

EDUDOC SERVICES: BOOK REVIEWS



Book Reviews

July – September 2021



LIBRARY AND DOCUMENTATION DIVISION

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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 *July 2021 to September 2021*

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.

Head, LDD

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Slices of history

Former Vice President M. Hamid Ansari's autobiography is more than just memoirs: it consists of reflections of a multifaceted personality and records that will serve as source material for historians. BY K.P. FABIAN

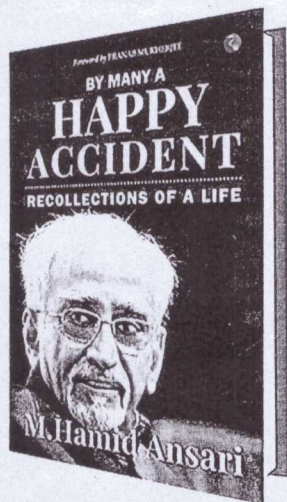
IT is more than an autobiography. It is an autobiography plus reflections of a multifaceted personality, reflections of interest and benefit not only to his generation but also to the younger generation, and to posterity. We live in an age where history is either set aside or rewritten by pseudo-historians who have an axe to grind.

It has been said that life is lived forward, but written backwards. Many people find it rather difficult to recall the past with reasonable accuracy. Our author is exceptionally gifted in this regard, and hindsight plays little role in his narration, or assessment, of events that happened over five or six decades ago, events of importance to India and to the world at large.

He is far from ego-centric and can almost effortlessly see the big picture. The only effort he puts in is his vast, almost omnivorous, reading on themes of his choice.

In his Foreword, former President Pranab Mukherjee says that the book "is an interesting account by a close observer of aspects of our public and parliamentary life".

The style is a study in lucidity. The very title *By*



Many a Happy Accident is a brilliant choice. M. Hamid Ansari was keen to follow an academic career. His father insisted that he should write the civil services examinations. Hamid Ansari did not agree. Finally, his father asked Professor Mohammed Habib to talk to his young student and it worked.

By then Hamid Ansari had got a fellowship from the University Grants Commission. He was asked to teach undergraduates in a women's college for a few weeks. There he had his 'first encounter' with Salma Kazmi, his future wife.

Fate had intervened

even earlier. Hamid Ansari was attracted to a girl a year his senior while studying at Aligarh University. As he did not get a chance to talk to her, he wrote a letter with a quotation from Aristotle. There was no response and Hamid Ansari says that his fancy "seemed to vanish quickly!" That he could not get a chance to talk to her might surprise the young reader. And his quoting Aristotle even more.

FOREIGN SERVICE CAREER

Hamid Ansari was appointed to the Indian Administrative Service in 1961. He was to report to the National Academy of Admin-

istration on June 1, 1961. A few days before leaving Delhi to Mussoorie he was told that there was a slot free in the Indian Foreign Service as a selected officer wanted a change. He took the slot. "This incidental happening decided the course of my life for the next 37 years." The reader might ask: Why only 37 years?

Hamid Ansari's first posting was to Algeria. There was delay owing to technical reasons that had nothing to do with him. His posting was diverted to Baghdad where a kindly fate wanted him to meet Salma Kazmi, who, unknown to herself, was waiting for him.

We conclude that the title is historically most appropriate.

Hamid Ansari was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata) on April 1, 1937. His father, Mohammed Abdul Aziz Ansari, was resident director of an insurance company. While studying at Aligarh, Hamid Ansari's father went on a medical mission to the Ottoman Turkey during the Balkan Wars (1912-13).

Hamid Ansari quotes from an internal government report of 1925 on how the government of the

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Hamid An posted as An the United Ar. A friendly I phone superv him one n November 19' 'unusual' telep out in Sau Hamid Ansar Secretary Bhandari in tl That was the :

day saw the Khilafat movement. This is the merit of this book. It gives slices of history, valuable to all readers, even more so for the younger ones.

The author takes us to his various postings. Iraq, Morocco and Saudi Arabia were followed by a posting back to the headquarters as Deputy Secretary in the WANA (West Asia and North Africa Division). The next posting was Brussels. Hamid Ansari, the bibliophile, decided to store books in two big steel trunks in the basement of the South Block. He promptly got a receipt, only to discover later that the basement was susceptible to flooding in the rainy season. He recovered only "a pile of soiled paper!"

In Afghanistan a 'happy accident' occurred. On March 6, 1989, 10 minutes after Hamid Ansari left his residence for the office, a bomb landed in the garden "and its impact blew away the façade and the first floor of the house".

The book has evocative photographs, starting from a family photograph in Shimla (1947-48). The damaged study at the residence where Hamid Ansari might have been when the bomb fell is also among the photographs. They add much value to the book.

Hamid Ansari, 39, was posted as Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. A friendly Indian telephone supervisor alerted him one morning in November 1979 about an 'unusual' telephone blackout in Saudi Arabia. Hamid Ansari informed Secretary Romesh Bhandari in the Ministry. That was the first indication

of the occupation of the Grand Mosque by Islamic students. The reader gets an idea of how a good Ambassador collects crucial information.

There are more stories about Hamid Ansari as Chief of Protocol, and as Head of Mission to Australia, Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Nations. This reviewer does not wish to spoil the joy of discovery by the reader.

ACADEMIC CAREER

The first four chapters take us to the end of the foreign service career. Hamid Ansari gets back to his first love, the academic career. He taught at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), wrote articles for scholarly journals, and also served as Vice Chancellor of the university where he studied.

Another window opened—the author might consider it as 'a happy accident' though he does not say it in so many words—when Sonia Gandhi, chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), asked him to become Chairman of the National Commission for Minorities. This was in 2006.

A year later, when Hamid Ansari was at the India International Centre he got a call from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who said that he was with Sonia Gandhi. They wanted him to be the UPA's vice presidential candidate.

Chapters 6 and 7 deal with his two terms as Vice President. There is a lot in these two chapters that will serve as source material for historians.

In July 2010, two newspapers carried a story

about a right-wing organisation's plot to assassinate the Vice President of India. Hamid Ansari got no official communication even as the report was not denied.

AS VICE PRESIDENT

President Barack Obama was the chief guest at the 2015 Republic Day. When the military parade began, President Pranab Mukherjee took the salute by raising his right hand. The Prime Minister and the Defence Minister, perhaps not properly briefed, also raised their hands in salute. A section of the media faulted Hamid Ansari for disrespecting the national flag. They did not know that as per protocol the President alone takes the salute on such an occasion.

International Yoga Day was celebrated on June 21, 2015, with the Prime Minister personally participating. Hamid Ansari, not invited, was absent. In any case, if the Prime Minister is the chief guest at a function anyone above him in protocol will not be invited. However, a ranking member of the ruling party faulted Hamid Ansari for his absence.

Obviously, as a posting, the 10 years as Vice President was the longest. Hamid Ansari visited many countries, including the ones where he was posted.

The eighth chapter is meaningfully titled "Away from Routine" and the last, the ninth, is about the family.

The reader will feel enriched as she finishes the book.

This reviewer has a re-

quest in the interest of historiography and posterity. Hamid Ansari made speeches on a variety of subjects of enduring importance after retiring from the foreign service, especially during the 10 years as the Vice President, and even after he ceased to hold that office. The book does refer to these speeches. They should be organised theme-wise and published.

Hamid Ansari loves poetry. The book is rich in quotes.

This reviewer takes the liberty of quoting only two, one at the beginning and the other at the end.

Manzoor hai guzaarish-e-ahwal-e-waaqae

Apna bayan husn-e-tabi'at nahin mujhe

(True expression of experience is what I really seek

I do not care to display my skill at speech)

The chapter 8 "Away from Routine" starts with the lines:

Freedom has a thousand charms to show

That slaves, however contended, never know.

This reviewer cannot resist adding a quote from a famous writer intimately linked to India:

"If you can walk with the crowd and keep your virtue, or walk with Kings nor lose the common touch; If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you; If all men count with you, but none too much; If you can fill the unforgiving minute with 60 seconds worth of distance run, Yours is the earth and everything that's in it..."

We have a right to expect more books from this singularly gifted author. □

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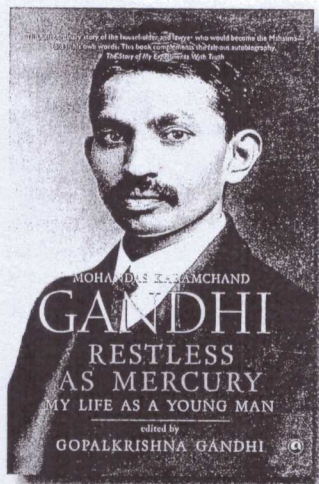
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Gandhi revisited

A new and close look at the first 45 years of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's life, ingeniously reconstructed from his *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, twelve volumes of *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* and the narratives of five of Gandhi's contemporaries. BY SUHAS BORKER

AS I read the preface by Gopalkrishna Gandhi to *Restless as Mercury: My Life As A Young Man*, I was reminded of what his elder brother and professor of philosophy Ramchandra Gandhi told me 30 years ago. Back in 1991, we were working together to make *Jagran aur Gavahi: Tees Janvari*, a documentary on the significance of Gandhi's martyrdom. While we were going through the original footage on the editing table, Ramchandra Gandhi said to me: "These frames [of the original footage] are like Gandhiji's ashes, let us be very careful in working with them." Gopalkrishna Gandhi writes in the preface: "Original' footage, howsoever grainy, jerky, starting and ending without notice, has the ring of truth. It is the 'thing' itself, not an image of it."

While this book brings together Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* and autobiographical observations from the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG)*, the documentary took a Brechtian



Restless as Mercury My life as a young man

By Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi
Edited by Gopalkrishna Gandhi
Aleph, 2021

Pages: 377
Price: Rs.999

break to contemporary times. It foresaw the destruction of the Babri Masjid a year down the line in December 1992 and the resurrection of divisive politics within the country, and also visualised the resurgence of Gandhi's ideas abroad.

Both the book and the documentary tell a story "for the sole reason that a story as first told is not a story, it is reality". But the documentary, before it was premiered on Doordarshan, the sole television network then, on January 30, 1992, faced cuts from the censors of the government channel. Rather than make the cuts, we decided to reshoot a part of the

opening sequence. Also, both are products of the synergy of Gandhi's "growing family, biological and ideological". The book made me recall Vithalbhai Jhaveri's five-hour-long film *Mahatma*, which I saw in 1969, Gandhi's centenary year, and the transformative impact it had on me as a student of Class 9.

The idea of this book came from Carnatic maestro and Magsaysay award-winner T.M. Krishna. Gopalkrishna Gandhi writes that one day, Krishna asked him, out of the blue: "Gopal, why don't you do a new autobiography of Gandhi?" Thinking that he had misheard Krishna, Gopalkrishna Gandhi

said: "You mean a new biography, right?" "No," Krishna replied, "I mean a new autobiography..." Krishna wanted the new book to put together what Gandhi had said, in his own words, about his life's journey, his family life and his public persona, but "outside" *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, which he thought was too brief. So *Restless as Mercury* was born, taking its title from what Gandhi's elder sister Raliyatben called her kid brother Moniya: "*Para jevo chanchala*", Gujarati for "one could not sit still even for a little while".

NEW GENRE OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

This time, Krishna—who has been called an "urban Naxal" and "converted bigot" by the Goebbelsian troll factories of the saffron brigade, and who has even faced the cancellation of his concert in New Delhi by the powers that be in November 2018, even as the concert itself was resurrected the next day in another space and hailed as a celebration of democracy—cannot be faulted by any sane person for having helped develop a new

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genre: the three-dimensional edited autobiography.

The three dimensions of this new genre are the original autobiography by the subject, contextual writing outside of the autobiography by the subject and the subject's experiences as narrated by the subject to contemporaries or observed independently by contemporaries. The credit for Gopalkrishna Gandhi's efforts having fructified so well in this new genre of writing must go to the monumental and priceless collection of *CWMG*, which runs into a hundred volumes and is now available online on the Gandhi Heritage Portal.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi has also sourced his material from the narratives of five contemporaries of Gandhi: his first biographer, Joseph J. Doke; his close associate Millie Polak, Christian feminist Scotswoman and author of *Mr Gandhi: The Man*; his two secretaries, Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal; and Gandhi's grand-nephew Prabhudas Chhaganlal Gandhi, the youngest of the sources.

The book covers the period from 1869 to 1914, from the time of Gandhi's birth in Porbandar to the time he finally departed Cape Town, South Africa, on *SS Kinfauns Castle* on July 18, 1914, for London en route India. The contents are divided into six books. Book I deals with Gandhi's first 19 years from 1869 to 1888; Book II looks at the next eight years from 1888 to 1896 when Gandhi was in England to study law, returned to Rajkot and then moved

to South Africa to practice law; Book III draws us to Gandhi in South Africa from 1896 to 1908, a period of 12 years when Gandhi was engaged with the rights struggle of Indians in South Africa, and which saw his first satyagraha on September 11, 1906, in Johannesburg; Book IV takes a close view of 1909, a momentous year for Gandhi, who visited England to mobilise support for the struggle in South Africa; Book V sees Gandhi's struggle intensifying in South Africa during 1910-1913; and Book VI spans 1913-1914, when Gandhi's satyagraha demands were conceded to and he planned to return to India.

This is like a ringside view of the first 45 years of Gandhi's life unfurled on a wide-angle screen. Nelson Mandela memorably said: "You gave us Mohandas; we returned him to you as Mahatma Gandhi." Each of the six 'Books' is accompanied by an appropriate chronological photograph: a portrait of Gandhi's father Karamchand (Kaba) Gandhi; a photograph of the Houses of Parliament in London; the Gandhi family portrait: Kasturba with her sons and Gandhi's nephew, though Gandhi himself is missing; a portrait of Dadabhai Naoroji; a photograph of the march crossing into the Transvaal; and a portrait of Gandhi during the satyagraha of 1914.

But there is no place for cinematic licence. We are "revisiting" the first four parts of the five-part original autobiography, enriched by twelve volumes of *CWMG* and the narrat-

ives of five contemporaries. We are offered a new and close look at the saga of Gandhi's struggle through value additions of depth, tone and colour, without the artificiality of a remake, coming though as the book does in 2021, 96 years after *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* was originally published in 1925.

GLIMPSES OF FAMILY LIFE

The book gives the readers an intimate glimpse of Gandhi's family life. In August 1888, Gandhi took leave of his wife Kasturba (referred as Kastur in the book) to go to England to become a Barrister: "I went to see her and stood like a dumb statue for a moment. I kissed her, and she said, 'Don't go'. What followed I need not describe. With my mother's leave, and leaving my wife and our son (Harilal), but a few months' old, I left Rajkot that day for Bombay" (page 36). Of his mother, Gandhi writes: "Never did I see any frivolity in her or interest in the pleasures of life, nor any recourse to beauty aids" (page 12). Gandhi writes about the death of his mother: "She died at the early age of forty" (page 13). Gopalkrishna Gandhi offers a correction in a footnote: "This is incorrect; she was nearing fifty at the time of her death."

Gandhi describes in graphic detail how his Modh Vania caste community in Bombay tried its best to prevent him from going to England to study law and how finally he was declared an "outcaste". But, Gandhi writes, "this boycott made no impres-

sion on me." He bought some clothes in Bombay, some he liked and some he did not: "The necktie which I delighted in wearing later, I then abhorred. The short jacket I looked upon as an attire that mimicked nakedness" (page 37).

There is an interesting exchange between Gandhi and his close associate Hermann Kallenbach in June 1908 that is noteworthy because it is a recurring theme in Gandhi's later life. Kallenbach is concerned that Gandhi is getting involved in "domestic trifles" when he should be thinking of his imminent meeting with General Smuts. "No, these little things are to me of as much importance as the big ones. They touch the very core of our life and truth is one whole, it has no compartments" (page 182). A scene from Richard Attenborough's 1982 film, *Gandhi*, captured this ethos brilliantly. In the film, Gandhi abruptly gets up to leave a special Congress party meeting convened at Sabarmati Ashram. "Where are you going?" Jawaharlal Nehru asks him. "To apply hot mud pack to the sprained ankle of my goat," Gandhi replies. For him, the health of the goat was as important as national politics.

Even as Gandhi is busy with the struggle for the rights of Indians in South Africa, he keeps a keen eye on developments in India. He condemns violence and attacks on Englishmen and women in India in *Indian Opinion* (bomb thrown by Khudiram Bose, Muzaffarpur, Bihar, April 30, 1908) (page 180).

But there are some si-

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lences. Gandhi arrived in London on July 10, 1909, just nine days after Madan Lal Dhingra, a young Indian student, assassinated Sir W.H. Curzon-Wyllie, political aide-de-camp to John Morley, Secretary of State for India. Gandhi vehemently condemned the assassination and castigated Dhingra. Gandhi said: "Those who incited him to this act will be called to account in God's court and are also guilty in the eyes of the world" (page 220). Dhingra was executed on August 17, 1909.

A FEW OMISSIONS

A little more than two months later, on October 24, 1909, Gandhi and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar shared the dais at a function to commemorate Vijaya Dashami organised by the Indian community in London. By then, the Indian community in London as well as the British Police were aware that Savarkar had "inspired Dhingra's admiration in the cult of assassination". Although Gandhi mentions the Vijaya Dashami event, along with the fact that Savarkar "delivered a spirited speech on the great excellence of the Ramayana", there is silence on Dhingra's Savarkar connection (CWMG, Volume 9, pages 498-499). M. Asaf Ali, later to emerge

as freedom fighter and Congress leader, who was in the audience that day, vividly mentions this event in his memoirs, though the date mentioned is incorrect. (*M. Asaf Ali's Memoirs: The Emergence of Modern India* by G.N.S. Raghavan, page 70.)

On the way back to South Africa on *SS Kildonan Castle* (November 13-30, 1909), while penning his thoughts on the subject of Indian Home Rule, Gandhi sternly castigated the propounders of the cult of assassination in his exchange between the Reader and the Editor: "...It is a cowardly thought, that of killing others. Whom do you suppose to free by assassination?... Those who believe that India has gained by Dhingra's act and other similar acts in India make a serious mistake. Dhingra was a patriot, but his love was blind. He gave his body in a wrong way; its ultimate result can only be mischievous" (page 226).

Gopalkrishna Gandhi gives the Gandhi-Savarkar meeting of October 24, 1909 a complete miss in Book IV, which is devoted to the year 1909 and consists of 69 pages. This omission is all the more glaring because Dhingra's hit represents the first success of Savarkar's cult of assassination as if it were a dry run

for assassinations planned for the future. It is also poignant, as 39 years later, on May 24, 1948, nine persons, including the assassin Nathuram Vinayak Godse and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, were arraigned on Gandhi's assassination. All, except Savarkar, were convicted and sentenced, and two among them, Godse and Narayan Dattatraya Apte, were sent to the gallows. Later, on appeal in the High Court, two more of the convicted conspirators were acquitted. More than 18 years after Gandhi's assassination and eight months after Savarkar's death, the Government of India set up the Justice Kapur commission in November 1966 to probe Gandhi's assassination which concluded: "... facts taken together were destructive of any theory other than the conspiracy to murder by Savarkar and his group."

There is an uncanny and eerie replication of the 1909 assassination in the 1948 assassination of Gandhi, and the figure of Savarkar lurks in the background of both.

On July 1, 1909, Madan Lal Dhingra assassinated Sir W.H. Curzon-Wyllie at the Imperial Institute, South Kensington, London, firing five shots from a Colt's automatic magazine pistol at point-blank range on Curzon-Wyllie's face. Before the assassination, Dhingra practised using the pistol at a shooting range at 92, Tottenham Court Road, London.

On January 30, 1948, Nathuram Vinayak Godse assassinated Gandhi at Birla House, Albuquerque Road, New Delhi, firing

three shots from a 9-mm Beretta Model 1934 semi-automatic pistol at point-blank range into his chest. Before the assassination, Godse practised using the pistol in the jungle behind Reading Road, New Delhi.

Another event that is overlooked is Gandhi's condemnation of the bomb attack on Viceroy Lord Hardinge in Delhi on December 23, 1912. Gandhi condemned the murderous attack in no uncertain terms in the columns of the *Indian Opinion* on December 28, 1912. He wrote: "We as Indians deplore that this nefarious institution of cold-blooded Satanic murder should find its votaries in India.... The idea of securing independence by assassination is chimerical" (CWMG, Volume 11, page 361).

Interestingly, although Rash Behari Bose, who is alleged to have thrown the bomb, escaped, the two freedom fighters, Amir Chand and Avadh Bihari, who were arrested and hanged on May 8, 1915 for this attack, were students of St. Stephen's College, Delhi. It was St. Stephens which hosted Gandhi on his return to India from April to 14, 1915, and where Gopalkrishna Gandhi (and his elder brothers, Rajmohan and Ramchandra) studied. Intriguingly, Amir Chand was the tutor and mentor of Raghbir Singh, who founded Modern School, New Delhi in 1920 in response to Gandhi's call to start Indian schools. Modern School, which Gandhi later visited on January 13, 1935, is where Gopalkrishna Gandhi and his siblings studied.



1910: Gandhi South Africa. T. South African n

Another missed out in would have been the sublime humanism Gandhi possessed before (CWMG, pages 1-2). This is how Gandhi brought together in matrimony a young British colonialist, Graham Downs Polak, both of whom came his close as the struggle in South Africa. This omission is a difficult to comprehend. Millie Polak's *Mr Gandhi's Man* is one of the sources of Gopalkrishna Gandhi's book.

I must close with a preface to the book which began with it. In the preface, Gopalkrishna asks: "Why did Gandhi concern himself with the cause of South Africa, its African majority, its Africanisation?" Undoubtedly, Gandhi was sharp and incisive on the struggle of Indians in South

"Restless as Mercury" is an ingenuous, creative reconstruction that reflects something of the "calm strength and the timelessness" of Gandhi's life and struggles.

Handwritten biography



AFP PHOTO / SOTHEBY'S

1910: Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach (middle row, centre) at Tolstoy Farm, South Africa. Tolstoy Farm was the first ashram Gandhi initiated during his South African movement.

Another episode missed out in the book would have brought the sublime human touch Gandhi possessed to the fore (*CWMG, Volume 96, pages 1-2*). This is about how Gandhi brought together in matrimony the young British couple Millie Graham Downs and Henry Polak, both of whom became his close associates in the struggle in South Africa. This omission is a little difficult to comprehend as Millie Polak's *Mr Gandhi: The Man* is one of the sources of Gopalkrishna Gandhi's book.

I must close with the preface to the book as I began with it. In his preface, Gopalkrishna Gandhi asks: "Why did Gandhi not concern himself with the cause of South Africa's majority, its African population?" Undoubtedly, Gandhi was sharply focussed on the struggle of Indians in South Africa

and their rights as British subjects. Gopal Gandhi also mentions that Gandhi used racist phrases such as "kaffir" (infidel) to describe the African people, which "jar". If this is examined contextually, as Nelson Mandela urges us to do, Gandhi gets the benefit of the doubt. "Insensitive vocabulary" was used at that time in South Africa even by the African majority.

But there is something more revealing in a footnote (page 325) on how John Dube, first president general of the South African Native National Congress (later the African National Congress) said in an interview to Reverend W. Pearson in 1914 that he was "amazed" by the non-violence and forbearance with which Indians faced police brutalities, and by their love for Gandhi. The footnote reads: "Dube thought Gandhi had

tapped a vein in the Indian character that he was not sure existed in the Africans, who would hit back recklessly, in a comparable situation." This was when Dube recalled what he had witnessed near Phoenix station during the Indians' campaign in November 1913.

The book is marred by a few typos—"east" replaces "least" (page 254) and "patron" becomes "pattern" (page 263)—as if to prove that computer spell-checks cannot replace manual proofreading.

Herbert John Gladstone, the youngest son of Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone and the first Governor General of the Union of South Africa from 1910 to 1914, found Gandhi to be a rather enigmatic personality. In a report to Lewis Vernon Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies,

Gladstone wrote: "It is no easy task for a European to conduct negotiations with Mr Gandhi. The workings of his conscience are inscrutable to the occidental mind and produce complications in wholly unexpected places. His ethical and intellectual attitude, based as it appears to be on a curious compound of mysticism and astuteness, baffles the ordinary processes of thought" (page 327).

When Jawaharlal Nehru was writing his Foreword to the first volume of the *CWMG*, in December 1957, he was in Darjeeling. Nehru wrote: "I write this from Darjeeling with the mighty Kinchinjunga [variant of Kangchenjunga used in 1950s] looking down upon us. This morning I had a glimpse of Everest. It seemed to me that there was about Gandhiji something of the calm strength and the timelessness of the Everest and the Kinchinjunga."

Restless as Mercury is an ingenious creative process of reconstruction that reflects something of the "calm strength and the timelessness" of the saga of the life and struggles of Gandhi. We now eagerly await Part Two of this creative reconstructed autobiography covering the period 1914-1948, which will complete the story of Gandhi's tryst with history. Collective memories of the nation have to be preserved for future generations. □

Suhas Borker is Editor, *Citizens First TV (CFTV)* and Convener, *Working Group on Alternative Strategies, New Delhi*.

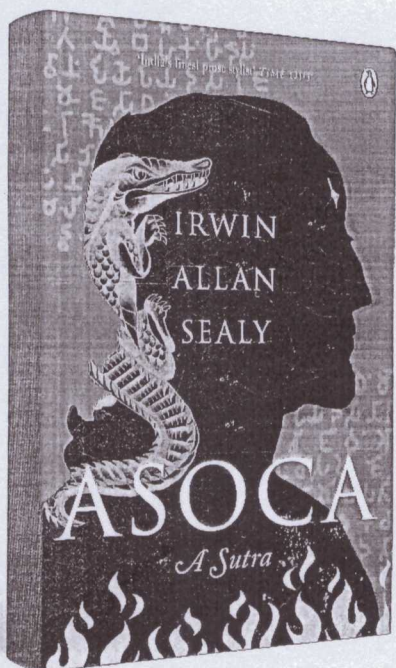
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BOOKS

REINING IT IN

While fictionalising the life of Ashoka the Great, not once does Irwin Allan Sealy forsake restraint. This can be both delightful and frustrating



ASOCA
A Sutra
by Irwin Allan Sealy
PENGUIN VIKING
₹ 699; 392 pages

There is a classic clip out there of Ian McKellen rehearsing Hamlet's deadly soliloquy, "To be or not to be". It is an actor's nightmare, a set of lines so familiar that there is a distinct possibility that, pretty soon, most audiences will start intoning the rubbed-down words and phrases along with the hapless actor. It takes an actor of McKellen's calibre to make those words sound fresh, as if being heard for the first time, rich with nuance and insight. It is a challenge that Irwin Allan Sealy will recognise. Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism after the carnage of the Kalinga War must be one of the most famous conversions in the history of the world. Every schoolchild knows about it—but beyond that, all we know is that Ashoka was "Great". The Rock Edicts, preaching tolerance and harmony, lie scattered and practically forgotten all over this heedless land. For the rest, there are only caricatures—the grandeur of Chandragupta Maurya—here, Grandfather—and the cunning of the incredibly durable

Kautilya, author of the ur-Machiavellian text, the *Arthashastra*—Uncle K. But beyond that, unlike Marguerite Yourcenar writing the *Memoirs of Hadrian*, or Hilary Mantel reimagining the villainous Cromwell, Sealy has significantly less historical material to rely upon. Even the Mauryan background is relatively sketchily known, compared to Rome, or Tudor Britain. It is all to be done.

Sealy holds a somewhat anomalous position in the pantheon—already!—of Indo-Anglian fiction. His *Trotternama* was practically a foundational text of the new magic realism—head-to-head with *Midnight's Children*. *The Everest Hotel* was a sombre meditation on mortality—and appeared on the Booker shortlist for 1998. Over three decades, there has been a steady stream of serious, considered works in a variety of genres. But for all that, Sealy occupies a quiet niche, away from the spotlight, squirrelling away in his Dehradun retreat. And surfaces from time to time with texts that bear

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Under Buddha's Influence

Buddhist impact on new literature

his unique signature.

First, there is the language, the perfectly poised sentences, the meticulously chosen words, the stately decorous prose, ever mindful of the majesty of its subject. I was put in mind of a fine jeweller, of engraved silver—but perhaps it is something of the lapidary quality of the Edicts that has seeped into the prose. Such a sustained linguistic performance is a rare pleasure in Indo-English writing, where much of the delight is often the unintended consequence of linguistic infelicity—and for that, one is duly grateful.

But I am not sure if that is sufficient to sustain the narrative. In choosing to narrate *Asoca* in the first person, Sealy has set himself another serious challenge. Thus, it is a given of the first-person narrative that the narrator must already be the person that he becomes. This is difficult enough in narrating a life that goes from childhood to maturity, but the difficulty becomes particularly acute when the challenge is to narrate a life whose key point of interest is a hugely momen-

tous conversion. This implies that the person has to be endowed with complex and even contradictory motives, with a self-consciousness that is endowed with both insight and blindness, sufficient to enable and explain the lurchings of a roller-coaster life.

The aftermath of the Kalinga War is, obviously, the crux of this life—and yet, all that we are shown apropos the “purging” of “the Kalinga guilt” is a

father shelling peas with his daughter in the winter sun. There is obviously an aesthetic that informs this heroic restraint, but

I can't help thinking—with my taste for melodrama—that here was an occasion for the language to shed its monumental quality, to rage and thunder, and stutter and break down—and so strike those deeper notes that must inform such a climactic moment. Still, to return to McKellen's Hamlet, perhaps it is Sealy that has the last laugh. His doubting Buddhist Asoca, reminiscing in a cave, unspooling his slow *sutra*, is a far cry from the familiar “Ashoka the Great” of dog-eared textbooks. ■

—Alok Rai

In narrating *Asoca* in the first person, IRWIN ALLAN SEALY sets himself a challenge—in that the narrator must already be the person he becomes



BUDDHA
IN
GANDHARA
SUNITA DWIVEDI

1

PHANIGIRI Interpreting an Ancient Buddhist Site in Telangana

by Naman P. Ahuja (Editor)

THE MARG FOUNDATION

₹1,800; 228 pages

Phanigiri is Telangana's most important Buddhist archaeological site and this book meticulously catalogues its sculptures and inscriptions, built between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD

2

BUDDHA IN GANDHARA

by Sunita Dwivedi

RUPA

₹795; 336 pages

The Buddhas of Bamiyan have been desecrated, yes, but Dwivedi finds in her travels through Pakistan and Afghanistan more signs of Buddhist influence—broken sculptures, even Buddha's begging bowl

3

RETURN OF THE BRAHMIN

by Ravi Shankar Etteth

WESTLAND

₹399; 342 pages

What did Ashoka do after embracing Buddhism? Compared to what Etteth imagines, history seems all too staid. According to this novelist, the emperor kept busy by fighting Khandapati, an invisible foe

BOOKS

KEEPING IT ALL ON RECORD

The economist **Kaushik Basu** brings to his memoir the same love for detail that defines his scholarship



SAGE ADVICE
Kaushik Basu (left) with the then Union finance minister Prānab Mukherjee, May 23, 2012

In 2011, (roughly half-way through this memoir), Kaushik Basu's curriculum vitae had 23 pages. Last year, it had 34 pages. He has written 197 papers—roughly one every quarter—and 21 books. He is a man of considerable activity and a prolific writer, used to recording what he does. This volume is a memoir of seven of his 69 years—three spent as chief economic advisor to the ministry of finance in Delhi, and four in the World Bank in Washington.

In Delhi, Basu had a friend and fellow economist in Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, whilst finance minister Pranab Mukherjee was little interested in economics. He did not have much work for Basu, whilst Manmohan Singh often called Basu for a chat and dinner. With little to do in South Block, Basu travelled around India and gave speeches. His time in the ministry saw high inflation, so he had plenty of opportunities to explain why it was so high. He was kept ignorant of the Vodafone affair, in which his ministry unfairly charged the company income tax on a transaction made abroad, lost in arbitration, and then took the case to a Singapore court.

A fortnight before the end of his term in the finance ministry, Basu was offered the chief economist's post in the World Bank. The Development Economics Group that he was put in charge

of had 500 people. The administrative machinery in Washington, both in his department and in the Bank, was well-oiled, and Basu did not need to burn the midnight oil. He travelled the world, met important politicians and bureaucrats, sat in meetings and also did a lot of sightseeing, eating and drinking.

His love of detail is remarkable: about the only one of the hundreds of people he met whose name he does not record is of a Dutch-Greek-French-speaking economist he met in Sydney. He is well read enough to recall cascades of poetry and songs as he watched the Ganga in Varanasi, though he does not inflict uneclectic scholarship upon readers of this book. He, instead, asks interesting questions.

Basu has some good tips for those who may follow in his footsteps. He says that chairs in government offices have a lever on the right under the seat which you can use to raise your height. It should be done carefully, for pushing the lever too hard would send you into the air. It should be done unobtrusively, so that others do not follow and raise themselves above you. He also shares one of Amartya Sen's rules: you may gossip with people in your inner circle about those in your outer circle, not the other way round. This is a good rule to prevent gossip from leaking out.

A fortune-teller has forecast that Basu will live into his mid-'90s—that is, another quarter century, so fans may expect some more memoirs from him. ■

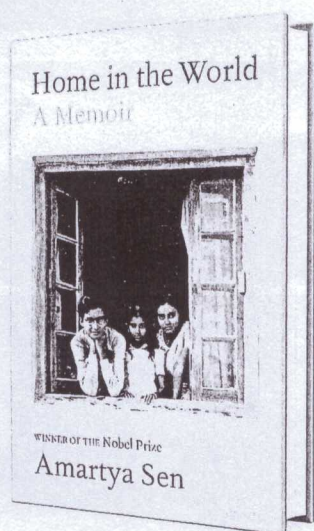
—Ashok Desai

KAUSHIK BASU was kept ignorant of the Vodafone affair, in which his ministry unfairly charged the company.



POLICYMAKER'S JOURNAL
From New Delhi to Washington, D.C.
by Kaushik Basu
SIMON & SCHUSTER INDIA
₹699; 384 pages

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HOME IN THE WORLD

A Memoir

by Amartya Sen

ALLEN LANE

₹899; 480 pages

It is hard to pigeonhole Amartya Sen. He nearly opted to study physics due to his love for maths. He has taught game theory and done mathematically-driven abstract work on social choice. He has edited and translated a book on Hindu philosophy written by his late grandfather and mused at length on many philosophical questions himself and worked on famines, economic deprivation, class, gender inequalities, etc.

If you wanted to know the wellsprings of these divergent interests, this book has some answers. The bald facts, of course, are well-known. Sen has been a leading economist and public intellectual since the mid-1950s, held many academic positions and influenced public policy for decades. Nevertheless, this autobiography is deeply illuminating.

Sen describes the first 35 years or so of his life in some detail, and by doing so with the benefit of many years of hindsight, he throws a spotlight on his research choices and the humanist, rational philosophy by which he has always lived. This understanding comes to the reader organically even as Sen describes milieus that have disappeared or altered beyond recognition.

The book is linear in chronology and the title derives from the fact that Sen has multiple “homes”—places he has felt comfortable in. These include Santiniketan, where he was born in 1933, and where he did most of his schooling, staying with his maternal grandparents, while his father worked in Dhaka. (There’s a brief description of his early childhood in Mandalay and Dhaka.)

There’s Calcutta (now Kolkata, but Sen consistently uses the old spelling) where he studied in Presidency College (now University), survived cancer as a teenager and returned to teach.

There’s Cambridge, more specifically Trinity College, where he launched his glittering career and returned decades later to serve as the first non-British Master of that institution. There’s Massachusetts, where he did a lot of research, or in his words, learnt a lot of economics. There’s Delhi as well, though the book more or less ends with his moving to the D-School in the mid-1960s.

Sen’s grandfather, Acharya Kshiti Mohan Sen, was a leading Sanskrit scholar, and an authority on Kabir and other Bhakti poets. Living

with him, Sen was soon reading Sanskrit with the same fluency as Bengali. He refers again and again to Madhavacharya, Panini, the epics and the great Buddhist tradition, which he could also access. As he points out, it was Buddha who changed the question from “Is there a God?” to “How should we behave, no matter if there is a God or not?”

Kshiti Mohan was a Brahmo Samaji with a broad non-sectarian outlook, and Santiniketan, the institution founded by Rabindranath Tagore (also a Brahmo), was, and remains, one of the least sexist places in academia. Enconced in this rural haven, living with a scholar who loved civilised argument, Sen developed the rational, atheistic outlook that characterises him. It was there he learnt, as he says, that the exercise of freedom must develop alongside the capacity to reason.

He also experienced the ravages of war (albeit at some distance) when Calcutta was bombed. He lived through the horrifying Bengal Famine of 1943, though it did not affect his family much. It was that experience that drove him as an adult to seek out the causes of famines. It may seem a truism now that famines are not caused by shortage of food; they are caused when large populations lack access to food. It was Sen’s work that clearly delineated this.

The Sen family had its share of jailbirds—uncles and cousins locked up in preventive detention due to their nationalist sympathies. He visited them in jail as a young boy, accompanying his grandparents. In 1946, he saw his fair share of the bloody communal violence that preceded Partition.

The political awareness that developed stayed with him, as did the dissonance between the sectarian madness of 1946, and his family’s long-standing relationships with Muslim friends. During his Presidency College years, Sen was drawn into endless *addas* (debates) about political formations. The *addas* resumed while he was setting up the Economics faculty at Jadavpur University. There were other *addas* in Cambridge, where he engaged in debates of all descriptions and joined political clubs.

Cambridge and later on, MIT, helped him to access the wider world and brought his work to the notice of

The Academy. As a young man, he backpacked extensively across Europe, doing Italy on 20 pounds. There are some brilliant sketches of interactions with his friends (many of them now household names) and also a description of the judo that results when academics with entrenched political views clash. All presented in a charming, gently humorous way that leaves one looking forward to the second volume. ■

—Devangshu Datta

Amartya Sen's book throws a spotlight on his research choices and the humanist, rational philosophy by which he has always lived

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Climate Change and the Human Condition

ARVIND ELANGO VAN

The inimitable auteur Satyajit Ray in one of his well-known films, *Jana Aranya* (The Middleman, 1975), captures a poignant moment in a young man's life when he is interviewing for a job in a restless Calcutta in the mid-1970s. Faced with a series of questions, such as, "what is the speed of light?" and "who wrote *Bande Mataram*?" the protagonist Somnath (played by Pradip Mukherjee) is finally stumped by the question "what is the weight of the moon?" Utterly flummoxed, Somnath responds by asking, *Chand-er ojon?* (moon's weight?).¹ While in the immediate context of the movie, Ray's depiction of Somnath's incomprehension at the seemingly absurd question portrays the harsh conditions of seeking employment in a rapidly growing Calcutta. In light of reading Dipesh Chakrabarty's illuminating book *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, we can say that Ray unwittingly captured the deep epistemic and philosophical chasm that existed between the worldly and the planetary, a distinction that lies at the heart of the book. The current crisis of climate change, Chakrabarty argues, calls for viewing the two together—the human-centric world that we have created for ourselves and the planetary in which the human is only an incidental presence—in order to seriously confront the challenges that climate change poses to our conventional understanding of the planet that we call ours.

Climate change, occurring mainly due to humans having become a geological force, has been widely recognised as one of the major existential crises of our contemporary times (pp 25–26). While various solutions have been proposed and countries have periodically issued statements to collectively combat the crisis, in the scholarly world, few have reflected on the impact of the science behind the

BOOK REVIEWS

The Climate of History in a Planetary Age

by Dipesh Chakrabarty, *New Delhi: Primus Books, 2021; pp 290, ₹995 (hardcover).*

explanation of climate change for disciplines in the social sciences and humanities that conventionally focused on understanding the "human condition" as it has evolved for the last few hundred or at best a few thousand years.² Indeed, as the novelist Amitav Ghosh pointed out, climate change rarely made a significant presence in works of fiction too, including in his own previous works.³ The nature and impact of climate change, then, remained largely invisible even as there was an increasing recognition among the scientific community about the deleterious impact of human action due to increased carbon emissions, among other causes, on earth's atmosphere and in the oceans (pp 24, 158).

Chakrabarty forces us to reckon with this amnesic inertia by undertaking a philosophical exercise to accomplish two main tasks: first, to argue that we can no longer focus solely on the human aspect of our lives in exclusion to the planetary, which includes the other life organisms on the planet and even the longer history of evolution of humans as a species; second, this cognition presents a particular conceptual and philosophical conundrum for the way humans believe that life has to be lived, namely in pursuit of ideals, best expressed in the American declaration of independence, "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness." From a planetary perspective, it becomes obvious that such a pursuit by *everyone* on this planet may not be sustainable; yet it is impossible to give up the pursuit of these ideals as well (pp 34–35, 62, 212). Climate change thus produces a difficult

and intractable puzzle to solve in the modern era. The first two sections of the book are devoted to accomplishing these tasks. In the final section, Chakrabarty explores some tentative ideas put forward by contemporary theorists on the indelible nature of the problem and the book includes a postscript that recounts a conversation between the French philosopher Bruno Latour and Chakrabarty on the above-mentioned ideas. Interestingly and understandably, there is no conclusion to the book. As Chakrabarty notes, it is a "... conclusion not yet reached in history" (p 20). In what follows, I will provide a brief overview of the arguments of the book along the two points mentioned above. As must be clear by now, the scale and scope of the book is immense. At one level, it speaks about the philosophical idea of the human as it emerged in modern political thought and at another level it expands to include the history of the human species, extending to the time of the "agricultural revolution" that occurred about 11,700 years ago (p 40) and the history of the planet, which extends to millions and indeed billions of years (p 166). This scale of history is equally matched by its eclectic and cross-disciplinary scope, ranging from the political thought of Immanuel Kant, Hannah Arendt, Karl Marx, Carl Schmitt and Bruno Latour, to mention only a few, and geologists and scientists, such as David Archer, Jan Zalasiewicz, and Will Steffen, among others. Capturing the nuances and subtleties of implications of different arguments made in the book are impossible, given the limitations of space here.

Cross-disciplinary Conversations

A central claim of the book is the ontic and epistemic distinction that Chakrabarty makes between the global and the planetary.⁴ For him, the global is a process by which the modern world as we understand it—empires, capitalism, industrialisation, and decolonisation, etc—has evolved over centuries. Here, the sustainability of the human is at the core of the enterprise; the planetary, on the other hand refers to the earth, which houses the humans along with countless

other organisms, microbes, viruses, and life-forms that are often invisible to the human eye. Habitability, therefore, emerges as a core concern in this regard. The current crisis of climate change, then, is a result of a collision of these two processes of sustainability and habitability, whereby a single-minded pursuit of anthropogenic well-being at a global level confronts the delicate ways in which the earth system works, balancing different forms of life in order for the human (along with other forms of life) to exist (pp 71–85). As Chakrabarty eloquently describes, “the global reveals the planetary” (p 207).

An exciting part of Chakrabarty’s argument is that this conceptual distinction is based on a deep engagement with the scientific literature that initially put forward the claim of the crisis of climate change. Works of Paul J Crutzen, Eugene F Stoermer, David Archer, James Lovelock, James Hansen, and Will Steffen, among others inform Chakrabarty’s elucidation. This makes his argument unique and compelling because for the first time, we are able to clearly perceive the planet as a co-actor in the drama of human life that we are so familiar with in our disciplines in social sciences and the humanities.⁵ The fault, if we may say, of the anthropocentric world view has been that it has conventionally evolved and fructified around the idea that the human was meant to conquer the earth and master the elements as it were in the process of the ever pursuant need to flourish. Forgotten in this narrative was the idea that the earth system, home to billions of other organisms also coexisted, which are an essential component of the earth’s biosphere, enabling the human to breathe and live (pp 4–5). Chakrabarty enjoins us, then, to view the planet itself as a humanist category because it now actively intervenes in our everyday life (p 68). We thus need to be conscious of the diverse scales of life in which we function on a daily basis—the human scale with all its conflicts and conundrums of everyday, along with the scale of the human considered as a species and as an inhabitant of the biosphere whose history extends far beyond the known human scales of times (pp 173, 177–78). “Unearthing the

planet,” in this sense, is a vital component of understanding the location of the human vis-à-vis the planet, an argument that Chakrabarty convincingly lays out in the book. If this perspective fundamentally turns our conventional world view upside down, it is only natural that its effects will be felt in the realm of morality and politics too.

Limits of Enlightenment Thought

In moving between scales of history, Chakrabarty is keenly attuned to one of the dominant concerns in the era of the Anthropocene (a name that identifies the current geological era where humans have acquired geological force to alter the living conditions of the planet), namely, the question of “intra-human justice.” Chakrabarty recognises that the current crisis produces a thorny problem of modernity, namely how to ensure justice in a world that is fundamentally defined by a trajectory of movement from a state of unfreedom to freedom (pp 33–34). Between countries, this question characteristically takes on a different form as well, where the industrially advanced countries have been mostly responsible for the scale of carbon emissions, and thereby there is a call for greater accountability of them from less “developed” countries (pp 65–67). For Chakrabarty, this question of justice is not just incidental but critical to engage with, in order to understand the expansive scale of the climate crisis.

Chakrabarty addresses this issue by raising an important philosophical point. He notes that modern political thought as articulated by the great enlightenment figures, such as Immanuel Kant or John Locke, for instance, emerged fundamentally by setting aside the biosphere in their political thought (pp 32–212). The idea of the individual that remained at the heart of their political theories were ones that believed in the abundance of nature and believed that the external “world” as it were would always be available in plenty as long as the human knew how to use these resources (pp 198–99). This enlightened self, at the heart of these theories, simultaneously became the bearers of individual rights, equality, and legitimate pursuers of justice while

remaining, ardent consumers of natural resources, which in the last century has included fossil fuel (p 40). Thus, the idea of justice that remains at the heart of humanity’s concerns, globally, has a problem at a cellular level. At its core, the idea of intra-human justice has to come to terms with the species idea of the human that is geared towards greater consumption of the planet’s resources (p 62). Chakrabarty’s argument in this regard raises a very compelling question about the limits of pursuing justice within the confines of enlightenment thought. How do we even begin envisioning limits to intra-human injustice in the interests of the health of the planet in order to ensure the viability of biosphere that makes the pursuit of justice meaningful in the first place?

Chakrabarty extends this philosophical argument to address the other aspect of injustice—between the richer and poorer countries. Briefly stated, in his view, such a critique that believes in “capitalocene” as opposed to Anthropocene undermines the undeniable species aspect of our lives, a process that predates the birth and spread of capitalism (pp 65–67). From a species or planetary perspective, it is futile to simply view the current crisis of climate change only as a result of excesses of capitalism when the entire world, really, is engaged in the process of using the planet’s resources to provide sustenance to the human population. This desire is universal and irrespective of the economic system a country chooses since the human population would need these “basic goods” to survive, a process that has only intensified since the “great acceleration” of the 20th century (p 61).

This moral crisis of securing intra-human justice in the age of the Anthropocene, inevitably leads to a crisis for

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our conventional models of politics as well. As Chakrabarty notes, geological change occurs at an expansive scale, whereas our analytical framework of political processes is inadequate to deal with the nature of climate crisis, which function on a limited timescale such as four or five years (pp 34–35). Given this scalar difference, how can we imagine a politics that addresses the urgency of the climate crisis from a standpoint of political process that remains at its core constitution, indifferent to the biosphere, somewhat mirroring the way in which the biosphere is indifferent to the human? Recognising this fundamental scalar disparity between the human and the planet and being cognisant of the fact that the human is in a minority, compared to other life organisms of this planet, is critical for Chakrabarty to begin work on addressing the crisis of climate change (pp 195–96, 203–04).

By way of critique, it is useful to note that this book is written partly in conversation with several interlocutors and critics who engaged with Chakrabarty's work since the publication of his essay "The Climate of History: Four Theses" (2009). The book thus responds, anticipates, and addresses several criticisms. In particular, readers will find that

Chakrabarty extensively addresses the critique that questions of capital, and therefore the related question of intra-human justice did not find sufficient place in his original articulation. As this review makes clear, the book convincingly responds to these criticisms. However, this does not mean that these debates will conclude; if anything, this book is sure to generate more vigorous debates along these lines and new ones.

In sum, Chakrabarty's book underscores the severity of the climate crisis by arguing for a paradigmatic shift in the disciplines of social sciences and humanities. Its core message of unthinking the global by thinking about the planetary is vital to address not only the physical but also the conceptual, moral and political crisis engendered by climate change. For this reason, the book will be a point of reference for a long time to come as we work towards overcoming the epistemic and philosophical chasm that confounded Somnath in *Jana Aranya*.

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Navigating through Democracy Concerns of the Poor

SATYAJIT SINGH

This is a book that tries to understand how the poor negotiate democracy. It asks whether the poor "absorb the ideas and identities encompassed in notions associated with democracy, of citizenship, rights, improvements, and modernity?" (p 2). Or do their everyday vulnerabilities "compel them to seek recourse to clientelistic practices, communitarian vocabularies, preservation of lifestyles with which they are familiar, and the comfort of their traditions" (p 2). The author wishes to underline that the poor "neither seek assimilation

Politics of the Poor: Negotiating Democracy in Contemporary India by Indrajit Roy, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, New York, US, Melbourne, Australia; New Delhi and Singapore: 2018; pp xxi + 521, price not indicated.

into the universalistic premises of democracy nor aim to perpetuate their difference" (p 5). Instead, he points to the poor's "multifaceted negotiations in and with democracy." These negotiations combine cooperation with conflict, are not necessarily conducted with formal institutions, nor are they always convened by organisations

NOTES

[The author thanks Ranu Roychoudhuri for prompt and immensely helpful feedback and constructive comments.]

- 1 As is well known, *Jana Aranya* (1975) is considered to be part of Satyajit Ray's Calcutta trilogy. The interview scene in question is quite iconic as well. Several commentators have reflected on the implication of that whole interview sequence, including the question, "what is the weight of the moon? See, for instance, Amitabha Bhattacharya (1990). *Jana Aranya* is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEMA1upForw> (last viewed on 21 June 2021). The interview sequence appears between 33:50 and 34:52.
- 2 Chakrabarty (2009) initially formulated these concerns in his essay, "The Climate of History: Four Theses." This essay appears as the first chapter in this book with an addendum addressing some of the critiques of the original essay.
- 3 See Amitav Ghosh (2016), pp 7–9.
- 4 Chakrabarty's distinction between the global and the planetary is one of the central arguments of the book that is discussed in different chapters. Most prominently, it appears in the Introduction (p 4), Chapter 3 (pp 71–81), Chapter 7 (pp 155–81), and in the last chapter, which takes the form of question-and-answer session with the French philosopher, Bruno Latour, pp 205–17.
- 5 In particular, see Chapters 1–3.

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of the poor. As the poor do not "quietly adapt themselves to the authority of the elected representatives," the "poor people's politics is a politics of 'agonistic' negotiations" with democracy (p 5). The book is about establishing Chantal Mouffe's concept of an agonistic perspective in understanding the politics of the poor in India (see *Democratic Paradox*, Verso, London, 2000). According to the author, this perspective allows an examination of power relationships in which the lives of the poor are embedded and it also provides a narrative in which they can marginally affect social relations of power.

Multifaceted Negotiations

The *Politics of the Poor: Negotiating Democracy in Contemporary India?* focuses on multifaceted negotiations of the poor, in and with democracy—with politicians, bureaucrats, employers and with one

other Indian languages. Elaborations of key terms by non-English speaking contributors would also add another dimension that can perhaps be lost in a work in English.

Bodh Prakash

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REPUBLIC OF HINDUTVA: How the Sangh is Reshaping Indian Democracy by Badri Narayan.
Penguin Random House India, Gurgaon, 2021.

Badri Narayan is a cultural anthropologist, a social historian and a creative writer in Hindi. He has been consistently engaged in writing on politics of identity involving caste and religion-based identities as they have evolved in the northern states of India such as Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar.

The book under review is an unusual as well as insightful attempt to explain the growing role of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in reshaping the contours of Indian democracy. Its compelling narrative unravels the role of the RSS in carving out two emphatic victories for the BJP in consecutive general elections held in 2014 and 2019, respectively. The author acknowledges that owing to the expansive and persuasive efforts of the countless volunteers at the grassroots level, the RSS has gained a wider and deeper base in society.

Strangely, the author himself was a prisoner of the stereotype images of the RSS during his three-decade long association with the left groupings in India. As such, the RSS was just an upper caste and middle and upper class grouping. However, his field studies have shown him new realities. Hence, without being a partisan, he has dared to politely invite critics of the RSS to go through his laborious exercise regarding the nitty-gritty functioning of the RSS to understand the depth and magnitude of its penetration in different parts of northern India.

The central arguments in the book could be stated thus. One of the distinguishing features of the RSS has been the capacity of its volunteers to work tirelessly in the remotest of areas, like missionaries, almost selflessly. As an organization, the RSS has evolved according to the changing social and cultural circumstances by creating, destroying and recreating itself. While most of its critics have battled with the erstwhile image of the RSS of the 1970s and '80s, the organization has changed beyond recognition since those days. This is evident from the fact that RSS volunteers today are techno-savvy and over the years they have made efforts to widen their base to accommodate Scheduled Castes

(SCs) or Dalits and Maha Dalits, Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Tribal and even Muslim communities within their fold.

The RSS is well connected to different NGO networks of formal and informal organizations that operate within the Sangh Parivar. Its sole aim is to construct an overarching Hindu identity. The RSS has come to terms with the fact that different community gods matter for the identity of marginalized communities that are looking for religious empowerment. The master strategy of the RSS of appropriating spiritual, religious as well as political leaders from different parts of the marginalized communities has paid rich dividends. Considering the numerical strength of the overall marginalized communities, the RSS has built Ambedkar memorials in Mhow, Mumbai, Delhi, Nagpur and London which have become pilgrimage sites. In a word, from Kabir, Ravidas and Gorakhnath to Dr Ambedkar, the RSS has appropriated everyone. Its constant appreciation of Ambedkar, at times, blunts Ambedkar's scathing criticism of the Hindu religion that has rested on a hierarchical, unequal and deathless caste system. It has also blurred the fact that even though Ambedkar was born a Hindu, he died a Buddhist.

Keeping in view the sheer numerical strength of the Bahujan Samaj, the RSS has moved further to counter caste-based parties such as the Socialist Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in UP. If Yadav and Jatav communities form the social base of the SP and the BSP, respectively, the RSS has tried to expand its base among the non-Yadav and non-Jatav lower social castes among the OBCs and the SCs. Moreover, the RSS has been relentless in its mission of confronting the proselytizing activities of Islam and Christianity in different parts of India. While mobilizing the electorate during the general elections, the RSS volunteers in countless numbers have helped the BJP launch door to door campaigns and building myths around the BJP leadership. There have been moments when the top leadership has relied on polarizing strategies such as Shamsan versus Kabaristan or Ali versus Bajarang Bali. Evidently, the RSS has shouldered the responsibility of transmitting an intrinsically polarizing essence of such messages to the grassroots.

While reflecting on this empirical travail, let me raise a few pertinent issues. Although the term Hindutva has been in vogue for decades, owing to the ambiguity that surrounds it, I have been unable to grasp its precise meaning. The RSS ideologues have an aversion to using the term Hinduism because it perhaps reminds them of other isms such as socialism or com-

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munism. However, what are the salient features of Hindutva? In the ultimate analysis, does it signify people who treat the territorial space of India as a fatherland as well as sacred land? How is Hindutva different from being a Hindu? Admittedly, there is no dogma that guides the Hindus. If Hinduism is a way of life, it has flourished in circumstances where there is a strong society and a weak central authority or the state. The RSS has chosen to exploit the prevailing social and cultural circumstances to its full advantage by playing on the emotive sensibilities of people. It has certainly reshaped the contours of India's electoral democracy. Generally, the term Republic is deployed to denote the rule of the people. What kind of Republic is implicit in the way the RSS functions? Do RSS foot soldiers aspire to promote militant Hindu consciousness as a base towards majoritarian politics? Will this form of ethnic nationalism leave any space for civic nationalism and consequently other religious groups?

It also needs to be underscored that India has roughly 204 million Muslims that constitute the largest single minority. Also, the third largest population of Muslims worldwide is in India. Since 2014, the alienation as well as insecurity of Muslims has become palpable. Besides, there are also citizens belonging to Sikh, Parsi, Christian, Buddhist and Jewish faiths, bound by a thread of unity, that collectively function based on a modern, egalitarian constitution in India. Unfortunately, polarization on religious or caste lines by political parties of different hues, has adversely affected social harmony in India's plural society.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Congress and the other opposition parties can learn from the RSS insofar as dedicated work at the grassroots is concerned. Without working with the people from the grassroots, they cannot evolve strategies to revive a progressive agenda to counter the RSS and the BJP more effectively. Now, thanks to the behemoth of the RSS/BJP and the lack of effective opposition, most of the institutions that sustain a worthy democratic set-up have been undermined. Are the people really sovereign today? In this context, Badri Narayan's work is an eye-opener for those who dream of protecting democracy in India with the fundamental right of the citizens to question their rulers, without any fear, and make them more accountable. It is also a welcome addition to the existing literature on the role of the RSS.

dialogue and even though the no-war pact failed as the two leaders could not agree on the terms, Nehru was keen on a framework to resolve outstanding issues of water, evacuee property and a no-war pact would offer that opportunity. Liaquat was also “not averse” to such a pact. At the same time, Nehru was not fully ruling out war over the question of minorities in Pakistan and the refugees flowing into India.

There was debate on the processes and procedure for dispute settlement, this from the Pakistan side, and there was a feeling that outstanding disputes should not come in the way of a declaration (p 105). The Indo-Pakistan no-war pact was based on the Kellogg-Briand Pact signed by 15 states in Paris in 1928 to neutralise the hostility between Germany and France, which even had the United States and United Kingdom on board. Raghavan says that by applying the concept behind this pact which outlawed war and opted to settle disputes by peaceful methods, India and Pakistan were defining their own relationship as “one that was admittedly

tense but one that could be negotiated in inherited frameworks of international relation” (p 106).

Lessons from History

The goodwill that the two nations had for each other at one level was not marked by a denial of partition but each step was an endorsement, as for instance the Indus Waters Treaty. Raghavan points out, “If a treaty could be signed at all between India and Pakistan, it would have to acknowledge, and then most fairly accommodate the fact of partition, and the viable coexistence of both countries” (p 138). This was also an instance, she points, “of how the fact of partition led to new methods of governance and administration being evolved” (p 136).

As one reads the book, there is a sense of what might have been, had this same spirit of mutual accountability and cooperation continued, despite the hostility. The complex questions of nation state formation and what constitutes identity and who is to be included or excluded are valid even today. India and Pakistan,

while maintaining diplomatic relations, have veered more towards immaturity rather than building on this early solid start, and keeping up a sustained constructive dialogue. The revocation of Article 370 in Kashmir has added to new tensions and potential conflict. As history has shown, and as the book explains, the bilateral framework is still a valid space for negotiation and innovation but the question is if the two countries lend credibility to that option. If after a brutal partition, India and Pakistan could engage so deeply to accommodate each other's concerns, there is little reason why they cannot do so now. That is the important lesson from history that this book uncovers.

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Through the Naga Insurgency Emergence of Mutant Democracy in Nagaland

PRADIP PHANJOURAM

Jelly J P Wouter's picturisation of the future of Nagaland and its people in *In the Shadows of Naga Insurgency: Tribes, State, and Violence in Northeast India* is grim. The author's treatment of the subject is empathic but detached, and his assessments of this deeply wounded and inherently broken society is often brutally honest. The despairing vision is, the Naga's effort to come to terms with the modern, burdened by memories of a fading ideal but still under the looming shadow of an unresolved insurgency, is horribly flawed. A mutant culture of several normalised abnormalities, including corruption, is the result.

In the Shadows of Naga Insurgency: Tribes, State, and Violence in Northeast India by Jelle J P Wouters, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp xxiv + 331, ₹995.

The author says he lived for close to two years in two villages, Phugwumi of the Chakesang Naga and Noksen of the Chang Naga and was even adopted into a clan of Phugwumi. It is from this vantage, and as a trained ethnographer, he did his fieldwork for his doctoral thesis which ultimately became this book. The book thus is an insider view of the vexed six decades old Naga problem, moderated by a disciplined academic observer's overview.

The book is in seven chapters. The introductory chapter lays out the canvas, sketching a broad panorama of life in Nagaland in the last six decades of the Naga struggle for sovereignty.

Naga Life in Past Decades

The second, is the densest. Here the anthropologist gets under the skin of the Naga society to survey their understanding of identity, ethnicity, indigeneity, etc. It is also a retrospective study of the evolution of the Naga identity, now very definitely commanding a sense of peoplehood but not so once. Naga identity, he shows, has often been a function of extraneously introduced political enclosures, a process which began from the time the British colonial administration dawned and progressively secured its hold in these hills. Till then, identity perception rested on the village as an autonomous social formation and seldom extended beyond it. In some cases, there are evidences of several villages of aligned tribes forming rudimentary confederacies

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in the face of common adversaries, in “negative solidarity.” This has also meant that when common extraneous threats diminish, this “negative solidarity” wears off. Several earlier ethnographers have also noticed this quality of the Naga village, but Wouters’ valuable contribution to this discourse is in weighing in the influence of the shadow of Naga insurgency.

Some of the notable extraneously introduced political enclosures causing reciprocal shifts in Naga self-perception are the creation of the Naga Hills district in 1866, its incorporation into the British Assam province in 1912, and in the post-colonial era its merger with Tuensang and Mon area of the then North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) (present-day Arunachal Pradesh) in 1957 to ultimately become Nagaland state in 1963. Wouters contends, as with many other communities in the North East, the Naga identity too has been more “adopted than inherent, temporary more than permanent.” This being so, the reverse process of voluntary withdrawal of identity affiliation by smaller tribes from bigger ones, especially when such withdrawals were seen as advantageous in entitlements from the state’s resources, has not been uncommon.

Wouters also suggests it is the waning of the phenomenon of “negative solidarity” which has caused Naga insurgent groups to splinter during the

two spells of ceasefires the Naga struggle has seen. By inferences, the readers are shown the grave challenge likely in a post-conflict future of the Nagas. When the binding threads of “negative solidarity” provided by a perceived common adversary disappears, would there be any strong enough sinew left to keep Naga unity intact? This problem would be compounded by new contests for the state’s available resources among the tribes. The next five chapters are elaborations of this.

Idea of Money ‘Pumped’ In

There are a few contestable presumptions, however. Although the focus of this book is on the failures and successes of Nagas in their response to modern challenges of statehood and democracy, it is a little unsettling that the author accepts rather uncritically the much-touted idea of money being “pumped” and “poured” into Nagaland after the creation of the state of Nagaland in 1963 as a “seduction” to wean the Nagas away from the path and ideology of the insurgents. My reservation is not so much on the content but the context of the proposition, for this rather unkind sketch is also often made with a tinge of patronising condescension in an accusatory tone of the recipients being ungrateful. It is confounding that none of the writers and newspaper columnists who conjured up this picture first to influence

future writers have ever thought it important to also quantify the amounts thus “pumped” or “poured” in.

Again, the resort has been to use per capita investment as alibi. However, per capita calculations can be tricky considering the differential in the population of Nagaland and large states of India. Yet again, in infrastructural investment, the quantum more than the per capita investment makes sense, for a bridge or road of the same specifications constructed in a remote village in Nagaland would cost the same as in the heart of a metropolis like New Delhi, regardless of whether the first is used by a few hundreds and the latter by several thousands. Of course, Nagaland as a full-fledged state after 1963 would have become entitled to a much bigger budget than while it was a district of Assam and the handling of this money has left much to be desired. But this budgetary allocation may also be all the money “pumped” in.

Nonetheless, Wouters does show how this money has not resulted in any meaningful creation or upgradation of democratic institutions and infrastructure, and has instead led to the emergence of an extensive corruption nexus, now touching the entire hierarchy of Naga society. This includes the Village Development Boards (VDBs), pioneered by bureaucrat A M Gokhale for which he

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received a Padma Shri, and the Nagaland Communitisation of Public Institutions and Services Act, 2002 which came into vogue during another bureaucrat R S Pandey's tenure as chief secretary. The author demonstrates these wrongs through interviews of several representative subjects as well as his own commentaries. In the shadow of insurgency, the ordinary Naga's effort to come to terms with the onset of modern economy and democracy has led to a grotesque mutation of Naga cultural mores and morality.

A Different Kind of War

In Chapter 3, Wouters argues that the current ceasefire is war by other means. Cadre recruitments by insurgents have not stopped just as "tax" (extortions) continues unabated. Of concern is also the fact that cadres recruited during the two decades of ceasefire are also now poised to replace the old guards altogether, resulting in a drop in commitment. Interviews by Wouters reveal most new cadres had joined as job seekers rather than fired by ideal. The picture is, even as the Indian Army withdraws into barracks, so have the Naga nation to "their more primal association of tribe, and focused on strengthening its status and standing in relation to other tribes, leaving the Naga nation for what it was, a semblance."

The next two chapters take on how Naga world view came to be degenerated by developmental money. Siphoning off developmental money, already prevalent before the ceasefire, now was a collaborative plunder in which the entire Naga social structure has become complicit. This plunder begins at the top from where insurgent tax collectors were diverted to project execution agencies like VDBs and individual contractors. Insurgents make tax demands on VDBs, the VDB authorities bargain and get discounts. The top bureaucrats cover their cuts using insurgent extortion as excuse. VDB authorities inflate claimed amount of insurgents and keep their cuts; the insurgent collectors claim huge discounts given to desperate villages and keep the balance. The entrenched vested interests in this unholy affair nexus are widespread and the author is that apprehensive that

it may even stand in the way of a final peace deal.

Plunder Economy

A skewed understanding of legality and morality also come to be internalised. Money from India is portrayed as compensation for decades of military oppression; therefore plundering it has come to be seen as not carrying the same moral weight as hard-earned money from traditional Naga occupations. But the problem is, Naga youth now are abandoning traditional occupations to join occupations that have a handle in this new plunder economy. The irony goes deeper. Those who make the biggest plunders allow others to have their cuts, donate liberally to local churches, throw lavish parties, etc, earn reputations of generosity and resourcefulness for themselves, in a skewed semblance of olden days when a rich man who holds "feasts of merit" and was honoured by his village with memorial stone monoliths.

This warping of Naga morality is also seen in the manner of another innovative administrative scheme under the Communitisation of Public Institutions and Services Act, 2002, which sought to take advantage of the "rich social capital, available in amazing abundance in Naga villages," functioning like "village republics" by handing them administrative responsibilities. The scheme no sooner became an instrument for shielding absenteeism and non-performance of clansmen and women in government services, completely overturning, the author argues, the Weberian notion of the modern state characterised by impersonal rules which explicitly define duties, responsibilities, standardised procedures and conduct of office holders.

Demand for a Separate State

Chapter 6 deals with how competition for state resources between tribes makes matters worse. The gravest consequence is a centrifugal tension now threatening to splinter Nagaland state. Six Naga tribes want a separate state called "Frontier Nagaland" formed of four districts they inhabit. These four districts were formerly part of NEFA, before being merged with the Naga Hills district in 1957 to become

Nagaland state in 1963. This demand is under the banner of the Eastern Naga People's Organisation (ENPO), which claims this is to end their alleged common exploitation by more advanced Western Nagas. The tension is however not new. To address this, in the 1970s a local layer was added to the reservation for Scheduled Tribes, and Nagaland reclassified its tribes into "forward" and "backward," setting aside 25% reservation for "backward tribes" and later increasing this to 37%. The ENPO was however unhappy as more tribes other than them were in this "backward tribes" category, and demanded another segment, "very backward tribes" within this category. In response, in 2003, Nagaland administration established the Nagaland Department of Underdeveloped Areas (DUDA), to level the playing field. The ENPO rejected this to insist on a separate state.

In the final chapter, Wouters shows how even the practice of democracy has come to be grotesquely reinterpreted in vernacular idioms in Nagaland. In the 2013 Nagaland assembly elections, he noticed many abnormalities resulting from the Nagas' belief not in the need for them to adapt to democracy, but for democracy to be adapted to their traditional power structure. Hence, bogus votes of "double entries, names of villagers long deceased or of persons who no longer resided in the village or never lived there," which each village commands, have come to be seen as a right of each village. In Phugwumi village, of its 5,500 votes, 2,000 were bogus. The village unfortunately had two aspirant candidates that year, and when no consensus candidate could be worked out, the village votes, even the bogus ones, were split between the two. Neither however won. It was also discovered that between them they ended up sharing only 85% of the village votes, the other 15% having found "escaped" from the binds of the village. Without saying it explicitly, Wouters leaves the readers to guess if Nagaland's best hope for the future would not be in the expansion of the world the 15% escaped voters chose to belong to.

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BOOK AND SOFTWARE REVIEW

Learning from the unconscious: psychoanalytic approaches in educational psychology, edited by C. Arnold, D. Bartle, X. Eloquin, London, Karnac Books, 2021, 352 pp., £29.69 (paperback). ISBN-10: 1913494233, ISBN-13: 9781913494230

Psychoanalysis is not a mainstream framework in the field of educational psychology. It is rarely discussed, and then often summarily dismissed as entirely speculative and therefore of no relevance to our quest for demonstrably evidence-based practice. However, by drawing primarily on Kleinian and post-Kleinian theory, for me this book makes a convincing argument in favour of at least an open-minded re-appraisal. The work includes chapters from an impressive and diverse range of knowledgeable and experienced practitioners, mostly educational psychologists (EPs). The stated aim of the book is to demonstrate ways in which psychoanalytic theory can be usefully embedded within mainstream practice. This text is accessible and aimed at both students and current practitioners.

The book is separated into seven well-organised parts which guide the reader through an insightful journey into the key tenets and principles of psychoanalytic theory. Each part relates to a specific activity from educational psychology practice and covers a range of potential applications. All chapters are well structured and written in a pedagogical style, with each including an appropriate introductory paragraph and an equally appropriate section for conclusions. Throughout the volume the reader will find many illustrative vignettes, as well as helpful quotes and bibliographic references that enrich and support the comprehension of its contents.

The first chapter provides a general introduction which seeks to equip the reader with the basic theoretical knowledge and understanding necessary to appreciate the overall argument. After this helpful beginning, each of the subsequent chapters can almost stand alone. The book successfully offers an exploration of the practical application of psychoanalytic thinking through different and recognisable activities from EP practice, including assessment, consultation, supervision, working with groups, and taking organisational perspectives. The last part uses chaos theory to analyse some of the potential challenges to the assumptions on which psychoanalysis is based.

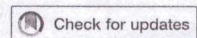
I found this a most informative and useful book, with one of its many strengths being a clear linking of theory to practice. One can finish the book with renewed ideas and reflections which will of course vary with the reader's previous experience of psychoanalysis. I would highly recommend this work both to qualified EPs and to those in training as it offers a potentially engaging, informative, and thought-provoking experience. On this basis it could be an asset to the team's library or to an individual searching for innovative professional development. It provides many ideas, tools and resources that might prove helpful by potentially embedding psychoanalytical ideas in our practice as well as adding new strategies to our repertoire.

Recommended for: EPs' professional development

Style: Applies theory to practice.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2021.1911519>



—19—

p. 257). This really invites the reader to take a dive into the Hindi original.

In his assessment of the colonial period, Pathak implicitly follows Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha's seminal work *This Fissured Land* (1992) which argued that the colonial period was a watershed moment in India's ecological history. Among other things this is evident in the way the chapters are organized, beginning with the 19th century and a discussion on the imposition of harsh restrictions on forest use through colonial legislations. The introduction to this book, 'A Man to Match his Mountains', is written by Ramachandra Guha who has edited this English translation. Guha's introduction is an intimate account of scholarly solidarity and a close friendship with the author. Reading *The Chipko Movement* takes the reader back to Guha's *The Unquiet Woods* (1989) where Guha drew scholarly attention to 'peasant rebellions' against state-led commercial forestry during the British rule in the Kumaon Himalayas. Subtle differences, that remain understated in the book, distinguish Pathak's approach from Guha's. In Pathak's account, anti-colonial resistance does not figure as the defining feature of the relation of the hill peasant with the state. This can be seen in the aspirations and demands for better education, employment, more equitable rights of access to forests and forest products and subsequently the demand for a separate state within the Indian Union. Further, here we see a more complicated and disaggregated picture of the protests and the protestors than what Guha described. It is clear that even though Chipko protestors were primarily rural hill peasants, the role of educated youth and organized political activists – both regional and national – needs to be recognized. The richness and variety of Pathak's sources stands out but there is also a noticeable similarity in the broader outline of *The Unquiet Woods* and *The Chipko Movement*. In both books agitations against forest policies of the British government and the Tehri Raja in the 1920s and 1930s provide the key historical background to events of the 1970s and '80s.

The title, *The Chipko Movement*, aptly captures the focus on Chipko but the account also offers a modern history of the Uttarakhand state, formed in 2000. Region-making seems to go almost hand in hand with the trajectory of ecological protests in this book leading us to think that the demand for a separate hill state always enjoyed a wide popular base. But this is at odds with Emma Mawdsley who has previously argued that until 1994, when the SP-BSP government of Uttar Pradesh implemented the OBC reservation, the demand

for a separate state was primarily restricted to elite-urban groups and did not have much of a popular base among the rural population in the hill districts. On a somewhat related note, the hill-inhabitant identity sometimes appears as an overarching uniting identity in this book and the author offers a limited discussion of the tensions in power relations between different social groups in the hills. If women were a key force behind the ecological and anti-liquor protests, why is that political leadership across the ideological spectrum remained largely confined to a male caste-Hindu background in this region?

Pathak emphasizes that the relation of rural women with the forests was primarily an economic one but at some places he implicitly subordinates their political agency to that of the male activists and leaders. For instance, with respect to protests led by Gaura Devi and other women in Reni in 1974, he writes that by resisting forest contractors in the absence of Chipko leaders, these women 'had saved the repute of' Chipko's male leaders (p. 132) and later again, with reference to the women-led protests in Doongri-Paintoli in 1980, he credits a founder member of the USV for 'activating' women of Doongri-Paintoli. (p. 285) At the same time, one also wonders if these issues are dealt with differently in the Hindi original.

Pathak perceptively notes that in border regions of Chamoli populated by the Bhotiyas (Tolchhas-Marchhas), CPI activists had greater influence than Sarvodaya workers of the DGSS. What explains this difference in reach with respect to tribal communities in this region? We would have liked to know more about this rather interesting observation. While a more elaborate discussion on the entanglements of caste, tribe and gender in this region would have widened the scope of this book, it remains an important contribution to scholarly writings on Chipko as it offers a regionally situated history of this globally famous ecological movement.

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HOW TO AVOID A CLIMATE DISASTER: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need by Bill Gates. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2021.

HOW we tell the story of climate change matters. In *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster*, Bill Gates tells the story of climate change through his lens, which is that of a skeptical billionaire-technocrat-philanthropist.

In Gates' view, climate change is a technical problem with social consequences, which needs philanthro-capitalist models of innovation to create zero-carbon tools as solutions. Gates begins the book by introducing us to two numbers – 51 billion, the tons of greenhouse gases added into the world every year, and zero, the number we need to get to in order to tackle climate change.

Gates sets the stage by laying out the enormity of the challenge of tackling climate change in no uncertain terms. 'This sounds difficult, because it will be. The world has never done anything quite this big.' (p. 1) Gates describes his own introduction to understanding climate change through the problems of energy poverty and lack of energy access in the global South, where Gates' work on public health (through the Gates Foundation) took him. In late 2006, Gates' former colleagues at Microsoft bring climate experts to him to explain climate change. At the time Gates was akin to a climate change skeptic, believing that cyclical variations would self-correct the climate problem and naturally prevent a climate disaster. A few years later spent learning, reading, and talking to experts, Gates shares his three main conclusions (p. 8): (i) To avoid a climate disaster we need to get to net zero carbon emissions; (ii) there is a need to deploy existing tools such as clean energy technologies faster and smarter, but these will not be sufficient; and (iii) there is a need to create new tools in the form of 'breakthrough technologies' to achieve the remaining carbon emission reduction required.

The next three chapters, Why Zero, This Will be Hard, and Five Questions to Ask in Every Climate Conversation, are a well-written compilation of Gates' notes from his studies through reading and conversations with climate science experts. Gates explains what fossil fuels are – buried organic matter compressed over time that have been fossilized into combustible materials like oil, natural gas, and coal. Gates explains why carbon dioxide and methane trap heat in the atmosphere, by vibrating molecules which get energized through the reflected sunlight. How the temperature has already risen one degree Centigrade over preindustrial times. How a warming atmosphere causes sea level rise, and affects plants, animals, and agriculture. How global energy demands are increasing due to the increasing prosperity of the erstwhile poor, and how that will increase emissions even more. How fossil fuels are cheap and energy dense. And so on.

Most of this information will not be new to anyone who has kept themselves informed about climate change over the last twenty years, but the information

is presented in an easy-to-understand way, with no academic citations, and its presentation style will likely be perceived as less daunting to an average non-academic reader, than an IPCC report (whose purpose is also to synthesize the latest academic research of climate change).

The following five chapters – How We Plug In, How We Make Things, How We Grow Things, How We Get Around, and How We Keep Cool and Stay Warm – describe what Gates thinks we should do to tackle the five major sources of global carbon emissions: electricity (responsible for 27% of total global annual emissions), cement, steel, and plastic (responsible for 31% of total global annual emissions), agriculture and animal husbandry (responsible for 19% of total global annual emissions), transportation (responsible for 16% of total global annual emissions), and heating, cooling, and refrigeration (responsible for 7% of total global annual emissions). Gates' suggestions range from 'electrify every process possible', (p. 111) cutting down on meat consumption from livestock, (p. 118-119) and use energy more efficiently. (p. 157) These are the book's best and most interesting chapters to read.

Gates is a credible and engaging writer when he discusses his views on various technologies and processes related to mitigating carbon emissions. One may disagree with Gates on whether the risks of nuclear energy are worth it or not (see discussion on pp. 84-89), or whether home heating energy uses are purely techno-economical choices, (p. 155) but these chapters overall provide engaging arguments and discussions related to technologies that a reader interested in climate change would want to be familiar with.

In the last third of the book, Gates describes the need for continued investments in climate adaptation measures like helping farmers manage climate risks, transforming urban growth, and restoring ecosystems to shore up natural infrastructures, why government policies matter and can have a huge impact, and a plan for getting to zero emissions. The final chapter, What Each of Us Can Do is an excellent summary of individual actions immediately possible as a citizen, consumer, employer/employee, and a call for more thoughtful and constructive dialogue on climate change across our individual differences. I appreciate Gates expanding this chapter to include non-technological actions like running for office and engaging in the policy-making process.

Where the book shines is when Gates describes the folly of focusing on climate change solutions at the cost of public health, education, energy access, and

other technologies and services that millions in the global South desire but do not yet have access to. Gates bluntly critiques the diversion of international aid to 'climate sensitive' projects (which invariably focus on reducing emissions from the world's poor, which on a per-capita basis is miniscule compared to per capita emissions in the global North) through the elimination of funding for malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, vaccines, and other basic primary health services.

Gates does well to explain clearly to readers that while many people living in wealthy parts of the world should *decrease* their carbon emissions, for vast numbers of people living in the global South the focus is on providing access to lighting, electrification, primary healthcare including vaccines, drinking water, sanitation, education, different agricultural technologies, all of which require an increase in energy consumption (from the relatively miniscule amount it is today). The book does well to describe the inequity of the world's poor facing the brunt of climate impacts when they did not cause it.

But there are several vexing aspects of this book. First, it is unclear who the intended audience for this book is. Clearly it is not for those who already know the basics about climate change as the book is written in a register to explain those very basics to a climate neophyte or skeptic. Neither is the book meant for climate experts, as there is no original research or new information in this book that cannot be obtained from academic journals, IPCC reports, or a myriad other publications on climate change. The book is for those who know little or nothing about climate change – are there very many of those out there? Let's assume yes, that Gates imagined this book would be useful for those who know next to nothing about climate change. That still does not answer the question why readers would turn to Bill Gates to learn about climate change, given that his professional work at Microsoft had nothing to do with climate change, and his philanthropic contributions through the Gates Foundation are largely in the field of global public health.

If we imagine who would care about what Bill Gates has to say about climate change, it becomes clear that there are two categories of people: those who are in awe of his technological expertise in software development and assume it translates into other technical and social domains as well, and those who admire his wealth and assume that his success in amassing vast sums of money means he has something worthwhile to say on any topic he chooses. As a critical social scientist of energy, society, and environmental

change, I will fully and grudgingly accept that there are likely people who fit these categories. The very fame and wealth Gates has amassed give him a loud microphone, access to experts to explain things to him, and a publishing contract which allows Gates to flood bookstores at airports, train stations, and universities with his musings on climate change, not to mention primetime spots on television and late night talk shows to promote his book.

Putting aside my vexation that Gates has this unearned platform to pontificate about climate change, I think it is a positive development that someone with Gates' platform is learning about climate change, trying to stay informed, and sharing what he has learned. But this leads me to the main critique of the book, which is that while Gates, to his credit, admits to richsplaining, he still goes ahead and does it anyway. Furthermore, Gates totally ignores the fact that his personal wealth (and platform upon which he stands to make his voice heard about climate change) is predicated on the functioning of a socio-economic and political system that allows such vast inequality to accrue in the first place, and is directly linked to the climate catastrophe.

Gates studiously avoids examining the political-economy of climate change, and shies away from analysing the socio-political reasons we are where we are with regards to climate change. He retrenches the idea that we can have technological fixes absent an understanding of (as a precursor to grappling with) the politics of technological change. In doing so, he plays into the myth of the apolitical and neutral technical expert who cannot muddy his mind with the messiness of human life and politics.

Taking a step back, I reflect on whether I am glad this book was written, and who I would recommend it to. First, although congratulations are due to anyone who writes a book and gets it published, it is reasonable to expect that for someone like Bill Gates it is hardly difficult to get writing partners, publishers, experts to explain things, and fact checkers as he freely admits in his acknowledgements. Should you read it? The answer is yes only if you are already interested in Bill Gates' views on things in general, curious which technologies Bill Gates thinks have promise in addressing climate change or need a refresher on the basics of climate change.

As I stated in the beginning of the review, how we tell the story of climate change matters. The framing of the climate story shapes our imagination of solutions. If we frame the problem of climate change as a technical one (although needing some policy change for

effective implementation), then a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through technical solutions seems the most logical way to tackle it. If we frame the problem of climate change as a social justice one predicated on the exponential rise of inequality of wealth and power in the world, then technical solutions remain only a small piece of the puzzle, and used only as a means to create a more just world. Gates tells the story of climate change through two numbers – 51 billion, and zero. But if I told the story of climate change with two different numbers, 8 men, the richest people in the world (including Gates), and 50 per cent, the share of world's emissions they produced, we might think about the problem of climate change and possible solutions differently. Alternatively, I could tell the story of climate change through two other numbers – 20, the top fossil fuel corporations in the world, and 35 per cent, the share of global greenhouse gas emissions they have produced cumulatively since 1965; or another example of a pair of numbers to hinge the climate change story on – 10 countries, the top emitters, and 67%, the share of global emissions they are responsible for emitting.

All these versions of the climate story are true; all are partial perspectives of climate change and cause us to look at climate change differently. Inspired by feminist science and technology studies scholars, I suggest we embrace the partial nature of every perspective, and avoid privileging any one view as the definitive, whosoever it may be.

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WILD AND WILFUL: Tales of 15 Iconic Indian Species by Neha Sinha. HarperCollins Publishers India, 2021.

THIS is not a book you would pick up to read on a quiet relaxed evening. It titillates, forces your brow to cloud in deep furrows, makes you look away into the distance once in a while, reminds you of your favourite books, and, if you love the wild as I do, maybe it will even have a tear or two roll down your cheeks. The title and the stunning cover photo of intertwined elephant trunks are enticingly deceptive; they promise a sojourn, perhaps jolly, into the wild with animals. While the book certainly packs some incredibly interesting and stunning wild animals, it is a deep, delicious dive into a land where the wild and the human are deeply intertwined. Neha

Sinha's writing forces one to pause, think, agree or disagree, shake your head and sigh deeply. It is one of those books that needs a careful review so as not to disclose too much detail and allow readers a full-on experience on their own.

India is a country of diversity like, perhaps, none other. And in this book you will experience and witness some of that diversity related to us by an artful writer, a deep thinker, and an exasperated lover of the wild whose affections are laid out unfiltered. Sinha clearly lives to experience the wild. But unlike many accounts of natural history and wildlife experiences, she is not, by any stretch of imagination, a mere visitor to the land she writes about. Her stories are not uncluttered and neat – mere narratives of beauty or science or philosophy. No, hers are nuanced with every observation, taking her back to her mother, the complexity of institutions in India, the plight and might of the wild species she is describing, and an urgent reminder of how nothing is truly wild here.

The book is broken into chapters, but that is a mirage meant only to hero a species. The protagonist of each chapter is introduced to us with a stunning black and white photograph. And that is where the mirage ends. Each chapter is akin to a single page of a stamp collection, where each individual page and stamp is different, varied, unique, yet requiring the entire collection to tell a full story. In the chapter championing the imperilled Great Indian Bustard in the dry dusty desert, for example, you will be transported to the lush perennial forests of the Northeast to meet the White-bellied Heron. In the middle of a detailed account of species behaviour, you will be reminded of Harry Potter and the Game of Thrones. And so on it goes, somewhat confounding yet always drawing back to the one species that set each story in motion.

Sinha is a people person almost as much as she is for the wild. The book is generously dotted with names of scientists, tribal leaders, government officials, and historians who provided the fodder for this book. She does not shirk from naming the minister whom she disagreed with, nor with the elephant biologist whose assessment about elephants being natural wanderers was almost too much to bear. She meets snakes, bustards and butterflies with the same aplomb as she does hunters in Nagaland, scientists at the Wildlife Institute of India, and the man who cares for a crocodile. (That is me trying hard not to give away too much!)

Having said that, Sinha shirks not from exploring the deep divisions in India where humans appear, at the same time, as deeply passionate yet limited in their

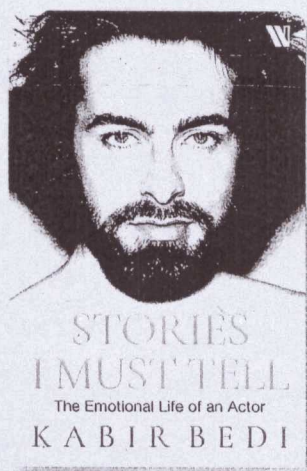
A star's self-definition

Kabir Bedi's memoir straddles many worlds, interweaving rich narratives. BY SACHIDANANDA MOHANTY

FOUR competing narratives, closely linked and interwoven, intersect this memoir in memorable terms. Rich and many-layered, like an arabesque, they bring to attention essentially fourfold subtexts: a life in cinema and allied arts, the meaning of man-woman relationship, the gift of parenthood, and the mystery of untimely death.

AGONY AND EPIPHANY

This is a narrative lyrically told with empathy and objectivity, punctuated by agony and epiphany. As in some of the best literary works, the life stories by Kabir Bedi, the well-known actor who has carved out a place for himself in the cinema of the East and the West over many decades, is told here in dramatic terms. Kabir would like the readers to learn from his own experience, the 'mistakes' he makes in his life as a lover, spouse, son, artist and parent. However, the story overpowers the narrator's desire to offer 'cautionary tales for the innocent and the unwary. The events and incidents, surcharged as they are with the ebb and flow of life, carry their own meaning, and 'lessons'



Stories I must Tell

The Emotional Life of an Actor

By Kabir Bedi
Westland Publications, Chennai, 2021

Pages: 311
Price: Rs.699

for the readers. Kabir's journey through life, enacted here in moving and self-reflexive terms, brings to mind the great literary classics in terms of the unfolding of triumphs and tragedies, evoking the Greek sense of 'hamartia', the 'fatal flaw' in the leading characters, in the modern context.

STELLAR LONGINGS

Kabir's persona in the memoir is often self-deprecatory, rarely condescending. Seldom drawn to the habitual and the commonplace, Kabir sidesteps mediocrity and aspires for nobility in thought and action that he sees in the life of his parents—Baba and Freda Bedi: one a national-

ist/communist/spiritualist of great fame, the other a Buddhist of equal eminence, both students from Oxford, and both citizens of the world. Both powerfully overcame the binaries and dichotomies of modernity.

We see Kabir's affairs, his tempestuous relationships, his 'open' marriages and life with gifted and passionate women, chief among whom were Protima and Parveen Babi. We see his 'dark nights of the soul' and those of his lady love. For Protima, the classical dance form Odissi becomes a source of catharsis; her dance school Nrityagram, on the outskirts of Bengaluru, and the ultimate pilgrimage to Mount Kailash as a "Hindu

sannyasin" the source of her deliverance. Parveen Babi, the legendary Bollywood actor who captures the spirit of an entire generation as an archetypical rebel, tragically succumbs to mental illness, forlorn and unsung.

Kabir's desires, both personal and professional, are always Olympian and larger than life, his longings forbiddingly stellar. Like Dedalus, he aspires to soar to the sun, and must get singed, but like the Phoenix, he rises eternally from his ashes. From great affluence to abject bankruptcy, from supreme stardom to total oblivion, and then back again. All the while, he remains unfazed, his *joie de vivre* remains infectious, his zest for life undiminished.

On the surface, the memoir chronicles the success and failures in the life of a popular film star in Bollywood, Italy and Hollywood; we see his celluloid adventures in the jungles of Malaysia and Costa Rica, the deserts of Egypt and Israel and other exotic locales, rubbing shoulders with the literati and the glitterati. He sees the works of great directors and is deeply inspired: David Lean, Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, Federico Fellini, Jean Luc Goddard, Luchino Visconti, K. Asif, Bimal Roy and Mehboob Khan. He learns theatre from the legendary ad guru Alyque Padamsee and is inspired by the eminent director Shyam Benegal. It is a life marked by royalty, glamour and flamboyance, marriages and separations, love and loss, affluence and

penury, nativism and cosmopolitanism, this worldliness and otherworldliness, a life of hedonism as well as a life of self-abnegation, piety and renunciation. In all this roller-coaster ride, the reader cannot miss the deeper layers of meaning and solemnity that lend significance to the memoir and its dramatic personae including the narrator-protagonist.

Kabir meets a host of luminaries in Bollywood, Italy, the United Kingdom and Hollywood: O.P. Ralhan, Vinod Khanna, Mahesh Bhatt (*A Soul Brother*), Rekha (*Khoon Bhari Maang*, that Kabir is best remembered for), Dev Anand, Gina Lollobrigida, Roger Moore, Cubby Broccoli (the producer of James Bond in *Octopussy*), Sheikh Abdullah, the Dalai Lama, Karmapa, Khushwant Singh, Deepak Chopra, Michael Caine, Kevin Reynolds, Ben Kingsley, Sean Connery, Rock Hudson, Roddy McDowell, Princess Margaret, Prince Charles, Princess Diana, Omar Sheriff and a cavalcade of actors/directors/producers. The meetings shape his mind and art and add to the rich repertoire of his international experience, especially in the field of cinema.

Acts of Remembrances

As an accomplished actor of Shakespeare, and a connoisseur of avant-garde theatre and cinema, Kabir knows that the act of recollection is not a mere act of reminiscence; it is fundamentally an attempt at self-definition. The British Romantic Revivalists tell us that when we visit a landscape, we recreate



SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

KABIR BEDI in 2017. "The best is yet to come."

through memory a fresh experience and renew our identities.

As one goes through Kabir's stories, one gets the unmistakable feeling that he is attempting, through the act of narration, to understand the meaning of his life, to define for himself the fluidity of his many identities, as a son, a spouse, father, comrade, companion, colleague, patron, philanthropist and mentor. This is borne out by the fact that the narrator-protagonist does not project himself as omniscient and all-powerful in

terms of self-knowledge and self-awareness. His voice is often marked by ambiguity and ambivalence about his predilections and actions. Was he right in this, and correct in that? Was he just to his wife Protima and fair to his son Siddharth, who tragically ended his life? Could he have done more for Parveen Babi? Did he give enough time to his parents?

Kabir offers speculations and surmises. He explains the situations but does not use his stories as self-justificatory exercises.

His acts of atonement for his guilt and regrets for the mistakes made are there for all to see. He does not refrain from showing himself as vulnerable and does not hide behind subterfuges, masks and covers for self-righteous reasons. If he cannot bear his loneliness, he is upfront about it. He is not prurient, nor is he an exhibitionist. Wisdom from hindsight often gives us the 'golden mean' that the wise speak about.

Bollywood Legends

The context for action here is largely Bollywood, a national craze and pastime. The lives of stars like Dev Anand², Rajendra Kumar, Rajesh Khanna, Sanjay Khan³, Asha Parekh⁴ never fail to excite us. Their life of struggle, courage and resilience, their fortunes and misfortunes are part of the Bollywood dream machine. Today, in the social media, the biopics of the film stars of yesteryears like Dilip Kumar⁵, Sunil Dutt and Dharmendra, Wahida Rehman, Meena Kumari, Mala Sinha, Nanda, Sadhana and Helen are familiar to the new generation. Manoj Kumar, Jeetendra and Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya and Rekha are on a comeback trail in the retrospectives.

But Kabir Bedi appears to be a stand-alone case. Perhaps his eclectic class background, education at St. Stephens, exposure to the world of elite culture and society, and his inheritance of the rich Sikh and British traditions through his parents, are responsible, in good measure, for the uniqueness of his journey.

As we go through the eight riveting chapters, we

are drawn to events aptly titled Home with Boldness and Chances and Kabir and K was twenty-th just nineteen" joyed shocking being a 'go-go of Love and dokan and P ("She chose success in Bol taking chance my shadow. I l who I wanted f man who I wa All that remain aching empty equally empty volution to Re and Freda, Ra Beach: Beach liefs (the short wrote when h Saving My Wounded Soul Ecstasy, Ruin rection: Holly and India; a Iconic Photog Magazine Cove

The mover narrative is not story often goe forth. It is a mix: the diary graphical accou by Andrew Wh ters written fro far, reflections ations of the dr

ENDNOTES

1. See Meena Ale & Littlefield, 198
2. "Romancing 'Khullam Khull. Unfinished Stor
3. "The Best Mis
4. See "Asha Pa dp/9386316986 Upadhyia; Sach
5. See the obitu: bollywood/the-o ?utm_source=ne graphy," https://

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collect alms were related to beliefs about fertility" (p 146).

How she could possibly extract the "self-representation" narratives of hijras from the 19th century by merely relying on colonial narratives is a question that remains unanswered. The sources she relies on for these religious origin myths are British ethnologists, namely Russel (1916), Enthoven (1922), Croke (1896), Rose (1911) (p 146). Herein lies the biggest oversight of the book in terms of citational politics—the uncritical citing of colonial knowledge as sources to "access" the past and the attendant reinvestment in their truth narratives by doing so. Other oversights like crediting the photograph of the "[Portrait of] Meah Sahub. Eunuch" [BL/10R/Photo 269/1(86)] to Lucknow-based photographer Abbas Ali (active late 1860s–80) instead of Ahmad Ali Khan (active 1850s–62) could perhaps have been avoided with more attention to historical detail. However, the captioning of the photograph as that of a *Khwajasarai* with explanations of the term and links to the Criminal Tribes Act seem to be unnecessary and inaccurate extrapolations by the author, especially so, because the photo is dated 1856–57, at least 14 years before the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 came into force.

Central Arguments

The major arguments placed forward by the book are that there were provincial projects within British India like the NWP campaign in the 1860s that constructed eunuchs as criminal due to a "hijra panic" around what the British considered to be an immoral and ungovernable group among the natives. By starting the book with an 1852 murder case, *Government v Ali Buksh* in which castration and prostitution are referred to, the author builds the moment as the catalyst for the "hijra panic." She repeatedly refers to "the rediscovery of the 1852 case as the moment that the Hijra community was first 'exposed'" (p 37). However, Laurence Preston's work shows archival documentation of commentaries among British officials, court cases, and inheritance and initiation laws imposed on hijras in Bombay and Satara in the 1830s (Preston 1987: 371–87). Moreover, it is widely

accepted that the subcontinent was composed of princely states before the British invasion with the concomitant uneven expansion of the empire resulting in some princely states being administered with varying degrees of independence by native rulers even as the British directly controlled other regions. Hence, the provincial character of administrative and legal regimes of the time are an accepted historical premise by most, if not all, historians of South Asian colonialism. Many of the claims of the book, such as the particularity of the campaign to exterminate hijras in the NWP remain unsubstantiated. How is the 1852 murder case a catalyst for laws and amendments enacted several decades later? What were the shifts and continuities in administrative policies of the East India Company and the Crown (post 1858)? Why was there a "hijra panic" in this particular region and what differentiated it from other British administered regions? Indeed, the issue with most positivist histories is that they are often caught in a loop of creating causal answers to complex historical processes.

The book argues that the "extermination project" launched by the British in the NWP was social and cultural involving the criminalisation of adult eunuchs, their registration and control through colonial laws, removal of children who were attached to hijra households, and disallowing public performances and begging, some of the major sources of livelihood for hijras at the time (pp 93, 106). However, later, the author argues that the NWP administration allowed *chelas* (younger kins of hijra mothers/gurus) to inherit their deceased guru's property if they were eunuchs and lived with the deceased attributing it to the low value of their properties and avoidance of administrative burden by the British (p 223). But, if it was indeed a systematic extermination plan, the allowance for property to be passed on internally within the hijra households, regardless of the value of the property, rests uneasily with that claim.

The most glaring gap in terms of analysis in the book is the under-exploration of the caste and racial contexts of British colonial rule. Although there is an entire

chapter that addresses Indian "middle class" morality and hijras, the author theorises what she calls "the overlaps in middle-class Indian and colonial accounts of the Hijra" as a result of the appropriation of colonial morality/modernity by the Indian middle class, north Indian class politics, and debates about social issues (p 91). Although it is mentioned in passing that for Hindus and Sikhs, "quotidian caste practices were an important ingredient of class identity" (p 83) the focus is more on class and respectability. Perhaps the author is under the belief that caste does not exist in Islam evidenced by the glossary for Ashrafs that says "people of aristocratic or eminent families" (p x). In the newspaper correspondence and letters to the government quoted, it is the opinions of mostly Ashraf men (the exception being Lalla Badri Pershad of the Indian Reform League) that are used as evidence for native prejudicial attitudes to hijras. It must be emphasised that history writing has implications for contemporary society, and the recuperation of hijras/eunuchs in Hindu origin myths and the disproportionate focus on Ashraf men's opinions to the exclusion of dominant caste men of any other religion have grave implications for the ongoing project of depicting Hinduism/Hindutva as one that is accepting of gender variance and alternate sexualities.

The Gender and Sexuality Lens

The lens the author uses is a narrow one, unfortunately, shared by many scholars of gender and sexuality. Hinchy argues that in the case of the "hijra community," "it was not race so much as colonial understandings of gender, sexuality and the body that ruled out the production of self-disciplining Hijras" (p 12). Colonial and Indian commentators are repeatedly quoted referring to hijras as a "race" (p 100). However, Hinchy claims, "late 19th-century ethnography in India emphasised socio-cultural knowledge over physiological theories of race, unlike ethnology elsewhere in the British Empire" (p 40). However, Hinchy herself relies on ethnological work such as that of William Croke that are heavily racialised and steeped in a discourse of colonial

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anthropology. For instance, Crooke's introduction to his four volumes on tribes and castes in NWP and Oudh in 1896 has an entire chapter dedicated to anthropometry with detailed measurements of cephalic, nasal indices, and face angles of different castes if only to show that there was similarity in racial background across castes (pp xxvii–cxxxvii).

By seeing the categories of gender, caste, sexuality, and the body as separable from racialised colonial systems, the author presents an account that is based on an uncritical use of colonial archives as sources to extract history from, in spite of claiming to pay attention to the form of the archive and not just the content as Stoler (2002) urges us to do (pp 87–103). Although Hinchy refers to plural forms of knowledge, she does not pay attention to the different forms—statistics, official reports, newspapers, police registers, etc, and only engages in a discourse analysis from different sources highlighting heterogeneous narratives. Hinchy says, “the plural forms of

knowledge in colonial archives allow us to piece together a fuller view of 19th century Hijras' lives” (p 138). In a bid to give us a “full view,” Hinchy embarks on a hurried search for an assumed stable subject—the eunuch/the hijra (although fleeting references are made to *bhagatiyas*, *sakhis*, and cross-dressing performers who might trouble the category) within the archives, imposing a coherent narrative of an ostensibly systematic, intentional extermination campaign in the NWP by the British, often even filling in the “gaps” in the archives. Nevertheless, this book is a welcome change from the anthropological studies of hijras conducted by earlier scholars. It attempts to, in some ways, shift focus away from the study of hypervisibilised deviant bodies to an examination of colonial systems of governance and control.

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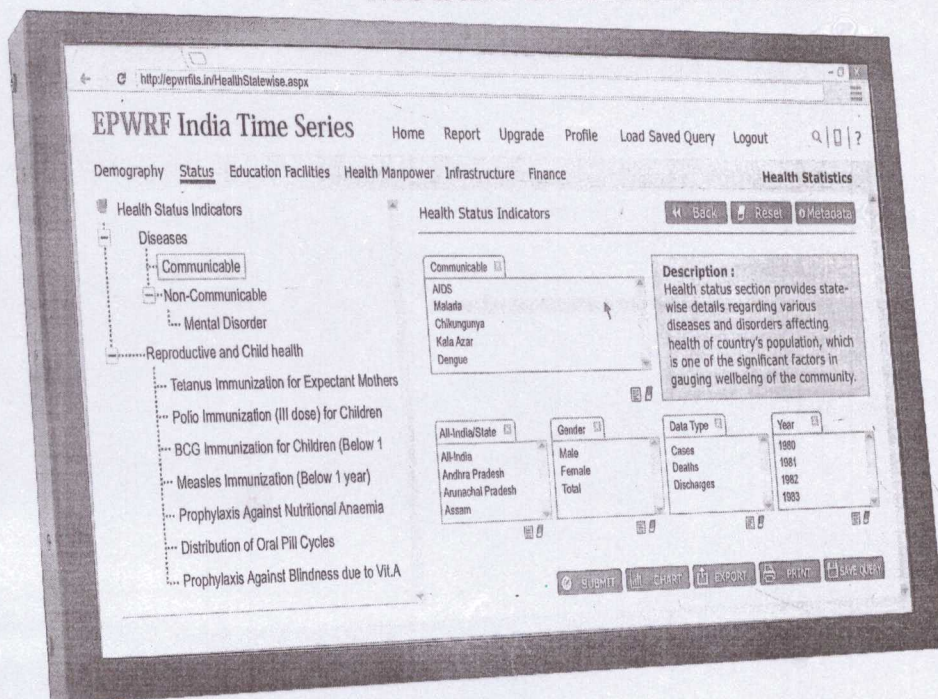
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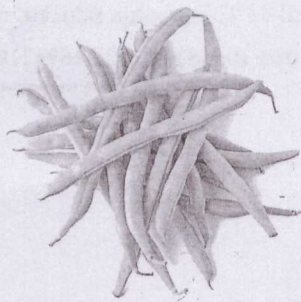
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Why Study Geography? By Alan Parkinson. 200 pp. London: London Publishing Partnership, 2020. \$17.26 (Softcover), ISBN: 978-1-913019-15-0.

Why Study GEOGRAPHY?



Alan Parkinson

Imagine an alternative reality in which geography were a core component of the US curriculum. How would American educators convey geography's relevance as an area of study and career? In *Why Study Geography?*, Alan Parkinson—2021–2022 president of the Geographical Association—constructs such a vision by describing why UK students ought to pursue a geography degree. Teachers in the land of opportunity should take note of how British educators make pitches about geography, which enjoys far more support and legitimacy in dear old Blighty.¹

Why Study Geography? confirms that the trade of geography can yield a meaningful career, alongside medical doctors, lawyers, stone masons, and coders. Each of the first four chapters addresses a question that students and parents are likely to ask: (1) What is geography? (2) Why should you study geography? (3) Where can your geographical studies take you? (4) How have people used their geography qualifications? Answers arrive as vignettes of professional geographers, advice for job hunting, and common public–private sectors where geographers are found. Chapters 3 and 4 effectively identify and describe geography jobs and careers existing outside of education. Doing so, Parkinson avoids the trap of assuming that geography is inherently important and that everyone should realize this point. Replies to these questions can prepare students to address concerns posed by parents when their child comes out and admits, “I want to become a geographer.”

Multiple cases for geography have been made before. What makes this book distinctive from others? *Why Study Geography?* could be seen as the UK complement to American geographer Alexander Murphy's (2018) *Geography: Why It Matters*, but in crucially different ways. Unlike Murphy, Parkinson enters into a personal dialogue with the reader. Reading *Why Study Geography?* feels like receiving practical life advice from a veteran geographer. Narration concentrates on UK students, Parkinson's target audience. Every chapter ends with short missions that compel readers to act upon knowledge gained. Murphy's *Geography: Why It Matters*, though short in length and rich in conceptual information, takes a more objective, academic tone which might disengage some learners. Murphy's book presents a theme-by-theme overview of geography, heavy on relationships among politics, space, and place (the author's expertise) and light on the interface between humans and the environment. Parkinson's first two

chapters, by contrast, do a more approachable job of balancing conceptual knowledge, especially nature–society relations, with pragmatic career guidance.

If readers find responses in chapters 1 through 4 convincing, then they may proceed to the next two chapters, which provide guidance on preparing for and making the most of one's time in university. The exclusive audience of UK students is a strength and a limitation. The intimate style reminds geographers that recruitment necessitates a relationship between educators and students, not just a portfolio of glossy advertisements, flashy videos, and department name changes. American geography teachers and students will find much of the book enlightening, while extended portions of the book may not apply to their situation. Overlaps exist, but some American readers may find themselves skimming through sections detailing how students navigate different levels of the British system. One lesson is clear: the profession of geography is highly contextual and develops in real time. Teachers must be quick to respond to how geography fits within existing educational structures, student motivations, and major challenges of the twenty-first century.

The book is responsive, written to address students right now. Chapter 7 reflects the book's timeliness by making the case for why geography matters now more than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic persists prominently throughout Parkinson's discussion. Tailored to the present, the book speaks directly to the generation of students whose futures are surely impacted by mass lockdowns, loss of family members, and educational changeups. On the other hand, the text will require regular updates to remain current. The final chapter lists numerous resources available for geography students to optimize their education and advance their careers. As a resource repository, the book bears similarity to *Practicing Geography: Careers for Enhancing Society and the Environment* (Solem, Foote, and Monk 2012) but offers more updated examples.

A noticeable feature of *Why Study Geography?* is the citation of GeoCapabilities as a unifying effort for UK geography educators. The multinational, multiphase project aims to identify dimensions of student capabilities that geography can enhance, then produce curricula that increase those liberating effects. GeoCapabilities represents a trending initiative among European geographers. The capabilities approach has had a mixed reception among members of the American geography education community. In any case, the phenomenon begs the question: Which ideas and initiatives most effectively recruit, unify, and motivate emerging students and teachers of American geography education?

Perhaps the most important takeaway from *Why Study Geography?* is the centrality of reassurance. The text extends a refreshing guarantee to young people that they are making the right choice by dedicating their lives to the study of geography. Considering

the misinformation about geography in the US context, students take a risk by trusting us. We should repay them accordingly. I hope that *Why Study Geography?* inspires an American equivalent.

Note

- 1. 'Blighty' is an affectionate nickname for England, originating among British soldiers during World War I.


Notes on Contributor





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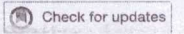
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<https://doi.org/10.1080/19338341.2021.1894210>



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BOOK REVIEW

Who Needs a World View?, by Raymond Geuss, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2020, 187 pp., Hardcover (\$35.00), ISBN: 9780674245938

When students enter a graduate program in geography, they are likely to take a course on geographic history and philosophy, also known as geographic thought. Textbooks on the matter typically trace geographic philosophies along a neat progression: ancient Greco-Roman geography, early modern geographers like Alexander von Humboldt, Friedrich Ratzel's environmental determinism, Carl Sauer's cultural ecology, the quantitative revolution, and the cultural turn of the 1960s. As a perspective that draws from various ideas and philosophies, geographic *thinking*, however, rarely materializes as plainly as geographic thought treatises depict. Indeed, Innes Keighren, Federico Ferretti, and others confirm that geographic thought is a delightfully messy, schizophrenic, interrelated pile of ideas thrown together into research articles, archives, institutional presidential addresses, and historiographies.

Geographic thought classes are the mutt of philosophy seminars. With messiness comes freedom to challenge taken-for-granted ideas in geography. Consider the *world view*, a unified system of knowledge that defines a group's understanding of the world. In *Who needs a world view?*, philosopher Raymond Geuss (2020) questions the validity of the concept. Geuss's main point: "Once we have seen through the sources of the obsession with unity, completeness, consistency, and invariability, we may become capable of seeing other possibly valuable ways of thinking and living" (xix). In other words, relying upon a single lens to view the world blinds us more than it opens our eyes. World views obscure discovering what works in local contexts.

Who needs a world view? is a collection of individual essays, not a "unitary, systematic monograph," which means that each chapter can be read independently (xix). Geuss's theoretical lens builds atop the pragmatic ideas of Czech mathematician and logician Kurt Gödel. His influential 1931 paper, "On formally undecidable theorems of *Principia mathematica* and related systems," held that arithmetic is not a static system of knowledge for structuring our relationship to the world. According to Geuss (xii), Gödel argued that "knowledge was best construed [...] as a series of repeated attempts by living agents to make the best of problematic situations, attempts that were at best more or less successful within some given context." Expanding upon Gödel's ideas, Geuss draws from an array of resources, such as personal experiences, philosophy, art, religion, and history.

Perhaps the most important essay is the first, sharing the same title as the book. This is where Geuss questions the utility of all-encompassing ideas that shape our world views, such as axioms, ideologies, maxims, and proverbs. "Who needs a world view?" is organized autobiographically according to philosophy mentors Geuss encountered through his life, namely Father Krigler (Béla) and Sidney Morgenbesser. The two teachers compelled Geuss to reimagine Catholicism

and Communism not as unchanging, monolithic world views, but as dynamic, historically contingent ferments of values and beliefs. Although Geuss's analysis treats proverbs with suspicion, it does bring to mind the following phrase: when you have a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail. In this case, the world view represents the hammer because one way of knowing cannot be adequately applied to every site and situation.

Postmodern/post-structural geographers might appreciate and critique Geuss's pragmatic spin on cultural relativism. Humanistic geographers might establish connections between Geuss's perspective and ideas like Relph's (2008, 321) pragmatic sense of place, which entails responding to socio-environmental challenges by "combining an appreciation for the distinctiveness of a locality with a grasp of its relationship to regional and larger contexts." According to Relph, what works for one place might not work for another. Such ties to the geographic context are unapparent in Geuss's exposition and could be considered for further scholarly inquiry.

The remaining eight chapters highlight flaws in the world view as a concept. The book's disconnected organization feels akin to posting themes on a bulletin board, then randomly throwing darts at the cork to see what Geuss will write about next. Chapter 2, "Games and proverbs," refutes the idea that people can make their lives a work of art or find an all-encompassing proverb to explain their situation. Life is an incomplete, unfolding "series of flickering moments" that will never be fully realized (54). No memoir, image, quote, or obituary will ever bring one's life into full view.

Chapter 2's gaming theme becomes more developed when we skip ahead to Chapter 4, "Life is a game," which refutes its own title in the first sentence by stating, "No, it isn't" (83). The essay claims that humans incorrectly compare life to a game. No fixed rules exist. Instead, rules are nested in a hierarchy of what a group or individual prioritizes at the moment. For Geuss, there is no universal doctrine for life, only subjective sense-making that constantly changes according to time and place. As a humanist who believes that some rules transcend contexts (e.g., the importance of responsibility, empathy, and compassion in place-making), I refrain from completely accepting Geuss's argument. Amid that tension can arise healthy debate about fundamental truths versus cultural relativism in geography.

Doubling back, Chapter 3, "Enlightenment, genealogy, and the historicity of concepts," examines how history, though always incomplete, informs understandings of the present and future. Geuss portrays *historicity* as the relationship between history and one's perception of reality. Contrary to conventional wisdom, history is not singular

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and sequential. It embodies a complex overlapping of events through time, with scholars attempting to arrange a *de facto* storyline. Origins of ideas and events do not arise because they belong together, but because they are forced together to form a “false sense of the coherence of their elements, of general meaningfulness, and even of the self-evidence around themselves” (82). Geuss’s historicity connects to the post-modern insights of historical geographer David Wishart on periodization and historical representation. Unfortunately, the book only indirectly addresses how *geographicality*—people-place relationships—factors into the discussion.

Following the fourth chapter, Geuss directs attention to *metaphysics*, or the study of abstract theories about knowledge, reality, and what it means to be human. Movers and shakers throughout history desire to imagine perfect places, utopias where a society functions effectively according to a set of collective morals. Utopian impulses, though valuable to signal that problems need fixing, “represent the dead hand of the human past” (115). Manifestos, for example, are defective because they render an imagined reality visible “as if it were obvious” and “something already there (although not salient)” (121). Geuss advocates for metaphysics that are rooted not in a singular god or belief system, but rather in historical context, especially as thinkers navigate “multiple shifting perspectives [...] between irreducibly different contexts” (163). That is all fine and good, but then Geuss throws a wrench into his argument in the book’s final sentence, “If one wants to call this a ‘world view,’ then I have no objection to that” (163). On the surface, this statement appears as a blatant contradiction to everything the author has written up to this point. Perhaps, following Geuss’s logic, it is more about actively world *viewing* as opposed to possessing a world *view*.

It is fair to say that this text is intended for philosophy scholars and not for a broader audience. Philosophers, like geographers, have their own style of structuring and communicating knowledge, which can render their work illegible to outsiders. In *Who needs a world view?*, key arguments tend to get buried in long paragraphs or revealed at the end of a chapter. Saving the best lines for last might work for

poems, but the tactic does not work in these essays. Non-philosophers may grow impatient by the inclusion of untranslated foreign quotes (e.g., long German passages quoted at length), important points underemphasized, and obscure names of philosophers. Having these feelings, myself, I found that diligent rereading and googling helped, but I remained questioning how large blocks of text fit together to support the overall thesis.

Despite its drawbacks, Geuss’s analysis is thorough and prosaic. Geographic thought instructors might assign each student to report on one of these essays (perhaps pick a chapter out of a hat), then relate it to how geographers make sense of the world view. While geographers can gain much from *Who needs a world view?*, they also have much to contribute. This work of philosophy is heavy on history and metaphysics but light on geography. *Who needs a world view?* opens dialogue about the role of geographic thought in improving our understanding of the world view.

Acknowledgements


I would like to thank Dr. Robert Briwa for providing thoughtful suggestions on improving this book review.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/00221341.2021.1887322>

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BOOK REVIEW

What Would Nature Do? A Guide for Our Uncertain Times, by Ruth DeFries, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020, 264 pp., \$26.95 (hardcover). ISBN: 9780231199421

What would nature do? articulates four key mindsets that can help us better understand and deal with the increasing global vulnerabilities that humanity faces in the twenty-first century. Dr. Ruth DeFries is a geographer and 2007 MacArthur Fellow. Her human-environment and sustainability research has used remote sensing and field observations to address the complex interactions involving agriculture, land use, and biogeochemical cycles. *What would nature do?* is a highly readable guide for these troubling times with six chapters that cover 166 pages. DeFries devotes a chapter to each of the four key lessons from nature. This scholarly work has no maps, an Index that covers 12 pages, 39 pages of Notes, and 28 pages of References. Numerous artistic drawings by Sophie Capshaw-Mack illustrate aspects of the text.

Earth system complexity, uncertainty and vulnerability are key themes of the introductory chapter, “The dragons are back.” DeFries connects her ideas on uncertainty and a civilization unprepared for future shocks to an inscription on the 1504 Hunt-Lenox globe. The globe has a Latin phrase which translates as *here are dragons*. DeFries suggests that contemporary dragons arise from “the recent past [that] no longer serves as a guide to the future” and “that the twentieth century, silver bullet-driven paradigm of efficiency and technological progress cannot protect us” (4). She argues that there is a need to learn from nature, where “over deep time and through trial and error [...] surprising tricks to stay nimble and resilient evolve in nature” (6). In making the case for learning from the natural world, DeFries suggests that an overemphasis on cause and effect and siloed scientific thinking has humanity unprepared to deal with contemporary problems. Linking the predominant mechanistic and clockwork world view back to the ideas of René Descartes and Issac Newton, she suggests that this reductionist approach, which broke down a complex system into its component parts, pushed humanity along an unsustainable development pathway. Citing a number of examples of past civilizations that collapsed when they were unprepared for shocks to the system, she makes the case for both humility and a need to better understand complex and interconnected systems. DeFries indicates that a goal for the book is to tell the story of four counterintuitive and underappreciated natural strategies that can protect against future shocks.

The second chapter, “Recovery from a crash: Install circuit breakers,” addresses stabilizing feedbacks as an important system component. Using examples from short and long-term time scales, DeFries discusses several cases that document the important role of stabilizing (negative) feedbacks in complex systems. A pertinent example involves changing policies regarding wildfire in western North American forests. It is now recognized that low-intensity

ground fires are an important ecosystem component providing long-term stability. Unfortunately, the historical Forest Service and Park Service policy/goal of having all fires put out by 10 am the next morning increased fuel loads and was counterproductive. Other examples of stabilizing feedbacks are the rules to halt stock market trading when sales drop system indicators at too fast a rate, as well as the human reactions of shivering to warm a body and perspiration to assist in cooling. Within the realm of Earth sciences, interaction among mountain building, weathering, and erosion plays an important role in regulating global temperature and carbon sequestration over deep time.

Having options available is a key message in “Hedges for bets: Invest in diversity.” Using examples like seed banks, languages, investment portfolios, and the microbiome in the human gut, DeFries makes the case that diversity is a necessary survival strategy and a stabilizing force for dealing with surprises in either natural or human produced complex systems. The third chapter includes a discussion of redundancy in aircraft design as a hedge against problems. The discussion touches on the green revolution and global food production, using these topics to document how efforts to improve efficiency can put humanity in a position that runs counter to the lessons we can learn from nature.

Readers with some geography in their training will feel at home with the core concepts and related examples in “Minding the net: Defending against cascading failure.” The fourth chapter deals with the importance of different network designs, with some patterns being more efficient and also prone to a shock or failure that can cascade throughout the system. The spatially oriented discussion addresses conditions and connections with illustrations of network patterns that include randomness, clusters, regular spaced grids, branching, and nested loops. Using examples that include global trade, veins in leaves, the spread of diseases, termite colonies, and airline route connections, DeFries highlights the importance of redundancy as a characteristic of a more resilient network architecture. An emphasis on efficiency in network connections, as in the hub-and-spoke design used by the airline industry, is problematic when there is a problem at a hub (e.g., weather related delays) that cascades to other nodes in the system. The human tendency for efficient network design has put civilization at risk.

The concept of natural resources and their management is a central theme of “One size fits no one: Make decisions from the bottom up.” The emphasis of the chapter is on the value of a bottom-up or local approach to dealing with natural resource management. Starting with an Aristotelian quote related to resources used by all and a lack of care, the emphasis shifts to Garrett Hardin’s tragedy of the commons. Hardin advocated for a top-down approach to resource

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management in 1968, and that mindset produced policies in the 1970s that included the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Endangered Species Act. DeFries cites the brilliant work by Nobel Laureate, Elinor Ostrom, on the wise and sustainable management of resources at the local scale to argue that a bottom-up approach is needed. Ostrom recognized that sharing information, building trust, establishing rules and ways to enforce compliance, and communication networks (i.e., social capital) were central to sustainable resource management. Ostrom's bottom-up toolkit identified eight design principles that could be adapted by collective action to deal with varying local conditions. DeFries discusses the atmospheric commons and provides information related to the Montreal Protocol and the Kyoto Protocol as contrasting examples to document that top-down approaches can be problematic. An important message from the chapter addresses our complex global system with the suggestion that we should be "making and enforcing rules at nested levels" (139).

The final chapter, "Cycles of renewal," integrates findings from the four previous chapters to make the case that we should learn from nature-based analogies to advance civilization. Having illustrated some of the problems of the mechanistic or clockwork worldview, DeFries takes a deep time view in discussing how nature and civilizations are complex adaptive systems subject to shocks and uncertainty. She suggests that a temporal pattern of growth, stagnation, breakdown, and renewal is characteristic of both. In addressing civilizations, the concepts of path-dependency and "lock-in" are presented along with the suggestion that innovation can help avoid stagnation. Throughout the book, DeFries makes convincing arguments based on extensive use of existing knowledge.


There is an emphasis in the text on the importance of using humility as we consider applying the lessons from nature. Others have suggested that knowledge combined with humility can lead to wisdom. DeFries has written a book that successfully makes the case that our worldview needs to shift and that we have work to do. A quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson seems relevant: "[W]hen nature has work to be done, she creates a genius to do it." It seems

very appropriate that DeFries was selected as a MacArthur Fellow, an award that is unofficially referred to as a "genius grant."

The four major themes that DeFries addresses—feedbacks within systems, diversity, networks, and aspects of social capital—are not subjects commonly included in the school curriculum. If nature has lessons for us regarding how to survive on this planet, then it would be good to help current and future students understand those sustainability lessons and related concepts. It can be argued that DeFries has identified four themes that fit within the realm of higher order thinking. Several decades ago, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Project 2061 and the Science for All Americans effort identified a set of Common Themes, notably systems, models, constancy and change, and scale. More recently, the Next Generation Science Standards developed a list of Crosscutting Concepts that include patterns; cause and effect, mechanism and explanation; scale, proportion and quantity; systems and system models; energy and matter: flows, cycles, and conservation; structure and function; and stability and change. It is perhaps unfortunate that one is hard pressed to find an interdisciplinary class that directly considers one or more of these Common Themes or Crosscutting Concepts. As the education system is transformed to help future students recognize the limits of a mechanistic and clockwork worldview, there is a need for curriculum reform to address important multidisciplinary ideas that will help humanity be better planetary stewards. *What would nature do?* is an important book that identifies some of the limits of contemporary thinking and, thus, presents a challenge for improving the education system.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/00221341.2021.1895870>

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Mapping Is Elementary, My Dear: 100 Activities for Teaching Map Skills to K-6 Students by S. Kay Gandy

**MAPPING IS
ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR**

*100 Activities for Teaching
Map Skills to K-6 Students*

S. KAY GANDY



Mapping Is Elementary, My Dear: 100 Activities for Teaching Map Skills to K-6 Students by S. Kay Gandy is a resource for elementary teachers who need quick and easy activities to infuse geography instruction into their classrooms. In the introduction, "Why Geography?," Gandy explains the importance of geography education in elementary classrooms and the misconceptions many teachers have about what geography instruction looks like when working with younger learners. She discusses that oftentimes, teacher-training programs do not require geography courses, leaving today's teachers underprepared to teach geography in their classrooms. Gandy stresses the importance of teaching geography in elementary classrooms and how it is much more than memorizing locations on a map. Teaching geography helps our students connect to places and people they have never met and, as elementary teachers, we can help encourage students to ask questions and make connections between their own lives and the geography of our world. She goes on to explain the kind of skills that should be taught in the primary grades to build the foundational knowledge students need to access higher levels of geography understanding. There are not many district-adopted resources out there for teachers to use. This book is designed to help elementary teachers feel comfortable and prepared to teach geography in their classrooms.

After the introduction, the book is laid out in a series of chapters focusing on skills and activities to help build a specific type of geographic knowledge with students. The chapters all begin

with a humorous comic that relates to the chapter's topic which is followed by a brief explanation of the geography skills that fall within that concept. For example, chapter 1 is called "Location," and the summary at the beginning explains what kinds of questions to ask students, the difference between absolute and relative location, the terms geographers use to describe location, and the importance of using hands-on activities to build these concepts. The short introduction of one to two pages for each chapter is helpful, especially for educators who may not be familiar with the background behind each geography concept or who just need a quick and easy-to-read reference guide that includes history and key terms.

Once Gandy has outlined her explanation for the concepts covered in the chapter, she includes user-friendly teaching activities to build geographical knowledge. Each activity includes the name, short list of materials needed, appropriate grade levels, suggested time for the activity, as well as a brief description of what to do with students. The activities are written in a way that is accessible to elementary teachers looking for a way to infuse geography instruction into their classrooms. Some examples of activities included in the book are as follows: playing snippets of songs that mention places in the United States and marking those places on a map in the chapter called "Locations"; using an orange or grapefruit with rubber bands on it to teach about the equator, prime meridian, and hemispheres in the chapter called "Perspectives"; and having students create pirate maps with a variety of locations noted with different letters for each location in the chapter called "Types of Maps." All of the activities included in this book are hands-on and interactive, engaging students and supporting learning. We all know that time to teach geography and social studies in the classroom is very limited, so the fact that almost all of the activities are designed to take 30 minutes or less is helpful. Only the chapter "Mapping with Technology" includes activities that require multiple hours or days of instruction.

Following the activities section, there is a list of literature citations and summaries that teachers can use to select read-aloud materials that can help build the skills from the chapter. With time for social studies instruction put on the back burner in many elementary classrooms, especially with a large number of students involved in distance or hybrid learning due to the current pandemic, the books she references are an easy way for teachers to integrate geography into their reading instruction. A number of the activities in each chapter reference using one of the books described in the chapter to teach the geography skill. This allows teachers to not only cover geography skills when teaching but also reinforce critical reading standards.

At the end of each chapter, Gandy includes possible assessment questions and answers that can be asked to students after working on the particular geography concepts. We all know how much busy teachers appreciate answer keys! Looking at the types of assessment questions for the chapter before planning and teaching would be helpful so that a teacher could teach with those skills and concepts in mind. The questions provided also make designing an assessment tool, whether formative or summative, easy to do if needed or desired.

The back of the book includes a series of appendices. One of the most helpful is the suggested scope and sequence of map skills K–6. There is also a glossary of geographic terms and definitions and some charts, tables, and examples that are referenced in a few of the activities throughout the book. One of the last resources in the book is a table that includes a list of all one hundred activities, organized by concept, that shows which activities are designed for each grade at the elementary level, K–6; which page each activity is on; and how much time each activity is designed to take.

In today's world, it is important that elementary teachers help build our students' understanding of the people, places, and interconnectedness of our planet. Whether we are teaching in person, with a hybrid model, or solely through distance learning, teaching geography matters. Many of the activities in Gandy's book are designed to be taught in person, but the literature citations she includes would be helpful for teachers who are teaching through distance learning and want to embed geography into their language arts instruction. Gandy's book takes all of the geography activities one might learn about at a geography conference or in a training and puts them all in one location for easy reference. In a world where there is a lack of funding and accountability for teaching geography in the classroom, especially at the elementary level, *Mapping Is Elementary, My Dear* is a helpful resource for classroom teachers.

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Chapter 3: Scale

Chapter 4: Orientation

Chapter 5: Map Symbols and Types of Keys

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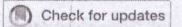


Marika Conrad received her Master of Science in Education from Western Oregon University and is currently a fifth-grade teacher at Hawks View Elementary School in Sherwood, Oregon. She is a member of the Center for Geography Education in Oregon and received the K–12 Distinguished Teacher Award from the National Council for Geographic Education in 2013.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/19338341.2021.1895866>



A Bridge of Transition to the Postcolonial

GYANESH KUDAISSYA

This book is focused on a critical period of contemporary South Asian history. It attempts a micro-history of the extraordinary 11 months between September 1946 and August 1947 during which an "Interim Government," with both the Congress and Muslim League as partners, held office in New Delhi. Rakesh Ankit's aim is to analyse the context, course and consequences of the Interim Government's policies. He also seeks to delineate the processes, experiences and structures that shaped the transfer of power and partition.

Ankit argues that the regime at the helm was made up of a "strange amalgamation of individuals and institutions, structures and processes, and networks and agents" (p xi) and, as such, deserves to be studied on its own terms and not treated cursorily as an epilogue to empire, or a prelude to partition. His work raises several important questions: How did the Interim Government impact the emerging Indian state? To what extent did its policies and interventions affect sections of Indian society?

These questions remain neglected in the existing historiography. This is ironic, considering that rich archival documentation is available in the 12-volume *Transfer of Power in India* (Mansergh and E W R Lumby 1970–82) series based on British colonial records of the India Office in London, complemented by the *Towards Freedom* series published by the Indian Council of Historical Research (1985–2015). To these one may add the *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah Papers*, edited by the Pakistani historian Z A Zaidi (1993) and *The Viceroy's Journal* (Moon 1973), the memoirs of Lord Wavell. A critical and detailed historical study of this momentous period has been lacking, except for two articles, one by the economic historian Raghavendra Chattopadhyay (1988) on the much-debated Liaquat Ali Khan budget of 1946

India in the Interregnum: Interim Government September 1946–August 1947 by Rakesh Ankit, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019; pp xii + 376, ₹1,195.

and a more recent essay by the Pakistani historian Mohammad Iqbal Chawla (2014). In this sense Ankit's book-length study fills a critical void. In doing so it highlights elements of institutional and political continuity from the colonial to the postcolonial, in the face of a substantial body of historical works which have emphasised rupture and discontinuity as the central features of transfer of power and partition.

Continuities at the Centre

The book is divided into three parts. Part I "Before Partition: At the Centre" deals with the working of the Interim Government under the two last viceroys, Wavell and Mountbatten. Part II "Beneath Partition: Personnel and Processes" examines the functioning of departments at the centre and the contributions of Indian Civil Service (ICS) officers helping these. Part III "Beside Partition: Among the Provinces" deals with individual provincial governments run by the Congress.

In Part I Ankit offers the overarching narrative of continuity in constitutional structures, processes and personnel, which provided the "bridge of transition" to the new state. Chapter 1 is devoted to the working of the Interim Government under the penultimate viceroy, Wavell and provides interesting details about its formation and the dynamic that evolved between ministers and the British officialdom. Once Wavell swore in the initial seven Congress ministers led by Jawaharlal Nehru, who ended "his oath with a soft 'Jai Hind'" (p 13), friendly and easy interactions came to mark working relationships. However, Ankit shows that defence and political departments remained matters of jurisdictional contention. For

example, Nehru raised the delicate issue of the continued deployment of over 1,90,000 Indian soldiers in Japan, Malaya, Burma, Iraq, Ceylon and West Asia. On completing his term, Wavell returned to London in March 1947 with this assessment for his political bosses:

Proceedings in the Cabinet had been conducted in a friendly, good-humoured and practical manner. This, however, had not drawn the Congress and Muslim League closer together. (p 51)

In Chapter 2 Ankit focuses on the Interim Government's dealings with Mountbatten from March to August 1947. After his first week in New Delhi, Mountbatten found "his" ministers in "complete unanimity" and was "gratified" for this "united front." However, this proved to be deceptive, as later events were to show. Mountbatten introduced the practice of cabinet committees in the Interim Government. In Chapter 3, Ankit takes up the working of the central departments. Statistics and details are provided about finance and commerce, food, education, railways, civil aviation, labour, home, and so on. The focus is on ICS officers in Chapter 4 and it offers insights into shifting attitudes and loyalties in the context of regime change. Profiles of ICS officials and their experiences serve to underscore, once more, the theme of continuity. In Chapter 5, plans sketched by the Interim Government for the setting up of the future Ministry of External Affairs and the Planning Commission are discussed.

Provincial Ministries at Work

The final part of Ankit's work, consisting of Chapters 6 to 11, deals with provincial Congress ministries and their working. Each of these chapters, instead of providing a comprehensive evaluation, focuses on a key issue. In the case of Bihar (Chapter 6), it is the police mutiny led by the socialist ex-constable Ramanand Tiwari. In Bombay (Chapter 7), the perilous food situation is taken up, while in Central Provinces and Berar Hindu communalism of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Hindu Mahasabha provides grist to the mill. In Madras the "communist spectre" and C Rajagopalachari's dealings with trade

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union activists is the theme, while for the United Provinces chapter, communal cleavages and law and order challenges are the focus.

Overall, Ankit's work manages to convey a vivid sense of the dramatic events between September 1946 and August 1947 when the Interim Government held office. It also highlights the deep feelings of political uncertainty about the future which prevailed in the subcontinent. It, to a large extent, is able to encapsulate the events associated with the Interim Government and the complex interplay of institutions and historical personalities at the helm. He affirms that "it is erroneous to look upon the Interim Government only as a last-ditch effort to stall/avoid Partition" (p 350). He goes further to challenge the prevailing historiographic view which looks upon the Interim Government as "a half-hearted compromise neglected by those who participated in it" and "deemed too little, too late, neither inspiring nor efficient" (p 350).

In Ankit's view the Interim Government was "a landmark of political accommodation and power-sharing." He looks upon it as a necessary "bridgehead during a phase of transition" which brought "Indian nationalists to the centre of governance and power" (p 351) but, in doing so, did not resolve any of the long-standing conflicts or dilemmas inherent in the different conceptions of nationalism.

Nonetheless, Ankit sees positive legacies of the Interim Government. For example, its economic policies, he argues, "provided a base for the 'socialistic pattern of society' of the 1950s by measures which envisioned 'a substantial social egalitarianism and a recasting of the fiscal system for social ends.'" He is particularly enamoured of its stellar cast of characters:

It was a gifted administration, a government of prima donnas in many ways ... but one in which the broad vision of Nehru, the managerial skills of Liaquat, the spartan intensity of Patel, the ebullient authority of Rajagopalachari, the appealing austerity of Prasad, the intellectualism of Azad, the experience of Mathai, the administrative flair of Jagjivan Ram and the loyalty of Chundrigar, Ghazanfar and Nishtar [were] welded into some kind of a whole, while it lasted. (p 351)

One key drawback of Ankit's work relates to the selection of his regional case studies to which he has devoted six out of 11 chapters. These are focused exclusively on "Congress Provinces" and have altogether neglected Muslim-majority provinces, such as Bengal, Punjab and the Sindh, which were very much in the news. This is intriguing as the focus in the first half of the work is on the Congress and the Muslim League working together at the centre. A more representative mix of the provincial case studies would have added to his effort. Further, Ankit's work does not cover events and developments taking place in the princely states, as the political department remained outside the jurisdiction of the Interim Government. Scholars interested in the political transition taking place in princely India must turn to the authoritative work of Ian Copland and the recent studies of Taylor Sherman and Sunil Purushotham.

Notwithstanding these limitations, *India in the Interregnum: Interim Government, September 1946 and August 1947* is a welcome addition to the literature on the turbulent 1940s. As the first work to

offer a connected account of this complex period, it has an intrinsic significance. It shall be useful to researchers, postgraduate students and general readers interested in that period. It may also serve to enhance Ankit's reputation as a meticulous, thoughtful and engaging researcher in the field of contemporary Indian history.

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State-wise Agricultural Statistics

The Economic and Political Weekly Research Foundation (EPWRF) has added State-wise data to the Agricultural Statistics module of its online database, India Time Series (ITS).

State-wise time series starts from 1960-61, depending upon data availability, and covers:

- Area, Production and Yield (APY): Foodgrains, Oil seeds, Fibre crops, Spices, Horticulture crops, Plantation crops and Other crops
- Land-by-Use and Area under Irrigation (source-wise and crop-wise)
- Production and Use of Agricultural Inputs: Fertilisers and Electricity
- Procurement of Foodgrains
- Livestock Statistics: Production and Per Capita Availability of Milk, Eggs, Fish, Meat and Wool
- Livestock Population: Rural and Urban areas
- Value of Output from Agriculture and Allied Activities, with different base years

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Book Reviews

Studies in History

37(1) 119–132, 2021

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DOI: 10.1177/02576430211009045

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Feb. 2021

✓ **Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2018, 454 pp., ₹2099. ISBN: 9781107441590 (Paperback).**

Santanu Das's *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* is a magisterial account of the Indian experience of the First World War, and also of the imperial context within which this experience took shape. It brings together his decade-long research into the 'experiences of people from undivided India [...]—both soldiers and civilians, men and women, sepoys, labourers, lascars, orderlies, doctors, politicians and intellectuals—in the First World War and the way such experiences were represented in variety of forms: testimonial, political, visual, aural and literary' (p. 11). Within such a forthright theoretical frame Das offers a virtual *tour de force*, and through a series of carefully orchestrated reading of texts, images, songs, oral narratives and other resources guides the reader through both the extraordinary and the mundane of a world-shaping event, with copious assistance on both. The result is an unusually textured history of the First World War and India, with a veritable maze of individuals, events, and stories. Even when such individuals or events are located in the Indian subcontinent, both thematically and historically, his readings conjure a very different idea of the *world* implicated in the World War: a world primarily made up of half-forgotten men and women, their mobility across the globe and along the imperial grid, and their traces in the cultural texts of not only India but also of Europe, the Middle East, or Northern Africa. As Das often notes in the book, the very nature of the events he describes, or the characters he tracks through dusty archives, insisted on these connected histories across geographical and cultural boundaries. What he calls 'First World War culture' is most prominently visible in these connected histories where an enigmatic character like Jemadar Mir Mast joins a gifted writer like Swarnakumari Devi, or forlorn sepoys scattered across battle frontiers find themselves juxtaposed with more prominent figures like Gandhi, Tagore, and Nazrul Islam. Some of these connections are expected, others unpredictable—
together they provide the tenor and the heft the book requires.

It is difficult to summarize a book as diverse and deliberative as this one. Das does not offer one overarching argument or idea across the four parts and ten chapters that constitute the book. Rather, what unites the book is its methodological nuances, Das's detailed and patient probing of the archive, and also his ability

to weave these diverse materials within a narrative that captures the Indian realities of the First World War. As he suggests in the 'Introduction', a work of this scope requires a redefinition of the 'archive' itself and forces one to extend the idea both 'horizontally and vertically'. Across chapters, as a result, one encounters a range of 'material'—official records along with 'rumour, gossip, memoirs, photographs, sketches, sound-recordings, songs, poems and imaginative literature'—that crosses neat boundaries between the 'subaltern and elite, the street performer and the Nobel Laureate' and redraws the limits of the archive itself (pp. 23–5). It is this strategic flattening of archival material where texts from elite cultural context share the same epistemological status with material used for soldier recruitment (e.g., the play *Bangali Paltan*) or letters written from war fronts that signals the methodological uniqueness of the book. Along with this, and as part of the granular detailing, unfolds another methodological choice Das makes, something that can perhaps be called *archival hesitation*. It is a productive process of slow reading that shows a rare—and ethical—ability to linger with texts, as also to refuse the temptation of generalizing evidence in favour of sweeping grand narratives. What I have in mind is not a simple 'literary' reading of 'historical' documents. Rather, it is closer in spirit to the best in historical ethnography—say, in works of authors like Michael Taussig—that brings about a wealth of sympathetic attention to the very act of reading.

This is evident, for instance, in Das's portrayal of the sepoy figure in the third part of the book. After detailing European representations of the sepoy in the previous section, here he concentrates on the 'sepoys' various experiences in Europe, as expressed by themselves' and, as a corollary, the 'inner world of the sepoy' (p. 204–5). Thus Chapter 5 entitled "'Life-Writing" from Below' explores letters written by the sepoys from various fronts along with the poems they often quoted or the sound recordings of their 'songs, stories and prayers' available through the POW camp at Wünsdorf. However, it is the deliberate—if somewhat ironic—invocation of *life writing* (albeit within scare quotes) as the framing device for these letters that allows him to treat these documents not only as missives to be read but also as material traces of the period that had a larger world of circulation and signification. As he points out, within semi-literate societies such letters functioned like tactile presence of distant lives, and their very materiality embodied a world much larger than their mere legibility could ever accommodate. Against this material history, and as a supplementary narrative, however, Das poses a fundamental question about this archive: since the original letters are mostly lost and what survives are censored excerpts selected and translated by war officials, can this archive 'be opened up to provide a history of emotions from below'? (p. 205). Within this paradoxical space—constituted by the official desire to police the sepoys' thoughts and the expressions of strange emotions from battlefields—he chooses to stage the inner world of the sepoy, with an extraordinary admixture of emotion and guile, with the concurrent desires to transmit one's message and to avoid the censor's eye. Such a reading strategy can only succeed if one is ready to patiently probe the narrative and psychological investment in such writing, cross-referenced with the larger events they allude to or the emotional

register the material is against middle-class soldiers. An ethical line

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¹ Walter Benjamin: *Selected Writings* (Cambridge, M

register they share. In Chapters 6 and 7, this lingering sympathy with the material is again evident in Das's careful reading of the wartime writings of largely middle-class professionals like doctors and bureaucrats or testimonials by serving soldiers. Across these different forms, genres, and materiality of the archive the ethical lingering explores different dimensions of the war as a human event.

If Das's account of the First World War is construed through this extraordinary care for the archive, such fragmentary readings find their eventual unity through the war itself. Indeed, these details, when set against the backdrop of the catastrophic war, respond to a fundamental crisis in modern times. In his reflections on the art of storytelling and the works of Nikolai Leskov, Walter Benjamin notes that one of the most noticeable things about the experience of the First World War was that its trauma exposed the limits of 'communicable experience', and unlike earlier wars, this time 'men returned from the battlefield grown silent'. Even when a 'flood of war books' appeared a year later, these books did not produce any relatable human experience for the simple reason that 'never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power'.¹ What Das attempts in his book is to move beyond this apparent opposition between what is genuine experience and what is strategic, or, to put it differently, what is communicable and what is destined to remain in the realm of unrepresentable and unsaid. Hence, when these minute details are aggregated to tell the story of the Indians and the First World War, it does not read like what Benjamin considers the authentic form of representing communal experience—that is, storytelling. Instead, Das's account reminds one of nineteenth-century Russian novels that bring together everyday details to reflect on the very logic of history, but does so within the quintessential solitariness of modernity. Even when he narrates events or insignia that betray an underlying community, his narrative style forces one to take note of the intimate, the personal, or even the fragmentary—experiences that cannot be generalized for communal consumption.

This sense of the novelistic intimate is evident in Parts 1 and 2, for instance, in his narrative of the home front in India or his painstaking exploration of how race played a key role in the depiction of the Indian sepoy in Europe. But, and crucially enough, this idea returns with equal fervour in the final chapters of the book as he reads literary accounts of authors like Tagore, Naidu, Islam, or Iqbal in Part 4. Das often underlines the fact that the texts considered in this section are self-consciously 'literary' as opposed to the material he read in earlier chapters, and that these two sets must be read within a relation of supplementarity. Hence, the predominant tone and tenor of Tagore's poems reproduced often in propaganda publications or Mulk Raj Anand's *Across the Black Waters* (1940) depicting Indian soldiers in Marseilles and elsewhere in Europe reproduce the kernel

¹ Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 3, 1935-1938*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2002), 143-4.

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of his other material—an intimate account and detailed texture of emotions and feelings, often united through the violence of war. It is hardly a wonder that many of the texts Das reads in the book overlap with each other through their generic or formal choices even when they represent diverse—or even oppositional—ideas, ideologies, or experiences. These conspicuously ‘literary’ texts allow Das to consolidate his material with a tighter grip, with an underlying vision that it is the intimate and solitary that can best capture the shared ‘culture’ of the First World War. Both diversity of material (much of which was unknown or unseen so far) and exceptional methodological insights make this book a serious candidate for the classic account of Indian experience of the First World War.

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Jyoti Mohan, *Claiming India: French Scholars and the Preoccupation with India in the Nineteenth Century*, SAGE Publications, New Delhi, 2017, 432 pp., \$59.99. ISBN: 9789352804658.

DOI: 10.1177/02576430211007627

In this deeply researched and innovative book, Jyoti Mohan considers how an idea of India was created in France, mostly by scholars in the nineteenth century, then disseminated globally with lasting implications. By closely examining the writings of missionaries, Enlightenment *Philosophes*, Indologists, philologists, anthropologists, colonial officials, textbook writers and others, Mohan shows how India was used as a canvas for French observers, upon which to draw a vision that advanced various political imperial agendas and scholarly ambitions.

The French colonial project in India was a long standing one, establishing itself in the second half of the seventeenth century, and not concluding until 1954, well after Indian independence in 1947. And as Mohan points out, for much of this period, the French presence was politically marginal, especially following the rise of the British Raj. Nevertheless, writings on and images of India created in France were a powerful tool for the creation of an “epistemological empire”: the collective body of ideas, writings, images, museum exhibits and scholarly work which allowed the French to “claim” India. Ideas constructed by French writers about caste, religion, history and race in India were disseminated far and wide. These rhetorical claims were largely motivated by the politics of empire, as Mohan argues: ‘having irrevocably lost India to the British the French could at least claim a superior understanding of India’ (xxvii).

The book cogently charts the construction of the claim of knowledge of India through two efforts: on the one hand, the creation of an intellectual archive about India, created by French writers, academics (especially the so-called Indologists and anthropologists) and other self-described specialists on India. And on the

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from broader developments in the growth of anthropology as an academic discipline and beyond. This research contributes to the recent scholarship on the same topics, especially Alice Conklin's work on the development of anthropology in France and its imperial and racist dimensions, as well as Pierre Singaravélou's study of the 'colonial sciences'.

In the last part of the book, Mohan turns to examine how the work on India created by French scholars was disseminated to a popular audience, mainly through accounts of India in French school textbooks and popular histories, and in the colonial exhibitions of the early twentieth century. School textbooks, which were not written by specialists in the history of India, drew on the academic work of Indologists, thereby allowing Mohan to trace a direct line between the specialized work charted in earlier parts of the book to its reception by a much broader audience. These textbooks were also a site for displaying the rivalry between the French and English in India, since the narratives highlighted the political and military struggles between the two colonial powers. The final chapter compares representations of India in the Imperial Exhibition of Wembley in 1924–1925 with the *Exposition coloniale* in Paris in 1931, thereby providing rich empirical ground for a comparison between French and British conceptions and visual representations of India. The chapter compellingly argues that the construction of India in the French colonial exposition was premised on denying the reality of British colonial rule in India.

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✓ Whitney Cox, *Politics, Kingship, and Poetry in Medieval South India: Moonset on Sunrise Mountain*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi (South Asian Edition), 2017, 309 + i–xv pp., ₹470.

DOI: 10.1177/02576430211007626

Perhaps one of the intensely researched areas in the history of South Asia has been the Cōḷa state and politics. Often characterized by hectic epistemological debates, the rich historiographical oeuvre ranges from amongst K.A.N. Sastri's many comprehensive masterpieces and Burton Stein's methodologically pathbreaking work to Noboru Karashima's and Y. Subbarayalu's empirically rich cliometric analyses of the settlement patterns and property rights. Whitney Cox's present work under review, *Politics, Kingship, and Poetry in Medieval South India*, is yet another addition to this list. Applying the methods of philology for reconstructing the history of Cōḷa state politics between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, this work documents in detail the life of the Cōḷa king Kulōttuṅga I (c. 1070–1122 CE) through a nuanced reading of inscriptions and literary texts produced at his court. The study argues emphatically that the Cōḷa politics and political language should

be situated within the philologic

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be situated within the frame of cultural and linguistic turn, for these texts 'embed within them significant semantic depths and rhetorical complexities which only philological attention can bring out' (p. 25).

Comprising four chapters with an Introduction and a Conclusion, the book charts out the political career of Kulōttuṅga I in three phases that form the core of each of the three chapters. Chapter 1 titled 'Rājiga, before 1070' is an account of the king's early days as a heir aspirant to the Cōḷa throne, despite belonging to the Veṅgī Cālukya lineage of the Andhra region. According to Cox, the kinship networks between the two ruling houses of the Cōḷas and Cālukyas were not reasons enough for the contentious implantation of a Telugu scion onto the Cōḷa line of succession. Rather it was, Cox opines, the different forms of political and institutional power and their strategies of public rhetoric as embodied in the *mēykkīrttis* that contextualized the events and influenced the metaphors of kingship for public presentation and self-conception (p. 69). Chapter 2 titled 'Rājendracōḷa, June 1070-May 1074' narrates the succeeding stage in Kulōttuṅga's political career when he ascended the Cōḷa throne in 1070 CE as Rājendracōḷa, a name that appeared in his own records. We are informed that Rājendracōḷa's initial years as a ruler were in collaboration with his uncle, Vīrarājendra and cousin Adhirājendra (1069-1072 CE) as royal partners, both ultimately predeceasing him. The chapter admits a lack of evidence for any internecine tensions between three and highlights the political activities of both Rājendracōḷa and Adhirājendra in the region of Toṇḍaimamaṇḍalam situated in the northern part. Through an analysis of different *mēykkīrttis*, the author explains how both the courts issued complex rhetorical appeals of their royal largesse whose disbursement benefitted the local elites recruited into the respective bureaucracies. The discussion concludes with Rājendracōḷa forging an alliance with the shrine of a martial goddess in the strategically located Kolar region, close to the northern part of the Cōḷa territories, thus constructing a new political vocabulary and network. Chapter 3 named 'Kulōttuṅga: The King and the Poets, ca. 1087-1115' discusses the highpoint of Rājendracōḷa's career as a king. We are told that by the middle of 1074 CE, with complete imperial control over the kingdom, the king in records made a public proclamation of assuming new title *Kulōttuṅga*, meaning 'Lofty in his Family' (p. 2), and *Tiripuvaṇaccakkiravarttikaḷ*, meaning 'Wheel Turning Emperor of the Three Worlds' (p. 5). On the basis of a detailed account of the negotiations and manoeuvrings in the Cōḷa politics, Cox concludes that the transformation from Rājendracōḷa to the emperor Kulōttuṅga was not a consequence of merely dynastic and court machinations, and political and social transformations, rather in this process of royal self-renovation, one 'can capture how the king's court actively sought to position itself through the calibration of public rhetoric and the assiduous fostering of a political network' (p. 5). This momentous metamorphosis in Kulōttuṅga's status, Cox points out, was recorded for posterity in three sets of texts, namely Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadēvacarita* composed in 1087 in the honour of Cālukyas king; Vikramāditya VI, three sets of copperplate grants from Veṅgī composed by one Vidayyabhaṭṭa at the instance of Kulōttuṅga's two sons; and finally Cayaṅkōṇṭār's *Kalīngattupparaṇi* composed in 1115 CE in the court of Kulōttuṅga himself. The chapter further states that although these three texts were different renditions of the career graph of Kulōttuṅga and in many ways plotted

trajectories of historical memories within their respective 'rhetorical, symbolic and generic priorities' (p. 119), they were all literary works united in their thematic focus on Kulōttuṅga with a particular audience in view. While detailing the textual narratives, Cox also reconstructs the ways in which the representation of Kulōttuṅga was extracted from its primary context and refashioned by his rivals, contentious successors and court factions. Chapter 4 titled 'The Emperor of the Three Worlds and the Lord of the Little Shrine' tells us that this exalted imperial identity of Rājendracōḷa was forged in the backdrop of Cidamabaram and the Śiva temple of Naṭarāja that catapulted their significance in the sacred geography of Śaivism and political landscape of the Cōḷas and produced a distinctive local culture in the textual narratives of *Cidambaramahātmya*. Finally, the 'Conclusion' charts out certain theoretical possibilities of studying historical events in reconstructing the political biography of a South Indian king.

In this richly textured work, the philological approach with the scaffolding of history and politics in analysing the lifetime of a Cōḷa king infuses a new perspective, which has many departures from earlier historical understandings. Bringing back the events to the centre stage, Cox attempts to derive the structure of political thought from a gamut of Tamil and Sanskrit narrative discourses. In many ways, this book tries to conceptualize the premodern Indic notion of political power as expressed in the language of Cōḷa politics. Arguing against the instrumentalist understanding of literary texts, the author asserts that the textual renderings were very much a part of the present in which they were located and influenced it. This idea is reflected in the chapter titles that carry the different names of Kulōttuṅga, registering different stages of the Cōḷa polity and crafting of the monarch's public image.

However, the textual transactions of the state politics ensconced in 'semantic depths' and 'rhetorical complexities' (p. 25) are expressed in many places in a somewhat opaque manner. Overburdened with theoretical postulations, the arguments sometimes make a cumbersome reading for an uninitiated. Equally incommodious is the extensive referencing as endnotes, an aspect that should have been taken care of during the course of the production of the book. Although the critique of the pre-existing historiography is not a sacrilege, an assumed air of modesty in acknowledging it can nettle a reader. It would have been useful if Cox had told us the reasons for his choice of the subject, Kulōttuṅga I, in favour of other equally significant Cōḷa rulers. The wider ramifications and relations of the economics have been almost marginalized by Cox in favour of an overwhelmingly political analysis. Nevertheless, the book makes an important addition to the wide range of historiography on the Cōḷa politics and should not be seen as a major contravention. It is a product of sincere efforts in drawing the attention of a historian towards the texts as literary registers of the period in which they were produced and not as handmaidens to any historical analysis.

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Books

✓ **THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT: A People's History** by Shekhar Pathak (Translated by Manisha Chaudhry). Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2021.

THE Chipko movement holds an iconic place in the history of environmental conservation in South Asia and has sparked many scholarly enquiries. The glacial-lake outburst flood in Chamoli earlier in February 2021 is a stark reminder yet again that the prescient concerns and questions thrown up by the Chipko protests continue to be meaningful for our times.

In this new book, historian Shekhar Pathak delves into the eventful decades of the 1970s and '80s when hill villages and towns of Uttarakhand bustled with socio-ecological and political protests popularly called Chipko. He firmly anchors this movement in the regional setting of Uttarakhand and its socio-political history, from the colonial period to independent India. Not only does he highlight the centrality of forests to

the hill economy and society, but by paying careful attention to landslides and flash-floods in the region, he also successfully captures the risks of inhabiting a geographically vulnerable mountainous landscape historically subject to multiple pressures. This people's history aims to highlight the role of women, students and regional and national political organizations in the Chipko movement.

The book is an English translation by Manisha Chaudhry of Shekhar Pathak's *Hari Bhari Ummeed: Chipko Andolan Aur Anya Janglat Pratirodhon Ki Parampara*, published two years earlier in Hindi by Vani Prakasan and Indian Institute of Advanced Studies (Shimla). Regrettably, a fascinating set of black and white photos of protest gatherings and personalities present in the Hindi book has been dropped from the English translation.

Organized in ten chapters, it narrates events around Chipko while interweaving them with the more

immediate political and ecological events of the 1960s and early '70s as well as older protests against restrictive forest regulations in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Central to the story of Chipko told here is the rich diversity of sites, personalities (eminent and common), ideologies and institutions that shaped the protests. Gandhian activists such as Sarla Behn and Sundarlal Bahuguna led anti-liquor agitations in Gopeshwar and Tehri, but in Reni in Chamoli district, protests were mainly led by ordinary village women such as Gaura Devi and other women of the Mahila Mangal Dal. In the towns of Almora and Nainital, it was young students who gathered to disrupt forest auctions in protest.

Besides Sarvodaya and Gandhian workers such as the Dashauli Gram Swarajya Sangh (DGSS)-leader Chandi Prasad Bhatt, the author also throws light on the work of less-known student leaders such as Shamsher Singh Bisht; members of the Communist Party of India (CPI) such as Govind Singh Rawat and Govind Singh Negi; poets from Uttarakhand such as Ghanshyam Sailani and Girish Tiwari; editors and journalists such as Ramesh Pahadi and a range of ordinary women and men, several of whom are meticulously named in the different chapters of the book. Importantly, he points out that the CPI was perhaps the first political organization to give serious attention to the forest question in the hill region in the immediate decades following independence.

The primary focus of the book is the 1970s and two broad phases of Chipko are identified – before and after the Emergency. The first Chipko protest took place in 1973 in Chamoli's Mandal village in the aftermath of destructive flash floods in the catchment area of river Alaknanda. A series of ecological disasters exposed the geographical vulnerability of the landscape damaged by the cumulative impacts of decades of extractive commercial forestry practices since the colonial period. Contract-based commercial tree-felling and differential rates of resin-tapping had put local residents at a disadvantaged position. Thus, when loggers of the Allahabad-based sports company Symonds arrived in Mandal to fell its *angu* trees from which ploughs and farm implements were made traditionally, Chandi Prasad Bhatt was alarmed and gave a call to embrace the trees to prevent them from being felled. Protests soon spread to other places in Chamoli such as Phata, Reni, Joshimath and even to districts such as Tehri, Uttarakashi, Almora, Nainital, Pithoragarh and Dehradun. In parallel, demands for a separate hill state and a hill university in Dehradun and Srinagar respectively, added momentum to these movements.

A more aggressive phase of Chipko unfolded following the repressive Emergency period which exposed significant differences in attitudes of Chipko leaders to the Congress government. Two new groups which played a pivotal role in the demand for a separate hill state were formed – the Uttarakhand Sangharsh Vahini (USV), influenced by Jayaprakash Narayan's work and the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal, the first regional political party committed to establishing a separate state.

The author convincingly shows that leadership and expressions of Chipko protests did not have a singular form. DGSS's members played a crucial role in protests near the Gopeshwar area of Chamoli, but in the Bhotiya villages of Reni and Lata it was CPI members who were more influential. Similarly, while the USV activists advocated the strategy of disrupting forest auctions held in hill-towns, others such as Bahuguna preferred less confrontational modes of protest. In the case of Bhyundar valley and Doongri-Paintoli (chapter 7), the protests were led by residents themselves and it was only later that activists of DGSS, CPI or USV got involved. Expressions of protest also derived strength from sacred and religious beliefs in some cases. Srimadbhagwad Kathas were held in the forests in Badiyargarh (1979) and women of Reni sang devotional songs dedicated to the mountain goddess Nanda Devi as they stood guard over the trees at night (1974).

The author draws upon an impressive range of Hindi newspaper sources, including publications from Nainital, Almora and Dehradun, as well as private collections. Additionally, his primary sources include oral material as well – conversations and interviews with more than 180 people, spoken with over a long period of forty-two years, from 1974 to 2016. The narrative is enriched by the author's own engagement in some events documented in the book. Voices and vocabularies of resistance are noted in Hindi as well as in vernacular languages of Uttarakhand. Notably, he points out that the word 'Chipko' is a later Hindi-ised form of 'angavaltha', the Garhwali term used by Chandi Prasad Bhatt. (p. 104) A variety of historical slogans and poetry scattered throughout the book, especially between chapters 4 and 7, make for delightful reading – 'Angu bachao, Symonds bhagao' (Save the ash tree, send Symonds packing; p. 107) 'Aa gaya hai lal nishan, lootne walon ho savdhan' (The sign of Red has arrived, looters beware; p. 120) and 'Kya hain jangal ke upkaar, mitti, paani aur bayaan; mitti paani aur bayaan, zinda rehne ke aadhaar' (What do forests give our lives: soil, water and air; Soil, water and air are what keep us alive,

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p. 257). This really invites the reader to take a dive into the Hindi original.

In his assessment of the colonial period, Pathak implicitly follows Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha's seminal work *This Fissured Land* (1992) which argued that the colonial period was a watershed moment in India's ecological history. Among other things this is evident in the way the chapters are organized, beginning with the 19th century and a discussion on the imposition of harsh restrictions on forest use through colonial legislations. The introduction to this book, 'A Man to Match his Mountains', is written by Ramachandra Guha who has edited this English translation. Guha's introduction is an intimate account of scholarly solidarity and a close friendship with the author. Reading *The Chipko Movement* takes the reader back to Guha's *The Unquiet Woods* (1989) where Guha drew scholarly attention to 'peasant rebellions' against state-led commercial forestry during the British rule in the Kumaon Himalayas. Subtle differences, that remain understated in the book, distinguish Pathak's approach from Guha's. In Pathak's account, anti-colonial resistance does not figure as the defining feature of the relation of the hill peasant with the state. This can be seen in the aspirations and demands for better education, employment, more equitable rights of access to forests and forest products and subsequently the demand for a separate state within the Indian Union. Further, here we see a more complicated and disaggregated picture of the protests and the protestors than what Guha described. It is clear that even though Chipko protestors were primarily rural hill peasants, the role of educated youth and organized political activists – both regional and national – needs to be recognized. The richness and variety of Pathak's sources stands out but there is also a noticeable similarity in the broader outline of *The Unquiet Woods* and *The Chipko Movement*. In both books agitations against forest policies of the British government and the Tehri Raja in the 1920s and 1930s provide the key historical background to events of the 1970s and '80s.

The title, *The Chipko Movement*, aptly captures the focus on Chipko but the account also offers a modern history of the Uttarakhand state, formed in 2000. Region-making seems to go almost hand in hand with the trajectory of ecological protests in this book leading us to think that the demand for a separate hill state always enjoyed a wide popular base. But this is at odds with Emma Mawdsley who has previously argued that until 1994, when the SP-BSP government of Uttar Pradesh implemented the OBC reservation, the demand

for a separate state was primarily restricted to elite-urban groups and did not have much of a popular base among the rural population in the hill districts. On a somewhat related note, the hill-inhabitant identity sometimes appears as an overarching uniting identity in this book and the author offers a limited discussion of the tensions in power relations between different social groups in the hills. If women were a key force behind the ecological and anti-liquor protests, why is it that political leadership across the ideological spectrum remained largely confined to a male caste-Hindu background in this region?

Pathak emphasizes that the relation of rural women with the forests was primarily an economic one but at some places he implicitly subordinates their political agency to that of the male activists and leaders. For instance, with respect to protests led by Gaura Devi and other women in Reni in 1974, he writes that by resisting forest contractors in the absence of Chipko leaders, these women 'had saved the repute of' Chipko's male leaders (p. 132) and later again, with reference to the women-led protests in Doongri-Paintoli in 1980, he credits a founder member of the USV for 'activating' women of Doongri-Paintoli. (p. 285) At the same time, one also wonders if these issues are dealt with differently in the Hindi original.

Pathak perceptively notes that in border regions of Chamoli populated by the Bhotiyas (Tolchhas-Marchhas), CPI activists had greater influence than Sarvodaya workers of the DGSS. What explains this difference in reach with respect to tribal communities in this region? We would have liked to know more about this rather interesting observation. While a more elaborate discussion on the entanglements of caste, tribe and gender in this region would have widened the scope of this book, it remains an important contribution to scholarly writings on Chipko as it offers a regionally situated history of this globally famous ecological movement.

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HOW TO AVOID A CLIMATE DISASTER: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need by Bill Gates. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2021.

HOW we tell the story of climate change matters. In *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster*, Bill Gates tells the story of climate change through his lens, which is that of a skeptical billionaire-technocrat-philanthrocapitalist.

British Journal of Special Education, Vol. 48, No. 1
March 2021.

BOOK REVIEW

Storey, K. (2020) *Case Studies for Inclusion in Education. Strategies and guidelines for educating students with disabilities in the general education environment.* Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

When I first started reading this book, I struggled to see how it would be of benefit to professionals in the UK. The American terminology used to describe special educational needs is often at odds with what we find acceptable. Terms such as 'intellectual disability' and 'Emotional Disturbance' did not sit comfortably with me. However, in America, in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004, these are recognised terms. In fact, this book really is a 'shout out' for inclusion for children and young people with additional needs in the mainstream education system and in society as a whole. It links the need for inclusion with the civil rights movement, pointing out that special educational needs is still one of the few reasons for which we can segregate children and exclude them from the rest of society.

The opening chapter breaks inclusion down into five useful components, providing a structure for staff to base their own discussions about the meaning of 'inclusion'. Our 2019 Education Inspection framework means that Ofsted is now looking for inclusive practices and will expect schools to be able to

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Special Educational Inclusive

articulate their vision. I suspect many in the UK, when describing inclusion, will actually be describing what Storey calls 'mainstreaming', which is providing specific classes for pupils with special educational needs/disabilities, allowing them to spend only part of the day within the general class. He sees inclusion as a 'service not a place' – a service that provides the special education needed by the student to the maximum extent appropriate to his/her needs, with other students who do not have disabilities and as close as possible to the student's home.

Storey describes exclusion as a system of education where students with disabilities receive their education in schools that only serve students with disabilities – a system that limits opportunities for inclusion. Whatever your view, it is important to consider these points, and, as an educationalist, to understand the implications of your views for children and young people with additional needs. The rest of the chapter is a compelling argument for the benefits of inclusion for everybody.

Comprehensive case studies in section 1 identify 20 criteria and highlight the actions that best supported children's needs for each criterion, providing a range of strategies and clarity about what to consider when planning for additional needs. Partial case studies in section 2 leave criteria open for practitioners to discuss solutions. Using the comprehensive case study framework, provision for individual children can be identified for each criterion. The structure could be followed, perhaps adapted to British terminology, with school teams planning how to meet the needs of their children. Good practice would be to develop a clear vision to allow the articulation of what inclusion means in the school and then use a consistent structure to plan how children's needs will be met, calling on external professionals if needed. Such a process would develop the skills and confidence of all teachers, encouraging a whole-school approach to special educational needs. The SENCo would then be able to provide support and guidance.

In conclusion, this book is not perfect for a British audience, but it could act as a wonderful basis for a school to develop its own approach to inclusion and create a consistent approach to the things that must be considered when planning a programme of support. I know I will be recommending it to the school leaders with whom I work.

Jane Starbuck education improvement advisor (SEND)
Nottinghamshire County Council

Guidelines for Co

The Journal and submission of article

The *British Journal of Special Education* is a journal for special educational professionals who are responsible for educational contributions focusing on any aspect of special educational needs, whatever the

An article can only be considered for publication elsewhere. Authors are expected to obtain necessary permissions to publish have been obtained for biographical notes. All articles considered

The Research Section in *BJSE* provides a forum for research that systematic, practice-focus research. Papers for the Research Section should have implications for future practice provided by the British Educational Research Society

Presentation

Manuscripts should be word processed. Alternatively, three paper copies of the manuscript should be submitted. The title of the article, the name(s) of the author(s) and that all main ideas in the article on a separate sheet

The preferred length of articles in *BJSE* is 1000-1200 words. Appendices. Materials such as tables, graphs, diagrams, Figures or Tables. Illustrative materials

Articles should be lively and engaging; clear and concise. In order to be accessible to a diverse readership, the language used should be clear and unambiguous. The writer should provide a clear and concise gauge that can be seen as discriminating

References

References should be selective and easily accessible. References should be given in brackets. Page numbers should be given for authors' names in a references section at the end of the article. It can be used as a style guide.

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Making contact

Further guidance for authors can be provided. For more information, contact the Editor or the Editor's Office.

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All submissions should be made online at: www.nasen.org.uk

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Soan, S. (ed.) (2021) *Why Do Teachers Need to Know about Diverse Learning Needs?* London: Bloomsbury.

Jo Turrell

Director of Inclusive Education at John Taylor High School Sue Soan and the contributors to this book should be congratulated. From the first page to the last, it delivers an accessible, instructional and thoroughly enjoyable resource.

It would set any trainee teacher on the right path, as they navigate their way through initial teacher training/education (ITT/ITE) and their early careers, and would provide inspiration to the experienced teacher looking to enhance and develop their practice further. It will be equally useful to the creators of ITT and ITE programmes or their tutors, with its bank of evidence-based, thought-provoking research to challenge ITT/ITE students.

The first chapter provides an overview and brief history of special needs education, setting the context for the rest of the book. However, the contributors move swiftly on from this macro approach to take a much more micro line. The reader is invited, at the end of each section, to consider what they have read and contemplate their own practice both reflectively and reflexively. The questions are thought-provoking and challenging. I liked the regular reminder of the links between those students with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and those who are considered gifted and talented, and how they may experience similar difficulties within our education system.

Mc Guckin and O'Síoráin explore the concept of universal design planning and assert that inclusive practice must be considered from the very outset of a project or plan. In other words, we should start by thinking of how we will

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BOOK REVIEWS

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teach our students with SEND, and build a tiered continuum of incremental complexity from this broad starting point. I will most definitely be advocating and exploring this bottom-up approach with our staff at school.

In their chapter on technology, Riordan and Roberts provide a wonderful visual representation of exclusion, segregation, integration and inclusion. Adapted from an image in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it made me question yet again the validity of the practice of removing pupils from their classes to provide well-intentioned intervention.

I would thoroughly recommend this book to ITT/ITE students, NQT 2 teachers and SENDCos as a resource for whole-school training.

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Hindutva stamp

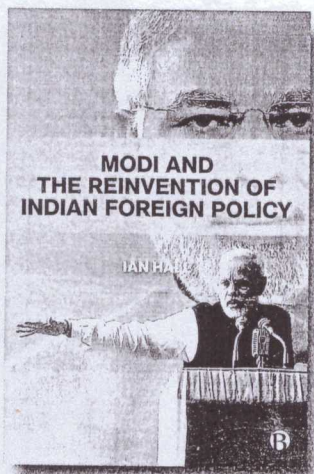
Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy is shaped by his Hindu nationalist ideology and the RSS' expansionist utopia and driven by his self-aggrandising megalomania. BY A.G. NOORANI

THIS book deserves a far wider readership in India than it has received. Its scholarship is impeccable; analysis incisive and its conclusions are of great relevance to us in the situation in which we find ourselves. Most Indian books on foreign policy tend to shower fulsome praise on the hero of the day. The truth is most blistering.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy is based on Hindutva, a strong bid to win domestic support, and a calculated projection of a massive ego which deserves to be punctured before it harms the country more than it has already.

In this Modi, like his predecessors, has been helped by stooges who dominate India's foreign policy debate. Without exception, no Minister opens his/her mouth without the ritual paeon to the celestial Prime Minister. Two of the leading English dailies of the country have "experts in residence" whose job it is to praise the foreign policy of the day.

In the last three decades their script could well have been written in the United States Embassy in New Delhi. It is occasion-



Modi and the Reinvention of Foreign Policy

By Ian Hall

Published by
Bristol University
Press, Penguin
Random House
Press India
Pvt. Ltd, Gurgaon

Pages: 221
Price: Rs.799

ally spiced with attacks on Jawaharlal Nehru.

In truth, in Nehru's foreign policy, the element of cynical opportunism was far more pronounced than his critics, Indian and Western, allow. This magazine published a well-researched piece by an Indian academic revealing Nehru's secret bid to forge an alliance with the U.S. India's Ambassador to that country was kept in the dark "An elusive military relationship", by M.S. Venkataramani in two parts in issues dated April 9 and April 23, 1999).

Nehru had scant respect for his dear old friend, Asaf Ali. The bond was depleted over the years. Never

mind, you cannot refuse a job to a dear friend even if he is a wastrel. The chosen emissary was the Military Attaché, another personal favourite, B.M. Kaul. His prominence increased over the years; so did the havoc he was able to inflict on the national interest. The Secretary-General in the Ministry of External Affairs, Sir Girija Shankar Bajpai, was in the know. Lesser men came after him.

In any case, no careful student of India's foreign policy can ignore Nehru's public support to the Brussels Pact (1948) or his sharp criticism of Soviet "expansionism" in his famous interview with C.L. Sulzberger of *The New York Times*. Non-align-

ment implied no more than independence in the shaping of foreign policy unshackled by ideological preferences and based on his understanding of the national interest.

The author of the book under review is Ian Hall, Professor of International Relations at the Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, Australia. We have not yet acknowledged the considerable debt we owe to Australian studies on India, especially on Partition—to R.J. Moore and Ian Copland. There are some good writings on Kashmir and the boundary dispute with China as well.

To Modi, foreign policy is not a mere necessary adjunct that his job demands. It is a major element in his ideological and personal advancement. In both, good taste goes by the board. You do not put heavy chairs on the lawn fit for an elegant drawing room. Much lighter fare is called for.

The author singles out the embraces Modi "inflicted" (his apt word) on foreign leaders, Archives will reveal when they are opened what they thought of him. The point is that as his speeches, especially in Gujarat, show, Modi is a coarse person pitchforked into a high place where he feels himself free to play his games, what with an impotent opposition terrified at the prospect of losing the Hindu majority vote.

MODI'S 'NEW INDIA'

The Hindutva vision became sharper after 1989. The author writes, "When

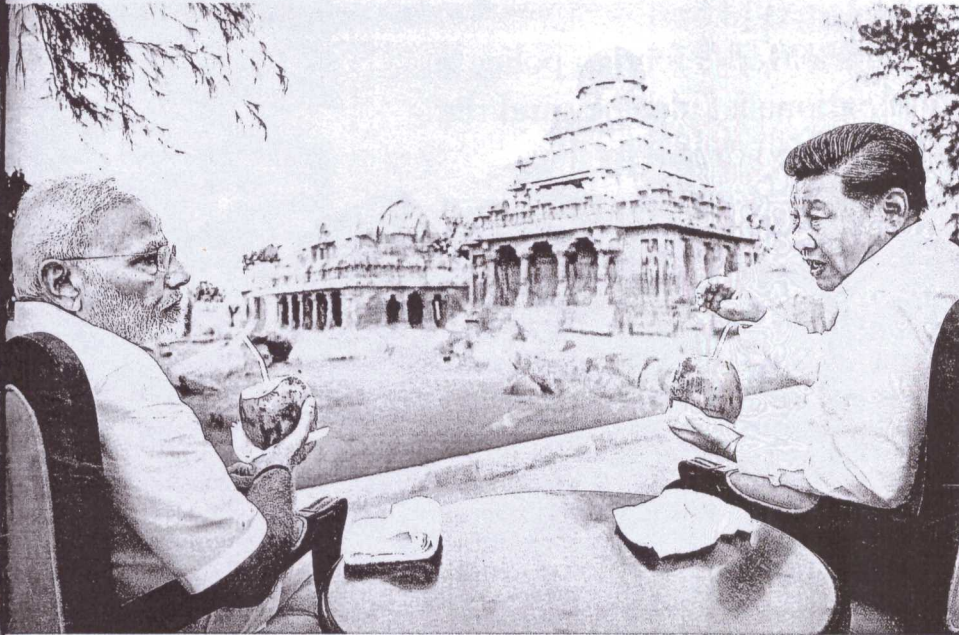


PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi

Narendra Modi came to power at the head of the BJP, the Janata Party, in 2014, that vision to the fore. After becoming Prime Minister, Modi made no secret of his disdain for Nehru's India and the politics of the postcolonial Congress Party. He has 'New India' in it grounded on principles to Nehru and his pursuit of secular socialism at home and non-alignment abroad. He has a 'mandate for change' for a transformation of 'mindsets' not just in domestic policy, but in India's international relations."

It facilitated the crafting of his image, emerges a state world renown. This in the consolidation of personal power.

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PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI with Chinese President Xi Jinping, in Mamallapuram, in October 2019.

Narendra Modi came to power at the head of a resurgent BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] in May 2014, that vision returned to the fore. Before and after becoming Prime Minister, Modi himself made no secret of his disdain for Nehru's idea of India and the political legacy of the postcolonial Congress Party. He offered a 'New India' in its place, one grounded on different principles to those of Nehru and his allies, who pursued secularism and socialism at home, and non-alignment and activism abroad. He claimed a 'mandate for change' and for a transformation of 'mindsets' not just in domestic policy, but also in India's international relations."

It facilitated the re-crafting of his image—here emerges a statesman of world renown. This helped in the consolidation of his personal power. The op-

position was speechless. He became a rock star in "Howdy Modi", with no small help from the Ministry of External Affairs.

The much-advertised summit with President Xi Jinping of China in October 2019 came to nothing. No Indian Prime Minister dares to come to grips with the boundary dispute and try to settle the dispute once and for all. But the meetings had a different purpose.

The author says: "Soon after his swearing-in, Modi also embarked on a series of high-profile foreign visits, each symbolic, and all carefully stage-managed. In keeping with the notion of 'neighbourhood first' and resetting relations with other South Asian states, he went first to Bhutan, in mid-June, 2014, and sent his External Affairs Minister to Bangladesh. He roamed more widely in the second half of the year, heading to

Brazil, Japan, the U.S., Australia." What will be India's plight when the U.S. and China kiss and make up? Japan's "Shoku" of 1971?

Modi went to Fiji and also undertook a series of visits closer home, to Nepal (twice) and to Myanmar. He attended four major multilateral meetings: the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit, the East Asia Summit, the G20, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit. "Throughout, Modi put on an elaborate show. In Australia and the U.S., alongside his formal diplomatic commitments, there were major public events, complete with music and dancing, that allowed Modi to mingle with members of the Indian diaspora, to thank them for their support during the election campaign and to bask in their approval, which they delivered with alacrity. At both the Melbourne Cricket Ground

and Madison Square Gardens the attendees chanted Modi's name. That was the purpose of the seven visits." This was applauded by what Ravish Kumar calls the "godi media". In this gaudy process fall the "bear hug" inflicted on Barack Obama when he landed in New Delhi and the gatecrashing on Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's birthday celebrations in Rawalpindi.

The Jana Sangh always sought an alliance with the U.S. and distrusted China. Those feelings became more intense over the years. Even before he became Prime Minister in 2014, Modi certified that China was "expansionist". The country's relations with China were fairly normal then.

India confidently practises what George F. Kennan called the "megaphone" diplomacy. Why not shift the External Publicity Division to South Block from Shastri Bhavan so that its head and the "official spokesman" can be given some rest? The book contains a concise, accurate, description of the evolution of India's foreign policy in the period between 2014 and 2019, especially the fall into America's embrace.

Even in Nehru's time, India sought to establish a Monroe doctrine for South Asia. Nehru failed in this. An academic willing to serve any who cared to hire him propounded the Indian Doctrine and the Gujral Doctrine. I.K. Gujral sought to inflict on Nepal when it was in dire straits an agreement worse

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than the Treaty of 1950. On Pakistan, Gujral was a hardliner masquerading as a dove. Pakistanis were not fooled. India aspires to be called "brother" by the Big Powers and "Uncle" by its South Asian neighbours, most of whom have bitter memories of the past.

HINDU NATIONALISM AS ALTERNATIVE

China's academics never fail to stress that India is a regional power while China is a global power. No Indian statesman has ever realised that the road to greatness lies through real rapprochement with its South Asian neighbours. The author holds: "I posit that Modi's track record in foreign policy between 2014 and 2019 did not merely involve injecting energy into Indian diplomacy and shedding inherited ideological baggage in favour of mere pragmatism, as many argue. Modi and his allies tried to go further than that. In foreign policy as in domestic policy, I argue, Modi sought to be a 'transformational leader', not simply a 'transactional' one. He aimed at more than merely delivering the spoils of government to his backers, instead seeking a broader transformation of Indian society—and, I argue, India's international relations—underpinned by an ideologically inspired 'vision' Modi sought to reinvent Indian foreign policy by replacing an older vision with a new approach grounded not in pragmatism or even realism, but in Hindu nationalist ideology."

Modi's drive to control the bureaucracy did not

spare India's Foreign Service, demoralised as it was over the years.

"This book argues that as part of Modi's wider project of building a 'New India', his government attempted to regroup key elements of Indian foreign policy in Hindu nationalist ideology, to recast the language of international relations in its distinctive idiom, and redirect Indian diplomacy in ways that better fitted its political agenda. From May 2014 onwards—indeed, from the early hours of his government—I contend that Modi and his political allies made a deliberate and concerted effort to displace inherited understandings of India's place in the world and how it ought to operate. In their stead, as new groundings for policy-making, they tried to put alternative ways of thinking derived in large part from the Hindu nationalist tradition. They did this, I suggest, partly because they believed that these alternatives would produce superior policies and better serve India's national interests, but also because they believed that public perceptions of success in foreign policy would boost and sustain Modi's position as a leader, consolidate his dominant position in government and produce payoffs at the polls. His reinvention of foreign policy was in part an attempt to improve his standing in domestic politics, and that of the BJP, an intriguing move to make, given generally low levels of knowledge about, and interest in, international relations in the Indian electorate."

(Emphasis added.)

Ignorance has not spared the so-called elite either, including some sections of the Ministry of External Affairs. Some of them were Hindutva-oriented before Modi appeared on the scene—including at least two former Foreign Secretaries. This suits Modi eminently as he pursues what Professor Hall calls a "Hindu nationalist ideology" in foreign policy.

RSS' DREAM OF AKHAND BHARAT

The book is rich in insights into the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) satraps, especially on the nuances of Deendayal Upadhyaya's "Integral Humanism" as also on Modi's cultivation of big business since his Gujarat days:

"But the summits also allowed Modi to share a stage and to build relationships with key figures in the Gujarati and national business community, including Gautam Adani, who runs a major multinational conglomerate, Mukesh Ambani, head of the industrial giant Reliance, and C.K. Birla, chair of his eponymous group. Initiating and sustaining these ties with the promises that he would fast-track approvals, cut red tape, and remove bureaucratic obstacles, he determined, was crucial to developing the state. Modi's reputation as a business-friendly politician grew as a result, allowing him to bring major projects to Gujarat.

"Perhaps the best known of these—partly because he made much of the story during the 2014 campaign—was the investment by the Tata Group in a

manufacturing plant to build the budget Nano car. After the company's application to build the plant in West Bengal was rejected, Modi supposedly convinced its boss, Ratan Tata, to bring his business across the country to Gujarat with a one-word text message that read 'Welcome'."

The roots go far deeper. Ravish Kumar of the Hindi NDTV, that rare dissenter, unfailingly and rightly ridicules the RSS' goal of India as a Vishwa Guru. Modi believes strongly in the use of extravaganzas to burnish his credentials.

Early in the day, he held a Sufi conclave with some participants whose Sufi credentials were not very obvious. It was drummed up by official agencies. But Modi has yet to wear the cap Muslims wear.

The author writes: "On 11 March 2016, less than two years after he became PM, Modi took the stage to address a huge gathering held on the flood plain of the Yamuna River, south-east of Delhi. The event at which he spoke—the World Culture Festival—was apparently attended by as many as three and a half million people and watched by a similar number on television and the Internet. It was organised by a group called the Art of Living Foundation, led by the spiritual guru and self-styled humanitarian Sri Ravi Shankar. It was no ordinary gathering of followers or faithful. The Modi government was a prominent sponsor, contributing some 2.25 crore rupees (22.5 million rupees or about \$370,000) towards the cost of staging the event (Jain, 2016). Some

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one thousand religious leaders and 750 'key' politicians also took part, according to the organisers (Art of Living, 2018). Apart from Modi, former French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, the Pakistani senator and sometime ambassador to Washington, Sherry Rehman—you name them."

Modi's hero is Swami Vivekananda, whom he praised on Independence Day 2014. He said, quoting Vivekananda: "I can see before my eyes Mother India awakening once again. My Mother India would be seated as the World Guru. Every Indian would render service towards welfare of humanity..." [...] Friends, the words of Vivekananda ji can never be untrue. The words of Vivekananda ji, his dream of seeing India ensconced as World Guru, his vision, it is incumbent upon us to realise that dream. This capable country, blessed with natural bounty, this country of youth can do much for the world in the coming days."

All this cannot fail to endear him to his political mentor and benefactor, the RSS boss Mohan Bhagwat as he watches warily the rise of the dreaded personality cult.

But they suit each other. Bhagwat has an RSS regime in power. Modi has the support of the RSS' ideology that Bangladesh and Pakistan will one day merge back with India to restore what some Hindu nationalists term Akhand Bharat ("undivided India")—the greater India ruled by the British that they think forms a cultural unit. "Although a long-standing aspiration of Hindu nationalists, such



WITH U.S. PRESIDENT Barack Obama in New Delhi on January 25, 2015.

suggestions were seen as unhelpful to bilateral relations with those two states."

But that is very much his 'RSS' dream, which includes Afghanistan as well. Think tanks generate the steam for Modi.

NEW THINK TANKS

The Hindu nationalist movement has created or strengthened a series of think tanks, as such institutions proliferate across New Delhi and further afield.

Long-established institutions like the Indian Council for World Affairs (founded in 1943) or the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (1965) now compete with a growing number of new organisations like Observer Research Foundation (founded in 1990 with

funds from the Ambani family's conglomerate, Reliance Industries) or Brookings India (founded in 2011 with donations from a range of sources within the country).

And within this increasingly complex ecosystem a number of think tanks aligned with the Sangh have also appeared, including the BJP-affiliated Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation (SP-MRF) named after one of the founders of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh; the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF, created in 2009), which has more convoluted ties; and the India Foundation (IF, created in 2011).

"Of these, the VIF and IF are arguably the most

important in terms of foreign policy and international engagement, though they differ in form. Run until the 2014 election by Modi's National Security Adviser, Ajit Doval, the VIF is clearly the most active in terms of research, with a relatively large team of about twenty working in a wide range of areas and a regular output of discussion papers and policy briefs. It also holds regular and high-profile events, including the Hindu Buddhist Samvad. The IF, by contrast, is smaller and its researchers comparatively junior, though it does publish its own bi-monthly journal. But the IF is widely considered, as the highly regarded *Hindustan Times* journalist Prashant Jha put it early in Modi's term, as 'the country's most powerful think-tank' (Jha, 2015). Its board is dominated by leading BJP politicians, including Nirmala Sitharaman, who served as Commerce Minister and then Defence Minister under Modi. The organisation is led in tandem by Ajit Doval's son, Shaurya, and Ram Madhav. As Jha points out, the IF was responsible for running the annual India Ideas Conclave, held mostly in Goa, and another Hindu-Buddhist dialogue forum (the annual Dharma-Dhamma event, first held in 2014) and major conferences on counter-terrorism and the economy (Jha, 2015.)"

Modi seeks to impose Hindutva on India. His foreign policy is crafted to that end. □

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Language as People's History

ASHA SINGH

Typically, linguists form an exclusive breed in academe—transacting in a dense, often impermeable language. Being a non-linguist interested in the questions of language, my interactions with them (all men) have been stressful and often “unintelligible.” Peggy Mohan in her book *Jahajin* gives us a glimpse of the upper-caste, male-dominated nature of linguistics in North India (2015: 246–56). Her observations are not off the mark even today. Unlike the mainstream of linguistics, Mohan’s recent book is a work of art. She becomes a linguist-storyteller—unburdened by academic conventions yet rigorous in her analysis. With visual metaphors ranging from lemon pickles, ovens, dry onion covers to dodo bird and Tiramisu bear—Mohan’s expositions are insightful and teach us how to approach the uninitiated. The book connects language with changes in economy, politics and environment. The aim, from the very outset, is to upset pure, winning visions on language, culture and human existence. Like our languages, we too are products of mixing and intermingling—a point that reminds us of B R Ambedkar’s (1979: 3–22) statement that castes are “artificial” chopping off of a people. Mohan’s story of Indian languages inadvertently gives us cues to understand this.

Divided into eight chapters, *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants: The Story of India through Its Languages* places language as a “faithful mirror” of history and change. Mohan takes us through the “bittersweet” migration stories of Sanskrit, Malayalam, Hindi/Urdu, Khasi, Nagamese, Assamese and Caribbean Creoles with a pleasant *tadka* of Trinidad Bhojpuri. Men and supergroups of empires, market and literacy engulf the masses—rapidly or gradually—forcing them to pay in kind and language. These men could be the Vedic tribes, Namboothiri Brahmins, Central Asians or English, depending upon the contingencies of

BOOK REVIEWS

Wanderers, Kings, Merchants: The Story of India through Its Languages by Peggy Mohan, New Delhi: India Viking, 2021; pp 352, ₹599.

time and place. The story of migration and power bleeds into the very structure of our languages. The metaphor of the pizzly bear or “tiramisu” bear (as the author calls it, after the Italian dessert), is creatively repeated to emphasise the germane possibilities of migration in the evolution of languages. In the introductory chapter, Mohan gives us a fair idea of what she sets out to achieve in the book. She asks—what do languages say about people? She answers this question by decoding signs of early language mixture and then “match them to known history and emerging evidence” (p 5). The following sections highlight some of the features of this captivating book.

Substratum Is the Story

Mohan’s detailed enquiries on creoles and the process of creolisation in erstwhile colonial plantations lend a methodological anchor to understand how languages come into existence. By drawing examples and lessons from creoles, Mohan enables a conversation between histories of migration from different locations. Her own lifeworld lights up the distant and recent histories of the Indian subcontinent and takes the reader a long way in identifying the similarities between creolisation and Sanskritisation of languages. Both are processes marked by rapid vocabulary transplant even when the grammar and sound system carry the tinge of the old. The history of European colonial expansion, and the introduction of new crops and slavery shapes the process of pidginisation and creolisation. Similarly, the expansion of political power and militarisation shaped Sanskritisation—all roads leading to a language

of power. The book does not comprehend language mixing as an egalitarian process where every dialect has an equal place. Rather (like the pizzly bear), the author describes language as a structure made up of layers. The top layers consists of vocabulary that “salute a new and alien group that has come to power” (p 14), while the substratum—buried deep under—draws its essence from the “people”—less powerful and often invisible. The substratum is made up of intrinsic sound systems and grammar which tells us the “maternal side” of the language story. This substratum, Mohan notes, does not simply “leak up” to the top as many scholars would like to believe. Such a view is a consequence of focusing squarely on the literate elite. The book embraces the study of substratum as a way to reconstruct the contribution of “little people” in the making of languages in India. Thus, Mohan, in a way, presents a “people’s history” of languages.

In Chapter 2, Mohan follows the retroflexions in Rig Vedic recitations to understand the substratum made up of pre-Vedic tongues. The Vedic “men” who entered the north-west of India had their own dialects, which were abandoned as they intermingled with the local population (the same story tends to repeat itself with other powerful migrants such as Namboothiris and Central Asians in the following chapters). Nevertheless, Sanskrit was passed down orally from father to son as a language of ritual prestige. Mohan marks out two distinct phases in Sanskrit’s development. The first when Vedic men engulfed local communities of the north-west in small groups over centuries. During this phase, the problem of communication was soon resolved with the help of Prakrits. The majority of people—unaffected by these migrants—continued to speak their old languages. In the second phase, Sanskrit succeeds as a language of ritual power with the emergence of “kuru super tribes.” This period saw militaristic expansion and growth of caste system and the first attempt to collect Rig Vedic hymns under a new political regime. Retroflexions from the local languages entered Sanskrit

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during this consolidation. As a consequence of such ramifications the “little people” started colouring their own languages with a coat of Indo-Aryan paint. Mohan’s intersection of migration and language highlights the part played by “mixed families” in bringing about linguistic change. In such domestic arrangements, the women spoke the older language (or language of the commoners) or a mixed variety—passed it on to their children before the boys were inducted into the “father tongue” (p 36). Such contact situations and dwelling units are perfectly described in Chapter 3 on Namboothiri Brahmins and Malayalam.

In Chapter 4, as Mohan narrates the birth of Indo-Aryan languages, she further demystifies Sanskrit and the heavy category of “Indo-Aryan,” even pointing out its erroneous nature. Against popular notions which attribute Sanskrit to be the mother of all languages, Mohan notes that Indo-Aryan dialects existed alongside Sanskrit. By highlighting linguistic features such as ergativity, verb-gender associations and compound verbs (aspects), Mohan argues how the Indo-Aryan languages of the north-west have in their substratum pre-Vedic languages—“that refuse to pack up and go away” (p 121). As a student of Bhojpuri language movement and cultural politics, I have noticed how Bhojpuri’s leading actors draw its genealogy exclusively to Sanskrit and Vedic texts (much like Sanskritised Hindi) without taking note of other influences. For example, Mohan discusses the word *kori* for “twenty” in Trinidad Bhojpuri which can be traced to the Munda languages (p 217). One finds *kori* in other Magadhan languages as well. The varying confluences which shaped the east have not received equal attention. Unfortunately, language movements tend to align themselves with what it is perceived as powerful.

Eruptions and Deaths

Reflecting on the language evolution of Caribbean creoles, Mohan argues against the “old belief” that gradual convergence is the only way for new languages to emerge. Instead, she makes a convincing case for sudden eruptions in the life of a language. Similarly, the death of a

language is also not a matter of smooth decline, rather a shift made in a single generation—“A language with no new generation of native speakers is a dead language” (p 58). Language death is understood as a “loss of vitality”—vitality which comes from native speakers. When there are no “native speakers” (those who learn a language first), we tend to speak of preserving a language—the way we preserve the dead. Mohan explains that language death is like “species extinction.” Such extinctions—she notes—does not happen because the species is unfit or diseased. Rather, it is a result of drastic changes in the environment making adaptation difficult. In my research, I have noticed that even when a language like Bhojpuri has young native speakers, its cultural actors—migrant men trained in Hindi or English—talk about “preserving it” and think of rural masses and women as unchanging vessels of Bhojpuri. Perhaps, language death has a class gradation to it. Moreover, unlike the moralistic belief that “obscenity” is killing Bhojpuri from inside, it is larger socio-economic and political shifts that make languages irrelevant or less important. One can even argue that commercial obscene songs have a function in keeping the language alive—infusing a sense of vitality.

Certain journeys of languages, Mohan writes, go unnoticed right under our noses. For example, she notes how in the late 1970s, Bhojpuri speakers often took pride in the small differences which mark their “village dialect” from those of others. However, today we find a “koine” (standard variety) emerge among the many Bhojpuri dialects—carving out a new market economy and political sphere for itself. Similarly, the emergence of Gondi as a “koine”—as a result of Maoist struggles—is another fascinating snippet in the book. Gondi and Bhojpuri go unnoticed, owing to their “low” status (as dialect varieties or non-scheduled languages) within the modern language hierarchy of independent India.

Children of Contact

In Chapter 5, Mohan demonstrates the dynamics of language mixing by looking at historical figures such as Amir Khusro

and Mirza Ghalib—both of whom had local mothers and Central Asian fathers. Mohan points out that Central Asian migrants brought with them written Persian—a language of great cultural and political prestige in the 10th century—along with their own vernacular dialects such as Turkic and Uzbek. Like the Vedic men and Namboothiris who abandoned their everyday dialects to embrace the local, Central Asians also “threw” away their vernaculars. Persian (like Sanskrit) persisted, given its importance but without much change as it arrived in the written form (unlike Sanskrit). Mohan notes that Khusro’s writings were a spontaneous mix of *hindavi* dialects and Persian. His work is a small window into the lingua franca of 13th-century Delhi and surrounding areas. A language which sounds like Hindi. Hindi, like other north-western dialects such as Braj and Awadhi, lived around Delhi when the Mughals were consolidating themselves. This was a reason why Hindi was picked up by the powerful.

Mohan explains that the term “Urdu” surfaces in the literary sphere only by the end of the 18th century, when the sun was setting on Persian and its ruling elite. This happens in Deccan, far away from the actual milieu of Hindi. Persian was infused in heavy doses with this local dialect to produce a literary language—*Rekhta*. Mohan discusses at length about *Rekhta* to trace the journey of this literary enterprise. *Rekhta* began with the aim to broaden the reach of ghazals, however, with time, Persian overpowered the genre and made it a cryptic form with a specialised audience. The obfuscated nature of *Rekhta* was heavily critiqued by a section of non-Muslim speakers and readers of Urdu (pp 171–72). With increasing Persianisation, Urdu was becoming a “Muslim” language. This was later paralleled with the Sanskritisation of Hindi in the 19th century (with British aid). Mohan underlines that Urdu and Hindi were the same language—one of the many dialects of a “polyglot society”—a point echoed in the works of Christopher King, among others.

Another interesting point on the gendered division of language (or “male–female

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linguistic split”) is Mohan’s observation on how boys and men were taught Persian and Urdu in the Persian script, while girls were taught Devanagari (until partition). Language mixing has always followed the hierarchy of gender and class. Much like the surface and the substratum of a given language, access to languages was always gendered.

Carving Out the Linguistic East

In Chapter 6, Mohan discusses the Magadhan group of languages. She begins with an interesting review of Nagamese as a language of hill traders and later a lingua franca that connects the distinct tribal communities of Nagaland. Unlike certain linguists who conceptualise Nagamese as a pidgin, Mohan argues that though Nagamese presents all the ingredients of a “pidgin-creole” situation, it misses out on certain specific political and economic factors. Pidgins were products of shock and permanent dislocation caused by slave trade. The new destinations made pidgin a necessity for immediate survival. On the other hand, in India, the powerful did not have access to technologies which “could move boatloads of people across high seas as cargo” (p 206). This meant that the masses had the time to adjust to changes in leadership and stay with their own languages “a while longer.” Politics and economics leave their permanent imprints of a language and its growth. Thus, Nagamese grew closer to its target language—Assamese, and Mohan calls it the latest addition to the Magadhan family, defining its eastern boundaries. The focus on Nagamese, Assamese, Khasi and Munda group of languages (in that order) helps undo the north-south scheme of India’s linguistic map. Mohan tilts the map to take an eastern look—with Bhojpuri and Nagamese guarding the west-east boundaries. In fact, the entire book convinces the reader to take a fresh look at the map of India and its neighbours. The journey of languages produces new contact situations and renews our perceptions on territorial boundaries.

The story of Assamese, Khasi and Munda are marked by migration from South-east Asia. The memory of this

contact is still visible in Ahom rituals that use the ancestral tone language. Khasi was a new entrant and could maintain its distinctiveness, owing to the nature of its migration. Unlike the Ahoms, Khasi migrants included women. Mohan notes that the oldest example of South-east Asian mixing can be traced back to a period before Vedic incursions. Groups of men from the east entered the gangetic plains where the Mundas (a people quite different from the north-west and south of the subcontinent) had already started paddy cultivation. These men married local Munda women and also introduced new varieties of rice in the area. It was long after this migration and mixing that Aryans entered the east with their own languages and mixed up with the gangetic locals. Mohan underlines that the difference of the Magadhan languages stems from the difference in their substratum (which she explains with the help of linguistic features that separate Magadhan from the north-west and Dravidian). Thus, the Bhojpuri boundary of present-day eastern Uttar Pradesh represents a region of collision (of two tectonic plates, as Mohan puts it).

Diglossia and English Invasion

In Chapter 7, Mohan takes us through the story of English in India and marks out its difference from Sanskrit and Persian. She pertinently argues that the spread of English begins in its present form only after independence with certain shifts in our policy on primary education. Though Mohan does not use the term capitalism often in her book, it becomes clear that with the spread of global capital, English became an “invasive species.” Socialist defences such as common school systems or neighbourhood schools were never pursued in India to block the “prestige” and “economic value” of English. Mohan rightly underlines how English is the inevitable direction we are all headed to and the reason for its success lies in economics more than the language itself. The story of Hindi is not very different. State patronage and preference in schooling system meant that “young dialect speakers” were inevitably brought under its ambit (only to

realise its “inadequacies” in the face of English). Unlike the bilingual *babus* of the British era, today we increasingly have a generation of diglossic speakers (Hinglish is an example Mohan discusses) who would inevitably abandon the less powerful language. In conclusion, Mohan leaves us with the idea that languages hide in them the story of the defeated and the meek—one only needs to scratch our substratum to know more about them.

This book is an invitation for scholars (beyond the field of linguistics) to engage with language as an index of class-gender relations, politics, economy and history. It also leaves you with new, uncharted questions. For example—how has marriage migration (across linguistic boundaries) affected languages, especially in bordering areas? Or, how do we make sense of nomadic and denotified tribes—men, women and children—who moved from one place to the other? Didn’t they have any impact on local languages, owing to their marginal locations? Or should we revisit the question in the light of more evidence? How were castes socially regulated through languages? Like women, we know that lower castes were also denied access to Sanskrit and certain expressions in local languages. How does caste disparity explain the story of Indian languages? One can surely hope that researchers and writers would bring such questions to life in the future.

For sociologists of languages—a field which remains marginal in India—this book offers a lot more than what seems apparent in the first read. It opens up mechanisms to approach India differently beyond the blinkers of methodological nationalism and its official list of worthy and unworthy languages.

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, July-sept-2021

BOOK REVIEW

Exploratory Practice in Language Teaching: Puzzling About Principles and Practices, by J. Hanks, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 384 pp., ISBN 978-1-137-45344-0, 32.12 € (eBook); ISBN 978-1-137-45711-0, 39.51 € (Softcover); ISBN 978-1-137-45343-3, 93.59 € (Hardcover).

This is actually the second time I have read this book, as it came out in 2017 when I was just finishing my PhD which used Exploratory Practice (EP) as one of the main pedagogical methodologies for data collection. This is also something of a disclaimer, as Judith Hanks was my external examiner. However, her book came out just as I was preparing for my viva and so I read it hurriedly, really just to be able to cite her before she came to assess me. I was very happy to have the opportunity to read through this excellent book again, and when I was invited to write this review the editors asked me to highlight EP's 'family relationship' (pg. 57) to Action Research (AR) and other forms of practitioner research. This book has already been reviewed elsewhere (Consoli and Ushioda 2018), and so in this review, I wanted to provide a more nuanced look at the book from the perspective of how it frames EP in relation to the rest of this family.

In the early days of EP, there was a somewhat vitriolic discussion which showed how AR and EP were distinct, in much the way that arguing siblings might say something hurtful, it was proclaimed that Action Research, when imposed upon trainee teachers might have a 'parasitical' effect on 'both their normal working lives and the lives of their learners' (Allwright 2005, 355). Elsewhere, AR was associated with other types of more traditional research which was not for the benefit of teachers or learners but for the sake of research itself, dubbed by Allwright and Hanks (2009) as *third-party research*. Hanks's (2017) book is somewhat less stern in its treatment of AR, but nonetheless maintains the distinction, in that for Hanks 'EP is markedly different from many other forms of practitioner research which have publicly stated aims of "improvement" and thus easily fall prey to the rhetoric of performativity and efficiency' (pg. 86). EP is about understandings rather than problem-solving, and much of this distinction arises from the puzzling process. She also notes that the vocabulary from EP has drifted back into the literature on other members of the practitioner research family, notably AR, with terms like 'puzzle' and 'Exploratory Action Research'. Hanks notes that this is 'entirely understandable [...] brothers and sisters may frequently influence one another' (ibid). I found this family-like stance more amenable and it seems to speak of the maturity of EP now as an established method.

Another of the defining and differentiating aspects of EP which is skilfully elucidated in Hanks' book is the emphasis on the *agency* of learners as practitioners. If I were to summarise Hanks' stance on EP (and indeed on how research should be done in general) it would seem that words such as *empowerment, inclusion, trust* and *understanding* would be amongst the most salient. Again, the key way to include learners as active participants and researchers in their own right is through the puzzling process. In this way, EP is not merely a research method, but a form of curriculum too, or even a 'social enterprise' (Allwright and Hanks 2009, 182). Ways in which this can be achieved are delivered clearly and engagingly, especially through the use of vignettes and worksheets which appear as boxes in the main text.

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In my view, one of the ways that EP further achieves this extended agency to learners and decreased pull towards the more technicist approach to research is through the use of Potentially Exploitable Pedagogic Activities or PEPAs. Again, these distinguish EP from other forms of research because, within an EP framework, everything done for research must also be done for learning, and research must be a by-product of learning, not something adjacent. These PEPAs are given a far more detailed treatment in Hank's book than previously in the EP literature, and thus the process is fleshed out and made more concrete through examples and the lived experience of others who have contributed their stories to the book.

It is now a few years since I did my EP study for my PhD and, as such, I have had chance to discuss EP more collegially (one of the developmental principles of EP). One of the criticisms I have heard a number of times against EP is all the long lists of Principles, which may seem prescriptive or daunting to those new to EP. Despite these principles, it is clear that EP is more about understanding where we come from and ensuring what we do is ethical, not just at the surface but as a truly defining aspect of the approach. I feel Hanks does a wonderful job of listing all the principles, and yet bringing them together and illustrating how they are part of a connected philosophical underpinning rather than an exhaustive list of rules that we must follow. This is, for me, one of the main strengths of the book and one of the ways in which it sets itself apart as more balanced and mature discussion of EP as the method has taken root in educational research.

When I met Judith on the day of my viva, I remember I had been nervous as to whether I was doing EP correctly in my PhD. After reading her book, my doubts were a little assuaged, and I decided that I would tell her of my worries about whether I was doing EP right or not. I said to her that 'if you are worried about doing EP wrong, you are not doing it right' in order to show her that I had understood her message that EP was not a prescriptive methodology, but one based on the concept of phronesis (pg. 52–53). In other words, 'practical knowledge and practical ethics' (Flyvbjerg 2001, 56) which are applied to each class or context with care and understanding. However, Judith went one step further and slightly rebuked me, saying 'I would avoid using the words "not doing it right", as there isn't really a right or wrong way'.

Overall, this book offers an in-depth history of the development of EP, as well as a detailed history of the underpinning philosophy of the practitioner research family more generally, from Dewey to Freire. It is accessible and clear, with many quote boxes, vignettes and worksheets. Clear examples make it almost like a guidebook at times, whereas at others it is deeply philosophical and clearly lays the importance of ethics and a philosophy of education at the core of doing EP.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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BOOKS

CITY OF RAPTURE

The story of Auroville's origins, through a tragic personal history



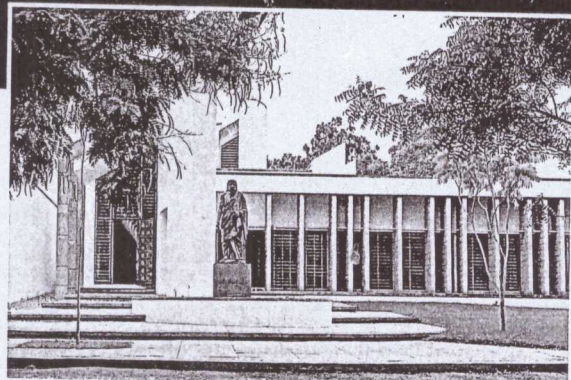
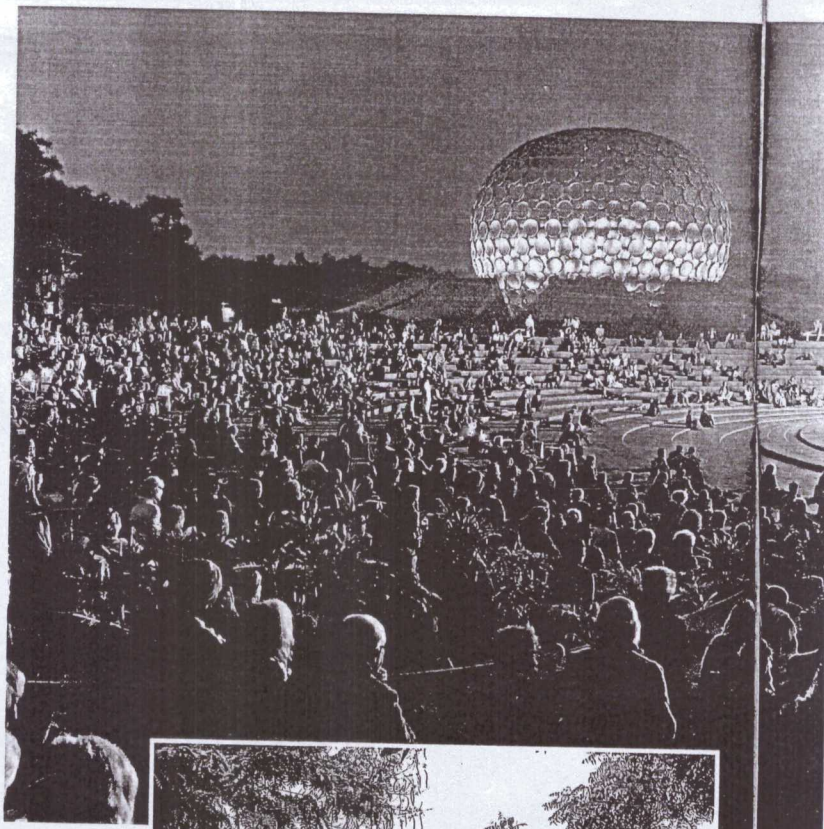
AKASH KAPUR

In his first book, *India Becoming*, Akash Kapur used a varied cast of characters, including a cattle broker and call centre worker, to animate the upheavals transforming the country he had returned to from the US. In his second, *Better to Have Gone*, he swaps out his panoramic lens for a more intimate focus: the family album. In this pacey, propulsive book, he turns his attention to the history of the place he and his wife grew up in and now call home: Auroville, the community founded in 1968 in the outskirts of Pondicherry (now Puducherry).

Kapur recounts Auroville's origin story through the entwined lives of three "rebels" who wind up on the same "arid patch of earth" in South India, in search of "a deeper

way of living": Satprem, né Bernard, a former French Resistance fighter tortured by the Gestapo, who became the favoured devotee of the mystical matriarch of Auroville, Mirra Alfassa; John Walker, a wealthy American who yearns for non-materialistic meaning; and Diane Maes, a beautiful, free-spirited Belgian and the mother of the author's wife Auralice.

Some have taken issue with Kapur's description of the land that Auroville was built on, a cluster of villages occupied by local Tamils, as "a moonscape: vacant, panoramic" and "a fitting tabula rasa for the new world". In a Twitter thread, Jessica Namakkal, a historian who researches French India, averred that this "new world" was brought into being not so much by the hope and boundless energy of a bunch of



ALAMY



BETTER TO HAVE GONE:
Love, Death and the Quest
for Utopia in Auroville
by Akash Kapur
SIMON & SCHUSTER
₹699; 368 pages

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ALAMY



CITY OF FAITH

(left) A view of the Matrimandir in Auroville; and Savitri Bhavan, a centre for spiritual education in Auroville

first inhabitants, variously described as “poets”, “hippies” and “self-taught ecologists”, lived in spartan huts, faced off against “bandicoots, bugs, thieves, cobras, dysentery, kraits and pneumonia”, and kept “digging, building, planting, cutting, damming, watering and baking” with “almost lunatic” stubbornness, eventually transforming a denuded landscape into a forest dotted with farms, a school, a health centre, a bakery, small businesses, and a number of thriving communities.

All this is a picturesque backdrop to the core of the book: the doomed love story involving Diane and John, Auralice’s mother and stepfather. The catalyst for this tragedy is the death of the Mother and the rumours she set in motion, through Satprem, that cultivating a “supramental consciousness” would prompt a “cellular evolution”, enabling her to achieve immortality even after everyone mistook her for dead. With hypnotic clarity, Kapur shows how this belief in the miraculous powers of “the Mother’s yoga” to conquer death and infirmity led the couple to entirely avoidable doom. But Kapur leaves much of this cultic in-group language—talk of “formations”, exhausted karma, and references to the way of the yoga—largely unmediated. The reader is left to extract another story from this one—one where spiritual wisdom is indistinguishable from dangerous delusion and faith from self-annihilating credulousness. This is understandable; his motivation, as he shares in the book, is catharsis for his wife Auralice, who left Auroville as a teenager with “so much unprocessed”. “We are shining a light on hidden places, and we are doing it together”. At least one love story in Kapur’s book has a happy ending. ■

- Shruti Ravindran

S(H)ELF LIFE

New books written from a first-person perspective



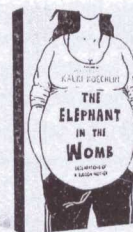
FRAGMENTS AGAINST MY RUIN: A Life
by Farrukh Dhondy
CONTEXT
₹699; 312 pages

Farrukh Dhondy wears many hats—TV celebrity, writer, leftist, Parsi boy. His friends list, too, is diverse. Everyone from Charles Sobhraj to V. S. Naipaul has been on it. His is a memoir of names, places, things.

STARGAZING: The Players In My Life
by Ravi Shastri
HARPERCOLLINS
₹699; 336 pages



From being a star all-rounder to commentator and then coach, Ravi Shastri has done it all. He writes of extraordinary players he has met, even stopping to separate Virat, the friend, and Kohli, the captain.



THE ELEPHANT IN THE WOMB
by Kalki Koechlin
PENGUIN
₹399; 256 pages

Helped by stunning illustrations, actor Kalki Koechlin’s take on motherhood covers all the bases—the toll of pregnancies, labour pain, postpartum melancholy. This is where private meets fiercely political.

disenchanted dreamers, but by a kind of “settler utopianism” that succeeded colonialism. (The French relinquished their hold on Pondicherry just six years before the founding of Auroville and many, including the Mother and Satprem, found their way there through French government posts.)

Aside from this contextual elision, the author carefully and vividly pieces together Auroville’s early years, and how its assemblage of idealistic international inhabitants—memorably described as “idiot savants of endurance”—were spurred by Sri Aurobindo’s teachings and the Mother’s lofty directives that Auroville be “the first city of the future” and “a Tower of Babel in reverse”, with its children serving as “intermediary beings’ to a more evolved form of life”. But the early Aurovilians’ treatment of these intermediary beings could best be characterised as benignly neglectful, with some left alone to be bitten by vipers (like Auralice’s brother) or drowned in wells (also Auralice’s brother). Nonetheless, the book depicts the heady early days of the intentional community, when its



BOOKS

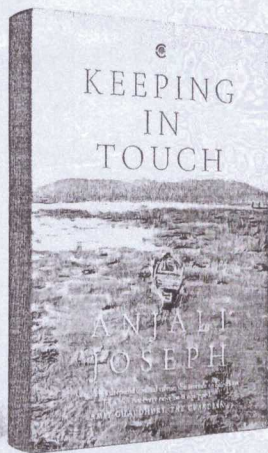
MAYBE NOT

ANJALI JOSEPH'S NEW NOVEL WORKS
BEST AS A LOVE STORY. IT IS UNDONE WHEN
IT TRIES EXCEEDING THAT BRIEF

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Within the first few pages of Anjali Joseph's new novel, the main protagonists have briskly bedded each other. The book's jacket describes itself as "uncompromisingly modern", perhaps telegraphing that they cannot be attached in any serious way. In *Keeping in Touch*, Joseph's fourth novel, a meet-cute in Heathrow airport will spawn a recurring long-distance relationship between Ved and Keteki, from London to Assam.

Ved, a UK-based venture capitalist, gives chase after



KEEPING IN TOUCH
by Anjali Joseph
CONTEXT
₹599; 232 pages

their fleeting encounter in Mumbai. But commitment-phobic Keteki, cosy in her itinerant life and thronged by myriad lovers, keeps him at bay. Large parts of the novel unfold in Jorhat and Guwahati, where curator-designer Keteki lives and NRI bachelor Ved returns. His new assignment involves a project with a bulb factory in the region, making the pursuit all the more convenient. (There is a quasi-magic realist sub-plot involving the bulbs and an "intelligent filament" that responds to its environment, but doesn't amount to a whole lot.)

Keeping in Touch is readable, in a will-they-won't-they way. Ved and Keteki go through the motions of a mating dance while trying to untangle their own insecurities and emotional awkwardness. Other lovers, old and new, have walk-on parts. Keteki's uncle Joy Mama, whom Ved befriends, offers a guest room, history lessons and pithy advice from time to time.

The characters are recognisable 30-somethings, cosseted by wealth and social cachet, flitting between relationships and swiftly moving between India and the world, insiders and outsiders everywhere. But there is also something of the manic pixie dream girl about Keteki, her wistful free-spiritedness in service of Ved's new mission and sense of self. Assam seems to serve a similar purpose—as a staging arena for Ved's growing up. And if people are locked in a quest for self-actualisation, can a stint at a yoga ashram be far behind?

We are treated to a recurring tic in contemporary Indian English fiction—the intent to establish context, mandatory references to a "Hindu nationalist government", a Muslim man being lynched, a woman being harassed. There are several opportunities for Indiasplaining as London-bred Ved tries to blend in. We have explanatory passages on Assamese history and culture, mostly from the mouth of Keteki's convivial uncle. However, some of the dialogue feels trite, designed to reflect on big themes that otherwise seem not to intrude into the lives of these self-absorbed protagonists. Take this: "Assam. So beautiful, yet always being unmade", or "Any search for the original people of a place is a kind of story".

The novel is agreeable, if somewhat inauthentic, a love story bedevilled by its own attempts to be something more. ■

—Bhavya Dore

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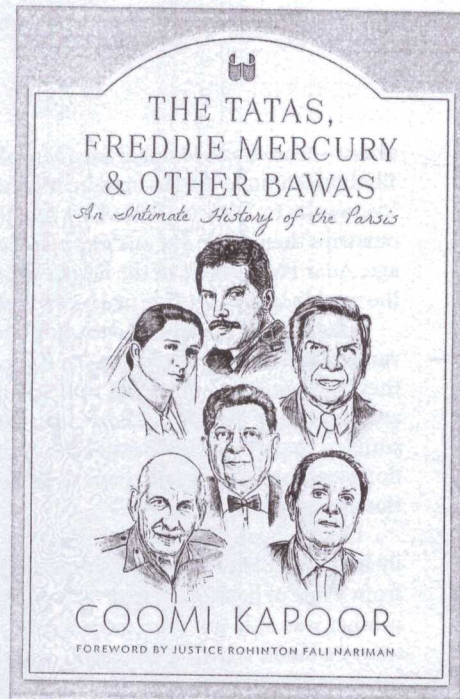
BOOKS

THE BAWA WAY OF LIFE

Coomi Kapoor's new book is a handy dictionary for all things Parsi

W

hy and how is it that, for a minuscule community that numbers about 57,000 but will soon be down to 23,000, the Parsis cut such an inordinately high profile and exert huge influence—as tycoons (the Tatas, Wadias, Mistrys and Godrejs), jurists and lawyers (Nani Palkhiwala, Soli Sorabjee, Justice Rohinton Nariman), nationalists and rebels (Dadabhai Naoroji, Madame Cama, Kobad Gandhi) not to speak of soldiers, scientists, musicians and



**THE TATAS, FREDDIE MERCURY
& OTHER BAWAS**
An Intimate History of the Parsis
By Coomi Kapoor
WESTLAND NON-FICTION
₹699; 320 pages

BOOKS

BRAVE IN A NEW WORLD

Payal Dhar tells the coming of age tale with a new compassion that makes it altogether refreshing

In a world so breathlessly preoccupied with labels—during the pandemic more than ever—to be free of them is to taste sweet freedom. Journalist and author Payal Dhar's new novel, *It Has No Name*, offers that and more, cheerfully treading a path with fewer sweeping stereotypes, liberating its characters and equally, the reader.

We first meet Sami, 16, doing something she absolutely loves: playing cricket at her neighbourhood park. The next moment, she's a ball of anxiety, alarm bells ringing in her head, as an elderly figure she recognises

too well lumbers in, muttering the usual vile things to her: "What's between your legs... are you a boy or a girl?" It's a painful reminder of the brutal bullying Sami has faced through her childhood, frequently shamed, questioned and regularly misgendered in a number of ways for sporting her trademark buzzcut, love for "boy's clothes" and not being more like other girls.

Her loving parents meanwhile believe she is one of a kind, even though they too feel at a loss at times—and this provides equal parts comfort and frustration to Sami. Increasingly, it seems she can truly be herself only

when she is alone in her room, in the company of her shiny new laptop and a virtual world that is quickly opening up to her and revealing many new riches—and dangers—allowing her to feel free to explore and be just a regular gay teen figuring stuff out.

It Has No Name is Dhar's tenth novel and she is on firm ground, writing about teens coming out of the closet in a way that feels entirely authentic and intimate. The novel takes off when Sami is thrown in the deep end as her mother relocates her cafe to her quaint hometown of Chandnisarai in the hills and back to the lovely home Sami's Nani built. But if Sami

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artists—from Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw to Homi Bhabha, Zubin Mehta to Freddie Mercury, Homai Vyarawalla to Jehangir Sabavala? And the name that outstrips them all in our anxious pandemic-afflicted age, Adar Poonawalla, of the flamboyant family that is the world's largest vaccine producer, is also a Parsi.

Like an anthropologist decoding the rituals of a vanishing tribe, columnist Coomi Kapoor excavates their intricate ties of kinship, unflagging zeal in making money (and donating large sums to charity and institutions) and a dottiness that has earned them the affectionate sobriquet of “*bawas*”.

Born a Parsi, Kapoor's own family history is conflict-ridden: descended from a line of hereditary high priests, her mother was only the third female not to marry a blood relation; when she died, her grandchildren were kept out from the fire temple's inner sanctum for prayers. “I accepted unquestioningly that once I had married out, I had become a ‘*parjat*’, an outcaste,” she writes. The rift between conservatives and reformers has led Smita Godrej Crishna, a scion of the industrial family, who not long ago paid Rs 372 crore for Homi Bhabha's Malabar Hill mansion, to establish an Association of Inter-Married Zoroastrians.

How did the Parsis become so rich? In her compelling profiles of the 19th century rise of great Parsi

dynasties, Kapoor lists three virtues: a brilliant head for new ideas and accounting, personal frugality, and an eye on the main chance. “People sometimes ask if the word ‘parsimonious’ is derived from Parsi—it is not,” she observes wryly. There is unerring truth in the flip remark by Adi Cowasji Jehangir (of the Readymoney family) that “except for Dadabhoy Naroroji, all you Parsis are lackeys of the British”.

Many Parsi fortunes indeed stemmed from the China trade, shipping Indian opium and cotton in return for tea, silks and porcelain.

Despite their shop front of close-knit cohesion, Parsis are a litigious lot, taking their battles for control of business empires to great lengths. Kapoor brings fresh insights to the well-told tale of Cyrus Mistry's summary sacking by Ratan Tata as Tata Sons chairperson in 2016. With her access to the dramatis personae, she unmasks a story of simmering insecurity and family antagonisms. Her account would have benefitted from some genealogical charts. For the outsider, the “dizzying familial ties”—a parade of Navals, Jamsheds, Soonis and Syllas—is utterly baffling.

For colour, drama, endurance and originality, this tiny, endogamous community is—like the much-loved Parsi charity—truly a Time & Talents Club. ■

—Sunil Sethi

In her book, Coomi Kapoor examines the Parsis' intricate ties of kinship and their unflagging zeal in making money



didn't “fit in” in the big city, what chance does she have in a small town? The tightly-knit community she encounters there however isn't quite what she imagined, and something shifts once she settles into her cool new school and finds herself an even cooler bunch of friends. Lots of cricket, a hot new crush and a room with a view—things begin to look up... till Sami's life begins to unravel again.

Coming of age stories follow a familiar story arc that can quickly fizzle out if they don't offer a fresh, new lens. While Dhar does employ a similar template, she does well to inject it

with important, progressive ideas about identity and freedom, friendship and family and what it is like to be young and pushing back against norms in modern India. Complex themes and tricky situations are crafted with a deft touch, charming humour piercing through the tense moments. The book's instantly relatable cast of characters, compulsively engaging tone and warm heart will keep you turning the pages and rooting for Sami. *It Has No Name* may be a YA (young adult) novel, but really, it's for everyone. ■

—Neha Bhatt



IT HAS NO NAME
by Payal Dhar
RED PANDA
₹399; 343 pages

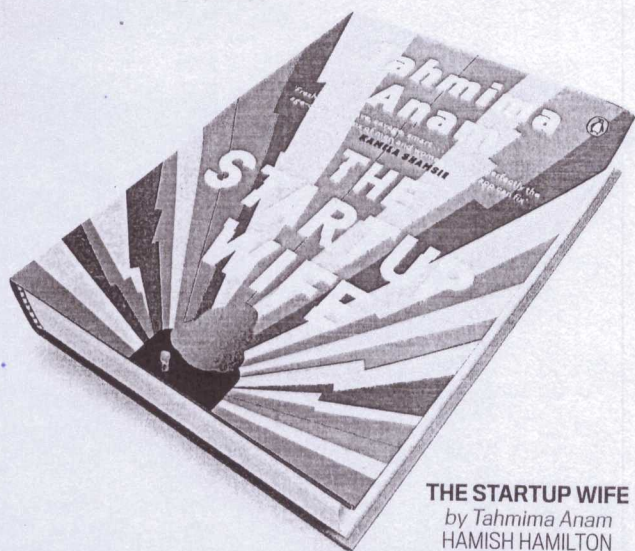


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TOO CLEVER BY HALF



From start-up culture to feminism, Tahmima Anam's novel draws the right boxes. The only trouble is that it forgets to fill them in



THE STARTUP WIFE
by Tahmima Anam
HAMISH HAMILTON
₹599; 304 pages

Three New Yorkers who have always felt like outsiders—Asha, the immigrant; Jules, the poor little rich boy; and Cyrus, the unemployed hippie spirit guide—end up becoming the founders of a million-dollar start-up. Asha is the coder and Jules is the business head, but it's Cyrus with his enviable hair and smug memory for obscure religious rites who becomes the star and, later, the villain, of the start-up WAI (pronounced "why", short for We are Infinite), an app that "anticipates people's need for meaning and ritual". Yup.

Tahmima Anam creates a fun parody of today's tech startup culture in *The Startup Wife*, complete with exposed brick walls, an aversion for vowels (the characters eat at restaurants called "Pikl" and "Mylkist"), and "vegan superfoods" like "coffee hemp mylkshakes with extra CBD shots"—the clever

hits just keep coming. How lovely then would it have been if the book had also made any kind of meaningful contribution to the conversation on consent, feminism, women in male-dominated professions and any of the other broad spectrum of complex issues it tries to cover. Unfortunately, it does little else apart from reaffirming what the reader likely already knows—that technology cannot save the world and that men will sometimes let you down.

Worse still, Anam applies the same broad strokes to her characters, who seem like cardboard cut-outs standing in for genuinely interesting and complex people. We never get to know Asha, this cool-headed nerdy programmer better, nor do we get to understand how the artistic, sensitive and utterly obnoxious Cyrus became who he is. Likewise, the extended cast of young founders, whose entire personalities can be summed up in single adjectives, lack nuance—the militant vegan, the female founder, the serious coder, the fatherly CFO.

What irks most of all is that Anam seems to present no clear point of view on any of the issues she tackles. Yes, women play as much of a role in diminishing

themselves as men do; yes, all the organic superfoods in the world can't protect against climate change; yes, men have fragile egos; and, yes, the startup world is starting to seem very much like a cartoon of itself. These seem to be the only messages, scrawled in crayon with no shadow or depth. Opinion can come disguised as parody and humour can make you think and feel; sadly, *The Startup Wife* does not even try to be more.

It is entertaining and I breezed through it over a lazy weekend. But once it was done, I forgot all about it. ■

—Tanushri Shukla

TAHMIMA ANAM
creates a fun parody of today's tech startup culture in *The Startup Wife*

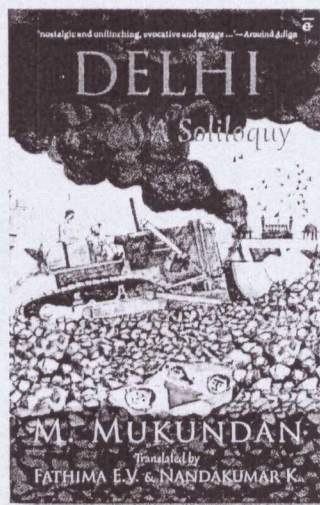
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An elegy for innocence

A nonchalant depiction of the personal tragedies of people as they unfold in Delhi during the war years in the 1960s and 1970s, the Emergency and the anti-Sikh riots. BY A. J. THOMAS

THIS is a heart-rending and, at the same time, heart-warming novel by M. Mukundan, one of the pioneers of modernist Malayalam fiction. Mukundan has 17 full-length novels, 13 short story collections and a couple of screenplays to his credit. The novel's entire action takes place in Delhi, a city where the author spent more than four decades of his life, and so it is essentially autobiographical in nature. For the most part, the author's firsthand experiences and narrations from secondary and tertiary sources, coupled with his creative imagination, constitute the novel.

The literal translation of *Delhi Gaathakal* would be "Sagas of Delhi", and it is appropriate because the novel is the result of the deft weaving of the lives of its main characters as they unfold in Delhi. *Delhi: A Soliloquy*, the title of the translated work, is equally valid because Sahadevan, the protagonist, is in the habit of talking to himself in his mind about everything that happens in



his life—he is a novelist who keeps writing about his life in Delhi. He is also the main narrator of the novel, which however is presented mostly in third-person narrative situations.

The main action takes place between the time Sahadevan arrives in Delhi, in 1959, and when Safdar Hashmi is murdered by his political opponents, on January 2, 1989, while he was staging his play, *Halla Bol*, near Ghaziabad. However, another character, Janakikutty, is shown at the

end of the novel, as photographed alongside Irom Sharmila, the activist from Manipur who had been on a hunger strike from 2000 to 2016. Therefore, the time span of the novel could be conjectured to be half a century.

I have lived in Delhi for more than two decades, from the late 1990s until recently, and the locales of most of the actions are close to my heart, having lived at least at a couple of those places—Andrews Ganj, Malviya Nagar and Inderpuri opposite Pusa Institute campus. I have

passed through Kotla Mubarakpur, Jungpura, Moolchand, Lajpat Nagar, Lodhi Colony, Jor Bagh, Karbala, Connaught Place... hundreds of times. I have worked for nearly two decades in the Rabindra Bhavan building, at the Sahitya Akademi, on Mandi House roundabout near India Gate, and frequented the India International Centre in Lodhi Estate, the Press Club of India on Raisina Road, and the INS Building on Rafi Marg, on countless occasions. All this makes the novel "my own".

The novel unfolds with Sreedharanunni dying of a heart attack on hearing the news of the India-China war that broke out on October 21, 1962. He is survived by his 33-year-old wife Devi and two children, 13-year-old Sathyanathan and five-year-old Vidya. Sahadevan is the mainstay for the bereaved family. So are the journalist Kunhikrishnan and his wife Lalitha. As Sahadevan moves in to share accommodation with Uttam Singh's family, paying a rent, Uttam Singh's wife, Gunjan Kaur, and daughters Jaswinder and little Pinky, gradually become his extended family members. Into this close family circle is admitted the angelic dreamer-artist Nemandha Vasava Panicker, known as Vasu.

The 1962 war, the 1965 and 1971 India-Pakistan wars, and the Emergency declaration in 1975, and their aftermath are depicted in all their possible horrors. The inhuman treatment of lower caste

Delhi

A Soliloquy

(Translation of M. Mukundan's Malayalam novel *Delhi Gaathakal*)

By Fathima E.V. & Nandakumar K.

Eka, an Imprint of Amazon Westland, 2020

Pages: 538

Price: Rs.799

(paperback)

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people by Brahmins and other higher castes, the violence against Muslims by the average ignorant but empowered Hindu fanatics, and the region-blind, who brand every south Indian a "Madrasian", all these are depicted in strong shades of black. Deep Black is the depiction of the inept, corrupt, and apathetic police force throughout, whose excesses during wartime and the Emergency are portrayed vividly. Delhi and its unalloyed crime, which Mukundan has portrayed in his short stories, "Delhi-1981" and "Delhi's Criminals Turn Sadists", come alive in the reader's consciousness.

The novel's main treatment is of Delhi with its teeming poor, destitute, starving, squalor-ridden population. The occasional glitter and glamour displayed is not as a mainstream characteristic but as a counterpoint and contrast to the inhumanity of hunger and deprivation.

Anyone who has read Mukundan's early masterpiece, *Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil* (On the Banks of the Mayyazhi), would be struck by the author's unblinking, nonchalant depiction of the eventual loss of innocence of the main characters, in which their personal tragedies are raised to epic dimensions, as each of them exercises his or her own existential choices. We can see the same Mukundan in action towards the end of the novel—the seemingly 'heartless' narrator who lets his characters face their tragedies without so much as altering their course to something optimistic, except maybe in

the case of a couple of them.

For example, Pinky, who lost her family members in the 1984 massacre of Sikhs. Sahadevan rescues her and hands her over to her grand-uncle's family in Gurdaspur. Or Rosily, the Nasrani girl Rosakkutty, with innocence showing in her eyes, who is tricked by a neighbour into being a call girl. Hailing from Kerala's high ranges, she spends the prime years of her youth in Delhi to raise enough dowry to marry Jomon, her childhood sweetheart. Finally, she wrestles to get back to being her original self, returns to Kerala, marries Jomon and lives happily ever after, apparently (if the long sigh at the end of her long telephone conversation with Sahadevan does not point in another direction).

Or, in a perverse sense, Sathyanathan, who grew up in dire poverty, unconsciously ridding himself of the memories of the tragedies of all the members of his family and becoming successful in life, taking up a job on Wall Street in New York. Or Lalitha, who dotes on her Kunhikrishnan, but he dies of the torture he is subjected to during the Emergency. Lalitha then displays true grit in educating herself and getting to the top of a publishing company. These are the protagonists with different types of halos around them.

Of course, grey characters are also grand success stories. There is Georgekutty, Rosily's pimp who goes on to become a factory owner with businesses all over the world and employing more

than 500 people, and also Gulshan Wadhwa, Sahadevan's employer who becomes a multi-billionaire through black money dealings but continues to maintain cordial relations with Sahadevan. Only these are the tales of redemption. All else die, perish or disappear, having been preys of casteism, communalism, circumstances, and history.

Sahadevan is the utterly innocent, selfless Mishkin-like soul who forgets his own life and loves and cherishes everyone else and lives on to tell their tales. He completes *Delhi Gaathakal* and hands over the manuscript to the author M. Mukundan. Mukundan publishes it in his own name, in deference to Sahadevan's seemingly last wish (a bit of theatre of alienation put in here, in the form of an Afterword).

FEMALE CHARACTERS

Mukundan's female characters are noted for their resilience, perseverance, personal integrity and fortitude, except in the case of Vidya, the tragic heroine of an ill-fated love story in which caste plays the villain. The most stoic and self-sacrificing is her mother, Devi, the wife of Sreedharanunni, the communist union leader and Central Secretariat employee who dies of heart-break as his idol Zhou Enlai, the Chinese Premier, breaks his 'Hindi-Cheeni Bhai Bhai' promise and attacks India.

Devi, widowed at 33, is recruited as a Class-IV employee under the death-in-harness scheme. She leads the straight and narrow life, always on the brink of

penury, yet upholding her dignity, bringing up Sathyanathan and Vidya (the Thiyya girl who grows up without being aware of her caste), all of whom wear threadbare clothes and worn-out footwear. Vidya's disappearance (obvious murder by henchmen of her Brahmin lover's father, the relative of the head priest of the Mathura Sreekrishna temple, a secret readers are privy to through a stage-whisper tactic in the narration—"She saw a humongous figure clad in a white dhoti moving towards her. That was the last thing she saw.") haunts the reader through the rest of the novel.

Sathyanathan, who grows up into a fine young man, intelligent enough to secure admission in the prestigious St. Stephen's College in open quota, gets a job as a journalist in *The Economic Times* and offers to support the mother in running the family. He becomes the comrade and partner of Janakikkutty, the bright daughter of the far-left leader Kunhikannan *mash* (master), who is tortured and murdered during the Emergency. Eventually, he lets down his mother when he refuses to marry Janakikkutty, but prefers to live-in with her, with Devi living in the same house. This leads to the mother's final rejection of all that she lived for over the last 27 years of her life, and she returns to Kerala, to "the breeze of Vrischikam and mango blossom".

Lalitha insists on bearing Kunhikrishnan's child despite discovering that he has low sperm count. She even goes to the fake Ro-

htak Baba's asl vine blessings an offering of ornaments to h ally, she realise of it all and li drawn life. Ye severes until s her life after he death, become ful publishing p and adopts a c she names "Inc the harrowing of her husbar other loved o the Emergency

THE SURVIVAL EXPERT

Rosily is by fa spectacular s pert. She grew poverty in a fa grants in the hig Kerala and is r belief systems. S can never lie t because her fat her that Jesus v with anyone (This same fi either through apathy, handed Georgekutty offered to give l Delhi—and also rum and fift. Through all th after her enco each customer : bath with Detto ter, prays to Je: giveness and g Sacred Heart every Sunday morning servio she planned to li only for about until she had enough money dowry, but it str years owing to 1 circumstances s Emergency. She manages to re original identity akkutty, the Jomon, who lat

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htak Baba's ashram for divine blessings and makes an offering of all her gold ornaments to him. Eventually, she realises the futility of it all and lives a withdrawn life. Yet, she perseveres until she rebuilds her life after her husband's death, becomes a successful publishing professional and adopts a child, whom she names "Indira" despite the harrowing experiences of her husband and her other loved ones during the Emergency.

THE SURVIVAL EXPERT

Rosily is by far the most spectacular survival expert. She grew up in abject poverty in a family of migrants in the high ranges of Kerala and is naïve in her belief systems. She says she can never lie to a person because her father taught her that Jesus will be cross with anyone who lies. (This same father had, either through naivete or apathy, handed her over to Georgekutty when he offered to give her a job in Delhi—and also a bottle of rum and fifty rupees.) Through all those years, after her encounter with each customer she takes a bath with Dettol-laced water, prays to Jesus for forgiveness and goes to the Sacred Heart Cathedral every Sunday for the morning service. Initially, she planned to live in Delhi only for about five years, until she had collected enough money for her dowry, but it stretches to 15 years owing to unforeseen circumstances such as the Emergency. She eventually manages to reclaim her original identity as Rosakkutty, the bride of Jomon, who later goes to

Dubai, taking up a job, and takes her and their daughter Elsy there on vacation.

Pinky dreams of becoming a hockey player and securing admission for medicine in the sports quota. She wants to raise enough dowry for herself, bringing dignity to her father, unlike her sister Jaswinder. The latter had to seduce her would-be husband Joginder, bringing shame upon her family and triggering constant fear in her father about her possible mistreatment or even dowry-death at the hands of her in-laws. Pinky is a breath of fresh air in the overall tragic atmosphere of the main narrative. In fact, Vidya and Pinky are the little princesses Sahadevan cherishes, after whose initials he names his firm as "V.P. Agencies". The firm, located at Turkman Gate, gets razed during the infamous "Turkman Gate Demolition Incident".

Sathyanathan, who appears to be Devi's solace and succour initially, reveals himself to be the lurking self-seeker and latter-day pragmatist who parts ways with Janakikutty, finding the JNU-educated and London PhD holder too austere and idealist for his taste, and migrates to the United States upon getting a plum job on Wall Street.

Vasu is the son of a retired District Collector, who leaves his family to pursue his art and see the world. He lives in his parallel world and is lost in himself, unaware of even his surroundings. He rejects the notion of possessions and is only mindful of his constant hunger, which he suffers silently

most of the time. He too gets killed during the 1984 riots. This Camusian tragic character was the closest friend of Rosily. (Incidentally, although Rosily is friends with Sathyanathan well into the prime of his youth, until Devi disapproved of his association with her as "inappropriate company", and also with Sahadevan, their relationship never turns sexual. They remain good friends, along with others, of whom Rosily makes fond enquiries during her long telephone conversation with Sahadevan.)

Sahadevan loves all these women as his sisters, equalling them to his own sisters Vanaja and Shyamala back home, striving to support them emotionally, morally and even financially. (He fails to raise enough money for Vanaja's wedding in spite of his constant efforts from 1959, as he has to support the family by sending the major part of his monthly earnings home. When Vanaja is in her thirties, she despairs that it will be too late for her to bear children and chooses a husband for herself—a widower Muslim schoolteacher, Abdul Abdunnisar, who is a good and upright man. She has two children with him—Saiful Islam and Radha, presenting an ideal inter-community marriage. It is Abdunnisar who helps find another idealist schoolteacher, Balaraman *mash*, as husband for Shyamala. Sahadevan also aspires to support the poor carpenter Uttam Singh; Vasu; the impecunious Malayali barber Dasappan; and others who come into his sphere of affection. In the

process, Sahadevan forgets to live for himself, does not acquire anything, remains single, and totters into his sickly old age.

The soliloquy could well be that of a desperate mother hen who strives to protect her brood against all odds and exits when there is nothing more to be done. Yes, Devi is the most engaging character of the novel. Her innocence and resolute virtue, sacrificing her youth at the age of 33, until she is ravaged by untimely old age at 60 through all her trials and travails, form the canvas on which the vast picture of this novel is painted.

To my mind, this is Mukundan's most consummate, big-canvas novel, although I do take into account the other Delhi-based novel, *Adithyanum Radhayum, Mattu Chilarum* (Adithyan, Radha and Some Others), his first novel *Delhi*, the two Mahe-based novels *Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil*, *Daiyathinte Vikritikal* (God's Mischief), and, of course, his enigmatic political novel *Keshavante Vilapangal* (Keshavan's Lamentations, the Crossword Award winner, which I translated).

The unwavering skill and care with which the translators Fathima E.V. and Nandakumar K. executed the English version is commendable. A joint venture like this can pose real challenges, but in this case the excellent outcome upholds the efforts. Worthy of special mention is the attention bestowed on leaving traces of the original in peculiar linguistic and cultural terms and usages. □

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Many-feathered world of fiction

A clutch of variegated, life-affirming stories to read and revisit as we emerge from an age of forced social isolation. BY ABHIRAMI GIRIJA SRIRAM

A “GOURMET” crow that refuses to eat leftovers arrives daily at the kitchen window just as “Sangeet Sarita” begins to play on All India Radio. A proudly atheist Bharatanatyam doyenne squares her books and papers in preparation for her impending end. A man takes a dip in a pond only to find out, quite literally, what it is like to be a woman in the 21st century. A cyborg turns soulmate in an age where communication does not always mean connection. These are but a few of the denizens of Tamil writer Ambai’s many-feathered world of fiction.

C.S. Lakshmi, founder trustee and director of Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women (SPARROW), Mumbai who writes fiction (or as the book blurb brackets it, “love, relationships, quests and journeys”) in Tamil under the pseudonym Ambai, has had the unique distinction of all her short stories being translated into English over the past two decades. Introducing “A red-necked green bird”, her most recent book of fiction in translation, she



A Red-necked Green Bird

By Ambai
Translated from Tamil by GJV Prasad

Simon & Schuster, 2021

Pages: 200
Price: Rs.399

likens her stories to windows through which “the world displays itself in small fragments or large scenes in various ways at many times” to her.

FICTION AS WINDOW

“I have seen the world through so many windows...” she muses. “...bus windows, train windows, the world that spreads out outside plane windows... the stained glass windows in churches... the windows in small and big temples, in various geometrical shapes, that cause the sunlight to fall on the ground in the same shapes.... That world continues to fall on my mind like sunlight in geometric shapes falling

story *is* in its details.

With thumbnail sketches, elaborate backstories and detail upon impressionistic detail, Ambai conjures up whole immersive worlds within each story. The city of Mumbai is a living, breathing presence, a character almost, in as many as nine of these stories.

In “A crow with a swollen throat”, we follow an elder’s slow inexorable descent into dementia and the everyday struggle of his caregiving daughter. In “The city that rises from ashes”, we watch Girangaon, the village of textile mills metamorphose into a shiny maze of skyscrapers, wiping out lives, livelihoods and much else. (Here Ambai invokes the *Mahabharata* as a coda, reminding us of the razing by fire of the Khandava forest—tribes, trees, birds, beasts and all—to build the new city of Indraprastha.)

In the title story “The red-necked green bird”, we understand that language does not need sound—indeed, that a hearing aid can be less an aid and more an assault on the senses for the hearing impaired. In “1984”, we partake of the horrors of a pogrom recounted by survivors who cannot forget and will not forgive.

MANY SHADES OF LOVE

So many of these stories centre around death and the inescapable loneliness of all urban lives, but just as insistently point to the abiding human need for connection. After the deaths of their spouses,

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both Kamala in "Falling" and Shanti in "Swayamvars with no bows broken" look back on the long years of love and companionship that buoyed them through sickness and health. Both go on to take their lives in their own hands, but in very different ways.

In "Journey 21", we are told of Kamamma's and Rajappa's enduring love for each other, reflected in "ungendered" endearments (she calls him "athu", "it"). In "The red-necked green bird", Mythili decides to let go of Vasanthan, her husband of many years, without rancour, but not before a long desperate effort where she is not sure if she is searching for him or hunting him down.

The most memorable metaphor of love for this reader, though, was found in "The Lion's Tail". When Madhura asks her grandmother what the word "love" means to her, Paatti muses: "It was a small child who walked holding my hand. Would throw tantrums. Would pee on me. Shit. Get beaten. Hug me tight. But it would never let go of my hand."

It is not only these minutely observed moments of intimacy, but also the little gestures of camaraderie that Ambai slips in, such as the sharing of a street-side sandwich with a stranger, or a vegetable vendor ordering an extra cup of cardamom tea for a regular customer, or the face of an Indian nun lighting up when she hears a conversation in Kannada in faraway Finland, that were oddly comforting to read in these times of social distancing.

Food and music seem



R. SHIVAJI RAO

C.S. LAKSHMI, who writes fiction in Tamil under the pseudonym Ambai.

not so much leitmotifs as the very life-blood of Ambai's fiction. The pages abound with sumptuous descriptions of meals and cooking, while more than one story celebrates in fine, granular detail the everyday ritual of brewing chai.

In an interview to *The Hindu*, Ambai once admitted: "Music has been coursing through my life like a perennial river and I relate almost everything including stories to music

and the way it is rendered." Music is certainly more than organic to these stories. Verses from the *Thiruvvasagam*, *Kamba Ramayanam* and *Silappadikaram*, Purandaradasa's *devarnamas*, lyrics of the Mumbaichi lavani, snatches of Hindi film songs, the blazing verses of Bharathiyar and Bahinabai and Bulleh Shah, John Lennon's "Nowhere man"—Ambai embeds them with a flourish, like a signature, at the heart of

each narrative.

Confessing that the experience of having her stories translated into English has been both difficult and exhilarating, Ambai turns to gardening for a root metaphor: "[Translation] is like taking a seed from one soil and planting it in another soil." She adds: "The only way to do it is not to change the quality of the seed but to prepare the soil that receives the seed to soften enough to let the seed take root. It is a process in which the author and translator are both involved. It takes time and patience but what comes out of it is always a surprise and a joy, like finding the first shoot in a plant one had given up for dead."

It is a triumph of GJV Prasad's translation that his text reflects the terse, incremental quality of Ambai's Tamil. There is much to admire in the way he has negotiated the minefield of an exchange on the etymology of a cyborg in "The Lion's Tail", by simply presenting the Tamil phrases cheek by jowl with their English translations. Prasad also seems to have taken particular care to retain the bits of Kannada, Gujarati, Marathi and Hindi that pepper the dialogues in many of the stories and give it their unmistakable Mumbai flavour.

Here are variegated, life-affirming stories to return to in this age of forced social isolation. Thanks to Prasad, and perhaps not unlike the narrator of "The Pond", this reader emerged from Ambai's world refreshed, and at least momentarily transformed. □

So many of Ambai's stories centre around death and the inescapable loneliness of all urban lives, but just as insistently point to the abiding human need for connection.

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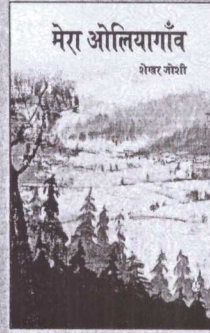
पल्लव

कथेतर का आकर्षण हिंदी लेखकों को उन क्षेत्रों में जाने के लिए प्रेरित कर रहा है जिनमें पहले रुचि नहीं ली जाती थी. आत्मकथा ऐसा ही इलाका है. माना जाता था कि आत्मकथा लिखना प्रसिद्ध और बड़े लोगों का काम है, भला साधारण लोगों के जीवन में पाठकों की क्या दिलचस्पी होगी? यह धारणा कथेतर लेखन के नए दौर में टूट रही है और आत्मकथा सरीखी विधा में निरंतर नई कृतियों का आगमन यथार्थ के अनदेखे-अनजाने इलाकों में पाठकों की गहरी रुचि से ही संभव हो रहा है. इधर आई तीन आत्मकथात्मक कृतियां मेरा ओलियागांव, जकरिया स्ट्रीट से मेफेयर रोड तक और क्या कहूं आज कथेतर लेखन में निजी आख्यान के मार्फत यथार्थ के सर्वथा भिन्न प्रदेशों की अंतर्यात्रा का अवसर देती हैं.

कोसी का घटवार जैसी अमर प्रेम कहानी के लिए समादृत शंखर जोशी ने जीवन के आठवें दशक में अपने बचपन के दिनों और जगहों को याद किया है. मेरा ओलियागांव उनकी आत्मकथा नहीं किंतु यहां उनके बचपन का लंबा समय मौजूद है जिसमें औपनिवेशिक दौर के पहाड़ी समाज के चित्र और उनका अपना जीवन संघर्ष है. जोशी अट्टाइस अध्यायों में विभक्त इस कृति में अपने बचपन के दोस्तों, घर-परिवार, रीति-रिवाज, खेती-बाड़ी, पशु-पक्षी और गांव के जीवन की पुनर्चना करते हैं. अपनी प्रकृति में यह पुस्तक अक्सर संस्मरणों के निकट जान पड़ती है लेकिन

लेखक के लिए मुख्य चिंता रूप की नहीं है. किताब के छोटे-छोटे अध्यायों में जोशी के बचपन और गांवों में अभावों के बावजूद जीवन की मस्ती के अनेक प्रसंग मिलते हैं. खास बात यही है कि व्यतीत के मोहक चित्रों में भी लेखक की दृष्टि द्वंद्वत्मक है. वे पंडितों के भोजन प्रेम का वृत्तांत सुनाते हैं तो वर्तमान दुर्दशा के तार्किक कारणों की खोज भी करते हैं. सामाजिक भेदभावों और जाति-वर्ण जनित अन्यायों की अनदेखी यहां नहीं है. एक जगह उन्होंने लिखा है, "हाथ की कारीगरी को अच्छूत कर्म मानने का नतीजा यह हुआ कि परिवार के सदस्यों की संख्या बढ़ने पर जमीन के बंटवारे और दूसरे के श्रम पर निर्भरता के कारण सवर्ण लोग गरीबी की ओर बढ़ते गए और नौकरी की तलाश में गांवों से विस्थापित होते गए." जिस भरे पूरे गांव-घर के चित्र से पुस्तक शुरू हुई है अंत में वह दृश्य नहीं है लेकिन जो है वह आशा का उजाला फैलाने वाला है.

आठवें-नवें दशक में स्त्री लेखन ने हिंदी में नई स्फुरणा पैदा की थी लेकिन देहवाद उसकी बड़ी सीमा बन गया और आत्मकथाओं की गुणवत्ता बोल्ड प्रसंगों से मापी जाने लगी. ऐसे में एक साधारण अध्यापिका की आत्मकथा सपाट लग सकती है क्योंकि यहां चौंकाने वाला कोई प्रसंग नहीं है. कोलकाता के मारवाड़ी समुदाय की रेणु गौरीसरिया की कृति जकरिया रोड से मेफेयर रोड तक एक साधारण महिला के जीवन संघर्ष का आख्यान है जिसमें गुलामी से निकलकर बन रहे हिंदुस्तान के समाज के प्रामाणिक



मेरा ओलियागांव
लेखक: शंखर जोशी
नवारुण प्रकाशन, गाजियाबाद
कीमत: 190 रु



जकरिया स्ट्रीट से मेफेयर रोड तक
लेखिका: रेणु गौरीसरिया
संभावना प्रकाशन, हापुड़
कीमत: 300 रु



क्या कहूं आज
लेखक: सत्यनारायण व्यास
कोटिल्य बक्स, नई दिल्ली
कीमत: 650 रु.

प्रसंगों के मध्य अपने व्यक्तित्व की तलाश भरोसा जगाने वाली है. यह उस स्त्री का आत्मलेखा है जो रुढ़िग्रस्त समुदाय और संपन्न परिवारों के मध्य रहकर भी अन्याय की शिकार होती है. इस अन्याय का प्रतिकार वे अपने व्यक्तित्व के निर्माण के साथ करती हैं और इस लंबी यात्रा में आए उतार-चढ़ाव कृति को पठनीय बनाते हैं.

क्या कहूं आज कवि और आलोचक सत्यनारायण व्यास की आत्मकथा है जिसमें एक साधारण व्यक्ति के अद्भुत जीवन संघर्ष का चित्र है. व्यास ने आजीविका के लिए कठोर परिश्रम और अनेक उपक्रम किये. ढह रहे घर और विपन्नता के मध्य जीवन संघर्ष के ये चित्र किसी दलित आत्मकथा के ताप सरीखे हैं. ब्राह्मण परिवार में जन्म लेकर भी भोजन और आजीविका के लिए कठोर संघर्ष भारतीय सामाजिक व्यवस्था में वर्ण बनाम वर्ण की पुरानी बहस की याद ताजा करता है.

व्यास की खूबी है कि अपने जीवन का चित्र तैयार करते हुए वे अन्याय और शोषण के किसी प्रसंग को ओझल नहीं होने देते. उनके पास राजस्थान के आदिवासियों की भयावह निर्धनता के वास्तविक दृश्य हैं तो अनेक साधारण लोगों के बड़े जीवनानुभव भी. पठनीयता में बेजोड़ इस कृति को विधा की उपलब्धि कहना अनुचित न होगा.

इन तीनों कृतियों को आत्म के सामाजिक विस्तार और कला में साधारण की उपस्थिति के दस्तावेज की तरह समझा जा सकता है. जोशी के बचपन की गाथा उनके आगामी जीवन के प्रति उत्सुक बनाती है, वहीं व्यास की आत्मकथा प्रवाही गद्य में जीवन संघर्ष का हार्दिक चित्र है. रेणु गौरीसरिया की कृति फिर याद दिलाती है कि हिंदी प्रकाशन में संपादक संस्था का अभाव साहित्य को क्या क्षति पहुंचा सकता है. ■

दृश्य हैं. मारवाड़ी वैश्य समुदाय की रेणु का जीवन उतार-चढ़ाव से भरा रहा जिसमें वैधव्य, पुनर्विवाह और फिर वैधव्य जैसे मार्मिक

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एक लेखक दो तरह के नाटक

संगम पांडेय

नाटककार जयवर्धन ने अपने नए नाटक 'एक और मीटिंग' को व्यंग्य-नाटक लिखा है, जबकि बेहतर होता इसे प्रहसनात्मक व्यंग्य लिखा जाता। इसमें नुक्कड़ नाटकों जैसी लाउडनेस है जिसमें पात्र दुनियादारी के शिष्टाचार का ज्यादा दिखावा नहीं करते। नेताजी यहां मीटिंग के मिनट्स पहले से ही लिखकर लाए हुए हैं और एक वरिष्ठ रंगकर्मी हैं जो सरकार की तरफ से प्रस्तावित चार करोड़ के नाटक को दो करोड़ में करने को तैयार हैं। उनके नाटक का नाम है 'साजन सीनियर सिटिजन, सजनी ट्वेंटी वन.' ऐसे में स्वागत-संबोधन जैसी औपचारिकता यहां खुद ही हास्य की एक तरकीब हो गई है, क्योंकि चपरासी भी यहां मीटिंग के बहाने पत्रकार मैडम से हाथ मिला लेने की अपनी मंशा सबको बता रहा है। इस तरह पात्रों का रवैया हकीकत पर चढ़ी झूठमूठ की कलाई भी उतार देता है और इससे जो सिचुएशन पैदा होती है उसमें हास्य उतना नहीं है, जितना चमत्कार है।

यह नाटक जयवर्धन के पिछले नाटक 'अर्जेंट मीटिंग' का एकस्टेंशन है, जिसमें संस्कृति की दुनिया में होने वाली बंदरबांट को उजागर किया गया है। मीटिंग का नायक एक सीनियर और बोहेमियन थिएटर डायरेक्टर नारंग है, जो झोले में दारू रखे हुए है और जो मन में आता है वह दोटूक बोलता है। उसकी एंटी नाटक में थोड़ी देर से लेकिन धमाकेदार है। उसका नायकत्व इतना जाहिर है कि किसी अर्थ में वही नाटक की कमजोरी बन गया

है। उसकी कही बातें इतनी स्पष्ट हैं कि सपाट हो गई हैं, जबकि व्यंग्य में वक्रता होनी जरूरी है। नाटक में ऐसी वक्रताएं जुगनुओं के रूप में हैं, जो रह-रह कर कौंधती हैं-जैसे कि मंत्री महोदय पृच्छते हैं, 'मैकबेथ निर्देशक का नाम है?' या नाटक 'साजन सीनियर

क्रिटिक आदि कई तरह के किरदार हैं। और इन किरदारों के बरक्स नेता है, जिसका इस गोरखधंधे को देखने का तरीका बिल्कुल अलग है। नाटककार ने इन सारे पहलुओं को नाटक में बुन दिया है। जाहिर है, आगे का काम नाटक निर्देशक का है कि वह इन पहलुओं और किरदारों को कितना रोचक और उपयोगी बना पाता है।

ज्यादातर कॉमिक फ्लेवर में लिखने वाले जयवर्धन का इसके अलावा एक सीरियस टंग से लिखा गया नाटक 'कालपुरुष' भी हाल में छपकर आया है, जो कि वीर सावरकर के जीवन पर

है।' लेकिन इस हत्याकांड की साजिश में अपना नाम आने से वे दुखी हैं, और कहते हैं-'क्या लोगों को नहीं पता कि इसकी पृष्ठभूमि में कौन है? कौन मेरे नाम और काम से भयभीत है?... लंदन में जब मैं घूम-घूमकर हिंदुस्तानी छात्रों को संगठित कर रहा था तो ये जनाब संगीत-नृत्य का आनंद उठा रहे थे। इनको इंडिया हाउस आने की मनाही थी।' जाहिर है, 'ये जनाब' यहां नेहरू के लिए कहा गया है। नाटक यूं तो काफी आसान तरह से लिखा गया है, पर इतना आसान भी नहीं कि उलझे प्रसंगों को उसमें छोड़ दिया गया हो। इसके लिए गोडसे-सावरकर संवाद का एक पूरा दृश्य नाटक में है। इसी तरह एक पूरा दृश्य गांधी-सावरकर संवाद का भी है, जिसमें दोनों के मतांतर के तीखेपन को नरम शैली में सामंजस्यपूर्ण बनाया गया है। लेकिन जहाज से भागने, मुकदमे और अंडमान की सेलुलर जेल के दृश्यों के विवरण निश्चय ही ज्यादा बारीकी से पिराए गए हैं।

इस नाटक को हम सावरकर के जीवन का एक मॉडरेट पाठ कह सकते हैं, जिसमें उनकी देशभक्ति तो पूरे तौर पर है पर उनके हिंदुत्ववादी विचार वास्तविक से कहीं ज्यादा संयमित रूप में दिखाई देते हैं। कुल मिलाकर सावरकर का वैचारिक पक्ष इसमें किंचित स्थूल रूप से ही आ पाया है, जिसकी एक वजह तो यह हो सकती है कि नाटककार ने विषय की गहराई से जुड़े जोखिम से बचने की कोशिश की है; और दूसरी यह कि आम दर्शक के लिहाज से आसान कलेवर लेखक को ठीक लगा हो। फिर भी, यह एक पात्र बहुल और दृश्यों की विविधता वाला नाटक है। कई जगह स्थितियों के ब्योरों को उद्घोष के जरिए समेटा गया है, जिससे किंचित डॉकु-ड्रामा का पुट भी है। ■



एक और मीटिंग जयवर्धन;
संजना बुक्स, डी 70/4, अंकुर
एन्वलेव, करावल नगर,
दिल्ली-90; 295 रुपए.



कालपुरुष जयवर्धन;
किताबघर प्रकाशन, 48
55-56/24 अंसारी रोड,
दरियागंज, नई दिल्ली-2

'एक और मीटिंग' नाटक जयवर्धन के पिछले नाटक 'अर्जेंट मीटिंग' का एकस्टेंशन है, जिसमें संस्कृति की दुनिया की बंदरबांट को उजागर किया गया है. 'काल पुरुष' में सावरकर का किंचित स्थूल रूप उभरता है

सिटिजन, सजनी ट्वेंटी वन' को प्रेरक मानक उसे सीनियर सिटिजन डे पर कराने का सुझाव देते हैं।

बाकी दुनियाओं की तरह कला-संस्कृति की दुनिया का भी एक अंदरूनी सच है, जहां झूठी महानताएं, जोड़-तोड़ से हासिल किए फायदे आदि तत्व काम करते हैं। जयवर्धन इस नाटक में उन्हें खटाक से तोड़ देने की कोशिश करते हैं। इस लिहाज से नाटक काफी डिटेलिंग में जाता है। उसमें अनुवादक, अभिनेता,

केंद्रित है। देशभक्ति से ओतप्रोत इस नाटक के 15 दृश्यों में उनका जीवनवृत्त पेश किया गया है। सावरकर की शुरुआती क्रांतिकारी गतिविधियों से शुरू होकर गांधी की हत्या के वक्त तक उनके जीवन से जुड़ी प्रमुख घटनाएं यहां एक सिलसिले में पेश आती हैं। गोडसे के बारे में सावरकर कहते हैं- 'गोडसे ने सिर्फ गांधी जी की शारीरिक हत्या नहीं की, बल्कि मेरी राजनीतिक-सामाजिक हत्या की

मोती भरा कमंडल

मोहम्मद वक्रास

गैंग्स ऑफ वासेपुर (2012) और नीरज पांडेय ने स्पेशल 26 (2013) में लिया.

अब बाजपेयी को पीछे दौड़ने की जरूरत नहीं रह गई है. उन्हें बस पक्का करना होता है कि अपने यकीन के मुताबिक पीछे दौड़ने वाले खासकर स्वतंत्र फिल्मकारों को पूरा वक्त और तवज्जो दें. बीते दशक में आखिर ये इंडी डायरेक्टर ही थे जिन्होंने उन्हें उनके करियर की पहचान बनाने वाले रोल दिए—हंसल मेहता के साथ अलीगढ़ (2015) और देवाशीष मखीजा के साथ थॉसले (2018). दोनों फिल्मों में सधी, सटीक और संवेदनशील अदाकारी के लिए उन्होंने एशिया पैसिफिक स्क्रीन अवार्ड हासिल किया.

बाजपेयी कहते यही हैं कि वे 'मुख्यधारा और स्वतंत्र सिनेमा में फर्क' नहीं करते, पर आने वाली फिल्मों से

स्वतंत्र सिनेमा के साथ उनका याराना जाहिर होता है. हाल में उन्होंने कन्नड़ फिल्म तिथि (2015) के लिए जाने जाने वाले राम रेड्डी, दिलचस्प फैमिली ड्रामा तितली (2014)

के निर्देशक कनु बहल की फिल्में पूरी कीं. सोनचिरैया (2019) और रे (2021) के बाद वे अभिषेक चौबे के साथ फिर काम कर रहे हैं. राज और डीके के अपने तयशुदा काम निपटा लें, तो बाजपेयी उनके साथ द फैमिली मैन का काम फिर शुरू करेंगे. वे एक और वेब सीरीज के आने का इशारा भी करते हैं. कहते हैं, "अच्छी बात यह है कि इन डायरेक्टरों से मेरी पटती है और वे मुझे समझते हैं."

लंबी छुट्टी के बाद, जिसमें कोविड-19 की पारी भी है, बाजपेयी को परवाह नहीं है कि ये फिल्में कहां और कैसे रिलीज होती हैं. वे कहते हैं, "अभिनेताओं से प्लेटफॉर्म या जॉनर के प्रति पूर्वाग्रह रखने की उम्मीद नहीं की जाती. उनकी दिलचस्पी बस अदाकारी में होनी चाहिए. यही मैं करता हूँ." बाजपेयी सरीखे कुछ ही हैं जो इतनी सहजता से किरदारों में जान डाल देते हैं. ■

अफगानिस्तान के शाह अब्दुर्रहमान 1885 में लुधियाना दरबार में आए. वहां 'इल्म के बादशाह' से मुलाकात के बाद उन्होंने कहा, "हिंदुस्तान में जो खुशी आपसे मिलकर हुई वो किसी से नहीं हुई." इसी तरह, 1888 में ईरान के बादशाह दो ही मकसद से आए: एक तो वायसराय से मिलना और दूसरा उस शख्स से मुलाकात करना जिसके प्रेस ने फारसी की इतनी किताबें छापी थीं, जितनी उस समय पूरे ईरान में नहीं छपी थीं. उस अजीमुशान शख्स का नाम था मुंशी नवल किशोर.

मथुरा के एक गांव में जन्मे नवल किशोर भार्गव उर्दू-फारसी के साथ ही अंग्रेजी के विद्वान थे. अपने करियर की शुरुआत लाहौर में कोहिनूर अखबार से की. फिर लखनऊ में नवल किशोर प्रेस की स्थापना की और अवध अखबार निकाला, प्रेस के लिए कागज की जरूरत महसूस हुई तो पेपर मिल खरीद लिया. 'हिंदू मौलवी और मुसलमान पंडित' नवल किशोर के कामकाज और वेश-भूषा देखकर अमेरिकी ईसाई धर्म प्रचारक बिशप जॉन प्लेचर हर्स्ट उन्हें 'कट्टर मुसलमान' मान बैठे थे.

राजकुमार केसवानी की जहान-ए-रुमी और दास्तान-ए-मुग़ल-ए-आज़म ने संभवतः आखिरी शाहकार कशकोल: सफ़ीना-ए-उर्दू के नाख़ुदाओं की दास्तानें में उर्दू अदब के 13 किरदारों की जिंदगी को बेहद दिलचस्प अंदाज में पेश किया है.

सबसे पहले, मिर्जा ग़ालिब की कहानी हज़रत निजामुद्दीन बस्ती में उनकी मजार से शुरू होती है. पूरी अक़ीदत के साथ लिखी गई मिर्जा के किरदार को बयान करने के लिए वे गुज़रे जमाने के मलिक राम जैसे ग़ालिब विशेषज्ञों को उद्धृत करते हैं. और उद्धृत करने का अंदाज देखिए: "सवाल मिर्जा ग़ालिब को 'नौशा मियां' कहकर मुझ्रातिब करने को लेकर है. यूं तो छोटा-सा और आसान जवाब दे सकता हूँ, लेकिन सोचता हूँ किसी और के जरिये यह बात कह दूँ, तो एक टिकट में दो मजे हो जाएंगे." वे अपने पसंदीदा शायर की तारीफ अपनी तरफ से नहीं करते. "ग़ालिब के परस्तरों में अकेले नेहरू ही नहीं थे. सियासी

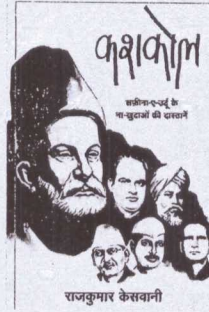
नजरिये से दो अलग-अलग ख़ेमों में खड़े लीडरान इस जगह एकमत रहे हैं." वे 1998 में ग़ालिब इंटरनेशनल सेमिनार में अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी के बयान को उद्धृत करते हैं: "अहद-ए-मुग़लिया ने हिंदुस्तान को तीन चीजें दी हैं—ताज महल, उर्दू ज़बान और ग़ालिब की शायरी." पूरे अध्याय में जगह-जगह उनकी शेर का इस्तेमाल ऐसे किया गया है, जैसे ग़ालिब के दीवाने केसवानी को दीवान-ए-ग़ालिब पूरी तरह याद हो.

हिंदुस्तानी शेक्सपियर आग़ा हश्र कश्मीरी का अध्याय बीसवीं सदी की मशहूर अदाकारा-गायिका और आग़ा हश्र की बीवी के बयान से शुरू होता है: "नौजवान तुमसे पूछने आया करेंगे, हमें बताओ, आग़ा हश्र कौन था? वह किस अंदाज में बैठकर लिखा करता था. उसके गुफ्तगू करने का ढंग क्या था? वह किस तरह

का लिबास पहनता था? वह किरदार कैसे तरतीब देता था? हमें बताओ कि आग़ा हश्र को तुमने किस-किस रंग में देखा है?" यहूदी की लड़की, रुस्तम सोहराब, बिल्वा मंगल आदि जैसे कालजयी नाटक लिखने वाले आग़ा हश्र के बारे में केसवानी इन सारे सवालों का जवाब पूरी तफ़्सील के साथ देते हैं. बयान की बानगी देखिए: "नमाज़ पढ़ते उन्हें कभी किसी ने देखा नहीं और रोज़ा रखने की फुरसत कभी मिली नहीं... वो खड़े-खड़े ऐसी ग़ालियां ईजाद कर लेते थे कि पहली बार सुनने वाले के होश फ़ाख़्ता हो जाते...

दीन-ओ-मजहब की हिदायतों से इस क़दर फ़ासले पर रहने वाले आग़ा हश्र के किरदार का यह भी एक अनोखा रंग था कि वक्त आने पर वे अपने मजहब के हक़ में सीना तानकर खड़े हो जाते."

केसवानी ने शीर्षक के चयन से लेकर इस किताब के लेखन में मन की मानी. वे बताते हैं, "प्रचलित भाषा में कशकोल नहीं, कशकोल है. न जाने क्यों इस पर मन नहीं मानता. लिहाजा, चलन छोड़ मन की मानी." चलन छोड़ने का नतीजा यह निकला कि एक-एक अदीब की दास्तान कशकोल में मोती की तरह हैं. पाठक तस्दीक कर सकते हैं कि दिल से जो बात निकलती है, असर रखती है. ■



कशकोल: सफ़ीना-ए-उर्दू के नाख़ुदाओं की दास्तानें
लेखक: राजकुमार केसवानी
मंजुल पब्लिशिंग हाउस
कीमत: 350 रुपए
पन्ने: 293

मनोज बाजपेयी कहते हैं कि द फैमिली मैन की बदौलत वे प्रोजेक्ट चुनने का मौका हासिल कर पाए

स्थापना मौलिक अवधारणाओं की

विजय पंडित

कहानी के रंगमंच के प्रणेता देवेन्द्रराज अंकुर की किताब *रंगमंच की कहानी* रंगमंच के उद्भव से लेकर आधुनिक रंगमंच तक की यात्रा का एक विस्तृत कथा-वृत्तान्त है। अभी तक इस विषय को लेकर रंगकर्मीयों, नाटककारों और शोधार्थियों को अंग्रेजी की किताबों पर ही आश्रित रहना पड़ता था। इतना ही नहीं देश के विभिन्न नाट्य संस्थानों में भी सिद्धांत, तकनीक और इतिहास के लिए बाहर की ही किताबें पढाई जाती रही हैं। यह किताब उस खालीपन को भरती है। विश्व के रंगमंच की कथा को अंकुर ने काफी श्रम और शोध करके लिखा है।

इस किताब में वे 'प्रागैतिहास का रंगमंच' के 'आदिम रंगमंच' से होते हुए पूर्व का रंगमंच, पश्चिम का रंगमंच और नेपथ्य की कहानी कहते हैं, जिसमें अभिनय, प्रेक्षागृह, मंच अभिकल्पक और दृश्यांकन से लेकर निर्देशन तक की यात्रा है। चार विशद भागों में विभक्त इस किताब में कुल उन्नीस शीर्षक हैं और हर शीर्षक नितांत तार्किक है। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि वे पाश्चात्य थिएटर की अवधारणाओं से कतई प्रभावित नहीं होते। इन सभी कहानियों में उन की अपनी अवधारणा है। विशेषकर जहां उन्हें लगता है कि भारतीय रंगमंच या इसके किसी भी पक्ष को विदेशी लेखकों और शोधकर्ताओं ने संज्ञान नहीं लिया है, वहां वे तर्कपूर्ण ढंग से अपनी बात रखते हैं।

पूर्व के रंगमंच में चीनी और जापानी रंगमंच के दो अध्याय हैं, वहीं भारतीय रंगमंच के चार अध्याय—भारतीय शास्त्रीय

रंगमंच, लोक रंगमंच, पारसी रंगमंच और आधुनिक रंगमंच। इन सभी शीर्षकों को मिलाकर भारतीय रंगमंच की यात्रा अपनी पूर्णता को प्राप्त करता है। वहीं 'पश्चिम का रंगमंच' में—ग्रीक, रोमन, मध्यकालीन रंगमंच, रिनेंसं कालीन (इतालवी), एलिजाबेथ कालीन, स्तानिस्लाव्स्की, ब्रेख्त और एब्सर्ड का रंगमंच है। एब्सर्डिटी या विसंगति के नाटकों



रंगमंच की कहानी
लेखक: देवेन्द्र राज अंकुर
वाणी प्रकाशन,
दरियागांज, नयी दिल्ली
कीमत: 695 रुपए

अंकुर पाश्चात्य थिएटर की अवधारणाओं से कतई प्रभावित नहीं होते। जहां उन्हें लगता है कि भारतीय रंगमंच या उसके किसी पक्ष का विदेशी लेखकों ने संज्ञान नहीं लिया है, वहां वे तर्कपूर्ण ढंग से अपनी बात रखते हैं

का विश्लेषण करते हुए वे स्पष्ट कहते हैं कि हमारे यहां विसंगति फैशन के तौर पर आई। युद्ध की विभीषिका से हम सीधे प्रभावित नहीं थे, इसलिए हमारे नाटकों का कथ्य प्रभावशाली नहीं रहा। केवल हम फॉर्म अपना पाए और इस तरह से जैसे ही वह नाटक आया, वैसे ही चला भी गया। इस संदर्भ में वे बादल सरकार के 'तीसरा रंगमंच' का उदाहरण देते हैं कि किस तरह समय के साथ उसे लोग भूलते गए, भुवनेश्वर हिंदी एब्सर्ड नाटक के जन्मदाता या प्रथम प्रयोगकर्ता थे, इस धारणा को भी वे सिरे से नकारते हैं।

कोई भी नाटक कैसे प्रासंगिक रहता है, उसके लिए वे ब्रेख्त का उदाहरण देते हैं। वहीं ब्रेख्त और प्रोतोव्स्की को आमने-सामने रख कर वे स्पष्ट करते हैं कि ब्रेख्त की एपिक थिएटर की अवधारणा को हम प्रायः महाकाव्यात्मक शैली से जोड़ देते हैं, जबकि ब्रेख्त की सोच है कि उनके दर्शक घटनाओं को विश्लेषित भी करें और परिवर्तनों को लेकर उतने ही सक्रिय हों। स्तानिस्लाव्स्की की चरित्रपरक प्रस्तुति और ब्रेख्त की प्रस्तुतिपरक प्रस्तुति की चर्चा करते हुए वे साफ कहते हैं कि यह कोई नवीन अवधारणा नहीं है। आज से ढाई हजार साल पहले भरत ने अपने नाट्यशास्त्र में लोकधर्मी और नाट्यधर्मी इन दो शीर्षकों के अंतर्गत दोनों पद्धतियों का संकेत कर दिया था। वे एलिजाबेथकालीन थिएटर के योगदान और ग्लोब थिएटर, शेक्सपियर तथा रेनेसां थिएटर के कारण नए रंगमंचीय तत्वों के प्रयोग से लेकर गॉर्डन फ्रैग, जॉर्ज बर्नाड शॉ, लॉरेन्स ओलिवर और पीटर ब्रूक तक की रंगयात्रा को भी विस्तार से लिखते हैं,

साथ ही मेयरहोल्ड, आर्तो और अगस्तोबोल के रंगमंच को भी उद्धृत करते हैं। अंत में वे अभिनय, प्रेक्षागृह, सेट डिजाइन और निर्देशन की कहानी भी बताते हैं। लेकिन महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि विश्व रंगमंच की इस कथा यात्रा में भारतीय रंगमंच के योगदान को वे बखूबी स्थापित करते हैं।

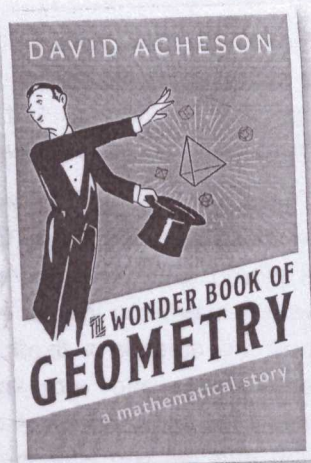
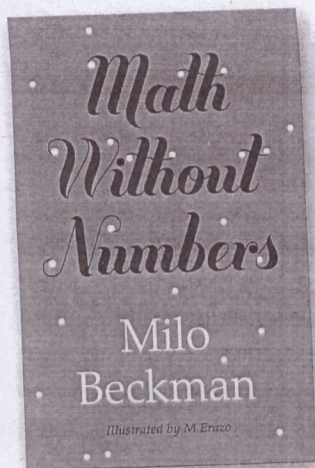
पुस्तक की भाषा में लालित्य है, केवल सूचना की भाषा नहीं है। हर अध्याय एक निबंध है, ललित निबंध। वहीं पर अंग्रेजी शब्दों का टर्मिनोलॉजी और नाम के लिए बखूबी प्रयोग किया गया है जो कि भाषायी रूप से समृद्ध करती है। इसमें चित्र की कोई आवश्यकता नहीं थी और इस बात को लेखक ने स्पष्ट भी किया है। लेखन ही अपने आप में इतना सक्षम है कि संबंधित कथा का विजुअल पाठकों के सामने ला सके।

रंगमंच की कहानी रंगकर्म से जुड़े लोगों के लिए तो जरूरी है ही, साथ ही साथ कहानी लेखकों के लिए भी जरूरी है क्योंकि हर कहानी में एक नाटक आवश्यक रूप से उपस्थित रहता है। हां, यह एक दो-दिन में पढ़ डाली जाने वाली किताब नहीं है। तीन सौ सोलह पृष्ठ की इस किताब को आत्मसात करने के लिए समय देना होगा, क्योंकि यह कहानी के साथ एक शोध प्रबंध भी है। इस किताब का अन्य भारतीय तथा विदेशी भाषाओं में भी अनुवाद अपेक्षित है, जिससे कि यह कहानी दूर-देश के लोग भी सुन-पढ़ सकें।

यह कहना अतिशयोक्ति न होगा कि देवेन्द्र राज अंकुर जितना 'कहानी का रंगमंच' के लिए जाने जाते हैं, अब उतना ही वे 'रंगमंच की कहानी' के लिए भी जाने जाएंगे। ■

Book Reviews

Tony Cotton reviews *Math without numbers* by Milo Beckman and *The wonder book of geometry* by David Acheson.



Math Without Numbers is published by Allen Lane. 978-0-241-50757-5. £20.

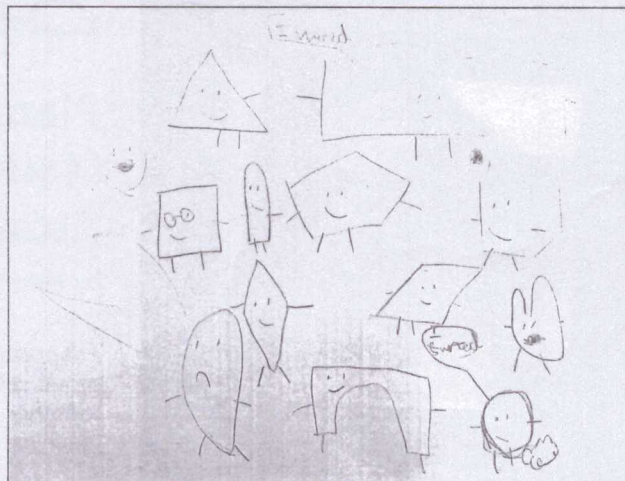
The Wonder Book of Geometry is published by Oxford University Press. 978-0-19-884638-3. £12.99

Whenever I sit down with a book to review for MT I hope that I will be made to wish I could go into the classroom the next day and share what I have learned and enjoyed with other learners. Or, more likely these days, take it to my grandchildren and talk about with them. It also takes me back to a time in the year 2BNC (Before National Curriculum) when I was a young head of department and took responsibility for curriculum planning in an integrated team in a secondary school. There was a time, honestly, when it was the teacher's responsibility to decide what it was important to share with the learners in a mathematics classroom. I still have the scheme of work designed around the history of numbers, which was our complete programme for the first year in secondary school.

So, I am delighted to tell you that I got this positive feeling as I opened both these books. Unfortunately the feeling dissipated the further I got into *The Wonder Book of Geometry*. However, this was offset by my growing enthusiasm and excitement as I read Milo Beckman's book. Let's start there. I had not heard of Milo Beckman. I probably should have. He is described as a 'math (sic) prodigy from New York. His brief CV states, "He has worked for three tech companies, two banks and a US senator

before retiring at age nineteen to teach mathematics in New York, China and Brazil, and to write." I can hear some of you sighing in despair as you read this but this drew me in. Why would I not want to listen to someone who was so passionate about his mathematics that he wanted to teach in the US, China and Brazil? Not only mathematics without numbers but mathematics without boundaries. There genuinely are no numbers, "except for page numbers" in the book. There are five sections exploring: topology; analysis; algebra; foundations (which takes the form of a dialogic debate about proof) and modelling. Each of the sections contains great 'proofs' of big ideas, many of them pictorial, and lots of activities that I immediately wanted to work on with people. I particularly enjoyed the exploration of ideas of infinity in the 'analysis' section.

As with most of the sections, the topology section begins with a question. In this case, "How many shapes are there?" What a fantastic question, I thought. There is the first half term in my scheme of work. I tried this out with my seven-year-old grandson. His first answer was "16". When I drew 17 shapes he suggested "59" before we got into an animated Zoom discussion about what made a shape. These are his sketches. You will see that the shapes all became characters that he could talk about:



He became particularly interested in what might be different about a 'square' the 'tilted square' that he enjoyed being called a rhombus, and the diamond (kite). So, Milo, this book on advanced mathematical

ideas is great for discussing geometry with a seven-year-old!

David Acheson has not aimed his book at seven-year-olds so it would be unfair to compare directly with the fun Felix and I had above, but it does seem to be aimed at a general readership. I do wonder about the two claims on the book jacket, however. The first claim is that geometry is the quickest route to mathematics at its best. I wasn't quite sure what this meant. I had just read the Milo Beckman book and this offered me several views of fascinating mathematics without trying to prioritise one over the other. The second claim is that "anyone can begin to enjoy the wonders of geometry - *within just half an hour of starting ...* This made me wonder about the people who I asked to look at the book for me who were not enjoying the wonders of geometry within half an hour. Should they see themselves as deficient in some way; after all if anyone can enjoy geometry it is surely their fault if they do not.

Once I got into the book, I found myself engaging fairly quickly, certainly within half an hour with the explanations of geometrical ideas. I was reminded of my best mathematics teachers at school who could explain ideas very well and also my frustrations when I was not expected to follow my own ideas, rather, I had to listen carefully to what they had experienced.

Things also get complicated quite quickly. I was interested that my non-mathematician friends fairly quickly put the book down very quickly whereas they enjoyed grappling the very complex ideas in the Milo Beckman book.

I was also rather put off by the cover. It looks like a cover of an old "Boys' Own Book of ..." (gender specificity deliberate) and presents mathematics as the domain of old-fashioned magicians.

There are two very different views of mathematics in these books, I think. One is a landscape to be explored accompanied by an enthusiastic guide who is interested in your experience of mathematics and the other is a fixed guided tour, again by an enthusiastic and very knowledgeable guide, who wants to revisit some of their favourite haunts with you and tell you why they found them interesting. As in life I prefer exploration rather than a very fixed guided tour.

If you are a teacher of mathematics at a secondary school and want some interesting ways of sharing geometrical ideas, or if you have an interest in geometry, then you will enjoy both books. I will keep both on my shelf. I have also bought multiple copies of *Math Without Numbers* for friends and family. What's more I am sure they will enjoy it!



Planning for Teaching GCSE Mathematics with Mixed Attainment Groups

by Mike Ollerton and Sam Hoggard

A fantastic book that is suitable for use in all GCSE classroom group settings, but what is different about this book is it brings together tasks designed to support learning and planning for teaching GCSE mathematics with all attainment groups.

Includes an accompanying set of PDF slides for use in the classroom.

“what a treat – this is a must have resource for all maths departments Clare Benton”

BEST SELLER

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Her topic is far more enormous than many students might anticipate, as she is really covering the history not included in US primary and secondary education. For example, in her 200+ page book on nonviolent resistance in the US, Berry spends one paragraph quickly covering the anti-nuclear movement of the 1980 s, not even mentioning the 1982 nuclear freeze resolutions in 23 states, the largest act of issue-voting direct democracy in US history, nor referencing the successful outcome of the nonviolent resistance to nuclear weapons that resulted in the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty, the first actual nuclear disarmament treaty (all previous nuclear arms control treaties only capped production levels and did not reduce existing weapons or delivery systems). Similarly, she barely mentions the resistance to Gulf War 1, again just a paragraph and only touching on demonstrations in October 1990, skipping the hundreds of thousands who demonstrated across the US in January 1991. We were in DC by the busloads and organizers in San Francisco claimed more than 200,000 turned out there in a diverse movement.


By contrast, her exegesis of the many struggles for civil rights domestically (from the 1940 s onward) and internationally (anti-apartheid campaigns and Haitian refugee rights in particular, but also disability rights and gay rights domestically) are complex, granular, nuanced, some of them arguably magisterial. A more accurate subtitle might have been *A memoir of how civil rights and other progressive movements have succeeded in challenging times.*

I think my favorite sentence in Berry's book comes as she describes a speaking tour in South Africa in early 1990 with her, Jesse Jackson, and others. Then, 'The government informed us on the evening of February 10 that we could essentially stop agitating because Mandela would be freed the next day.' To me, thinking of Mandela's 27 years of incarceration and the thousands killed by South African armed agents of the state, that sentence just stands tall. Berry was there. She was a player as well as a scholar.

To be clear, Berry is not writing from a strategic nonviolence perspective, though her own personal resistance as described was always nonviolent. She did, however, visit guerrilla fighters in various locales in southern Africa and offered no particular analysis of the mix of methods.

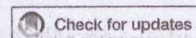
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<https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2020.1769885>



✓ **Education for sustainable peace and conflict resilient communities**, by Borislava Manojlovic, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 188 pp., US \$75.83 (Paperback), ISBN 978-3-319-57170-6; \$37.51 (Hardback), ISBN 978-3-319-57171-3

Introduction

Globally, human existence is threatened by instability occasioned by widespread civil wars and armed conflicts. There is therefore heightened desire for peace and security in the contemporary globe. One of the most pragmatic ways by which the much desired

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peace and security in the world today can be attained or improved upon is through teaching and learning (Ki-Moon 2013). Given the nature of contemporary violent conflicts that are promoted by structural deformations within the society, how should education be deployed in finding a sustainable solution to widespread violent conflicts in conflict-ridden societies? This remains one of the questions that scholars and practitioners of education and peace have engaged for decades. This book also made a modest contribution to this debate.

Content of the book

Altogether, the book has seven chapters. Chapter one is titled 'Introduction to education for sustainable peace'. Here, the writer discussed the aim and objectives of the book; how education can be deployed to address the consequences of violent conflict and create conflict-resilient communities given the rising cases of state fragility and increasing conflict-striking societies in the contemporary world. Chapter two is titled 'Historical narratives, politics of memory, and education'. Using examples from Japan, Croatia and Germany, the chapter examines the place of history and memory of the past in rebuilding post-conflict societies as well as the role of educational systems in passing down the historical narratives towards building resilient post-conflict society. Chapter three of the book is titled 'Impeding access to quality education: culture, gender and funding'. This chapter discusses cultural practices, gender issues and funding mechanism as key issues that require significant attention because of the impact they have on access to quality education in post-conflict and fragile societies. Following from this, the next chapter, chapter four, titled 'Education at the heart of extremism' explores the relationship between extremism and education. It uses the example of Boko Haram activities in Nigeria and the European right-wing nationalism and anti-immigrant extremism as examples to show that bad educational systems can unintentionally enhance extreme tendencies in people.

Chapter five explores how peace and collaborative learning can be promoted through innovations. In doing this, the chapter critically examines the methods of education and innovative strategies such as artistic approach to education, study abroad programmes, use of games and technology as well as virtual/online platforms and how they can be used to promote sustainable peace. Titled 'The role of innovation in education for sustainable peace', the chapter posits that society can become more peaceful if educational programmes, curricula, textbooks and other educational materials are designed and implemented with innovative teaching and learning initiatives that engage all members of the society. Chapter six of the book is titled 'Learning for practice: peacemakers as educators'. It explores lessons that can be learnt from peacemakers contributing to peace in fragile and violent conflict scenes. The chapter identifies changing pattern of interaction, creative learning, inclusive, generational and relational participation of peacemakers in peacemaking as well as studying and understanding the motivation of peacemakers to display uncommon behavioural pattern in conflict as some of the benefits that can be learned from peacemakers especially from the Balkans and Basque country. It holds that stories of peace actors should be part of education in post-conflict and fragile societies so that children and youths who have experienced violent conflict will know that in spite of their violent environment, they can work for peace. Chapter seven titled 'Collaborative learning, relational responsibility and resilient' is the last chapter of the book. This chapter engages the role that collaborative learning and relational responsibility play in building a society that will be resilient to violence and fragility. It emphasises that building conflict-resilient societies requires the promotion of social ties, collaboration and relational responsibility.

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The thesis from the book is that for conflict-ridden societies or those with past violent conflict, how their educational systems are adjusted to address key issues that result in the outbreak of the conflict is significant to rebuilding and making them resilient to relapse into conflict. It is of the view that every aspect of education in post-conflict societies should project values that promote peace. This is what the writer called education for sustainable peace as different from peace education. Thus, the book recommends implementing peace education programmes different from the conventional practice in which students are merely provided with knowledge and skills about how to manage conflicts non-violently. The writer's recommendation is based on the argument that the conventional practice rarely work in building peace in fragile and post-conflict societies. These ideas espoused in the book are not new. Harris and Morrison (2003), Heater (1984), Montessori (1974) and Read (1949) have all advanced this argument in the past. However, the area of major difference between Manojlovic's thesis and others' seems to be in the area of the application to post-conflict societies in order to build conflict-resilient communities. In doing this, the writer used relevant examples that teased out the major arguments been projected.

Conclusion

The question of how best to make post-conflict societies recover from the devastation of violent conflict and become resilient to forestall relapse to violent conflict will continue to dominate the thinking of peace scholars because of the preponderance of violent conflict in the world today. In all of this, education will undoubtedly play a significant role, but how to deploy it in seeking quick recovery and forestall relapse will continue to elicit intellectual engagement of scholars and practitioners of education and peace.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2020.1793533>

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 **The United Nations and higher education: peacebuilding, social justice, and global cooperation for the 21st century**, by Kevin Kester, Charlotte, IAP-Information Age Publishing, 2020, 227 pp., US\$ 45.99 (paperback), US\$ 85.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-64802-054-4

The United Nations and higher education: peacebuilding, social justice, and global cooperation for the 21st century is a collection of previously published articles from the author's PhD dissertation work. Using rigorous qualitative research methods with primary data

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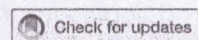
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<https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2020.1793533>



- ✓ **The United Nations and higher education: peacebuilding, social justice, and global cooperation for the 21st century**, by Kevin Kester, Charlotte, IAP-Information Age Publishing, 2020, 227 pp., US\$ 45.99 (paperback), US\$ 85.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-64802-054-4

The United Nations and higher education: peacebuilding, social justice, and global cooperation for the 21st century is a collection of previously published articles from the author's PhD dissertation work. Using rigorous qualitative research methods with primary data

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collected via direct observations and semi-structured interviews and secondary data gathered by browsing various academic databases, including Google Scholar, SCOPUS, JSTOR, and ERIC with keywords 'peace education' 'peace and conflict studies' 'peace research,' and the 'United Nations,' Kester critically discusses how the United Nations, in its effort to promote peace and peacebuilding education in higher education institutions, ends up contributing to and unwittingly perpetuating both conflict and cultural and structural violence in this 21st century.

This book is divided into 12 chapters. The flow of chapters and organisational structure of the book are quite remarkable. Chapters 2 through 4 discuss the literature review and highlight various theoretical and pedagogical approaches often used in the field of peace and conflict studies academics (PACS). Chapter 5 discusses peace and conflict studies higher education inside the United Nations. Chapter 6 provides the analytical framework. The methodology used in the research is provided in chapter 7 while the interpretations, analyses of the data and the findings are highlighted in chapters 8 through 11. Chapter 12 focuses on the concluding remarks, policy, and ways forward.


In the introduction, the author describes how his experiences as peace educator inform the content of the book. He then provides a constructive criticism of how peace and conflict studies' scholars rely mainly on 'Western theoretical premises of the liberal peace agenda' (p. 2). To narrow the focus of the book, the author purposefully selects the University of the United Nations, which belongs to the United Nations system, and therefore has a mandate to teach for peace. His choice of such a university could never be clearer for the university houses scholars of peace and conflict studies who provide reliable and credible data that have been analysed in the book. It is equally important to note that Kester explains how the terms, such as conflict, violence, peace, education, and field are used in the book. After exploring Galtung's (1996) definition of conflict, Kester contrasts the terms 'conflict' and 'violence' and posits that 'conflict produces constructive tension and positive change while violence is considered a destructive medium of domination and harm' (p. 5). When it comes to defining the concept of 'peace,' the author adopts the definition offered in the 2000 Earth Charter, which states: 'Peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which we are all a part' (Article 16 f). However, because of the systematic, reflective, and lifelong nature of education, Kester connects it to the field, which he argues, is 'the intellectual domain of PACS higher education' (p. 7).

Oftentimes, practitioners and scholars use peace education and peace studies interchangeably. In this book, Kester argues that each of the two concepts has its focus. To Kester, while peace education deals with various pedagogies, approaches and methodologies used to combat violence, peace studies focus on 'the causes of war, security, and nonviolence; the teaching of nonviolent communication and conflict resolution techniques' (p. 12). One of the merits of this book is the detailed discussion of theories, such as intergroup contact theory, Galtung's peace theory and forms of violence, social reproduction theory, critical theory, liberal peace theory, and post-structural critiques of hegemonies to help explain PACS education.

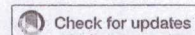
Furthermore, the author discusses the impact of 'Whiteness' in PACS education and argues that in the name of 'doing work,' practitioners (for the most part dominated by Whites) pay little to no attention to social and cultural contexts and end up imposing 'non-indigenous ways of life' (p. 41) on places they were called to save from violent conflicts. To illustrate his point, Kester chooses the UN universities – the United Nations University (UNU) and the University for Peace (UPEACE) which are specifically mandated


to teach conflict transformation techniques that can be used to address global issues. In these universities, two models, such as the flower-petal model of peace education and the learning to abolish war model are used for a comprehensive PACS education (p. 53). Because UNU and UPEACE depend heavily on the UN for their survival, they are not free to develop their own PACS education curricula. Additionally, because there are significant presences of whiteness in the curriculum, in the faculty, and in the pedagogy (pp. 146–150), Western liberal ideals dominate the teaching and learning in these universities (p. 94). After reading this book, one can deduce that if there is a persistence of cultural and structural violence within the field of PACS today, the UN has played a paramount role in perpetuating such a violence.

However, to right the wrong caused by unintended consequences of 'Whiteness' in PACS education, Kester recommends that peacebuilding education be 'more reflexive' and 'more critical' both at the individual level and the field (pp. 187–188). To that end, he proposes three interrelated approaches, including (a) transrational perspectives, which call for multidisciplinary studies, inclusion of faculty from diverse cultural backgrounds and reflection; (b) embodied pedagogies; and (c) second-order reflexivity, which calls for an 'outside of the box' way of thinking in order to expand the scope of PACS education beyond Western liberal ideals. What is missing in this book is the discussion on the call for a structural reform of the United Nations itself, especially its Security Council for the later remains the sole decision-making organ when it comes to war and peace issues. Since the Five Permanent members of the UN Security Council have shown no interest in reforming the organisation, I believe these approaches are sound prescriptions, at least for the moment, if we really want to have a world free of structural and cultural violence. In all, I highly recommend this book to be used as a textbook in advanced qualitative research methods courses for social and political sciences graduate and PhD students.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2020.1821542>



 **The marginalised in genocide narratives: revisiting genocide narratives and reconciliation initiatives**, by Giorgia Donà, London and New York, Routledge, 2019, 172 pp., US\$ 124.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-138-83990-8; US \$46.36 (eBook), ISBN 978-1-315-73316-6

The marginalised in genocide narratives is a new perspective about genocide and post-genocide debates in Rwanda; it addresses from the case of Rwanda, controversial topics such as ethnicity and political violence in the African Great Lakes region. In this book, Giorgia Donà shows how it is still possible to study conflict and post-conflict situations where actors on both sides tell their stories on what happened and how individuals or groups who experienced the events at any level of society have been positioned by the elites involved in state power, or were positioning themselves. The author states, 'I witnessed the formation, transformation, and consolidation of a national narrative

Books

KEYWORDS FOR INDIA: A Conceptual Lexicon for the 21st Century edited by Rukmini Bhaya Nair and Peter Ronald deSouza. Bloomsbury, UK, 2020.

THE title of the book of course might raise a few eyebrows. 'For India'? Or 'Of India'? But this is more than adequately addressed in the Introduction. These are a selection of key words used in India by Indians (even non-Indians?) and carry within them diverse connotations and associations, social, cultural, political, philosophical, and ideological. These could well be called key words 'from' India or 'of' India, though one is not sure the editors would make such a claim. They are after all a selection, subjective as is inevitable and limited given the humongous task the book sets out to achieve. Key words far from being merely descriptive, can be and should be studied as conceptual categories. What is particularly interesting to note is that commonly used words that exist outside the academic domain are embedded within contextual, conceptual frames that are somewhat different. Indeed one of the intentions of the book is 'discourse mapping', and creating space for a critical self-reflective engagement with the conceptual terrain of these key words.

The 21st century is in some senses a break with the past. The internet revolution, the accelerated speed of information flow, and the levelling of the hierarchies and distinctions between the academic, scholarly, specialist, highbrow communities and the non-academic, lowbrow non-specialist ones has led to a democratization of culture. E-interactions through blogs and social media platforms have taken debates and discussions outside the privileged space of seminar halls and classrooms into the public marketplace of exchanges that can be extremely vituperative at times but also calm, reflective, and productive in other moments. It is this space that has thrown up a host of new terms that have

gained currency rapidly in the new world even as older terms have acquired new and innovative meanings. Older certainties and stabilities are dissolving at breathtaking pace and words are acquiring a life of their own. A key word as the introduction to the book says, is a 'cross-cultural viral meme', a transitive moment in which the internet savvy, selfie generation comes face to face with their predecessors stretching back to the 20th century and beyond, when 'pre-history confronts post-truth.'

Neither a dictionary, nor an encyclopedia, *Keywords*, like Raymond Williams' early work (*Keywords*) is 'an enquiry into vocabulary'. A significant aspect of this book is what the editors have called its 'hybrid approach'. Combining two sets of approaches, one of lexicons like Hobson Jobson and Hanklyn Janklyn, the 'rumble tumble' guides and two of the sedate, erudite tomes like *Future of Knowledge and Culture: Dictionary for 21st Century* (edited by Vinay Lal and Ashis Nandy) and *Key Concepts in Modern Indian Studies* (edited by Gita Dharampal-Frick et al), the book includes both quotidian terms as well as abstract philosophical ones. The more than 200 contributors come from diverse professional backgrounds like journalism, medicine, politics, academic, and arts. The 'little narratives' of lived experience jostle for space with more respectable academic narratives and both local and cosmopolitan contexts are brought in, in the short essays that accompany each entry.

Through these key terms that represent the vast linguistic, philosophical, cultural, social and ideological diversity of India, the book challenges the knowledge asymmetries between the North and South. Privileging a word, elaborating its conceptual foundation, particularly Indian words from the *bhasas*, initiates a decentring effect Eurocentric epistemology can be nudged if not pushed from its self-assumed pedestal. Of particular significance here are the numerous

terms from western Englishes that have been appropriated for common usage in India. Equally important are the numerous terms from Indian languages that have acquired currency in global exchanges in English.

The book is divided into seven sections – ‘Classical heritages: Databases of memory’, ‘Contemporary aesthetic modes: Reimaginings’, ‘Economic mantras, media and technological change’, ‘Intimacies: Culture and material culture’, ‘Emancipatory imaginaries’, ‘Language and self-reflection’, and ‘Politics and the political’. These are loose thematic categories that permit an easy crossing over between disciplinary boundaries and are in keeping with the contemporary thrust towards interdisciplinarity. There are terms for instance, Hinduism and Hindu rashtra, that are included in different sections and it would have been useful to keep them together to give a better perspective. Shashi Tharoor’s entry on Hinduism describes it as ‘an eclectic range of doctrines and practices’ without any compulsory dogmas even though Hindu society has not always lived up ‘to the freedom enshrined in the faith’. Pralay Kanungo’s entry on Hindu rashtra, in contrast, delves into the construction of a political Hindu identity from the 19th century onwards. However, Tharoor’s elaboration of the term is equally significant in contemporary ideological debates on the issue of Indian identity and the Indian nation. However, there are multiple ways of organizing terms under different headings and perhaps the reader can pick up keywords from the Contents and follow them across different sections. After all there is no particular order in which the book can be read, or ‘dipped into’, an approach suggested by the editors themselves. With its more than 200 key words, it’s a book that you can savour intermittently, skip pages, whole sections, read what attracts one, spend time on a term, even converse with it if one likes before moving on. It’s a veritable garden of colours and odours from across India with its tremendous diversity.

Going through the book I was drawn to the entry on ‘Mussalman’ by Taslima Nasreen and ‘Parsi’ by Keki Daruwala, two rather dissimilar ones as it turned out. My initial expectation that it would be about Islam and its cultural and religious dimensions particularly because it was included in the first section titled ‘Classical heritages: Databases of memory’, was soon belied by the author whose piece is all about the fundamentalism and the history of conflict between Hindus and Muslims in the Indian subcontinent in the 20th century. Daruwala’s piece was more about the history of the Parsis in India and their idiosyncrasies. But this is what is unique about the book. Each contributor

brings in her own perspective on the term, locates it within her own context and, as the editor says, owns it. Paula Richman’s entry on the Ramayana is both comprehensive and a comprehension of diverse perspectives on the subject. It makes the critical distinction between the Valmiki text and several other renderings of the basic story notably the Kamban Ramayana and the Ramcharitmanas, but also the Jain and Buddhist renderings, all of which constitute the Ramayan tradition. Richman also brings in the diverse range of ideological readings of the characters and events, as well as the politically charged reading or misreading of the derivative term Ram Rajya. Thomas Abraham’s entry on Cyberbhakt was informative. Not many would know that the term did not have a political connotation in the 1990s. This was the decade in which gods entered cyberspace, temples came up with online websites and rituals. In its current usage the term refers to the ardent supporters of the BJP, the RSS and other Hindu political organizations particularly after the elections of 2014. Cyberbhakts consistently attack liberal, secular and progressive formations and individuals with abusive terms like ‘presstitutes’ (for the journalists, particularly female journalists), Khangress (the Khan suggesting the pro-Muslim orientation of the INC), and sickular (for secular parties and individuals).

Among other key words I found interesting was ‘kolaveri’ a Tamil term literally translated as ‘murderous rage’ that became extremely popular not just among Tamilians both in India and the diaspora but also among non-Tamil speakers, on account of the Tenglish song ‘Why this kolaveri di?’ written for the film Movie 3. As a code-mixed song, it appealed to the younger generation and in time the term ‘kolaveri’ lost its original Tamil connotation and the expression in the song became a kind of rhetorical flourish, a catchphrase. One can disagree or agree with the perspectives of the individual authors, but the intention is not to provide the definitive comprehensive guide (though some give that impression, particularly the ones on atman, asmita, dharma, caste etc.) but a perspective that can open a conversation at the very least.

Finally, a word about the book’s afterlife. Keywords, as Rukmini Bhaya Nair writes, will keep changing. New ones will emerge, old ones will be dropped or modified. Hopefully we will see revisions in this book or even a new one in the not so distant future. The speed at which things are changing this may be very soon. I also feel that a book like this in Indian languages would be immensely beneficial for non-English language speakers, particularly students and scholars working in

other Indian languages. Elaborations of key terms by non-English speaking contributors would also add another dimension that can perhaps be lost in a work in English.

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REPUBLIC OF HINDUTVA: How the Sangh is Reshaping Indian Democracy by Badri Narayan.
Penguin Random House India, Gurgaon, 2021.

Badri Narayan is a cultural anthropologist, a social historian and a creative writer in Hindi. He has been consistently engaged in writing on politics of identity involving caste and religion-based identities as they have evolved in the northern states of India such as Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar.

The book under review is an unusual as well as insightful attempt to explain the growing role of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in reshaping the contours of Indian democracy. Its compelling narrative unravels the role of the RSS in carving out two emphatic victories for the BJP in consecutive general elections held in 2014 and 2019, respectively. The author acknowledges that owing to the expansive and persuasive efforts of the countless volunteers at the grassroots level, the RSS has gained a wider and deeper base in society.

Strangely, the author himself was a prisoner of the stereotype images of the RSS during his three-decade long association with the left groupings in India. As such, the RSS was just an upper caste and middle and upper class grouping. However, his field studies have shown him new realities. Hence, without being a partisan, he has dared to politely invite critics of the RSS to go through his laborious exercise regarding the nitty-gritty functioning of the RSS to understand the depth and magnitude of its penetration in different parts of northern India.

The central arguments in the book could be stated thus. One of the distinguishing features of the RSS has been the capacity of its volunteers to work tirelessly in the remotest of areas, like missionaries, almost selflessly. As an organization, the RSS has evolved according to the changing social and cultural circumstances by creating, destroying and recreating itself. While most of its critics have battled with the erstwhile image of the RSS of the 1970s and '80s, the organization has changed beyond recognition since those days. This is evident from the fact that RSS volunteers today are techno-savvy and over the years they have made efforts to widen their base to accommodate Scheduled Castes

(SCs) or Dalits and Maha Dalits, Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Tribal and even Muslim communities within their fold.

The RSS is well connected to different NGO networks of formal and informal organizations that operate within the Sangh Parivar. Its sole aim is to construct an overarching Hindu identity. The RSS has come to terms with the fact that different community gods matter for the identity of marginalized communities that are looking for religious empowerment. The master strategy of the RSS of appropriating spiritual, religious as well as political leaders from different parts of the marginalized communities has paid rich dividends. Considering the numerical strength of the overall marginalized communities, the RSS has built Ambedkar memorials in Mhow, Mumbai, Delhi, Nagpur and London which have become pilgrimage sites. In a word, from Kabir, Ravidas and Gorakhnath to Dr Ambedkar, the RSS has appropriated everyone. Its constant appreciation of Ambedkar, at times, blunts Ambedkar's scathing criticism of the Hindu religion that has rested on a hierarchical, unequal and deathless caste system. It has also blurred the fact that even though Ambedkar was born a Hindu, he died a Buddhist.

Keeping in view the sheer numerical strength of the Bahujan Samaj, the RSS has moved further to counter caste-based parties such as the Socialist Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in UP. If Yadav and Jatav communities form the social base of the SP and the BSP, respectively, the RSS has tried to expand its base among the non-Yadav and non-Jatav lower social castes among the OBCs and the SCs. Moreover, the RSS has been relentless in its mission of confronting the proselytizing activities of Islam and Christianity in different parts of India. While mobilizing the electorate during the general elections, the RSS volunteers in countless numbers have helped the BJP launch door to door campaigns and building myths around the BJP leadership. There have been moments when the top leadership has relied on polarizing strategies such as Shamshan versus Kabaristan or Ali versus Bajarang Bali. Evidently, the RSS has shouldered the responsibility of transmitting an intrinsically polarizing essence of such messages to the grassroots.

While reflecting on this empirical travail, let me raise a few pertinent issues. Although the term Hindutva has been in vogue for decades, owing to the ambiguity that surrounds it, I have been unable to grasp its precise meaning. The RSS ideologues have an aversion to using the term Hinduism because it perhaps reminds them of other isms such as socialism or com-

April 2021

BOOK REVIEWS

History teaches us to resist: how progressive movements have succeeded in challenging times, by Mary Frances Berry, Boston, MA, Beacon, 2018, 222 pp., US\$18.00 (paperback), ISBN 9780807057674

Mary Francis Berry is a national treasure. Still professing, still writing, still offering a deeply detailed, profoundly personal, yet cogently germane history of the episodic highlights of her thesis – that protest of injustice is not enough and resistance is required – she is in her ninth decade and going strong.

This volume is a clear-eyed historical excavation of several of the case studies that underscore her analysis and, in episodic memoir fashion, highlight her decades of involvement from several standpoints – journalist, activist, organizer, professor, commission member and commission chair. Each case study is well known to those of us who teach in this field and each of her cases drills down more deeply than most of us have gone before, revealing both prescience and 20–20 hindsight questions. I was not 20 pages into this work before developing a page-by-page gratitude for context I had not known, for mysteries solved or at least far more explicated than much previous scholarship.

As a scholar and activist in this field, my responses were probably much like many others will be when they read Berry's book, a two-fold response in general.

One, though I know a fair bit about each major movement she covered chapter by chapter, I learned something from each and a great deal from several of them. Two, I wish I could have added a few bits to some of them from personal knowledge and experience. This is not a critique, as each chapter could easily expand into a thick tome, just an observation as to Berry's gift in writing so engagingly that I was drawn into personal memories all along the way, from her exegesis of the Civil Rights movement and its sequelae (e.g., Native rights, Latinx rights, disability rights, LGBTQ rights), the antiwar movement, environmental protections, the confluence of one or more, and much more.

The overall successes of civil resistance were also punctuated by descriptions of truly dirty deals from our history, some of which likely literally cost millions of lives. Nixon's successful schemes to derail Lyndon Johnson's (LBJ) 1968 overtures to end the war in Vietnam arguably opened the road to hell for more than an additional 1.5 million Vietnamese and approximately 25,000 Americans killed subsequent to that subterfuge. Nixon's campaign promise 'secret plan' to end the war was in fact his secret plan to continue it and it never completely ended until after he was run out of office five years later, with fresh deaths daily through 1973, none of which would have happened if LBJ had succeeded in ending the war in 1968 – a war he only wished to end because of the powerful and growing antiwar movement. The reader can discern the vengeful leitmotif that emerges when a certain type of American president is opposed or exposed. Berry's brief but illuminating account of Nixon going after Beacon Press for publishing the Pentagon Papers – and his henchman at the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, even investigating the parent Christian denomination that started Beacon Press, the Unitarian Universalists – certainly echoes the vindictiveness we have witnessed from the similarly heavy-handed Trump regime. Her direct personal experience of being fired by Ronald Reagan for her work on the US Commission on Civil Rights, and her subsequent reinstatement by judge's order, help us see this red thread of revenge running through the conduct of some Republican rulers in particular.

*Peace education
Political history*

Her topic is far more enormous than many students might anticipate, as she is really covering the history not included in US primary and secondary education. For example, in her 200+ page book on nonviolent resistance in the US, Berry spends one paragraph quickly covering the anti-nuclear movement of the 1980 s, not even mentioning the 1982 nuclear freeze resolutions in 23 states, the largest act of issue-voting direct democracy in US history, nor referencing the successful outcome of the nonviolent resistance to nuclear weapons that resulted in the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty, the first actual nuclear disarmament treaty (all previous nuclear arms control treaties only capped production levels and did not reduce existing weapons or delivery systems). Similarly, she barely mentions the resistance to Gulf War 1, again just a paragraph and only touching on demonstrations in October 1990, skipping the hundreds of thousands who demonstrated across the US in January 1991. We were in DC by the busloads and organizers in San Francisco claimed more than 200,000 turned out there in a diverse movement.


By contrast, her exegesis of the many struggles for civil rights domestically (from the 1940 s onward) and internationally (anti-apartheid campaigns and Haitian refugee rights in particular, but also disability rights and gay rights domestically) are complex, granular, nuanced, some of them arguably magisterial. A more accurate subtitle might have been *A memoir of how civil rights and other progressive movements have succeeded in challenging times.*

I think my favorite sentence in Berry's book comes as she describes a speaking tour in South Africa in early 1990 with her, Jesse Jackson, and others. Then, 'The government informed us on the evening of February 10 that we could essentially stop agitating because Mandela would be freed the next day.' To me, thinking of Mandela's 27 years of incarceration and the thousands killed by South African armed agents of the state, that sentence just stands tall. Berry was there. She was a player as well as a scholar.


To be clear, Berry is not writing from a strategic nonviolence perspective, though her own personal resistance as described was always nonviolent. She did, however, visit guerrilla fighters in various locales in southern Africa and offered no particular analysis of the mix of methods.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2020.1769885> Check for updates

P **Education for sustainable peace and conflict resilient communities**, by Borislava Manojlovic, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 188 pp., US \$75.83 (Paperback), ISBN 978-3-319-57170-6; \$37.51 (Hardback), ISBN 978-3-319-57171-3

Introduction

Globally, human existence is threatened by instability occasioned by widespread civil wars and armed conflicts. There is therefore heightened desire for peace and security in the contemporary globe. One of the most pragmatic ways by which the much desired

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Illumining an epic poem

A brilliant resurrection of Sir Edwin Arnold's 19th century poem on the life and teachings of the Buddha, which is sure to create more awareness about Buddhism in the country of its birth. BY ASHOK THAKUR

IFIRST came across Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* in 1976 while preparing for the civil service examinations. A section in the syllabus was dedicated to Gandhian thought; from here, I gathered that this book had had a profound influence on the Father of the Nation. I confess that I did not go beyond that slight curiosity until 45 years later, when I read Jairam Ramesh's *The Light of Asia: The poem that defined the Buddha*. On completing it, I was left amazed by the profound impact this single tome has had in spreading the story of the Buddha and his teachings across the world.

The Light of Asia was seminal because until its publication in the late 19th century, no one in the West knew about the Buddha. Jairam Ramesh's book captures this brilliantly. I foresee the book leading not only to a resurrection of Arnold's *chef-d'oeuvre* but also creating more awareness about Buddhism in the country of its birth.

This is a "book within a book", in which the primary story is about *The Light of Asia*, first published in 1879. It also covers the fascinating life

story of Arnold the oriental scholar, poet, linguist, adventurer and Pax Britannica man. Finally, it tells the story of Buddhism through the ages and how it totally disappeared from India.

The Light of Asia is itself a translation of the *Lalitavistara*, — meaning "the play in full", a Sanskrit Mahayana Buddhist Sutra on the Buddha's life and his teachings. Translating intricate thoughts is not an easy task, more so when it is in verse. Arnold manages to do so well even though he was not recognised as one amongst the top poets of his time.

A similar effort that I am aware of is "84,000: Translating the words of the Buddha", a project helmed by Dzongsar

Khentse Rinpoche. As part of this project, the *Lalitavistara* has already been translated into English in 2013 and the rest of the 108-volume *Kangyur* [Words of the Buddha] is under way. A group of international scholars are working on it, yet it is not definite whether their version will be able to capture the real meaning of what the Buddha had said. Different people see the elephant differently, depending upon their past experiences and perceptions. My respect for Arnold only grows when I realise the amount of confidence and effort it needed to undertake this work single-handedly.

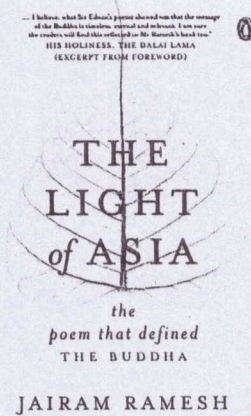
Jairam Ramesh's writing is full of rich information, mined diligently from

literature across the world, including the latest doctoral theses by researchers. This outstanding work proves that he is an academic first, an inkling I had while setting up the Indira Gandhi Centre for Sustainable Development at the Somerville College in Oxford in 2013, where I found he was respected as a scholar and a researcher in his own right. He is indeed an academic disguised as a politician, although it is generally the other way round!

THE HISTORICAL BUDDHA

Personally, the book evokes the same feeling of wonder I had while reading *Ten Thousand Miles without a Cloud* by Sun Shuyun or *The Buddha and the Sahibs* by Charles Allen, which Jairam Ramesh also refers to. The story of the historical Buddha would have been forgotten had it not been for Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang), who diligently recorded his travels in India in the 7th century.

On the basis of his records, British archaeologists in the 19th century such as Sir Williams Jones, James Prinsep and Alexander Cunningham worked to link Buddha as a living



The Light of Asia The Poem that Defined the Buddha

By Jairam Ramesh
Penguin, 2021

Pages: 448
Price: Rs.507



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Literature
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person to Lumbini, Bodhi Gaya, Sarnath and Kushinara where his birth, enlightenment, first sermon and death took place.

Jairam Ramesh's book highlights the fact that if the 19th-century rediscovery of the historical Buddha was done by archaeologists, it was *The Light of Asia* that actually led to the awareness and spread of Buddhism across the world from Japan to the United States. The poem has since been translated into 13 European and 14 South Asian languages. Similarly, Arnold's "Song Celestial", published in 1885, introduced to the West the Bhagavad Gita, which until then was an unknown chapter in the Mahabharata, and made it world-famous.

The book also brings home the power of poetry over prose. With his poetic rendition of the life and teachings of the Buddha, Arnold achieved what the scholars of the Royal Asiatic Society and the archaeologists could not. Interestingly, in Tibet in the 8th century, it was Guru Padmasambhava the tantric and poet who spread Buddhism, rather than Santarakshita the scholar who had spent several years in Tibet before him trying to achieve the same.

Until I read Jairam Ramesh's book, I did not realise the extent of influence *The Light of Asia* had on the leaders of the nation's freedom struggle, be it Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Jawaharlal Nehru or B.R. Ambedkar. The Theosophical Society has also published several editions of the book. Others who

were influenced by *The Light of Asia* include Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Rudyard Kipling, W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot and Leo Tolstoy, as well as scientists like C.V. Raman and Dmitri Mendeleev, not to forget Andrew Carnegie, the richest man of his time.

In the context of understanding the nature of Buddhism today in India, it would not have been too much of a digression if some space had been dedicated to the historic linkage of Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism to the Nalanda tradition of India, about which the Dalai Lama never fails to remind both his own people as well as Indians. This would have been apt as the foreword has been written by the Dalai Lama.

Buddhism was introduced in Tibet in the 8th century thanks to Santarakshita, the renowned Indian scholar from Nalanda University in Bihar, who also established Tibet's first monastery, Samye Gonpa, in the 8th century. Over time, many monasteries were established throughout the country and a rigorous system of cultivating intellectual mastery of philosophy, logic, psychology—inner and outer sciences—was developed based on what they learnt from the Nalanda masters.

Few of us are aware that although we lost many of our valuable Pali and Sanskrit texts in Nalanda to the wanton destruction caused by the forces of Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1202, many were taken to safety in Tibet where they were preserved and translated

into Tibetan. It has now come full circle as these texts are back in India after a thousand years, thanks to the Dalai Lama who set up mirror institutions of Tibet's famed monastic universities of Gaden, Drepung, Sera, Tashi Lhunpo, Namgyal, Rato, Gyuto and Gyume in Tibetan refugee communities established in Mundgod and Bylakuppe in Karnataka. It is in our interest to unlock the rich wisdom and knowledge of our past by translating those texts back into Indian languages.

Unfortunately, apart from the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Varanasi, no serious work is being undertaken in this vital area. The Nalanda University, initiated by the Ministry of External Affairs, has only the name in common with this great tradition. Nothing makes one guiltier than a visit to the State Museum at Patna where a treasure trove of Tibetan texts and artefacts, brought from Tibet by the writer Rahul Sankrityayan under challenging circumstances in the 1930s, lie gathering dust and in utter neglect.

MAHABODHI TEMPLE

An aspect which has been well highlighted by the author is about the issue of the control of the Mahabodhi temple in Bodhi Gaya which was with the Hindu mahants. It was the persistence of Arnold, who was one of the first to raise the issue with his fellow Englishmen in power, that eventually culminated in the mahants' partial sharing of responsibilities with Buddhists in 1954. Angarika Dharampala, a Bikkhu from Sri Lanka

whose statue is prominently seen at Sarnath, also had a major role to play. As a child, I was witness to several heated discussions in our house on this issue as my grandfather was a member of the Mahabodhi Society as well as the President of Himalayan Buddhist Society which caters to the Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Lahaul Spiti, Pangi, Zaskar and Rupshu. This is an ongoing matter and one hopes that in the years to come, the control of the Mahabodhi temple will be passed on completely to the Buddhists. If matters can be resolved as in the case of Ayodhya temple, one has all the reasons to hope that in the case of Mahabodhi temple, too, the innate sense of human goodness will eventually prevail, paving the way for a permanent resolution of the issue.

Lastly, the book takes us to the important point of Hinduism-Buddhism interface and its effect on each other. Though Hinduism eventually managed to assimilate Buddhism into its fold by tactfully recognising Buddha as an avatar of Vishnu, Hinduism, too, was not the same again as many of the doctrines of Buddhism like ahimsa, vegetarianism, emphasis on inner realisation, ethical living and equality of all human beings became an integral part of Indian society which are cherished even today. □
Ashok Thakur is former Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, and a Buddhist from Lahaul Spiti, Himachal Pradesh.

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Lessons of Hope for India and Pakistan

MEENA MENON

In the 74-year-old history of India and Pakistan, it is the more recent memory of terrorist attacks in Mumbai and other places, that tends to overpower the monstrosity of partition and the visuals of endless streams of refugees. The two countries lurch between wars and failed peace moves and function in a state of suspended hostility. The fog of war, terrorism and partition often obscures the fact that these were two new states that were formed in 1947 and that history of how they evolved, with bilateral engagement forming a crucial part of this process, is a fascinating and important one. Pallavi Raghavan's *Animosity at Bay: An Alternative History of the India-Pakistan Relationship, 1947-1952* offers a ringside look at this dialogue and problem-solving between India and Pakistan, and how that process formed an integral part of state formation and in a sense, solidified partition.

Starting with the nitty-gritties of the bureaucratic travails of the respective high commissions, the book examines the Nehru-Liaquat Pact in which they agreed to protect the interests of the minorities in their respective countries, along with the question of evacuee property, the no war pact, the Indus Waters Treaty and trade and financial relations. The book also examines how the countries dealt with each other on international platforms. At the heart of the nascent post-partition relationship of the two states was a desire to cooperate, which may be hard to digest for the hawks on both sides. The book stands apart as it uses each of the examples to meticulously trace the process of engagement through archival research. That this was not to last is evident in how each state conceptualised its identity and who belonged to it, and how it would dictate what constituted its external relations. The road

BOOK REVIEWS

Animosity at Bay: An Alternative History of the India-Pakistan Relationship, 1947-52

by Pallavi Raghavan, HarperCollins Publishers India, 2020, pp 288, ₹699.

ahead seemed initially paved with good intentions and that is an important context to understand not only post partition politics but also later developments, leading to intractability and war.

Establishing Diplomatic Relations

Other than grappling with the millions of refugees and the bloodshed, India and Pakistan had another problem, namely the establishment of diplomatic relations. The book starts out with the bewilderment of Indian deputy high commissioner M K Kripalani who had to take decisions on an infinite number of mundane details like marriage licences and educational certificates, even verifying bank details, among other things. Kripalani's fulminations jostle rather amusingly with what Raghavan describes as the "subsequent characterisation of the India-Pakistan relationship as one of high stakes brinkmanship and a volatile and all-consuming strategic rivalry for territory" (p 1). It was these seemingly trivial administrative details and not the impending conflict over Kashmir that would occupy Kripalani's mind, it would seem.

The micro details of the everyday existence of the two states is often lost in the quagmire of their intensely bitter and confrontational relationship, compounded by the first war over Kashmir in 1947 and the subsequent wars in 1965, 1971 and 1999. There were so many pressing issues that had to be urgently addressed by the two states in their diplomatic relations and this was compounded by the lack of a precedent. It is this rival

history to the two states that forms the core of this book and it is quite different from the perception that the two countries started out as bitter rivals. Instead, there is a measured attempt on both sides to engage and debate positive outcomes, keeping in mind at all times that they are two different states. The negotiations come from a position that recognises this important fact and what the book shows us is how it contributed to the formation of two independent nation states, even if the outcome at times was not a constructive one as far as bilateral relations go.

It is this protracted and bureaucratic exercise of mutual engagement, which is not as dull as it sounds, that the book discusses, while at the same time emphasising the strong adherence that each country had to its own emerging policies of nationhood and administration. What triumphed in those early years was a spirit of camaraderie and trying to understand each other, even though hostility was voiced in many quarters. This early phase of the two countries offers a contrast to their current phase of relations over 70 years after partition, where many of the issues that were negotiated then, continue to fester. The book does not touch on Kashmir and the princely states and their disputed succession, as there are many "excellent studies" on them already as the author points out. It focuses more on the "avenues of cooperation" between India and Pakistan and the attempt is "to understand the imperative of state building and the processes that swing into action during the creation of a state, even those that are incompletely aligned with the idea of the nation" (p 20).

The book also "charts out the avenues of cooperation between India and Pakistan, the reasoning behind the acts of cooperation and then examines the implications of this on how the relationship continues to function" (p 4). And so it was not just territorial conflict that the two countries had to negotiate or surmount but bilateral relations, trade, finance, water sharing, cross-border relations, and travel. Many books have since sought to redress the

lacunae in research on early state formation and especially the experiences of the people with the new states. As an edited volume on the subject points out

However, there has been little discussion on the everyday aspects of the early post-1947 state or linked notions of citizenship-in-the-making. To complicate matters further, the histories of India and Pakistan after 1947, and the role of the everyday state with them, seem to be divided largely along nation-state lines, a division that, it could be argued, has artificially separated directly comparable social and political experiences. (Sherman et al 2014: 3)

The book examines the issues of state formation of both India and Pakistan and offers insights into how leaders, bureaucrats and politicians addressed monumental questions that involved the lives of its citizens. It was important to define what the purpose of the states was and Raghavan writes that “at its heart, the India–Pakistan relationship contains a collaborative element. It assumes a mutual acknowledgement of the validity of both states” (p 2). The book also highlights “how an alternative history of the India–Pakistan relationship, which is based on acts of bilateral engagement and cooperation in the years that followed the partition, is also possible” (p 3).

Bilateral Engagements

Importantly, there is an emphasis that the trajectory forward for the two newly-minted countries necessarily involved cementing bilateral relations as a fact of partition and perhaps setting up a framework for negotiating so many questions of refugees, abducted women, evacuee property and sharing the Indus waters and also engaging with each other on international forums. These bilateral engagements progressed side by side with wars and hostility, and the book draws out the fact that the “task of emerging out of partition required not just the mechanics of warfare in Kashmir, but also an intensive effort to flesh out the state structures for India and Pakistan, often in a more collaboratively determined fashion than appearances would first suggest” (pp 3–4).

At a time when the two countries looked as if they were going to war

once again in 1950, Jawaharlal Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan were writing to each other about a no-war pact. The author feels that partition need not be viewed in a negative light and explores the question of how it can work towards setting up different and perhaps more lasting traditions of governance, and also provide a basis of building commonalities of interest between the successor states.

The other question she studies is the ways in which the legacy of partition can provide for productive spaces of innovation for a state. And the book argues that the experience of partition was also seen as an opportunity for both governments to strengthen their hold over state-building and that many of the questions of state-making in India and Pakistan had to be carried out in consultation with each other. It was in the necessities of strengthening the state that the bilateral dialogue between India and Pakistan proved to have its greatest value, she writes.

The book outlines the fact that dialogue and engagement was the way the two countries progressed in the first few years and how that holds good even as a choice today for them. She quotes the work of scholars like Gabriella Blum who have shown that in conflict zones of the 20th century, sustained warfare is not in fact entirely correct and there are opportunities of cooperation or “islands of agreement” (pp 18–19).

Each of the subjects in the chapters on bilateral solutions, the Nehru–Liaquat Pact, evacuee property, no-war pact, Indus waters, shaping international personalities and trade and financial relations had a strong influence on state formation and policymaking. The Indus waters treaty, brokered by the World Bank, had left a lasting legacy and is usually hailed as a success story in an otherwise fraught relationship. The Nehru–Liaquat Pact in the same light was aimed at protecting the interests of the minorities by extending the jurisdiction of the respective high commissioners. Nehru and Liaquat met in New Delhi to sign a declaration that their governments would protect the interests of the minorities in both countries. This made them accountable to each other and Raghavan calls this amongst

the most accommodative pieces of writing in the history of the bilateral relationship. And it was signed in the midst of developments that pointed to a war (p 47).

The pact was an example, the author says, of how in the aftermath of partition, the necessity of solidifying the act of partition, could also enable acts of greater cooperation between the states. Today, the wars over Kashmir are more remembered than this pact, for example, and the fact that the two states were committed to being accountable for the minorities.

There were several critics to the pact, leading to resignations of K C Neogy and S P Mookerjee from Nehru’s cabinet but Vallabhbhai Patel stood by it. As is often in bilateral relations, a pact may signify little or it can be a scrap of paper as J N Mandal called it, but it was better than not having one, which was Liaquat’s line of thinking (p 69). Also, there was a media angle to this, and a delegation of editors from Pakistan was invited to visit India after the declaration, which made Nehru hopeful that their view of matters had changed and they would go back and “preach peace and cooperation.” This was followed by the Dawn calling the pact “a breath of fresh air in these tumultuous times” (p 70).

The contentious no-war pact of 1950 is another example of cooperation and the two countries wanted to project to the world their shared desire to ease the tension related to the refugees from then East Pakistan. The author’s analysis of the voluminous correspondence that led to this pact between Nehru and Liaquat shows the deep connections between the shaping of foreign policy with domestic politics. This correspondence, she writes, offered some movement on the question of evacuee property and water, and an opportunity for India and Pakistan to clarify their positions internationally.

By examining the correspondence for 11 months in the form of over 200 letters and telegrams, the author discusses how it was also important for the two leaders to create a sense of stability and cooperation which were equally important as actions on the ground. They were not insensitive to the political dividends of a

dialogue and even though the no-war pact failed as the two leaders could not agree on the terms, Nehru was keen on a framework to resolve outstanding issues of water, evacuee property and a no-war pact would offer that opportunity. Liaquat was also “not averse” to such a pact. At the same time, Nehru was not fully ruling out war over the question of minorities in Pakistan and the refugees flowing into India.

There was debate on the processes and procedure for dispute settlement, this from the Pakistan side, and there was a feeling that outstanding disputes should not come in the way of a declaration (p 105). The Indo-Pakistan no-war pact was based on the Kellogg-Briand Pact signed by 15 states in Paris in 1928 to neutralise the hostility between Germany and France, which even had the United States and United Kingdom on board. Raghavan says that by applying the concept behind this pact which outlawed war and opted to settle disputes by peaceful methods, India and Pakistan were defining their own relationship as “one that was admittedly

tense but one that could be negotiated in inherited frameworks of international relation” (p 106).

Lessons from History

The goodwill that the two nations had for each other at one level was not marked by a denial of partition but each step was an endorsement, as for instance the Indus Waters Treaty. Raghavan points out, “If a treaty could be signed at all between India and Pakistan, it would have to acknowledge, and then most fairly accommodate the fact of partition, and the viable coexistence of both countries” (p 138). This was also an instance, she points, “of how the fact of partition led to new methods of governance and administration being evolved” (p 136).

As one reads the book, there is a sense of what might have been, had this same spirit of mutual accountability and cooperation continued, despite the hostility. The complex questions of nation state formation and what constitutes identity and who is to be included or excluded are valid even today. India and Pakistan,

while maintaining diplomatic relations, have veered more towards immaturity rather than building on this early solid start, and keeping up a sustained constructive dialogue. The revocation of Article 370 in Kashmir has added to new tensions and potential conflict. As history has shown, and as the book explains, the bilateral framework is still a valid space for negotiation and innovation but the question is if the two countries lend credibility to that option. If after a brutal partition, India and Pakistan could engage so deeply to accommodate each other's concerns, there is little reason why they cannot do so now. That is the important lesson from history that this book uncovers.

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Sherman, Taylor C, William Gould and Sarah Ansari (eds) (2014): *From Subjects to Citizens, Society and the Everyday State in India and Pakistan 1947-1970*, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press.

The book is in seven chapters. The introductory chapter lays out the canvas, sketching a broad panorama of life in Nagaland in the last six decades of the Naga struggle for sovereignty.

Naga Life in Past Decades

The second, is the densest. Here the anthropologist gets under the skin of the Naga society to survey their understanding of identity, ethnicity, indigeneity, etc. It is also a retrospective study of the evolution of the Naga identity, now very definitely commanding a sense of peoplehood but not so once. Naga identity, he shows, has often been a function of extraneously introduced political enclosures, a process which began from the time the British colonial administration dawned and progressively secured its hold in these hills. Till then, identity perception rested on the village as an autonomous social formation and seldom extended beyond it. In some cases, there are evidences of several villages of aligned tribes forming rudimentary confederacies

Through the Naga Insurgency Emergence of Mutant Democracy in Nagaland

PRADIP PHANJOURAM

Jelly J P Wouter's picturisation of the future of Nagaland and its people in *In the Shadows of Naga Insurgency: Tribes, State, and Violence in Northeast India* is grim. The author's treatment of the subject is empathic but detached, and his assessments of this deeply wounded and inherently broken society is often brutally honest. The despairing vision is, the Naga's effort to come to terms with the modern, burdened by memories of a fading ideal but still under the looming shadow of an unresolved insurgency, is horribly flawed. A mutant culture of several normalised abnormalities, including corruption, is the result.

In the Shadows of Naga Insurgency: Tribes, State, and Violence in Northeast India by Jelle J P Wouters, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp xxiv + 331, ₹995.

The author says he lived for close to two years in two villages, Phugwumi of the Chakesang Naga and Noksen of the Chang Naga and was even adopted into a clan of Phugwumi. It is from this vantage, and as a trained ethnographer, he did his fieldwork for his doctoral thesis which ultimately became this book. The book thus is an insider view of the vexed six decades old Naga problem, moderated by a disciplined academic observer's overview.

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our conventional models of politics as well. As Chakrabarty notes, geological change occurs at an expansive scale, whereas our analytical framework of political processes is inadequate to deal with the nature of climate crisis, which function on a limited timescale such as four or five years (pp 34–35). Given this scalar difference, how can we imagine a politics that addresses the urgency of the climate crisis from a standpoint of political process that remains at its core constitution, indifferent to the biosphere, somewhat mirroring the way in which the biosphere is indifferent to the human? Recognising this fundamental scalar disparity between the human and the planet and being cognisant of the fact that the human is in a minority, compared to other life organisms of this planet, is critical for Chakrabarty to begin work on addressing the crisis of climate change (pp 195–96, 203–04).

By way of critique, it is useful to note that this book is written partly in conversation with several interlocutors and critics who engaged with Chakrabarty's work since the publication of his essay "The Climate of History: Four Theses" (2009). The book thus responds, anticipates, and addresses several criticisms. In particular, readers will find that

Chakrabarty extensively addresses the critique that questions of capital, and therefore the related question of intra-human justice did not find sufficient place in his original articulation. As this review makes clear, the book convincingly responds to these criticisms. However, this does not mean that these debates will conclude; if anything, this book is sure to generate more vigorous debates along these lines and new ones.

In sum, Chakrabarty's book underscores the severity of the climate crisis by arguing for a paradigmatic shift in the disciplines of social sciences and humanities. Its core message of unthinking the global by thinking about the planetary is vital to address not only the physical but also the conceptual, moral and political crisis engendered by climate change. For this reason, the book will be a point of reference for a long time to come as we work towards overcoming the epistemic and philosophical chasm that confounded Somnath in *Jana Aranya*.

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Navigating through Democracy Concerns of the Poor

SATYAJIT SINGH

This is a book that tries to understand how the poor negotiate democracy. It asks whether the poor "absorb the ideas and identities encompassed in notions associated with democracy, of citizenship, rights, improvements, and modernity?" (p 2). Or do their everyday vulnerabilities "compel them to seek recourse to clientelistic practices, communitarian vocabularies, preservation of lifestyles with which they are familiar, and the comfort of their traditions" (p 2). The author wishes to underline that the poor "neither seek assimilation

Politics of the Poor: Negotiating Democracy in Contemporary India by Indrajit Roy, *Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, New York, US, Melbourne, Australia, New Delhi and Singapore: 2018; pp xxi + 521, price not indicated.*

into the universalistic premises of democracy nor aim to perpetuate their difference" (p 5). Instead, he points to the poor's "multifaceted negotiations in and with democracy." These negotiations combine cooperation with conflict, are not necessarily conducted with formal institutions, nor are they always convened by organisations

NOTES

[The author thanks Ranu Roychoudhuri for prompt and immensely helpful feedback and constructive comments.]

- 1 As is well known, *Jana Aranya* (1975) is considered to be part of Satyajit Ray's Calcutta trilogy. The interview scene in question is quite iconic as well. Several commentators have reflected on the implication of that whole interview sequence, including the question, "what is the weight of the moon? See, for instance, Amitabha Bhattacharya (1990). *Jana Aranya* is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEMA1upForw> (last viewed on 21 June 2021). The interview sequence appears between 33:50 and 34:52.
- 2 Chakrabarty (2009) initially formulated these concerns in his essay, "The Climate of History: Four Theses." This essay appears as the first chapter in this book with an addendum addressing some of the critiques of the original essay.
- 3 See Amitav Ghosh (2016), pp 7–9.
- 4 Chakrabarty's distinction between the global and the planetary is one of the central arguments of the book that is discussed in different chapters. Most prominently, it appears in the Introduction (p 4), Chapter 3 (pp 71–81), Chapter 7 (pp 155–81), and in the last chapter, which takes the form of question-and-answer session with the French philosopher, Bruno Latour, pp 205–17.
- 5 In particular, see Chapters 1–3.

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- Ghosh, Amitav (2016): *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.

of the poor. As the poor do not "quietly adapt themselves to the authority of the elected representatives," the "poor people's politics is a politics of 'agonistic' negotiations" with democracy (p 5). The book is about establishing Chantal Mouffe's concept of an agonistic perspective in understanding the politics of the poor in India (see *Democratic Paradox*, Verso, London, 2000). According to the author, this perspective allows an examination of power relationships in which the lives of the poor are embedded and it also provides a narrative in which they can marginally affect social relations of power.

Multifaceted Negotiations

The *Politics of the Poor: Negotiating Democracy in Contemporary India?* focuses on multifaceted negotiations of the poor, in and with democracy—with politicians, bureaucrats, employers and with one

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another. These heterogeneous negotiations that outlast electoral cycles form poor people's politics. The book is not about the reasons for India's poverty or an investigation of anti-poverty policies, rather an attempt to understand the ways "in which the poor people negotiate with democracy and make meaning of it" and "the ways in which the constitution of political spaces shapes these negotiations" (p 6).

The theoretical formulation is laid down in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 deals with an analysis of the institutional opportunity structure in West Bengal and Bihar and points to the multifaceted opportunity structures that facilitate and obstruct the everyday political practices of the poor. Chapter 3 deals with how political spaces for poor politics are crafted by using a class-analytic framework to understand labour, caste and the social relations of power in the study states. The author underlines the many ways in which "practices of labour intersect with the practice of caste to produce diverse class subjectivities." There are thus a "variety of collaborations and contests" (p 184) in the lives of the poor.

The author largely relies on ethnographic details to bring out stories from rural West Bengal and Bihar. The core of his empirical work is in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. These chapters contextualise the public policy, illustrate how the poor negotiate with politicians, political mediators and democratic institutions, point to the heterogeneities in their negotiations, and reflect on the particularistic or universalistic conceptions of political life in the field sites. Each of these chapters discusses different public policy concerns. In discussing the categorisation of "below the poverty line" (BPL) (Chapter 4), a category that provides certain benefits to the poor, the engagement with the state is varied across the four sites. The supplications for being enumerated as a BPL use both categories of clientelism and citizenship and the negotiations are varied, ranging from assertion to a meek submission.

The heterogeneity of political engagement, varying from confident to reticent, is the story in Chapter 5 that examines the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural

Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Under this programme, the poor can demand employment for 100 days in a year as a right. The study of the Rajiv Gandhi Vidyutikaran Yojana in Chapter 6 brings politics to the fore with the poor disputing over the installation of electric poles in their villages and questioning the spot where the installations were done. Chapter 7 departs from developmental policies and relates to people's contentions over a temple in Sargana, Bihar where the privileged temple trustees disregard the views of the poor. The poor people's imaginations "exemplify neither an attachment to tradition nor an assimilation into modernity" (p 389).

Use of Public Spaces

The book is about how public spaces are used by the poor in demanding their rights and articulating their voice in public negotiations. This is done with a theoretical analysis of power and the use of political space through institutional opportunity structures and dynamic social relations. The empirical chapters outline the social relations of power and point to the unpredictable ways in which men and women engage in collective action. Instead of a linear approach to politics, the book provides a

nuanced and varied understanding of local politics in specific conditions. The author advances Moufe's agonistic perspective in overcoming the "theoretical impasse between universalism and particularism." Hence, he goes beyond the assimilationist perspective that focuses on universalist principles or their particularistic values. The focus on a wide variety of "people's negotiations with democracy" provides him a perspective to examine "ambivalence, heterogeneity, and poly-vocality of these negotiations" (p 399). These agonistic negotiations are at the boundaries of formal politics and everyday politics. These heterogeneous negotiations are political as they are concerned with the policies of the state and competition over the resources that they provide to the poor. This book is a valuable addition to the literature on Indian democracy and politics and its greatest value is that it rises above electoral politics to understand the various ways in which the poor negotiate their rights with the state and allied power structures and create opportunity structures for their everyday existence.

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EPWRF India Time Series Expansion of Banking Statistics Module (State-wise Data)

The Economic and Political Weekly Research Foundation (EPWRF) has added state-wise data to the existing Banking Statistics module of its online India Time Series (ITS) database.

State-wise and region-wise (north, north-east, east, central, west and south) time series data are provided for deposits, credit (sanction and utilisation), credit-deposit (CD) ratio, and number of bank offices and employees.

Data on bank credit are given for a wide range of sectors and sub-sectors (occupation) such as agriculture, industry, transport operators, professional services, personal loans (housing, vehicle, education, etc), trade and finance. These state-wise data are also presented by bank group and by population group (rural, semi-urban, urban and metropolitan).

The data series are available from December 1972; half-yearly basis till June 1989 and annual basis thereafter. These data have been sourced from the Reserve Bank of India's publication, *Basic Statistical Returns of Scheduled Commercial Banks in India*.

Including the Banking Statistics module, the EPWRF ITS has 23 modules covering a range of macroeconomic and financial data on the Indian economy. For more details, visit www.epwrfits.in or e-mail to: its@epwrf.in

Suspicious state

Abhishek Saha's book captures the lack of transparency in citizenship determination in Assam and exposes the deep inequality in the relationship between the state and its citizens. BY DARSHANA MITRA



No Land's People
The Untold Story of Assam's NRC Crisis
 By Abhishek Saha
 HarperCollins India
 Pages: 303
 Price: Rs.599

IN 1949, a seven-year-old girl named Alata Rani and her family fled the Muktagacha region in Mymensingh district of East Pakistan to settle in Bhuragaon, a village in Assam. Alata's name was included in the 1951 National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, conducted as part of the first Census in independent India. She survived the devastating Assam-Tibet earthquake of 1950 and lived through the 1960 Assam language riots, and later raised a family of her own in BARPETA, Assam. In 1997, however, the Election Commission of India (ECI) marked her as a 'D', or 'doubtful', voter. This meant that in 2019, 70 years after she had left East Pakistan, Alata Rani Saha was excluded from the NRC in Assam.

Alata Rani Saha's story forms the heart of *No Land's People*, a book that documents the history of the NRC in Assam. Written by her grandson Abhishek Saha, the book documents what is possibly one of the largest citizenship determination exercises in the world.

Abhishek Saha is a Guwahati-based journalist with *The Indian Express*, and this book brings together his extensive report-

ing on the NRC.

Alata Rani Saha is one of 3,30,27,661 persons, almost the entire population of Assam, who applied to be included in the NRC, and she is also one of the 19 lakh persons who were excluded from the final list. Abhishek Saha's clinical examination is, consequently, leavened by confusion and anguish at his grandmother's exclusion.

LACK OF STATE TRANSPARENCY

Alata Rani's story is an eye-opener on the opacity that defines the citizenship determination processes in Assam today. From the Quit India notices issued in 1961-66, and the marking of over 3.7 lakh persons as 'D' voters in 1997 as part of an exercise conducted by

the ECI, to the more recent issuance of reference notices by the Border Police and the NRC, citizenship determination has followed multiple routes in Assam.

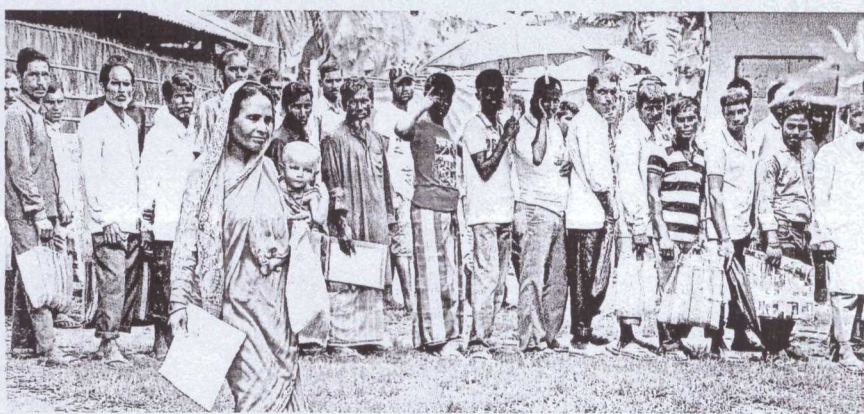
However, unlike other forms of state prosecution of undesirables—criminal trials, for example—citizenship determination processes can feel like being looked at through a one-way mirror. Rarely, if ever, does the state provide adequate justification for why it suspects an individual of being a foreigner. 'D' voters are never informed about the reasons for which they are marked as doubtful, and many have to wait for years to even receive a notice from the Foreigners' Tribunal giving them an opportunity to defend their citizenship.

Abhishek Saha's Right to Information (RTI) query on his grandmother's 'D' voter tag was returned with the response: "Not available in this office". As of February 2018, there were 1,25,333 'D' voters in Assam, and the vast majority of them, including Alata Rani Saha, had never received notices from the state.

Similarly, much of the NRC has been conducted through modalities and mechanisms inaccessible to the public or by relying on documents of doubtful and indeterminate authenticity. The Supreme Court's supervision of the NRC has relied on sealed cover reports and private Powerpoint presentations from Prateek Hajela, former NRC State coordinator, much of which was not accessible to the affected parties. Both the 'D' voter process and the NRC process highlight how deeply unequal and precarious the relationship between the citizen and the state has become.

The citizen is compelled to present before the state all of her documentation and every single detail of her life that the state may find relevant to her citizenship status, but the state is not obligated to practise transparency in

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RITURAJ KONWAR

AT AN NRC centre in Morigaon district of Assam on August 13, 2018.

return. Today, two years after the publication of the final list, excluded persons such as Alata Rani Saha are no closer to finding out the reasons for their exclusion or, for that matter, the consequences.

PIECING NRC TOGETHER

Abhishek Saha's book succeeds in reducing this informational disparity to a certain extent by painstakingly piecing together the NRC process.

A chapter on original inhabitants (OIs) explains how an applicant's surname determines the level of scrutiny her NRC application will be subjected to: a person with an identifiable Assamese Hindu surname is categorised as an original inhabitant and exempted from having to produce rigorous documentary evidence. On the other hand, non-OI women are not only denied such procedural benefits, but in many instances they are doubly disadvantaged because of the lack of formal documentation that can be used to support their citizenship claims. These and such other details would have remained incomprehensible to non-legal audiences but for the

care and precision with which Abhishek Saha explains their consequences for affected persons.

In all this, his reportage is vital, as is this book, in that it performs the essential public function of informing citizens of the processes being used to disenfranchise them. Further, Abhishek Saha does it from the lens of someone personally affected by these processes—someone who has had to encounter the state's opacity.

In recognition of his efforts, and that of journalists like him, Abhishek Saha's name was included in a document titled "NRC: The Other Story—Journalists involved in the anti-NRC propaganda", released anonymously in August 2019. This document mentioned his roots in Barpeta and profiled him as someone bent on destroying the reputation of the NRC. *No Land's People* is possibly one of the first accounts, and certainly the most comprehensive, of the NRC by someone directly affected by this mass disenfranchisement. What the 2019 dossier identified as a liability is perhaps Abhishek Saha's strength—being the grandson of Alata Rani

Saha, who, in her eighties, will have to now defend her citizenship.

The book also highlights an important fact to contextualise citizenship determination processes in Assam—that there is no consensus on the number of undocumented migrants in the State. Abhishek Saha dives into the various competing estimates of migration and documents how official figures, including those quoted by Lt General S.K. Sinha, former Assam Governor, are not supported by any factual assessment. These figures have not formed the basis for the NRC but are now being used to discredit the entire exercise because the actual number of people excluded is less than the projected number of "illegal migrants".

A recent application filed in the Supreme Court by Hitesh Dev Sarma, the NRC State Coordinator, asking for a complete reverification of the NRC, illustrates how a satisfactory NRC and an accurate NRC may mean two entirely different things.

In the epilogue to his book, titled 'The idea of India', Abhishek Saha suggests that the historically

specific basis for the Assam NRC is now being subverted to bring it in line with the ideals of Hindu majoritarian politics. He laments the loss of a moment, not so long ago in India's history, when the "multitude of identities and histories; ethnicities, languages and religions; nationalist and sub-nationalist movements" could still hope to coalesce into an inclusive national identity.

While it is true that political rhetoric today unequivocally identifies Muslims as the enemy, to be excised from the body politic of the nation state, Abhishek Saha's own account of the citizenship determination processes in Assam speaks to an existential crisis of national identity that seems to have plagued us for as long as we have been a nation.

The nation state has always reserved the right to define itself, and its sovereign prerogative to define who is a citizen (insider) and who is not (outsider) is considered largely unassailable. Defining who gets to be a member of its body politic is central to the identity of the nation state, because "a nation-state is a nation's state", according to the writer William Rogers Brubaker.

But who gets to be part of that nation, and who remains the interloper, whose mere presence is deemed suspicious? *No Land's People* documents what happens when the state decides that everyone is a potential interloper, doubtful and suspicious. □ *Darshana Mitra is a lawyer and researcher working on issues of citizenship law in India.*

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THIS is a heart-warming M. Mukundan pioneers of Malayalam Mukundan length novel: story collecti couple of scree credit. The n action takes pl a city where spent more th ades of his life essentially au ical in nature.) part, the au hand experien rations from and tertiary coupled with imagination, cc novel.

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Book Review

✓ Sanjay Kumar and Jugal Kishore, *Public Health Care in India: Historical Background and Current Realities*, New Delhi: Century Publications, 2020, 288 pages, Rs 450.

Sanjay Kumar and Jugal Kishore's book, *Public Health Care in India: Historical Background and Current Realities*, is a valuable contribution towards both understanding the current health care scenario in India and to historical accounts of the evolution of public health practices. The book takes us through public health during ancient India, medical practices in the medieval era and emerging concepts of modern public health in colonial India, that have shaped the foundation of the public health system in independent India and impacted the plans, policies and progress in health care. Trained as social science researchers and medical professionals, having researched and taught history of medicine, and being a medical educator and public health expert respectively, Kumar and Kishore are placed in a unique position to provide a firsthand view of public health care in India.

The author duo are straightforward in arguing for the universal accessibility of health to the people of India given the diverse and unequal social structure. They have substantiated their arguments with remarkable experiences and intensive health research and point out that even though India has seen improvement in many health indicators, a majority of the people are facing hurdles in receiving quality health care services. In the same vein, while they accept progress in the development of health care and outcomes, they also raise questions triggered by the pain experienced by the common people. At the centre of this important work is the authors' concern for the poor and disadvantaged sections of society when it comes to their health care. Quite often, the authors' anguish is reflected in descriptions of the state of health care provisioning placed in the larger context of the social structure and political economy of the country. The role of political interests is alluded to when reflecting on the promotion of private care, which moved more and more services out of the reach of common men and women.

The book covers a wide array of issues related to the development paradigm and its relationship with public health with a strong historical grasp. While tracing the history of medical practices, the book foregrounds

the fact that public health is an integral part of education, agriculture, technology, environment and politics. The narrative in the book can be broadly divided into three parts. The first speaks of the Indian health system pre- and post-independence India, the second traces the history of public health, medical practices and the concept of modern public health from the pre-colonial to the colonial period, and the third includes their insights and debates on the health situation, health policies, development, environmental aspects of health, arguments on public versus private health care system, regional inequalities, health expenditure, out of pocket expenditure, health regulations, and discussions on various health surveys and reports of commissions and committees. Medical tourism and health insurance is discussed to show how accessibility of health care is compromised in the background of emerging globalisation.

The initial chapters provide a historical outline of traditional medicine in the pre-colonial period. This is followed by a detailed discussion on changes during the period of British rule. Assessing the situation under British rule, the authors argue that the concern of the colonial state was with the health of European civilians and soldiers in India, rather than that of the 'natives'. Access to health care was limited to few and majority of the population was neglected. The system created by colonial rule favoured the urban population, resulting in unevenness between rural and urban health vaccination and more importantly, and inadequate disease control measures that demonstrate the failure of the British health policy.

The authors observe that due to the colonial legacy, the entire Indian health sector focused on how to manage epidemics in the 1950s and 60s. The Indian State was absorbed in helping and supporting the process of accumulating capital in the private sector through large-scale investment in infrastructure, capital goods industry, and financial services while neglecting the social sectors like public health and education. Despite the various community development programmes and shifts in focus areas and priorities, policy did not produce sustained results in health-related areas, though the programmes may have helped in reducing absolute poverty. Assessing the recommendations made by the Bhore and Sokhey Committees, the authors feel that the heart of the Bhore committee was in the right place, when it argued that health planning should be an integral part of national planning and the private practice of health care should be prohibited. However, the outcome of the committee was far from satisfactory as it came out with a changed focus, with privatisation of health care being preferred including by the government agencies. In other words, it came out with a systems approach to health care looking at health in terms of a diagnostic and curative health care as the cornerstone of health policies.

The authors argue that the health system in India cannot be understood in isolation and reflects the paradoxes of the country's development

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trajectory since Independence. While on the one hand, we have world-class hospitals encouraging medical tourism, on the other, most Indians suffer from various infectious diseases, and many perish due to inadequate access to treatment due to high costs. The prevalence of malnutrition in India is amongst the highest in the world; the Millennium Development Goals for infant and maternal mortality have not been attained and there is an increasing burden of non-communicable diseases. Health spending is largely financed by out-of-pocket expenditures, which is catastrophic and pushes a substantial number of people into poverty year after year. Public health expenditure, despite repeated promises in election manifestos as well as in policy documents of towards raising it to 2.5 per cent to 3 per cent of GDP, remains at around 1.2 per cent of GDP. In this context, this book provides not just an analysis of the causes for failure but also insights into what needs to be done in order to take corrective action.

The book is a useful contribution to the history of the development of medicinal systems and health care in the country, provides a good analysis of the current situation, incorporating relevant data. It would be valuable as a reference book for researchers, students and health activists aiming to understand questions relating to the problems of India's health infrastructure and dilemmas in some detail.

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, May 2021

BOOK REVIEW

Maximising the impact of teaching assistants in primary schools: a practical guide for school leaders, by Rob Webster, Paula Bosanquet, Sally Franklin and Matthew Parker. Routledge. London 2021, 148 pp., Paperback £26.99 ISBN: 9780367468347

Review for European Journal of Special Needs Education, by Toby Greany, University of Nottingham

Anyone who worked in English education during the mid-2000s will remember the Workforce Agreement reached between the government and teacher unions, which aimed to reduce teacher workloads by expanding the number of Teaching Assistants (TAs) and other support staff roles in schools. Schools were supported to implement the changes through a 'workforce remodelling' programme, however the government's own evaluation of this hugely expensive project was disappointing, finding 'no evidence ... (of) changes in attainment' and that 'support staff at all levels reported excessive workload, despite large increases in support staff numbers' (Hutchings et al. 2009, 17–18).

Fast forward to the current day and school leaders are being asked to remodel their use of TAs once again, but this time in a much more constrained budgetary climate. The need for this renewed focus is the evidence compiled by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) that, despite comprising more than a third of the primary and nursery school workforce, TAs have a limited impact overall and 'a disproportionately *negative* effect for the most disadvantaged pupils – specifically, lower attainers and pupils with SEND' (Education Endowment Foundation 2020).

Thankfully, this book provides a strongly evidenced and thoughtful, but also deeply grounded and practical set of tools, processes and stories that primary school leaders can draw on to address this dispiriting finding. Rob Webster is now an Associate Professor based in the Centre for Inclusive Education at the UCL Institute of Education, but he started his career working as a TA before collaborating with Peter Blatchford on the hugely influential Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project (Blatchford, Russell, and Webster 2012). Building on that work, Webster and his co-authors developed the Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants (MITA) programme, which has now been accessed by thousands of schools in the UK and more widely (see <http://maximisingtas.co.uk/>). Two large-scale regional interventions in England that draw heavily on the MITA approach have been evaluated positively (Sibieta and Sianesi 2019; Maxwell et al. 2019), while a national EEF-funded evaluation is due to be published later this year.

The book's intended readership is primary headteachers, so the style and format is 'practitioner friendly', with plenty of useful summaries and implications drawn out. The authors also draw on quotes and examples from leaders, teachers and TAs from five case study schools that have been active participants in the MITA programme. However, the authors are clear that the book is 'not a manual' and that there is no 'one size fits all' solution for maximising the impact of TAs. They start by reviewing existing theory and practice before working through Kotter's famous eight-step framework, showing how heads can use this process in flexible ways to initiate and embed desired changes across their school. Three final chapters focus on related areas: the typical shifts required in TA practices and interactions with children in classroom

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contexts if they are to scaffold independent learning; how best to prepare and support TAs to fulfil their new roles successfully; and, lastly, how to maximise the impact of structured interventions delivered by TAs outside classrooms.

The authors argue powerfully that TAs are the 'mortar in the brickwork' of schools, holding them together in numerous and sometimes unnoticed ways. Drawing on the DISS findings, they seek to explain why it is that TAs based in mainstream classrooms have a negative impact overall on pupil outcomes, and particularly on the lower attaining and SEND children that they are most often deployed to support. Key issues here are that these children too often end up receiving less teacher input than their more able peers and that they end up, in effect, 'outsourcing' their learning to their TA, developing learned helplessness. In Webster et al.'s view, the implication for headteachers are twofold: firstly, TAs should not be used as an informal teaching resource for lower attaining and SEND pupils; secondly, TAs should be deployed in ways that add value to what teachers do, not to replace them.

The implications of these statements are profound, requiring significant changes across all aspects and layers of a school, from its core culture, beliefs and values, to ways of working and collaborating, to structures, systems and processes in areas such as timetabling and contractual arrangements. For these reasons, Webster et al. are clear that the Headteacher must actively lead the process and avoid delegating it to the SENCO. Success involves integrating any MITA-related changes into the school's wider strategic plans and vision – built in, not bolted on to existing priorities. Furthermore, the authors are clear that the 'how' is equally as important as the 'what' of change: listening to and involving diverse voices, taking time to really understand the issues, iterating, learning and embedding the new approach into daily norms and culture are all key to success.

In this sense, the MITA programme has arguably been one of the most significant whole-school change programmes to have been attempted in England in recent years and the book includes some rich observations on why the leadership of this change does or doesn't succeed. Critically, in contrast with New Labour's workforce remodelling programme, this attempt has been built on a strongly evidenced and well-theorised approach, which has been refined over time and has the advantage of mostly working with volunteer schools. Nevertheless, the challenges are not to be underestimated – TAs are often nervous that MITA is really a route to rationalisation, while teachers can be 'disinterested and ambivalent' despite the direct implications for their own planning and work.

One of the most interesting aspects of this story is the authors' analysis of why change can be so difficult for schools. Part of the problem is the government's lack of interest – or, in their devastating aside, 'the government's policy on TAs appears to be not to have one' (p29). But the wider issue is that England's 'accountability system does not reward good implementation' (p37), meaning that ever-busy leaders have become accustomed to making rapid and instrumentally focussed decisions that, they hope, will lead to rapid improvements in pupil outcomes, rather than taking time to think through and address the deep-set cultures and norms that shape daily classroom practice. This observation is particularly interesting in the context of the current 'what works' agenda underway in England and, it seems, worldwide (Gorard 2020), which privileges robust evidence derived from Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) above all else. As Webster et al. highlight, RCTs 'work' best at assessing tightly defined interventions, such as the numerous catch-up packages that TAs deliver outside class. RCTs are less well suited to evaluating complex whole-school changes, such as MITA, where scripted fidelity is impossible and leadership is required to adapt any intervention to the particular needs and context of the school (Anders et al, 2017). In this sense, I would question the authors' decision to use the EEF's preferred word 'implementation', which implies a largely rational and technical process, rather than the broader term 'change', which suggests the wider socio-cultural


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challenges that leaders must always consider if they are to lead genuine school improvement.

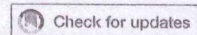
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© 2021 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1902112>



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of his other material—an intimate account and detailed texture of emotions and feelings, often united through the violence of war. It is hardly a wonder that many of the texts Das reads in the book overlap with each other through their generic or formal choices even when they represent diverse—or even oppositional—ideas, ideologies, or experiences. These conspicuously ‘literary’ texts allow Das to consolidate his material with a tighter grip, with an underlying vision that it is the intimate and solitary that can best capture the shared ‘culture’ of the First World War. Both diversity of material (much of which was unknown or unseen so far) and exceptional methodological insights make this book a serious candidate for the classic account of Indian experience of the First World War.

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✓ **Jyoti Mohan, *Claiming India: French Scholars and the Preoccupation with India in the Nineteenth Century*, SAGE Publications, New Delhi, 2017, 432 pp., \$59.99. ISBN: 9789352804658.**

DOI: 10.1177/02576430211007627

In this deeply researched and innovative book, Jyoti Mohan considers how an idea of India was created in France, mostly by scholars in the nineteenth century, then disseminated globally with lasting implications. By closely examining the writings of missionaries, Enlightenment *Philosophes*, Indologists, philologists, anthropologists, colonial officials, textbook writers and others, Mohan shows how India was used as a canvas for French observers, upon which to draw a vision that advanced various political imperial agendas and scholarly ambitions.

The French colonial project in India was a long standing one, establishing itself in the second half of the seventeenth century, and not concluding until 1954, well after Indian independence in 1947. And as Mohan points out, for much of this period, the French presence was politically marginal, especially following the rise of the British Raj. Nevertheless, writings on and images of India created in France were a powerful tool for the creation of an “epistemological empire”: the collective body of ideas, writings, images, museum exhibits and scholarly work which allowed the French to “claim” India. Ideas constructed by French writers about caste, religion, history and race in India were disseminated far and wide. These rhetorical claims were largely motivated by the politics of empire, as Mohan argues: ‘having irrevocably lost India to the British the French could at least claim a superior understanding of India’ (xxvii).

The book cogently charts the construction of the claim of knowledge of India through two efforts: on the one hand, the creation of an intellectual archive about India, created by French writers, academics (especially the so-called Indologists and anthropologists) and other self-described specialists on India. And on the

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other hand, the formation of popular understandings and recollections of colonial India among French people of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mohan argues that the highly specialized and academic intellectual work still shaped popular conceptions of India in France. Even more broadly, she suggests that the central place afforded to French scholars in the study of India has meant that the image of India which was created in France came to define the subcontinent for people around the globe.

While the heart of the book begins with the Enlightenment, the first chapter is devoted to an earlier period and the image of India depicted in the writings of missionaries, dating back to texts written in the fourteenth century by the Dominican missionary Jourdain du Séverac, but focusing mostly on the letters written and published by Jesuits in the eighteenth century and collected in the volumes of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*. While the eighteenth-century Jesuit letters are clearly imbricated in the French contemporaneous political project, the broader context for the claims made in the earlier missionary text remains somewhat unclear.

During the Enlightenment, India became an object of fascination for the philosophes, and none more so than Montesquieu and Voltaire. Given their influence on the European intellectual landscape, the centrality of academic preoccupation with India in the nineteenth century finds its roots in the eighteenth century. It was in the latter part of the eighteenth century that French “Indology” took shape, particularly through the growing interest in Sanskrit, which some early French Indologists studied in translated work in Arabic, Chinese and Persian. Through their efforts, and the acquisition of Sanskrit manuscripts by metropolitan actors, Mohan shows how Paris became the European capital of enquiry into Indian languages. While these early enquiries were characterized, argues Mohan, by romantic and lyrical views of India, the study of India shifted shape in the early nineteenth century, with a transition towards philological, empirically oriented work which focused on comparative linguistics and grammar, syntax and structure, mirroring—and shaping—general trends in European intellectual history.

The transition from the more florid and lyrical accounts of Indian culture and literature to the philological and ‘scientific’ accounts of India and especially Indian languages was accompanied by another shift—the topic of the fifth and sixth chapters: the creation of racialized and racist theories about Indians and a preoccupation with the myth of ‘Aryan purity’. Here Mohan notes the different ways that the ‘Aryan purity’ discourse was used by Europeans to justify imperial ambitions of domination over India and its relation to the development of anthropology as a means of creating a hierarchical ranking of humans as inferior and superior, a cornerstone of the discipline. This process is one that is well studied in a vast body of literature, and Mohan’s important contribution to it lies in her focus on a group of French scholars of the mid-nineteenth century who wrote early anthropological scholarship on India, including Louis Rousset, Arthur Gobineau, Paul Topinard and Gustave le Bon. The analysis is especially powerful in showing the transformation of French Indology from its philological and textual stage to its focus on race and racism, physiology and caste, as stemming

from broader developments in the growth of anthropology as an academic discipline and beyond. This research contributes to the recent scholarship on the same topics, especially Alice Conklin's work on the development of anthropology in France and its imperial and racist dimensions, as well as Pierre Singaravélou's study of the 'colonial sciences'.

In the last part of the book, Mohan turns to examine how the work on India created by French scholars was disseminated to a popular audience, mainly through accounts of India in French school textbooks and popular histories, and in the colonial exhibitions of the early twentieth century. School textbooks, which were not written by specialists in the history of India, drew on the academic work of Indologists, thereby allowing Mohan to trace a direct line between the specialized work charted in earlier parts of the book to its reception by a much broader audience. These textbooks were also a site for displaying the rivalry between the French and English in India, since the narratives highlighted the political and military struggles between the two colonial powers. The final chapter compares representations of India in the Imperial Exhibition of Wembley in 1924–1925 with the *Exposition coloniale* in Paris in 1931, thereby providing rich empirical ground for a comparison between French and British conceptions and visual representations of India. The chapter compellingly argues that the construction of India in the French colonial exposition was premised on denying the reality of British colonial rule in India.

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Whitney Cox, *Politics, Kingship, and Poetry in Medieval South India: Moonset on Sunrise Mountain*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi (South Asian Edition), 2017, 309 + i–xv pp., ₹470.

DOI: 10.1177/02576430211007626

Perhaps one of the intensely researched areas in the history of South Asia has been the Cōḷa state and politics. Often characterized by hectic epistemological debates, the rich historiographical oeuvre ranges from amongst K.A.N. Sastri's many comprehensive masterpieces and Burton Stein's methodologically pathbreaking work to Noboru Karashima's and Y. Subbarayalu's empirically rich cliometric analyses of the settlement patterns and property rights. Whitney Cox's present work under review, *Politics, Kingship, and Poetry in Medieval South India*, is yet another addition to this list. Applying the methods of philology for reconstructing the history of Cōḷa state politics between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, this work documents in detail the life of the Cōḷa king Kulōttuṅga I (c. 1070–1122 CE) through a nuanced reading of inscriptions and literary texts produced at his court. The study argues emphatically that the Cōḷa politics and political language should

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Family, State, and Ideal Populations Unearthing Histories of Population Planning

APRAJITA SARCAR

Reproductive Politics and the Making of Modern India examines the significance of family planning in the economic modernisation in India. National worries about overpopulation influenced statist visions of sovereignty and individual freedom. Family planning embodied grand visions of modernity through reproductive choices, while also showcasing worries about the quality of the population. The book illustrates the proximity of developmental economics to eugenics. Mytheli Sreenivas embeds reproductive politics in India in its planned economy of the 1920s till the 1970s. She contributes to the rich scholarship on histories of birth control in late colonial India. Additionally, this literature has been put in a conversation with global histories of population.

The book can be analysed in three layers: the first layer studies change in marriage practices and birth control advocacy; the second layer examines the links between population planning and economic development; and the third layer links family planning to famines and food security. With clear and concise language, the book is paving the way for historians to study links between population planning and modern statecraft. The period of the book is from the late colonial to the postcolonial period leading up to the 1970s. It ends with a note on how the 1980s saw shifts in the statist vocabulary around women's health. The book slowly lays out how reproductive politics accrued coercive techniques over the decades. Constructed as a solution to poverty, targeted birth control advocacy allegedly brought economic prosperity.

Sreenivas undercuts the limits that national boundaries place on studying the planned family. She lays out the way it became a site for global population

BOOK REVIEWS

Reproductive Politics and the Making of Modern India by Mytheli Sreenivas, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021; pp 274, ₹2,250.

control movements to converge, change, and experiment policies on birth control.

The Family

Through the structure of the book, the author expands on the intentions of her earlier work on conjugality in colonial Madras (Sreenivas 2008). Conjugality (the relations between a man and a woman who are unrelated and tied through affection and romance) in the late colonial Madras reshaped the extended family and its associated laws of property inheritance. This new family formation moved away from traditionally large ones. In the present work, Sreenivas extends the analysis of this family unit to the ideal family that embodied the national programme. This family unit was necessarily heterosexual and reinforced a home in which modernisation could circumvent other family formations.

Through Tamil posters, calendar art, and propaganda campaigns, Sreenivas drew a continuity between late colonial politics of sexuality to postcolonial anxieties of sovereignty and statehood. The book successfully imbricates the Hindu nuclear family within a schema of statist vision, national economy, and sexual desire by showcasing the wife's will to be sterilised as her acquiescence to a happy marriage (p 179).

The book adds to the existing social histories of population control by placing different historiographies in conversation with each other. The historiography on family exists on two scales. We have regional histories of the small family and birth control. These histories focus on

the new family formations and conjugal relations in the late colonial India (Majumdar 2009; Hodges 2008; Devika 2008). Concomitant with these clusters are histories of transnational advocates for birth control (Annie Besant, Margaret Sanger, and Marie Stopes are examples) in the same period (Ahluwalia 2008; Nadkarni 2014).

The other cluster of work locates population planning as a central imperative that transforms decolonisation. They focus on the effect of Malthusian family planning on global diplomacy, circuits of power, and knowledge communities. Predominant in this cluster is the United States' love for demographic transition in the newly independent countries, especially during—but not limited to—the Cold War (Connelly 2008; Bashford 2013). The book collates these differing historiographies. Literature on birth control in colonial India can now be read along contemporary global discussions on population.

Population Planning

Many social histories of birth control start off from Foucauldian governmentality, while not limiting themselves to a single framework. This book follows a similar pattern, by treating the planned family as a heuristic device to understand eugenics dressed as economic modernisation. Sreenivas identifies the neat divide between family planning and population control as problematic. Scholars have maintained that the concepts are different as family planning entails people voluntarily accepting contraceptives; while population control has a streak of coercion that is sharpened around targeted sterilisations. The book is successful in analysing how the voluntary acceptance falls within the ambit of coerced sterilisations, in the name of improving the nation. This analysis carries Alison Bashford's (2013: 350) work forward in questioning the way a state persuades its people to reduce family size. In this way, the author questions how the Indian state structured governance around fertility control; it became the sole way out of poverty and malnourishment.

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There is a recent spurt in literature on the Emergency years. Part of the notoriety of 1975–77 was the forced vasectomies of “target” populations. Gyan Prakash (2019) has observed how sterilisations were consonant with populist authoritarianism. The author’s project is different. The book smoothly circumvents the Emergency years to show that the state functioned between coercion and incentive even before and after those years. Curbing fertility accrued coercive techniques over the decades, right after being spelt out in terms of economic prosperity. Mohan Rao (1994) has already critiqued the Malthusian influences on the national programme (Hartmann 1987). What Sreenivas brings to the discussion is how positive eugenics sat very comfortably along rhetoric around improving living conditions of people.

Another facet of the book delineates how neo-Malthusianism informed governmental decisions on food security and sustenance. Starting from the famine of 1876–78, shortage of food was blamed on the colonised population’s reproductive behaviour. As the author notes,

the new regimes of counting that developed during the late 19th century, and the

accompanying importance of numbers in the administration, prompted a new economisation of life, whereby the benefits of lives saved was calibrated against the cost. (p 43)

The colonial state saw famines as positive checks that would bring the population numbers down. Famines would also be sieves that ensure only upper-caste privileged families, unaffected by the food shortage, would be encouraged to procreate. The health of an individual family was tied to its prosperity. However, such thinking had its critics. M G Ranade and Dadabhai Naoroji rejected this form of legitimising famines and moved away from this link between the family and economy (pp 52–54). They blamed imperialism for the food shortage. Notwithstanding such a critique, birth control activist and Congress leader Annie Besant blamed overpopulation for poverty and rallied for birth control to improve national economic conditions. The book examines interwar years’ discussion of birth control through Katherine Mayo’s *Mother India* (1927). This popular text was useful in rendering poor Indian families as regressive. This narrative was crucial in enabling a transnational consensus on the need for population control and

advocating safe birth practices in India. Even as the Indian National Congress rejected the racist narrative of the book, it accepted the need for birth control.

The book also examines how the imperial state used population control to limit the global movement of people towards settler colonies. This chapter draws heavily from Bashford’s (2013) analysis of Radhakamal Mukherjee. Both authors observe how Mukherjee advocated for free movement populations to “empty lands” of Australia and other settler colonies. This advocacy assumed emptiness by erasing the indigenous claims of First Nations to these lands. It assumed that migrants from India would make good use of these vast territories and not let them go to waste; simultaneously, their migration would lessen the population density in India.

Elite Anxieties

This question of land and settling populations influenced Indian feminists, too. The chapter on transnational feminist advocacy for birth control is deeply intertwined with Sanjam Ahluwalia’s (2008) work. This segment explains how elite networks of birth control advocacy

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fostered a national community of privileged women. Many literate and upwardly mobile women worked to disseminate contraceptive information. In the 1940s, Congress leaders like Dhanvanthi Rama Rau drew a direct link between gendered family planning to the national economy that was emerging through the Planning Commission. One part of their advocacy was a latent worry about nurturing productive citizens. This anxiety about the quality of births was linked to the national development. Simultaneously, this elite worry about access to contraceptives served eugenic prerogatives. Feminists accepted that overpopulation caused India to be poor and its people malnourished. Intergenerational poverty was causing degeneracy.

The network of middle-class women spoke for and over subaltern women. By the 1950s, contraceptive use was no longer a simple mode of planning children but stood for so much more. The upper-caste women who were worried about the unhygienic and unsafe birthing conditions propagated contraceptives as tools of empowerment. The All India Women's Conference and Margaret Sanger were allies in this twofold worry about lowering population numbers and bettering the "quality" of births in the world. Such advocacy found its critics, too. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay discussed people's access to sustenance and space without citing birth control as the sole method to reach this goal. The first health minister of India Rajkumari Amrit Kaur resisted this logic, too. However, her motivation might have been different. Even as she rejected economic development through contraceptives, she endorsed the rhythm method—one that had M K Gandhi's approval. These critics were sidestepped as the First Five Year Plan supported mass advocacy campaigns instilling contraceptive-use to outgrow poverty.

In the middle of the last chapter, Sreenivas asserts (through an inspection of state-sponsored campaigns) that the Indian state reinforced the heteropatriarchal notion of inheritance through son preference amongst the new visions of home and family. Sreenivas states that in the archives, she did not come across any publicity text that showed the

ideational children to be of one gender (p 179). This point has been left under-analysed. I believe regional specificities of the population control programmes demanded changes in the rhetoric around the national campaign. The author could have asked how this statist avoidance of son preference may have changed according to political geographies: Indian states may have avoided the question using differing rhetoric. These different enunciations would further the analysis of efforts to reduce family size without disturbing the region's specifically traditional kinship ties. The book had the potential at this point to integrate the interviews that the author had with women in Tamil Nadu to revisit the way the Tamil programme had aspects that were unique to it and not commensurable with the programmes in other states.

Future Scholarship

The book turns particularly bold towards the end of the last chapter and the epilogue. This part of the book can be read almost as a manifesto for future scholarship on family planning and population control. The author has opened the field up to studying the universal small family within global modernisation policies. Studying "family planning" as a historical object necessitates looking at national population programmes within global networks of power. Such studies will help understand how population planning transformed developing countries. In a parallel trajectory, Sreenivas also underlines neo-Malthusian influences on climate activism. Here too, advocates for reduced carbon emissions call for family planning. Reduced birth rates, once again, becomes the sole solution—this time, for environmental conservation. Thus, the "framework of crisis" that overwhelms every discussion on birth rates is not new and mutates ever so insidiously as solutions to political problems (p 206). Future scholars have the twofold responsibility of tracing the regional specificities of demographic planning while analysing Malthusian influences on discussions regarding the biosphere.

As the lineage of literature has shown, this book is of vital importance to scholars of postcolonial states, modernisation,

and population control. Even if the book is situated within South Asian historiography, many of the claims work within a transnational context too. The way it merges social histories of family and kinship with global histories of population control will ease the work of setting a national problem in an international scale. Scholars must expand on these existing analyses to explain how population control remains relevant across ideological spectrums and changing regimes of governments. Such a book should find a home in syllabi on medical histories and demography. The scale of the book makes it an important contribution to sociological studies too. Finally, it is an important read for students of population studies to understand how, historically, family units—their primary data points—have been governed.

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BOOKS

GIRL, INTERRUPTED

Farah Bashir's memoir of growing up in Kashmir is haunted by both absent comforts and present traumas

RUMOURS OF SPRING
A Girlhood in Kashmir
by Farah Bashir
FOURTH ESTATE INDIA
₹499; 240 pages



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Farah Bashir's memoir, *Rumours of Spring: A Girlhood in Kashmir*, is a tender and mournful account of growing up in a land in which, as her dedication puts it, children "know nothing of a normal childhood". How could they, given that Kashmiri lives in the past three decades have been ravaged by violence that has displaced many and made others prisoners in their own homes? Those who have not left the Valley live under the surveillance and intrusions of a security apparatus that acts to instil fear into all.

Rumours of Spring tells of a girl coming into adulthood

as she navigates the world outside her home while noting how nothing at home remains the same. Daily routines are disrupted, sometimes spectacularly, by curfews and crackdowns, but more often by the daily grind of fear and uncertainty. And then there is the news, or rumours in the absence of news: protests, fring, the killing of adults and children, the beating and humiliation of people going about their business. No one remains untouched, no child is exempt. The very language of childhood shifts, the everyday games and rituals of friendship, as children internalise the threat posed by bunkers and armed men with unchecked authority.

Bashir's memoir is powerful in its quiet recounting of disrupted lives. It is also a moving love song addressed to her grandmother, Bobeh, whose care enveloped her and attempted to protect

her against all manner of emotional damage. Bobeh's asthma, made worse by the tear gas that filters into their home, is a metaphor for the impossibility of shutting out the violence of the street. Bodies wilt under such pressure: Bashir secretly pulls out tufts of her hair, and at another moment, stops eating. Something is gnawing at her, her mother knows, but folk remedies do nothing. The men of the house are particularly vulnerable. Her father no longer sits at ease at his bolster but crouches, as if ready to move at a moment's notice. And Bashir's childhood lurches through these years of turmoil: schools are often shut for months, the thrills of shops and salons are denied, there are stories of militants

throwing acid on women who do not cover themselves.

But there is the joy of forbidden letters exchanged with an older boy—they stop, but not because they are found out, but because the post office is torched. In these dark decades, nothing happens for ordinary reasons.

The Pandit family across the street leaves and Bashir is too terrified to ask

why. Delayed school examinations and results mark the passage of years, and Bashir slips into an apathy. "Our lives were controlled from elsewhere and

the dreams we dreamt were always at the mercy of someone else, someone occupying us, ruling us," she writes. If there is hope, it seems to lie elsewhere. And the coming of spring remains, even today, but a rumour. ■

—Suvir Kaul

FARAH BASHIR'S book is also a moving love song addressed to her grandmother, Bobeh

Saga of a community

The writer successfully captures the milieu of an upper middle-class Brahmin household with a keen eye for ethnographic detail. BY T. SRIRAMAN

K. BHARATHI'S *Ranganayaki*, set roughly between the 1910s and 1960s, is a Tamil novel in the social-realistic mode, a family saga and a cultural-ethnographic history of the times as seen in the transformations undergone by a section of the Tamil Brahmin society.

The principal character is the eponymous heroine, and it is through her consciousness that we see the slow but significant changes that impact the Iyengar community, of which the Srirajapuram family is a microcosm. Intelligent and sympathetic, Ranganayaki understands that changes are necessary, indeed inevitable, if her family and the community are not to become decadent. It is through her meditation, counsel and support that the next generations learn to accept and adapt to changes.

Ranganayaki is not a historical novel; historical personages like Mahatma Gandhi, Annie Besant and Rajaji make passing appearances, but their impact is seen not only in society at large but immediately in the Srirajapuram family. Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy, pioneer of social reforms, appears right in the middle of the novel (p. 114), speaking passionately about the plight of deva-



Ranganayaki

By K. Bharathi
Kavitha
Publication, 2021

Pages: 240
Price: Rs.200

dasi women. Early in the novel, we are told about the prevalence of the custom in Kumbakonam town, the famed seat of Vaishnavite learning, piety and orthodoxy, with a suggestion that Ranganayaki's father might have exploited one of those women who had undergone the *pottu* ceremony and been dedicated to the temple. Santanakrishnan, Ranganayaki's nephew-in-law, honourably marries a girl from the devadasi community, subjecting himself and the girl to ostracism and humiliation.

Most revolutionary of all, a son-in-law of the family, brought up in the most traditional way and serving as priest in a temple, provides permanent shelter to the daughter of a devadasi because the girl, who is poor and ill, has no one to care for her after her mother's death.

As for the impact of

Gandhi, the most surprising Gandhian act comes from Ranganayaki's daughter Thangamma, who performs a novel *satyagraha* within her home to reform her lawyer-husband Setumadhavan, who has been exploiting his clients by getting them to mortgage their properties to him. She imprisons herself in the large kitchen even while carrying out her cooking obligations. The familial and social pressure that her act builds forces Setumadhavan to mend his ways and release his clients from mortgage.

The novel records several other changes brought about by modernisation and urbanisation affecting the characters. Ranganayaki, on her visit to the city, is thrilled to attend D.K. Pattammal's public concert. "What a far cry", she wonders, from those days when she herself was not allowed by her in-laws

to play the veena, which she had learned as a child.

How do you bring about change and reform, how do you create a society where everyone will have the space, time and freedom to strive for self-fulfilment without destroying the family as an institution? Parimala reflects on this: "This structure called the family looks so beautiful like a green and sheltering tree, but there are invisible venomous snakes hiding in it. They too are enjoying the comfort and coolness of the tree. But it looks as though everyone keeps silent for fear that if they hunt the snakes down, the tree itself might come crashing down" (pp. 134-35).

With a keen eye for ethnographic detail, Bharathi has captured the milieu of an upper middle-class Brahmin household of the mid-20th century. Of particular interest is the clear picture the novel gives us of the structure of the house with its various horizontal "tiers" (*kattus*), each signifying the power relations in the family, *vis-a-vis* men, women, children and servants. The backyard (*kinattradi*), too, is sufficiently large for people to meet and chat. Ironically, the very place where women first sit and grieve in isolation gradually becomes a site of debate, camaraderie, education and empowerment. Altogether, a sensitively crafted, highly readable, debut novel. □

T. Sriraman is former professor of The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad.



CHAUDHURY HEMAKANTA MISRA (1935-2005), the author of this story, was a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi award in 1986.



THE STORY "SA...
by Chaudhury Hemakanta Misra features in "The Greatest Odia Stories Ever Told", selected and translated by Leela Mohapatra, Paul St-Pierre & K.K. Mohapatra (2019).

— III —

The 'social' in north-eastern India

The way the region has been governed since colonial times shapes the narratives of underdevelopment of the social sector in the present time. BY DIXITA DEKA

THIS edited volume on the social sector in north-eastern India goes beyond development and offers an introduction to the nuances of researching the region on the basis of rigorous quantitative analysis, fieldwork and experienced commentary. With the introduction by editors Ashok Pankaj, Atul Sarma and Antora Borah, the book comprises seven sections covering 15 chapters around the thematic areas of education, health, poverty, unemployment, food security and governance. The volume focusses on some urgent areas of policy intervention and encapsulates the challenges to human capital formation towards the development of the social sector in the north-eastern region.

The region comprises eight States—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. The region was popularly referred to as the "Seven Sisters" until 1975, when Sikkim became a State of the Indian Union and became the 'brother' to the region.

Most of these eight States were part of Assam

when India achieved Independence. Shillong was the capital of Assam until 1971. It is now the capital of Meghalaya, which attained Statehood in 1972. Manipur and Tripura were princely States until 1972. Arunachal Pradesh was part of the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) until it turned into a Union Territory in 1972 and then a State in 1987.

At a time when the region continues to yearn for a correct representation, writing about the geographically vast and ethnically diverse north-eastern region is challenging. It requires both in-depth knowledge of historical facts and sensitivity towards local know-

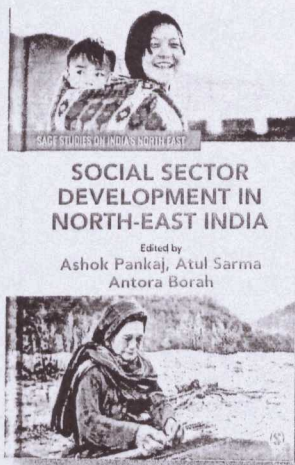
ledge, in oral histories or archives. In this sense, this edited volume enormously contributes towards locating the current socio-political and economic anxieties prevailing in the region.

The region's strategic location is such that while it connects to the rest of India through the Chicken's Neck of just 22 kilometres through Siliguri, it shares vast international boundaries with China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. As India's gateway to South East Asia, and rich in natural resources, the region's significance to the country's economy is immense. For instance, the Look East Policy of 1991 launched by Prime Minister P.V.

Narasimha Rao or the Act East Policy of 2014 led by Narendra Modi have been among the attempts of successive Union governments at international diplomacy through north-eastern India. Yet, ironically, the people of the region continue to face racial attacks in mainland India for their Mongoloid features, food habits, and cultural ethos that are allegedly 'different' from what Jelle J.P. Wouters and Tanka B. Subba called the "Indian face".¹

In fact, there have been attempts since colonial times at civilising the "primitive", "uncivilised" or the "savage" communities from north-eastern India. Part of this project consisted in demarcating administrative territories between the hills and the plains. For instance, under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, Inner Line Permit (ILP) was introduced, which is still required for Indians and foreigners to enter Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.² The purpose of the ILP was "to protect the tribal people from economic and political exploitation and cultural dilution".³

Under the Government of India Act of 1935, the tribal areas of Assam were classified into Excluded Areas and Partially Excluded Areas. The British not only pushed the tribal communities into isolation from the mainland by categorising them as different, but also found new economic and market-driven interests in the region with its suitability for



Social Sector Development in North-East India

Edited by Ashok Pankaj, Atul Sarma and Antora Borah
SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2021

Pages: 432
Price: Rs.1,356

— 112 —

introducing tea plantation and with the discovery of oil in Assam. The British mindset of “disciplining” workers on the tea plantations in the Naga Hills and Upper Assam made the Naga and the Assamese people unsuitable for their needs, whom they branded as “lazy natives”.⁴

The way the region has been governed since colonial times also shapes the narratives of underdevelopment of the social sector in the present time. A host of factors have favoured the inflow of migration from Bangladesh—Partition, flow of climate refugees caused by the geographical proximity between the nations, porous borders and vote bank politics. The problem of illegal immigration cannot be oversimplified to ideological or religious clashes. The issue of illegal immigration directly connected to questions of citizenship has an even more complex history of territorial demarcations at the convenience of the British. While the British brought migrant workers from central India to meet their demands of labour, particularly in the Brahmaputra valley, the demarcation of geographies at different points of time has drawn unprecedented migrants, refugees, and illegal immigrants. The challenges for development of the social sector in the north-eastern region against this backdrop are well articulated in the book.

IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN CAPITAL

In section II, Chandan Kumar Sharma has emphasised immigration and illiteracy as detrimental to

the region’s social-sector development. He stresses the development of two communities, the Adivasis and the Muslim migrants from East Bengal, who constitute a major workforce in the region. Going beyond the security-centric approach of the Indian state, Sharma emphasises the need for the Indian state to expand in every part of the region either “by creating physical infrastructure or by pushing its political or cultural symbols, often at the expense of autonomy of the tribal communities” (page 51). For Bimal Kumar Kar and Suli Yohana Avemi, migration, unequal fertility behaviour and tribal resurgence have drastically changed the demography of the region. In order to meet the challenges of poverty, unemployment and food security posed by a growing population, it is vital to improve education and

health conditions. Section III of the book examines the status of education in the region with respect to factors like age, sex, gender and ethnic identities. In chapter 4, Saket Kushwaha, Sushanta Kumar Nayak and Jumi Kalita have attributed high dropout rates after the higher secondary stage to the poor quality of school education. The writers call for greater integration and coordination across institutions and across all stages of education, stressing the importance of quality early childhood care and education (page 125). Mizoram remains one of the top three States with highest literacy rate in the country. But the quality and the rate of educational attainment across the region has never been uniform.

Gender, class, caste, ethnicity and religion are crucial parameters in understanding the overall educational attainment

and health of the greater population in the region. In chapter 5, Nirmali Goswami traces the inception of formal education in the region and examines the intersections of gender and caste in defining educational statistics. She stresses the importance of examining data on educational enrolment and attainment along with social processes like discrimination, exclusion and segregation (page 146). Jayashree Doley’s narrative on the education and modernity of the Mising youth of Assam is noteworthy. She writes about the concept of “venture schools” in rural Assam initiated by graduates from the villages, built on land donated by local residents and run by volunteer teachers (page 155). However, uncertainties loom large about the sustainability of these schools. This pushes a large number of educated youth to



THE POBITORA Wildlife sanctuary in Assam’s Morigaon district flooded, on August 17. Heavy rainfall in Arunachal Pradesh led to inundation of low-laying areas in Assam.

RITU RAJ KONWAR

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Health, unemployment

The two section IV health conc people from The section challenges c of health dwells on ma in children. mar Nayak Modi write crude birth r death rate ar are important meters in me nomic perfo social well-be tional deliver isation a malnourishm to be importa As mentioned Deb in chapt e alised groups gion, mostly

Endnotes

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2. Following the of Nagaland.
3. Dutta, Akhil R
4. Sharma, Jayer 1287-1324, http:

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migrate to metropolitan cities in search of higher education or to be absorbed in the cheap labour force.

Taking the conversation further, Kalyan Das points out the failure of the state in developing the market as an institution in the hill economy and generating remunerative livelihoods (page 261). It has resulted in out-migration where the migrants are compelled to work under precarious conditions. It is important to draw attention to these things at a time when the pandemic has given rise to reverse migration and driven many labourers to death across the country.

Health, poverty and unemployment

The two chapters in section IV examine the health conditions of the people from the region. The section explains the challenges of accessibility of health services and dwells on malnourishment in children. Sushanta Kumar Nayak and Geling Modi write about the crude birth rate and crude death rate and how these are important health parameters in measuring economic performance and social well-being. Institutional deliveries, immunisation and child malnourishment continue to be important concerns. As mentioned by Surajit Deb in chapter 8, marginalised groups from the region, mostly comprising

Endnotes

1. Wouters, Jelle J.P. and Tanka B. Subba. 2013. "The 'Indian Face', India's Northeast, and 'The Idea of India'", *Asian Anthropology*, 12(2): 126-140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1683478X.2013.849484>.
2. Following the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in 2019, the ILP was extended to Manipur and Dimapur city of Nagaland.
3. Dutta, Akhil Ranjan. 2013. "Politics in India: Issues, Institutions", Processes. Guwahati, Arun Prakashan.
4. Sharma, Jayeeta. 2009. "'Lazy' Natives, Coolie Labour, and the Assam Tea Industry," *Modern Asian Studies*, 43(6): 1287-1324, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/40285014>.

Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes, continue to record high nutritional deficiencies.

Section V deals at length with poverty, unemployment and food security. Joydeep Baruah holds the view that it is not sufficient to introduce employment generation schemes in order to curb poverty. He concludes: "Overcoming the geographical and institutional constraints in agriculture, expanding public investment in the social sector, improving the scope of quality employment and addressing inequalities could form an effective strategy for the eradication of poverty in the region" (page 247).

Rajshree Bedamatta and Mahsina Rahman's chapter examines the role of the public distribution system in fulfilling the cereal consumption needs of the people in Assam's riverine villages. They point out the administrative weaknesses in the implementation of such schemes, which limit their reach, and call for urgent policy intervention in pricing mechanism and food management.

Section VI and VII deal with governance and the emerging challenges to social-sector development in the region. While Bhupen Sarmah and Joseph K. Lalfakzuala write about autonomous councils as crucial instruments of in-

clusion, Vanlalchhawna focusses on the financial powers of the district councils (page 337) and talks about fiscal decentralisation. Lack of financial autonomy, political corruption and inefficient administration are said to be the major impediments to the smooth functioning of the district councils.

In chapter 14, Thongkholal Haokip offers an interesting account on the formation of regional councils for minorities within autonomous councils for better conflict management.

He focusses on microscopic minority groups and the scope for their self-governance through regional councils. In the last chapter, Patricia Mukhim elaborates on the drug menace in the region and demelishes myths relating to gender-based equality in the region.

This volume is indeed one of a kind that has primarily focussed on the social sector and its problems in the region. In the face of underdevelopment, the editors have argued that the "prospect for service sector development is much higher compared to that of the primary and secondary sectors". Agriculture continues to be a dominant source of livelihood (page 28).

Most of the thematic areas covered in the book are also crucial with respect to sustainable development goals (SDGs), be it

eradicating poverty, promoting gender equality, ensuring health care or education to all. The data in the chapters offer a grim picture of development. This is also borne out by the SDG India Index released by NITI Ayog in 2021 that places Assam as one of the worst performing States. Along with Assam, the rural population of Tripura is also unable to access safe drinking water. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram are far behind the national average in establishing sustainable cities and communities.

Strategic geographical location, ineffective decentralisation, rampant corruption, gender inequalities, and the challenges of caste, class, and emerging communal tensions in the region continue to affect human capital formation. While some of the chapters generously offer solutions, emphasis on factors like innovation, management skills, and capacity-building employed in the service sector could be crucial in understanding future prospects.

Finally, there is enough scope to add to the significant work done by the non-profit and civil society organisations along with the region's religious institutions, and also focus on the ever-booming information and communication technology in developing the social sector. □

Sociology and its limits

An ambitious new study of stigma that falls short on a number of

BY SUSAN RAM

As its title suggests, *Stigma* is an engagement with a concept whose ancient roots and cruel, life-destroying application across the centuries continue to imbue it with intensely negative connotations and meaning. Dominating previous attempts to theorise this concept has been the analysis offered by the United States sociologist Erving Goffman in *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity* (1963). But the systemic application of stigma has also generated a rich literature in other parts of the world, particularly in India, where the writ of an immeasurably cruel, stigma-saturated caste system continues to this day.

STIGMA AS A CONCEPT

In the West, the concept of stigma has, over recent decades, featured regularly in research on disability and mental health; a web search using stigma as the key word yields plentiful results in these spheres. Such a focus is in line with Goffman's classic definition of stigma as an "attribute that is deeply discrediting": whether a visible trait such as skin colour or physical disability, or something more hidden, such as mental ill-health

or having a criminal record.

Until recently, there was a tendency for research around stigma to be corralled in departments of psychology and social psychology, with the focus on the operation of stigma at the interpersonal level. While psychologists have elaborated the cognitive dimensions of stigma and the ways it shapes micro-level social interaction, social psychologists have been busy exploring the individual-level consequences and the coping mechanisms of those confronting stigma in daily life.

The past two decades have seen a turn away from this micro-level focus, in tandem with a critical re-examination of Goffman's ideas. In particular, there has been an

effort by sociologists to reclaim a concept which, despite its elaboration by Goffman, a kingpin member of the U.S. sociological fraternity, seems to them to have been appropriated by other disciplines.

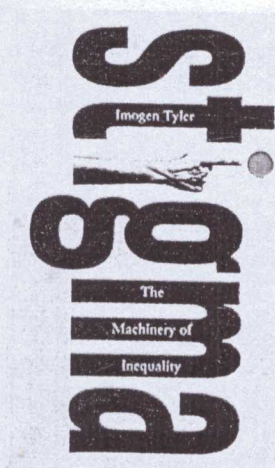
In 2001, an article by two U.S. sociologists, Bruce Link and Jo Phelan, detonated a bomb of sorts in stigma studies. In the article, which appeared in the *Annual Review of Sociology*, the authors proposed a new definition of stigma, one which sought to address criticisms that the concept was "too vaguely defined and individually focused": "In response to these criticisms, we define stigma as the co-occurrence of its components—labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination—and

further indicate that for stigmatisation to occur, *power must be exercised.*" [emphasis added]

Significantly, this was a time when Goffman's work was already under challenge from the Left. In 1999, the Marxist geographer Brendan Gleeson, in his book *Geographies of Disability*, delivered a forceful critique of Goffman's focus on personal encounters as the site where stigma is created and learned. For Gleeson, this "interactionist fallacy" ignored the structural forces shaping disability and swept from view the way in which personal encounters were the outcome of social, economic and political forces.

The reconceptualisation of stigma initiated by Link and Phelan in 2001 has continued ever since. By 2015, another contribution to the *Annual Review of Sociology* by Bernice Pescosolido and Jack Martin took things several steps further by proposing the existence of a "stigma complex", an interdisciplinary concoction of "inter-related, heterogeneous parts" offering a "multi-level approach that can be tailored to stigmatized statuses."

Imogen Tyler's new study can be broadly situ-



Stigma

The machinery of inequality

By Imogen Tyler
Zed Books, London, 2020

Pages: 416

Price: £18.99

ated in this or to wrest stigmatisation at the micro-level and its potential as a much broader and relevance.

Imogen Tyler is a professor of Sociology at Lancaster University. She is a passionate and socially engaged academic who combines her work with activism through her leadership of the Lancaster Bay Poverty Trust and her mission and involvement in the U.K. Poverty Network. Her book *Revolting Subjects* is an analysis of the ways in which globalisation rendered "abject" neoliberalism, and she was awarded the Lancaster University Roses Award.

An experienced academic and with a passion for social justice and for expanding horizons through research and evidence, she could possibly go

In her latest chapter, Imogen Tyler outlines a number of ways in which both deconstruct and seek to reinvent the underlying theses of the stigma lies at the heart of how power is exercised and enforced, particularly at the level of government. "It is the thesis of this book that in order to counter the 'vigorous and relentless assault' upon human dignity that is a major characteristic of the current authoritarian turn, we require a better understanding of how stigma is propagated as a dominant technology of social control and dehumanisation (page 7) "The overall aim...is to deepen our understanding of stigmatisation and its governmental te

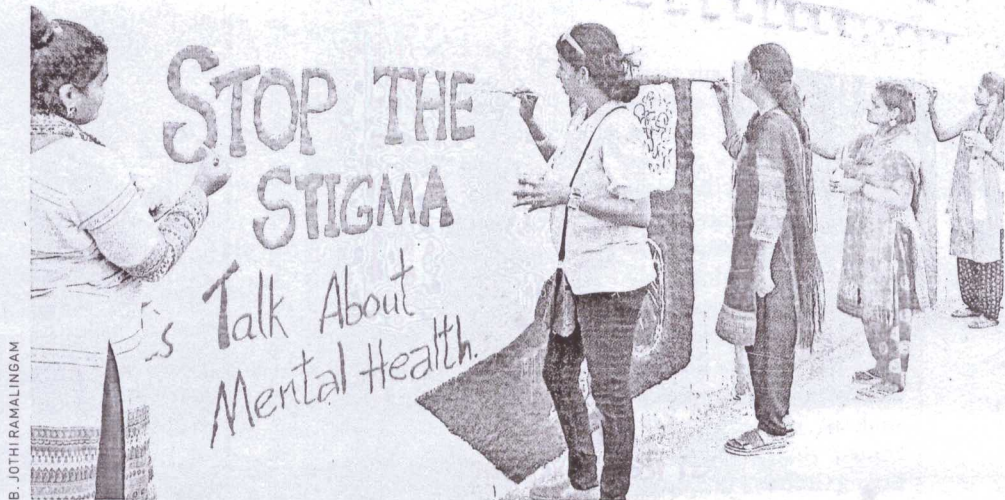
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ated in this ongoing effort to wrest stigma from the micro-level and explore its potential as a concept of much broader application and relevance.

Imogen Tyler, a Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University, is a vocal and passionate advocate of socially engaged research. She combines her academic work with social activism through membership of the Morecambe Bay Poverty Truth Commission and involvement in the U.K. Poverty Truth Network. Her earlier book, *Revolting Subjects* (2013), an analysis of the processes by which groups are rendered “abject” under neoliberalism, was shortlisted for the Bread and Roses Award.

An experienced writer, academic and activist with a passion for social justice and for expanding people’s horizons through argument and evidence: what could possibly go wrong?

In her opening chapter, Imogen Tyler sets out a number of objectives which both derive from, and seek to reinforce, her underlying thesis that stigma lies at the heart of how power is exercised and enforced, particularly at the level of government: “It is the thesis of *Stigma* that in order to counter the ‘vigorous and relentless assault’ upon human dignity that is a major characteristic of the current global authoritarian turn, we require a better understanding of how stigma is propagated as a government technology of division and dehumanisation.” (page 7) “The overarching aim...is to deepen the understanding of stigma as a governmental technology



MESSAGES of awareness being painted on the walls of The Institute of Mental Health in Chennai to commemorate International De-addiction Day on June 26, 2019.

of exploitation; to draw new lines of connection between people’s dehumanising experiences of stigmatisation and the socio-political machinery of stigma in service of extractive forms of capitalism.” (page 29)

Underlining the heavy lifting that will be required of stigma as a concept in the pages that follow, Imogen Tyler proceeds to give it a central role in the project she calls “connected sociologies” (the title of a book by Gurminder Bhambra, Professor of Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies at the University of Sussex).

In recognition of the epic scale of the challenge ahead, Imogen Tyler argues for “developing a ‘deep historical consciousness’, a commitment to ‘unlearning’ the epistemological foundations of disciplinary knowledges, and a candid examination of ‘the myriad of effects and consequences’ of the con-

cepts, vocabularies and methods that have shaped the discourses and practices of sociology since its invention as a science in the mid-nineteenth century.” (page 24; all quotes are from Gurminder Bhambra’s book.)

CULTURAL BRICOLAGE

In pursuit of these goals, Imogen Tyler adopts a strategy that can be likened to cultural bricolage: the practice, in the visual arts and elsewhere, of seeking to integrate a variety of knowledge sets in order to throw up novel, inventive perspectives. On this basis, the presentation of material, evidence and arguments takes an unorthodox route: rather than follow a conventional (some might say logical) sequence, chapters aspire to “cut a series of historical slices through stigma power” in an effort to both “look up’ and ‘look back” (page 20).

The opening chapter,

titled “The penal tattoo”, is an instructive example of this strategy in action. It begins with a story: the arrest and torture of five Sikh women near the Golden Temple in Amritsar, in 1993. Accused of stealing a purse, the women had their foreheads tattooed by the police with the local word for pickpocket—an unambiguous, horrific case of stigmatisation in contemporary times.

Imogen Tyler proceeds to an exploration of the uses made of bodily stigmatisation and penal tattooing in other contexts: firstly, in the Graeco-Roman world and then within the modern era practice of slavery, with its resort to branding and collaring. This is followed by a dip into the “gendered history” of penal stigma: its use against women, again in various epochs and contexts. For Tyler, these disparate “genealogies” (page 56) reinforce the view that

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Tyler’s new
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penal stigmatisation functions as a "dehumanising classificatory technology" (page 56).

In line with the strategy of "looking up" and "looking back", the chapter then executes an abrupt shift. We now find ourselves in the midst of the English enclosure movement, with Karl Marx and E.P. Thompson for company (if only briefly). To buttress her underlying thesis, Imogen Tyler claims that penal stigmatisation "was a pivotal technology in these processes of enclosure, deployed to manage the massive social upheavals and class conflicts that followed in the wake of the destruction of people's customary access to the means of subsistence." (page 60)

Whether subject to transportation overseas or locked into what Imogen Tyler, in a catchy turn of phrase, titles "Bentham's panoptical welfare stigma machine" ("a vast carceral welfare state within England"; page 63), dispossessed English peasants now found themselves "a marked and captive population" (page 67).

Following this, the discussion turns to the deployment of penal tattooing by 19th-century eugenicists in quest of the "born criminal". After that, there is a shift eastwards, to India, where Imogen Tyler first explores the uses made of "penal stigma" by British imperialism in its crown jewel colony. Then, at last, she turns her attention to caste.

Given the staying power of a hierarchical, rigidly enforced system whose origins reach back

some 3,000 years (the earliest mention of the division of Indian society into *varnas* or hierarchically ordered occupational categories appears in the *Rig Veda*, a Hindu sacred text from the period 1200-900 BCE), one expects, in a book about stigma, a reasonably fine-grained examination of stigma's role in the structuring and practice of caste.

STIGMA AND THE CASTE SYSTEM

In fact, stigma has been integral to the perpetuation of this system. It has provided ideological sustenance for the pollution-purity matrix of caste whereby those at the top ("the pure") enjoy a feast of entitlements, against the mountain of duties bearing down on those at the bottom ("the polluted"). In this respect, the Indian caste system can be seen as a particularly elaborate, complex and intractable "stigma machine", with much to tell us. Imogen Tyler allots it just a handful of pages (pages 81-87).

Subsequent chapters explore "stigma power" in relation to racism (Chapter 2); immigrants and asylum seekers (Chapter 3); and austerity politics (Chapter 4). The final chapter focusses on the insights to be gleaned from personal narratives of stigma injuries and struggles, the author's included. The bricolage strategy of "looking up" and "looking back", of mix-and-match collage, is maintained throughout.

The book concludes on an exhortatory note: "Speaking, reading and thinking about connected

histories of stigma power is part of a decolonising process of reparative justice that supports the building of solidarity movements: critical practices which Paul Gilroy describes as the 'ongoing collective work of salvage'. This work is essential if we are to resist the divisive forces of identitarian politics, 'salvage humanity' and rise in rage together against the stigma machines." (page 271)

It is probably evident by now that I found this book a bewildering, frustrating and at times annoying read. Rarely have I come across a text so difficult to pin down, so testing to read, or so tricky to appraise.

PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS

Several factors contribute to the book's slippery quality and capacity to irritate. In addition to its pick-and-mix organisation, the polemical tone and unceasing flow of indignation and outrage become wearisome after a time. There is also the author's effort throughout to elevate stigma to the status of a socio-political lynchpin, as in: "Stigma is an 'indispensable weapon in the armoury of the state elites', amplifying social divisions through devaluation, in ways designed to soften the way for further rounds of capitalistic enclosure and accumulation ... global corporate capital, which is and has always been colonial capitalism, feeds vampire-like on the divisions that stigma politics inculcates." (page 267)

Without stigma, the inference runs, the capit-

alist system would be brought to its knees.

In fairness to Imogen Tyler, the varied historical and contemporary snapshots presented in her book do shed light on the variety of ways in which stigma has been deployed as a tool of division, subordination and control. Part of the challenge lies in tracking how stigma-use changes, adapts, or rigidifies across time. Here, a theoretical grasp of stigma as a particular form or manifestation of oppression under class society provides a starting point, establishing stigma as historically specific and encompassing both material and ideological elements.

To argue that a different book would have emerged from such a framework is to reopen a long-standing debate about the usefulness and limitations of sociology as a discipline within the social sciences. Back in the 1980s, Marxist critics such as Martin Shaw positioned sociology as "an ideological field within the general framework of bourgeois ideology" and, by that token, incompatible with Marxism, "a method whose theoretical and practical assumptions were wholly opposed to sociology."

Non-Marxist critics have also joined the debate. In his 2001 book, *Chaos of Disciplines*, for example, the Chicago-based sociologist Andrew Abbott characterised sociology as irredeemably eclectic: a hotchpotch of multiple, mutually contradictory approaches.

Sadly, Tyler's book lends weight to such conclusions. □

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narrative, without qualifying and modifying her main argument.

Complex Web

Be that as it may, one has to read the book to get an idea of the multifarious interactions and influences of people, places, commerce, travel, communications, societies, wars, revolutions, writings, graphic images and events that Colley has woven into a complex and suggestive web. Writing as a historian, she explores the “protean,” many-edged nature

of constitutions with her vision firmly fixed at all times on what actually happened, what was actually the case—the nitty-gritty of empirical fact and evidence, eschewing theoretical, supra-historical moral-ethical and philosophical perspectives. This is predominantly history from above, resolutely “realist” with few concessions to liberal pieties. Coming at a time when constitutions have unrivalled legitimacy universally and are at the same time being questioned from many points of view, there is little doubt that

her book will nevertheless compel social scientists and theorists, ethical and legal philosophers, among others, to rethink many of their most basic ideas about them.

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Engaging Ethnic Politics Infrastructure and the State in Manipur

RICHARD KAMEI

Raile Rocky Ziiipao's years of research on infrastructure and its intersection with tribes, the tense history up to the postcolonial period, ethnic contestation, politics and beyond, is captured well in his book titled, *Infrastructure of Injustice: State and Politics in Manipur and Northeast India*. He situates the argument on infrastructure in contemporary times and the politics embedded in it. Before he delves into the interface between infrastructure and varied ethnic communities in Manipur, he lays out a background with theories, concepts, and debates surrounding infrastructure, along with an introduction on infrastructure in the North East and its significance in the region. Infrastructure, listed by him, refers to road, electricity, healthcare, educational institutions, water, etc, access to which are considered a basic necessity for all.

Embedded Politics

The book brings forth the politics embedded in infrastructure in Manipur, that has always been an expression of power. The power it holds maintains the unequal relationship among various ethnic communities, guides when to connect and disconnect people, or creates political space for contestation among ethnic communities, and for trade. These factors are essential to understand the political

Infrastructure of Injustice: State and Politics in Manipur and Northeast India by Raile Rocky Ziiipao, London and New York: Routledge, 2020; pp 202, ₹995 (hardcover).

discourse in infrastructure, roads, and electricity—the main components this book brings out in the context of Manipur.

In the opening chapter, he argues that for a region marked by a “sensitive social and political context,” infrastructure ensures that ethnic survival becomes tied up with their material needs in the contemporary period (p 29). He laments that the existing discourse does not attempt to engage infrastructural development with the political context concerning the interests and injustices surrounding ethnic communities. Focusing on Manipur provides the scope to expand infrastructure discourse, engaging with ethnic politics and interests—those actors behind infrastructure as well as pointing at the abject neglect of infrastructural development in the hills. Tribal communities like Nagas, Kukis and other smaller tribes dominate the hills in contrast to the dominance of Meitei and non-tribals in the Manipur valley. However, he reminds us that the state's engagement, from the colonial period, with the hills began with militarisation in the form of the Cachar Levy (rechristened the Assam

Rifles in 1917) in 1835. The hills were introduced to infrastructure as the Cachar Levy's tasks involved constructing the road that facilitated the British expeditions as well as administration, and protection of the British subjects from raids by the hill men. People experienced militarisation since colonial times, and today the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958, is in place.

Presently, infrastructure is seen as a gateway to overall development in the north-east region. But the ground reality points at disparities in the distribution of infrastructure across geographies, especially for the hills, in terms of accessibility or the lack of it. The role of dominant communities and the state comes out strongly in determining infrastructure development regarding investment and building infrastructure. The relationship of tribal communities with the land is deeply rooted, which must be factored in infrastructure development. Ziiipao holds that the “question of land, identity, and justice,” must be at the core of infrastructure development in the region (p 47). However, the notion of land as envisioned by the state places individual ownership as the norm, unlike the tribal communities whose connections with land are integrated into community values, customary law, rituals, ceremony, and cultivation where land is inseparable from tribal people (Kamei 2018).

Hills and Manipur Valley

In the chapters that follow, the author presents the role of the Manipur valley, to locate its historical role in dominating the hills. The dominance of the valley upon

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the hills exists from the precolonial period, which enabled successive shifts—from colonialism to the signing of the merger agreement—keeping its dominance intact. The hills expressed resentment against the Manipur king and state at different historical moments, like the Kuki Rebellion (1917–19), Zeliangrong movement (1927–33), and the Naga National League formed in 1946, among others.

The unequal relationship and power dynamics drawn from the past are reflected in the infrastructure disparity between the hills and valley. Ziipao finds that the disparity is acute as the valley accrued and accumulated all the important infrastructure—roads, electricity, access to healthcare, banking, educational institutions, telecommunication, and airport. He proposes that the indicators for development must incorporate ethnicity, landownership practices among tribes, structural inequality, and power dynamics informing the reality of communities and ethnic contestation among Meitei, Nagas and Kukis in Manipur.

Roads and electricity are the main focus of the book, where Ziipao demonstrates the infrastructural gap between the hill

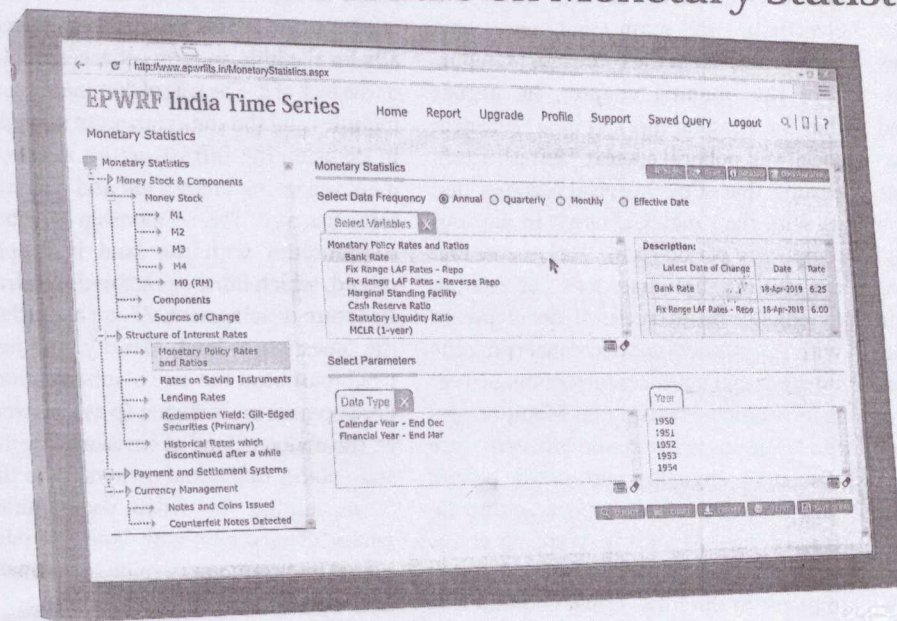
and valley, through data and accounts from people. In these two types of infrastructures, the necessity of rural development in the hills is seen. However, considering how they are disproportionately distributed across the state—poor road connectivity and supply of electricity—along with inadequate maintenance, the data he uses in the book substantiates that the hills are perennially ignored and undermined, thus echoing the injustice of infrastructure. The disparity in the power supply between the hills and valley is presented in the book. He explains that the high electricity deficit in Manipur is due to the lack of electricity infrastructure and power supply in the hills. Moreover, the electricity generated in Manipur is meagre for even domestic consumption. The limited electricity in Manipur is concentrated mainly in the valley, with the hills largely deprived of electricity. According to Ziipao, “this reinforces the valley-centric development approach of the state” (p 122). He presents data from various sources as well as field studies to substantiate the gravity of electricity shortage in the hills of Manipur.

Somehow, the highways that pass through the hill districts of Manipur become sites to draw the attention of the state on issues affecting the hills. Civil society and student organisations across ethnic communities of the state turn to “economic blockades and bandhs, which translate into blocking the highway” as a form of protest to register their grievances and for negotiation (p 94). Ziipao notes, “Almost every ethnic community in the state has resorted to the strategy of highway blockades to voice their demands and political aspirations” (p 94). Blockades in Manipur also inconvenience the common people with respect to their livelihood activities, as well as hike prices of commodities and transportation. Very often, counter-blockades are imposed.

From Threat to Exclusion

While the implications of a road on social, political, and economic dimensions is presented succinctly in the book, Ziipao also notes the cultural dimensions by writing about the bridle path or (traditional) road existing among Poumai Naga, Mao Naga, and Angami Naga. He reminds us that the colonial state introduced the

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“road” in the region to advance its control. The road served a two-pronged purpose: colonial expansion and resource siege. In an agreement with the British, the Manipur state constructed the Kala Naga Range Road between 1837 and 1844. As road construction proceeded, it is how the Nagas (in what is present-day Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland) first encountered British trespassing into their territories in 1832 (Shimray 2005). Roads were constructed for expeditions and establishment of administration, subjecting the Nagas to taxation and forced unpaid labour (Kamei 2008). Subsequently, the Nagas were coerced into forced unpaid labour for road construction and maintenance (Thomas 2012). Jadonang led the Zeliangrong movement¹ that is also linked to the Cachar road,² where he regularly witnessed the movement of troops, British officers, government servants, the sepoys, and coolies (Kamei 2004).

The road during the colonial period introduced many things to the hill tribes—Christianity, education, diseases, modernity, etc (Thomas 2016). The construction of these roads using unpaid labour of the hill tribes, was carried out with total disregard for the interests, cultures, customs, and concerns of the hill tribes. This encounter also saw the Nagas sent to France, during World War I, to perform and carry out many tasks, including road construction (Thong 2016).

The road for the hill tribes, especially the Nagas, served two different relationships, one during the colonial era and now in the present. In the former, it made the Nagas see the road as a threat to their lives and lifeworld. In the latter period, as Ziipao argues, the poverty of infrastructure is taken as justice in a time where the realities of political economy encompass every community in Manipur. Though he touches upon the historical context of the road in the opening part of the book, a deeper engagement on the road’s differential relationship with hill tribes over a century could unearth the dynamic role of the state and how it sustains power and control, and how this has transformed the hill tribes in the realms of culture, custom, and lifeworld.

Nevertheless, Ziipao’s focus on the intricate linkage between the state and

the Meitei community is well explained and helps in understanding how power operates in determining the distribution of infrastructure in Manipur. His book suggests that the Manipur Kingdom was actively involved in enabling and aiding the British to control the hill tribes. They were asserting their dominance over hill tribes before the British came, by conducting expeditions against the tribes. This focus opens a window to the varied forms of power and dominance circulating across geographies and communities in Manipur. Ziipao admits that as the book’s focus is on the relationship between the hills and valley, against the backdrop of infrastructure development, it gives little scope to examine and analyse infrastructure disparity at the intertribal level. Notwithstanding, he sheds some light on the differences between the Nagas and Zo (Kuki-Mizo-Zomi) regarding financial inclusion and development.

Towards the end of the book, Ziipao notes that the existing divide between the hills and valley regarding ethnic polarisation is refashioned in the infrastructural divide. Drawing from his primary and secondary data, he affirms the gap seen in the infrastructural divide between the hills and valley of Manipur. He remarks that the valley has no poverty of infrastructure in contrast to the abysmal condition in the hill districts. An inference here appears to suggest that Rongmei (Kabui) Nagas, Tangkhul Nagas, Poumai Nagas, Kuki, etc, residing in Imphal are better off than the hill tribes. This raises a question on whether justice in infrastructure development ends the struggle and conflict among tribes.

The book informs us of the possibility of research beyond the binary of the

dominant and the oppressed, within the frame of political economy by not detaching from community values. To this, the dimension of gender lingers, when referring to the injustice of infrastructure. Ziipao implies that the dominant forces and elites of every shade across and within communities must be held accountable to smoothen infrastructure justice and make coexistence possible.

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NOTES

- 1 Zeliangrong movement is one of the first nationalism movements among the Naga tribes whose objective was to achieve freedom for all the Nagas. The movement was against the British colonial rule, Christian missionaries, labour exploitation, household taxation, etc. The movement was led by Jadonang and later by Rani Gaidinliu. It was active between 1927 and 1931.
- 2 The Cachar road (also known as the Cachar-Manipur road) holds a significance in the history of Manipur as it was one of the first roads, jointly constructed by the British and the Manipur King, connecting Manipur to Assam.

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Urban and Regional Transformations

GOPAL KRISHAN

Urban and Regional Planning and Development: 20th Century Formations and 21st Century Transformations is essentially a Festschrift, a befitting tribute to celebrate the academic and professional journey of Professor Emeritus Frank James Costa, who has been at the University of Akron, United States (US), for more than half a century, by four of his US-based students and colleagues.

The book investigates “urban forms and their transformations in the last few decades and their relevance in contemporary urban and regional planning and development” (p 2). The focus is upon the closing decades of the 20th century and the early decades of the 21st century. This was a time when neo-liberalism was replacing the idea of the welfare state, the concept of sustainable development was evolving as a universal mantra, and international agencies like United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Commission on Human Settlements, and United Nations Environmental Programme started getting seriously involved in global issues. Humanity was viewing the turn of the millennium as the most opportune moment to reinvent the world.

Stories from across the globe in the second half of the 20th century revolved around explosive growth of population and massive flow of people from rural to urban areas, causing proliferation of slums, in particular; the destruction caused by World War II and the urgency of over-all reconstruction; gradual decolonisation and birth of many new independent countries, accompanied by rapid growth of their capitals and metropolitan cities; and emergence of socialist cities, distinguished by standardised multistoried residential apartments in parts of the world, which happened to come under the sway of socialism. The influences working on the urbanisation process and urban landscapes were many and varied.

BOOK REVIEWS

Urban and Regional Planning and Development: 20th Century Formations and 21st Century Transformations edited by Rajiv R Thakur, Ashok K Dutt, Sudhir K Thakur and George M Pomeroy, Springer Nature Switzerland, 2019; pp xiv + 546, ₹9,726 (hardcover).

The beginning of the 21st century carried further the stories of globalisation, revolutions in technology, biotechnology and spatial technology, climate change, disaster management and now the COVID-19 pandemic. The most dramatic change, although the one that passed quietly, was the transformation of the world into an urban majority in 2008. A wider scatter and extensive overspill of cities was posing a challenge for governments and planners alike.

There were other challenges too. These included ecological vulnerability to climate change, massive expansion of the informal sector and economic insecurity induced by globalisation, worsening social inequity as a consequence of neo-liberal policies, and inadequacies of urban governance under ever-intensifying complexity of urban systems. Climate related extreme events were proving more destructive for cities where both people and property, per unit of area, were many times of those in the countryside. All this had direct implications for urban planning and design as also for regional planning.

Such ideas are expected to find a place in a book of present kind.

Morphology of the Book

The anatomical details of the book are as follows. It is divided into seven parts, consisting 34 chapters, written by 63 authors, co-authors or editors from across 15 countries. The book does not include an index.

The ball is set rolling by three introductory chapters of Part I. These successively provide the rationale and flavour

of the contents of the book by R Thakur et al, a biographical essay on Costa by R Thakur et al, and an overview of literature on regional planning and development by Dutt et al. The overview is highly informative and insightful. The eminence of territorial or regional approach to development planning is well critiqued and represented.

Part II of the book titled “Planning Perspective” is organised into five chapters. These establish that the political perspective is invariably the planning perspective. Recent planning in China carries the stamp of authoritarian liberalism, in India of neo-liberalism, in South Africa and Botswana of anti-apartheid sentiment, and in Costa Rica of eco-conservation sensibility.

On adoption of the opening-up policy in 1978, China embarked upon remarkable changes in its urban and regional planning. Zhang et al list these as integration of economic development planning with spatial planning, movement from belts to blocks or from the eastern corridors to western regions, and shift from province to city-based planning. The recent inclination is toward ecological-environmental planning. By comparison, India followed a policy of neo-liberalism consistent with its democratic set up and market orientation. Banerjee-Guha observes that such a system led to private control of urban space, birth of private townships and gated communities, dispossession and displacement of the marginalised from their land, and delinkage of the urban from its diverse regional realities. On the other hand, Maharaj informs that urban and regional planning in South Africa was on apartheid lines till independence in 1990. A reconstruction and development programme initiated in 1994 was meant to do away with segregation on racial lines. Mosha presents a similar picture for Botswana. After independence in 1966, efforts were made to ensure social integration through the mixing of different classes of people in the same locality on non-apartheid basis. The planning story of Costa Rica, as described by Beita and Murillo, informs how the issue of

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large-scale deforestation during the 20th century was resolved through two regional systems: one for more than 200 protected areas organised into 11 regions and the other for environmental services like forestry by way of eight regions.

Innovative Techniques in Research

Part III, under the title "Methods Matter," carries three chapters that illustrate the use of innovative techniques in urban and regional planning research. Salazar and others suggest that socio-economic structural gaps in indicators like productivity, job access and quality of jobs are a more reliable measure of a country's development performance than the per capita income. Accordingly, they classified the 220 cities of Ecuador into five groups in hierarchical order with the objective of ascertaining the potential of each group for sustainable development. As an exercise in crime geography, Wu and Wells conducted a spatio-temporal analysis of the shooting and repeat shooting data for the city of Houston, us. A relationship between the locales of the initial and subsequent shooting was observed. Ye and others present an innovative research in cyber geography. Based on real time data, retrieved from Twitter, pertaining to purchase demands and sales on Black Friday, which marks the beginning of shopping season in the us, they identified regional variations in shopping behaviour of people.

Challenges Facing Cities

Carrying the title of "Planning Challenges," five chapters of Part IV deal with haphazard physical spread of cities, vulnerability of slums, lack of safety of women in public places, and the lowly status of Scheduled Castes (sc) in these cities. Ayon and others explore the factors responsible for rapid urban expansion and loss of agricultural area and wetlands on the fringe of Dhaka Metropolitan Development Area. On somewhat similar lines, Alam and Markandey provide an insightful analysis of the explosive population growth and chaotic physical spread of Hyderabad city. They insist that only a spatially integrated plan, covering both the city and peri-urban area, can redeem the situation. On the

other hand, Kapoor and B Thakur call for a meaningful classification of slums in the national capital city of Delhi, based on the degree of their vulnerability. Meanwhile, Bhattacharyya and Prasad raise the issue of vulnerability of women in public places, such as shopping centres, vacant sites, parks, buses, and trains. On a positive note, Kant gives a due credit to welfare schemes of the Government of India (GoI) in meeting the challenge of socio-economic transformation of the downtrodden sc population.

Part V partakes nine chapters that belong to the theme of "Urban Governance and Politics." Invoking newly planned cities of Tres Cantos in Spain and Chandigarh in India, Alonso argues that retail centres have emerged as nuclei of evolving cityscape, and designing of retail-centred localities is vital to urban planning today. By comparison, Choudhary and Das observe that exclusive enclaves, gated communities and huge shopping centres are conspicuous features of rejuvenated urban India under the impress of privatisation. In an evaluation of community participation in the planning of Amphawa district of Thailand, Peerapun concludes that decision-making from above limits decentralisation of powers to lower levels. Samanta demonstrates how devolution of power to the grassroots level in West Bengal is undermined by the state and the party in power through financial control over local bodies.

Master Plan to Strategic Planning

Ghosh and others describe the shift from the master plan approach to strategic planning in India as ushering in of a new era in urban management. Several flagship missions, such as the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation, National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana, and Smart Cities Programme have been put in place. The desired success is elusive because their implementation rests with bureaucrats rather than planners. Akhter and Islam take stock of the ethical values of stakeholders like professionals, bureaucrats and politicians in respect of the Detailed Action Plan of

Dhaka, Bangladesh. They found that parameters of environmental protection and social equity were often compromised in the name of economic development.

Thompson and Willis examine the implications of the government-induced process of gentrification in cities across the us. The core objectives of urban renewal, slum clearance, and reconstruction are achieved but at the cost of displacement of the poor. Sanchez-Ayala brings to light the impact of land management policies as followed by the city authorities of Bogota, Colombia. The real estate development here through private sector led to urban fragmentation, segregation, and infrastructure inequity. The rich got concentrated in the city's north and the poor in its south.

Departing from a focus on urban planning, Diaz-Garayua and Guilbe-Lopez move into a case of regional planning. They provide a narrative of successive movement from macro-scale spatial planning to micro-scale in Puerto Rico. The objective was to intensify the spirit of democratic planning.

The five chapters of Part VI focus on "National and Local Responses to Urban Transformations." As an exercise in geography of finance, S Thakur examines the impact of public debt raised by the GoI on regional development. Taking a sweep of studies on tourism in India, Kalra argues that any sustainable tourism has to operate within the carrying capacity of the place as a part of decentralised planning. On a different turf, Reid and others describe how place specialisation in a domestic brewing brand led to revitalisation of a neighbourhood in Cincinnati, us. Based on a case study of Poland's regional city of Poznan, Kusek familiarises us with the way the return migrants transformed its landscape. Several among the young returnees were start-ups, especially in culinary business. They set up a variety of food outlets, based on Indian, Lebanese, Thai, Chinese and other cuisines. Considering the case of Istanbul in Turkey and Kolkata in India, Basu and Asci observe that most of the displaced persons take refuge in cities. Such a situation does put pressure on the sustainability of any city.

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The final Part VII carries the title "Future: Sustainable Development." The four chapters herein refer sustainable development to parameters of governance, transport, place branding, and heritage. Building on the experience of cities in East Africa, Cusack and Elwell project good governance as the most critical factor in the realisation of urban sustainability. Kaplan, by comparison, considers sustainable transport as an essential element of sustainable development. Meanwhile, Singh and Kumar emphasise that a historic pilgrimage site like Ayodhya is a reservoir of enduring ideas on sustainable development. In the same tone, McNamee and Pomeroy use municipalities of Pennsylvania, us as an illustration to project history and culture as central to revitalisation of cities through tourism.

A Critique

Defined on conceptual lines and arranged systematically, the various parts of the book make an impressive whole. This is commendable for any extended edited book. The book also achieves its stated objective of understanding the global scenario of urban and regional landscapes in transformation.

The fundamental contribution of this book lies in initiating a research discourse on the salience of urban and regional planning in meeting the challenges being faced by humanity. Case studies constitute a vital dimension of the book. These provide a comparative view of developments in different parts of the world. Sadly, a discussion on the former Soviet Union, where a reliance on spatial planning has been of high order, is missing.

The book goes by the paradigm of development as enshrined in the title. In reality, urban and regional planning is also meant to pre-empt, manage, and mitigate disasters and more so to correct the distortions caused by development itself. Planning, in an ultimate sense, is an antidote to disaster. This perspective is rather weak in this book.

The dominance of urban planning over regional planning in research is testified to by the contents of this book. Cities are conspicuous entities, regions are not.

Regions are delineated afresh as per purpose. To overcome this imprecision, regional planning at times is referred to as territorial planning. Meanwhile, the spatial aspects of planning today have got fixed in the framework of administrative areas, whereas urban and regional transformations often go beyond their territorial jurisdictions. For best outcome, it is essential to ensure compatibility between administrative space and planning space.

Government policies, in conjunction with technological upsurge, emerge as the most powerful factor underlying the urban and regional transformations. Ideas like smart, sustainable development, emanating from international organisations also go as an input in policy formulation. Often, policies are framed under political considerations and implemented in a bureaucratic mode. While the success of any plan is directly proportional to devolution of powers to the grassroots level, the dominance of politicians and bureaucrats at the top persists in decision-making. Professionals are made to align with their wishes. Formations are not without elements of deformation, as this book convincingly confirms.

Incidentally, the book predates the COVID-19 pandemic, whose tectonic forces have shaken the very foundations of people's lives across the world. Implications of all this are far-reaching for health, infrastructure, transport, mobility, and

jobs, among other things. The question is how urban and regional planning can make a specific contribution to the resolution of each of these issues in place of just being a general professional recipe. Here is a future agenda for the book in hand.

What could be the vision of cities in their transformed form? A discourse on dynamic city remained in focus for long after World War II. The various organs of the United Nations started mooted the idea of Healthy City in 1987, Sustainable City in 1990, Harmonious City in 2008, and Smart-Sustainable City in 2013, among others. Such branding in quick succession signifies what needs to be done to address the issues pertaining to urban and regional transformations taking place at a fast pace. This book sets a stage for this imperative.

The book will certainly be of great value to students, researchers, and policymakers, as claimed by its blurb. Herein, students will get conversant with the latest in the field of urban and regional planning as impacting on development, researchers will be enthused to pursue projects on all-inclusive transformation of cities and regions, and policymakers will be sensitised to finding answers to the dilemmas over what to do or not to do.

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The Indian Economic and Social History Review,
Vol. LVIII, No. 2, April-June 2021.

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Book Reviews

DURBA MITRA, *Indian Sex Life: Sexuality and the Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2020, 290 pp.

The prostitute has been central to umpteen sophisticated feminist academic works on sexuality in colonial India. Covering the *devadasis* (temple dancers) of Tanjore, the erudite *tawai'fs* (courtesans) of Lucknow, the *kalavants* (artists) of Maharashtra, the monogamous concubines, the nautch girls, the bazaar and cantonment sex workers, and ranging from venereal disease to soldiers, legal criminality to literary victimhood, Victorian prudery to urban Indian reformism, these studies have highlighted that the regulation of deviant female sexuality in pre-colonial times was ambiguous, while colonialism signalled increasing surveillance and disciplining. One would have thus thought that the subject and the figure of prostitute was pretty much exhausted. It goes to the credit of Durba Mitra that she not only holds her ground, but brings new insights and depth to sexuality studies by looking at the prostitute not just as a figure and a category, but a *concept*, which according to her is the primary grid to foundationally think and write about modern Indian society and the making of disciplinary knowledge. It is this layered and wider meaning that gives *Indian Sex Life* its freshness, intensity and academic depth. The book derives its title 'from a popular genre of social scientific texts produced in early twentieth century' that linked control of women's sexuality 'to the evolutionary progress of Indian society' (p. 2). Based largely on Bengal, and spanning the century from mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, the book is an intellectual and social history of sexuality in colonial India, and the shame and stigma associated with women's sexual desires. It analyses how European scholars, British officials and elite Indian male intellectuals, with their transregional networks, utilised new fields of knowledge of society to make normative and 'scientific' claims about deviant female sexuality.

The Indian Economic and Social History Review, 58, 2 (2021): 279–289
SAGE Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore/Washington DC/Melbourne
DOI: 10.1177/0019464620987924

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Interestingly titled ‘Origins’, ‘Repetition’, ‘Circularity’, ‘Evolution’ and ‘Veracity’, each of the five chapters focus an individual field of knowledge—philology, criminal law, forensic medicine, ethnology and popular literature, respectively—to trace the reach of ideas regarding deviant female sexuality. Durba begins by examining how philologists and Indologists from Germany, England, America and Bengal—such as Richard Burton, Richard Schmidt, Johann Jacob Meyer, Santosh Kumar Mukherji and Chandra Chakraborty—collectively engaged in researching and tracing the origins of modern sexual sciences in select classical Sanskrit erotic scriptures. More pertinently, these men used them to articulate the ‘social fact’, threat and contempt of sexual female deviance. Cogently argued, Durba underscores how these ‘new fixed structures of knowledge’ were ‘guides for masculinity and patriarchal power’, and showcased ‘control of female sexuality as the primary index for stages of civilisation’ (pp. 26, 27, 61). While largely convinced by her argument, I was left wondering if perhaps these, and many other, translations were not so homogenous and sometimes paved way for transgressive sexual registers, unruly appropriations, and dissonant texts of pleasure.

Creatively engaging with the West Bengal archival records, particularly the more interesting ‘B’ files, the book moves to legal interventions in Indian sex life through surveys, questionnaires, and criminal laws, where a ‘systematic social typology of the prostitute’ (p. 98) was created. In the infanticide records and the notorious Contagious Diseases Act of 1868, for example, the prostitute appeared as a concept ‘invented, circulated, and repeated in the service of new forms of social scientific inquiry’ (p. 79), and was largely categorised as a deviant criminal. Similarly, beginning with the tragic death of Kally Bewahm, a pregnant widow belonging to a high-caste Hindu family of colonial Calcutta, the next chapter highlights the forensics of abortion, which was used to ‘prove the inevitable unchastity of unmarried, widowed, and polygamous women in India’ (p. 112). ‘Evolution’ brings to the fore ethnological and sociological theories propounded by European and Bengali networks of elite male social scientists to produce ‘a multidisciplinary hermeneutic for female sexuality’, and to envision ‘the mutable concept of the prostitute as the very genesis of social evolution’ (p. 174), which created universalist models for comparison between civilisations. Finally, the book takes a peep at flourishing popular print cultures and realist literary autobiographies of ‘fallen women’. Durba’s argument is that they often tended to follow a script, as even while claiming to reveal the hypocrisy of society, these texts ‘made natural the terms of women’s sexual exclusion and reasserted the primacy of patriarchal monogamy’ (p. 179). The brief Afterword ends with the classic 1905 science fiction ‘Sultana’s Dream’ by Begum Rokeya Hossain.

The most fascinating aspect of *Indian Sex Life* is its treatment of the prostitute as a fluid concept, ubiquitously present everywhere, across different archives, ‘appearing, disappearing and then reappearing in files that seemingly had little to do with the regulation of sexual commerce’ (p. 4). This wide arena encompasses virtually

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all women outside monogamous Hindu upper-caste marriages in colonial India. The prostitute thus is not primarily seen as a sex worker engaged in commercial sex, a *tawa'if*, or a *devadasi*, but a high-caste Hindu widow, a Muslim worker, a polygamous woman, an indentured labourer, a low-caste, a mendicant performer, a professional singer, a theatre actor, a domestic servant. This methodology provides a critical genealogy to expand the taxonomy of an archive, bring an interdisciplinary framework and rethink global scholarship on sexuality.

My minor quibble with the book is twofold. First, it leaves oppressive vigilance of male sexuality through discourses on *brahmacharya* (celibacy) and masturbation, as well as condemnation of the queer largely outside its ambit. Second, sometimes its leaning on an elite male perspective leads to a homogenised, linear narrative. This position of negation, while critical, can constrain our analytical horizons, where the cracks, fissures, subversions and deviances against disciplinary power regimes remain faint threads. That said, the book is a landmark contribution to global history of sexuality and will be indispensable to scholars across many disciplines. The malleability of deviant female sexuality shows that each of us who question, who defy, who desire, who demand, are proud to be, or have the potential to be, labelled as prostitutes.

Charu Gupta

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A. D. JHALA, *An Endangered History: Indigeneity, Religion, and Politics on the Borders of India, Burma, and Bangladesh*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019, 253 pp.

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Angma Dey Jhala's latest work is an exploration of the colonial practice of knowledge production with reference to the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), now located in Bangladesh. The hills and forests east of Chittagong district came under Company control in 1760; it was formally made a district of Bengal a century later. The book takes us across several generations of knowledge production on the CHT through the works of five British officials beginning in the late eighteenth century through to the first quarter of the twentieth century. Given the length of time involved—over a century—the book is firmly located in the changing political contexts within the hill tracts from autonomous chieftaincies to varying stages of British control. The book is also primarily focused on the practice of the evolving notions of knowledge production, especially in the context of the then developing disciplines of anthropology and ethnology and their use for colonial control. All these factors, juxtaposed with the subjectivities of each author, allow for a rich narration of the manner in which the CHT was produced. The author is also very conscious of the

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SANJIB BARUAH, *In the Name of the Nation: India and Its Northeast*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020, 278 pp.

DOI: 10.1177/0019464620987925

At the heart of Sanjib Baruah's *In the Name of the Nation: India and Its Northeast* lies a paradox: How is it that Northeastern India, site of the suspension of rights and freedoms enjoyed by most Indian citizens, is also a region that witnesses high electoral involvement and voter turnout? Unravelling this question requires the deconstruction of all-too-familiar political idioms of Indian democracy—including 'insurgency', 'frontier', 'citizen' and 'infiltrator'—as well as deep scrutiny of the directional signifier 'Northeast' itself.

With this book, Baruah completes a trilogy of sorts. *India against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality* addressed Assamese subnationalism and conflict, positing a loose federation as the solution to tackling the multiethnic polity of India. *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India* expanded upon the nature and consequences of the counter-insurgency operations by the Army in

the region, which have acted as a parallel regime and eroded the democratic fibre of the Indian nation-state. These earlier books narrated the complex transition of colonial frontier spaces into postcolonial regional entities ‘belonging’ to India. *In the Name of the Nation* further complicates the premises and stakes that were established by Baruah in these earlier works with respect to the eight states under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), calling into question the very existence of the ‘directional place-name and its derivative *Northeasterner*...’ (p. 24).

The Northeast, as Baruah argues in the introduction, is ‘an officially organized and named region—an artifact of deliberate policy’ (p. 1). The eight states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura) are all frontier provinces characterised by uneven geographies of power. The ‘regional identifier’ Northeast describes these eight states, each of which (other than Sikkim) has witnessed militant unrest in the postcolonial period. Armed conflict by different claim-making groups is known in official Indian discourse as the insurgency problem. Baruah already demonstrated in *Durable Disorder* that the discourse of insurgency institutionalised non-democratic and authoritarian governance through the AFSPA regime within the Indian nation-state. In the years since the publication of *Durable Disorder*, the question of India’s democratic credentials has become even more urgent, and *In the Name of the Nation* analyses the country’s present democracy deficits in extensive historical and contemporary detail. In this book, Baruah turns his attention to the citizen-dissident as opposed to looking for solutions through a larger state policy. While *Durable Disorder* posited a reformulated dynamic policy (Look East), *In the Name of the Nation* calls for a new paradigm (‘Beyond State-centric Thinking’) to reconsider the politics of ideas emerging in times of ‘insurgency’ in the ‘vernacular intellectual life in the societies of Northeast India’ (p. 181).

The book is compelling in the way that it charts the complex political history of the region and connects colonial policy with postcolonial realities of Northeastern states. The first three chapters explore the ad hoc creation and consolidation of the Northeast as an administrative concept in postcolonial India. Baruah argues that Indian legislation has carried over the racist paternalism of imperial policy. He also discusses imperial strategic policy with respect to direct and indirect rule over the region, analysing how settled regions under direct rule became hubs of socioeconomic migration. Chapter 2, in particular, considers the long-contested issue of migration into Assam and the indigene–migrant divide emerging from a plantation economy. This old debate, central to late colonial, partition and post-Emergency politics of the Assam Movement, has been reinvigorated by the Hindu majoritarian regime currently in power. Baruah warns us that exclusion of the Bengali Muslim ‘infiltrator’ does not arise out of consideration for citizens’ resources; it capitalises on decades of suffering to dispossess the already disenfranchised. Baruah also highlights the complex and circuitous patterns of exploitation of the Northeastern resource frontier. While state protectionism has vested mineral rights

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with indigenous landowners, this, in turn, has led to land alienation and unequal accumulation within ethnic communities. Baruah emphasises how colonial architects of indirect rule left behind policies of protection and exclusion that were repackaged as affirmative action by the Indian State. He analyses how this leads to an unequal distribution of power since state-legitimised ethnic groups control the private rights of ownership of land and natural resources. Ultimately, ethnic political elites determine the course of the political economy of the region.

The subsequent chapters expand on theoretical dimensions of conflict and sovereignty in the Northeast, particularly in Nagaland and Assam. The call for a sovereign Nagaland is seen as unique, given that its independence movement predates Partition. Baruah calls attention to the important fact that the 'Naga' label itself was a fluid term designating several linguistic communities, these factional divisions complicating the idea of a homogeneous Naga identity. India has held numerous peace talks to resolve the Naga impasse, which have led to ambiguous political language of 'shared sovereignty'. Baruah argues that the actual terms of 'shared sovereignty' remain unspecified and that the 'hybrid political regime' (p. 109) that has since emerged leaves vulnerable settler groups in a position of political precarity. The fifth chapter provides a pointed account of how the Assam Movement morphed into the Ulfa, which was suppressed by the Indian State through military operations and the lure of material reward for informants. Many Ulfa defectors turned to illegal and criminal activities, which were not only overlooked but actively supported by the Indian State. Through the Ulfa, Baruah highlights the inadequacy of the political idiom of insurgency as used by the counter-insurgent state. Since India did not follow a proper rule of law, granting *de facto* rather than *de jure* amnesties, Ulfa and other armed groups fell within a liminal political space wherein insurgent actors sided with official politics. Baruah analyses these conflicts through the lens of 'contentious politics', which shifts focus to the 'interactive dynamics between the rebels and their competitors, antagonists, the power-holders, and the relevant audiences' (p. 132). The author sets an agenda for future scholarship by offering us new modes of thinking about Northeast India. First, he shows that the liminality and hybridity of this space can be better understood by looking at networks of complicity. Second, he complicates critiques of the Indian nationalist project by exploring how state violence in the Northeast is seen as morally necessary even within the liberal imagination as a means to enforce ideas of national culture.

The book concludes with a meditation on the AFSPA. Baruah traces how national sentiment was at one point somewhat mobilised against the AFSPA but, with the rise of the Hindu right, democratic deficits have been further normalised and extended into the heartland. The National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act enacted into law on 12 December 2019 have caused unprecedented protests across the country, decrying them as an unconstitutional step taken by the Indian government against the interests of Muslim and poor migrants who cannot provide documentation. The book is a timely reminder of

why the Northeast has been the epicentre of this democratic protest. *In the Name of the Nation* is an essential read that helps us better understand how ordinary people can reclaim moral sovereignty in the face of state violence. In the process, Northeast India is reconceived as central, not peripheral, to the history of Indian territorial sovereignty.

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Y A. R. VENKATACHALAPATHY, *Who Owns That Song? The Battle for Subramania Bharati's Copyright*. New Delhi: Juggernaut, 2018, 192 pp.

DOI: 10.1177/0019464620987922

There is a road called Subramania Bharti [sic] Marg in Central Delhi. It links the Delhi Golf Club with Lodhi Garden, has ministers' bungalows lining part of it and abuts Khan Market, one of the most expensive pieces of real estate not just in India but also in the world. On this road, and at right angles to it, are located two housing estates for senior government officials: Rabindra Nagar and Bharti Nagar, respectively. Most residents of that road, or shoppers on it, would have little difficulty in associating Rabindra with the Nobel Prize winner from Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore. 'Bharti', on the other hand, would flummox most, unless they were exceptionally well read or from Tamil Nadu. This is not a comment on the relative importance of the poets—though Bharati (1882–1921) translated Tagore and not the other way round—but more on the general ignorance of residents of North India of seminal historical figures from other regions (even when they lived for some time in North India, as Bharati did, in Benaras, between 1898 and 1903). One way of remedying this state of affairs is, of course, through school textbooks (in one of the national school boards a poem by Bharati is indeed included in the textbook for English). The other is through well-researched and lucidly written books by reputed historians in an idiom that can be appreciated by readers outside the academy. An acclaimed cultural historian of and from Tamil Nadu, A. R. Venkatachalapathy has undertaken this task with great felicity.

We are familiar with our own times, when public campaigns calling for bans on books and other creative arts appear with unsurprising regularity. Venkatachalapathy's book chronicles a time different from our own, when poetry was the subject of popular agitation (demanding nationalisation by way of copyright acquisition by the state and free or wider availability), and political elites still read (rather than just attend book launches) and took personal interest in literary matters. Although the book contains biographical details of the poet's life (including the time he spent in exile in Pondicherry, safe from the laws of British India) and highlights his career

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location of the CHT as a borderland between Indic cultures and Southeast Asia, between more settled governance of the plains and the still-to-be-controlled hill tracts further east, thereby creating its own complications and hurdles for knowledge production. The book begins by showing us the complexities of this ‘liminal border area’, a foregrounding of this being important as it was the complexity of the porous frontier zone inhabited by various communities and the hybridity prevalent therein that revealed the limitations of ‘European-derived intellectual paradigms’ (p. xvii).

The book thus takes us through four chapters that intertwine the lives, interests and pursuits of five colonial officials: Francis Buchanan, a Scottish doctor who toured the CHT in 1798; Thomas H. Lewin (in the region between 1864 and 1875), the first deputy commissioner; W. W. Hunter and R. H. Sneyd Hutchinson (in the region between 1876 and 1909), both ICS officers and authors of gazetteers and surveys; and J. P. Mills, who toured the region between 1926 and 1927. All of them represented the breed of colonial administrator-scholars who were part-scientists and part-administrative/military men, guided by the Enlightenment ideas of reason and civilising mission. The CHT became the ground on which to practise the ‘investigative modalities’ of the European intellectual discourses of the time.

In Jhala’s work, two aspects are very prominent over which she also shows a very strong hold. The first is the intellectual context in which the authors write and the second is the biographical context of the authors. Thus, each chapter is dedicated to an author (except for the clubbing together of Hunter and Hutchinson), and each is a very-well-crafted assessment about how existing epistemologies and biographies intertwined to produce the region. The chapters are therefore chronological, and readers are made aware of the developments in the science of representation from the late nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century.

Buchanan is placed in the context of the developing interest in natural history and Linnaean categorisation of specimens. His work was characterised not only by an empirical thoroughness that dealt with all specimens—animate and inanimate—he encountered but also by his inability to deal with hybridities, the heterodox and the ‘mixed’ whether in religion, cultures, peoples or even agricultural practices. Jhala places Lewin as a product of an England that cherished and encouraged a spirit of adventure, a heroism and romanticism about the discovery of the unknown along with a sense of duty in the performance of the functions of the imperial master. She sees evidences of these attitudes in all that he wrote. She also innovatively sees Lewin through his engagements with the womenfolk—white, native or ‘mixed’. The works of Hunter and Hutchinson, on the other hand, are seen through the prism of the implementation of the enumerative mode of representation that had begun with the creation of the census with a focus on racial and religious categories in the former and latter, respectively. Mills is an example of the close conjunction especially in Northeast India of anthropology and colonialism even as he was invited to make recommendations for the administration of the district. Mills’s suggestions regarding the curtailment of the power of the chiefs were based on

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The Indian Economic and Social History Review, 58, 2 (2021): 279–289

Tribal Revolts in a Precarious Frontier

T C A RAGHAVAN

Pukhtun resistance to external intervention has acquired many characteristics of a dominant narrative. The Soviet invasion and retreat from Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 was its longest external military intervention and ended in failure. The United States (US) is now on the verge of ending its longest external military intervention after two decades in Afghanistan and there is failure written all over this enterprise too. These late 20th and early 21st century developments focus interest on older histories, and in particular, on the second half of the 19th century as an expanding British imperialism displaced the Sikh kingdom and now had a direct interface with Afghanistan. In each of these three historical conjunctures—the British, the Soviet, and the American—the frontier areas that today comprise the Pakistan–Afghanistan border zone have played a major role in establishing the narrative of Pukhtun resistance.

This book centres around one particular episode of such resistance in 1897, when local Pukhtun tribes revolted against the British colonial administration along the North-west frontier with Afghanistan. The geography of that insurrection is largely the areas covered by the administrative territories of North and South Waziristan, Khyber and Swat, all falling in or adjoining what was till recently termed the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and familiar to those who have followed recent events relating to the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban.

At its peak, the insurrection led to a number of significant tactical military setbacks for the colonial state. These included at one stage a number of losses in Khyber, including the Landi Kotal post, which was at the time the most important. The consequent closure of the Khyber Pass extended to some months. Even at the time, this was seen as more than a local problem or setback, but rather as a loss for British prestige as a whole. The day, 25 August 1897, therefore

The Limits of Empire: Sub-imperialism and Pukhtun Resistance in the North-West Frontier

edited by Sameetah Agha, Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2020; pp xvii + 231, price not indicated.

passed into the imperial lore as the “blackest day” for the British on the frontier. The presence of Winston Churchill as a young subaltern in the forces mobilised to suppress these insurrections, gave to this linked series of events a certain optical permanence in the mythology that surrounds the British Raj in the frontier to this day. The operations to restore authority in Khyber—the Tirah expedition against the Afridi tribe—was one of the biggest undertaken by the British in its frontier history.

Wide Range of Source Material

The Limits of Empire: Sub-imperialism and Pukhtun Resistance in the North-West Frontier is a detailed retelling of the story of these revolts and insurrections in the history of the North-West Frontier. In writing this history, Sameetah Agha has mined an unusually wide range of sources and has thus managed to surmount the numerous political divides in the subcontinent. It is rare to come across works by subcontinental scholars or those of subcontinental origin, even when based outside it, who have managed access to archives in India and in Pakistan, including record offices in the tribal agencies. The use of depositories such as the India Office Library is, of course, to be expected. In addition, and more unusually, the author has had the benefit of actually travelling in the different tribal agencies of the old North-west Frontier Province (NWFP) that were the sites of these outbreaks and interviewing persons who had inherited memories of the revolt. Each of these factors has contributed to making this book a riveting and well-researched local history, which gives a more granular sense of the subject than is otherwise encountered. The author’s research and fieldwork were

completed about a quarter of a century ago, but simultaneous access to Indian and Pakistani archives would have been as rare then as it is now.

Details of the Insurrections

Throughout the colonial period, the entire Pukhtun belt in the north-west of the subcontinent saw fierce and continuous resistance. The 1897 revolt was, however, the “most spectacular manifestation of resistance in the North West Frontier.” To contemporary officials and the colonialist historiography that developed alongside, such acts of resistance were described as “treacherous” and representative of tribal “lying and deceit.” “Fanaticism” was another catch-all explanation to describe defiance of British authority. Such explanations have had, Agha points out, a long afterlife. The revolt as a religious reaction to British penetration, which was seen as a direct threat to existing moral and religious values of local tribes, has continued as an explanation of sorts in present-day analysis also. Her conclusion, however, is that the “historical evidence does not support the 1897 revolt as a sudden spontaneous, treacherous or fanatical rebellion.” On the other hand, the revolt has to be seen as the culmination of “continuous resistance against imperial occupation” and only by looking at the actual conduct of imperial policy on the ground does an explanatory coherence emerge with regard to the events of 1897.

At the heart of the British policy in the North-West Frontier were the dual considerations that the mountain passes to Afghanistan be controlled by them and also that the tribes in the frontier regions be made into the empire’s allies. These considerations followed from the geopolitical logic dictated by Russian advance into Central Asia and the encroachment, at least perceived as such by colonial strategists, into the very frontiers of India. From this, Agha explains, emerged a new forward policy on the frontier. But this approach had at its heart a contradiction: Those who advocated this policy stated that they had no desire to interfere with the independence of the tribes. At the same time, they wanted to show these tribes that

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they were “our men!” The contradiction thus lay in the fact of wanting to extend control while seemingly trying to abstain from expanding local influence or interfering with the tribes in any way that would inevitably bring about a collision with local tribes. The tribes in turn saw the policy as one of interference and occupation and “the 1897 risings were part of a continuous struggle against this threat to the tribe’s independence.”

Agha meticulously traces out the chronology and spread of the insurrections and uses the material gathered from the archives of the “lower echelons of empire” to correct and contextualise the often deliberately distorted narratives propagated by the colonial state. These bring out how the “empire actually functioned rather than how it stated it did.” The 1897 tribal revolts began in North Waziristan and were followed by a major insurrection in Swat. The third site was in Khyber. What was common to each of these insurrections were the severe military losses suffered by the colonial state, despite the existence of well-equipped troops in a good number. In each of these cases, there was also a

common attempt by local civil and military officials to suppress the real reason for the outbreaks and gloss over the military failures and the setbacks suffered.

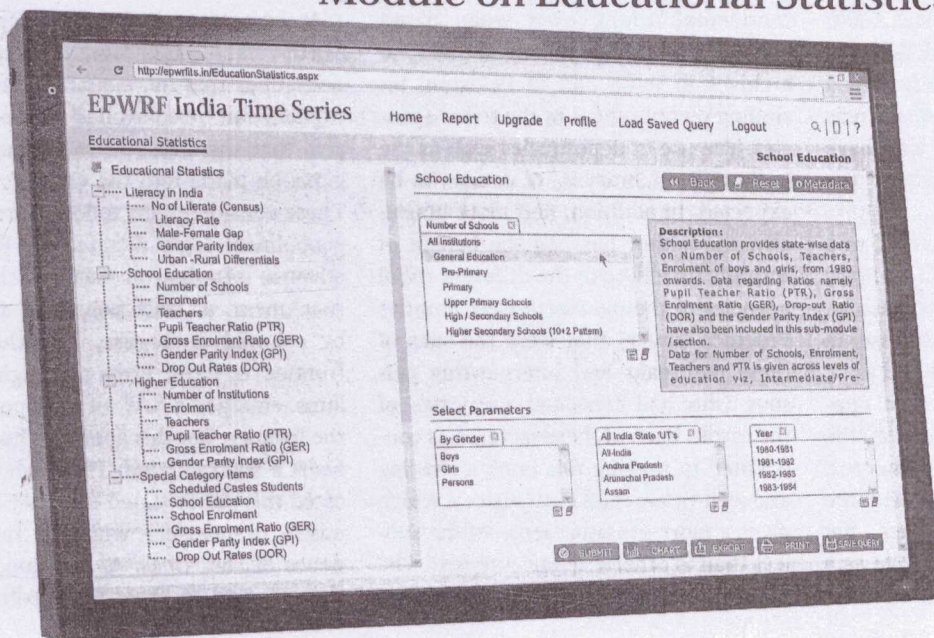
What explains the outbreak in each case was the encroachment into the tribal domain by an expanding colonial power more focused on the geopolitical logic of imperial defence and a scientific frontier. The oft-stated premise of non-interference with local tribes was thus discarded in the actual “implementation” of policy, and in fact, this was the cause for each of the insurrections. In Agha’s account, the “loss” of the Khyber was in fact anticipated by the officials on the ground, but preventive steps were not taken because it was expected that a setback in Khyber would strengthen the climate of opinion in favour of a major and prolonged military intervention.

Wider Considerations

Delving into these issues also enables Agha to pose larger questions of the imperial and sub-imperial pivots of policy. Does the contradiction she identifies explain the frequent tension between the colonial officers on the ground and

those in higher echelons of officialdom? Local initiatives and considerations, in brief the “man on the spot” driving policy and being an explanatory factor in colonial expansion, has a long historiographical tradition. Thus, Gallagher and Robinson had, in the mid 20th century, put forth the thesis of local factors driving imperial expansion rather than official policy per se.¹ This shifted attention away from the imperial metropolis as being a kind of a mother brain in explaining the spread of the empire, to local officers who were seen as the key factors in expansion. The obvious attraction of such a thesis, especially for colonial apologists of an older generation, was that it shifted the focus away from the metropole to the periphery in explaining the expansion of the empire in the late 19th century. Agha gives an outline of these older debates to reiterate her own finding that these local initiatives were not an autonomous explanatory factor but rather were intrinsic to how “imperialism functions at the frontier” and, hence, the title of the book “Sub-imperialism.” In brief, the real drivers of policy were the real or imagined geopolitical

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compulsions of the Raj, and thus, implementing a forward policy would necessarily lead to frictions and resistance from the tribes.

Different Lenses

Agha provides a useful corrective to the older prisms of "fanaticism" and treachery that were employed for analysis of these insurrections. Her basic thesis of the resistance being a colonial encroachment into tribal domains is convincing. Nevertheless, the question remains whether the tribal regions were in fact entirely insulated from outside influences, and to what extent the use of a charged religious indoctrination as explanation can be dispensed with in entirety.

Second, although Agha does not venture into the postcolonial domain, some parallels with modern developments are irresistible. For many Pukhtuns, the idea of successful resistance against an expanding British, then Soviet and finally US interventions has become a large part of their own self-image. The 19th and early 20th century memories of successful resistance entered the vocabulary of a later generation of rebels: The *Pir* of Ipi in North and South Waziristan in the 1930s and 1940s, Sufi Mohammad and his *Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi* in Dir, Swat in the first decade of this century, and the *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan* in a number of tribal agencies, are the best known examples. In each

case, their resistance and insurrection was sparked by state intervention and encroachment in a wider geopolitical context. Yet, each was also inspired by piety and religious fervour, which gave to them that extra potency and staying power.

I would strongly recommend Agha's book to those interested in the deep history of what is happening today in the Af-Pak region.

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NOTE

- 1 Gallagher, John and Ronald Robison (1953), "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *Economic History Review*, Vol 6, No 1, pp 1-15. The author of the book cites other variants of this thesis also.

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The Changing Dynamics of Tribal Societies in India

AASHISH XAXA

Tribes or indigenous peoples of India have been the focus of scholarly attention, particularly in the fields of anthropology and sociology, for about a century. However, even before the inception of these disciplines, much has been written on tribes since the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. Some of the most notable among them from the colonial period are Edward Tuite Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (1872), Herbert Hope Risley's *Tribes and Castes of Bengal* (1891), Edgar Thurston and K Rangachari's *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (1909), Robert V Russell and R B Lal's *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (1916) and G S Ghurye's *The Aborigines—"So Called"—and Their Future* (1943). Renowned British missionary-turned-anthropologist Verrier Elwin contributed immensely to tribal studies. Some of his pioneering works are *The Baiga* (1935), *The Agaria* (1942), *The Aborigines* (1944), *The Muria and Their Ghotul* (1947), *The Religion of an Indian Tribe* (1955), *India's North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century* (1959), and his landmark, *A Philosophy for NEFA* (1957).

In the postcolonial era, some of the critical works that have advanced the sociological understanding of tribes are K S Singh's (ed), *The Tribal Situation in India* (1972), *Tribal Society in India: An Anthro-historical Perspective* (1985) and Virginus Xaxa's *State, Society and Tribes: Issues in Post-colonial India* (2008). These works have established tribes as communities having their own diverse histories, epistemologies, languages, cultures, social practices and so on. They have also marked tribes as a heterogeneous social group which is distinct from caste. Due to this distinction, tribes require a different approach in research and analysis than caste. In this regard,

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India's Tribes: Unfolding Realities edited by Vinay Kumar Srivastava, New Delhi, California, London and Singapore: SAGE Publications, 2021; pp 294, ₹1,295 (hardcover).

India's Tribes: Unfolding Realities is an important contribution.

The volume is a compilation of some critical articles on tribes published in the journal *Social Change* between 1971 and 2021, which also marks the 50th year of the journal. The articles have been organised around the broader themes of development, labour exploitation, land alienation and acquisition, sustainable livelihoods, the politics of religious conversion, tribal women's issues, resistance movements and policy responses. These reflect the wide range of issues that were affecting tribes in the time period when these articles were written. Unfortunately, a lot of these issues continue to plague tribal societies in India, which is why the book has topical relevance. The book is composed of three sections, namely "Actors," "Institutions," and "Change." The first two have four articles each, while the last has five. All the articles within each specific section address a core thematic area.

An important contribution and a strength of this volume is the in-depth introduction written by its editor, Vinay Kumar Srivastava. He highlights some crucial developments that have informed the discussion on tribes in the field of anthropology. These include the surveys of British administrators and anthropologists, the Adivasi assertion by Jaipal Singh in the Constituent Assembly Debates, to its more contemporary usage both to mark the identity of India's indigenous peoples as well as a political

term for assertion and self-determination (Xaxa 2008). The fundamental distinction between tribe as a social identity and Scheduled Tribe as an administrative category is discussed. He also discusses the Report of the High-Level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities in India, also known as the Xaxa Committee Report (Xaxa 2014) to highlight how the morphological distinctions (structural differences between societies) between communities tend to get effaced for the sake of uniformity. An important observation made by him is that even though the economic conditions of tribes overall have yet to improve, there is an increased interest in their world. This is reflected in the diverse number of publications coming from wide-ranging disciplines. A journal on molecular genetics has a paper on ancient DNA where blood samples of a lesser contacted tribe were analysed (Sharma 2012). A book on architecture includes a chapter on the ecologically sensitive residential structures of tribes. A text on psychiatry gives a very respectable treatment on how tribes treat behavioural disorders in their own communities (us Department of Health and Human Services 2001). Gender studies is increasingly looking at why the sex ratio is much better among tribes and why women in tribal communities have comparatively better freedom than their non-tribal counterparts. With these examples, Srivastava is hinting at not just the limitations of these various disciplines but also how much the tribal world has to teach us.

Actors

The first section called "Actors" introduces the readers to the people known as tribes. Themes such as social change, development and its disastrous effect on tribes, and the plight of Maria women miners are explored in this section. These articles give an overview of tribal society and highlight the immense challenges faced by them. The key issues explored in this section are the incursion of the non-tribal population into tribal areas

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leading to a decline of the tribal population; state activities such as urbanisation and industrialisation with ill effects such as deforestation, land alienation, indebtedness, unemployment and forced migration to Bengal and Assam to work as “cheap labour” in the tea gardens among many others. All these problems affected not only the tribal population but also the larger ecological balance leading to a series of unrests and giving way to more organised movements at a later phase. The inception of the Adivasi Mahasabha in Jharkhand, under the aegis of Jaipal Singh, was the culmination of these sporadic movements. The sense of subnationalism among the Adivasis was born out of it.

Institutions

The next section called “Institutions” discusses the ways and practices of living among different tribal communities in India. The authors in this section explore the complex tribal customary laws, agricultural knowledge and sustainable livelihood among the Chuktia Bhunjia tribe of Odisha, the sociocultural lives of the Baites and the impact of Christianity on the Sumi Naga. Overall, their works have focused on the agricultural practices, customs, practices and spiritual beliefs of various tribes. The section also explores the notion of legal pluralism in India. Despite the presence of governmentality in the form of state enacted laws and rules, there exist traditional customs and regulations that govern life in tribal areas. A crucial aspect discussed in this section is about who is the final owner of the land: is it the community or the individual? In the case of India, a critical point to be observed is that while the genesis of modern Indian law is foreign, nationwide generalisations of law are of “little consequence” (Galanter 1989) as India is a vast and heterogeneous country. There has been scant attention paid to the understanding of local conditions which inevitably leads to misleading generalisations. Drawing from this section, I would argue that it is crucial for both policymakers and scholars of tribal communities to understand the nuances of each tribes’ distinct land-holding patterns and not homogenise

them with the general land laws of the country.

Change

The final section of the book is called “Change.” This section explores both the exogenous and endogenous factors that have affected tribal societies. The authors in this section explore the inter-generational social mobility among the Konyak Naga tribe, the Jharkhand Movement and future possibilities for Jharkhand, the tribal resistance movements and the politics of development-induced displacement in contemporary Odisha, how development and displacement have led to labour marginalisation in Jharkhand and the indigenous identity of Indian tribes. One key theme that this section focuses on is how massive development projects initiated in the country have been justified in the name of “national interest” and that these have led to massive displacement, land alienation of tribes and severe environmental consequences. A dark reality that emerged due to such displacement was the initiation of non-tribals into jobs reserved for tribal people, by using fake certificates fuelling massive uproar in the tribal communities. This was seen as the modernisation of discrimination to fit into the brutal labour market. Another interesting aspect of tribal change discussed is the intergenerational shift in occupation in the context of the Konyak Nagas. It is mentioned that the younger generation among them does not prefer to practise agriculture despite the tribe being largely dependent on agriculture. The crucial reason put forward is that due to the rise in literacy, the Konyak youth have greater educational mobility and can shift to non-agricultural professions. I argue that this can be seen as being generally true for most tribes in India. However, it is being witnessed among people returning home, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that the younger generation is discovering a newfound interest in agriculture.

Srivastava makes some critical and analytical observations with regard to the emerging trends of tribal scholarship today. He states that it is a well known fact that tribes have been treated

with prejudice by the political state as well as by well-to-do people. Exploitation of tribals has been repeated across generations, in various forms. This indignation has filled them with a lot of anger and remorse. Suffice to say that once the new generation of tribes was exposed to the earlier anthropological writings on them, two sets of responses emerged: one was the sense of anger on discovering that they had been wrongly portrayed, misconceptualised and inferiorised so as to forcibly fit them into the Western civilisational hierarchy as well as the Indian caste system. Unfortunately, this practice continues from Indian anthropologists and has now come under severe criticism from indigenous scholars (Xaxa 2021). The other was the sense of discovery. Many tribes who had just heard about their histories from oral traditions were now reading anthropological accounts about their religious beliefs, customary laws, ethnomedical practices, food and drinks among many others. This filled them with an urge to undertake research studies within their own communities for a correct construction of the past. Such studies seek to explore their own communities’ epistemologies and are not reliant on previous accounts of their communities. There is also a class of urban tribes that have been formed over the past two to three decades. This stands in sharp contrast to the isolated tribes in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Very few studies have been conducted on either of them. He urges future scholars to undertake some studies with regard to their lives which can shed light on their emerging issues.

Overall, this is a very good, important and timely volume for tribal studies. It will be of immense help to scholars of sociology, anthropology, development studies, political science, policy studies, tribal studies, women studies, cultural studies and scholars engaged in decolonial and reclamation studies. This is a volume that seeks to raise the scholarship on tribes with dignity, confidence and respect.

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Analysing Socio-economic Backwardness among Muslims

MANJUR ALI

Underdevelopment turns not only into indirect violence but also into justice. Merely systemic weakness causes redistributive problem, whereas exclusion of an individual or group(s) based on their identity converts non-development into injustice.

Since independence, Muslims as a social-religious group have gradually been pushed to the periphery of development. Contrary to the right-wing political rhetoric against “secular” union governments of being minority appeaser, community as a whole is lagging on all socio-economic development indicators. Many commissions and scholarly works have proven this fact beyond doubt. This book too concludes that “Persistence of disparities of this magnitude also underlines the failure of state initiatives ... Apparent discrimination by state institutions makes their lives less optimistic and hopeful.” However, it must be noted that underdevelopment among Muslims is not a uniform but a heterogeneous phenomenon. The intra-community development status is shaped by the historical events, class and caste position. A confluence of these factors to produce inequality among Muslims is the focus of this book. However, while doing so, the book has restricted itself with the outcome, that is, inequality, rather than its causes. However, it can be construed from the subtitle of the book that one is linked with others.

The book spread into eight chapters is rich in data which is based on extensive fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh (UP). It has captured and highlighted various kinds of backwardness of Muslim social-religious groups in two ways—intra-group and inter-group. This is the first research of its kind, which has interviewed Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Dalit Muslims extensively. The Sachar Committee report (2006) was mainly based on old secondary data. For example, the percent

Backward and Dalit Muslims: Education, Employment and Poverty by Surinder Kumar, Fahimuddin, Prashant K Trivedi and Srinivas Goli, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2020; pp 220, ₹995.

share of Ashraf, Ajlaf and Arzal was quite dated. The format of data collection makes this book an important read for policymakers and researchers on social exclusion.

The data on various indicators reveal the overall backwardness of the Muslim community. The upper-caste Muslims are relatively backward than upper-caste Hindus. Similarly, Muslim OBCs are no match to Hindu OBCs. And Dalit Muslims are lagging behind Scheduled Castes (SCs). However, the study also highlights the gap between upper-caste Muslims and Muslim OBCs/Dalit Muslims.

Table 1 reveals that on selected indicators Ashraf Muslims are doing better than Ajlaf (backward) and Arzal (Dalit) Muslims. Dalit Muslims’ education is 7.7% lower than upper-caste Muslims. Similarly, more upper-caste Muslims presented their primary occupation as farmers than Dalit Muslims. It could be due to the cultivable landholdings in rural areas. Among Dalit Muslims, 22.2% are self-employed in petty business and non-agricultural activities as compared to 15.1% of upper-caste Muslims.

These are important information revealed by this book. However, the book has its limitation, as has been mentioned earlier, in terms of explaining certain data, which it should have, to comprehend the socio-economic situation. It is

Table 1: Intra-community Comparison among Muslims

	Percent of Lit Rate	Work Status of Five Years and Above	Percent of Farmer	Percent of Self-employed in Petty Business and Non-agricultural Activities	Percent of Seasonal Migrants	Percent of HHs with Flush or Pit Toilet	Wealth Quintiles		HH Cultivable Landholdings in Rural Areas
							Poorest	Richest	
Upper-caste Muslims	78.3	34	8	15.1	2.8	62	20.9	19.8	69.4
OBC Muslims	73.2	33.3	2.6	21.9	2.9	58.2	26.9	12.5	34.5
Dalit Muslims	70.6	36	3.2	22.2	1.7	47.4	33.6	9.9	33

HHs: Households.

Source: Compiled by the reviewer.

so data focused that it forgot to mention the factors behind Dalit Muslims exceeding working percentage (Table 1) as compared to OBCs and upper-caste Muslims. “Richest” wealth quintiles comprise 12.5% of OBC and 9.9% of Dalit Muslims. An explanation was needed to understand the reason for the economic mobility of Dalit Muslims. What are the explanations for the lowest seasonal migration among the Dalit Muslims?

Practice of Caste

Nevertheless, the book has scored on the most important question of “degree of untouchability” among Muslims. Theoretically, the existence of caste among Indian Muslims has been proved and settled. It is a well known fact that the community is divided into Ashraf, Ajlaf and Arzal. Yet, scholars continue to debate over the origin and intensity of the caste system among Muslims. The book has investigated three sites, namely home, food and religious places to look into the question of untouchability among the Muslims. The book argues that

The indicator of the social status of OBC/Dalit Muslims have revealed the prevalence of discrimination practised by UC Muslims with OBC and Dalit Muslims ... it appears that OBC and Dalit Muslims were considered lowly and treated in an undignified manner by their UC co-religionists and also non-Muslims UCs ... it can be conclusively said that social segregation and exclusion of OBC and Dalit Muslims is a living reality in the entire state of UP. (p 35)

Tables 2.1 and 2.4 of Chapter 2 of the book reveal a vital perception of OBCs and Dalit Muslims regarding the practice of casteism and untouchability.

more than 70% of the OBC/Dalit Muslims feel that they were considered belonging to “lower caste” by UC Muslims ... The OBC/Dalit Muslims have reported that similar kinds of discrimination were relatively more frequent in the houses of UC Hindus. (pp 22–23)

The book’s findings have shown lower rates/intensity of untouchability in the

BOOK REVIEW

operational process of caste and thus leave scope for further research. Table 2 reveals that 75.1% of OBC/Dalit Muslims do not face any type of discrimination listed in the table. But, the other way of looking at it is that almost 25% of the population does face caste-related experiences.

Table 2: Social Status of OBC/Dalit Muslims in Uttar Pradesh (%)

Item	(%)
Situation faced in the house of upper-caste Muslims	
Keep distance	14.6
Ask to sit on a particular floor	4.9
Give food/water in utensils they do not use	10.4
Use derogatory terms	2.6
Use a particular term rather than name	3.8
None	75.1

Source: Page no 23 of the book.

When Dalit Muslims were asked whether they sit with upper-caste Muslims in a wedding feast, 7.5% across the state said yes. It is higher in Bundelkhand region with 14.8%. At the state level, 8.7% of parents belonging to Dalit Muslims said that their children were asked to sit in a separate row in school. Among Dalit Muslims, 9.6% said that their children are asked to sit in a separate row for midday meal. Of Dalit Muslims, 32.7% responded that they do not share graveyard with upper-caste Muslims and 4.1% noted that they offer prayers in a separate

mosque. And, 14.47% of respondents thought that their caste is seen associated with menial jobs. During the field survey, questions were put to the upper-caste Muslims and OBCs to corroborate the caste practices among Muslims. State-level data suggest that 33.4% of upper-caste and OBC Muslims said that the utensils used to offer food to Dalit Muslims are different. Of the upper-caste and OBC Muslims, 22.5% do not partake food offered by Dalit Muslim households.

The third important thing that this book reveals is the region-wise pattern of gaps and the notion of untouchability. Although Muslim population is not substantial in the Bundelkhand region, caste-related practices run deeper in the region. Among Dalit Muslims in Bundelkhand, 77.80% sit along with upper-caste Muslims in wedding feasts as compared to 93.3%, 89.5% and 96.2% in eastern, western and central regions, respectively. Among Dalit Muslims, 20.7% offer prayers in a separate mosque in Bundelkhand as compared to 2.9%, 3.7% and 2.5% in eastern, western and central regions, respectively. Similarly, 74.1% of Arzal in Bundelkhand are served food and water in the same plates and glasses in feasts of upper-caste Muslims

as compared to 93.9%, 96.8% and 100% in eastern, western and central regions, respectively. Among Dalit Muslims of Bundelkhand, 7.4% revealed that they eat after upper-caste Muslims finished their meals in a feast of upper caste as compared to 6.1%, 5.0% and 1.9% in eastern, western and central regions, respectively.

Although the occurrence of caste-induced practices seems smaller in number and lower in intensity, the authors are of the view that regarding untouchability, "Data presented in this study may be just a tip of an iceberg as relatively well-off sections among Dalit Muslims report higher incidences of untouchability." Nevertheless, the book provides sufficient argument to lead the way for further research into the topic with a newer question such as marriage alliance among the Muslims, political support to upper-caste Muslims, etc. For policy-makers, the evidence is enough to get started with the long-pending economic and political demands such as amendments in Article 341 and special package like SC sub-plan to the Dalit Muslims.

Manjur Ali (manzooral.ali@gmail.com) is with Giri Institute of Development Studies, Lucknow.

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In this collection of essays, Professor Jalaluddin presents deep insights into contemporary education in India by combining theoretical knowledge and rigour and experiential learning derived from experiments and innovations in real school settings. Most significant aspect of the book is its simplicity in communicating profound ideas without the use of high-sounding rhetoric and jargon.
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I'm really grateful to Bodh Shiksha Samiti for documenting the work of the great thinker, researcher and practitioner, Prof. AK Jalaluddin. This was a much needed initiative.
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April, 2021

BOOK REVIEWS

✓ **Exploring teacher recruitment and retention: contextual challenges from international perspectives**, edited by Tanya Ovenden-Hope and Rowena Passy, London, Routledge Books, 262 pp., £27.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-367-07645-0

Education is globally acknowledged to be of fundamental importance in order to achieve a sustainable future and economic prosperity. So why is there an international crisis over the recruitment of qualified teachers? And why is there an even greater crisis when trying to retain them in the profession? What might the solutions be? This important edited collection addresses these vital questions and provides multiple perspectives on the most crucial educational challenge of our time, for what is a school without teachers?

Editors Tanya Ovenden-Hope and Rowena Passy have assembled experts, academics and researchers to provide a forensic investigation into the pressing problems regarding the recruitment and retention of teachers. The book is structured into two sections. The first section attends to the situation of teacher recruitment and retention in England based around three themes. The first theme, explored in the first three chapters, offers an overall analysis of the problem. In Chapter 1 John Howson, the go-to authority on teacher supply numbers, reminds us that the problem of teacher recruitment is not a new one. For the past 50 years, teacher supply has fluctuated, going from feast to famine. His analysis points out that the issue is not solely concerned with finding sufficient numbers of qualified teachers but of ensuring an equitable distribution in an increasingly market-based education system. James Noble-Rogers, in Chapter 2 explains how recruitment has been damaged in recent years, arguing that government policy has potentially worsened the problem, particularly since 2013; while Georgina Newton, in Chapter 3, draws on research into the reasons why teachers in England leave teaching, citing heavy workloads, feeling undervalued and a lack of agency as key factors.

A second theme explores possible solutions. In Chapter 4 Linda la Velle and Alexandra Kendall argue for teaching to be recognised as an intellectual, critical profession as the foundation for enhancing status and encouraging teachers to remain in the profession. The importance of high-quality, research informed continuing professional development (CPD) is one of the key findings of RETAIN, a pilot project funded by the Educational Endowment Project in coastal-rural schools, reported upon in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6 Sarah Younie and Christina Preston look at the supply of digital technology teachers in England, illustrating the ways in which changes in curriculum policy can exacerbate existing difficulties.

The final theme examines how an increasingly market-based education system impedes the equitable distribution of qualified teachers. Section one concludes by exploring recruitment and retention in the areas where it is most challenging. Chapter 7 articulates the problems for schools in coastal communities; Chapter 8 gives attention to 'educationally isolated' schools while Chapter 9 attempts to make sense of educational policy and workforce supply for small schools in England. Together these three chapters provide a significant overview, supported by empirical research, of the nature of educational disadvantage within some of the 'forgotten corners' of educational provision.

In Section Two the scope of the book broadens to consider international perspectives. Chapter 10 reports on research undertaken by The Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) between 2015 and 2017 across seven different and mostly national jurisdictions. Four areas are identified where the development of teacher identities

can enhance recruitment and retention. These are unsurprising conclusions: recognising and celebrating the status of the profession, focussing on quality CPD, developing teacher-led education systems and attending to the ways in which system structures affect and model trust in teachers (both individually and collectively). Chapter 11 explores one of the most perplexing and controversial responses to teacher recruitment and retention, that of financial incentives. The systematic review of international empirical research shows that, while financial incentives appear to work in attracting teachers in hard-to-staff school areas, such external motivation may not be desirable, or able to attract the best teachers and it certainly cannot guarantee that teachers will stay in the profession.

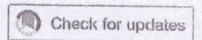
This leads into a sequence of six chapters that describe the teacher supply situation in Canada, China, Israel, Jamaica, Sweden and Australia. I found the comparisons between countries fascinating and instructional as the following examples demonstrate: The Chinese Free Teacher Education Programme that offers participants free tuition, free accommodation and a stipend for the duration of their studies; the situation in Israel where there is simultaneously a teacher shortage in the Jewish sector and a surplus in the Arab sector and challenges Jamaica faces to retain teachers in the face of migration through recruitment to overseas jobs.

What does this book tell us about the problem of teacher recruitment and retention and what the possible solutions might be? Teacher recruitment this is not a new problem and, in many countries, turbulence in teacher supply has been exacerbated by government policies. Retention is exacerbated by increased workloads reinforced by the stress of accountability, performativity agendas, low professional status, and the lack of teacher agency. The solutions that are offered throughout the book are surprisingly consistent. Financial rewards it seems have a limited impact over the long term. Instead teachers seem to be looking for ongoing support through high-quality CPD, leadership they can trust, being valued for what they do and allowed to make professional decisions. At a national or regional level, there is a need for genuine collaboration and consultation over policy between policy makers, school leaders and the profession.

The lasting message from this book is that, while teacher recruitment and retention is a problem, it is particularly acute in disadvantaged areas and the least developed countries. Any solution needs to acknowledge this so that the benefits for some are not at the expense of others. This thought-provoking book offers a valuable contribution to understanding and resolving this crucial and intractable educational problem. Academics, researchers and, hopefully, policy makers have much to benefit from reading it.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2021.1876502>



X If schools didn't exist, by Nils Christie, translated and edited by Lucas Cone and Joachim Wiewiura, with a foreword by Judith Suissa, MIT Press, Cambridge. Massachusetts, 2020, 232 pp., £30 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-262-53889-3

The Norwegian sociologist Nils Christie (1928–2015) will be familiar to readers from his many contributions to the field of criminology and punishment. Books including *'Limits to Pain'* (1981), *'Crime Control as Industry'* (2000) and *'A Suitable Amount of Crime'* (2004) have

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Understanding Housing Resettlement through Women's Experiences

SIMRAN PAL KAUR

In the book, *A Place to Call Home: Women as Agents of Change in Mumbai*, Ramya Ramanath explores the uncertainties and transitions that women living on the peripheries of a national park experienced owing to slum clearance and subsequent relocation to small 225 square feet apartment units at a resettlement site called Sangharsh Nagar (symbolising a “neighbourhood born of struggle”). The book showcases the author’s deeply invested ethnographic field study in understanding the impacts of the displacement and disruptions in the lives of diverse groups of 120 women who emerge as primary agents in laying claims to the placemaking process at their new homes. The sense of “home” that evolves in this book validates the four value-types remarked by Lorna Fox (2002). These four types include “home” as a physical structure for shelter; territory for security and control; means of self-identity for reflection of personality and status; and social and cultural phenomenon for community relations and networks.

The book is an arduous record of almost two decades of transition that has taken place from pre- to post-resettlement against the backdrop of urban policy, planning, politics, governance and community. Ramya Ramanath is associate professor and chair of International Public Service at DePaul University, Chicago. Her work broadly focuses on the role and strengths of international and domestic non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the context of their cross-sector interactions and grassroots support in policy implementation. This book grew out of Ramanath’s doctoral thesis and her field research was also anchored with the support of an NGO

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A Place to Call Home: Women as Agents of Change in Mumbai by Ramya Ramanath, *New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2019; pp xvii + 170, ₹795.*

named *Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti* (Committee for the Protection of Housing Rights) whose reference is interspersed throughout the book.

The book provides unique insights to reflect on how housing is salient to the everydayness of life. Ramanath retains the literal Hindi/Marathi terms throughout the book to preserve the implicit meaning. The usage of original terms like *basti*, *zopadpatti*, *bombaiyya*, *dongar*, *bazaar*, *bishi*, *chaali*, *mahasangh*, *mandal*, *morcha*, *shaana*, *handaa*, etc, cherish the unadulterated meanings with inherent emotions of the local language. She further supports the imagination of the reader through maps for locational context followed by a series of hand-drawn sketches of women during focused group discussions, women performing chores, visuals of bazaar and other glimpses of the neighbourhood.

The new dwelling units allocated to the households were barely connected to infrastructure or conducive to a community environment. The women themselves made the apartments more liveable through a process of personal fulfilment. John Turner in the article “Housing as a Verb” (1972) draws a distinction in two alternate approaches to the definition of housing (pp 151–52). Using the term housing as a “noun” denotes a product or commodity with physical attributes—with a focus on houses or dwelling units. Whereas, housing as a “verb” denotes a process or an activity which responds to psychological and

physical needs of the inhabitants—with a focus on an all-encompassing experience of living. Thus, the approach with which housing is viewed ultimately shapes the strategy of housing interventions.

Ramanath’s book is a reminder that housing is not all about houses. It breaks away from the conventional obsession with number of units, materials and plot sizes. It intricately highlights the elements that distinguish “housing” from houses by making stronger connections between housing and infrastructure, demographics, income, financing, occupation, identity, community and external actors.

Housing with Infrastructure Services

The introductory chapter opens with excerpts of interviews with women who lay out the new stresses of life at the resettlement site after having experienced the “major stress” of demolitions of their slum houses on the fringes of Sanjay Gandhi National Park in northern Mumbai. With this context, the author elucidates the background of the demolitions based on the high court’s ruling in 1997 in a case fought between an environmental rights organisation and a housing rights organisation. It sets the context for the series of struggles that unfolded to procure a new house at Sangharsh Nagar in Chandivali neighbourhood.

In Chapter 2 “Vibrant Matter of the Past: A Woman’s Theory of Place,” Ramanath captures the stories of the women as they recollected their early years of being new migrants in Bombay city and spelled out comparisons between their first inhabited slum homes and the new legally tenured homes. Their longing for the past years indicated “what the women sought in the built environment—a place of togetherness” (p 26).

The “retrospective conversations” reflected how women’s memories of the place were “mediated by objects” and were influenced by their age, marital status, location of employment, etc. The memories were connected to particular places, items and environment such as fetching water from the standpost or

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common well, blue drums to store water, using the open air toilet areas, front door of their houses, tarpaulin sheets, greenery, etc (pp 18–19).

In the slums, around 10 to 30 proximate households grouped together as a “chaali” by making collective payments to qualify for basic infrastructure improvements. They started with municipal water supply connections and subsequently negotiated for access to other basic services such as unclogged drains, sewage system, electricity, paved alleyways, disposal of garbage, etc. The networks that developed in the chaalis along with the physical infrastructure and the sense of companionship, created the “vibrant matter” that women shared and treasured.

Water and the Lives of Women

The women recalled their lives revolving around water. They assembled in queues to collect water from a municipal standpost which also became a place of socialisation among young girls. Some women who inhabited the slums at a higher elevation of the park, delivered drinking water to other slum households by climbing up and down the hill slopes carrying a handaa to fetch water from the

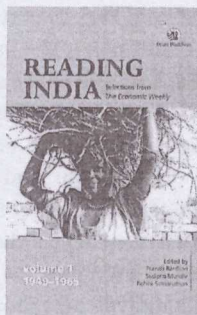
standpost downhill (p 26). In park slums, the common toilets were managed by a small group of residents who collected money for their maintenance. The morning queues and waiting time outside these toilets were long. But after shifting to the new homes, “some women missed the ‘public aspect’ of their toilet routines in the slum” (p 36). They recollected the “positive associations” with going in the open. One of the respondents shared with the author: “So the toilet [inside the new apartment houses] takes up a lot of water. Now we have to wash this. Wash that.” They were concerned with the amount of water that was needed to be stored to keep toilets clean and sanitised.

Chapter 4, “Hazards of a New Fortune,” mentions that most of the women who were early occupants in 2007, faced hardships of no drinking water supply at Sangharsh Nagar. Until a year and a half post-resettlement in 2007, the kitchen faucets of houses had no running water. Queuing up for water and carrying handaas up the stairs was reminiscent of the activities in past years. The borewells were drilled in 2009, but to avoid high electricity bills the motors were operated for only five to ten minutes a day, during

which the women would rush to fill the storage drums (p 83). The households paid ₹300 per month to the cooperative housing society’s managing committee to cover the expense of water and general building maintenance. Water has been a major concern in Sangharsh Nagar.

Resettlement Decisions

In Chapter 3, “Deliberation over Legitimate Benefactors in a Neoliberal Bazaar,” the author discusses the relationships that the slum residents formed with the external supporters who presented themselves as legitimate guarantors of the residents’ right to housing. It accentuates the role of different actors who influenced the resettlement project’s decisions—high court, environmentalists, forest department, housing rights advocacy NGO, state government, political parties and the private developer (p 45). In the early 1990s, film actress Shabana Azmi joined the leadership of Nivara NGO and became a recognisable face of the organisation. Her involvement in mass protests to stall demolitions, helped to mobilise slum dwellers, especially middle-aged women (p 58). Yet, the design and construction process initiated in 2002



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for constructing the Sangharsh Nagar apartments was never community-driven. The slum households located on the lower elevations of the park had better access to basic amenities like water, electricity, paved alleyways and sanitation because these households had developed stronger familiarity and networks with Nivara NGO and political parties. The households at lower elevation also gained better information from the benefactors about the process of resettlement because of their proximity to the benefactors.

New Challenges

Chapter 4 narrates the chaotic transitions in their new life in legally secure housing. When the “long-suffering slum dwellers” were resettled, they “were counselled to mimic the lifestyles and habits of the “building people” of a well-groomed suburb” (p 79).

While they were trying to fit into the new environment, some challenges could not be overlooked. Apart from the concerns of water, women expressed that while their “prestige” of living in an apartment house had improved, the expenses of living in a building had also increased. Additionally, the rules placed by the cooperative housing society regarding restricted access to certain places within the premises, such as the terrace to eliminate the chance of any mishap, made them feel spatially confined. After shifting into Sangharsh Nagar from 2007 onwards in a phased manner, the two groups of early and later occupants had different grievances and perceptions regarding the advantages and disadvantages in the timing of their relocation.

They also shared concerns about safety that traced to the design of the buildings that allowed observers to peek into other houses from balconies. The lack of safety was also perceived due to the presence of local politicians and loitering *taporis*. Lack of open spaces and community cohesiveness also added to their discomfort.

Women observed “a decline in collectivism and the emergence of a more individualised atomistic lifestyle” (p 95). In the subtext of these concerns, they desired a healthy balance between an

individual’s privacy and the community’s common purpose.

New Livelihood Strategies

Chapter 5, “Buildings and Business, Love and Forgiveness,” is focused on how women reconstructed their livelihoods and made readjustments to steer their new residential life. The women anchored their agency to explore livelihood options at the new site. Their decisions regarding livelihood options occurred independent of the aims of the external benefactors.

The rotating savings and credit group called “fund” or *bishis* were common in the slum and reemerged when enterprising women mobilised other middle-aged women members from a cluster of apartment buildings, usually belonging to the same caste and ethnic affiliations. Such informal groups were crucial in mediating more interactions, discussions, involvement and community mobilisation. Development of *bishis* also shaped the financial and social lives of women at Sangharsh Nagar.

Women shared concerns about limitations in subcontracted home-based work on account of the size of their apartments, cost of raw materials, access to open space like the terrace (to sun dry *padad*), network of subcontractors, etc. They suggested “gender segregated space for recreation and skill training purposes” and thereby convinced their parents that “skill building workshops could lead to financial gains” (p 135). Women wanted to freely and legally pursue self-employment and organise other opportunities.

The concluding chapter, “The Depth of Place,” delves into the overall details of the book and advocates that resettlement processes must integrate gendered experiences across different social demographic characteristics. It lays out that policymakers, architects and planners must understand “home” and “housing” firstly from the experiences and perspectives of those who are affected by their interventions.

In Conclusion

Ramanath’s book knits the narrative of placemaking and community building by integrating interdisciplinary perspectives. It takes a well-thought-out and

nuanced approach to foreground women’s agency in making and giving sense to a place in a way that makes their housing conditions more liveable and organised. *A Place to Call Home* raises questions on meaningful and comprehensive “rehabilitation” and the new spatial issues created by imposition of architectural designs formed without community participation. It lays out the case of one resettlement site but resonates with several resettlement colonies that are envisaged as well as planned interventions but fall short on delivering all the objectives even after several years of occupancy. Often in this way, the insecurity of being a slum dweller prevails in one way or the other even when they relocate to their new accommodation.

While Ramanath strives to make her analysis sophisticated and persuasive, the back-and-forth narration of pre- and post-settlement scenarios in all chapters, at a few instances, fiddles with the logical flow of thoughts. However, this constraint is managed by Ramanath’s attention to details in footnotes, intermittent interview excerpts and dense references to literature in the body of the text which are a treasure of knowledge. While the spotlight of the book is on the experiences of diverse women in the process of resettlement, after the first half of the book, the transformations in networks and relations with the earlier benefactors other than Nivara remains underexplored. The other aspects of change in roles of some benefactors could have added a nuanced layer of understanding about how their influence or control altered when women were the primary “agents of change.”

This book brings forth an inside view of the multifaceted sociopolitical field in which resettlement and rehabilitation gets designed and implemented. It positions women as practical solution-makers who must be listened to intently. The limitations of the planned development of the resettlement site stand corrected by the occupants who as real planners make sense of their place and housing.

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