It is highlighted that the material and professional affluence and sense of community did not translate into active political participation until the 1990s. It was only in the 1990s and in the face of discriminatory measures like racial violence, hate crimes and the "glass ceiling"[3] that the Indian Americans fortified themselves into a political community. They emerged as significant voting publics, contesting elections and engaged in fundraising efforts. The community leveraged a range of tools, from religion, food, and entertainment to consolidate its cultural capital in the US and transform this into political capital. This further translated into a clout in lobbying with the formal registration of the United States India Political Action Committee (USINPAC) as a lobby group in 2002. The political expediency of the community is exemplified in its bipartisan posture. It is emphasised that today neither the Democrats nor the Republicans can ignore the community's interests.

The last three chapters document the journey of consolidation of lobbying by Indian Americans, and seek to provide evidence for the claims of political clout made in the earlier chapters. Emphasising the role of India Caucus,[4] the author argues that they have been instrumental in building a positive image of India in the US Congress through its focus primarily on US–India relations than concerns of the Indian American ethnic community in the US. The analyses based on interviews with experts and primary documents present a nuanced discussion of the lobbying efforts as well as some of the challenges. The author highlights the struggle of the community to organise as a consolidated group by saying, "Too many Indian American organisations many with similar names and objectives send confusing signals to the members of the Congress" (p 251).

Though the explanation weaves the narratives to largely underscore the effectiveness, the limitations of lobbying surface on several occasions. The effects explained, in the case of lobbying during the nuclear tests conducted by India in 1998 as well as on the agenda of permanent membership to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), seem less supported by the flow of the description. The causality attributed to lobbying also appears overestimated at various points, like when it is claimed that the transformed US policy towards India is the result of positive image creation through lobbying. There is a whole range of scholarship which emphasises that the US policy towards India has been crafted in consonance with its grand strategy and global policy objective that requires it to strengthen political, economic and defence relations with states that share democratic values and national interests (Cohen 2001; Kapur and Ganguly 2007; Schaffer and Schaffer 2016). For instance, democracy promotion was one of the main objectives of American foreign policy in the period which coincides with the period of political activism showed by the community. A knitting of the overarching objectives of US foreign policy and whether it aligned or contravened with the corresponding lobbying effort, could have been more telling. Given the rigour of study, such analyses would contribute to a constructivist reading of foreign policy in terms of how significant domestic factors have the potential to transform the meanings that actors hold for each other in bilateral relationships.

Also, the treatment of the process of transformation of cultural capital of the community into political capital could have been more nuanced. There is a jerk between the descriptions provided by the author that hint at the instrumentality of a Hindu set of values and identity and his conclusions that explain Indian Americans as successful entrepreneurs aligning effectively with conditions created by market liberalism, imbibing both American as well as Indian values in a unique way.

The book also throws up interesting points of reflection through analysis of the role of entrepreneurs and fundraising in Indian American lobbying in the US. The author also mentions the phrase "combined interests of the two nations" (p 111). Like Morgenthau's "national interest defined in terms of power" in international relations, what all can constitute the combined interest would be worth delving into by scholars.

Overall, the book presents a very insightful study of lobbying, its theoretical grounding in American politics, its origin, consolidation and instrumentality in the case of the Indian American community. It is an engaging read for

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- Credit-Deposit (CD) Ratio
- Number of Bank Offices–By Population Group

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anyone interested in US–India relations, and the painstaking details would be of much value to future research in this area.

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NOTES

1 Teresita and Howard Schaffer use this phrase for lobbying in their latest work on India.

2 Lee Drutman's (2015) work emphasises the corporatisation of politics in America. His study argues that business constitutes 95% of all the organisations spending on lobbying, indicating the increasing hold of the private sector on policy expertise.

3 Discriminatory feature in jobs with bleak prospects of promotion and secondary treatment vis-à-vis white counterparts. The *Glass Ceiling Initiative* of the US Department of Labor, 1991 defined it as "those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organisational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organisation into management-level positions."

4 A group of members of US Congress pursuing common legislative objectives. India Caucus was formed in the lower house of US legislature in 1993 and in 2002 in the upper house.

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Janne Ka Haq
The Struggle for the Right to Information

SHAILESH GANDHI

BOOK REVIEWS

The RTI Story: Power to the People by Aruna Roy with the MKSS Collective, *New Delhi: Roli Books, 2018; pp xxiv + 375, ₹495.*

Initiated by Anders Chydenius, a Finnish clergyman, the first right to information (RTI) law was passed on 2 December 1776 in Sweden. However, most countries around the world began enacting such laws, codifying the right of citizens to get information, in the last seven decades only. Merely 19 countries enacted such laws till 1995. Now, however, over 100 countries have laws recognising and codifying the citizens' right to information. In India, the first clear statement recognising this right is credited to Justice Mathew in the Raj Narain case (*State of Uttar Pradesh v Raj Narain* 1975), wherein he stated,

> In a government of responsibility like ours, where all the agents of the public must be responsible for their conduct, there can be but few secrets. The people of this country have a right to know every public act, everything that is done in a public way by their public functionaries. They are entitled to know the particulars of every public transaction in all its bearing. Their right to know, which is derived from the concept of freedom of speech, though not absolute, is a factor which should make one wary when secrecy is claimed for transactions which can at any rate have no repercussion on public security.

Subsequently, there were numerous Supreme Court judgments which stated that citizens have a fundamental right to information as per Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

MKSS Movement

It comes as a surprise to many that the idea and the demand for the implementation of the "right to information" grew in rural Rajasthan through local conversations, discussions and agitations. Three extraordinary people got together in 1987 to work on converting our elective democracy into a truly participatory democracy. This was an unlikely combination, joined together by their ideals and commitment to democracy. Aruna Roy was a former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer who had left the administrative service to serve the disadvantaged directly. Nikhil Dey was a young lawyer who had been trained in the United States (US). Shankar Singh belonged to rural Rajasthan and was extraordinarily talented as a communicator and an artist. They started staying in the small village of Devdungri and inspired people in rural Rajasthan to recognise their rights, as the sovereigns of democracy. They stayed in a small hut and started working with the villagers, discussing and evolving ways to get them to transform democracy—from an elective and defective democracy into a participatory democracy which empowered them. The main reason we call India a democracy is the reasonably fair election system, which gives the power into the hands of its citizens once in five years. The citizens, however, do not get the respect due to them in the in-between period of elections.

While writing this book, Aruna Roy displays a talent, which she uses very effectively when communicating and discussing matters of great importance like democracy and rights—that of a master storyteller. She gives us an idea of the extreme poverty and hunger while describing how the children of a family survived without food in the hope that the little *hundi* (cooking vessel) tied to the rafters of their mud home had grain, and when their parents would come home, they could cook and eat it. When they realised that it had no food, they died. The poor often survive on hope. There are numerous such accounts and stories in the book. These display humour, philosophy and pathos linked to the earthy soil of Rajasthan.

Roy introduces us to Mot Singh, Narayan, Chunni Bai, Lal Singh and many others in the first chapter itself. As we read the book, we start empathising with them and get to know of their deep understanding of political and social concepts and processes. It is characteristic of Roy to almost make her contribution invisible as a leader and a catalyst in the evolving democratic concepts; instead, she lets the various characters of this fascinating narrative speak. She describes the struggles which started against the oppression of the disadvantaged and their organising themselves to resist exploitation. We get a ringside view as the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) movement moves from Dadi Rapat to Sohangarh, Bhim and other places. We can feel the pain and share the shock of the Planning Commission team when it sees that a woman is filling her famished stomach with a roti made from ground thorns; despite the government's claims of providing work and alleviating sufferings of the people, in the midst of a drought. We relive the moment when Roy learns that diminutive Kakiji had worked with Gandhiji at Sabarmati Ashram.

We begin to empathise with the disadvantaged, who are being cheated of their rightful minimum wages by devious means. We wonder what independence from British rule has actually come to mean for the poor. The villagers had doubts that they were being cheated out of their fair wages by manipulation in the muster rolls. This led to the demands raised through dharnas (sit-ins) and negotiations, to see the muster rolls. The villagers begin to develop this wisdom that access to government records is absolutely essential for them, so as to secure their right to life and to attack the arrogant insolence of the officials who exploit them. We witness how villagers use their earthy logic to understand the importance of information from the government and the legitimacy of their right to access it. In simple words they say—"hamara paisa hamara hisab" (the

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money is ours and hence we must get its accounts). The fact that the government belongs to the citizens and that the public servants are holders of public records acting on their behalf, unlocks the key to the meaning of democracy. This is reiterated in their slogan—*yeh sarkar hamare aapki, nahi kisike baapki* (this government belongs to you and me and is not anyone's father's property).

We also get a view of the next stage when people recognise that access to records would also be a useful tool to expose and curb corruption. There cannot be better vigilance monitors than the citizens, to hold the government accountable. In the bargain they ought to get respect as the individual masters of the nation. The narrative also takes us to the instrument of "public hearings," which the movement developed to ensure public participation and acceptance of the demands for rights and to register protests against oppression and exploitation. Many media persons and eminent people from the cities also came to these hearings. Thus, the right to information started getting recognised as an important part of the functioning of democracy in the cities as well. The realisation of the need for a legal framework to get the right to information, and for this right to get recognised and codified emerged in the rural Rajasthan, and then travelled to urban India in this story of democracy.

In short, this is a fascinating narrative of the evolution of RTI in rural Rajasthan by deepening people's understanding and ensuring their empowerment through dialogues, struggle and a commitment towards actualising the essence of democracy. The narrative recounts and acknowledges the contributions of government officials, political leaders and media persons who gave a big boost to the movement. It also records how the RTI has brought a change in the power equations in the country, and if properly implemented, it can make our democracy meaningful.

Spread of the Movement

The spread of the movement from Dadi Rapat to the 40-day dharna at Beawar to the move towards the cities, to a stage of drafting and making of the law, is narrated by linking these various stages in a manner that creates the excitement of watching a national movement growing through the pages of the book. This book reads like a novel that is difficult to put down. It recognises the role of other players like NCPRI (National Campaign for People's Right to Information) and NAC (National Advisory Council) and their contributions in bringing about the RTI Act. It also recounts how the government, which made the law, found it so powerful that in less than a year, in 2006, it sought to amend it and reduce the power of citizens. People across the country opposed this move with such intensity that the government retracted. This was evidence enough that the movement had truly become a national one, involving citizens across the nation. Everyone concerned with democracy and interested in the narrative of the growth of mass movements must read this book.

We can also take a look at some other movements at this juncture, to understand the impact of the RTI movement. The Navnirman movement and the Jayaprakash Narayan movement were a call for anti-corruption and good governance, but they had a limited impact. The India against Corruption movement of Anna Hazare and Arvind Kejriwal also saw great support, but it did not result in any significant change in the nation. Narmada Bachao Andolan appears to not have met its short-term objectives, but it did leave a significant mark on the agenda of the nation. It brought about greater attention to the environmental concerns and to issues like displacement of people. RTI, however, offered an empowerment tool which was so simple in the draft of the law, that ordinary citizens could use it and become monitors for ensuring accountability from their government. More importantly, citizens across the nation took ownership of it and millions started using it. This has resulted in the initial success of the RTI and certainly MKSS has a big role in this. However, now there are also some serious threats to it. If these are vanquished, RTI has the potential to change the governance and to enable it to serve the people.

The concluding chapter in the book tells a fascinating story of rustic Lal Singh's insightful and pithy statement to the civil servants, about what should be the primary concern for all—India. Now our country has got one of the best RTI laws in the world. It has been a movement for true democracy; recognising that it must be a government of the people, by the people and for the people. While citizens have internalised this essence, those in power from all sections, have been acutely discomfited by its actualisation in the form of RTI. The corrupt dislike it for obvious reasons, and the honest find it as an affront to their arrogance. By numerous illegal ways like blocking information, misinterpreting the law and information commissions taking a long time to take decisions, the law is being emasculated.

Those in power have been labelling the RTI users as undesirable scum by castigating them as "obstructing the national development and integration, or destroying the peace, tranquility and harmony among its citizens" (Para 37 of *Central Board of Secondary Education and Others v Aditya Bandopadhyay and Others* 2011). Many such obnoxious statements are being made. Complaints are lodged to the police against RTI users. Few institutions are refusing to give information which will expose their misdeeds by declaring RTI users as *persona non grata*. Such an ambience is making it easy to label citizens who are in fact using their fundamental rights, as blackmailers and extortionists. This is encouraging verbal and physical attacks on the RTI users. Sometimes this leads to murdering them. Statutory and constitutional authorities should develop the culture of transparency and recognise that the citizens are the masters of the nation, and they are duty-bound to uphold the law. Otherwise another movement may be required to safeguard RTI and the democracy.

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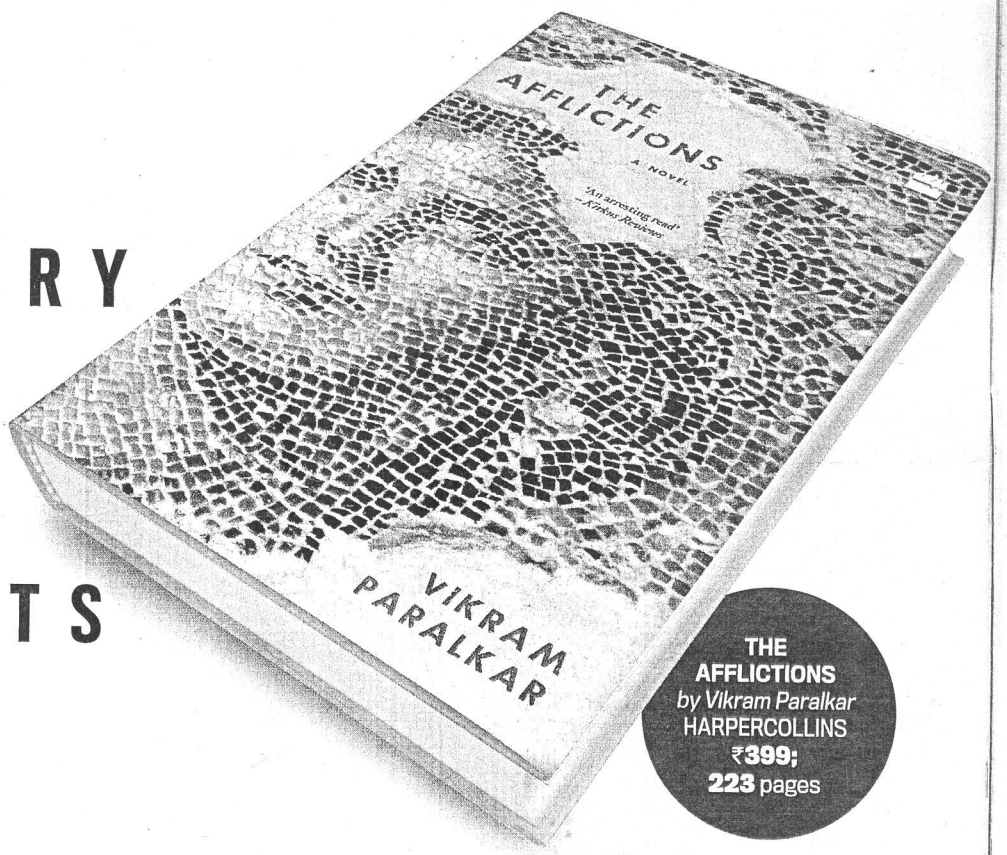
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State of Uttar Pradesh v Raj Narain (1975): SCC, SC, 4, p 428.

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BOOK REVIEW

A LIBRARY OF WEIRD AILMENTS



THE AFFLICTIONS
by Vikram Paralkar
HARPERCOLLINS
₹399;
223 pages

What a strange and compelling book this is! It conjures an easy comparison with Jorge Luis Borges—especially since one of the epigraphs is from the Argentine master's *The Library of Babel*—but that doesn't begin to explain its effect. Using a very short framing story about a man named Maximo being shown around the Central Library in an unspecified time and place (the setting and the writing style appear medieval), the bulk of Paralkar's book simply chronicles some of the ailments recorded in the precious *Encyclopaedia Medicinae.*

Grotesque and mystical, these are fictitious afflictions—or are they? Some are clearly otherworldly. In 'Osteitis deformans preciosa', the invalid's bones keep folding back on themselves, even beyond death, until a year later a whole skeleton has been reduced to a concentrated, eyeball-sized diamond. But others are more plausible, with echoes in the human condition as we know it: blank spots in the mind, so that only fragments of certain incidents can be remembered; a disease called "Morbus geographicus", where the patient must detach himself from each place where he has just settled down, and travel to new pastures for healing. Readers familiar with the medical writings of Oliver Sacks (*The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*) or V.S. Ramachandran (*Phantoms in the Brain*) may be reminded of the more unusual neurological cases discussed in those books.



Vikram Paralkar's compelling new novel is a chronicle of grotesque and mystical medical conditions

Each entry is accompanied by a simple, yet resonant, illustration by Pia Valentinis, and the writing style is deliberately impassive. Though there is some theological speculation: could Cursed Healer Syndrome, in which the sufferer takes on the disfigurements of people around him, be "a gift from the Lord", a version of Christ suffering for others' sins?

"If you read the *Encyclopaedia* from beginning to end," the head librarian says, "you get the feeling that every affliction known to man is part of a single, infinite progression."

The book is a commentary on the multi-pronged relationship between our bodies and minds, something that even today's science is incapable of revealing too much about. There are reflections on the nature of memory and the creation of art: one disease causes the ears of illiterate peasants to ring with notes from a sophisticated musical composition; another gives its victims such powerful visions that they are driven to express them through books or paintings, but produce only mediocre work.

And, occasionally, it reads like a straightforward anthropological observation. Individuals with 'Empathia pathologica', we are told, develop a crippling susceptibility to the moods of others: "It is only in absolute seclusion, far from all human contact, that they can be certain they are savouring joys or sorrows that are truly their own." ■

–Jai Arjun Singh

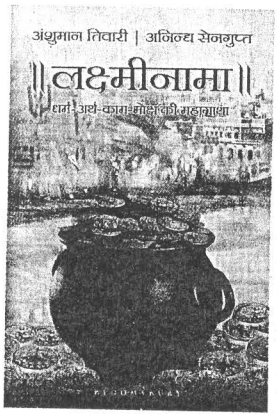


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जब वेद लिखे गए, उस समय तक भूमि और समुद्र, दोनों ही मार्गों से लंबी यात्राओं के कई संदर्भ मिल जाते हैं

यह केवल भारत के आर्थिक और वाणिज्यिक इतिहास की बात नहीं है. *लक्ष्मीनामा* में पौराणिक कथाओं और इतिहास में अपना नाम दर्ज कराने वाली प्रमुख शख्सियतों (राजाओं, रानियों, व्यापारियों, आक्रमणकारियों, फकीरों, नाविकों, राजकुमारियों, व्यापारियों, स्वर्ण व्यापारियों और अन्य साहसी व्यक्तियों) से जुड़े प्रसंगों को इस तरह पिरोया गया है कि इससे प्राचीन भारत (सही मायनों में कहें तो विश्व) से लेकर वर्तमान दौर के व्यापार, व्यवसाय और अर्थव्यवस्था का रोचक विवरण मिल जाता है. यह किताब आधुनिक भारत के भौगोलिक क्षेत्र में पड़ने वाले विभिन्न साम्राज्यों और समाज के साथ-साथ कुछ पड़ोसी देशों के भी व्यापार, प्रणाली, लेन-देन और अर्थव्यवस्था का लेखा-जोखा पेश करती है. लेखक गिल्गामेश (सुमेरियाई सम्राट) और पृथु (विष्णु के अवतारों में से एक) के मिथकों से शुरुआत करके हमें राम रहीम और उसके साम्राज्य तक की यात्रा पर लेकर जाते हैं. व्यापार और उद्योग को धर्म ने किस प्रकार प्रभावित किया है, इसमें इसका समुचित विश्लेषण तो हुआ ही है, साथ ही रियासतों, राज्यों, समाज और उनके नवाचारों का भी मंथन हुआ है. कुषाणों से लेकर गुप्त वंश के राजाओं तक, दक्षिण के साम्राज्यों (पल्लवों, चोलों) से लेकर दिल्ली के सुल्तानों (तुगलकों, लोधियों), मुगलों, रॉबर्ट क्लाइव और ईस्ट इंडिया कंपनी तक, ब्रिटिश साम्राज्य और आजादी के बाद के वर्षों तक भी—पुस्तक विभिन्न साम्राज्यों की आर्थिक और व्यापारिक परंपराओं का गूढ़ विश्लेषण करती है.

किताब मुख्य रूप से वाणिज्य-व्यवहार के बारे में बात करती है. सामान्य तौर पर भारत के शासकों और सरकारों की मानसिकता संरक्षणवादी नहीं रही है. अगर वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था जैसी कोई व्यवस्था नहीं भी थी तो भी, भारतीय समाज का पास-पड़ोस के साथ-साथ दूर के देशों से भी व्यापारिक जुड़ाव था. हड़प्पा जैसे स्वावलंबी समाज में भी व्यापार के प्रमाण मिलते हैं. यहां तक कि वेदों में भी भूमि के साथ-साथ समुद्री यात्राओं के संदर्भ मिलते हैं. वैसे, लेखक का मानना है कि यह बहुत दावे के साथ नहीं कहा जा सकता कि ऋग्वेद में बड़ी नावों से जलमार्ग से यात्रा के जो संदर्भ हैं, वे समुद्री यात्राओं के लिए हैं या फिर नदियों के लिए क्योंकि प्राचीन भारत में नदियों से यात्रा भी बहुत कठिन थी. बाद के साम्राज्यों ने दूर-दराज की यात्रा की और व्यापार का विस्तार किया. समुद्रों और महासागरों को पार करने में चोलों ने विशेष रूप से साहस का परिचय दिया है.

इस विषय पर केंद्रित कोई किताब उबाऊ हो सकती थी. लेकिन मिथकों, लघु कथाओं, रोचक आत्मकथाओं का, उस दौर की आर्थिक और व्यापारिक परिस्थितियों के साथ तारतम्य बनाते हुए लेखक इसे जीवंत बनाए रखने में सफल रहे हैं. प्रत्येक अध्याय को इस प्रकार पेश किया गया है कि वह अपने आप में अलग और संपूर्ण प्रतीत होता है. हर अध्याय आपको एक नई यात्रा पर लेकर जाएगा.

पुस्तक के कुछ अंश

धर्म, अर्थ और समाज का अनकहा आख्यान

भारतीय समाज धर्म, अर्थ और आस्था के अनूठे समन्वय की बेहतरीन मिसाल है. लक्ष्मीनामा अतीत में जाकर इसी परंपरा की कई रोचक, तथ्यपरक और अनकही कहानियों को सामने लाती है, जो वर्तमान से भी जुड़ी हुई हैं. इसका फलक भारत के साथ-साथ दुनिया की व्यापारिक परंपरा तक फैला है

गिल्गामेश नामक प्रतापी राजा और उसके मित्र इंकदू की कहानी दुनिया की पहली कृषि क्रांति और व्यापार की शुरुआत की गाथा है. एपिक ऑफ गिल्गामेश मानव इतिहास की पहली प्रतिष्ठित साहित्यिक कृति भी है. यह महाकाव्य जिस समय रचा जा रहा था, उस समय सुमेरियन लोग मनुष्य को समृद्ध भविष्य के सफर पर भेजने का पहला कदम उठा रहे थे. सुमेरियन ही थे जिन्होंने दजला और फरात नदियों की घाटियों में पहली बार जरूरत से ज्यादा अनाज उगाया. यह अतिरिक्त उपज समृद्ध भविष्य की उम्मीद का पहला

स्टोन एज जैसी सभ्यता का चित्र

परख

कुसुम अंसल

संतोष गोयल का यह उपन्यास 'सन् 2000 का जून' 2017 में छपकर हाथ में आया है. सत्रह वर्ष बाद. पूरा उपन्यास पढ़ लेने पर, उसे बंद करके मेज पर रक्खा, सोचने लगी, क्या विशेषता है कथानक में? क्या है जिसे संतोष पाठक तक पहुंचना चाहती हैं. पूरा उपन्यास, पहले पृष्ठ से अंतिम तक, एक ऐसे भरे पूरे परिवार का चित्रण करना चाह रहा था, जो अवश्य ही सन् 2000 के बाद से अब तक धुंधलाता जा रहा था, लुप्त-सा होता गया. ऐसा भरा पूरा परिवार जहां ठसकेदार नाना-नानी राजगद्दी पर बैठे हैं, परिवार के अन्य सदस्य उनकी बनाई मान्यताओं, तयशुदा या फार्मूलाबद्ध, तर्कों को सिर झुकाकर आज्ञाकारी बच्चों की तरह मान लेते हैं. मन ही मन उनसे डरते भी हैं. अपनी बात कहते, चाहे वह इच्छा जिसमें उनका का भविष्य जुड़ा है. इच्छाओं, आकंक्षाओं का गहरा मन्थन निरंतर साथ-साथ चलता है—मानवीय मूल्यों के शाश्वत समय के साथ. उसी घर में जहां घर के बड़े-बूढ़े, बुजुर्ग सदस्य हैं, संतोष जी के शब्दों में—

"पर इंसान भी क्या? अपने अहम् में जकड़ा, अपनी सीमाओं में बंधा समझता रहता है कि वही सब कुछ है. आयु में बड़ा हो जाना ही अनुभव है और अनुभव सदा परिपक्व करता है. ऐसा होता तो नाना सबसे अनुभवी हैं. फिर भी अपने बच्चों की मानसिकता क्यों नहीं समझ पाते? खुशी की परिभाषा क्यों नहीं जान पाते, ऐसा क्यों?"



जैसा कि चला आया हैं—हमारे भारतीय सामाजिक परिवेश में—संयुक्त परिवार होते थे और उन्हें घर के बुजुर्ग अपने तौर तरीके से चलाती या जैसा संतोष जी ने लिखा है, "अनुभव के हिसाब से चलाते थे. विवाह उनकी इच्छा से होते थे. कौन-सा सदस्य क्या रोजगार, नौकरी पकड़ेगा, किस शहर में रहेगा." ऐसे फैसले व सुझाव भी उनके होते थे—और घर के सदस्य, सिर झुकाकर उन मान्यताओं का आदर भी करते थे.

परंतु अब समय इतनी तेजी से बदल रहा है. वैश्वीकरण के तहत विदेशों की संस्कृति, पाश्चात्य जीवन-पद्धति की चिंगारियां भारतीय सभ्यता पर एक गहरे रंगीन बादल-सी छाती जा रही हैं. बदलाव का ये रेला किसी के रोके नहीं रुकता. ये भी लगा, "इश्क को दिल में जगह दे अकबर/इल्म से शायरी नहीं आती."

समय के साथ परिवर्तित होना आवश्यक हो गया.

हां, अब तालीम, बुद्धिमत्ता, या पुराने अनुभवों की राजनीति युक्त संस्कार—नई पीढ़ी पर अपना कोई प्रभाव नहीं डाल पाते. संसार बड़ी तेजी से बदल रहा है—वैश्वीकरण के प्रभाव- स्वरूप चिंतन के धरातल पर प्रगति के अद्भुत मार्ग निर्मित हुए, तकनीकी-ज्ञान से अर्जित नई नकोर पीढ़ी जो उन्हें प्रगति के मार्ग पर अग्रसित कर रही है, पूरी तरह बदल चुकी है. जहां एक ओर विद्या और चिंतन ने नई पीढ़ी को जीवन के नये अर्थ पकड़ाए हैं—उसका अमानवीकरण भी नहीं किया है, बल्कि मुझे लगता है उनमें विवेक की वृद्धि ही हुई है. जो कि एक बहुत साहसिक कदम है.

इस पूरी पुस्तक में तन्वी इसी पीढ़ी की प्रतीक है, जहां विदेश के अर्जित ज्ञान और प्रवास ने उसे एक भिन्न-सी समृद्धता प्रदान की है. वहीं तन्वी, वर्ष 2000 के जून की तपती गर्मी में भारत लौटती हैं. परिवार—अपने संकुचित वातावरण में वहीं का वहीं खड़ा है—जहां वह उन्हें उतने वर्ष पहले छोड़ गई थीं, घर-आंगन वैसा का वैसा, पुराने रूढ़िबद्ध प्रेम जहां पुराने खीचतान, रिश्तों के दांवपेच सिर उठाकर खड़े हैं. तो यहां क्या वास्तव में कुछ नहीं बदला?

'व्यक्तिगत...हम लोगों का...'देयर इज नो पर्सनल फॉर विमेन...मेरे माता-पिता मेरी डोर पकड़कर मुझे चलाते हैं. मैंसज होने पर मैं अछूत बन जाती हूं...नौकरी करना चाहूं तो उनकी इजाजत चाहिए... खर्च करूं तो एक-एक पाई का हिसाब दो...बाहर निकलो तो कहां...क्या...कैसे... किससे...जाने कितना गणित, कितना जमा-घटा...पर्सनल...माई फुट.'

भावना का यह रूप तो मैंने कभी न देखा था.

जानती तक न थी कि उसके भीतर भी एक जीती जागती औरत है जो सोचती-समझती, विद्रोह करना चाहती है. आजतक तो वह सब का शिकार रही है जिसे जब चाहे, जैसे चाहे सुइयां घोंपी

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जा सकती हैं, यही जानती थी. नहीं जानती थी कि उन मोटे चश्मों के पीछे औरत की वह तेज निगाह है, जिसमें सजगता है, विद्रोह पनप रहा है. वह भी इस दुनिया के बनावटीपन पर क्रोधित हो सकती है.

तन्वी को लगता है नानी-नाना-मम्मा में कुछ न बदला. वे पिछला सखी से थामे खड़े हैं. आगे बढ़ने की कोई गुंजाइश न छोड़ते हुए, क्यों?

आम खरीदकर बोरी पकड़ने की घटना से लगता है उसकी मां ने जीवन के किसी पन्ने को पलटा ही नहीं—वहीं की वही खड़ी रह गई जहां थीं. परंतु तन्वी उस संस्कृति की चौखट से कहीं आगे चली गई है.

विलियम से उसका, 'लिव-इन रिलेशनशिप' उसे आधुनिक नारी के एक ऐसे पैडस्टल पर खड़ा कर देता है जो पुरानी सड़ी-गली मानसिकता की कल्पना से भी परे आज के आधुनिक जीवन का सच है. पूरा उपन्यास 'सन् 2000 के जून' की तप्त हवाओं में इसी पहेली से शुरू होकर इसी पहेली के बूझने पर समाप्त हो पाता है. उपन्यास की मूल-प्रेरणा इन दो पीढ़ियों का संघर्ष है.

मुझे हैरानी होती...हमेशा ही, तब भी जब मैं सोलह वर्ष की थी और अब जब अठाईस वर्ष की किसी लड़की का ऐसे लड़के से विवाह या तीस वर्षीय लड़के की ऐसी लड़की से शादी, जिन्हें हम पांच-सात मिनट भर मिलते हैं...जानते बिलकुल भी नहीं...न लड़के को न लड़की को, न परिवार को.

संतोष जी के शब्दों में—

तब गलती कहां और किसकी है?

पीढ़ियों का अंतराल वर्ष कभी खत्म होने न पाता या भरी न जा सकने वाली खाई—तिस पर जातिभेद, कभी वर्गभेद-रंगभेद और अब तो देशों का अंतराल भी—फिर संस्कृति, सभ्यता का अंतर—इतने अंतर हों तो कैसे तो हम निकलें? जितना यथार्थ यह है उतना ही यह भी कि मानव सदा ही नयी राहें खोजता उन पर चलता रहता है तभी नए का उद्घाटन होता है. नई तस्वीरें बनती हैं, नए रूप-आकार व्यवहार जन्म लेते हैं. नए तरह का शोध करना, नए-नए एक्सपेरिमेंट करना, नए-नए कैमिकल्स का योग कर कोई तीसरा बनाकर उसकी प्रतिक्रिया नोट करना—आदि यह न हो सके तो हम एक ही जगह जड़ नहीं जाएंगे? चलते रहना जीवन का प्रतीक है—तो चलना तो है ही, आगे जाना तो है ही—छोड़ो अब इसको क्या सोचना? किसकी गलती, किसकी नहीं—किसका दायित्व, किसका नहीं, क्या करे—कौन बदले, कौन झुके—किसी का कोई हल नहीं. क्या सोचना? तन्वी की सोच,...विल और मेरी शादी....दोनों ओर के सगे उपस्थित.... खुले मन से ब्याह...हंसते-खिलखिलाते हम सब...सब भयानक सपने-सा हो गया... यहां कुछ भी कहां बदला है?

न डैड से कुछ कहा, न मम्मा ने कुछ सुना, नाना का हुक्म नादिरशाही ऐलान-सा डंके की चोट चारों ओर गूंज रहा था कि लड़के के आने का दिन आ गया. मम्मा की आज्ञानुसार मुझे नाना के घर पहुंच जाना था, भावना को तैयार करने के साथ-साथ स्वयं को भी सजाना-संवारना था. नाना-नानी के अनुसार मैं यूं तो सांवले रंग की सुंदरी थी तिस पर अमेरिका निवासी, वहीं नौकरी करती, डॉलर में कमा रही थी. अव्वल तो अनेक खूबियों से भरपूर, पर थी तो लड़की ही, जिसे लड़के के लिए सजना-संवरना चाहिए ही.

अंत में संतोष का हल है—

जीवन जीने की एकमात्र राह है, एक मात्र लक्ष्य है, जिस पर चलकर इंसान खुश होना, सुख से जीना, बसंत की खिलखिलाहट सभी सुन सकता है तथा पतझड़ की टूटन, झटकन, भटकन, दुख, तकलीफें सभी का सामना कर सकता है और इसी राह पर चलने का अर्थ अनुभव-यात्रा है, जो जन्म के साथ प्रारंभ होती है. व्यक्ति को परिपक्व करती है और जीने का ढंग सिखाती है. 'संन्यास' की प्राप्ति यही है. सम+न्यास अर्थात् वह गद्दी जिस पर बैठ मानव दुख-सुख सभी के लिए समभाव रखता है.

प्रारंभ में कहा था,

'खुशी कोई डाल में लगा फल तो न है, जिसे हाथ में पकड़ा और तोड़ लिया.'

आज कहूंगी, 'खुशी मन में छिपा वह भाव है, जो करीबी संबंधों के रसायन से जुड़ा होता है, बाहर निकल आए तो अमृत-सा बरसता है.'

मुझे लगता है यह उपन्यास 'सन् 2000 का जून' एक टीपिकल भारतीय परिवार का दस्तावेज है. साल-दर-साल पुरानी पड़ती जाती जीवन-पद्धति, जो अब धीरे-धीरे जीवन के फलक पर फीकी पड़ती जा रही है. आगे अपने वाली पीढ़ी इस उपन्यास को एक ऐतिहासिक आकाशदीप की तरह पढ़ेगी जो उनके लिए एक बहुत पुरानी स्टोन एज जैसी सभ्यता का चित्र पेश करेगी. ऐसा जीवन चक्र जो समय के अंतराल में केवल कागज पर लिखे नाटक सी शाश्वतता में बुझी-बुझी सांसें जी रहा था.

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पुस्तक : सन् 2000 का जून
लेखक : संतोष गोयल
प्रकाशक : अमन प्रकाशन, कानपुर
मूल्य : 400 रुपए

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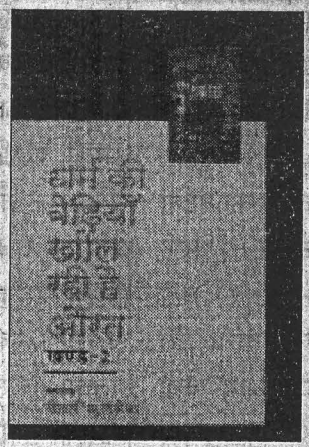
साहस भरा सार्थक प्रयास

परख

सुपरिचित रचनाकार नीलम कुलश्रेष्ठ के साहस, श्रम, जोखिम वृत्ति, एकाग्रता को धन्यवाद देना चाहिए कि इन्होंने धर्म जैसे सर्वाधिक संवेदनशील मसले पर एक नहीं, तीन पुस्तकें सम्पादित कर डालीं–(1) धर्म की बेड़ियां खोल रही है औरत–खंड एक, (2) धर्म के आर-पार औरत, (3) धर्म की बेड़ियां खोल रही है औरत–खंड दो.

धर्म पर तमाम पुस्तकें लिखी गई हैं लेकिन 'धर्म की बेड़ियां खोल रही है औरत खंड–दो' में नीलम कुलश्रेष्ठ ने ऐसी सामग्री का चयन किया है जो धर्म के पक्ष-विपक्ष की परख-पड़ताल करती है साथ ही धर्म को लेकर स्त्रियों के विवेकसम्मत दृष्टिकोण को स्पष्ट करती है. भूमिका में कुंवर पाल सिंह ने निर्णायक बात लिखी है, "हमारे समाज में धर्म की भूमिका नकारात्मक रही है." सच है, धर्म की स्थापना प्राणी मात्र के योग-क्षेम के लिए की गई थी कि धर्म पर चलने से मनुष्य में नियम, नियमितता, नैतिकता, आत्म नियंत्रण, आत्म शुद्धि का भाव जागृत होगा लेकिन नकारात्मक भूमिका के कारण धर्म विभेद, भेदभाव, आडंबर, पाखंड, अंधविश्वास, अहंकार, छल-बल, धन प्रदर्शन, चढ़ोतरी, चंदा उगाही, स्त्री शोषण की ओर उन्मुख होता चला गया. खासकर स्त्रियों को धर्म का भय दिखाकर जिस तरह घेरा गया, धर्म उनके लिए ऐसा भयानक अंतहीन चक बनता चला गया जिससे छूटना असंभव लगता है. नीलम कुलश्रेष्ठ

सुषमा मुनीन्द्र



आत्मकथन में लिखती हैं, "स्त्रियों को निकृष्ट समझने व शोषित करने की जालसाजी युगों से होती आ रही है जो अब ज्वालामुखी का विस्फोट बन रही हैं." इस बेहद व्यावहारिक टिप्पणी को मनीषा कुलश्रेष्ठ अपनी कहानी 'केयर ऑफ स्वात घाटी' में इंगित करती है. "उस समय के ब्राह्मणों ने सदियों तक अपने लाभ के लिए बहुत कुछ नष्ट हो जाने दिया और बहुत कुछ क्षेपकों की तरह हमारे महान ग्रंथों में जोड़ दिया!" (पृ. 109) सर्वविदित है सिख धर्म को छोड़कर सभी धर्मों में स्त्री की स्थिति को दूसरे दर्जे पर रखा गया है. पुरुष वर्चस्ववादी समाज में हिंदू, इस्लाम, ईसाई, यहूदी, जैन, बौद्ध...अन्य धर्म स्त्रियों के प्रति संवेदनशील नहीं रहे हैं. जैसे सभी धर्म एक-दूसरे की प्रतिलिपि हैं. हर धर्म में पुरुष वर्चस्व है. संजय सहाय अपने आलेख 'धार्मिक औरतें' में लिखते हैं, "सभी धर्मों में सबसे समर्पित भक्त महिलाएं होती हैं. धर्म का सारा व्यापार कारोबार इनके भरोसे चलता है लेकिन हर धर्म का संस्थापक और उसका परमपिता कोई पुरुष होता है." हम देख ही रहे हैं पितृ सत्तात्मक समाज के कठोर पारिवारिक-सामाजिक-धार्मिक यम-नियम का पालन करने हेतु स्त्रियों को किस तरह विवश ही नहीं भयभीत किया गया है. यदि वे कथित यम-नियम का पालन नहीं करेंगी, उनका लोक (मायके-ससुराल में ठौर नहीं मिलेगी. अन्य ठौर ढूंढेंगी तो कुलटा-कलंकिनी कही जाएंगी) बिगड़ेगा. निर्जल व्रत, उपवास, भजन-कीर्तन नहीं करेंगी, साधु-संतों का चरणामृत नहीं लेंगी तो परलोक (रौरव नर्क की भागी बनेंगी) बिगड़ेगा. पुरुष नीति- अनीति करने के लिए मुक्त है लेकिन कुल की कीर्ति को बढ़ाने के लिए स्त्रियों का कर्तव्य है सीता और सावित्री बनकर रहें. पुस्तक में शामिल सुधा अरोड़ा, हुस्न तबस्सुम निहां, जोहरा निगाह, बृज किशोर, मेहता, रेनू सक्सेना, रंजना जायसवाल, संजय तिगांवकर, प्रभा मजूमदार, वत्सला पाण्डेय, रेखा चमोली, शुभम श्री, कुसुम अंसल, संतोष श्रीवास्तव, मीरा रामनिवास और नीलम कुलश्रेष्ठ के लेखन से गुजरकर धर्मतंत्र और स्त्री की स्थिति के बीच के जटिल और शोषणमूलक संबंध को समझा जा सकता है.

नीलम कुलश्रेष्ठ ने इस पुस्तक के लिए परिश्रमपूर्वक ऐसी रचनाओं का चयन किया है जो स्पष्ट करती हैं धर्म की आड़ में स्त्रियों के विरुद्ध आदिकाल से विकट साजिश रची जाती रही है. कहीं उन्हें वस्तु समझा जाता है कहीं मूक-वधिर जीव. उनसे संबंधित फैसले पिता या पति करते थे जो कि आज भी करते हैं. गांधारी, माधवी, अहिल्या पिता के गलत फैसलों से विवश हुईं तो ओधवती, द्रौपदी, हिडिम्बा पति के गलत फैसलों से आहत हुईं. भीष्म से पराजित हुए गांधार नरेश सुबल ने भीष्म की अधीनता से बचने के लिए भीष्म की शर्त स्वीकार कर पुत्री गांधारी का मत जाने बिना उसे उनके सुपुर्द कर दिया था. हस्तिनापुर पहुंचकर गांधारी को विदित

हुआ उसका विवाह दरअसल नेत्रविहीन धृतराष्ट्र से सुनिश्चित हुआ है. पराए राज्य में उसके प्रतिकार का अर्थ न था. उसने क्रोध और प्रतिशोध में जीवनपर्यंत आंखों पर पट्टी बांधने का अटल निर्णय कर लिया कि जहां पिता राजनीतिक संबंध और लाभ को प्रमुखता दे, भीष्म षड्यंत्र रचे, पति नेत्रविहीन हो, ऐसे जगत को देखने का मतलब नहीं (नाटक–गांधारी–जयवर्धन). राजा ययाति अपनी पुत्री माधवी को भोग के लिए तमाम राजाओं के पास भेजते हैं (कहानी–ओधवती...). अहिल्या अपने पिता राजा बध्यश्व की वचनबद्धता का भाजन बनी. इन्द्र, अहिल्या को पटरानी बनाना चाहते थे पर बध्यश्व वचनबद्ध थे. बध्यश्व के संतान नहीं हो रही थी. गौतम ऋषि ने सशर्त पुत्रेष्ठि यज्ञ किया कि बध्यश्व अपनी पहली संतान को उनकी सेवा में समर्पित करेंगे. वचन न निभाने से ऋषि श्राप देंगे जैसे भय से बध्यश्व अपनी पहली संतान अहिल्या को वृद्ध गौतम के आश्रम में छोड़ आते हैं. अहल्या की वृद्ध पति में रुचि नहीं है. वह इंद्र का आह्वान करती है. सूचित होने पर ऋषि उसका त्याग करते हैं. "आपने वृद्धावस्था में तरुणी को पत्नी बनाया, यह सही है?" जैसा निर्भीक प्रश्न कर अहिल्या, ऋषि को ग्लानि से भर देती है (कहानी–श्राप और पश्चात्ताप–डॉ. वासुदेव). यात्रा पर जा रहे सुदर्शन अपनी पत्नी ओधवती को निर्देश दे गए घर में पधारे हुए अतिथि धर्मराज के सत्कार में कमी न रखे. धर्मराज चाहें तो ओधवती उनकी काम पिपासा भी शांत करे. ओधवती, पति के निर्देश का पालन करने को बाध्य हुई (कहानी–ओधवती...). हिडिम्बा तो ऐसी हतभाग्य है जिसे भीम (पति) ने बिसरा दिया लेकिन वह अपना कर्तव्य नहीं भूलती. पांडवों की ओर से युद्ध करने के लिए पुत्र घटोत्कच और पौत्र को भेजती है. पुत्र-पौत्र वीर गति को प्राप्त होते हैं लेकिन पांडव नोटिस नहीं लेते. व्यथित हिडिम्बा मीलों का फासला तय कर शरशैया पर पड़े भीष्म के सम्मुख आती है. ऐसे वेधक प्रश्न करती है जिनके उत्तर न भीष्म, कृष्ण, कुंती, द्रौपदी के पास हैं न उस भीम के पास जिसने हिडिम्बा से गुप्त विवाह कर उसका उपभोग किया और द्रौपदी के साथ समाजस्वीकृति जीवन जीता रहा. ये स्थितियां सदियों पहले की नहीं, आज का भी सच हैं. स्त्रियों के योगदान पर ध्यान नहीं दिया जाता. नहीं सोचा जाता स्त्रियों को भी अपने लिए टाइम और स्पेस चाहिए. उन्हें सामाजिक-पारिवारिक-धार्मिक दबावों में यूं रखा जाता है कि वे अपने लिए कुछ न सोचें, न कहें, न करें. जबकि धर्म–वह है जो समानता का व्यवहार करे, भूख खत्म करे, शांति दे, आराम दे, सुरक्षा दे, सुंदर जीवन पर विश्वास दृढ़ करे, स्त्री और पुरुष की सहभागिता सुनिश्चित करे. कहानी 'योगक्षेम' का यश तर्क करता है, "विचार, दर्शन, वेदशास्त्र से संसार के काम क्या चलाए जा सकते हैं? ...धर्म और दर्शन एक दबाव है. ज्ञान और ईश्वर बंधन. मोक्ष और स्वर्गकल्पना है या विश्वास...जप-तप से न शुद्ध होती है, न ध्यान-साधना से मन शांत होता है. ...आसक्ति, तृप्ति, विरक्ति, फिर मुक्ति." इस सिद्धांत का अनुमोदन नीलम कुलश्रेष्ठ की कहानी 'हवा जरा थमकर बहो' भी करती है. संत जीवन धारण कर आश्रम में रहने वाली संन्यासिन शैलजा का चित्त, आश्रम में आने वाले एक व्यक्ति, जो उनकी ओर आकृष्ट है, की ओर सायास चला जाता है. शैलजा संत जीवन से बाहर आने का साहस नहीं कर पाती यद्यपि उस व्यक्ति की स्मृति मात्र में मोक्ष की अनुभूति होती है. प्रकृति का यही सच है. मोक्ष पृथ्वी की दो सर्वश्रेष्ठ इकाइयों पुरुष और स्त्री के मिलन में ही निहित है. सृष्टि ईश्वर है. ईश्वर की सत्ता इस मिलन से कायम है. ब्रह्मचर्य, गृहस्थाश्रम, वानप्रस्थ, संन्यास जैसी व्यवस्था ही उत्तम है. इस व्यवस्था में मनुष्य अपने कर्तव्य, वचन, व्यवहार, आचरण को लेकर सजग, सतर्क, एकनिष्ठ, नैतिक, ईमानदार रहे तो इससे बड़ा धर्म कुछ नहीं है. मनुष्य जीवन अपने आप में श्रेष्ठ है. इस जीवन में "हमें भी मुट्ठी भर आसमां और कदम भर जमीं चाहिए (97)." की कामना रखने वाली स्त्री का भी उतना ही हक है, जितना पुरुष का. धर्म की बेड़ियां तोड़कर वे मनुष्य जीवन को भरपूर जीना चाहती हैं– "एक दिन/मनुष्य की परिभाषा/पढ़ रही थी मैं/समझ रही थी मैं/पढ़ते-समझते/खुद को भी मनुष्य समझ लिया था मैंने/तब से/पुरुष प्रधान समाज में/उंगलियां उठ रही थीं मुझ पर/प्रश्न चिह्न लग गया था/मेरी उस भूल पर/जहां मैं भी/एक मनुष्य थी. (कविता–मैं भी मनुष्य हूं–डॉ. नलिनी पुरोहित)."

अंत में यही कहूंगी पुस्तक में इतना विस्तार, इतनी रेंज, इतने प्रसंग, इतने प्रश्न, इतने तर्क, इतनी चुनौती, इतनी गहराई है जिसे समीक्षा में समेटना संभव नहीं है. यह पुस्तक वह सलीका और विवेक देती है जिससे हम आस्था और पाखंड में फर्क कर लें. पुरुष समुदाय अपनी मानसिकता बदलने का उपक्रम करें. प्रबुद्ध और जनतांत्रिक समाज यह सोचने के लिए विवश बल्कि प्रेरित हो कि मनुष्यता ही सबसे बड़ा धर्म है. नीर-क्षीर विवेक को प्रस्तुत करने के लिए नीलम कुलश्रेष्ठ की जितनी सराहना की जाए कम है.

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पुस्तक : धर्म की बेड़ियां खोल रही है औरत-खंड दो
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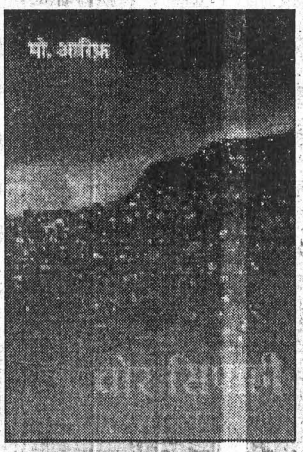
चोर सिपाही

आलोक तिवारी

परख

'चोर सिपाही' मोहम्मद आरिफ़ का तीसरा कहानी-संग्रह है. इससे पूर्व मोहम्मद आरिफ़ 'उपयात्रा' नामक बहुचर्चित उपन्यास लिख चुके हैं. 'फूलों का बाड़ा' और 'फिर कभी' इनके अन्य कहानी संग्रह हैं. मोहम्मद आरिफ़ वर्तमान कथा-लेखन परिदृश्य में निरंतर सक्रिय कथाकारों में गिने जाते हैं. इनकी कहानियों में जीवन यथार्थ अपनी समस्त जटिलताओं के बावजूद भाषा की बुनियादी शक्ति के सहारे एक ऐसे वातायन का निर्माण करता चलता है जिसमें पाठक बड़ी सहजता से प्रवेश कर पाता है. भूमंडलीकरण तथा उत्तर-आधुनिकता के दबावों के तहत जहां वर्तमान पीढ़ी के अधिकांश कथाकार भाषा की सहजता और पारदर्शिता को बरतने के कौशल से महरूम होते जा रहे हैं वहीं मोहम्मद आरिफ़ बहुत सरलतापूर्वक, बिना किसी नाटकीयता या लाग-लपेट के यथार्थ के समस्त पेचोखम को उसकी गतिशीलता (डायनमिक्स) के साथ आंकने की क्षमता रखते हैं. उनकी भाषा कहीं भी जटिल अथवा बोझिल नहीं होने पाती. समीक्ष्य कहानी-संग्रह 'चोर सिपाही' भी इसका अपवाद नहीं है.

'चोर सिपाही' कहानी-संग्रह में कुल आठ कहानियां संग्रहीत हैं. इस संग्रह की पहली ही कहानी जो कि संग्रह के शीर्षक के रूप में भी चुनी गई है, कथानक के झीने आवरण में भारत के सामाजिक यथार्थ के उस कटु सत्य की तरफ संकेत करती है जो 'भारतीयता' की अवधारणा के लिए ही संकट बनता जा रहा है. भारत अपनी मूलभूत प्रतिज्ञाओं में एक ऐसे देश के रूप में स्थापित हुआ था, जो अपनी सीमा में निवास करने वाले विविध सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक वर्गों को समान मानवीय और



लोकतांत्रिक अधिकारों को प्रदान करने का वचन देता है. किंतु भारत की राजनीतिक स्वतंत्रता के बहुत पहले से ऐसी शक्तियां सक्रिय रही हैं जो न केवल भारतीयता की इस अवधारणा में विश्वास नहीं रखती बल्कि इस पर निरंतर चोट भी करती रही हैं. खेद का विषय है कि अपनी समस्त सदिच्छाओं के बावजूद हमारा राजनैतिक, सामाजिक और बौद्धिक नेतृत्व स्वतंत्रता के 68 साल बीतने के बाद भी देश को इन शक्तियों से मुक्त नहीं करवा पाया है. 'चोर-सिपाही' कहानी अपने कलेवर में इसी विडम्बना को मूर्त करती है. शिल्प की दृष्टि से यह 'कहानी' और 'डायरी' के संक्रमण का उदाहरण है. कहानी के आरंभ में लेखक लगभग तीन साढ़े तीन पृष्ठों में सूचनात्मक ढंग से यह बताता है कि यह सलीम नामक एक किशोर की डायरी है. इस डायरी में सलीम ने अपने ननिहाल के प्रवास की, जो कि अहमदाबाद शहर में है, लगभग एक सप्ताह की घटनाओं को आंका है. लेखक एक डायरी जैसी निजी व गोपनीय दस्तावेज को पब्लिक डोमेन में लाने का औचित्य स्पष्ट करते हुए बताता है कि "इस लड़के की डायरी में ऐसे विवरण हैं....सारे नहीं, कुछेक जो 'व्यक्तिगत और गोपनीय' का बड़ी आसानी से अतिक्रमण करते हैं." यह सलीम के अहमदाबाद प्रवास के दौरान लिखी गई. वह भी उन सात-आठ दिनों में जब उसके मामू के मोहल्ले में कर्फ्यू जैसे हालात थे.ऐसी स्थिति में सलीम, गुल्नाज अप्पी और कुछ दूसरे बच्चे समय काटने के लिए घर में चोर-सिपाही का खेल खेलते थे...जान भी बची रहे, मनोरंजन भी हो जाए. लेखक के अनुसार डायरी के नामकरण (चोर- सिपाही) का कारण भी यही है. यद्यपि यह नामकरण अपने औचित्य को भलीभांति स्पष्ट नहीं कर पाता. लेखक इसी क्रम में कुछ ऐसे संकेत भी दे डालता है जो वस्तुतः यथार्थ के उस धुंधले पक्ष को आलोकित करते चलते हैं जिन्हें प्रायः नजरंदाज कर दिया जाता है. डायरी की भाषा के विषय में लेखक बताता है कि...'उसने डायरी के कठिन उर्दू और क्लिष्ट हिंदी के शब्दों को हिंदुस्तानी से बदल दिया है." कहना न होगा कि यह भाषा की संप्रेषणीयता के प्रति लेखक की सजगता को दर्शाता है. हटाए या बदल दिए गए शब्द हैं...उर्दू के 'मुमानी' की जगह 'मामी', 'सितम' की जगह 'जुल्म', 'अस्मत' की जगह 'इज्जत' और हिंदी के 'मलेच्छ' ऐसे ही कई शब्द. इसी स्वीकार

और अस्वीकार के तर्कों के बीच लेखक एक ऐसे प्रसंग का जिक्र करता है जो अपनी सांकेतिकता में वर्तमान विडंबना को सारांश की तरह समेटे हुए है. लेखक उल्लेख करता है कि सलीम ने अपनी डायरी में नानी के हवाले से दर्ज किया है, "गोधरा के समय जब तुम्हारे नाना और मझले मामू को गांधी चौक पर आग लगाके जलाया तो मामू अम्मा बचाओ अम्मा बचाओ और नाना हिन्दुस्तान हमारा है, हिन्दुस्तान हमारा है , बोलकर चिल्लाते रहे जब तक कि जलकर राख नहीं हो गए." लेखक इस प्रसंग को डायरी में शामिल नहीं कर रहा है किन्तु डायरी में शामिल न किए जाने का तर्क यहां अनुपस्थित है. लेखक द्वारा इस प्रसंग को डायरी में शामिल न किए जाने के बावजूद इस प्रसंग की गूंज पूरी कहानी में निरंतर विद्यमान है.

जहां लेखक ने पहली कहानी (चोर-सिपाही) में डायरी और कहानी विधा का मेल किया है वहीं दूसरी कहानी 'मोहम्मद अली हकले' में रेखाचित्र विधा की स्पष्ट झलक देखने को मिलती है. यह कहानी इस बात की ताकीद करती है कि किस प्रकार कुंठा, जिद और पुरुष-वर्चस्व की पितृ-सत्तात्मक सोच प्रेम और मानवीय संबंधों के लिए घातक है. कहानी का मुख्य पात्र समाज का एक उपेक्षित और विकलांग व्यक्ति है. शरीर से कसरती और स्वभाव से अत्यंत स्वाभिमानी होने के बावजूद वह हकलाने की वजह से सभी की हंसी का पात्र बनता है. लोग उसे काना कहकर चिढाते हैं, जबकि 'माशाअल्ला वे अपनी दोनों आंखों से अच्छा देखते थे.' 35 साल की अवस्था में भी उनका कोई दोस्त नहीं था. शादी, तलाक और फिर शादी की पेचीदगी को रखने की कोशिश करती यह कहानी पुरुषवादी समाज के विरुद्ध मुखर प्रतिरोध भले ही न हो किन्तु चेतना के उदय का संकेतक तो है ही.

संग्रह की कहानी 'मन' अनुबंध पर नौकरी करने वाले एक सामान्य से भारतीय निम्न मध्यमवर्गीय व्यक्ति की कहानी है जो अपनी साधारण सी जिंदगी में बहुत से ऊंचे मूल्यों और मानदंडों का जीवन भर निर्वाह करता है. आज के कार्पोरेट भारत में छोटे लालों (कहानी का एक पात्र है छोटे लाल) की संख्या बढ़ती ही जा रही है जो अपने परिश्रम और कार्य के प्रति निष्ठा के बावजूद छले जाने के लिए अभिशप्त हैं.

'लुत्फ़' कहानी को पढ़ते हुए सहसा निर्मल वर्मा की कई कहानियां जेहन में उभर आती हैं. इस कहानी में भी वही शहरी वातावरण है, कसौली की वादियां हैं, घर-परिवार से दूर एक लॉज में ठहरा हुआ एक सैलानी है, कॉफी हाउस है... किंतु अपने गठन में यह कहानी निर्मल वर्मा की कहानियों के मुकाबले कहीं नहीं टिकती. यह कहानी बहुत कुछ गढ़ी हुई मालूम देती है. मो. आरिफ़ की भाषा की सहजता भी इस कहानी में कहीं नजर नहीं आती. यह कहानी तीन-चार हजार रुपए मासिक तनख्वाह पाने वाले, उत्तर प्रदेश के छोटे से शहर सुल्तानपुर के निवासी किंतु घूमने-फिरने का शौक रखने वाले मानिक अस्थाना की है. घूमने को लेकर मानिक अस्थाना के अपने अलग विचार हैं. वे अपरिचित जगहों तथा ऑफ सीजन में घूमना पसंद करते हैं. इसका कारण काफी कुछ आर्थिक भी है. यह कहानी उनकी कसौली की उस यात्रा के संदर्भ में है जब रविवार की एक शांत-शीतल सुबह भूख से पीड़ित हो वे मिसेज सिंधू के कैफे पर पंहुचे. मिसेज सिंधू बेहद बातूनी और झक्की किस्म की अधेड़ महिला हैं. अस्थाना साहब शाम तक मिसेज सिंधू का लगभग एकतरफा संलाप सुनते रहते हैं कि अंततः उन्हें कुछ खाने को मिल जाएगा परंतु उन्हें कुछ भी हासिल नहीं होता.

'प्रेम कहानी' नामक कहानी भी मानिक अस्थाना की कहानी है, परंतु ये साहब 50 वर्षीय तथा दिल्ली के निवासी हैं. यह कहानी बहुत दूर तक सिगमंड फ्रायड के 'साइकोसेक्सुअल सिद्धांत' से प्रभावित है. मानिक अस्थाना की पुरुषवादी सोच भी रेखांकित हुई है. 'कागज का जहाज' कहानी बाढ़ की विभीषिका और रिलीफ के नाम पर खेले जाने वाले घिनौने खेल के परिप्रेक्ष्य में घटित होने वाली मानवीय त्रासदी का जीवंत यथार्थ प्रस्तुत करती है.

'चोर-सिपाही' संग्रह के अंत में लेखक मोहम्मद आरिफ ने अपने गृहनगर समस्तीपुर पर लिखा अपना एक रिपोर्ताज संकलित किया है. शीर्षक है–'एक अधूरा शहर'. समस्तीपुर वर्तमान बिहार प्रांत के केंद्र में स्थित एक महत्त्वपूर्ण जनपद है. इस रिपोर्ताज में लेखक की भाषा की सहज पारदर्शिता अपने पूरे शबाब पर है. लेखक के मन में एक कसक है जो रिपोर्ताज में अनेकशः अनायास ही उभर आती है. यहां तक कि–'समस्तीपुर का उल्लेख सलमान रुश्दी ने मिडनाइट्स चिल्ड्रेन में और जिम कार्बेट ने अपनी आत्मकथा में किया है.' पर यह बात कम ही लोगों को पता होगी...और यह विडंबना ही है कि इस सबके होते हुए भी 'है तो समस्तीपुर एक छोटी सी जगह ही.' एक अन्य जगह लेखक कहता है, 'जान लीजिए समस्तीपुर महाकवि विद्यापति की जन्मभूमि और कर्मभूमि है, कविवर पोद्दार जी यहीं के हैं, बाबू देवकीनंदन खत्री यहीं पैदा हुए, उत्तर प्रदेश के भूतपूर्व गवर्नर सी.पी.एन. सिंह और बिहार में सामाजिक न्याय आंदोलन के प्रणेता और राष्ट्रीय नेता कर्पूरी ठाकुर इसी मिट्टी के बने हैं. इस मिट्टी की लीची

में मिठास और मालदा में रस अभी भी बाकी है, दही चूड़ा, लिट्टी, सत्तू, खिचड़ी और भूजा का न तो स्वाद कम हुआ है और न शौक, लेकिन भाइयों, आज जनरेटर की रोशनी में जीने वाला यह टाउन अपना कस्बाई चरित्र छोड़कर शहर बनने की जल्दबाजी में हैं. कुछ ऐसे ही जैसे कोई बच्चा जवानों जैसी हरकतें करने लगे; जैसे कोई निम्नवर्गीय बाला उद्योगपति की बेटी जैसे नखरे दिखाने की कोशिश करे; जैसे कोई विदूषक अपने दर्द को भुलाकर अपनी फूहड़ चेष्टाओं से दर्शकों को हंसाने का प्रयास करे.' कहना न होगा कि देश के अन्य बड़े साहित्यिक-सांस्कृतिक केंद्रों जैसे इलाहाबाद, पटना, फैजाबाद, जयपुर, इंदौर, सागर और ऐसे ही बहुत से कस्बों की स्थिति कमोबेश यही है. अत्यंत तेजी से पसरते उपभोक्ता कल्चर ने न केवल उनकी जातीय संस्कृति बल्कि उनकी विशिष्ट पहचान को भी नष्ट कर दिया है या करने को आतुर है. यह दुखद है, पर ज्यादा कष्टप्रद यह है कि इस खतरे को पहचानने के बावजूद हम जबानी जमाखर्च के अतिरिक्त कुछ नहीं कर रहे हैं...कर पा रहे हैं. मोहमद आरिफ ने जिस तन्मयता से इस रिपोर्ताज को लिखा है वह स्वयं में एक उपलब्धि है. और यह उपलब्धि शायद इसीलिए संभव हो सकी क्योंकि समस्तीपुर अपनी समस्त अच्छाइयों और कमियों के होते हुए भी लेखक का अपना शहर है, कुछ वैसे ही जैसे बनारस केदारनाथ सिंह का अपना शहर है.

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लघुकथा

फेस टाइम

सुकेश साहनी

फेसबुक खोलते ही वह धक से रह गया, उसके प्रिय युवा रंगकर्मी मित्र की 'हार्ट अटैक' से मृत्यु हो गई थी. पोस्ट को पढ़ते हुए उसकी आँखें डबडबा आईं. उसने कमेंट लिखा, ''बहुत ही दुखद, नमन!''

अगली ही पोस्ट पर उसके बाल सखा ने एक फोटो शेयर की थी, जिसमें वे तीनों जिगरी दोस्त एक नुमाइश मैदान में एक दूसरे के गले में बाहें डाले खड़े थे. अपने लड़कपन की फोटो को वह मंत्रमुग्ध-सा देखता रह गया, होठों पर बारीक मुस्कान तैर गई, उसने 'लाइक' करते हुए लिखा, 'तीन तिलंगे' जवाब में मित्र ने अट्टहास करता 'ईमोजी' भेजा, जिसे देखकर उसे हंसी आ गई.

आगे बढ़ा तो उसकी नजरें अपनी महिला मित्र की बहुत ही उत्तेजक प्रोफाइल पिक्चर पर पड़ीं. वह बड़ी देर तक उसे बड़ा करके देखता रहा, बहुत सोचने विचारने के बाद उसने कमेंट में 'धांसू' का संकेत करता 'ईमोजी' पोस्ट कर दिया.

फोन 'लो-बैट्री' का संकेत करने लगा तो वह बैठक से बैडरूम में आ गया. यहां पत्नी भी अपने फोन पर व्यस्त थी.

''अब बस भी करो,'' फोन को चार्जिंग में लगाते हुए उसने कहा, ''दिन-रात इसी में लगी रहती हो.''

पत्नी ने उसकी बात पर कोई ध्यान नहीं दिया, मुस्कराते हुए कुछ टाइप करने लगी. यह देखकर उसका गुस्सा सातवें आसमान पर पहुंच गया.

''मैंने तुमसे कुछ कहा?सुनाई नहीं देता!'' वह चिल्लाया, ''फोन रखो. मुझे सोना है.''

''तुम्हें मना किसने किया है, सो जाओ. मुझे अभी देर लगेगी, ''पत्नी ने रुखाई से कहा, ''तुम खुद दिन-रात फोन से चिपके रहते हो, मैंने कभी कुछ कहा?!''

''मेरी बराबरी मत करो, मेरा तो ऑफिस का सर्किल है, दूसरे सौ झमेले हैं. तुम्हारी तरह खाली बैठे पलंग नहीं तोड़ता. नारी मुक्ति के नाम पर न जाने कैसे कैसे ग्रुपों में घुसी रहती हो. बिगाड़ कर रख दिया है इस लत ने तुम्हें. बोलने की तमीज तक तो रही नहीं.''

इस बार पत्नी ने कोई जवाब नहीं दिया और मैसेंजर पर कुछ टाइप करने लगी.

गुस्से में तमतमाते हुए उसने कमरे की लाइट बंद कर दी और पत्नी की ओर पीठ कर लेट गया. मैसेंजर पर चल रही चैटिंग की हल्की आवाज उसके कान में पिघले सीसे-सी पड़ रही थी. बहुत देर तक पत्नी ने फोन नहीं रखा तो उसने करवट बदलकर देखा, पत्नी 'फेसटाइम' वीडियो पर थी. स्क्रीन की लाइट में पत्नी का चेहरा चमक रहा था. उसके चेहरे पर बहुत ही मोहक मुस्कान थी. उसे याद आया ऐसी मुस्कान तो पत्नी के होठों पर तब होती थी, जब लवमैरिज से पहले वे डेटिंग पर जाते थे. तो क्या...? इसका मतलब...जरूर उसका चक्कर किसी से चल रहा है...

वह अंगारों पर लोटने लगा.

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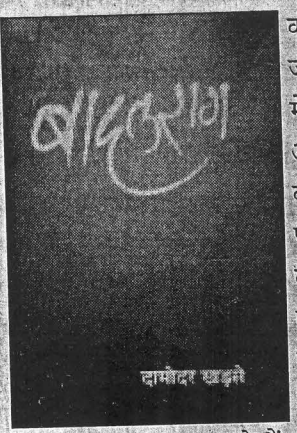
परिरक्षित पुनर्नवा

अशोक गुजराती

परख

ज्ञानपीठ से सद्यःप्रकाशित दामोदर खड़से का नवीनतम उपन्यास 'बादल राग' मेरे सामने है. इससे पूर्व आए उनके उपन्यास 'काला सूरज' और 'भगदड़' मैं पढ़ चुका हूं. उनके द्वारा हिंदी में अनूदित कई मराठी की किताबें, जिसमें 'अछूत'–दया पवार की–अपनी खास पहचान रखती है. उसी प्रकार 'बारोमास' भी. इतना सब वे लिखते रहे हैं; अनुवाद करते रहे हैं और भूलने से पहले जिक्र कर दूं कि कविताओं की और यात्रा-संस्मरण की भी उनकी पुस्तकें हैं. यह परिश्रम और अनुभव उनकी परिपक्वता दर्शाता है इस उपन्यास में. कहना न होगा कि यह रचना उनकी लेखनी को वहां पहुंचाती है, जहां आलोचना के वास्ते कोई स्थान नहीं छोड़ती.

इस उपन्यास को पढ़ते समय मुझे याद आती रही दो चर्चित उपन्यासों की. जी हां, मुझे कभी 'मुझे चांद चाहिए' का और कभी 'अन्ना कैरेनिना' का स्मरण होता रहा. ऐसा नहीं कि उसमें और इनमें ऐसी कोई समानता है लेकिन नायिका के चरित्र-चित्रण के छोटे-छोटे बिंदु वैसी ही–फिर भी अपने आप में बिलकुल अलग–प्रतिस्थापना करते रहते हैं. इन दिनों स्त्री-स्वतंत्रता की काफी ज्यादा यहां-वहां प्रस्तुतियां आती रही हैं. उनमें कुछ मानने लायक होती हैं तो कुछ अतिरेक का दोष लिए हुए. एक सामान्य महिला यदि अपने जीवन में अनेक त्याग करते हुए ऊंचाई की ओर बढ़ने का संकल्प ठान लेती है तो उसकी सफलता निश्चित होती है. इसमें सेक्स की सीढ़ी को अलक्षित कर–हालांकि पुरुष चारा डालने से बाज नहीं आते–नायिका सुनिधि का यह सफर मुश्किल लेकिन रोचकता से भरा है. और...पुरुषों के हमेशा के स्त्री-लोलुप स्वभाव से हटकर नायक विकास का उसमें भरपूर योगदान विशेष उल्लेखनीय है.



उपन्यास में अपने कथ्य को विस्तारित करना पर्याप्त जोखिम-भरा होता है. अगरचे लेखक बीच-बीच में थोड़ा ढीला पड़ जाए तो कथानक को सही दिशा देना फिर उसके वश में नहीं होता. यहां स्त्री का–एक बिखरी हुई स्थिति से उठान–जो सामाजिक परिप्रेक्ष्य में बहुत कठिन होता है–को बड़े हठ के साथ दामोदर खड़से तटस्थ भाव से शीर्ष तक पहुंचाते हैं. कामकाजी महिला को कार्यालयीन परिसर में–पुरुषों से अधिकांश घिरे हुए–अपनी अस्मिता को न केवल बचाए रखना अपितु उत्तरोत्तर उनकी तुलना में बेहतरी हासिल करना कितना दुर्गम होता है, यह उपन्यास के केंद्र में है. अर्थात् पुरुषों में बिरले ही सही–कुछेक इन सारी सच्चाइयों और अवधारणाओं को अंगूठा दिखाते हुए किसी मादा का शोषण न हो, इसकी सुरक्षितता प्रदान करते रहते हैं. यह हमारे नीचता की तरफ अग्रसर समाज के लिए एक सबक की ओर इशारा करता है.

रही बात स्त्री के मन की. उसके चेहरे के हाव-भाव अक्सर उसे प्रकट करने में संयम दिखाते हैं. वह जो सोचती है, कम से कम परायों के समक्ष जाहिर नहीं होने देती. ऐसे में पुरुष लेखक को उसके अंतर्मन की थाह लेने हेतु काफी जद्दोजहद करनी पड़ती है. हां, आप स्वयं पात्रों को मनमाफिक चला रहे हों तो आपको सब पता ही होता है. सही लेखन वही है, जिसमें पात्र अपनी राह खुद तय करते हैं और लेखक उनके मनोभावों को, उनकी अंतरात्मा की सदा को दूर से ही परिलक्षित करते हुए बस एक तटस्थ आख्यान निर्मित करता है.

पुस्तक का ब्लर्ब कहता है–"स्त्रियों का मन समझने के लिए स्त्री ही होनी चाहिए." यह धारणा दामोदर खड़से ने अपने उपन्यास 'बादल राग' में गलत सिद्ध कर दी है. स्त्री केंद्रित अनुभवों को साहित्य रूप देते समय केवल पारिवारिक, सामाजिक वास्तविकता का विश्लेषण ही काफी नहीं है, बल्कि स्त्री-मन की अंतर्व्यथा-वेदनाओं की दैहिक अनुभूतियों के परिणामों का भी ध्यान रखना होगा. दामोदर खड़से ने इस उपन्यास के माध्यम से इसे अभिव्यक्त किया है."

दूसरी ओर एक मर्द की मानसिकता को बूझना जरा आसान होता है. यहीं पर लेखक की परीक्षा होती है. किसी औरत के प्रति उसका आकर्षण सतही न होकर भी कभी देह की आकांक्षा नहीं करेगा, यह सामान्य व्यवहार के विपरीत भले ही हो, सच भी तो है. प्रेम में शरीर ही सब कुछ नहीं होता लेकिन स्त्री आपके सम्मुख बुरी तरह समर्पित हो तो आपके सारे आदर्श धरे रह जाते हैं. अपवादस्वरूप अगर पुरुष

(५१)

उसे रोकता है, समझाता है कि यह तुम्हारे लिए उचित नहीं है तो यह उसके सिद्धांतों की हर हाल में जीत ही है. फ्लैप मैटर इसी को रेखांकित करता है–'आत्म-भान जागृत स्त्री-पुरुष आपसी वैचारिक समानता आधारित एक-दूसरे के व्यक्तित्व को आदरपूर्वक स्वीकार करते हैं तो यह स्त्रीत्व का सम्मान ही है.'' इस ऊहापोह के द्वंद्व में मैं नायिका की अपेक्षा इस उपन्यास के नायक की अपनी मनःस्थितियों पर विजय को अधिक महत्त्वपूर्ण मानता हूं.

अब हम मुड़ते हैं कथानक की ओर. सुनिधि, जो पहले शिक्षिका थी, बैंक के क्षेत्रीय दफ्तर में प्रोबेशनरी ऑफिसर के पद पर नियुक्ति पाती है. इस कार्यालय का सर्वेसर्वा है विकास, जो उसका सुहृद भाव से स्वागत करता है. धीरे-धीरे पता चलता है कि सुनिधि पारिवारिक तौर पर बहुत दुखी है. उसका पति नंदन देर रात दारू पीकर जुए में हारकर घर आता है. उसकी सास यशोधरा परंपरागत सास नहीं है. नौकरी करती है. ससुर सेवानिवृत्त हैं और निर्लिप्त स्वभाव के हैं. यशोधरा जी अपनी बहू के प्रति बेहद केयरिंग हैं; उसकी तकलीफ पूरी तरह समझती हैं. यह सब है पर अपने बेटे को लेकर वे स्वाभाविकतः चिंतित हैं. चाहती हैं कि सुनिधि उसे संभाल ले. विवाह को तीन वर्ष हो चुके हैं परंतु पति-पत्नी एक-दूसरे से दूर, और दूर होते जाते हैं. सास-ससुर का लिहाज कर सुनिधि बेबस है.

सुनिधि का विवाह-पूर्व प्रेमी शिरीष उसकी यादों को उकसाता है. विकास का भी सहपाठी गौतमी के लिए रुझान अंत में प्रीति से शादी में तब्दीली पा गया है. बेटी गरिमा के प्रति उसका लगाव सहज से अधिक है. बावजूद, सुनिधि से उसकी आंतरिकता बढ़ती जाती है. ऐसे में ताज्जुब न होता जो दोनों अपनी-अपनी परिधि लांघकर दैहिक रूप से आपस में जुड़ जाते. बहरहाल, विकास का मनोबल तथा उसकी सुदृढ़ता उसे किसी भी भटकाव से रोकती है.

इधर बैंक के चेयरमैन का भ्रष्टाचार की हदें पार करना विकास को उलझन में डालता रहता है. वह चेयरमैन के ऐसे आदेशों के पालन के लिए स्वयं को तैयार नहीं कर पाता. नतीजतन उसके विश्वस्त अधीनस्थ अफसरों का तबादला कर दिया जाता है. सुनिधि और उसके संबंधों की अफवाह के कारण सुनिधि को स्थानीय ब्रांच में भेज दिया जाता है. उसके अपेक्षित प्रमोशन का तो सवाल ही नहीं उठता. उसके अधीन चेयरमैन के एक बदमाश आदमी को लाकर बैठा दिया जाता है. मतलब, ऊपर से जारी कूटनीति के तहत उसे इस कदर परेशान किया जाता है कि उसका जीना हराम हो जाता है.

उधर सुनिधि अपने ससुराल को त्यागकर मायके चली जाती है. वहां भी उसका स्वागत नहीं होता कि छोटी बहन के ब्याह में उसका यह साहस कहीं रुकावट न बन जाए. सुनिधि अंदर से सीमातीत मजबूत है. वह इन विपरीत परिस्थितियों में भी पहले बैंकिंग सर्टिफिकेट की और बाद में सीए की परीक्षा भी उत्तीर्ण कर लेती है. अर्थात् इसमें विकास का संपूर्ण सहयोग रहता है. यूनिवर्सिटी पार्क में रोज सुबह होती उनकी मुलाकातें उन्हें और करीब ले आती हैं. सुनिधि हॉस्टल में रहने लगती है और तलाक के लिए कोर्ट में अर्जी दाखिल कर देती है. अब वह लगभग स्वतंत्र है. वह विकास को अंतरंग क्षणों में दृढ़तापूर्वक निमंत्रण देती है कि वह उसके संतान की मां बनना चाहती है, बिना कोई हक उसके परिवार पर जताए, भविष्य में बच्चे के साथ अलग रहकर...

''विकास ने मान लिया कि स्त्री जब चाहती है तो अपना सर्वस्व लुटा सकती है. वह अपने निर्णय पर अडिग रह सकती है. सारी बंदिशों को झटक सकती है. जिंदगी को अकेले निभा सकती है...वह जब चाहती है तो पूरे समर्पण के साथ. कभी दुविधा में नहीं जीती...जहां सौंपना होता है, वह अपना सर्वस्व सौंप सकती है...विकास के मन में आज सुनिधि और दृढ़ और सुंदर रूप में स्थापित हो गई.''

विकास सुनिधि के इस आग्रह से रोमांचित तो है पर उसे अपने भावी जीवन के प्रति आगाह करते हुए इनकार की राह अपनाता है. अपने विवेक के निर्देश को स्वीकारना ज्यादा उपयुक्त मानता है. अपितु उसे दूसरे विवाह हेतु प्रोत्साहित करता है.

''विकास क्षणिक मोह के प्रभाव में नहीं बहा बल्कि उसने एक ऐसी बात कही जिससे सुनिधि के मन में विकास की ऊंचाई कई गुना बढ़ गई...''सुनिधि मैं तुम्हारी सारी भावनाओं का आदर करता हूं. पर यह सब अव्यावहारिक और तुम्हारे भविष्य के खिलाफ़ है. दुनिया कितनी भी बदल जाए, आदमी कितना भी साहसी क्यों न हो, हमारा समाज चीजों को स्वीकार करने में उतना परिवर्तित नहीं हुआ है... सच कहूं सुनिधि, यह तुम्हारी खुशियों का माध्यम कभी नहीं हो सकता...तुम तो पूर्णता पाओगी या नहीं, नहीं मालूम...पर आने वाला बच्चा बेहद अपूर्ण, एकांगी महसूस करेगा. सामाजिक रूप से उपेक्षित और मानसिक रूप से वह अपाहिज-सा होगा. स्कूल में दूसरे बच्चों के साथ वह भटकन और प्रताड़ना अनुभव करेगा... तुमने मेरे सामने बात रखी...तुम्हारे विश्वास और समर्पण का मैं सम्मान करता हूं... इसी का वास्ता देकर कहता हूं कि किसी और के सामने यह प्रस्ताव सपने में भी मत रखना...कोई भी इस भावना का फायदा उठाकर तुम्हें कहीं का नहीं छोड़ेगा...''

चेयरमैन और यूनियन की साजिश से विकास को औरंगाबाद क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय में ट्रांसफर कर दिया जाता है. विकास उस दफ्तर को अपनी मेहनत और लगन से उन्नति के मार्ग पर ले आता है. यहां वह अकेला है. उसकी पत्नी प्रीति ने बेटी की पढ़ाई एवं कैरियर को अपने जीवन का एकमेव लक्ष्य निर्धारित कर लिया है. यह उसे एकाकी करता जाता है. बीच-बीच में

फोन पर सुनिधि से बातचीत हो जाती है. वह एक अच्छे दोस्त जैसा उसे आवश्यक सलाह-मशविरा देता है, जिस पर सुनिधि सदा की भांति अमल करती है. सुनिधि विकास को न पाकर भी पूरी तरह उसकी हो गई थी.

सुनिधि के तलाक का फैसला उसके पक्ष में आ जाता है. सीए की वजह से उसे मुंबई के एक विदेशी बैंक में चुन लिया जाता है. उसका प्रभावशाली व्यक्तित्व, उसकी खूबसूरती, उसका परिश्रम उसे यहां एक हैसियत दिलाता है. यहां और इससे पूर्व भी विकास के जोर देने के कारण वह विवाह के लिए दो युवकों के बारे में सोचती भी है. वह इनमें विकास की छवि ही तलाशती है. उसका चित्त स्थिर नहीं हो पाता. इन दो में से दूसरा पुनीत उसके काफी पीछे पड़ता है. सुनिधि को भी वह ठीक लगता है लेकिन वह इस चक्कर से अनायास बच जाती है, जब उसे चुनाव की खबरों के मध्य अचानक सीबीआई द्वारा पर्दाफाश किए हवाला कांड में लिप्त चार व्यक्तियों में एक पुनीत का फोटो दिखाई देता है. हालांकि यह समाचार चुनाव की सरगर्मी में दबा रह जाता है.

सुनिधि की फिर पदोन्नति होती है. उसे बैंक का साउथ इंडिया का इंचार्ज बनाकर बेंगलूर पोस्ट किया जाता है. पुनीत के विषय में विकास को नई जानकारी नहीं थी. वह सुनिधि को फोन करता है–

"एक बात बताओ...मैं पूछने वाला नहीं था, पर अब रहा नहीं जा रहा है... पुनीत वाली बात में तुमने क्या तय किया है?" विकास अपने उतावले कानों में सारी शक्ति पिरोकर पूछ गया.

"तुम सुनना चाहोगे?"

"ऑफकोर्स..."

"मैंने अब अकेले ही रहने का फैसला कर लिया है!"

सुनिधि के इस अंतिम निर्णय के शब्दों के पीछे कुछ छिपा है...'तुम नहीं तो कोई नहीं...' वह जीवन में शून्य से उठकर शिखर तक पहुंची है. विकास के प्यार की बनिस्बत. कह सकते हैं कि कोई पुरुष यदि स्त्री का परिरक्षण करे; हर मायने में– उसे सुरक्षा देकर उसमें निहित गुणों को विकसित करने में उसकी मदद करे तो स्त्री निश्चित ही पुनर्नवा बनकर उभर सकती है.

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पुस्तक : बादल राग
लेखक : दामोदर खड़से
प्रकाशक : भारतीय ज्ञानपीठ, नई दिल्ली
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आग्रह

• **हंस** के जिन सदस्यों का वार्षिक शुल्क खत्म हो गया है या होने जा रहा है वे कृपया अपना शुल्क शीघ्र भिजवाएं. चैक अक्षर प्रकाशन प्रा.लि. (Akshar Prakashan Pvt.Ltd.) के नाम से हो. पत्र/राशि भेजते समय अपनी सदस्यता संख्या लिखें या नई/पुरानी सदस्यता का उल्लेख अवश्य करें और इसकी सूचना मेल से अवश्य दे दें. ताकि किसी भी प्रकार के दोहराव से बचा जा सके. सुविधा के लिए अपना ईमेल भी लिख भेजें.

• डाक से हंस को भेजी जाने वाली प्रत्येक रचना में अपना नाम/पता/दूरभाष/ईमेल स्पष्ट अक्षरों में लिखें. लिफाफे के बाहर रचना-विधा का उल्लेख करें. रचना की एक प्रति अपने पास सुरक्षित रखें. छोटी रचना के लिए पत्र-व्यवहार करना संभव नहीं है.

• रेतघड़ी/रपट/अपना मोर्चा (पत्र) की शब्द संख्या अधिक न हो ताकि अधिक से अधिक लोगों को उचित स्थान दिया जा सके. रेतघड़ी की रपट के लिए शब्द-सीमा 500 की हो तो हमें सुविधा होगी.

–वीना उनियाल

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संचयन : स्नेह गोस्वामी

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मेरी पसंद : डॉ. पूर्वा शर्मा

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प्रार्थना में केवल पहाड़ नहीं

रचना त्यागी

परख

उपन्यास के शीर्षक में भले ही प्रार्थना में केवल पहाड़ है, पर वास्तव में प्रार्थनीय समस्या का दायरा बहुत वृहत् है. जो कुछ लिखा गया है, उसकी ओट में छिपा उतना ही महत्त्वपूर्ण वह भी है, जो नहीं लिखा गया. पाठक बहुत सहजता से उन स्थितियों को महसूस कर सकता है, जो अनलिखे शब्दों के रूप में उपन्यास में आई हैं. यदि वह संवेदनशील हुआ, तो उन प्रार्थनाओं की गूंज अपने अंतर्मन में सुन भी सकता है.

उपन्यास की भूमिका से प्रतीत होता है कि यह उपन्यास आदिवासी जनजीवन और उनकी समस्याओं पर केंद्रित है. किंतु पढ़ने पर पता चलता है कि इसमें निहित चिंताएं, संदर्भ व भविष्य दृष्टि केवल आदिवासियों से संबंधित नहीं, अपितु यह कदम-कदम पर पूंजीवाद और उसकी नाल से जुड़े राजनैतिक भ्रष्टाचार को इंगित करता है. धन-लालसा की सुरसा का मुंह इतना बड़ा है कि उसमें जाकर नैतिक मूल्य तो क्या, जीवन जैसी शय भी लापता हो जाती है. वैसे भी पूंजी और नैतिकता का बैर सनातन है. धन की अनंत लालसा के चलते शिकार के सामने अपने परिवार की स्त्रियों की देह परोसने का सौदा भी नगण्य है. स्वयं स्त्रियां भी अपनी देह को व्यापार और मुनाफे का एक माध्यम मानती हैं और उसके व्यावसायिक उपयोग का कोई विरोध नहीं करतीं. यह बात थोड़ा चौंकाती है, क्योंकि धनपशु इस उद्देश्य की पूर्ति के लिए परिवार की स्त्रियों से इतर व्यावसायिक युवतियों का उपयोग करते हैं, जैसा कि इस उपन्यास में भी दिखाया गया है.



कथानक मध्य प्रदेश के एक पहाड़ी गांव 'भिताड़ा' के रहवासी बाशिंदों के इर्द-गिर्द बुना गया है, जिनकी दुनिया उन पहाड़ियों और जंगलों तक ही सीमित है और उनसे बाहर की हर वस्तु उनके लिए अजूबा है. उनकी प्यास बुझाने वाली एकमात्र नदी में शराब के एक बड़े व्यापारी की कंपनी द्वारा हर वर्ष की भांति कई टन अपशिष्ट छोड़ दिया गया है. इस बार यह निर्णय आदिवासी इलाके पर कहर बनकर बरपा होता है, क्योंकि हर वर्ष शराब कंपनी द्वारा अपशिष्ट एक निश्चित तिथि पर छोड़ा जाता है, जिसके एक-दो दिन बाद वर्षा का आगमन होता है और उसके फलस्वरूप नदी में आने वाली बाढ़ विषैले अपशिष्ट को अपने साथ बहा ले जाती है. किंतु इस वर्ष प्रकृति भी जैसे मानव षड्यंत्रों के प्रत्युत्तर में अपना खेल दिखाती है और अनुमानित समय पर बरसात न होने के कारण फैक्ट्री का अपशिष्ट नदी के संपूर्ण जल को विषाक्त बना देता है. नदी पर निर्भर रहने वाले जीव-जंतु और भिताड़ा निवासी एक-एक कर प्राण गंवाने लगते हैं. इस समस्या को भांपकर शेष निवासी नदी के जल का त्याग कर प्यास से मरने पर विवश हो जाते हैं. लेकिन उनके जीवन-मरण से बेफिक्र फैक्ट्री का अरबपति मालिक, प्रशासन और नेतागण अपने-अपने कारणों के चलते मृत्यु के इस ताण्डव से तब तक आंख मूंदे रहते हैं, जब तक समीर चन्द्रा सरीखा ईमानदार पत्रकार उनके अमन-चैन की दीवार में सेंध लगाने नहीं आता.

पूंजी और सुरा-सुंदरी का मायावी जाल बिछाकर सत्ता और लोकतंत्र की चौथे स्तंभ की आत्मा का सौदा करने की त्रासदी को उपन्यास में कुशलता से दिखाया गया है. जाल फेंकने वाले और जाल में फंसने वालों की निर्लज्ज व कुत्सित मानसिकता का बेहतरीन चित्रण उपन्यास में किया गया है. इसके अलावा एक पक्ष वह भी है, जिसके लिए अभी भी अभी मानवता और जमीर की पुकार मायने रखती है—खोजी पत्रकार समीर चन्द्रा व धनपशु के हाथ की कठपुतली नीना. दोनों ही चरित्र कुछ हद तक लोभी होते हुए भी अपने लक्ष्य से नहीं भटकते. ये दोनों चरित्र भावुकता और व्यवहारिकता के झूले में झूलते हुए बीच की राह खोजते हैं, जिससे इनकी भावनाओं व कर्तव्य, दोनों की रक्षा हो सके. इन दोनों पात्रों के मानसिक द्वंद्व को बहुत सूक्ष्मता से उजागर किया गया है. इनका प्रेम-प्रसंग उपन्यास की शुष्क रेतीली भूमि में शीतल फुहार-सा प्रतीत होता है. इसके अलावा उपन्यास में दूसरी प्रेम कथा दो आदिवासी पात्रों— रतन व रूपा की है, जिनके जीवन में इस समय अपनी और अपने ग्रामवासियों की जीवन रक्षा से बढ़कर और कुछ नहीं है. अतः उनके प्रेम के चित्रण के बहुत अधिक अवसर नहीं मिल पाते. बावजूद इसके, एक महत्त्वपूर्ण बात, जिसे नजर अंदाज

नहीं लिया जा सकता, वह है—एक आदिवासी युग्म के प्रेम व एक महत्त्वाकांक्षी शहरी युग्म के प्रेम का अंतर. रूपा और रतन के लिए प्रेम का अर्थ निःस्वार्थ समर्पण है, स्वयं से पहले वयम का भाव है. इसीलिए जहां एक ओर रतन अपने बचे-खुचे ग्रामवासियों की जीवन रक्षा हेतु साथियों के साथ शहर जैसी अजानी दुनिया में जाकर धनोपार्जन करता है, वहीं दूसरी ओर रूपा प्रेमी के साथ जाने का लोभ न करते हुए पूर्ण समर्पण के साथ उसी संक्रमित आबोहवा में रहकर सबकी सेवा करती है, सबका संबल बनती है. यह घटना देहाती और शहरी मानसिकता के अन्तर को उभारती है, दोनों संदर्भों में प्रेम के भिन्न अर्थों को खोलती है.

उपन्यास में अवांतर कथा के रूप में आदिवासियों के शहर गमन की कथा है, जिसमें गांव की दशा से हताश होकर रतन व कुछ अन्य आदिवासियों का शहर जाकर रोजी-रोटी का जुगाड़ करना, वहां यूनियनबाजी की गिरफ्त में फंसना और उन सरलमना आदिवासियों का परिचय एक नई दुनिया से होने का चित्रण है. आरंभ में ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि उन जरूरतमंदों के जरिये मजदूर यूनियन भी अपने स्वार्थ को भुना रही है और शोषितों के लिए स्थापित संगठनों का विकृत चेहरा उपन्यास के माध्यम से उजागर होने को है, किंतु शीघ्र ही यूनियन के स्थानीय कार्यकर्ताओं में संवेदना का प्रवाह कर इसे एक पृथक् मोड़ दे दिया गया. दरअसल इस मोड़ का श्रेय आदिवासियों के निश्छल समर्पण को दिया जा सकता है, जो पार्टी के कार्यकर्ताओं तक को मोह लेता है. आदिवासियों की सरलता व पीड़ा देखकर उनके प्रति कार्यकर्ता के मन में उपजा स्नेह उसके जीवन के साथ ही छूटता है.

कथानक की प्रकृति यथार्थवादी होने के कारण इसमें विजय आदर्शों अथवा नैतिकता की नहीं हुई, बल्कि पूंजीवाद और स्वार्थ का पर्दाफाश करने वालों और अंतिम सांस तक उनसे संघर्ष करने वालों को हारते ही दिखाया गया है, अतः इस उपन्यास को आज के समय का बीभत्स सत्य दिखाता दस्तावेज कहना अनुपयुक्त न होगा. एक संपूर्ण गांव का नाम-ओ-निशां मिटा देने के बाद भी फैक्ट्री मालिक बहुत निश्चिंतता के साथ नदी के ही साथ खिलवाड़ करते अपने अगले प्रोजेक्ट की योजना में व्यस्त है, क्योंकि वह गांव किसी राजनैतिक दायरे में नहीं आता. वहां के जीते-जागते प्राणी किसी मतदाता सूची में नहीं आते. मात्र इस आधार पर उनके जीवन का कोई मूल्य नहीं है. यह सत्य बहुत बड़ी विडंबना की ओर संकेत करता है.

उपन्यास में कुछ अंश ध्यानाकर्षित करते हैं. बानगी के तौर पर—

• दुनिया में स्त्री न होती, तो क्या होता? आदमी अपराध किसके साथ करता? अपने अपराधों की क्षमा किससे मांगता? दुःख के कठिन समय में किसकी थपकी से तसल्ली पाता? दुःखों की लड़ाई में किससे हिम्मत हासिल कर पाता? स्त्री के बगैर पुरुष जीवन मिलने का कोई अर्थ ही नहीं है.

• प्रायः लोग कहते हैं कि आदिवासी जाहिल, हिंसक और आक्रामक होते हैं लेकिन उनका इतिहास उस समय की क्रूरता उन्हें विरासत में देकर जाता है. असीम यातनाएं, असंख्य दुःख और समय का क्रूर बर्ताव उन्हें एक अनाम क्रोध और अजानी आक्रामकता से भर देते हैं. आदिवासी व्यक्ति के प्रति नहीं, चतुर-चालाक समय की बेइमानियों की वजह से क्रूरता के आवरण ओढ़ते हैं, वरना जिसके प्रति प्रेम रखते हैं, उसके प्रति पूरी तरह समर्पित होते हैं. दुनिया में संभवतः आदिवासी ही एक ऐसी जनजाति है, जो गोरे-काले, छोटे-बड़े या अमीर-ग़रीब का फर्क नहीं करते हैं.

• सपनों का मर जाना दुनिया के सबसे ज्यादा आत्मीय का मर जाना होता है. बगैर सपने के व्यक्ति कैसे और क्यों ज़िंदा रहे?

कुछ बिंदु पढ़ते समय मन में विघ्न की लहर उठाते हैं, यथा—आदिवासियों की भाषा शहरी भाषा-सी स्पष्ट होना, उनका प्रायः 'क्रांति' और 'शोषण' जैसे शब्दों से नितांत अपरिचित होते हुए उन्हें कोई भौतिक वस्तु समझना, जबकि इनसे अधिक अन्य भारी शब्दों व वाक्यांशों का सहज प्रयोग करना. इसके अतिरिक्त इस महत्त्वपूर्ण कथानक के स्तर को बाधित करती है इसकी प्रूफ-रीडिंग, जो कि रचना-सौष्ठव का बेहद महत्त्वपूर्ण अंग होती है. कहीं-कहीं शिल्प की बुनावट उपन्यास की बजाय रिपोर्टिंग या डायरी-लेखन-सा एहसास देती प्रतीत होती है.

तथापि...पूंजीवाद, निजीकरण, राजनीति, पत्रकारिता व पर्यावरण-भक्षण की कुरूप नग्नता को इस साहसिकता के साथ प्रस्तुत करने के लिए लेखक निश्चित रूप से बधाई के पात्र हैं. साथ ही यह उपन्यास अखबार के किन्हीं कोनों में दबी-छिपी खबरों को एक नई समझ व दृष्टि से देखने-समझने का आयाम भी प्रदान करता है, जिन्हें प्रायः गौण समझकर हम पढ़ने की जहमत भी नहीं उठाते. इस रूप में भी निश्चित तौर पर लेखक ने धन-लोलुपता, स्त्री-मन, पत्रकारिता व संगठनों के विभिन्न आईनों में समाज के कई महत्त्वपूर्ण पक्षों के सत्य से रू-ब-रू कराकर अपना सामाजिक कर्तव्य व दायित्व बखूबी निभाया है, इसके लिए उन्हें साधुवाद.

❐

पुस्तक : प्रार्थना में पहाड़
लेखक : भालचंद्र जोशी
प्रकाशक : आधार प्रकाशन, पंचकूला (हरियाणा)
मूल्य : 200 रुपए (पेपरबैक)

Genetics and law

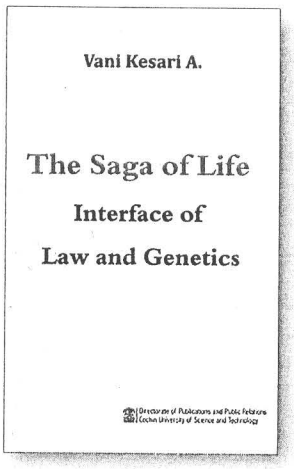
The book unravels the philosophical, legal and ethical challenges posed by genetic research. BY **DR B. EKBAL**

JAMES WATSON, the first director of the Human Genome Project (HGP), once quipped: "Genetic revolution brings unprecedented power to humanity with new ethical and social dilemmas." Watson wanted 2 per cent of the resources spent for the HGP to be set apart for a project called ELSI (Ethical, Legal and Social Impact of genetic revolution).

While humans explore the unlimited contours of life, the genomic revolution has unearthed the secrets of human life and attempted to give solutions to diseases that have tormented human life. Although many books, articles and monographs have been published in this area, the book under review is of contemporary relevance since it unravels the philosophical, legal and ethical aspects of the challenges posed by genomic research.

While focussing on the legal aspect of genetics, Vani Kesari has examined the relevant ethical issues relating to genetics and genomic technologies.

The book throws light on how philosophy coupled with spiritualism and humanism has influenced legal principles and the basic precepts of law and how as a result legal principles can address the challenges posed by scientific advances. The work analyses the response of law to the human rights challenges genomic research poses. With several pages dedicated to notes, references and bibliography, it will be a treasure trove for researchers in the area.



The Saga of Life Interface of Law and Genetics

By Vani Kesari A.

Cochin University of Science and Technology

Price: Rs.750

Vani Kesari attempts to make a philosophical inquiry into the scope, content and nature of the concept of life. The various issues relating to the sanctity of life are examined from theoretical and practical perspectives. The book also elaborates on the legal aspects of many of the currently debated issues such as capital punishment, contraception, sterilisation, suicide and euthanasia.

It delves into the concept of "life" in human rights jurisprudential discourses and in human rights instruments. This is worth understanding not only for the legal fraternity but also for the layman.

The author also raises the point that most human rights instruments employ the term "dignity" without taking the effort to define it. The judicial interpretation of the connotations of the term is examined in detail through Indian and foreign judgments. The author throws light on the perils of patenting in the area of genetics. She points out that human genetic research involves risk and at the same time it promises benefits to humanity.

The task of law is to balance the relative weightage between benefit and harm and choose the technique that furthers the interest of research participants and society alike. Cloning technology and its infringement upon bioethics are examined in this context.

The major criticism levelled against cloning is the destruction of human embryos used for therapeutic cloning and the legality of embryonic research. The author rightly points out that the major lacuna in this regard is the fragmentation of authority governing the realm of biomedical research.

Advances in certain areas of genetic research require legal restrictions since it can corrode the faith in human dignity and negate principal rights such as equality, non-discrimination, autonomy, and bodily integrity. The book evaluates recent legislative efforts undertaken in this field in different jurisdictions and at the international level. Discussions on the existing regulatory framework in India and the inherent weakness in it are highlighted in the book.

A concluding suggestion by the author is strict penal sanctions and monitoring mechanisms lest genetic research become an aberration on human dignity.

As the legal scholar Dr N.R. Madhava Menon mentions in his foreword, "*The Saga of Life* is the unending story of man's struggle with Nature and his efforts to know the unknown."

This work may be considered as aiding the scientist, the legal fraternity, and the academia in understanding the nuances behind this journey. □

Dr B. Ekbal is a public health activist, neurosurgeon, and academic.

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chapter again endorses the point made by Mathur that, while

> it is appreciable that the Government of Uttarakhand had initiated the digitalisation of land records ... and computerisation of record of rights has been completed, gender-wise segregated data about ownership on agricultural land, distributed *pattas* by state government to women ... are not available properly in the government records. (p 399)

Contribution of the Volume

There is no doubt that this voluminous work covering 14 states brings together rich information, and gives readers a sense of the historical context and social relations governing rules of inheritance and division of property, and land, in particular, among household members. It clearly brings out that women continue to be discriminated whatever be the social class, region or religion to which these households belong.

However, many of the chapters are heavy and long on reporting, while their analytical content is extremely poor. The lack of an analytical framework to situate the details contained in the chapters constantly leads to the question: What exactly is the significance of these details? What is the author inferring from these anecdotes? Equally significant from an analytical point of view is the need to differentiate women's right to land in her capacity as an equal citizen from the need to give them ownership and control over land since an overwhelming number of them presently work in agriculture. The larger question not examined by any of the authors is the state of agriculture in the country, and how many farming households want to continue with farming. In this context, the question not canvassed by any of the chapters is: How many of the women want land because they want to continue working in the agricultural field, or is it that their requirement for ownership and control over land is a demand for economic and social security?

Several puzzling but interesting questions that arise from the different chapters, however, remain unarticulated by the authors. For instance, most of the north-eastern states have very high levels of literacy among both men and women and yet there is no interrogation of why this important endowment has failed to lead to any sort of empowerment through membership in village- or clan-level decision-making bodies, getting rid of oppressive and regressive customary practices, etc. In the absence of such an interrogation, asking for improving women's literacy levels to make women aware of their rights, rings hollow. Several chapters in the volume make a number of assertions that are not backed by evidence or relevant references. The volume also needs to be edited for language and typographical errors.

Padmini Swaminathan (*pads78@yahoo.com*) is a visiting professor at the Council for Social Development, Hyderabad.

Producing Exclusionary Spaces in Delhi

GEETA THATRA

Accumulation by Segregation: Muslim Localities in Delhi by Ghazala Jamil sets itself an admirable task—that of narrating the exclusionary spatial ordering and the everyday life of Muslims in Delhi. As the subtitle "Muslim Localities in Delhi" might imply, this book is not limited to the physical spaces, but encompasses the structural processes, subjective meanings, and dominant representations that confine Muslims to marginal locations in the city. Jamil traverses different registers of sociological analysis to foreground the geographies of exclusion and the quotidian experiences of Muslims in contemporary urban India.

Accumulation by Segregation: Muslim Localities in Delhi by Ghazala Jamil, *New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017; pp xiv+240, ₹750.*

Muslims in urban India have begun receiving the much-needed scholarly attention. In the field of urban studies, there is a growing interest in exploring the dynamics of contemporary urbanisation and the creation of divided cities. However, its impact on Muslims remains uncharted. Some of the existing scholarship on Muslims has focused mostly on the widening socio-economic inequities and/or the creation of "ghettos" in the aftermath of "riots," and the cases of Ahmedabad or Mumbai are prominent here. A more recent work *Muslims in Indian Cities: Trajectories of Marginalisation*, edited by Christophe Jaffrelot and Laurent Gayer (2012), has broadened the canvas in terms of the number and size of the cities studied. Exploring the enmeshed processes of urbanisation, capital accumulation, and spatial segregation in Delhi, Jamil's book makes a remarkable contribution. Although it adds to the abundant scholarly literature on Delhi, it is relevant because it offers a fresh perspective on the exclusion of Muslims, which is spatially manifested in contradictory and differentiated ways. For doing so, Jamil's theoretical framework combines the economic processes underlying urbanisation, representations in the media, and the often-neglected discursive practices of urban governmentality.

The approach of this book is incisive, sensitive, and compelling. The author pursues three interrelated analytical moves. First, mapping the social geography of the city through ethnographic fieldwork, Jamil shows how the spatial segregation of Muslim neighbourhoods is produced. She explores the urban processes that link the local space with the economy of the city and global networks, and suggests that the exclusion of Muslims is structurally entwined with capitalism. Second, traversing through the discursive practices of governmentality and media representations, Jamil argues that Muslims are reduced to "normative non-citizens," which has weakened their

claims to space in the political community. The dominant discourses reinforce spatial segregation and engender the vulnerability of Muslims (particularly men) to retributive violence. Third, pursuing an imaginative exercise of (re)envisioning the city, Jamil reflects on the networks of solidarity in Muslim neighbourhoods against the curtains of social stigma and stereotypes that have rendered Muslim lives and localities precarious.

Unlike many Indian cities, the spatial segregation of Muslims in Delhi is not produced through mass communal violence at the behest of Hindu right-wing groups with the impunity provided by the state. The processes of segmentation in Delhi are far more insidious, diverse, and structural. The author traces the historical continuity in the marginalisation of Muslims in Delhi (although in a repeated fashion). The events remembered by Muslims residing in the segregated neighbourhoods are: the 1857 rebellion against the colonial state, and consequently their dispossession in the city; the unprecedented scale of violence and their dishousing due to the partition in 1947; and the postcolonial state's project of gentrification that led to their mass displacement from the walled city of Old Delhi in 1975. While there is continuity in the exclusion of Muslims, its spatial manifestation is divergent during recent times.

Segregation and Differentiation

The five predominant Muslim localities, discussed in the book, are the Old Delhi's walled city, Seelampur and Taj Enclave in the north-east, Nizamuddin in the west, and Jamia Nagar in the south. Drawing on the spatial triad of Henri Lefebvre; the first and second chapters focus on the lived space of neighbourhoods and the everyday negotiation of Muslims in the city. Jamil's analysis of the neighbourhoods presents a complex picture of the underlying processes at work in producing each of these exclusionary spaces.

The author interprets the areas adjoining Jama Masjid in Old Delhi as "commodified space" and its Muslim residents as "museumised objects" for the voyeuristic consumption of elites, tourists or the flâneur. The state promotes the image of this space as "cultural heritage" for "economic benefit" and to "define nationhood," but simultaneously hides the disparities. The residents participate in the culture industry without writing the script of its museum. Jamil suggests that they are nonchalant about this development of their locality (p 48), which shows their integration into the economy, however, at the cost of being "caught in the cesspool of stereotypical representation" (p 70).

In Seelampur, Jamil explores the relationship between the neighbourhood and informal labour. The trans-Yamuna cluster is a contiguous area with predominant Muslim settlements, yet diverse in terms of class, regional belonging, and housing typology. This locality is a small-scale manufacturing hub, which makes a resident call it "mini Japan," yet the dominant view of this place is that it is "mini Pakistan" (p 63). Jamil shows that communal spatial segregation also produces labour market segmentation, and Muslims are placed in the lower echelons of the manufacturing industry. It is accentuated by the lack of credit facilities and discriminatory business practices, which restrict the mobility of labour and capital (p 67). Muslims are confined to this neighbourhood due to stigma and suspicion, and their gains are marginal.

Jamia Nagar presents a fascinating exploration of the relationship between the neighbourhood and the university (Jamia Millia Islamia). Jamil's analysis of this neighbourhood could be discerned at three levels. First, is the distinct migratory experience that gives varied meanings to its residents. This area grew from a laidback educational locale in the 1960s to a bustling hub for employment opportunities since the 1990s. Eking out a living in the precarious private jobs, the skilled workers and professionals in Jamia facilitate the accumulation of capital for private businesses and corporations. Over the decades, it has attracted not only aspirants of education and private employment but also those escaping communal violence in North India.

While this neighbourhood held the promise of upward mobility for Muslims, it also enclosed them, based on the identity foisted upon them. Second, is the class hierarchy among Muslims as the affluent have created gated enclaves within the locality, which cannot be read as a process of voluntary self-segregation as they are denied accommodation in Hindu areas in spite of their ability to pay. Third, is the analysis of the real estate boom, which shows the contradiction in the market economy where Muslim capitalist entrepreneurs are doing "roaring business" by providing housing for Muslims, yet they "must manoeuvre in the limited segregated spaces because they cannot operate in non-Muslim areas" (p 82). The author argues that such speculative activity in the neighbourhood ensures that the "segregated topography of the city remains undisturbed" (p 81).

Taj Enclave is a gated citadel of affluent Muslims in Delhi. This neighbourhood underscores the problem of a homogeneous perception of Muslims, as the elites eschew any contact with the more deprived localities, and anxiously reinforce the hegemonic discourses that make (poor) Muslims prone to violence. Jamil suggests that these are "interesting spaces because they are microcosms that are fraught with all kinds of contradictory processes that Muslims are subjected to in the global urban" (p 88). A question that arises here is: What would a thicker description of this locality, than merely engaging with an exceptional case study, suggest? Would it lend credence to the idea of self-segregation?

In Nizamuddin, Jamil presents a case of east–west zonation of class difference among Muslims, as well as the politics of conservation played out in this neighbourhood of historical, religious and architectural importance. There is an impending threat of displacement for the residents of the *basti* as the monuments are taken up for restoration. Jamil argues that the intervention of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture is one of "eventual

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gentrification of the neighbourhood" (p 86). While the initiative of private actors might further the state's neo-liberal agenda and lead to the shrinking of the space available for the urban poor, it is a limited engagement with the question of conservation itself. Elsewhere in the book, Jamil calls for "countering epistemological Islamophobia" by engaging at the discursive level (p 186). However, she remains silent here about the attempts made to restore the monuments, which are under the constant threat of neglect, erasure, or even desecration in the process of rewriting the past by the Hindutva ideology. A more nuanced engagement with the politics of aesthetics and the discourses of nationalism might be a step towards rethinking the idea of conservation and its relationship with the neighbourhoods.

On the conceptual analysis of segregation, Jamil is critical of both the formulations of "self-segregation" and of "ghettoisation." On the one hand, she challenges the notion of Muslim localities as enclaves created by choice that reflect voluntary self-segregation, and emphasises segregation due to palpable fear of violence, discrimination by the state or civil society, and structural factors. Complicating this picture, she presents the dynamics of class differentiation among Muslims, through life trajectories, which show the individuals' choice of localities within the wider constraints of socio-spatial divisions in the city. Commenting on the agency exercised by individuals, Jamil suggests

> Notwithstanding the homogenising tone and tenor of hegemonic discourses, not all Muslims are discriminated in the same manner; they are not all segregated in the same way. As a result, everyone aspires more to become the kind of Muslim who would be less discriminated against. Like a chimera, segregation is a strange animal. It buys complicity of its subjects by discriminating between them. (p 90)

On the other hand, she refrains from employing the nomenclature of ghetto to describe the Muslim localities. The term ghetto has received global traction with the characterisation of localities that are homogeneous by race, ethnicity or religion. It is also used in Indian parlance to categorise spaces produced through coercion and violence, which symbolises stigma and exclusion of marginal communities. Such widespread deployment of the concept has blunted its historical and analytical specificity. Jamil finds this notion misleading and argues,

> The use of the term "ghetto" for Muslim neighbourhoods in Indian cities is problematic because it "normalises" segregation. It makes it appear that since societies have always shunned and segregated "the other" living within its precincts, there is nothing strange in this. There is an implicit resignation to there always being inequality in the city, and continuity of conflicting interests of various groups. (p 34)

Implicit in the concept of a ghetto is also an understanding of insurmountable borders. This book unravels the paradox wherein Muslim neighbourhoods are spatially delineated, but they are not closed. In other words, they are integrated into the economy of the city and global networks, although "the balance of accumulation of capital is tipped in favour of spaces elsewhere" (p 71). Interestingly, segregation is not intensified by the peripheralisation of Muslim neighbourhoods

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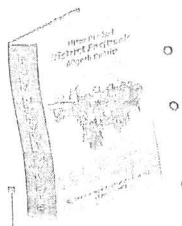
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outside the limits of the national capital, but manifests within the city. I draw these conclusions from the descriptions in the book, which are, however, not made explicitly by the author.

Representation and Citizenship

The discursive production of Muslim identity and spaces is investigated through the representations in Bollywood cinema and print media. This exploration marks an analytical shift from the particular Muslim neighbourhoods of Delhi to the representations of space. Scholars usually analyse the city plans, maps, models, diagrams, symbols, architectural visions, etc, to explore the assumptions and ideological underpinnings in the production of space. Interestingly, Jamil moves away from these conventional forms to discuss the dominant narrative in the media, which essentialises the Muslim identity and fortifies the exclusion of Muslims in the urban fabric. While Jamil presents a potent critique of the frameworks employed for analysing the construction of Muslim identity in the mainstream media, she does not offer any explanation for the epistemological choice of media representations as the object of her analysis, which could have better integrated Chapter 4 with the rest of the book.

Jamil's framing question to analyse the distance between the formal guarantee of citizenship by the state and the possibilities of claiming substantive rights by Muslims is: "Where does the often invoked idea of 'Muslim alienation' stem from?" (p 96). She begins Chapter 3 with a review of the existing scholarship to establish an antagonistic relationship between Muslims and the state—developed historically and in the founding moment of the nation state—as the conception of citizenship reflected communal fault lines and portrayed Muslims as disloyal citizens. Jamil calls it "citizenship deficit" that Muslims confront in the city (p 97), and this gap is only widening due to the fear and threat of retributive violence. Then, she discusses the lack of space for Muslims to articulate their specific issues in civil society initiatives (for instance, in the India against Corruption [IAC] campaign) or progressive movements (like the women's movement), which are traditional spaces for making claims of equal citizenship. Further, analysing a recent incident of fatal targeting in Seelampur (during the protests against the Sealing Drive in 2006), Jamil argues that Muslims experience alienation in the political community without meaningful articulation of critical dissent and political representation. Drawing on Michel Foucault's notion of biopolitics and Giorgio Agamben's conception of bare life, Jamil concludes that Muslims are "treated as normatively non-citizens at the minimum, and as *homines sacri* in the extreme" (p 125, emphasis in original).

Examining the practices of governmentality presents a promising theoretical framework; however, it is limited in terms of Jamil's empirical account. Relying on secondary literature to discuss the modes of urban governance in Delhi and the cursory observations of Aadhaar cards or data collection by the Samajik Suvidha Sangam (Mission Convergence) are insufficient. Further, Jamil does not provide any rationale for specifically choosing the IAC campaign and the women's movement or for tangentially bringing up the Dalit and LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) movements to reflect upon the political participation of Muslims. Surprisingly, the discursive construction of Muslim localities by urban planners and social scientists, which provides the logic for segregation, is discussed in a later chapter.

Envisioning the city

While Jamil focuses on differentiation to contest the monolithic category of Muslims and ghettos, which in turn challenges the view that involuntary segregation is a natural, inevitable or ecological process, the discussion about cohesion within the community is moving. The exploration of aspirations for a dignified life and the networks of solidarity among Muslims to meet their necessities is a life-affirming exercise. Jamil refers to these avenues as "spaces of counter hegemony," which provide a "breathing space" in the segregated neighbourhoods and a hope for emancipation while acknowledging that these spaces are enmeshed in the "logic of the globalised, neoliberal set-up" (p 181). She also engages with the modes of protest and socio-political institutions adopted by Muslims, and asserts the need for rethinking resistance beyond the "juridico-legal resistance and resistance-through-identification," which do not confront the contemporary systems of domination and the biopoltics of the state (p 189).

In lieu of a conclusion, Jamil foregrounds the questions for the (re)imagination of cities. What are the value considerations that could produce a different ordering of city's geography? How do we comprehend the new modes of exclusion by inclusion and contest the dominant narrative of the city as a site of consumption rather than as a site for dwelling? How do we assert collective rights to the city moving beyond the individual needs and aspirations? While Jamil paints a bleak picture of the cities, by quoting Antonio Gramsci's formulation "pessimism of intellect and optimism of will" (p 199), interestingly, she is thinking about the urban futures as an inclusive space for all rather than becoming insular and particular about Muslims.

Finally, what one misses is an engagement with the category of gender in the book. It is pertinent to point out that only five out of the 26 "excellent participants" of this research were women (pp 203–07). One awaits to see if a substantive discussion of the women's narratives would give us a more critical insight into the gendered negotiation of urban spaces, segregation of labour markets, and the formation of gendered subjectivities in the Muslim neighbourhoods, perhaps even disturbing the coherence of the author's plot. Concerning readability, this book is a conceptual quagmire: the author is grappling with too many ideas that make the substantive arguments elusive, and the reader is left to manoeuvre the dense narrative. Overall, this book is about the city as much as it is about Muslims, and should be read for thinking about how to make our cities liveable and egalitarian.

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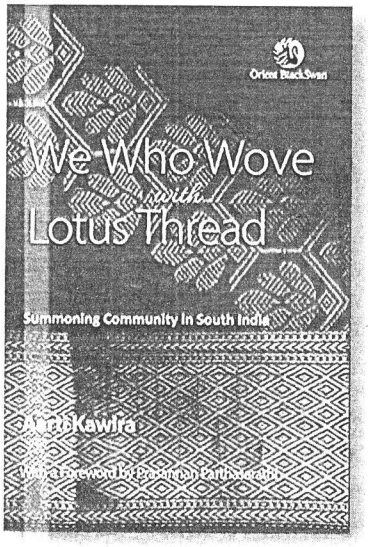
Caste as capital

The book makes important observations on the relevance of caste affinities for minority caste groups, such as the Padma Saliyars, whose trade interests are protected not through class alliances but through the creation of a caste identity. BY **ANANDHI S.**

THE plight of handloom weavers in Tamil Nadu is marked by poverty, misery and distress leading to suicides among them. Two instances that conjure up an image of weavers in distress are the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam-initiated community gruel centres for starving weavers, and the Tamil film *Kanchivaram* with a captivating plot on the sufferings of silk weavers.

The protagonist in the film, Venkatam, an impoverished silk weaver, despite generations of his family being involved in silk weaving, does not find a piece of silk cloth to wrap his father's body with. The desire to weave a silk sari for his daughter's wedding is thwarted by the horrid circumstances of poverty, a dysfunctional family and labour exploitation. The endless mental agony makes him poison his daughter, whose body he covers with the incomplete silk sari he had woven with silk threads stolen from yarn meant for making a sari for a temple deity. The film ends with a communist resolution of weavers' cooperatives for ending the crisis.

The book under review, *We Who Wove With Lotus Thread*, neither offers such images of weaver vulnerability nor does it offer any resolution of class collectivism. Instead, it invites us to look at how caste serves as social and cultural capital in protecting the material interest of the Telugu-speaking silk weaving community of Padma Saliyars of Tamil Nadu under harsh conditions of economic distress.



We Who Wove with Lotus Thread

Summoning Community in South India

By Aarti Kawlra

Orient Blackswan, Delhi, 2018

Pages: 187+xxiii

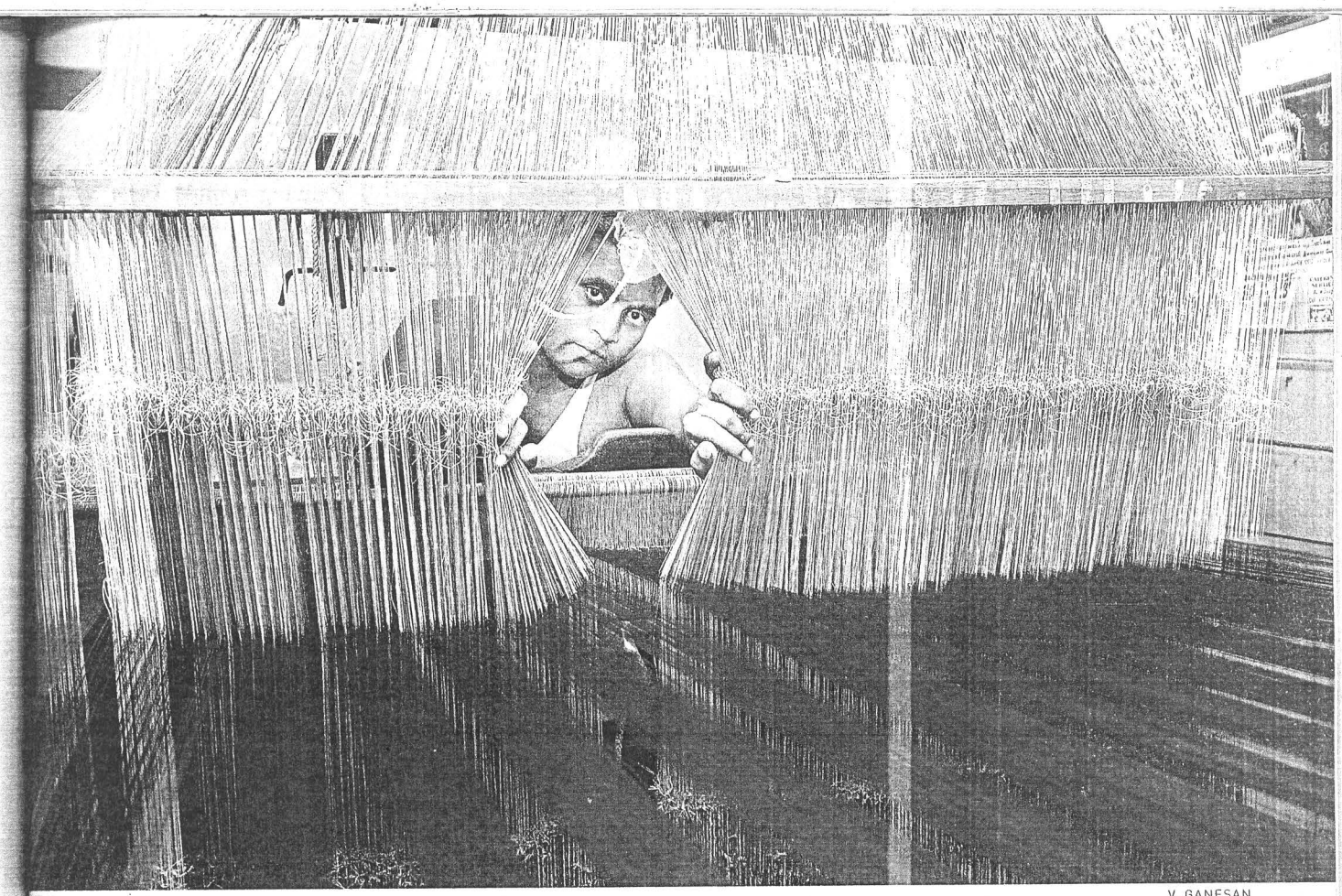
Price: Rs.695

The politics of caste mobilisation has been a major theme in writing the history of colonial and post-colonial south India. The centrality assigned to caste in colonial governance in south India resulted in caste and caste-based mobilisation gaining significance in politics, and it is not surprising that south Indian history, too, has predominantly focussed on the theme of caste. In post-colonial India, the politics of caste-based reservation, the Mandal Commission mainly, brought in fresh debates on the questions of silence and speakability in terms of caste, leading to renewed interest in studying caste identities and the interiority of caste.

The myriad ways of engaging with the caste question has also led to enquiries on everyday transactions of caste within the household and beyond, in terms of its production and reproduction, mainly in the context of labour and capital. An example of this is David Rudner's influential study on the Nattukottai Chettiars (the banking caste) that tells us how members of this caste group intensely invest in caste as their social and symbolic capital through their close attention to ritual prerogatives, marriage alliances and gifts and endowments, which in turn enable capital accumulation, distribution and investment.

We Who Wove With Lotus Thread follows the above trend in nuancing the caste history of the Padma Saliyars, a minority caste group with a population of eight lakhs, that is, 1 per cent of the population in Tamil Nadu. While they are mainly weavers, a few like Nalli Chinnasamy Chetti and his sons and grandsons have entered the sari trade. Nalli Chinnasami Chetti Pvt Ltd, and the group's various enterprises such as Nalli Silks and Nalli Next, are examples of a successful model of entrepreneurship in the silk sari trade across the world.

Interestingly, being a minority community, this caste group has no political



V. GANESAN

TRADITIONAL silk sari weaving in Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu. A file picture.

representation and its mobilisation has been mainly as weaver-entrepreneurs at the service of capital.

However, as this book highlights, there have been interesting historical moments when this caste group did make a political representation to be included in the Backward Caste category and later in the Other Backward Classes. But until the late 1990s, the Padma Saliyars had no significant presence in public service or in professional courses in education. The author observes that there was only one male engineer from the community during that period.

This excellent monograph on caste and work makes important observations on the relevance of caste affinities for minority caste groups such as the Padma Saliyars, whose trade interests are protected not through class alliances but through the creation of a bounded caste identity.

Importantly, it explains how the consolidation of caste collective could counter effectively the internal differences among community members, whose vulnerability to class conflicts have been accentuated by neoliberal economic transformations.

The Padma Saliyars constructed their distinct weaver caste identity in terms of their hereditary talent of weaving with the fibre of the lotus stem thread. (The Padma Saliyars trace their ancestry to the mythical Bhuvanarishi. He embodies their work culture as legend has it that every part of his body represented the loom. *Vishnu Puranam* mentions weavers who wove with the lotus stem that emanated from Vishnu's navel. The Padma Saliyars believe that Vishnu ordained them to weave.)

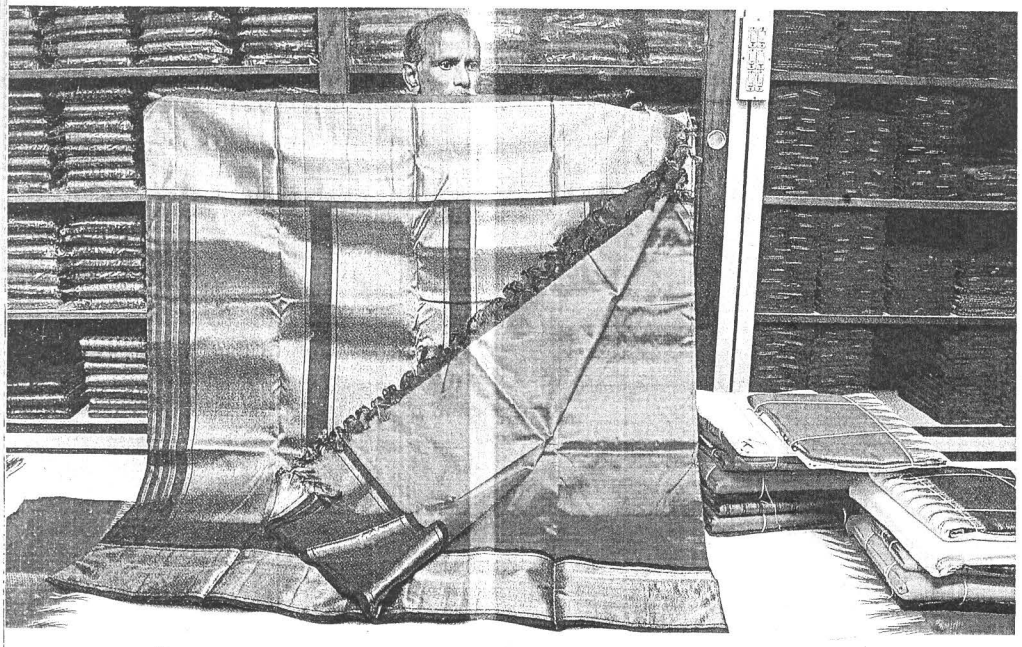
AUSPICIOUS WEAVERS

This, according to the author, served the purpose of distinguishing their work practices from other weavers and producers of cloths by attributing a specific cultural value of auspiciousness to their weaving.

What is also distinct about the Padma Saliyars is their claim to upper caste status on a par with Brahmins through their adherence to Sanskritic Hinduism. However, such a claim by the Padma Saliyars, though not uncommon among the upwardly mobile caste groups in Tamil Nadu, was closely linked to their primary concern of protecting their work identity by distinguishing themselves as "auspicious weavers". For instance, the thread ceremony performed for male Padma Saliyars , although resembling the Brahmin ritual practice, was not meant to assimilate the community into brahminism but to claim equal status for their artisanal work with the "mental labour" performed by Brahmins as preachers and interpreters of the Vedas. ("They have the Vedas, we have the weaving," was their assertion to such a claim.)

Similarly, their claim to caste privileges as divinely endowed silk weavers who were ritually

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B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

THE "TIRUPATI PERUMAL VAS[illegible]IRAM" with a width of 72 inches and length of 12 yards is made specially for the presiding deity of the Tirumala-Tirupati temple in Andhra Pradesh. A salesman displays the "vasthram" at Nalli Silks in T. Nagar, Chennai, which specialises in weaving it.

privileged to offer the temple flag in silk (for *kodi utsavam*, or flag festival) was also to overcome their status of numerical minority among other weaver communities and to improve their bargaining power with merchants.

Connecting the colonial history of such caste claims, Aarti Kawlra shows how the claims to ritual purity and high social status enabled this caste to avoid peasantisation of weavers and enabled them to become employees in the state-promoted handloom industry.

In independent India, the Hindu revival politics of the Padma Saliyars, as the book claims, enabled them to combat intra-caste class conflicts triggered by uncertainties in the handloom industry and served the interests of a few caste entrepreneurs, who had to ensure that the weaver-caste guild worked efficiently in order to enhance their silk sari trade.

As the book demonstrates, the Padma Saliyars' claim as weavers of silk cloth for god enabled them to overcome their minority and "subaltern" status among the other weaving communities and caste groups and take advantage of the state's programme for development of handloom weaving and promotion of craft heritage.

The neoliberal context of market volatility and the vanishing handloom industries revealing the community's extreme vulnerability and the fragility of the caste guild, has pushed the Padma Saliyars to re-articulate their caste identity as ritually endowed work identity.

In the light of the above contexts, the book strongly recommends a re-reading of such caste histories in the light of how caste serves as social and economic security, mainly for artisanal and working caste groups. One may recall here Ram Manohar Lohia's insightful observance about caste serving as social security for many in India: "Caste is presumably the world's largest insurance for which one does not pay a formal or regular premium. Solidarity is always there when everything else fails."

For Lohia, it is this system of insurance without any cost or premium that makes the system more resilient and durable mainly in the eyes of those "insiders"/members of caste groups. Caste as social solidarity, even when economic cooperation fails or fragments under the new market system, matters to the Padma Saliyars, and this matters to many such "minority" caste groups that are otherwise fragile and insecure in the political/public sphere. It is with such boundedness, these caste groups tended to practice segregation by denying similar social security to other "minority" castes from below, such as Dalits.

In recent years, learning about caste-based societies has got entangled in identity fixing, which has ossified discussions on caste, class and gender as relational categories.

"Who speaks for whom", though very important, has contributed to the limiting of liberal knowledge practices and new enquiries in studying caste, as in the case of the Nadar caste protests against a historian's account of colonial conditions of existence for this caste or in the controversy over the visual representation of B.R. Ambedkar in a political science textbook.

Such surveillance, boundary setting and policing of academic enquiries on caste and caste histories have contributed, in no small measure, to the freezing of caste into ascribed and embodied qualities without allowing us to investigate the relational aspects of caste as material and lived reality.

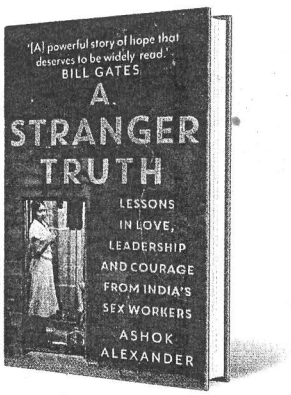
We Who Wove With Lotus Thread remarkably unsettles such tendencies of boundary setting or surveillance by caste groups with its sympathetic yet impartial enquiry into the Padma Saliyars' consciousness of caste as an articulation of privilege as well as subalternity in their encounters with neoliberal production relations. □

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BOOKS

FLAWED TRUTH

By Siddharth Dube



A STRANGER TRUTH : Lessons in Love, Leadership and Courage from India's Sex Workers
by Ashok Alexander
Juggernaut; ₹699; 287 pages

Over 20 million people had died of AIDS before the world's elite paid heed to the carnage. Then, belatedly, the disease became the global *cause du jour*. Billionaires and movie stars vied to declare their abiding concern for the AIDS-stricken, notably for 'innocent' women and children. Bill and Melinda Gates were in the vanguard of this elite, though with a commitment to public health matters that has been laudably sustained since—and in 2003, the couple selected Ashok Alexander to lead an HIV prevention effort backed by a $200 million gift.

A Stranger Truth is Alexander's journey from the moneyed world of McKinsey & Company, the American consulting firm, into the India of poverty, scorn and injustice suffered by sex workers of every gender.

Alexander is perceptive and iconoclastic. He writes, in insights that will surprise the many well-off Indians, who seem unaware that ordinary Indians muster heroism every day to survive a lifetime of blows: "These women stand out for the capacity to judge character and negotiate well. They survive because of their personal courage, charisma and sense of humour. They are selfless. They exercise leadership in the highest sense of the word, and with a combination of attributes I have rarely seen in business leaders." For such deep insights, Alexander deserves praise and readers.

He deserves praise, too, for marshalling evidence that rebukes the destructive campaign of disinformation on Indian sex work conditions led by *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof, feminist Gloria Steinem, journalist Ruchira Gupta and a motley crew of far-right US legislators and evangelical zealots, who heatedly insist that sex work is indistinguishable from sex trafficking and that the only acceptable solution is to abolish sex work, irrespective of the views of sex workers themselves or the considered advice of the United Nations' human rights experts.

"The brothels of India are the slave plantations of the 21st century," Kristof pronounced in his trademark sensationalistic take on brutish Third World nations, stridently adding, "India probably has more modern slaves than any country in the world. It has millions of women and girls in its brothels, often held captive for their first few years." In truth, as Alexander points out, only a tiny fraction—currently estimated at below one in 10—of India's sex workers ever work in brothels.

Alexander marshals evidence against the disinformation campaign on Indian sex-work conditions by those who insist that sex work is indistinguishable from sex trafficking

Gupta, who has long been Kristof's and Steinem's interlocutor on this subject, equally absurdly claims in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed that, in India, "the average age for beginning sex work is between nine and 10". Such stunning disregard for evidence and truth is only possible where the exaggeraters know they are unlikely to ever be held to account.

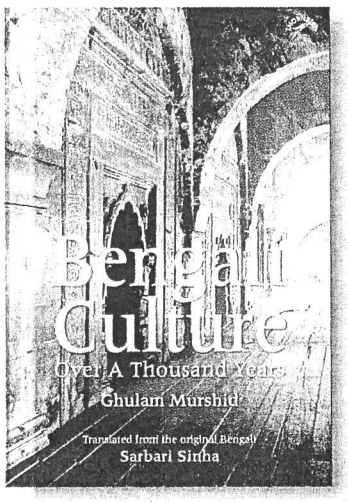
While *A Stranger Truth* deserves to be widely read, it is a strangely uneven book. The quality of Alexander's writing deteriorates after the first hundred-odd pages, to the point that it almost seems the work of another writer. The analysis deteriorates too, with the early insights giving way to reverential anecdotes about the Gates clan and needlessly exaggerated claims about the Gates-funded HIV-prevention effort.

The gravest weakness is Alexander's neglect of the far-reaching efforts by India's sex workers to fight for their rights since the early 1990s, endeavours that testify to the strength of grassroots democracy. Readers of *A Stranger Truth* would never know that India's sex workers do not merely display the individual leadership qualities that Alexander rightly celebrates, but also have for decades led pan-India movements demanding a cogent agenda of rights, a cornerstone of which is the decriminalisation of consensual sex work. My hope is that Alexander's ahistorical 'great man leading the poor' account will be the impetus for more readers to turn to Nalini Jameela's truly revelatory autobiography of life as a sex worker or the other recent accounts that document how India's sex workers have actually won progress. ■

Siddharth Dube works on social justice issues

History of a distinct culture

The meticulously researched book covers a whole gamut of themes, touching upon many aspects of the cultural history of Bengal. BY **RAZIUDDIN AQUIL**



Bengali Culture
Over a Thousand Years

By Ghulam Murshid
Translated from the original Bengali, "Hajaar Bochhorer Bangali Samskriti", by Sarbari Sinha

Niyogi Books, 2018

Pages: 644
Price: Rs.995

THE book was originally written for "intelligent non-academic" Bengali readers and published from Dhaka in 2006. Sarbari Sinha has offered a fine translation which reads like an original piece of work. In her Translator's Note, Sarbari Sinha has beautifully summed up the purpose and value of this work in the troubled times we inhabit. She writes: "Almost everywhere in the world, the walls are growing taller and more rigid as people turn away from history and ignore narratives that speak of shared destinies. More than ever before, this is the time to tell and share stories on the basis of recorded history instead of hearsay and social myths. If histories do not come out of the confines of academia and become part of everyday conversations, myth-making and bigotries inevitably usurp the intellectual space that is left vacant."

Ghulam Murshid's work emerges from radio programmes and newspaper columns, where they were first offered to a large public interested in knowing about the history and culture of the Bengali people over the past thousand years. On closer look, it would appear that Bengal as a region, the Bangla language, and the Bengali people we know have emerged with distinct cultural markers in the past six to seven centuries, although the prehistory of literary traditions, cultural practices and geographical formations in the region identified as parts of greater river-washed Bengal can go back another couple of centuries or more.

Spread over 14 chapters, 644 pages in all, the voluminous book covers a whole gamut of themes on the cultural history of Bengal. Defining Bengali-speaking and fish-and-rice-eating people as Bengalis, despite differences and difficulties of different kinds—region, religion, caste (despite the apparent lack of it) and rural-urban divide—the author has, as is generally the case, sought endorsement from the venerable Rabindranath Tagore. The latter is quoted as saying: "The history of Bengal is the history of fragmentation. Eastern and western Bengal, Varendra and Rarh, these are not simply geographical divisions; divisions of hearts and minds were meshed up with them, and social unity was also absent. Yet, through it all there runs a strain of unity, and that is the unity of language. What defines us as being Bengali is that we happen to speak Bengali."

This is not accidental. A long history of cultural investment has made the Bengali adda a Bengali adda. This can only be maintained through a deliberate distinction between a Bengali and a non-Bengali, even though the latter might learn to speak the language, with varying proficiency and accents. Language sophistication, then, is an important marker, which also distinguishes an inhabitant from a *probashi*, or expatriate.

And once language is taken care of, it is the turn of religion. In contemporary West Bengal, Hindus have appropriated the Bengali identity for themselves—for them, Muslims are Muslims, even if they are Bengali-speaking. Bengali Muslims themselves have struggled with their dual identity, with terrible consequences in their history. To be a Bengali by birth and language, therefore, is a carefully crafted identity.

Well-meaning Bengali scholars have always tried to rise above political divisions to emphasise the value of shared cultural practices—encompassing East and West Bengal as well as religious divides and variations between the rural and urban people, besides class differences between *bhadralok* and *chhotolok* (although the latter are not explicitly identified as such).

The unfinished business of the making of Bengali identity of the tribal people, who are not perceived as being proper Bengalis in terms of their cultural sophistication, also remains a problem. All these have led to complex processes of appropriation and exclusion which have made Bengali culture what it is.



PTI

TRADITIONAL DRUMMERS perform during the unveiling of a kilometre-long street "alpona" ahead of Durga Puja festivities in Kolkata in 2017. Although "alpona" has remained a largely private and domestic art in West Bengal, alpona covering long stretches of roads has been iconic of Bengali nationalism based on a linguistic identity in what is now Bangladesh for close to half a century.

BENGALI AND MUSLIM

After a short chapter on the antecedents of what constitutes Bengali culture, Murshid appropriately turns to the cultural transformations in the Indo-Muslim era, drawing attention to nearly 550 years of a sort of indirect "Muslim rule" in Bengal, from the early 13th to the mid 18th centuries. The Muslim rulers came down from different parts of Central and West Asia. They spoke different languages and did not belong to a monolithic culture. Although they had a common religious identity, they had not "travelled to Bengal to preach Islam or to establish Islamic rule". Arabic, Persian and Turkish-speaking Muslim immigrants brought with them "varied cultural and civilisational traits of a vast region of the globe" and, over centuries, also underwent considerable mutations through marriage with local women, beginning the process of becoming a Bengali Muslim. This was similar to North Indian Brahmin immigrants marrying Santhal women to form the process of the making of Bengali Brahmins, even though it might sound scandalous to those with little or no sense of history.

The intermingling between Muslim rulers and nobles of central Islamic lands on the one hand and local intermediaries on the other, besides the "Bengalicisation" of the immigrants, left clear marks on religion, architecture, literature and various other aspects of culture. The use of bricks and terracotta designs gave a distinct character to Islamic architecture in the mosques, mazars and dargahs with all their domes, minarets and arches that began to dot the spiritual landscape of Bengal.

In this and several other features, one can see what Richard Eaton characterises as the "double movement" in Bengal's Islamic traditions—which features will be privileged when would depend on the ethnic or religious politics of the time.

As Murshid wrote in the chapter on society and religion, the advent of Islam in the medieval period produced a process of opposition and assimilation between the local and the imported religions. This was similar to the kind witnessed earlier under rulers patronising strands of Vedic (Shaivite) and Buddhist (Sahajiya) forms of worship, in a context in which the local rural masses subscribed to a range of beliefs, invoked many gods and goddesses, and performed their rituals and "vratas" (propitiation of folk deities, usually performed by women).

Religious beliefs and practices in Bengal have, thus, acquired many influences to the extent that sometimes they just cannot be easily boxed into one religion or the other. Some such cases are often referred to as syncretism or syncretic sects, revealing accretions from a variety of sources. This would also mean that Islam or Hindu traditions in Bengali communities are not always the exact replicas of their sources. The Bengali interpretation and appropriation would make them something of their own, and thus a marker of their distinct identity. A Bengali Muslim will not be the same as a Bihari Muslim or a Punjabi; no degree of fundamentalism can, for long, dissolve the cultural markers that set them apart. Islam in Bengal, therefore, was going to have its distinct character.

The process of religious assimilation summed up by the author includes the suggestion that Buddhism was influenced most by tantric modes of worship, which in turn spawned several sects and branches through varied influences and incorporations. Further, as wives, daughters and daughters-in-law of Siva, the non-Aryan goddesses became accepted as deities in the Hindu tradition. A variety of Mangalkavyas illustrate this process. Also, literature associated with the Hindu revivalist movement around the figure of Chaitanyadev and his Vaishnava devotion reveals its resistance to the massive political presence of Islam.

Faith in Bengal has always been devotional and inclined towards gurus or spiritual mentors and teachers. Not surprisingly, therefore, it was the non-dualistic, devotional and guru-dependent Islam that flourished in Bengal.

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Thus, a tradition of non-ceremonial and syncretic faith—triumphing over institutionalised religion—assimilated Buddhist Sahajiya ideals, the Sufi world view of Islam, and the stress on love in Vaishnavism; it drew even on tantric beliefs and found soulful expression in the Bauls, who emerged as early as the 15th century. The latter sang the songs of love as a matter of the heart, moving away from the usual codified chants or mantras.

The distinctive qualities of its own mark many other aspects of Bengali culture across communities, subregions and centuries. Although Murshid acknowledges the process of Persianisation of the Bengali literary tradition under the Mughals, beginning late in the 16th century, he remarks somewhat cryptically that the conquerors could not make sense of the language, clothes and food of the Bengali people. The author writes: "These roti-and-meat-eating outsiders of the Mughal age detested the fish and rice of Bengal."

LOVE OF FISH

Whatever may be the truth, the reverse assimilation is evident today: by most accounts, the Mughlai in Kolkata, which is the Mecca of Bengali culture now, offers some of the best preparations of kebab, chap and biryani with their mouth-watering flavours catering to varied tastes, ranging from hot and spicy to mild and fragrant. If one has not tasted these, one is not properly introduced to either Mughlai or Bengali culinary culture. These are best prepared by professional cooks or "bawarchis" working for ubiquitous restaurants. In older times, one could lose caste by eating rotis or smelling meat, but from the 19th century those who sought to defy taboos jumped college walls for beef kebabs.

Further, as someone claiming to be not bound to any national or ethnic identity, Murshid claims in his chapter on food culture: "People of many other provinces of India, however, do not view this fish-eating habit of Bengalis too kindly. Many people in the subcontinent still do not eat fish."

Noting that historical records "reflect the love that the people of this land have for fish", the author quotes an early text: "Fortunate is the man whose wife serves freshly cooked rice, clarified butter from cow's milk, leaves and gravy of sardines every day on plantain leaves." The author concludes: "Bengali food has so far retained its own distinctiveness despite the many changes in food, drinks and modes of hospitality over the past 1,000 years."

While we discuss gastronomic delights and satisfaction, can we ignore a fine conversation on music, films and other art forms? Murshid offers a detailed discussion in dedicated chapters on all these. These constitute the cultural capital of the Bengali people, with considerable investments going back five centuries, if not ten. The tradition of kirtan, devotional songs sung by the Gaudiya Vaishnavas, formed something of a unique school of music in the early modern era. Excellence in music in modern times can also be seen in the fusion of different kinds, often influenced by Western vocal and instrumental traditions.

The English-knowing Bengali clerk, the babu, had already appeared by the late 18th century, with Calcutta (now Kolkata) picking up English quickly, along with other markers of Western modernity. Many fields such as literature, theatre, films and other modern art forms manifested changes wrought by Western influence in different phases, from the early modern to colonial modern transformations and postcolonial changes.

All in all, great efforts were made to attain sophistication and excellence in several cultural fields—art forms and performance—together comprising the chequered cultural history of the region. Negative comments on Bengalis, either as internal critique or perceptions of outsiders, include the stereotype of the tame, timid but well-mannered, lazy and idle Bengalis attached to the comforts of home and the *para*, resembling the proverbial frog in the well. One such criticism, as far back as 1885, succinctly stated: "Bengalis will starve to death at home and yet refuse to go out and look for food." But such critiques should not detract from their cultural attainments.

When a book on this scale is written, some details might appear problematic for the specialists of different fields and eras of history, but the narrative as a whole captures the larger cultural contours. Since so many varied things have been discussed, a separate chapter on festivities would serve as an occasion to showcase the celebrations, cultural aesthetics and pleasures of life, as in the case of Durga Puja, which has been central to Bengali culture for over two centuries now. "*Baro mashe tero parbon*" (thirteen festivals in twelve months of the year), goes the popular Bengali saying and with good reason.

As is the usual practice, followed by Murshid too, we conclude with a reference to Tagore's extraordinary internationalism and cosmopolitan outlook: "In this age of communal disharmony and heightened cultural and religious identities, we will also do well to remember how Tagore's work inspired several generations of Hindu and Muslim Bengalis to draw closer on the basis of their shared linguistic identity. The ideal of a liberal, secular and humanist universalism that formed the underpinning of Tagore's work and his world view continues to inspire progressive Bengalis today."

The author, translator and publisher deserve much appreciation for meticulously bringing out this huge volume covering many scintillating aspects of the cultural history of Bengal. □

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Valay Singh

Ayodhya: City of Faith, City of Discord | Aleph | 383 pages | Rs 799

Tunnel To Kosala

A sober account of the Ram Janmabhoomi issue is also a long look into actual, pre-Ram Ayodhya

BY SHIV SETHI

A veteran journalist, who asked trenchantly in one of his thought-stirring articles in 1995: "Did Babri Masjid exist in public consciousness prior to its demolition on December 6, 1992?" had raised a very pertinent question. In fact, Ayodhya is now a veritable Bermuda or Welsh Triangle of Ram Janmabhoomi, Babar's makeshift mosque and shoddy politics. Faith is a very delicate issue and as Yuval Noah Harari rightly remarks, at this particular juncture of human civilisation, mankind is embroiled in faith-related issues and turmoils. Thus unraveling the conflict of faiths, Valay Singh's debut book *Ayodhya* is a deep exploration into the evolution of the city. The author also throws a harsh light on the nefarious religious politics and the macabre massacre that claimed the lives of thousands of humans in the name of hollow faith during the tumultuous times after the demolition of Babri Masjid.

In the first part of the book, the writer meticulously attempts to stitch the scattered threads of the city with the needle of historical facts and details. Since the demolition of Babri Masjid, Ayodhya has become a tinderbox and an ever-burning cauldron of conflict, which has been shrewdly embedded in the psyche of the nation as Ram Janmabhoomi (the birth place of Rama).

Consequently, our wily politicians woo voters and take recourse to abominable political practices by tactfully exploiting the religious sentiments of credulous devotees who are forever thronging the city. But rising above narrow dogmas, Valay Singh introduces us to those pre-historic phases of the city of Ayodhya, when it had nothing to do with Ram and his dynasty. Known as Kosala and Saket, the city contains the remnants of many civilisations and cultures, like Buddhism and Jainism, which once held sway over this place, even though the proponents of the Ram temple movement are loathe to buy any other version of Ayodhya. Undoubtedly, a lot of literature on Ayodhya has already been written with a tilt to a particular standpoint and thus it fails to present a completely unbiased account of the town. Unlike most of those writers, Valay Singh does not adhere to any pre-conceived notions and neither does he thrust any old, ossified ideology upon his readers. Therefore, Valay's description of Ayodhya has not fallen prey to the unauthentic beliefs of a particular community.

Some books have also appeared with a view to dealing with this volatile matter and finding a solution acceptable and amenable to all. Thankfully, Valay refrains from offering any solution but sticks to the facts of the case which provides a fresh perspective, leaving the readers to decide for themselves. He must be applauded for his candour and intrepidity, and for the richness of detail that is certainly the fruit of his scholarly research. Therefore, this book should be regarded as a reliable source for those who want to know about this prickliest of issues sans any prejudice and presupposition.

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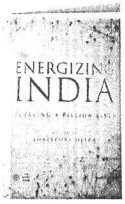
ON THE RACKS



Meenakshi Reddy Madhavan

The One Who Had Two Lives | HarperCollins

The tale of Amba-Ambika-Ambalika, and that of Shikhandi, are among the most enticing of the Mahabharata—that supremely capacious of epics. In this age of mining it for retellings, Madhavan adopts a first-person voice for intimacy, ploughing the inner lives of Amba and Shikhandi. The result is finely drawn characters who drive the narratives, though more could have been done on vivifying an imagined ancientness.



Edited by Shreerupa Mitra

Energising India: Fuelling a Billion Lives | Rupa

As India marches towards economic superpowerdom, its energy needs have increased salience. This book, through its galaxy of contributors, deals with the subject threadbare: our energy challenge (Anil Kakodkar), a gas-based future (Dharmendra Pradhan), energy diplomacy (S. Jaishankar), role of LPG in household energy (Kirk R. Smith and Abhishek Jain) etc. Beautifully printed, with accessible graphs.



Robin Sharma

The 5 AM Club | Jaico

Sharma is one indefatigable collater of snackworthy anecdotes: bits of wisdom-laden goodies featuring the great (Picasso, Vonnegut, Seneca...) and framed by stock characters in earnest confab. The messages are as old as the hills (work detached from thoughts of gain, a disciplined, early-to-rise lifestyle), though the crispiness would appeal to those who approach reading cautiously.

India's Waste Problem
Envisaging a Just Transition

ARAVINDHAN NAGARAJAN

BOOK REVIEWS

Waste of a Nation: Garbage and Growth in India
edited by Assa Doron and Robin Jeffrey, *Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2018; pp xv + 393, ₹799 (hardcover).*

In recent years, the issues of waste and sanitation have gained widespread attention in the national and international media coverage of Indian policy. Indian policymakers, from Jairam Ramesh (of the Congress) to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have, in particular, spoken about the need for toilets over temples (Ramesh 2014; Press Trust of India 2013). Waste management is at the forefront of the Prime Minister's Office's (PMO) flagship programme Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, the primary goal of which is to end open defecation. The importance attached to sanitation in public policy leads Assa Doron and Robin Jeffrey to ask, "Why is India so filthy?" And its corollary, "How can a clean India be achieved?" This is the central investigation of *Waste of a Nation*, where Doron and Jeffrey describe and explain the sociopolitical character of India's waste problem.

The book consists of seven main chapters addressing various aspects of India's waste problem. Doron and Jeffrey employ the use of several detailed case studies, textual analysis, archival research work and interviews with people who work with waste.[1] The authors highlight the presence of both continuity and change that is to be found within and outside India in dealing with the question of waste. The history of waste management, and the growth and development of waste and sewage, form the bulk of the first three chapters. Some of the more important aspects of these chapters include the exploration into the history of sanitation under the colonial government. This includes the relatively lesser-known reports on the state of sanitation in India prepared by Florence Nightingale. These chapters also trace the sanitation concerns in cities in post-independence India, such as with the changing nature and scale of waste in Chandigarh. The third chapter details the question of municipal and sewage waste, faecal waste, dry latrines, open defecation and the impacts of the same on caste, gender, and child health. An important takeaway from their assessment of continuity and change in these chapters is that India's waste problem bears a resemblance with the state of industrialised countries in the late 19th century; such as the pollution and stench in London (called the Great Stink) that forced the closure of the English parliament. India's lesson from this history is the benefit of learning, from hindsight and the development of modern institutions, science and technology, to deal with waste.[2]

One of the highlights of the book is its rich case studies. In the chapter on "Recycling and Value," the authors trace the lives of people working at different levels of a global supply chain of discarded materials and commodities. This includes the international trade in discarded human hair. It describes how the small-scale picker and trader of wastes in the streets of West Bengal and the large-scale trade from temples, both end up servicing the international retail market for wigs. The chapter also includes travails of the ship-breaking industry in Alang in Gujarat and the chain of collectors, traders and recyclers of plastic and e-waste in Indian cities. These chapters offer a thick description of the plight and hope of those who work with waste.[3]

Abolition of Caste

An important aspect of the question of waste is one of the people, institutions, technology and financial resources available to deal with the problem. This forms the bulk of the discussions in the latter chapters of the book (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Some of the best discussions within the book look at the social and cultural aspects of toilet models used within the Swachh Bharat campaign. How are these toilets to be constructed? What about the absence of water and sewage, and the working of septic tanks? Who uses these toilets and who will clean them? On the other hand, there is also the mention of those who work with waste, including unions, organisations, social activists and social workers dealing with India's waste problem. The achievements of the Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) in Pune and its role in incorporating women waste worker's rights, and restoring dignity to waste pickers and collectors, are of particular importance.

Apart from this descriptive account of India's waste problem, the authors also talk about the peculiarity of the Indian context in dealing with waste. The break from the story of continuity and change arises with India's threefold problem: density, volume and caste. The first problem is that of density, which refers to India being one of the most densely populated developing countries in the world. It is also one that has high per capita waste generation. The second is the sheer volume of waste generated by a population, which is growing and increasing its consumption. The authors point out that India's 65 million tonnes per annum is ever-increasing. And further that its population density of 445 people per square kilometre (that is three times greater than that of China). The authors seem to contrast the growth of the economy and waste with India's past, which made a virtue of frugality, and its consequent networks of waste management (for example, the *kabbadiwaala*). The third and perhaps the most important aspect of India's waste problem is that of caste. This primarily centres on the exploitation, stigmatisation and marginalisation of Dalit (and in many urban areas it includes Muslims)

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workers who deal with waste and work in the lowest rungs of the waste collection hierarchy.

Doron and Jeffrey detail the constraints imposed by the caste system that includes narrative accounts of manual scavenging in Varanasi to waste pickers in cities such as Mumbai and Delhi. Confounding the issue is the absence of economic, physical and social security for those working with waste. In contrast to the novelty and attention attached to the statements made by Jairam Ramesh and Prime Minister Modi, Doron and Jeffrey rightly highlight the long-held viewpoint of many Dalit leaders and intellectuals: without the abolition of caste and without restoring dignity to work, imagining a clean India is woefully inadequate and insufficient. This view draws of course from B R Ambedkar's assessment that "under Hinduism scavenging was not a matter of choice, it was a matter of force" (p 261).

In more contemporary times, Doron and Jeffrey refer to the work of (to name a few) Bezwada Wilson (who has organised and fought for the rights of those engaged in manual scavenging), Sudharak Olwe (who has through his photography detailed the plight of manual scavenging in India) and the writer Chandra Bhan Prasad (who details the importance of modernity in undermining caste prejudices).

Waste and Capitalism

There is no denying that the problem of solid waste and sewage is important in terms of magnitude and its specific characteristics. However, the use of density and volume as measures of the quantity and quality of India's waste must be taken with a pinch of salt. Population density in itself has no reference to the resources, institutions and technologies available within countries to deal with waste. At best, it can indicate the unavailability of land to manage waste. But, the problem of waste is one of reducing wastes sent to landfills and the need for recovering resources from waste (MacBride 2011). Its close relative, per capita waste generation (also used frequently to describe the problem), has been argued by many experts to be a non-precise measure. This is on two counts. The first is that it emphasises individual behaviour and consumption as the biggest contributor to waste generation, and second, it disregards that the biggest contributor to waste is from industry, construction and mining (Johansson 2014; MacBride 2011).[4] In fact, as Doron and Jeffrey point out, India's waste generation (per capita or total volume) is not the largest in the world, by far. For instance, India's annual municipal waste generation is at 65 million tonnes as compared to the United States' 250 million tonnes, indicating that we still remain a poor country.

Production and waste are central to industrial capitalism, and the importance of waste and scale requires a forward-looking approach. In comparison, frugality of consumption and dealing with waste are outcomes of poverty and there is a risk of it being romanticised. In order to treat new volumes of waste, there must be the presence of institutions and technology that are scaled upwards. The rise of industrial production and consumption presents not just a problem, but also the opportunity to handle waste. This is seen in the presence of greater recycling rates seen in China (Qi et al 2016).[5] It is also seen in the historical examples of synthesising aniline (an important product in the chemical and dye industry) from coal tar (a discarded substance that polluted cities) and the processes of meat packaging in Chicago (which tackled the health hazard of discarded meat waste in the early 20th century) (Desrochers and Leppälä 2010). An important lesson from economic history is that waste must be present in a large scale in order for it to be recognised as a problem and for it to be resolved institutionally and through technology.[6]

Crisis or Modern Transition?

Throughout, the book's motif is that India's waste and sanitation problem represents a moral binding crisis. A moral binding crisis is one that affects the poor and the powerful, not equally but inescapably (p 80). It includes the bubonic plague of Surat, air pollution in Indian cities, and the impact of open defecation on child growth. The recognition of such a crisis necessitates action even from the ruling elite. While agreeing with the universal and physically binding nature of these crises, one does need to point out that the appellation of "moral" attached to them seems to be misplaced. The appeal being made here is that of a universal crisis, such as the Great Stink of London or the advent of cholera in the United Kingdom, affected the ruling class and the elite, and compelled them to act on it. However, what is missing in this analysis is an assessment of the character and nature of the Indian state and its ruling elite. From the absence of universal public education and the presence of child labour (Weiner 1991), to the question of public sanitation and child malnutrition (Kumar 2017), what characterises India's ruling elite is its sheer backwardness. This backwardness is in comparison to the history of other industrialised countries and even with the priorities accorded by developing countries. This backwardness represents an incomplete transition to modernity and it specifically reflects in the failure to deal with caste in the case of waste.

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The question is: How can a modern and just transition be envisaged? One that is premised on the need to incorporate scale and technology that is forward-looking? A transition which, as the authors themselves suggest, looks not only at employment and economic security but also at dignity (and its lack thereof).[7] Perhaps, at the heart of India's waste problem, is the failure to see this. And, perhaps, this is why the efforts of the ruling elite and the initiatives of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan seem backward and wholly inadequate.

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NOTES

1 There is also an appendix, with an interesting email correspondence of questions and responses sought from Prime Minister Modi on the origin and genesis of the PMO's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. This contains clues to the larger political context of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan approach of the Bharatiya Janata Party as well as the Prime Minister's personal motivations for the same.

2 A point that is also made within development theory in general, but one which has in recent times been applied to specific cases; such as health and sanitation in India (Coffey and Spears 2017).

3 The references and endnotes throughout the book are in themselves an essential resource for those who are investigating and researching the subject of waste and its treatment in India.

4 Some of the references warning about industrial waste are, in fact, referred to by the authors themselves. However, the implication of the measures missing the mark is not reflected in their characterisation of the problem.

5 There are two inferences to be made of the Chinese example of increased recycling rates and transition to circular economy (though incomplete and at its infancy). The first is the need for increasing levels of production of materials such as steel and plastic before there is enough scale to treat waste and recover resources. The second is the larger trade in international waste and scrap that aids these capacities.

6 This refers to the works of Charles Babbage and Karl Marx, and the environmental historian Joel Tarr (1996).

7 In their own words Doron and Jeffrey describe this in the following statement: "[the waste of a nation] does not include poor and marginalised people, but is restricted to inanimate matter—minimised, collected, neutralised, and reused in ways that provide models for other places in an environmentally fragile world" (p 15).

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