EDUDOC SERVICES: BOOK REVIEWS



Book Reviews

November - 2018

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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 **November, 2018.**

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.

(Prof. Saroj Yadav)

Chairperson, LDD

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Social Scientist, Vol. 46, No. 9-10, Sept.-Oct. 2018

Guru Rao Bapat and Lata Singh, eds., *Performing Arts in India: Performances of/and Violence*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2016, 242 pages, Rs. 300.

In a troubled time of ours when intolerance and bigotry of almost all sorts are looming large this book will help us understand 'violence' in performance spaces. In many cases, readers may have experienced that nothing remains at the level of mere 'opposition' nowadays. Everywhere, everything quickly assumes a character of violent animosity. From the social media to other public platforms, this kind of a development can be perceived to one's consternation. The violence is not limited to all conceivable modes of brutality, but penetrating and assaulting the mind in a most direct and ostensible manner, without any 'sober' pretense. Democratic rights are easily construed as the right to name-calling, diatribes (in many cases, without proper knowledge of the subject violating all bounds of logicality), silencing and gaging. The recent political developments both in India and elsewhere have precipitated an intellectual volatility coupled with deliberate misrepresentation and misinformation. The readers may therefore find this book useful in order to understand many facets of violence in different kinds of performance spaces.

Lata Singh in her paper titled 'Confronting Violence Within and Outside: Women Performers of Sangeet Bari' studied the poignant ordeals of the womenfolk of this form of *Tamasha*. Their exploitation by the male family members and patrons are nothing less than a concatenation of violence against her body, mind, and sexuality each day and every passing moment. The accounts bear striking similarities to the conditions of the *Nachnis* in the district of Purulia in West Bengal. As in other cases, here also, by the process of naturalisation, the female performers are not only used to the dismaying repressions, but, perhaps, accept the patriarchal dominance and exploitation as a common, normal way of existence. The legacy of decades of fleecing and oppression continues with their daughters, mostly love children, who are forced to continue the 'business' of *Sangeet Bari* by their maternal grandfathers and/or uncles whose only objective is to live off their daughters/sisters/nieces. The stereotyping and objectification of prostitutes and female performers of a 'low' social order have been continuing from the colonial period. The educated middleclass

and the landed gentry developed a taste for the westernised culture, though the stories of their lechery and wantonness, in every part of India, were well known in those days and are now an area of academic scholarship. By virtue of pecuniary muscle-flexing and understanding with the Raj, this native class (of course with several layers of class, caste, gender strife among themselves) flourished and continued to maintain a social standard, whereas the 'lower' order, especially the weakest among them, became objects of disdain and targets of exclusion. In post-Independence India, their situation has not changed much, except for the fact that a section of the 'illuminated' class celebrates the 'lower' and/or rural traditions as the example of 'true' Indian cultural heritage. Lata Singh's article captures all these issues very well.

Sandesh Bhandare on the other hand shares a picture of an infusion of a stream of fresh blood into *Tamasha* in order to escape the drudgery of a labourer's life and find a life of 'prestige and status'. (p. 198) In spite of its repressive facets, *Tamsha* continue to entertain villagers of western Maharashtra, Marathwada, Vidarbha, and the Konkan. Here, one has to remember the dire economic and political developments of these regions in the recent past. Hunger and deprivation have devastated many of these regions forcing thousands of debt-ridden farmers to commit suicide. But a section of the popular entertainers seems to prefer those stage which also exploits them, deprives them of their basic human rights. This is the paradox of life!

Colonial stereotyping and exclusionary politics are also behind the reasons for the inception of the Budhan Theatre among the Chhara community in Chharanagar on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. Through this theatre, according to Dakxin Chhara, they struggle to find and establish self-identity because 'a cumulative anger has always burned within the Chharas' otherwise '(a)ccustomed to being imprisoned, beaten, extorted and humiliated over the decades'. (p. 228) Therefore, they employed 'a kind of invisible theatre', which 'remained in our genes' because '(t)he art of theatre was used by our forefathers for thieving' in order to usher in a social transformation and 'community development'. (p. 228) Dakxin considers that their practice has helped them overcome many of the social stigmas. At least, they can look for livelihoods in a competitive job market (many of them are successful), upper-class people flock to their locality, which was a godforsaken place until a few years ago, to witness their performances, though it will take years to change the mindset completely. The psychic trauma, the distressful social and economic deprivation would gnaw at us, but that is the *dominant* religious cultural heritage that is celebrated, no matter how much we try to eulogise it.

The four most important performance traditions from South India—Kutiyattam, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, and Yakshagana—are known for their vibrancy, panache, and deep-rooted traditionality with common aspect of

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presenting mythological violence in order to establish the virtue of good over the evil forces, though Kutiyattam places the anti-hero in high order going against the *Natyasastra* dogma. There are many qualities in these Dravidian indigenous-classical forms which challenge the ancient Sanskritic dramaturgy to construct a complex matrix of performativity. Although this is not a proper place to discuss my following observations, but as a passing comment, I would like to say that these aspects in many cases go unnoticed by many modern Indian practitioners and are imported from the West. I am not against collaborations or cultural imports, but certainly rue the poor consciousness and understanding of own cultural heritage, and its worse preservation. No developed country is ill-informed or lackadaisical about their history, at least in matters of preservation. For all these reasons, the last words by K G Paulose in the article 'Violence in Kutiyattam' is beyond my understanding: '...it is desirable for a matured theatre not to deviate from Bharata's principles so as to keep up the equilibrium of various elements in society.' (p. 115) I can only say that perhaps this kind of approach very justifiably ignited anti-Sanskritic sentiments among the South Indians during the colonial rule.

Aruna Bhikshu touched upon the contemporaneity of some of the Kuchipudi performances, (p. 132) but did not elaborate them; we would have benefitted otherwise. V. Kaladharan rightly mentioned in this regard: 'As long as Kathakali does not directly address any of the issues relevant to the contemporary milieu like increased violence/sexual abuse/transgender, its impact on the society is intangible.' (p. 126) If contemporary issues also emerge as a dominant feature, alongside maintaining traditions, the performers would also benefit. They can certainly reconsider Kaladharan's suggestion, and it is applicable to all the classical forms.

Makarand Sathe in 'Violence and Contemporary Marathi Theatre' made some insightful comments with regard to the various forms of violence. While discussing Tendulkar's plays he says: 'This attitude of not wanting to analyze and understand society intellectually is a convenient trait of the middle classes in India' with a few exceptions. (pp. 71–72) He rued the lack of social consciousness, in contemporary Marathi theatre, of growing disparity between the well off and the down-and-out; (p. 73) nor did he see any awareness of growing trends of censorship imposed on theatre practices. (p. 74) While agitprop theatre is 'non-existent', street theatre is 'too simplistic'. (p. 78) It is indeed a matter of concern if, as Sathe says, '(B)arring a few exceptions—Marathi theatre simply denies dealing with issues like violence.' (p. 79)

Sudeshna Banerjee's 'Violence as Theatre: Bengali Theatre 1965–75' simply charts a few plays by Utpal Dutt, Mohit Chattopadhyay, Badal Sircar during a decade of turbulence in West Bengal.

Goan Tiatr, as Tomazinho Cardozo viewed, has been staging various forms of social violence along with other social/entertaining aspects with

such a success rate that no other forms of drama virtually exist in Goa. (p. 103) Initially, this century-old Goan performance tradition was anchored in translations and adaptations, but with changing times, especially after the independence of Goa in 1961, social issues, including political and social violence, started featuring in Tiatr.

While G. P. Deshpande pointed at the importance of a holistic understanding of violence in theatre, which, he thinks, has not been dealt with as yet (p. 22), almost in a similar tone, Lokendra Arambam regretted a lack of theoretical perception, social insights in the post-Independence Manipuri theatre that resorted to 'a spontaneous, semi-anarchic outbursts of creative individuals affected by the subterranean energies of protest and resistance to the forces of repression unleashed by the new nation state which was using the principle of violence in the nation-making enterprise.' (p. 33) H. S. Shiva Prakash recounted personal agony and tribulations of performing own play *Mahachaitra*, (pp. 37–8), and reiterated after G. P. Deshpande the importance of a thorough and critical approach to violence in performances. (p. 39) With an admixture of reality and explanation of spirituality/scriptures, Prasanna's article overemphasises Gandhi with an oversimplified idea of him ('I am almost tempted to say that Penelope is weaving the same thread that Gandhiji picked up, centuries later, for his Indian experiments in charaka' (p. 48)), prescribes 'natural'-ity, and avoids critical engagement and discussion of 'performance' per se.

How the concepts of violence as depicted in several performance traditions, both classical and contemporary, leave their impact on the audience is an important question raised by Guru Rao Bapat. (p. 9) Although he says, and we know that violence and social discriminations are being challenged in the methods of performances by many distressed groups, but the question remains as to how effective those performances are. Any artistic/literary representations show a limited way of overcoming these impediments; unless democratic systems are well structured, any progress is well-nigh unreachable, inapproachable. Literary and artistic undertakings would keep falling flat on its face, with the rising violence against cultural ambassadors and practitioners. Shiva Prakash may find solace in the 'socially useful therapeutic function' of ritual/theatre, but history has shown us that literature and art cannot prosper without a healthy, democratic, political system and it has been established to a greater extent in the West; capitalism has an influential role to play. I know my views can provoke a storm of criticism (and this is not a place to elaborate those ideas), but if we remember Marx's suggestion of the path to communism, perhaps they can be realised to some extent.

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Statesman, 25/11/18 ; Pg-12

History of the rocket

Illustrated with more than 140 pictures, some published for the first time, eight appendices and more than 1,000 references, and a projection of ISRO's future programmes including manned flights, the book is a valuable guide to the common man to understand the Space Age... A review

SAM RAJAPPA

There is a plethora books on the Indian Space Research Organisation, many of them penned by former chairmen of the organisation or its senior scientists whose contribution to the nation's "incredible journey from the Third World towards the First" is immense but none as comprehensive as that of Gurbir Singh's new book. The author of *Yuri Gagarin in London and Manchester*, published in 2011 to mark the 50th anniversary of humanity's first journey into space, he traces India's contribution to optical and radio astronomy, particle physics, astrophysics and space research.. One of the earliest organisations in the country established on the Western traditions of science was the Aligargh Scientific Society set up in 1864 by Syed Ahmad Khan who had visited Oxford and Cambridge and recognised the fundamental role of science in facilitating the Industrial Revolution and shaping the British and European societies. Driven by this vision, the primary objective of the ASS was not only an attempt in imparting scientific knowledge but also an attempt at societal reform through science in India, says the author.

Tracing the invention and use of rockets for the first time to the Chinese in 1232, in India, the credit goes to Tipu Sultan of Mysore who used rockets to contain British colonial expansion in South India. In 1815, Alexander Dmitrievich Zasyadko developed military rockets in Russia. The missile that launched Sputnik into space could be traced back to Zasyadko's rocket science. The genius behind the successful American Apollo programme is Wernher von Braun of Germany, one of the most intriguing and controversial characters in the story of mankind's first step into space. Hitler awarded von Braun the Knight's Cross for his contribution in developing the V2 combat ballistic missile during World War II while US President Dwight Eisenhower honoured him with the Distinguished Federal Civilian Award in 1959. At a time when India had no space scientists or infrastructure, Vikram Sarabhai embarked on a bold, seemingly impossible mission, and on 21 November 1963 launched its first rocket into space.

The author traces science-based society in India to the beginning of the Vedic period. The Vedic communities observed and recorded the celestial motions of the Moon, planets and the Sun and mapped the night sky into 27 *nakshatras*, hinting at the role of science at the beginning of the Vedic period. The Qutab Minar in New Delhi constructed with 99.7 per cent wrought iron in the 4th century BC still remains rust free marvel. It is evidence of advanced metallurgical techniques developed in ancient India. In the 6th century AD, Aryabhata had proposed a heliocentric system. Homi Bhabha, chairman of the Department of Atomic Energy Commission, in 1962 proposed that India should pursue space research also. It resulted in the formation of the Indian National Committee for Space Research. Vikram Sarabhai, a cosmic ray physicist, was asked to lead it. Thus was born India's space programme. INCOSPAR operated under the Atomic Energy Commission until transferred to the newly created Department of Space. The sudden death of Bhabha in 1966 in an Air India flight that crashed into the Alps as it descended towards Geneva was a serious setback to the scientific progress of the nation.

The book has an interesting story about the use of rocket mail during World War II. Stephen Smith, who practised dentistry from his residence on 25A Elliot Road in Kolkata, in collaboration with the Oriental Fireworks Company, developed his own rockets using leather, cardboard and tin. Though he did not have any technical training or experience, his diary shows a systematic approach to recording each rocket launch. He experimented with alternative forms of propulsion. On 31 October 1944, he launched a rocket using compressed air that he recorded as "compressed air projectile." It carried 28 signed covers, but the record has no details on the design and technology how the compressed air was used. On 4 December he launched two rockets, one used compressed and the other he called gas-propelled projectile. Unfortunately Smith's son Hector destroyed all the rocket-related material of his father soon after his death in 1951. In 1992, the government of India observed the birth centenary of Smith by issuing a stamp and a first-day cover in honour of his work in rocketry.

The vacuum left behind by Bhabha was filled by Vikram Sarabhai who was to India what Sergei Korolev was to the USSR and Wernher von Braun was to the American space programmes respectively. All national programmes rely on the contributions of thousands of individuals, but history has the tendency to single one person as the originator above all others. Sarabhai's courageous vision of how a developing nation like India could utilise space technology for social development and the speed with which he implemented earned him the title 'father of India's space programme.' One of the unique aspects of India's space programmes, unlike the motivations of other nations, was the absence of a military motivation. The sudden death of Sarabhai, 52, in his sleep at Kovalam, near Thiruvananthapuram, on 30 December 1971 shocked the nation. His passionate advocacy of indigenisation and self-reliance continues to be the culture of ISRO.

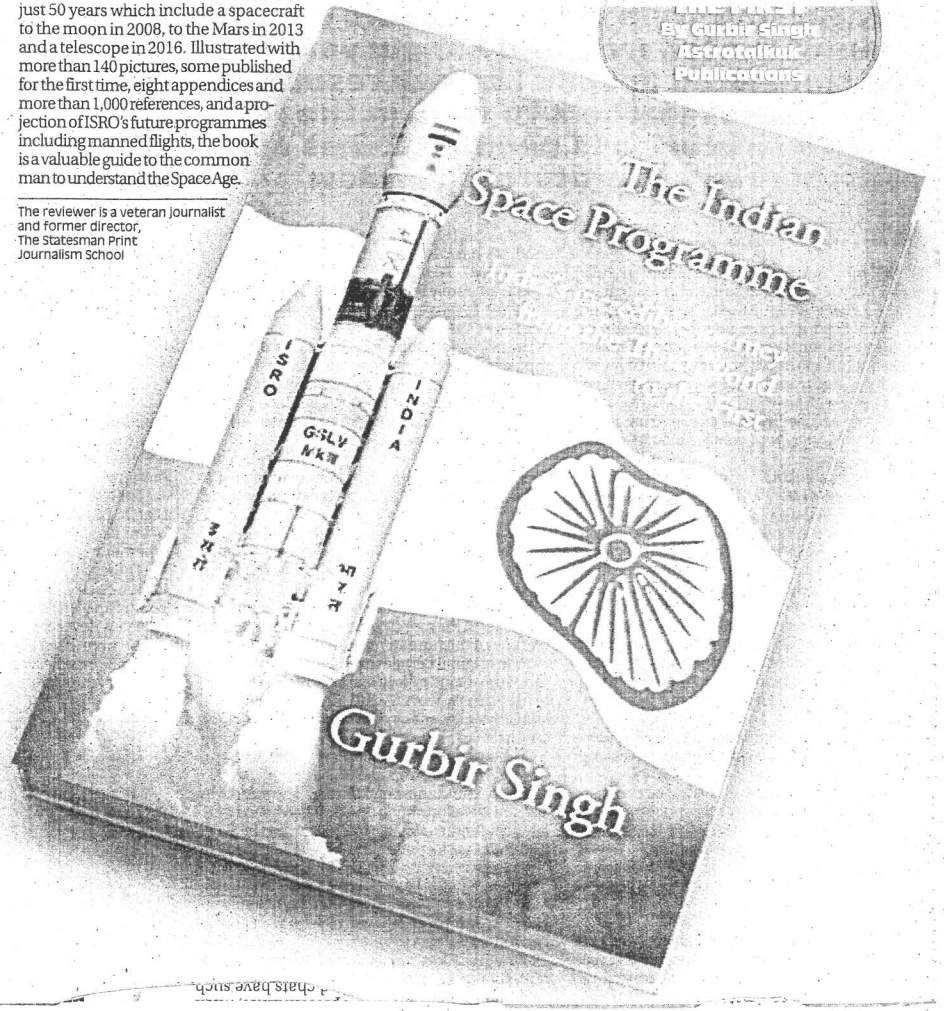
The author meticulously chronicles the setting up of the Thumba Equatorial Rocket launch Station near Thiruvananthapuram in 1962 to placing more than 100 satellites in different orbits in just 50 years which include a spacecraft to the moon in 2008, to the Mars in 2013 and a telescope in 2016. Illustrated with more than 140 pictures, some published for the first time, eight appendices and more than 1,000 references, and a projection of ISRO's future programmes including manned flights, the book is a valuable guide to the common man to understand the Space Age.

The reviewer is a veteran journalist and former director, The Statesman Print Journalism School

Spot Light

THE INDIAN SPACE PROGRAMME: INDIA'S INCREDIBLE JOURNEY FROM THE THIRD WORLD TOWARDS THE FIRST

By Gurbir Singh
Astrotalkuk Publications



TRUTH AND BEAUTY
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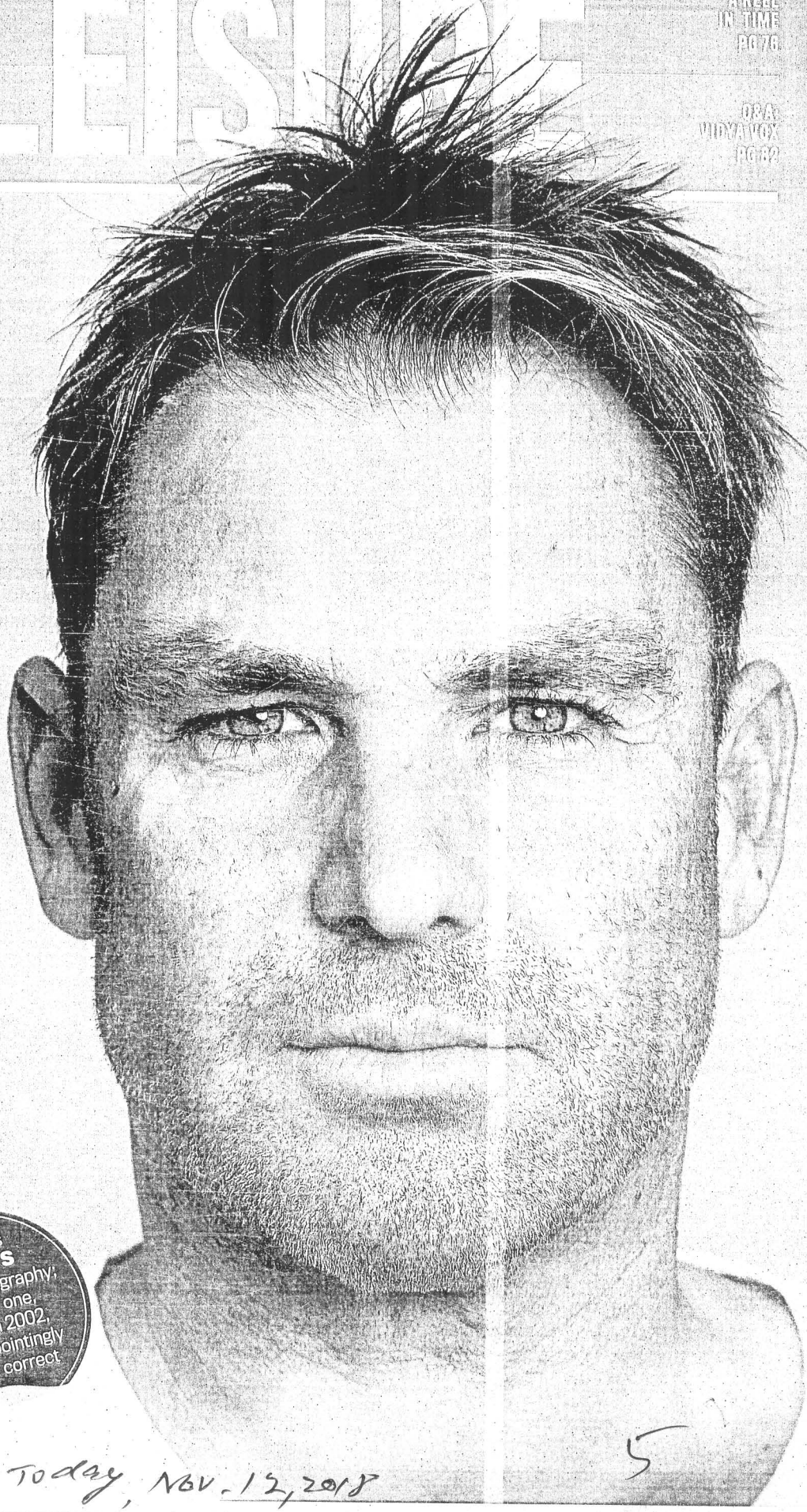
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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

SHANE'S NEW SPIN



JULIAN KINGMA

No Spin is **WARNE'S** latest autobiography, the earlier one, released in 2002, was disappointingly politically correct

India Today, Nov. 12, 2018

5

Warne has clashed with almost every form of authority possible and been in trouble for a variety of misdemeanours, but his popularity in Australia and in cricket circles remains intact.

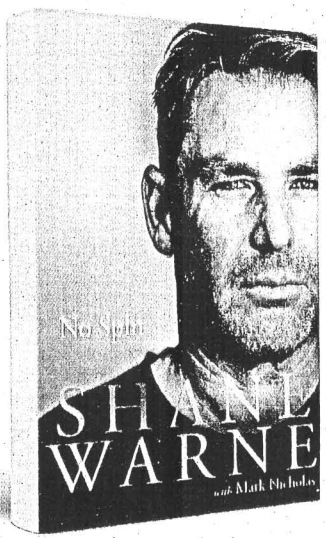
No Spin, published in October 2018, is his latest stab at an autobiography. There was an earlier one, released in 2002, when he was still playing for Australia, which was a disappointingly politically correct account of his early playing days. With *No Spin*, Warne has definitely tried to give a more honest and detailed account of his life, both on and off the field. The tone and the look, right down to the cover picture, seems inspired by Andre Agassi's *Open* (2009), which became the gold standard in sports autobiographies.

The first thing you notice about *No Spin* is that, unlike a traditional autobiography, it zigzags back and forth through time. In effect, Warne and his co-writer, Mark Nicholas, recorded a series of interviews across various topics and then decided to club the resulting content together into broad themes and chapters. This tends to make it great for 'snacking' a chapter or two at a time, but not perfect for an end-to-end read. Warne has probably got it right though: few of his intended readers would probably have the patience to read this from cover to cover.

However, it is a book of many parts, and a lot of the parts are entertaining. Warne's description of his Australian cricketing days is where he really hits his straps, and some of his accounts are fascinating. He was one of the most astute readers of the game and his account of the 'Ball of the Century', his first ever ball in an Ashes Test, which bowled Mike Gatting, was fascinating. His on-air conversation with commentator Brendon Julian while playing for the Melbourne Stars is a classic: Never before has a bowler described how he planned to trap a batsman (Brendon McCullum, in this case) on live television and then gone out to take his wicket.

The other extremely revealing parts are in his description of his mentor, former Australian spinner Terry Jenner, and the mental and cricket tips imparted by him. Warne didn't usually take kindly to coaching, but Jenner is clearly the man he credits with making him the bowler he became. And because Jenner was such a big influence, his interactions with every other coach left a lot to be desired. He had absolutely no time for coach John Buchanan, who famously won two World Cups, and the slightly unorthodox methods he used in his training regimen. Clearly, a week in the Australian bush with the army and no booze or cigarettes was not Warne's idea of training. He has a similar disdain for the almost religious reverence for the Australian flag or the 'baggy green caps' among many Australian cricketers.

So while Mark Waugh was a close friend and one of the 'lads', Warne's antagonism for brother Steve Waugh and his seemingly over-the-top patriotism comes through. Shane clashed repeatedly with Steve and his anger at being dropped in Sri Lanka is still palpable.



NO SPIN
by Shane Warne
Ebury Press
384 pages; ₹699

While Warne has tried to give an honest account of his life, both on and off the field, the tone and the look, right down to the cover picture, seem inspired by Andre Agassi's *Open*

Warne's description of his IPL days with the Rajasthan Royals makes for great reading. In a format others were just beginning to get, his leadership in that first championship year was absolutely top-drawer. And while the rest soon caught on and caught up, given their limited resources, the Rajasthan Royals under him always punched above their weight.

As far as the tabloid fare goes, after all the racy *News of the World* accounts, Warne's post-mortems of his various peccadilloes are underwhelming—even his explanation of "sexcapades" like the time he was caught on camera in a threesome with two scantily clad UK fans. There is a lot of Liz Hurley though, enough to satisfy those looking for the real story.

And for the typical Indian reader: yes, he thinks Sachin and Lara are the greatest, and he would probably want Sachin to bat for his life—but Lara if he was chasing 400 in the fourth innings. There is a little bit, in the end though, about the Warne Tendulkar All Star Games in the US, and the fallout of that tournament, and though they may be cordial in public, I can't see Sachin coming for the book release.

All in all, a great bathroom companion, but not the one book you'd take to a desert island. But then again, few are. ■

–Joy Bhattacharjya

decline in the Nineties.

Indian Express; 10/11/18 Pg. 19

Love of the Game

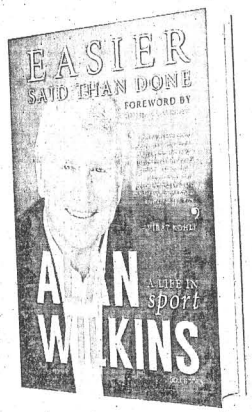
In his autobiography, Alan Wilkins explores the changing face of cricket with empathy and self-deprecating humour

KAUSHIK DAS GUPTA

ALAN WILKINS is something of an oddity in TV cricket commentary teams that are made up overwhelmingly of celebrity cricketers. Even the ones who could never make it to the top — Laxman Sivaramakrishnan, for example — somehow draw notice as unfulfilled talent. Wilkins as a player, however, was never earmarked for greatness. He bowled left-arm medium pace for Glamorgan and Gloucestershire when almost every county team had seamers who wheeled their arm over to exploit the helpful conditions. After a shoulder injury put paid to his cricketing ambitions, Wilkins found his calling as a broadcaster. Formal, honest yet affable, the former Welsh pacer conveys the thrill of the game by playing second fiddle to his star colleagues in the commentary box, never missing a chance, however, to put in a sharp witticism. While most viewers in India would recognise him as a cricket and tennis broadcaster, Wilkins has covered golf and rugby — a sport that he flirted with during his playing days — as well.

In many ways, *Easier Said Than Done*, his autobiography, is a chronicle of the changing face of sport. County cricket had its professionals during Wilkins' playing days, but this appellation belied the overwhelming amateur nature of the game which could make a 17-year-old teenage spectator take the field for unwell cricketers in a match against the visiting Indian team. Every county had its star overseas players. Wilkins shared the field with Vivian Richards, Clive Lloyd, Mike Procter, Gordon Greenidge, Imran Khan, Sadiq Mohammed, Bishen Singh Bedi, Dilip Doshi and Kapil Dev. There were also home-grown luminaries — Ian Botham, Alan Knott, Graham Gooch and David Gower. But English county cricket during Wilkins' playing days was one "big family" of "bright boys from Oxford and Cambridge, not-so-bright boys straight from school, former insurance salesmen, former teachers, smokers, dreamers and nutters". Many of them were genuine athletes yet nobody thought of cricketers as athletes then. And, as the summers gave way to autumn, the men in flannels had to give serious thought to earning a living.

When Wilkins began his stint in the commentary box, one-day cricket was just about beginning to mark its presence. The Packer churn was less than a decade old, India had won a World Cup, and, there were murmurs of changes in the Anglo-Australian dominated world cricket firmament. By the time Wilkins the Welsh journeyman seamer had become Wilko of the commentary box, financial rewards in the sport had escalated remarkably — "the game had become unrecognisable, and not just for players". The Twenty-20 leagues across the world "has changed the very base of the game and it seems like an almost different sport." Players who seem like fish out of water in the five-day version of the game can make serious money by plying their trade in these leagues which showcase the instant avatar of the game. Umpires on the ICC's elite panel command good salaries.



EASIER SAID THAN DONE: A LIFE IN SPORT
ALAN WILKINS
Roli Books
296 pages
₹595

Wilkins brings to his autobiography the empathy that has been the trademark of his commentary. You can't blame "any player for choosing to showcase his skill purely in Twenty-20 cricket, when there is a handsome living to be made". It's a trait that was, perhaps, taught to Wilkins by the vicissitudes of the sport. He did not have the options that present-day cricketers have when injury cut short his playing career. Wilkins states all this with self-deprecating humour.

Those with an appetite for anecdotes that show up the sport in all its beauty will find much in *Easier Said Than Done*. There is obvious joy at dismissing some of the modern greats such as Viv Richards, Sunil Gavaskar, Zaheer Abbas and David Gower. The Glamorgan No 11 was once nearly timed out in a match because he had spent too much time reading the newspaper in the lavatory. But a certain Malcom Marshall who was playing his first county match for Hampshire wanted to have a go at the medium pacer who had bowled him through the gate, and so Wilkins had to stumble out in the field, "a disheveled mess".

He is unapologetic about his stint in South Africa, because he wanted to go and see the "country for myself". There is also an account of his now-well known kafuffle with Navjot Singh Sidhu over pronouncing Indian names. And Wilkins had to cope with the extra demands of commentating on Test Cricket because, as Harsha Bhogle told him, "that fans sitting at home in India would expect to hear more commentary, not less". As Wilkins writes, "watching the greats of Indian cricket at the highest level" was extraordinarily rewarding.

Easier Said than Done does a great job in making the reader partake of that pleasure.

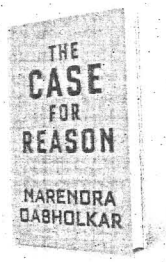
Hindu ; 11/11/18

Religion and rationality

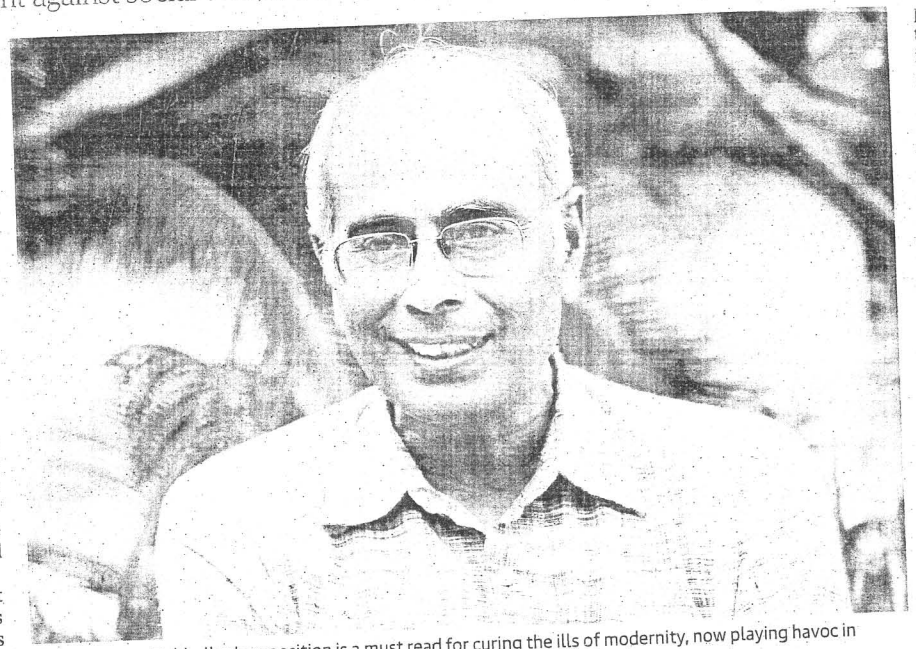
The work of an activist, who was killed for his fight against social evils, is made available to a wider audience

V.S. SREEDHARA

Narendra Achyut Dabholkar (1945-2013) is a well-known social activist and writer from Maharashtra who was gunned down on August 20, 2013, during his morning walk in Pune. It is obvious that he was killed because of his incessant efforts at fighting inhuman superstitious practices and spreading a scientific temper among people. His murder was the first in a series of similar killings of three more rationalists and secular activists/thinkers – Govind Pansare on February 20, 2015; Prof. M.M. Kalburgi, on August 30 the same year and Gauri Lankesh on September 5, 2017. Ironically, it looks like Karnataka is repaying its debt to Dabholkar, for it was his efforts at bringing an Anti-Superstition Bill in Maharashtra that paved for a similar move by the Karnataka government.



The Case for Reason
Narendra Dabholkar
Translated by *Suman Oak*
Westland
₹699



Timely lesson: 'Dabholkar's exposition is a must read for curing the ills of modernity, now playing havoc in the lives of people, aided and abetted by social media.' ▪AP

Bill against black magic

After much dilly dallying, the Karnataka government finally managed to pass a much watered down version of the draft Bill called 'Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices and Black Magic Bill' in November 2017, two months after Lankesh was killed.

Fighting inhuman and superstitious practices became Dabholkar's life's mission. He formed the 'Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti (The Committee for the Eradication of Superstition, ANiS in short) and established its units at the taluka level to spread awareness among people.

The book under review is to be [illegible] as an extension of his activism. The essays in the volume (originally in Marathi and lucidly translated into English by Suman Oak) are meant to educate ordinary citizens about the importance of developing a scientific spirit and a rational outlook.

The book has two parts. Part One, 'The Case for Reason', is about various theoretical aspects of the Anti-Superstition movement and has nine essays dealing with the history and philosophy of science and how a scientific approach should be applied to understand human affairs.

The second part is about the samiti and its activities. It gives an account of various campaigns against specific superstitious practices and irrational beliefs covering a wide range of issues from phoney godmen and their divine claims to belief in astrology and *vasthu*. The concepts discussed and developed in the first part are elaborated and examined in the second part, in relation to specific instances exposed by the samiti. Written perhaps for different occasions, there are some repetitions, but a common concern runs throughout the book, linking theory and practice.

Rituals, caste system

Asking why scientific knowledge did not develop in India post 8th century, he outlines five reasons for the non-development of science in India: importance given to rituals and karma, the caste system, improper education, family structure and deification of individuals. Interestingly, it is the same period that Ambedkar terms as the age of 'counter revolution' that saw the decline of science and the rise of Manuvadi India. In a way, we can see the same temperament still continuing and even flourishing under the present political dispensation. That explains the growing presence of obscurantism and revivalism, as the recent stage-managed protest against the Supreme Court judgment on the Sabarimala case so clearly exemplifies.

On modern science and its limits, Dabholkar says that "scientific outlook does not aim to conquer nature, it aims to understand nature and its laws, and use them for the benefit of human beings." Talking about the 'value' of science, he says that scientific thinking can generate moral behaviour as causality means "we should not do unto others what we do not want others to do unto us..." His analysis of hypnosis as a pseudo-science is a convincing account of how the use of scientific jargons (like positive and negative energy) does not make it true science. Now a simplistic and uncritical mix of science and spirituality can be seen in the way people, which include teachers, corporate managers and management professionals, get easily fooled by the use of pseudo-scientific jargons by spiritual gurus and personality development experts. Dabholkar's exposition is a must read for curing these ills of modernity, now playing havoc in the lives of people, aided and abetted by social media.

There is a pattern in Dabholkar's method of analysis, whether he is writing about a scientific theory or a superstitious practice. He first provides a historical account of the phenomenon, then exposes its methodology and finally provides a rational explanation of how it manifests in local conditions.

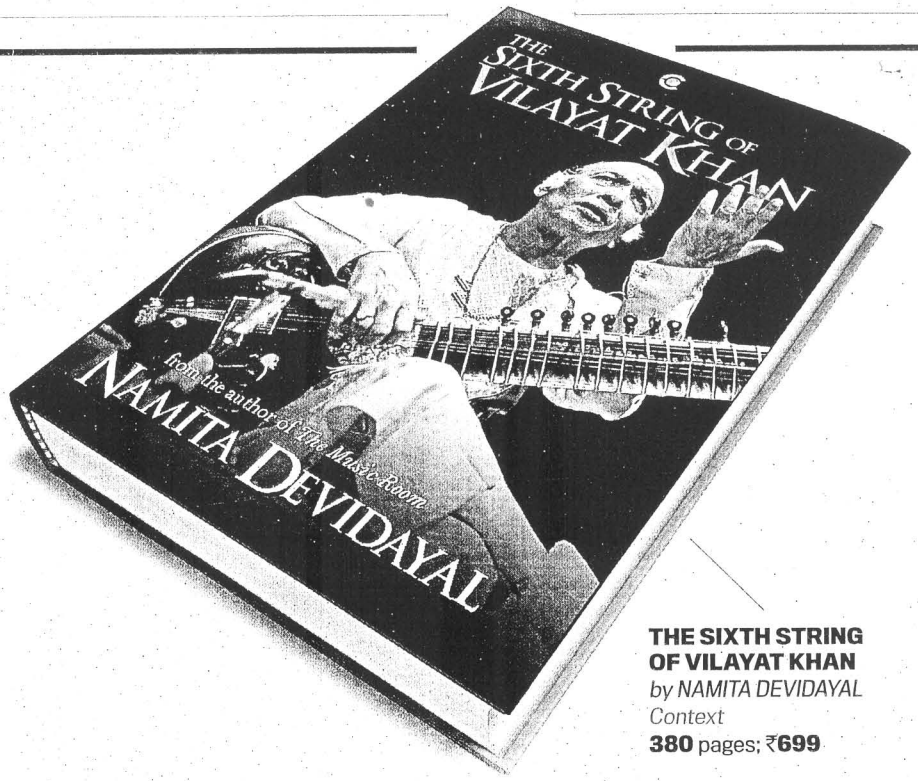
Faith and reason

The Hindu right takes pride in attacking those who oppose superstition and calls it anti-Hindu. Obviously, it is a ploy to oppose attempts at spreading scientific temper and rationality which stands opposed to its communal politics. But Dabholkar's investigation exposes the 'miracles' prevalent among Muslim communities too, as the articles on Qamar Ali Darvesh and Sahibjadi show. He writes to the Pope himself when Sainthood is awarded to Mother Teresa on the basis of the alleged miracles associated with her than on the great humanitarian work she has done.

Though the book borrows its intellectual material from history and philosophy of science, it is an easy read. The book is useful for both scholars and lay persons who wish to see a better, humanitarian society. Yet, it leaves one wondering if it is not weighed down by hyper-rationalism as it does not address the deeper causes that constitute human experience shaped by long-held cultural practices which are inseparable from different forms of faith and unreason.

BOOK REVIEW

Dueling Sitars



THE SIXTH STRING OF VILAYAT KHAN
by NAMITA DEVIDAYAL
Context
380 pages; ₹**699**

For aficionados of sitar, it is either Ravi Shankar or Vilayat Khan. Both were epochal, and the modern sitar owes everything to these two amazing musicians. The rivalry was mostly one-sided. Shankar had worked as a music director at the All India Radio and received government honours; Vilayat rejected both. And Vilayat's continuous barbs did not affect Shankar's spectacular world career.

It was a question of pedigree for Vilayat. After all, Shankar was an outsider, who had trained with a maverick first-generation maestro, while Vilayat's grandfather Imdad Khan and father Enayat Khan were acknowledged maestros. And here was the irony. Vilayat was a precocious 10 when his father died. He was left to his own resources, the goodwill of his father's disciples and the dedicated ambition of his widowed mother.

Devidayal, the biographer, is very good at ferreting out facts about the hazy early years of apprenticeship. Vilayat was taught by his maternal grandfather and uncle; the vocalists Bande Hasan and Zinda Hasan Khan of Saharanpur; D.T. Joshi, a disciple of his father; Wahid Khan, his paternal uncle; and Khan Mastana, his cousin. Most of all, he absorbed repose and inwardness from Amir Khan, who was briefly married to Vilayat's sister and who went on to have a trailblazing career as a vocalist. Very early on, Vilayat had the patronage of AIR honcho Zulfiqar Ali Bukhari in Delhi and the friendship of Arvind Parikh, a wealthy merchant in Bombay. The support from Calcutta was important too, though it's thinly documented in this biography. Basheeran Begum, Vilayat's mother, looms large throughout. She was, by all accounts, astute on music matters. In a story recounted by the music critic Mohan Nadkarni and missed by Devidayal, she had secretly kept a written record of *raga* compositions and offered this valuable collection to her father and brother in exchange of lessons to her eldest son.

> Vilayat Khan clashed with Ravi Shankar, yet laboured in his shadow

Vilayat's music was modern. Closer to the vocal graces of *khayal* and *thumri*, the famed *gayaki* style he pioneered differed in tone and flavour from the traditionalist *dhrupad*-based approach of Shankar. In life too, Vilayat tried to be modern. In early adulthood, he cultivated a love of clubs, expensive cars, liquor and ballroom dancing. Then, in a remarkable move, he abandoned the metropolis and moved to Shimla. The seclusion helped him grow into a mature performer. But his marriage unravelled in a few years, and his relationship with his mother and brother Imrat became strained as the latter emerged as a talented instrumentalist. His relationship with his children was uneven too, especially with his first born, Shujaat.

Driven by Devidayal's smart prose, the narrative combines fact with fiction though it veers on the glib with flourishes like '*paan* stained heart'. She has a keen sense of place, which had made descriptions of Bombay in her earlier best-selling *The Music Room*, such a delight to read.■

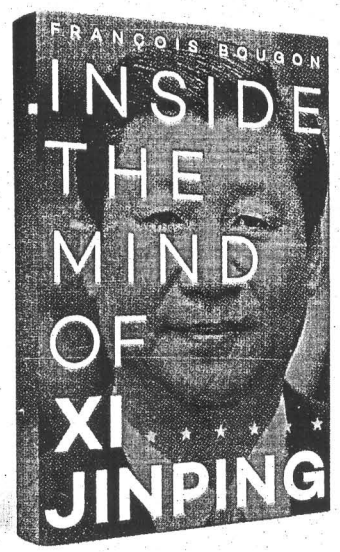
–Partho Datta

09

BOOKS

READING THE XI LEAVES

By Ananth Krishnan



INSIDE THE MIND OF XI JINPING
By Francois Bougon
Context
₹599; 181 pages

What runs through the mind of Xi Jinping, the most powerful man in China? That's the question Francois Bougon, a French journalist who spent five years in Beijing as Agence France-Presse correspondent, attempts to answer in this new book. Unfortunately, the only person who can answer that question with any sense of authority is Xi himself. And through his long political career, Xi has managed to reveal very little—so much so that at the time he took office in November 2012, no one had an inkling of how he would govern. Leading journalists and Sinologists speculated he might be a closet Gorbachev, a liberal who would usher in political reforms. Even the Dalai Lama, recalling his good relations with Xi's "friendly and open-minded" father, who presented him a watch, suggested the apple wouldn't fall far from the tree and would perhaps usher in a more liberal leadership.

Like many Chinese leaders, Xi, as he rose through the system, left a long paper trail, demonstrating, as China's Communist leaders like to do, their mastery over Marxist theory and contribution to the theoretical evolution of the CPC (Communist Party of China). Bougon deserves great credit for going about the painstaking task of making sense of the Xi leaves. The most interesting chapter takes us back to Xi's difficult childhood and his time as a "sent down youth" in the tough, dusty loess-mountains of his native Shaanxi. Xi's father was humiliated by Mao during the Cultural Revolution, enduring public struggle sessions. Xi had to apply eight times before he succeeded in joining the Communist Youth League, and 10 times before joining the CPC.

Xi lamented the opacity of the process, asking, "Where is the verdict against my father? What have I done?" A question, ironically, that thousands of family members of officials purged by Xi are, no doubt, asking today.

Xi, Bougon says, isn't the typical Maoist. He sees value in the very same traditional ideas that Mao went to war against, evinced in how the state today is once again popularising Confucian thought. Xi appears to be deeply knowledgeable about the history of China's philosophical thought, and Bougon notes revealingly that he is especially influenced by the Warring States period philosopher Han Fei's sense of legalism, where the rule of law is intended not to curb power, but to serve it.

One glaring—and puzzling—omission from the book is a rigorous evaluation of Xi's governance during his first term, from his politics to his economic policy. That would have perhaps revealed far more about what Xi really thinks, rather than articles penned years ago. It is only in the last 10 pages that Bougon dives into Xi's new governing philosophy, called Xi Jinping Thought. Yet there is little careful analysis of what it entails, or of the lengthy Party Congress report from 2017 that spells out Xi's ruling philosophy.

As Bougon correctly acknowledges, there is no coherent Xi philosophy, and he "is neither entirely on the right which defends constitutional evolution nor entirely on the left" of hard-line Maoism. "Like all politicians, he manoeuvres, tinkers and seeks his balance", which, of course, is natural. But because of its reliance on Xi's writings, this lack of coherence afflicts the book as well. Leaving aside the rather grandiose (and alas, impossible to fulfil) objective promised by the book's title, what Bougon does achieve is a very useful literary review of Xi's many writings and speeches. This may spare readers the onerous task of seeking out Xi's published works (which are, under his government, now widely available). Yet how much light these writings shed on what Xi really believes is an altogether different question. As is the case with any politician in any country, carefully choreographed articles, arranged interviews with state media and, dare I say, weekly radio broadcasts, perhaps reveal less about what a politician really thinks and more about the public image they wish to cultivate. ■

The writer is a visiting fellow at Brookings India and was earlier China correspondent for INDIA TODAY

Outside the ring

Hindu 25/11/18

A daughter pays tribute to a sporting icon

ASHWIN ACHAL

Muhammad Ali's accomplishments in the ring are well-documented. There were the early victories over the thuggish Sonny Liston, which put Ali on the world map. 'The Rumble in the Jungle' – regarded as the most famous bout in boxing history – saw Ali knock down a marauding George Foreman in front of 60,000 raucous fans in Kinshasa (Zaire). The three-fight trilogy against arch nemesis Joe Frazier was brutal, bloody and madly entertaining.

But what was Ali like at home, as a father and as a husband? The answers lie in this book written by Hana, Ali's daughter from his third wife, Veronica Porche. The memoir is based on 80 hours of voice recordings that Ali left for her.

Hana recalls visits from several celebrities. Famous names like Michael Jackson, John Travolta, Clint Eastwood and many others frequently came by to the family home. Even in his later years, Ali held sway with people in high places. Hana details a "cherished moment" when Ali asked to get President Barack Obama on the phone, to see if he could help Obama with his public relations.



At Home with Muhammad Ali: A Memoir of Love, Loss and Forgiveness
Hana Ali
Penguin Random House
₹699

But Ali did not confine himself to just Hollywood and political circles. He took pride as a man of the people. Among his more celebrated interactions came in 1981, when he talked a suicidal man out of jumping off an office-building fire escape nine floors high. "He thought nobody loved him. I told him I loved him, or I wouldn't be there," Ali explained later to Veronica.

This came towards the end of Ali's fighting career, a particularly painful phase for Ali and his family. The dreaded Parkinson's disease had begun to set in, which resulted in slurred speech and involuntary shaking. Hana explains that despite his obvious ill health, her father had no choice but to take on a younger, fitter, stronger Larry Holmes in a title fight. Ali needed the money, and paid no heed to pleas from friends and family to hang up the gloves. The ring battle proved to be a disaster, as Holmes put a beating on the ailing Ali.

Hana describes Ali as the perfect father, but his credentials as a good husband are far from perfect. The handsome, charismatic Ali had a wandering eye which eventually led to a painful divorce from Veronica. While the book contains several interesting personal anecdotes that show Ali in new light, the narration suffers from Hana's distorted, one-sided view. The doting daughter is blinded by her love for her father, who she believes can do wrong. This worshipful theme – a constant from start to finish – can get a bit tiresome.

• • •

A daughter recalls

Hindu; 11/11/18

An affectionate, but incomplete, ode to poet-filmmaker Gulzar

HARI NARAYAN

Maazi (the past). That's one element constant in Gulzar's films, one motif that permeates through his poetry. Almost all his films have flashback as an important component. His protagonists are forever tapping into the recesses of their precarious pasts, trying to find some closure. This perhaps is a reflection of the contemplative state of mind of a poet whose childhood was marred by the death of a mother whose face he doesn't remember; whose adolescence was scarred by the trauma of Partition; and whose life remained blank, as he mentions in one of his poems, *bemaani si cheez tha vo*, till he discovered literature, and cinema. This book, written by his daughter, has its own *maazi*, as it was published first in 2004.

In the 14 years since, Gulzar has written lyrics for more than 40 films, penned poetry collections, translated Rabindranath Tagore's works into Hindustani and also brought out his first novel. This updated intimate coffee-table ode is only briefly able to capture the versatile artist's expansive repertoire. Gulzar's output gives the lie to the romantic assumption that a genius is born with a halo of creativity.



Because He Is
Meghna Gulzar
HarperCollins
₹2,499

His genius is a product of years of honing his craft through reading, writing and re-writing. Rabindranath Tagore, Mirza Ghalib and Munshi Premchand were no doubt early influences, and Bimal Roy and his team were his mentors in cinema.

However, Gulzar's creative life also owes itself to the fact that he is a creature of routine; as his daughter mentioned once, the poet never takes his creativity for granted, never compromises on his daily *riyaaz* (preparation).

Further, one reason that the poet has appealed to readers across generations is he has kept his style tuned to the times. The poetry in *Pluto* is different from that in *Raat Pashmine Ki*. He has forever been in the process of perfecting his craft, by putting in those six to seven hours of hard labour, day after day.

This light read is peppered with unpublished poems, adding some intellectual heft. In one, Gulzar calls himself a *kabaadi* (trash-vendor) who collects bits of dreams and destitutions of himself and others, polishes them into *nazms* and sells them in discarded cans.

The book also leaves many questions unanswered, like how did Gulzar, whose medium of instruction was Urdu, teach himself Bengali even before he met Bimal Roy? What explains his fascination for *chand* (the moon), his lifelong muse? Are there more films, like the unfinished *Devdas*, that he wanted to make but couldn't? We get more a glimpse of Gulzar the father than Gulzar the poet-filmmaker – the two identities merging beautifully when we read of poems he wrote exclusively for his daughter.

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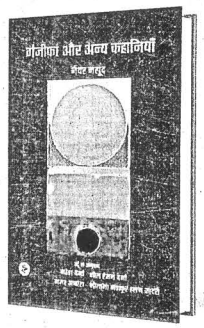
किताबें

किस्सागोई का अलग अंदाज

मोहम्मद वक़ास

उर्दू पाठकों के लिए प्रोफेसर नैयर मसूद (1936-2017) तआरुफ के मोहताज नहीं हैं पर हिंदी पाठक जान लें कि लखनऊ के मसूद मशहूर अफसानानिगार थे. *गंजीफ़ा, सिमिया, इत्र-ए-काफ़ूर, ताऊस चमन की मैना* जैसी कहानियों के लेखक नैयर मीर अनीस के विशेषज्ञ और लखनऊ के स्मारकों के जानकार थे. उनकी लघु कथाओं की लोकप्रियता का आलम यह है कि अंग्रेजी में पांच किताबें–*एसेंस ऑफ कैंफर, स्नेक कैचर, द ऑक्ल्ट, द मैना फ्रॉम पीकॉक गार्डन* और *कलेक्टेड स्टोरीज*–मौजूद हैं लेकिन हिंदी में केवल एक कहानी संग्रह *ताऊस चमन की मैना* दिखती है, वैसे, उनकी कुछ और लघु कथाएं हिंदी में मौजूद हैं.

समीक्षित पुस्तक में उनकी सात लघु कहानियां हैं–*गंजीफ़ा, अल्लाम और बेटा, किताबदार, बादेनुमां, आज़ारियान, मिसकीनों का एहाता* और *बड़ा कूड़ाघर*. *ताऊस चमन की मैना* की तरह *गंजीफ़ा* भी उनकी मशहूर कहानी है. इसमें एक पतनशील समाज का खाका है जिसका शानदार अतीत उतना ही झूठा और अविश्वसनीय लगता है जितना सच उसका वर्तमान है. कहानी के शुरू में गंजीफ़ा और उसके नियम के बारे में बताया गया है: ''दिन को आफ़ताब (मीर) जिस खेलने



गंजीफ़ा और अन्य कहानियां
लेखक: नैयर मसूद
प्रकाशक: राजकमल प्रकाशन
कीमत: 399 रु.

वाले के पास हो वह बाज़ी को शुरू करता है और आफ़ताब के जिलु में माहताब एक कम क़ीमत, बल्कि बेक़ीमत पत्ता होता है, रात के वक़्त माहताब के हुक़ूक़ माहताब को मिल जाते हैं और आफ़ताब की हैसियत एक मामूली मीर की रह जाती है.'' कहानी जब ख़त्म होती है तो ऐसा लगता है कि पात्रों का जीवन और उनकी भूमिका इन्हीं पत्तों की तरह है.

एक बेरोजगार शख्स को मलाल है कि वह अपने बाप की तरह अपनी मां की कमाई पर पल रहा है. लेकिन मां उसे दुरुस्त करती है कि उसके बाप ने उसे बहुत प्यार और सम्मान दिया. वह उसे भी पढ़ाने के लिए विलायत भेजना चाहता था; इस फिराक में उसने अपने दो घर बेच डाले, ऑफिस से कर्ज ले लिया जिसकी वजह से रिटायरमेंट के बाद उसे पेंशन भी नहीं मिली. उस मां की जद्दोजेहद पाठक खुद महसूस कर सकते हैं. यानी आफताब (सूरज) के ढलने के बाद भी जीवन माहताब (चांद) की कम रोशनी में ही चलती रहती है.

कहानी में यह नवाचार बिल्कुल अलग किस्म का है. इसी तरह, 'अल्लाम और बेटा' की कहानी सामान्य लोगों की फितरत बयान करती है, जिन्हें लगता है कि वक्त के साथ उनकी याददाश्त कमजोर होती जा रही है. मौजूदा दौर में पाठकों को यह कहानी अपने इर्दगिर्द की घटना मालूम देगी. उनकी दूसरी कहानियों की तरह इसमें भी आखिर तक रहस्य बना रहता है और इसकी वजह से पाठकों में उत्सुकता भी.

रज़ा पुस्तकमाला के तहत हिंदी-उर्दू के बीच संवाद की परंपरा को कायम रखते हुए इस संग्रह का प्रकाशन प्रशंसनीय है. साहित्य अकादमी अवॉर्ड और सरस्वती सम्मान से नवाजे गए नैयर की किस्सागोई का अंदाज लोगों को अलग लग सकता है.

लेकिन इस किताब में नुक्ते के इस्तेमाल में बरती गई लापरवाही मजा किरकिरा कर देती है. 'खाने' को 'ख़ाने' और 'शक्ल' को 'शक़्ल' बनाकर अर्थ का अनर्थ किया गया है. यही नहीं, ख्वाहमख्वाह 'ख़ामख़ाँ' हो गया है. अदब में इस तरह की गलतियां बेअदबी के दायरे में आ सकती हैं. ■

किताबें मिलीं



हाफ विंडो
लेखक: पुनीत शर्मा
प्रकाशक:
प्रशांत पब्लिकेशंस
कीमत: 199 रु.



विश्व की कालजयी कहानियां
अनुवाद: सुशांत सुप्रिय
प्रकाशक: शशि प्रकाशन,
गाजियाबाद
कीमत: 275 रु.



रंग सृजन
लेखक: प्रवीण शेखर
प्रकाशक: आशु प्रकाशन,
इलाहाबाद
कीमत: 300 रु.



भभूल्या
लेखक: रत्नकुमार सांभरिया
प्रकाशक: स्वराज प्रकाशन,
नई दिल्ली
कीमत: 125 रु.

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extremes of violence and non-violence by situating them in the larger context of history, religion, state formation and scholarly debates and discussions in ancient Indian political thought.

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NATURE AND NATION: Essays on Environmental History by Mahesh Rangarajan. Permanent Black, Ranikhet (in association with Ashoka University), 2018.

Rangarajan's book offers a rear-view mirror insight into India's ecological history and the opportunity to learn from it. 'The past matters as it can illustrate how the present came about. By knowing better what choices were made in the past, when and why, the dilemmas of the present can be seen in a more holistic way' says the author, and he is right. So many modern day conservation policies have been shaped by India's colonial past as well as by the leaders who inked our first wildlife laws that continue to shape our ecological future.

The book titled *Nature and Nation* is a collection of 10 essays and is an exhaustive reminder of the events that shaped current conservation policies. The journey from a British colony to becoming independent, to an economy that hunted wildlife till the passing of the Wildlife Protection Act (1972), was a long and arduous one and only a scholar of history of Rangarajan's eminence with an eye for detail could capture it in an intriguing way that makes for scholarly reading as well as engaging storytelling.

A political History of the Lion in India (Chapter 3) makes for an interesting read and how the lion became a symbol of power as well as of the modern Indian state fits in well with the central theme of the book. The record of hunting over 57 lions in the region of Delhi seems hard to imagine but it is a fitting reminder of the factors that have shaped the rapid decline of the species. Post-independence, the clash between middle class enthusiasts and the local people again provides an insight into competing visions and how Gir evolved from a princely reserve to a major tourist destination.

I found Chapter 5 – Striving for a Balance – particularly fascinating as it delves deeper into the decisions taken during Indira Gandhi's tenure – a prime minister who is often lauded for the bold decisions she took in favour of wildlife and conservation. Gandhi in the 1970s and 1980s faced the same dilemmas that confront contemporary leaders today, especially the debates that are centred around large dams. While Gandhi may have taken a bold decision by not giving the go ahead to the Silent Valley project, Rangarajan reminds us that she also said no to the Moyar Dam that would have flooded the entire Mudumalai National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu. These and other nuggets of information makes 'Nature and Nation' a lucid read with just the right level of detail thrown in.

Rangarajan takes us back in the past to remind us of battles that were fought before, the ecological dilemmas that previous leaders were confronted with and the decisions they took. The author takes us on a journey from colonial India to the present, reflecting on how our natural world shaped up – the challenges it faced and the political interventions that preserved large tracts of nature.

Rangarajan is a historian par excellence but he is also a political commentator of the present. He does touch upon the present times in the final chapter – The Politics of Ecology – but this stops at 1995. One had hoped to read in greater detail about our current times and that is my singular disappointment about the book. One is left wanting to know more about Rangarajan's sharp incisive views of current conservation policies, especially in the light of his tremendous knowledge of the past.

That said, Nature and Nation is an imperative read for anyone interested in the ecological history of South Asia and how we managed to preserve our rich biodiversity amidst many upheavals in the past

Bahar Dutt
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IN PURSUIT OF PROOF: A History of Identification Documents in India by Tarangini Sriraman. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2018.

WE are today so subsumed by the coerced ubiquity of Aadhaar and its various inefficacies and encroachments that it's possible that we have lost sight of the true nature of the relationship between identity documents and welfare processes in India which, in many ways, goes back to the very inception of the state. Indeed, to understand the popular making of ID documents, as Tarangini Sriraman argues in her fine new book, *In Pursuit of Proof: A History of Identification Documents in India*, we must consider various

Scheduled Castes or tribal communities. One female author appears briefly in the appendix to the book (p 330).

Notwithstanding the issue of determining appropriate terminals for the successive periods of a long movement and of identifying Maithili activists from diverse religious, caste and gender backgrounds, Jha steadfastly retains his focus on the political activism of Maithil Brahmins and Kayasthas while depicting the development of each of the four phases of the movement. In the end, he provides unrestrained access to his rich archival data and political insights on the making of the modern Maithili movement. Jha, thus, offers an admirable exposition of the Maithili movement that will leave a lasting impact on the study of literary and political cultures in South Asia.

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A Tale of Tangled Lines
Whither Accountability?

T R RAGHUNANDAN

A Bureaucrat Fights Back: The Complete Story of Indian Reforms by Pradip Baijal, *Noida: HarperCollins, 2016; pp xvi +366, ₹499.*

A Bureaucrat Fights Back, authored by Pradip Baijal, a former civil servant who served as the chairperson of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) during a critical period of its existence, claims to tell the reader the "complete story of Indian reforms." That is an ambitious and bold promise for an author to make; however, the competency of the author to follow-up and deliver on such vast intentions cannot be doubted. He was a distinguished member of the Indian Administrative Service and held several important positions, eventually culminating in his ascent to the chairpersonship of the TRAI. Earlier, the author served in the Ministry of Power as additional secretary, and then as secretary in the Department of Disinvestment (now the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management [DIPAM]). With this rich experience under his belt, if he cannot tell us the story of Indian reforms, few others can.

The book is rich in detail. Part I relates the reforms story in the telecom sector, Part II contrasts the success of telecom sector reforms with the lack of it in the power sector and describes the successes of the disinvestment sector. In all of these, the author was a critical player and saw plenty. Part IV traverses the history of market reforms, disinvestments, opening of sectors, de-licencing, and privatisation. In Part V, the author speaks of his early years in service, relating how his administrative experience evolved and why he was drawn to the idea of liberalisation and privatisation. The book, therefore, fills a vital gap in the understanding of the reforms process for the average reader. The only fault, if any, is that of form rather than content. The back-and-forth nature of the text and the wealth of detail combine to ensure that the reader's attention ought not to falter.

Yet, one feels a disquiet in the combative nature of the title. Why should a bureaucrat fight back if there is a general consensus that the nation must move forward on liberalisation? The tone for the overall nature of the book as a defence of the author's actions, particularly after his tenure as the chairperson of TRAI, is set in the preface. The author reflects upon the dynamics of reform processes and how a reformer is often caught in the trap of either choosing inaction for their own safety or to choose to be decisive and face the risk of having their motives and tactics questioned.

Reforms in the Telecom Sector

Part I of the book takes up the telecom sector as a case study of the typical dilemmas faced by a regulator. The author's depth of knowledge is revealed through his narration of the reforms that led to the explosion of telephone connectivity in India. Chapter 1, "The History of Telecom, Corruption and Politics," makes not more than a cursory reference to the latter two matters. However, that is more than redeemed by the depth of detail in Chapter 2, "India's Unusual Telecom Growth." This chapter is the backbone of the book; its raison d'être. The author not only details the statistics of the growth, but also explains the dilemmas and choices faced by regulators in the face of fast-changing, high-potential technologies knocking at the doors of India.

By way of background, the author explains that in furtherance of the National Telecom Policy, 1994 that enabled the entry of private sector players, bids submitted by them were too high to make telecom services affordable. The government capped the number of

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licences issued to each bidder to just three, thus promoting competition, but reduced the earning of revenues from the bids. For several reasons that the author documents, which include stabilisation of the regulatory regime comprising the TRAI and the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal, these reforms did not accelerate the growth of telecom services provision. It was the policy of 2003 that introduced Unified Access Services Licencing (UASL) on the basis of the TRAI's recommendations under the author's leadership, that led to the exponential growth in the sector.

The TRAI's recommendations were to introduce a "unified licencing regime" for all telecom services, with UASL to be implemented in each circle first, as a transitional measure. UASL threw open access of players into all areas in the country, thus freeing the sector from service area monopolies. Even though the unified licensing regime was not implemented, the UASL policy pursued by the government catalysed the explosive growth of telecom services. As the author goes back and forth in time to explain details, the reader may need a notepad to write down the sequence of what happened in that period. That is a necessary investment to understand the crux of the allegations against the author when the 2G scam broke out, long after he demitted office as the chairperson of TRAI, and his defence when the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) turned its cold gaze on him.

From Chapter 2 onwards, the author focuses on addressing the primary purpose of the book: to fight back allegations of irregularities. Following an absorbing description of how policy decisions evolved, the author makes a comprehensive and convincing defence of his decisions, as exemplified in two instances. The first is the policy of "first come, first served," which was what got the United Progressive Alliance (UPA)–II government into deep trouble. When the 2G scam broke out, the main defence of Dayanidhi Maran and A Raja—union ministers of telecom who were under the scanner for corruption in handing out licences on a first come, first served basis—was that they were following precedent. The Baijal-led TRAI had recommended exactly the same thing, they said. The author points out that this policy was a prudent way of dealing with technology options that were fast evolving in the early 2000s, and that in any case, the policy had been adopted before his time.

The second example is that of "universal access;" the author explains convincingly that the approach to do so was backed by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) cabinet in December 2003 and that the TRAI's recommendations in this regard catalysed the enviable, steep growth in telecom services, which earned kudos worldwide. The author's explanation of the modalities of migration of existing "basic licence holders" to the UASL regime is comprehensive. Several passages have to be read repeatedly, but any reader would be convinced of the assertions of the author that both the migration of the existing basic licences and the granting of new UASLs did not favour any party, though some of the late entrants into the game, such as Tata Teleservices, attempted to catch up through the UASL route with other early birds.

Defence against 2G Allegations

Matters got hot for the author when the CBI turned the scanner on him in the wake of the 2G scam. Raja, the principal accused in the scam, alleged that his actions in 2008 were driven by the recommendations of the TRAI in 2003. While that charge was easily refuted, the more difficult matter to counter was the observation of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), which stated,

> The DOT's (Department of Telecommunications) action of applying the rates approved for existing operators for migrating to (the) UAS regime, to new applications also, by relying on the clarifications of the Chairman TRAI in his individual capacity was inconsistent with the recommendations of the TRAI (2003) and went beyond the authority given by the Cabinet. (p 57)[1]

The sole evidence to substantiate this matter is a letter written by the author to the secretary of the DOT, dated 14 November 2003 (reproduced in full on page 59 of the book), in which he interprets and clarifies the recommendations made by the TRAI, in response to a telephone conversation with the latter. In Chapter 3, "The TRAI Cases," the author demolishes this observation of the CAG, by stating out that his clarification was ratified by the entire TRAI body and was not his individual opinion. The author asserts that the files concerned in the TRAI, which include the minutes of the meeting in which the body ratified his actions, were deliberately "lost" in order to nail him to the cross. It was only his presence of mind of having kept copies of these records in his personal papers that saved him from further action.

There is nothing that can be faulted in the author's assertion. Though he was put to considerable hardship by the CBI enquiry and raids, the investigating agency did not file a first information report (FIR) on him, convinced of his explanation for the seeming transgression of the cabinet decision on UASLs.

There are two kinds of officers who get into undeserved trouble and face consequences for their decisive actions. The first are those who walk the straight and narrow path, aloof from politicians and pressures, and oblivious of the happenings around them. They work with the firm belief that everybody around them, including the corrupt, are bound by rules of fair play and decency, and that some deep-felt pangs of conscience will prevent them from delivering fatal and undeserved blows to the honest. Such officers are particularly vulnerable when in trouble, because they have no godfathers and no defence mechanisms in case they are subsequently framed for irregularities not committed by them. The case study of Shyamal Ghosh presented by the author and the recent instance of H C Gupta, former coal secretary now languishing in jail, are cases in point. The other kind of officer who gets into trouble has friends in high places, including politicians of all ideologies. It is this insurance, which they buy early in their careers, that enables them to move into the right jobs. Once placed there, their competence carries the day; and the reassuring presence of influential people to whom they can go in case

trouble breaks out, gives them the confidence to be decisive. In all fairness, the integrity of such officers cannot be ipso facto questioned simply because of their connections with politicians in high places.

A reading of the book makes it clear that the author fits more into the second category than the first. His competence in decision-making is clear even to his detractors, and he also makes no bones about the fact that he has relied on support from erstwhile political bosses, most of them from the NDA-I era, to fight investigations against him. His dislike of the ministers and the Prime Minister of the UPA decade is open; he accuses them of sighting him in the cross hairs when they trained their guns on political rivals in the NDA-I, as also aiming, speciously, to use his legitimate decisions in the TRAI as alibis for their corrupt actions. While the CBI did not culminate the investigation against the author with an FIR filed against him, the case against Maran, Raja, and their political partner, M K Kanimozhi, is under trial.

Conflict of Interest

Is the author's innocence irrefutable, or is he a smart, meticulous man who walked on the edge and got away because he covered his tracks well? The one matter that arguably weakens the author's claims of complete impartiality is that following the expiry of the year-long moratorium on employment after the chairpersonship of the TRAI, he joined Niira Radia's consultancy firm, Noesis, as a consultant. The CBI's hypothesis was that the author's actions as TRAI chairperson favoured the Tatas and that his joining Radia's firm, which consulted with the Tatas, reeked of conflict of interest. The author has vigorously addressed these allegations of quid pro quo citing four reasons; first, that he joined Noesis after the one-year "cooling-off" period; second, that most telecom regulators worked as consultants after retirement; third, that it was only a part-time consultancy and that he was also a consultant with international agencies; and fourth, that he had resigned from the position of adviser to the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), a government body, as it would have been a conflict of interest to have served in that body after having joined Noesis. In fact, the author says that the only taped conversation in the infamous Radia tapes featuring him is the one where he informs Radia of his decision to quit the PNGRB position.

However, to the unbiased reader, the assertions of the author have an amoral ring to it. One does not doubt the author's word when he says that he was not barred from taking up private employment and that he did so after the cooling-off period. The author is far too intelligent to not follow the letter of the law. The key issue is a more fundamental one; which is, regardless of the rules, whether somebody should actually take up such employment after retirement from the sensitive post of a regulator. The issue is not whether the author avoided conflict of interest by quitting the PNRGB position, whilst in Noesis, but whether he should have joined the firm in the first place, knowing its close relationship with firms that he had dealt with at arm's length, as the TRAI chairperson.

Does conflict of interest cease on the completion of 365 days of a cooling-off period? Does the shine of integrity get tarnished by the lure of money, even if the latter is legitimately earned? The author is candid enough to admit in the very last page of his narrative that there can be different views on this. He recalls that Arun Jaitley, the current Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, felt that after the brilliant work done by the author as the secretary of DIPAM and chairman of TRAI, he occupied a pedestal in the public's mind and that he had made himself vulnerable by stepping down from that pedestal to become a consultant.

Regulators who emerge from the government have been there and done that. They know, not merely enough to become a consultant, but much more that must be preserved for posterity and ought not to be used, even inadvertently, by private interests. At best, they could take up teaching assignments—indeed, they must—because their enormous experience needs to be passed on to the next generation. At the worst, they could take up alternative careers in a sector that bears no connection to the one they regulated. However, to take up a position in a consulting and lobbying firm that dealt with the same companies that he dealt with as a regulator was uncomfortably close to the environment in which the author was a central player as a regulator. One cannot but agree with Jaitley in this regard, that the author diminished his aura and rendered himself vulnerable by doing so.

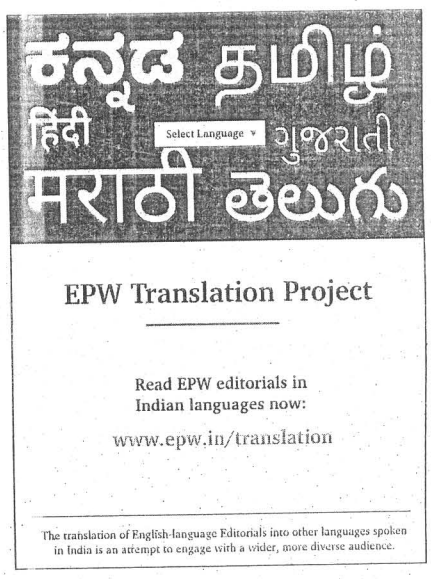
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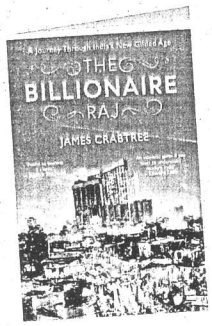
A Bureaucrat Fights Back is a gripping, if somewhat heavy read for the layperson. The wealth of detail contained in it can become frenetic, as the author veers from describing facts to defending his intentions and actions during a particularly interesting period of India's technological evolution. Even if some questions still remain unanswered, as they inevitably will, it is a must-read, equally for the budding and the experienced policymaker, as also the conscientious layperson.

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NOTE

1 Para 3.1.7 of the CAG's report, "Performance Audit Report of CAG on the Issue of Licences and Allocation of 2G Spectrum by the Department of Telecommunications" (2010), quoted verbatim on page 57 of the book.





books James Crabtree

The Billionaire Raj | HarperCollins | 358 pages | Rs 799

GDP On A Reckless Aston

Crony capitalism oils the wheels of politics, which then bestows on it the benefits of power. Modern India's 'growth' is thus unpicked in these stories.

BY SUDHIRENDAR SHARMA

IT has been five years since an Aston Martin, valued at $7,00,000, hit and spun an Audi A4 on to the opposite carriageway before a collision with another car had its front end crushed. No one was killed in the accident on December 8, 2013, but the identity of the driver remains an unresolved mystery. The case has long been buried, but the skeleton keeps on popping in people's memory. The accident on Mumbai's Peddar Road continues to evoke conspiracy theories even today, as the car belonged to the Reliance Industries, and none other than a young man from that business dynasty could have been at the wheel. The confession of a so-called driver claiming to be the one at the wheel during the late-night test drive is reflective of the tumultuous times when political and economic influence protects the rich.

Evoking Mark Twain's 'The Gilded Age', when greedy, corrupt industrialists, bankers and politicians had ruled the US at the turn of the 20th century, the *Financial Times*' former Mumbai correspondent, James Crabtree, provides a somewhat similar but unsettling portrait of the country that claims to uplift itself on the GDP curve, but at the expense of its poor and the vulnerable. In each portrait drawn by Crabtree, from Ambani to Adani and from Mallya to Reddy, none of the wealthy and opulent come out without their share of scams, scandals and erased crimes. The stories are only beginning to unfold in public.

The stories may sound familiar on surface, but the devil is in the details. The billionaire class may have painted a bright future for the country, but sanitised capitalism had left public sector banks holding at least $150 billion worth of bad assets in 2017. Was such a situation unexpected in a democratic set-up? Crony capitalism is at the core of an unholy nexus, which keeps the political machine suitably oiled to fulfil its electoral promises, for regaining power and returning favours back to the businesses. This unchecked cycle has led to the overnight ascent and dubious finances of the new billionaire class, leading to a shocking trend about the continuing purchase of politics by the wealthy.

Crabtree has captured what is often considered a given, but for him it is a curious case of a democracy being



> For Crabtree, India is a case of a democracy being weakened as the lines between politics and business gets blurred to a great degree—a story of wealth amidst poverty.

weakened at its core as the lines between politics and business get blurred to dangerous extremes. No wonder, the country has become a picture postcard story of wealth amidst poverty, marked by a growing economy that only widens income inequality. Part of the problem, argues the author, is that India itself, for all the lofty ideals of its Constitution, has never actually made the transition to becoming a full liberal democracy, with public institutions capable of guarding in every respect the civil and political rights of its people.

The Billionaire Raj is a telling account of the pleasures and possibilities of appropriating the state and its systems by an emerging class of political entrepreneurs. In a racy and engaging narrative, the author draws amusing caricatures of the Bollygarchs, a term coined to represent Indian oligarchs. And, these are not without context, as the colourful portraits also paint the dark side of the rich and the famous. "In his early forties, with swept-back black hair and the angle of a crooked nose incongruent with the face" and "a bulky man in a red polo shirt, with gold bracelets on each wrist and chunky diamond ear stud sparkling against his long, graying hair" help the reader see beyond the obvious.

Much of the foreign correspondent's memoirs relate to the present political dispensation, on whom alone the blame may not rest, but which hasn't done much to reverse the trend either. From the British Raj to the License Raj, and now the Resource Raj, the relentless growth has proved to be economically disruptive, socially bruising and environmentally destructive. Having moved to Singapore since completing the book, the author wonders if the country could be any different if it ignores the three major challenges—growing inequality, crony capitalism, and destructive development.

However, Crabtree is an optimist, as he draws reference to the Roosevelt-style progressive era, a moment in which anti-corruption campaigns had cleaned up politics and the middle-class had exerted control over government. For this to happen, a lot will need to be done to build state machinery able to create and implement wise public policies, while remaining impartial between different social groups. Without building state capacity, as Samuel Huntington had cautioned, rapid economic expansion can rip societies apart, resulting in social upheaval. The message cannot be more loud and clear!

Hindu 4/VI/18

Prescription for growth

A former RBI Governor on what is holding India back

KANDASWAMI SUBRAMANIAN

Dr. Bimal Jalan is a prolific writer. He served in the Finance Ministry as Chief Economic Adviser and moved, later, to the Reserve Bank of India as Governor. He also had a term as a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha. He is a neo-liberal who is moderate in his views and has been acceptable to successive governments, including the present.

Jalan's books traverse the undefined ground between economics and politics. His new one, *India Ahead*, however, is a mixed bag. There are many ideas and not all of them consistent or realistic. Jalan is convinced that India has advanced economically, both domestically and in the global context. He feels, "India now has the opportunity and potential to achieve, in the first quarter of the twenty first century, what it could not achieve in the previous fifty or hundred years..."

In his view, what stands in the way of India realising its full potential is its political system and administrative *malaise*. Having a longer term objective, he proposes a set of ten recommendations, which he feels will be acceptable to all parties.



India Ahead: 2025 and Beyond
Bimal Jalan
Rupa
₹495

We confine attention to two major suggestions. He feels that the anti-defection law has emasculated the functioning of Parliament, rueing that even budgets are passed on 'voice vote'. Smaller parties switch alliance and distort the process and therefore he wants smaller parties as a group to be disqualified. He wants Parliament to become unicameral. The legal tenability of these suggestions is in doubt. He recommends that the Speaker should disqualify members who disrupt the functioning of the House. He does not foresee that if such powers are given, a Speaker can destroy the entire opposition as our experience with anti-defection law has shown.

For India to work smoothly, Centre-State relations must be redrawn, feels Jalan. While the Centre should confine its role to macroeconomic issues such as balance of payments, exchange rate, monetary policy etc., the States should have full freedom to handle microeconomic issues. Is this feasible as the border lines between the two are blurred?

Jalan is gung-ho on the emergence of the BJP as a single dominant party, saying this should lead to sound and stable policies. After more than four years of BJP rule, he would realise how his hopes have been belied. There have been no major structural reforms. A misadventure like demonetisation would not have been approved in a coalition government.

On the whole, it is difficult to say that this book has much to offer in the understanding of political economy. It is a reworking of older ideas dealt with in his earlier books.

Indian Journal of Gender Studies, Vol. 25, No. 3, Oct. 2018

nobility (even when they are heartless and cruel) which made Lucknow and Awadh so different from the rest of India.

Parveen's prose is simple and unadorned, almost Kiplingesque in its plainness. It is unpretentious and tries to tell a plain tale as plainly as possible without becoming boring and banal. It is this which makes it a valuable document of social history.

Amitabha Pande
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Meeta Deka, *Women's Agency and Social Change: Assam and Beyond*. Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2013, 200 pages, ₹650. ISBN 978-81-321-1138-2.

DOI: 10.1177/0971521518785787

Meeta Deka's work is a collection of four essays meant as pointers for further work on the theme of women in the northeast. Her work is ambitious as she looks at diverse themes, many of which are not settled debates within feminist thought.

Though the title of the book suggests an engagement with states 'beyond' Assam, most of the essays focus on this state. That the historical analysis of the women's movement in Assam is to be seen simultaneously from the location of the socio-religious movement and the nationalist movement as is the case in other parts of India is a point well made. Though the book suggests the amnesia that erases women and other marginalised voices from history writing, in retrieving that history, Deka falls into the trap of recovering the voices of predominantly privileged women. The first chapter 'Women and Society' is arranged in sections titled—'Retrieving the Woman in Assam', 'Women Writers of Assam' and lastly, 'A Gender Perspective of the Text on the Skin in Northeast India'. The last section that includes the experience of tribal women through the art of tattooing seems to indicate that the sole possible way of retrieving tribal women's experience is through the inscribed skin. It would have been interesting if here too, Deka had engaged with the act of writing as she does in the other sections of this chapter and looked at the various Sahitya Sabhas within Assam like, for instance, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha and women's role therein or as she sets out in the first section, through myths, legends, folk tales and history.

Gender Studies

The second chapter is a detailed examination of the judicial structure in the colonial and post-colonial period and its repercussion on women in Assam. It is interesting to see the various case studies especially of the Legal Aid Cell. However, her premise of the law not being gender-neutral leads her to the conclusion that it provides for the 'legal terrorism'. Thus she states 'It is of interest to note that 98 per cent of such cases against men have been found by the High Court and the Supreme Court of India to be false'. The exact source of this statement is not given. Following this, her argument is for a gender-neutral law. However, this needs to be contextualised within a larger feminist theory of the law. To therefore argue for laws for protection of women to be gender-neutral is problematic and is a formulation that already will have its sceptics. In 'Women and Economy', the first and the last sections pertain to colonial Assam with a middle section on 'Traditional livelihood and ethnic women in Dima Hasao based on 'field study'—though the details of it is not given.

The framing of chapters in *Women's Agency and Social Change: Assam and Beyond* needs elaboration. Similarly, the definition of prostitution in the last section of this chapter as constituting 'the three elements of payment, promiscuity and emotional indifference' needs further elaboration as she bases her study on this definition. In conclusion, Deka delineates new areas for possible further investigations.

In this regard, two very important points are made on sources and methodology. Deka advocates unconventional sources such as letters, folklore and social practices as ways to retrieve women's history and the critique of archives as the authoritative voice of history is a case in point. The book is an attempt at exploration of the processes of production of the history that erases women at various crucial junctures. The act of writing contributes and creates the narrative of the transformation of gender roles. This timely intervention to recover women's agency from the obscuring tendencies of history needs to be engaged with.

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Indian Journal of Gender Studies, Vol. 25, No. 3, Oct. 2018

task that Bandyopadhyay does with great sensitivity making *Desire and Defiance* a deeply moving narration of the history of intimacies on the margins of marriage in South Asia.

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Parveen Talha, *A Word Thrice Uttered: Stories on Life's Realities*. New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2017, 192 pages, ₹350. ISBN: 978-93-85285-87-5.

DOI: 10.1177/0971521518785786

We rarely acknowledge the value of works of fiction as important documents of social and cultural history. This is partly because we valorise 'fact' as verified truth, independent of an individual's subjective perception and we treat fiction as an act of an individual's imagination whose 'facts' may or may not conform to documented reality. Yet, fiction, particularly when it relates to a specific time and place in history, is a richer source of gathering historical information about that place and time than any ostensibly 'fact'-rich document can provide.

There is also a problem that when history is written it is generally attracted to the grander, larger narratives in which rulers and political and military leaders and noblemen play the major role. While a corrective to this approach was attempted by bringing the 'subaltern' into the picture, the focus shifted to the other extreme of looking primarily at peasants, Dalits, working class members and their role in the class struggle. Very rarely have we documented histories of ordinary people—of housewives, of maids and nannies, family retainers, the *chaiwallas*, young people of modest origins aspiring to be doctors or engineers, junior government officials at the lower end of the hierarchy and such others of similar backgrounds. We know even less of these almost 'classless' people when they are a part of Muslim families which chose to stay back in India after partition or were members of the now vanishing Anglo-Indian community.

It is this gap in our experiential understanding of the last generation or two that Parveen Talha fills in a compilation of short stories titled *A Word Thrice Uttered* published by Niyogi Books in the mid-2017. Parveen Talha is a natural chronicler of her generation and of the generation immediately before hers. She writes of the world of Mofussil India,

mainly Lucknow and other towns and cities of Oudh, as it evolved after partition over the next few decades. As a former civil servant and as a Muslim who grew up in the unique syncretic culture of Oudh, the much celebrated 'Ganga Jamani tehzeeb', she has a very gently, evocative Civil Lines perspective of people and their lives.

Few outside the Indian sub-continent would understand what a Civil Lines perspective could mean. Civil Lines, like the Cantonments, were constructed by our erstwhile colonial rulers as an enclave for British expatriate civilian officers, their staff and included those Indian members of the colonial administration who had made their way into the higher rungs of the administrative hierarchy. While being connected to the traditional city in many different ways they were different from the rest of the city in terms of density, civic infrastructure, amenities, urban design and architecture. Over the years they acquired a distinct identity of their own and as the local Indian part of the population within Civil Lines areas grew they developed, socially and culturally, into a very interesting mix of colonial traditions and mores with the native, vernacular traditions of the older settlements.

Those families who grew up in Civil Lines areas, especially after Independence imbibed much of this uniquely syncretic culture. In Parveen Talha's case, there are two separate syncretic traditions coming together—that of the traditional Hindu–Muslim intermingling which gave Oudh in general and Lucknow in particular, its very distinctive grace and elegance in language, in aesthetics, in the Arts and architecture, in music and poetry and this is then combined with the modernist, liberal education traditions of the Anglophonic world of the Civil Lines. It is this which giver her voice its very distinctive quality.

The characters in Parveen's stories, all obviously (or so it seems) based on real-life characters, she would have interacted with at different stages of her life and career, are all modest people of the kind that all of us encounter and interact with in our everyday life. Yet we know little of what goes on in their lives, the sacrifices they have to make, the struggles they have to go through to make ends meet or to try and keep up with a better lifestyle they had had in a gentler past, their aspirations and their secret yearnings, their loves and betrayals—and it is this that she captures in a palimpsest of Awadh. In her simple, seemingly artless prose, she also manages to convey the lazy, quiet serenity of mofussil life and despite the grind and struggle of everyday living her characters have to go through, they have in them that innate gracefulness, gentleness and

nobility (even when they are heartless and cruel) which made Lucknow and Awadh so different from the rest of India.

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Indian Express; 3/11/18; Pg. 25

Leading Ladies

A fine account of prominent Mughal women and their contributions to the politics and culture of their time

MADHULIKA LIDDLE

ENGLISH TRAVELLER and writer Thomas Coryat, visiting India during the reign of Jahangir, wrote: "The king keepeth a thousand women for his own body". Gross exaggeration, of course, but wild assertions such as this, along with those of other Europeans writing about the Mughals — Niccolao Manucci, François Bernier, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier — was to create an image of a Mughal harem that was little more than a glorified giant bedchamber for the Emperor. A place of perfumed beauties, of lust and sexual intrigue, and of hundreds of women catering to the desire of one man.

It is this myth that Ira Mukhoty attempts to explode in *Daughters of the Sun: Empresses, Queens and Begums of the Mughal Empire*. Realising the "...casual negligence with which we regard our history in India and the sometimes benign largesse with which we assimilate inaccuracy and fallacy as received wisdom", she sets out to show what the Mughal harem really was. Of course, the home for the wives and concubines of the emperors, but also a refuge for hundreds of female relatives and dependants — even the widows and daughters of loyal and highly esteemed courtiers. A place of opulence and elegance, but also a place of industry, of literature and learning. Of power.

Mukhoty restricts her book to the reigns of the first six Mughal emperors, tracing the trajectories of their rule, and simultaneously tracing the lives of the prominent Mughal women of each period. Here, from the matriarchs — like the intrepid Khanzada, elder sister of Babur — to princesses like Roshanara, are women of every stamp. There are the nomadic Timurid women of the early years, who rode alongside the Emperor, rarely in purdah and as used to a life on the march as their men. There are the accomplished and hard-headed businesswomen, like Maryam-uz-Zamani and Noorjehan, who wield power, both political and commercial. There is Jahanara, with her Sufi bent of mind, and the political machinations that were to end in her downfall.

What makes this book so valuable is that it is both immensely readable as well as very informative — especially when it comes to the more elusive of the Mughal women. Noorjehan, Jahanara, and (to some extent), Mumtaz Mahal: these are the women of whom most people know something. But women like Khanzada, Gulbadan, Harkha Bai, Maham Anga and Salima Sultan Begum, mostly from the earlier years of the Mughal dynasty, are rarely talked about. And these are the women whose lives, explored by Mukhoty, especially come alive in *Daughters of the Sun*. There are the later luminaries of the court, of course, but their predecessors are the ones who are truly the heroines of the book.



DAUGHTERS OF THE SUN: EMPRESSES, QUEENS AND BEGUMS OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE
IRA MUKHOTY
Aleph Book Company
276 pages
₹699

The depth and width of Mukhoty's research shows through. There is detail aplenty here, culled from the writings of everybody from Manucci and his like to official chroniclers like Abul Fazl (who wrote the *Akbarnama*) and, most importantly, some of the women themselves: Gulbadan's memoirs, in the form of the *Humayunnama*, and Jahanara's writings. There are descriptions of everything from the gardens at the Red Fort to the clothing of the women; important events and small but interesting anecdotes; the women's impact on, and involvement in architecture, literature, religion, social life, and — of course, given the stature of these women — the state.

At times humorous, sometimes almost lyrical in its descriptions, *Daughters of the Sun* goes deep into the lives of the padshah begums (as most of these women — including Khanzada, Gulbadan, Noorjehan, and Jahanara — were titled). Their courage, their fire and their personalities come through vividly. From Aisan Daulat Begum's murder of a "husband" who was being forced onto her to Maryam-uz-Zamani's role in the suppression of Portuguese ambitions in India, it makes for an engrossing read. If there is a shortcoming, it is in the less-than-diligent editing and proofreading. Besides the occasional typographical error, there is a certain amount of repetition, with events, details and even quotations being repeated, which can be sometimes tedious.

That aside, this is a good book, vastly more women-centric than most books on the Mughals; better-researched and wider in scope than Rumer Godden's biography of Gulbadan, and more readable than Rekha Misra's *Women in Mughal India*. This is a book that is a worthy tribute to the women it is about.

Madhulika Liddle is an author and historian

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REALISM

Hindu ; 25/11/18

Epic in the *aangan*

One of the most powerful indictments of patriarchy in Indian fiction

BY KESHAVA GUHA

Aangan, the first of Khadija Mastur's two novels, was first published in 1962, and is now experiencing a revival of interest. *The Women's Courtyard* – Daisy Rockwell's new English translation – arrives only weeks before a major Pakistani television adaptation.

Although it has been translated into English before (in 2001, as *The Inner Courtyard*, by Neelam Hussain), this unusual and hugely compelling novel has never received the wide readership it deserves, particularly in India.

The Women's Courtyard is often compared to other Muslim fiction of Independence and Partition: Qurratulain Hyder's *River of Fire*, Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, and Saadat Hasan Manto's short stories.

But while it is deeply concerned with such questions as Hindu-Muslim harmony and opposition to colonial rule, and its central characters move from what is now Uttar Pradesh to Lahore, to call it "a Partition novel" would be misleading. It is at its core an indictment of patriarchy – one of the most moving and powerful in all our fiction.



Going beyond Amrita Sher-Gil's oil, 'Village Scene', 1938. WIKI COMMONS



The Women's Courtyard
Khadija Mastur
trs Daisy Rockwell
Penguin Classics
₹499

> Aliya rejects both her mother's amoral cynicism and the romantic idealism of her sister Tehmina

Single setting

What makes *The Women's Courtyard* unusual is the formal constraint imposed by its setting. After a long prologue ("Past"), Aliya and her Amma move to the house of a paternal uncle. The rest of the action, until their departure for Pakistan, will take place exclusively in the titular *aangan*. Rockwell rightly compares this to a stage play with a single setting. The outside world of politics and commerce regularly enters the action, but always through a character coming into the courtyard.

When a character leaves, we don't follow them – when Aliya leaves for Aligarh for a year to earn a teaching degree, one sentence later she is back in the courtyard, degree in hand. Male relatives come and go – when they want to exclude the women, they talk in the outer sitting room beyond the *aangan*.

Within this confined setting, Mastur gives us a narrative on the epic scale, ranging across four generations, the life-arcs of dozens of characters – births, marriages, suicides, imprisonments, sexual assault, divorce – and taking in Gandhi's leadership of the national movement, the rise of the Muslim League, and the birth of Pakistan. The narrative is always gripping, although it can strain from the sheer quantity of event.

The accounts of political debate – the family is divided between Congress and League supporters – are rather crude, sometimes little more than a sideshow. But politics is something only men have the luxury of engaging in: and that engagement comes at a great cost, borne by the women.

For freedom

Aliya and her Amma reflect the human costs of patriarchy in contrasting ways. Amma is, on the one hand, a terrifyingly cynical and even cruel character, who openly regrets that her mother-in-law did not murder a daughter for the crime of falling in love with a poor farmer. She seems constantly on the lookout for opportunities to deny her daughters or nephews their chosen route to happiness. Amma, and to an extent the others of her generation, show how women can be the most committed defenders of patriarchy.

But, viewed another way, Amma's behaviour is that of a survivor – a woman who has had to keep a family going in the face of persistent male failure. This resilience is what mother and daughter have in common. Aliya rejects both her mother's amoral cynicism and the romantic idealism of her sister Tehmina (romantic idealism, in this novel, ends only one way). She seeks independence, and acquires it through education. One of the most affecting and revealing moments in the novel concerns her decision to go to Pakistan. We know that, to the extent that she is political, she is in sympathy with her father, a loyal Congressman appalled by the idea of Partition. And when she reaches Pakistan, she continues to live by this doctrine. But Pakistan is a way out of the "swamp" of the *aangan*. So she goes.

Rockwell's translation is superbly judged. Her English renders the spareness of Mastur's Urdu, the efficiency of her physical descriptions, and the devastating concision with which she handles tragedy. This is a retranslation – a common and necesary practice, but too rare in India. Retranslation is necessary not only because existing translations may be inadequate, but also because there is no one way to best translate a work. Rockwell is a literary scholar as well as translator, and her Afterword is essential reading, both as an analysis of *The Women's Courtyard* and as an explanation of her motives and methods.

The writer is based in Delhi.

CM
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-26-

Islands no more

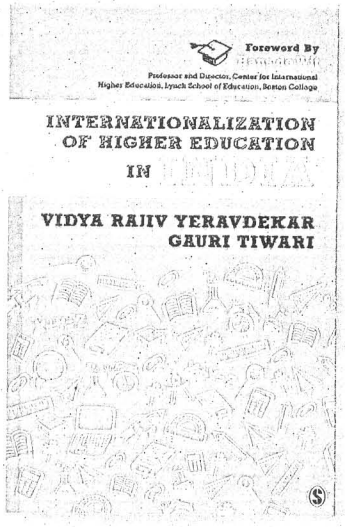
The book clarifies that internationalisation of higher education is imperative for India, but not at the expense of the real purpose and process of education.

BY **JOHN ALEXANDER**

IN the classic work *The Idea of a University*, published in 1852, Cardinal John Henry Newman pointed out that a university's "soul" lies in the positive influence it leaves on students and in the way it resists commercialisation and a utilitarian approach to education.

It is surprising that Cardinal Newman attributed a soul to an institution like university. Why did he do that? When Cardinal Newman noted that an educational institution has a "soul", he was thinking more about the character and culture of that institution, how its various stakeholders—students, teachers, researchers, administrators and policymakers—hold its different elements together and give it a common purpose, ethos and destiny. If the institution acts in accordance with that purpose, then it acts with integrity. And we can even say that, like a soul, that purpose can be lost when the institution obscures or neglects it.

Cardinal Newman's advice is a timely reminder as many efforts are being made to "internationalise" and improve the quality of higher education institutions at the global and national levels.



Internationalization of Higher Education in India

By Vidya Rajiv Yeravdekar & Gauri Tiwari

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2017

Pages: 285+xxxiii

Price: Rs.895

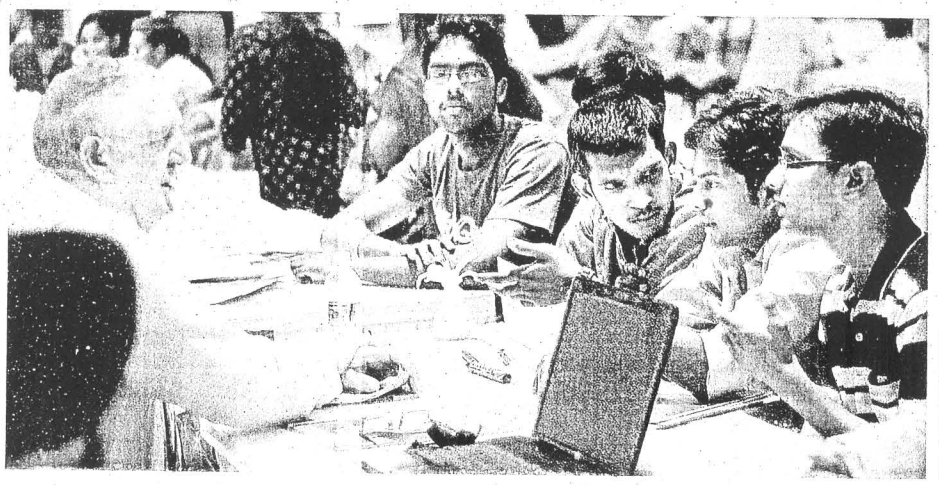
Internationalization of Higher Education in India by Vidya Rajiv Yeravdekar and Gauri Tiwari is a comprehensive, well-researched and critical study on the theory and practice of internationalisation of higher education in India. It clears the myth and the common misconception that internationalisation of higher educational institutions means increasing international student mobility and student exchange programmes through more funding and world-class infrastructure. Rather, the authors point out that internationalisation should be integrated into the very fabric of higher education in such a way that it is available to many more ordinary young citizens and not merely to a few elite and to those who can afford to travel abroad. It cannot be merely an add-on feature but must be built into every aspect of the educational process such as the curriculum and learning outcomes, teaching, research, social and cultural impact, and citizenship.

The authors write: "Internationalisation does not have to be an elitist proposition. It can be for all of us who partake in the higher education process. As opposed to how it has been presented in the Five Year Plans and those on the 'World-class universities' project by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, internationalisation can be of benefit to the entire populace that makes up the higher education cohort."

This study is a timely contribution to the public debate on the proposals of the government to restructure and revamp the apex bodies of higher education—such as the University Grants Commission, the All India Council for Technical Education and the National Council for Technical Education—and introduce the New Education Policy.

Many academics and student forums across the country have expressed serious concerns that the proposed changes will lead to granting unilateral and absolute power to the Central government, thought-manipulation, profiteering, and the abdication of the autonomy and diversity of the educational sector. It is also feared that they will contribute to the marginalisation of millions of students, particularly those from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The study insists that the steps taken by the government to reform and internationalise higher education institutions should focus on the real issues: "Poor convertibility of discipline-specific knowledge into career preparedness skills, inability to produce sufficiently large workforce that is globally competent, lack of interdisciplinary approach



MOHAMMAD YOUSUF

STUDENTS INTERACTING with educators at the Indo-Global Education Summit and Expo organised in collaboration with foreign universities in Hyderabad. A file picture.

to learning, the paradox of large number of unemployable graduates, institutional non-presence in global ranking, abysmally low output research in international publications, lack of institutional benchmarking pointers at the national level, and, above all, modernisation of curriculum—the core of the teaching-learning process."

The study is both descriptive and prescriptive. With relevant facts and research findings, it outlines the historical evolution of internationalisation in the Indian context, the global market principles and benchmarking factors that determine the dynamics of internationalisation, the regulatory and obstructionist stance of the Indian government, and the skewed ratio between inbound and outbound student mobility in India. The study also provides an illuminating comparison of India's performance with countries such as China, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea.

The study is prescriptive inasmuch as it critically examines the motivation that drives the internationalisation process in India, and suggests the directions towards which it should actually be oriented. Although the authors identify at least four different approaches and motivations—academic sociocultural, political and economic—operative in the current discourse and enactment of internationalisation, they find that it is the economic and commercialisation model that is dominant, spearheading most of what is happening in the name of internationalisation of higher education.

In this approach, internationalisation of higher education is utilised for the recruitment of more foreign students from privileged countries in order to generate revenue, secure a national profile and build an international reputation. This instrumentalist approach, the authors suggest, needs to be corrected to pursue a more inclusive and purposeful process of internationalisation.

Also, the authors envision a broad scope for internationalisation. If internationalisation of the Indian higher education institutions is pursued properly, it can be leveraged as a platform for India to be a knowledge and political leader at the regional and global level: "Internationalisation of higher education holds the key to much more than putting India on the global map of higher education. It is also a powerful lever of 'soft power', especially with respect to India's relations with many developing countries in the Asian and African continents."

In *Nationalism* (1917), Rabindranath Tagore echoed and reiterated Cardinal Newman's observation about the dangers of commercialisation. Tagore wrote: "History has come to a stage when the moral man, the complete man, is more and more giving way, almost without knowing it, to make room for the political and commercial man, the man of limited purpose. This process, aided by the wonderful progress in science, is assuming gigantic proportion and power, causing the upset of man's moral balance, obscuring his human side under the shadow of soul-less organisation."

Strictly speaking, the idea of internationalisation of education is not new. It has been very much part of the university system right from its inception in the form of universal knowledge, willingness to share new knowledge and discoveries with others, and in the movement of scholars and students across countries and cultures. We find evidence from the writings of Chinese scholars Xuanzang (602-644 C.E.), I-Ching (635-713 C.E.) and others.

Moreover, with the acceleration of technology and the Internet, geographical barriers have been broken to facilitate easy and rapid exchange of knowledge, research cooperation, cross-border delivery of academic systems, and collaborative online learning and teaching. What is, however, missing in the recent trends and activities pursued under the banner of internationalisation is a thoughtful attention to the societal and human goals of education.

Vidya Rajiv Yeravdekar and Gauri Tiwari's work merit appreciation precisely because it draws attention to those pertinent issues that are sidelined in the blind pursuit of economic gains and commercial success. □

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books Ronen Bergman

Rise and Kill First: The Secret history of Israel's targeted assassinations | Random House | 1,099 pages | Rs 784

Caesaria's Misdirected Stabs

This is no starry-eyed study of Mossad's acumen in assassinations, but a catalogue of its horrible bunglings and politically naive judgements too

BY VAPPALA BALACHANDRAN

ON March 14, 1988, the Israeli cabinet under prime minister Yitzhak Shamir met to approve the killing of PLO leader Khalil al-Wazir or Abu Jihad, who was Yasser Arafat's closest ally. The first Intefada had started from December 1987. Abu Jihad was directing it from Tunis. Rabin, who as former PM had approved his killing, was hesitant to sign as he feared adverse international reaction. However, finance minister Moshe Nissim, son of the chief rabbi of Israel, persuaded him, quoting a Talmudic precept: "If a man comes to kill you, rise early and kill him first".

This is the 'religious sanction' for 'targeted assassinations' by Mossad and IDF (Israeli Defence Force) quoted by Ronen Bergman in his deeply researched book. Bergman is an investigative reporter with Israeli paper *Yedioth Ahronoth*, which is an involved party in a police bribery case against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He gets chilling details of the Caesarea's (a unit of Mossad) assassinations and their 'surveillance evasion tradecraft' despite rigid censorship. He says: "Since World War II, Israel has assassinated more people than any other country in the Western world". Till 2000, Israel killed at least 1,000 Palestinians, including civilians in armed drone strikes. During the second Intefada, Israel carried out 1,000 more strikes, of which only 168 succeeded. "Since then..., Israel has executed some 800 targeted killings operations". As against this, America carried out only 401 drone strikes through Bush-Obama presidencies.

Did such massive killings protect Israel? Abu Jihad's killing had the opposite effect: It intensified the first Intefada, which lasted till 1993, killing 277 Israelis and 1,962 Palestinians. It also proved foreign minister Shimon Peres's earlier warning that Abu Jihad was a moderate who could have checked Arafat. The author quotes Aman's (Military Intelligence) chief Amnon Lipkin- Shahak, after the killing: "He (Abu Jihad) could have made a significant contribution to the peace process". The author says: "If the adored and charismatic Abu Jihad had been alive, Hamas might not have been able to consolidate large parts of the Palestinian public".

In fact, I had written in January 2009, quoting Israeli pianist-conductor Daniel Barenboim, that it was Israel that had encouraged Hamas to weaken Arafat. Bergman ridicules PM Netanyahu, who



> Abu Jihad's killing only intensified the first Intefada. He could have checked Arafat, Shimon Peres said. Bergman feels his absence helped Hamas have its immense sway.

"had launched his international career by presenting himself as an expert on terrorism", saying that he would not succumb to demands for release of terrorists for Israeli hostages. Yet he was forced to order the humiliating Gilad Shalit exchange in 2011 in which a lone Israeli soldier, kept as hostage by Hamas since 2006 was exchanged for 1,027 Hamas prisoners. This was because Israeli intelligence agencies, despite their legendary technical prowess, could not locate Shalit in Gaza's 365 sq. kms. Also, as Bergman says, Iranian intelligence was advising Hamas during that period.

The second wrong decision was the assassination of moderate Lebanese Shia leader Abbas al-Mussavi. On February 16, 1992 Israel proudly described it as the first-ever drone-guided Hellfire missile assassination. It was to check the growing Iranian influence on Hezbollah. This also backfired, as Mussavi's successor, Sayyid Hassan Nasarallah, "was blacker than black", more radical than Mussavi. Nasarallah chose Imad Mughniyeh to intensify guerilla tactics against Israeli occupation in southern Lebanon. He rained Iranian rockets on northern Israel, attacked a synagogue in Istanbul, killed the Israel embassy's security officer in Turkey and attacked their embassy in Argentina, all within days of Mussavi's killing. Nasarallah made things so difficult that Israel was forced to vacate southern Lebanon in 2000.

The killing of Al-Mabhouh, Hamas's weapons procurement chief in Dubai's Al-Bustan Rotana Hotel on January 19, 2010, also exposed the sloppy tradecraft of Mossad's Caesarea, who used cash for hotel charges, utilised the same Austrian telephone number for contacts and, most surprisingly, the same fictitious passports for four consecutive visits to Dubai. In 2009, they poisoned Al-Mabbouh's drink but he just fainted. In 2010, 27 members arrived in Dubai but their images were trapped by the hotel's multiple CCTVs. Although all departed from Dubai within four hours of the assassination, they had left enough traces for police chief Khalfan to expose Mossad to global ridicule by beaming the film all over the world. Not only that, he also demanded arrest warrants against Netanyahu, Mossad chief Meir Dagan and the 27 assassins. It was as bad for Mossad as their 1997 botched operation to assassinate Khalid Mashal, the leader of Hamas.

Israel Intelligence Community's record "has been one of a long string of tactical successes", says Bergman, "but also disastrous strategic failures". ◻

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Asian Age; 11/11/18; pg 11

World War I is more than just military history

Mark Bostridge

review

PEACE AT LAST:
A Portrait of Armistice Day 11 November 1918

by Guy Cuthbertson
Yale, £25

&

FIGHT TO THE FINISH:
The First World War Month by Month

by Allan Mallinson
Bantam, £25

Reflecting on the scenes of celebration, the "overpowering entrancements", that he had witnessed in November 1918 on the first Armistice Day, Winston Churchill wrote that their memory was all too fleeting, and that the spirit of wild rejoicing that had erupted at the end of the first world war was in a sense irrecoverable.

Throughout Britain it had been a magical day, repeatedly described as "wonderful beyond words". Yet the spontaneous outpouring of joy, intensified by sadness, the feelings of relief and brotherhood, together with the conviction of a better future, left no permanent legacy. Instead, across the century that now separates us from the end of the Great War, Armistice Day, and subsequently Remembrance Sunday, became associated with solemnity and silence, and respectful communion with the dead.

Guy Cuthbertson's book aims to retrieve something of the excitement and pandemonium — as well as the sheer strangeness — of the British experience of the Armistice. Reading it is a bit like watching a day unfold in slow motion. It opens in a stationary railway carriage in the middle of a French forest at 5.12 a.m. GMT. Representatives of the Allies and Germany meet to sign a document bringing to an end 1,560 days of bloodshed, enshrining a victory for one side and a humiliating defeat for the other. Marshal Foch, resembling "an elderly ticket inspector on the Orient Express", is the first to sign, on behalf of the French.

Meanwhile, in Birmingham, at eight o'clock, a white rainbow is visible, a perfect signal for the arrival of peace on what happens to be St Martin's Day (commemorating the fourth-century soldier in the Roman army who refused to fight). A man on his way to buy his morning newspaper sees a flag tied to a child's chair in a cottage doorway, as if waiting for the moment. Already boats on the Tyne are decked in bunting, their sirens sounding. By eleven that morning, when church bells start to peal, guns fire and maroons sound — causing some to panic in anticipation of an air raid — most people know that it's "peace at last", though in some places, Banbury for instance, news doesn't reach the inhabitants until midday (and in London also, the bongs of Big Ben don't strike until noon).



Members of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) celebrate Armistice Day, 1918, in London

The Mayor tells the citizens of Chester that he leaves it to their consciences how they should behave, while the Prime Minister Lloyd George says that people are entitled to do "a bit of shouting". However, the "very riot of unrestraint" that follows, lasting until late at night, is unprecedented. There is yelling and singing, flag waving, dancing (Nelson's Column is treated like a maypole), the lighting of bonfires and the burning of the Kaiser in effigy. Children are let off school — though not in Sheffield where some spoilsport orders that pupils be kept in all day.

Cuthbertson makes a significant point about books like his, which are part of a by now established trend in looking at first world war history in terms of much more than just the military story

But, as in the disturbing image from Louis Golding's poem, the *Lady of Peace* comes with her grief and "blood on her teeth". Private George Ellison, killed on the outskirts of Mons at 9.30 that morning, was the last British soldier to die before the Armistice, and news of soldiers' deaths continued to reach families as they were attending church services in thanksgiving for the peace.

The week of the Armistice also saw a sharp rise in the death rate for the flu pandemic that was sweeping the world. The celebratory crowds encouraged the spread of infection. Anthony Burgess's earliest memory was of being lifted onto the shoulders of his mother or sister to see the flag-waving crowds in Manchester. Both women died from flu only days later.

Cuthbertson has worked hard in assembling his impressionistic picture from scores of first-hand manuscript and published accounts (it may be invidious to mention one major collection he's missed, but it seems distinctly odd that he didn't apparently consult the Liddle archive in Leeds).

The result is often memorable and moving, though sometimes his more interesting conclusions — for example of the revolution-defying impact of George V being driven through the London drizzle on November 11 in an open carriage, "without cops", as Ezra Pound put it — are lost in the monotony of the flag-waving. One can take only so much yelling and shrieking.

Cuthbertson makes a significant point about books like his, which are part of a by now established trend in looking at first world war history in terms of much more than just the military story. Among recent transnational developments are studies of the effects of the fighting on children and on captive civilians.

In light of this, Allan Mallinson's month by month survey of the war may seem to fall into too familiar and conventional a mould. But *Fight to the Finish* is notable for its clarity, and anyone requiring a digestible narrative summary of the fighting on land and sea would be advised to start here. One thing disfigures the book and that is the author's polemical conclusion, in which he attacks Christopher Clark's *The Sleep-walkers* for having the temerity to argue that no nation, not even Germany, really meant to wage war in 1914. Given the extraordinary weight of scholarship that supports Clark's work, Mallinson's decision to play the old German-blame game — even to the extent of asking, whatever would Lady Thatcher have thought? — comes across as simplistic and banal.

By arrangement with the Spectator

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Politics of Peace Building in Chittagong Hill Tracts

BHUMITRA CHAKMA

BOOK REVIEWS

Life in Peace and Conflict: Indigeneity and State in the Chittagong Hill Tracts edited by Nasir Uddin, *Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2017; pp xix+248, ₹495.*

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region of Bangladesh has a chequered history. During the British colonial rule, it enjoyed significant internal autonomy. The colonial administration undertook several measures to maintain the demographic and environmental balance of the region. This included the enactment of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation, 1900 (in which stringent conditions were imposed on the settlement of outsiders in the district), the declaration of the CHT as a "totally excluded area" in the Government of India Act, 1935, etc (Al Ahsan and Chakma 1989). The CHT was administered directly from Delhi through a representative of the Governor–General, separate from the administration of Bengal and Assam.

A Brief History

At the time of the British withdrawal from India in 1947, the CHT, an area with more than 98% non-Muslim population, was bizarrely included in Pakistan, a country which was created on the basis of religion (Islam) and as a homeland for the subcontinent's Muslims. The Pakistani state surreptitiously took away the safeguards that were put in place for the indigenous people by the regulation of 1900. Most importantly, the administrative and developmental measures undertaken by the then Government of Pakistan initiated a process of marginalisation and "unpeopling" of the CHT's indigenous population.[1] Of these, the most impactful project was the construction of the Kaptai dam (1957–62) on the Karnafuli river which left a devastating impact on the livelihood of the hill people, by inundating an area of about 400 square miles, including 54,000 acres of cultivable land (40% of the district's plough land) and uprooting 10,000 ploughing and 8,000 *jhumiya* (shifting cultivator) families, totalling about 1,00,000 people (27% of the district's total population) (Islam 1978). It would contribute to the rise of ethnic resistance in the CHT in later years.

In 1971, Pakistan was dismembered, resulting in the creation of independent Bangladesh from the former East Pakistan. CHT became part of this new state. However, the process of marginalisation and unpeopling of the hill people intensified after 1971. This happened primarily due to the new state's adoption of a "monocultural" (Bengali only) constitution and an assimilationist policy towards the hill people (Chakma 2010). Such an approach threatened the cultural identity of the hill people which prompted an armed resistance in the CHT in the 1970s.

After more than two decades of violent conflict, the government and the indigenous group—Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) (United People's Party of the Chittagong Hill Tracts)—signed a peace accord on 2 December 1997. Since then, a peace process has been underway. After more than two decades of peace building, a pertinent question concerns whether the process has produced, or is likely to produce, durable peace in the conflict-torn region. In reality, peace still remains elusive in the CHT as key provisions of the peace accord have not been implemented (Tripura 2017).

Bottom-up Peace Building

The issue of peace in the CHT is taken up in the book under review. Consisting of eight chapters, it is a significant effort to understand various dimensions of the peace-building process and the current state of peace in the CHT. It adopts an ethnographic method (barring a couple of chapters) and argues that peace has remained elusive because peace building has been pursued as a "top-down" process. What is needed, the book posits, is a "bottom-up" approach which "pays particular attention to how people interpret the role of the state in their everyday life" (p 3).

In Chapter 1, the editor builds the central argument of the book (as noted above) and illustrates, through an ethnographic approach, the dialectic relationship between indigeneity and the state and how the state figures in the everyday life of the people. Chapter 2 explores the external dimension of the CHT peace accord and assesses it in the context of the India–Myanmar–Bangladesh trilateral relationships. Chapter 3 evaluates the peace accord from a gender perspective and critiques it for neglecting women.

Chapter 4 provides a critical evaluation of several materials on the peace accord concluding that ground realities need to be understood to attain peace in the CHT. Chapter 5 explains the importance of land and forest in indigenous life, livelihood and identity, asserting that the lack of access to these resources impede peace building in the CHT.

The final three chapters explore the developmental dimension of peace building in the CHT. In Chapter 6, the role of development agencies in the CHT post the accord is assessed. It asserts that development initiatives are instrumental in building peace. In a similar vein, the issue of development in the CHT is taken up in Chapter 7, arguing that local, national and global actors generate statist discourses which cannot yield positive outcomes. Finally, Chapter 8 assesses the efficacy of microcredit financing to build peace in the CHT. Nasir Uddin asserts that local power relations determine the outcome of microcredit schemes, implying that the schemes are not necessarily helpful to build peace in the CHT.

The ethnographic method adopted in this book is sound. Its "bottom-up" approach for a durable peace in the CHT is plausible because peace ultimately is meant for the ordinary people who live there. However, a political scientist will view the issue differently. Arguably, peace building in the CHT and elsewhere in post-conflict environments is essentially a political process, where there exists a close connection between the micro-level reality of peace and the macro-level political process of peace building. It can be asserted that the former is primarily shaped by the dynamics of the latter. In other words, the micro-level reality of peace and the macro-level process of peace building are intertwined.

The book rightly points out that after two decades, peace remains elusive in the CHT as it is "found only in paper (and) not in practice" (p 14). Moreover, the conflict has become multidimensional and more complex as the needs of the people at the grass-roots level have been overlooked in policy planning. While one would largely agree with this, I am of the view that to understand the complexities of peace building in the CHT, we need to dig deeper into the dynamics of the politics of peace in the region.

Tactics of the State and Military

This reviewer has argued elsewhere that the 1997 peace accord was made to fail (Chakma 2012) due to a variety of reasons. First, the Bangladesh government signed the peace accord knowing that it would not fully implement its provisions and promises (Mohsin 2003). The intrinsic objective in concluding the accord was disarming the insurgent Shanti Bahini (the armed wing of the PCJSS), albeit giving some concessions in several areas. However, as I illustrate below, a different strategy pursued by the Bangladesh military was at work here. It should be noted that the civilian Government of Bangladesh under Sheikh Hasina, and the military, were and still are two distinct stakeholders in the CHT affairs. The latter has had the upper hand in the affairs of the CHT since the late 1970s.[2]

Although the Bangladesh government massively militarised the CHT once the insurgency surfaced,[3] the core counter-insurgency strategy was to change the demography of the region, also known as "demographic invasion." For this, a programme of transmigration of Bengalis was undertaken in the late 1970s (Anti-Slavery Society 1984: 71–73). Four lakh Bengalis were settled in the CHT between 1978 and 1985 (CHT Commission 1994: 26); consequently, the Bengali population in the CHT increased sharply from 9% in 1951 to about 50% in 1991 (Adnan 2004: 15). In the 2001 and 2011 national censuses, the Bangladesh government did not show separate figures for the indigenous and non-indigenous people in the CHT.

Three specific objectives underpinned the transmigration programme: (i) outnumbering the local indigenous Chakma population and "Bengalise" the CHT; (ii) enabling the Bangladesh military to counter the Shanti Bahini members by

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building "strategic hamlets" similar to those of the ill-fated American strategy in Vietnam;[4] (iii) pursuing a policy of what came to be known as "we want the land and not the people,"[5] which aimed at driving the indigenous people away and grabbing their lands.

The issue of Bengali settlement was discussed during negotiations for the accord, but it was not mentioned in the final document. The PCJSS leaders claim that there was an unwritten understanding about the Bengali settlers in which the Bangladesh government representatives promised that the transmigrated Bengalis would be resettled elsewhere following the signing of the accord.[6] The European Union offered financial assistance to resettle the Bengalis (Roy 2003), but the Bangladesh government (read the military) did not accept the offer. Later, the Bangladesh government claimed that there was no such unwritten understanding (Chakma 2016).

Arguably, the military would not have agreed to the accord if their "demographic change" strategy were nullified by the accord. The idea being that if the demography could be changed, the accord itself would become redundant in the course of time. This calculation has been at the core of why the "temporary" military camps so far have not been withdrawn. The key purpose of the military after the accord was to provide security to the transmigrated Bengalis and maintain the demographic change strategy.

On Sexual Violence

Finally, one specific issue noted in Chapter 4 warrants brief comments. It is asserted in the chapter that the Shanti Bahini used rape as an instrument against both Pahari and Bengali women (p 94). I have not come across any credible research that makes or establishes such a claim. On the contrary, a substantive body of research work does exist on how the Bangladesh military and the Bengali settlers have used rape as an instrument to realise their objectives. For example, a Chittagong University ethnographer has noted: "... many helpless indigenous women and girls have been raped or sexually assaulted by Bengali settlers and the security forces" (Uddin 2016: 331). Indeed, violence against indigenous women appear systematic. Adnan and Dastidar (2011: 97) have pointed out that rape and other forms of sexual violence were perpetrated as mechanisms of pressurising indigenous families and communities to leave a particular locality, enabling settlers to grab their lands. Many more studies can be cited on the military's and the settlers' use of sexual violence as a political instrument. Issues such as these needed greater editorial scrutiny.

Notwithstanding its shortcomings, this is an excellent endeavour in the quest for understanding the 20-year-old experience of peace building in the CHT. It highlights some of the key failures of the peace process which may contribute to the policymaking of Bangladesh for building durable peace in the region.

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NOTES

1 The term is borrowed from Abul Barkat (2016). Initially, George Orwell used the term "unperson" which was modified by Noam Chomsky as a phenomenon of "unpeopling" to illustrate the "vanishing" of a group of people by various means.

2 Once I asked a former Bangladesh foreign minister about the issue, who said that decisions regarding the CHT were the prerogatives of the military.

3 A total of 1,15,000 military personnel was deployed in the CHT, that is, one soldier for five to six hill persons (Levene 1999: 354).

4 A former Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong district, Ziauddin Choudhury, has provided an inside account of the Bengali settlement programme. He opposed the programme because he thought that it would have a disastrous impact on the indigenous communities (Choudhury 2010).

5 The statement was made by the general officer commanding of the Chittagong Division of Bangladesh armed forces, Major–General Abul Manzur, on 26 March 1977 at a public meeting (quoted in Mohsin 1999: 111). This policy can be traced back to the initial years of independent Bangladesh. In 1972, Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman threatened a delegation from the CHT that if they did not abandon the demand of regional autonomy, the government would eliminate them by settling thousands of Bengalis in the CHT (van Schendel 1992: footnote 80: 117).

6 It is very likely that there was an unwritten agreement on the issue of resettlement of the government-sponsored settler Bengalis from the CHT, because the PCJSS leaders would otherwise not have possibly signed the 1997 accord. According to Peace Campaign Group, the PCJSS leaders agreed to keep it unwritten because Government of Bangladesh representatives explained to them that the "domestic constituency does not allow the simple majority Awami League Government to openly address the issue in the agreement ... once the issue is addressed in the agreement, the opposition parties, particularly the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, will come out in the streets with mass agitation that can even raise the question of survival of the government in power" (quoted in Roy 2003: footnote 23: 30).

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British Journal of Special Education, Vol. 45, No. 3, Sept. 2018

Book Review

These reviews are written by two practitioners in the field, one of whom is a principal psychologist and the other is a senior lecturer on special educational needs and inclusion. By publishing two reviews of the same book, we aim to encourage the readership of *BJSE* to reflect upon differing points of view.

Tomlinson, S. (2017) *A Sociology of Special and Inclusive Education. Exploring the manufacture of inability.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Natalie Bianchi Muir

Never has a book provoked a more conflicted reaction from me than this one. On the one hand, it has challenged and encouraged me to scrutinise the practices and behaviour of both myself and my peers, through a repeated idea that we are all at risk of 'manufacturing inability'. On the other, it is an uncomfortable, unforgiving and at times seemingly contradictory read that seems to present a one-sided argument on the failures of inclusive education over the centuries. However, the book does what it sets out to do: to present perspectives on how mass education systems have emerged and expanded.

The primary message throughout the book dominates; the labels we give and the language we use to describe people with additional needs are never fresh. Ideas are simply rehashed by new administrations, all with varying degrees of segregation. At times the point is over-pressed and can make for a protracted read.

Criticism of the attempts made at inclusion is often 'over-egged', perhaps even leading the reader to wonder whether the achievement of inclusion is viewed as a desirable goal at all. While I think it is healthy that attempts at inclusion are subjected to critical scrutiny, it would have been useful to detail what has gone well, so we can take inspiration and move forward with passion rather than trepidation.

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Sometimes the book denies there are differences between people's abilities and belittles the value in some interventions that have been attempted over the centuries. At one point it scrutinises the viability of professionals and their expertise, inferring that the design of professional roles has been carried out to oppress, and explicitly stating that teachers, teaching assistants, SENCos and psychiatrists are all playing their part in maintaining levels of inability. This is a hard-hitting message and will probably chip away at the confidence of readers in these roles. Consequently, the book contains a set of hindsight opinions on legislation and practice, which at times ironically feels oppressive.

A lot of the arguments offered are political rather than scientific. Drawing together equivocal links to emphasize strong opinions can present a misleading argument. Sometimes the literary choices made come across as conspiratorial – for example, words we need to doubt are put into quotation marks, such as 'intelligence' and 'professionals'. Is the book's issue simply a case of semantics?

If we were to change some of the vocabulary choices, would the historical quotations presented seem more inclusive? For example, 'No degenerates or feeble minded stock can ever be converted into healthy and sound stock, by the accumulated efforts of education, general law or sanitation' (Pearson, quoted in Tomlinson, p. 67) – would changing this to 'Education, social care systems and legislation will not change the fact that somebody has a learning need' be more acceptable? Because what Pearson said holds some truth, it is possible that the political response to this truth is at fault. Perhaps it would be a useful activity to analyse the semantics in the context of the social situation at the time. Out of context, the data presented are shocking. As we evolve, so does our language, and I very much doubt that the speakers of these provocative words were intending to offend, but rather to use labels to understand the diversity within our communities. Would we be where we are today if they had not done that?

If I were to summarise the arguments presented in the book, I would probably say, 'Tests are bad because they were divisive; special schools are bad because they were used for oppression; vocational courses are bad because they were used for subjugation. All of our strategies have been a way to manufacture inability'. Ideas about how to treat people who have diverse needs will always be controversial (perhaps using the phrase 'diverse needs' will be seen in the future as oppressive?). The book lays it all out in a raw

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and challenging read. It is very interesting as a tool to get one fired up and a very useful amalgamation of relevant legislation and literature; perhaps, however, it leaves one wanting some suggestions about moving forward.

The book affords an excellent chronology of influential events that have shaped inclusive education and makes links in a sophisticated and fast-paced manner. It discusses a wide range of pertinent topics, such as poverty, race, IQ testing, and parental influence. One of the most useful structural features is the list of references concluding each chapter. This allows for focused research into pertinent theories and associated contrasting ideas.

The concluding message is stimulating, and finishes by asking 'what will happen to the young people when they have experienced what education has to offer?' This is something which I feel every person working in the education sector has asked themselves as the GCSE results flood in. But it has left me with the murky questions: am I preventing real inclusion just by targeting support at students who need it? Am I the cause of segregation? Is my role as a professional really valuable?

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How We Got Here

Bilateral relations between India and the US under two leaders with very different styles of operation

P NAYAR

BEGIN with a confession. As the 2016 American presidential election campaign entered its final lap, I was convinced that Hillary Clinton would win easily. There was no other way, I told myself, reassured by the confidence of having reported from Washington as a foreign correspondent for the previous 15 years. My son, a keen observer of the political scene in the United States, had been telling me all through the presidential primaries that eventually Donald Trump, not the Clintons, would move into the White House. But my stories from the campaign trail reflected my faith in the well-oiled election machine of the Clintons.

Hardeep Singh Puri, now a minister in the Narendra Modi government, was then living in New York. He read my election despatches and cautioned that they were way off the mark. "Trump is going to be elected on November 8, you watch," he told me. I managed to speak some Americans whose inside campaign knowledge had convinced Puri. These men subsequently became powerful influencers in President Trump's administration.

I wrote two stories in the final days of the campaign taking a positive view of Trump's chances to balance my four previous pieces suggesting a Clinton victory. On the morning of November 9, I woke up to emails and text messages congratulating me for having sensed a Trump win. Later that day, when I went to the Foreign Press Center in New York, I was effusively praised for my perspicacity.

Varghese K George begins his open embrace of India-US ties in the age of Modi and Trump with a compelling account of how the author and Lalit K Jha, the indefatigable chief America correspondent of the Press Trust of India, decided on election night — by the flip of a coin, as it were — that victory would be Trump's. They stood at a crossroad in Manhattan unsure whether to cover the results from Hillary's victory party at the Jacob Javits Convention Center or from the Hilton Midtown on 53rd Street at 6th Avenue.

The author's description of a forlorn Trump election night headquarters at the mid-size hotel when he and Jha arrived there brings back memories of how horribly the American media got it wrong about Trump. Indeed about American voters' considerations when they chose to hand over the most powerful nation on earth and the world's biggest economy to an untested and unpredictable businessman. That election night was lucky for some, like the author, Jha and me, but it represented the biggest credibility crisis for the free media ever.

America is yet to recover from that night — and how we all got there — which the author dwells on in great detail. The White House has just revoked CNN reporter Jim Acosta's media credentials following an argument with the President after mid-term polls ended Trump's monopoly on power. It is the same Acosta, who is quoted by George in a detailed chapter on "America First," Trump's 2016 clarion call.



OPEN EMBRACE: INDIA-US TIES IN THE AGE OF MODI AND TRUMP
VARGHESE K GEORGE
Penguin Viking
320 pages; ₹599

The author reported on Modi's landmark 2014 election campaign. It has left an indelible impression on George, which he carries into this book. Both Modi and Trump are strong personalities. It is inevitable that while chronicling the fallout of two landmark elections — in India and in America — this book should reflect on those events. But the author is a victim of the journalistic version of "localitis," an affliction that often clouds the judgement of diplomats. Localitis is a tendency to draw conclusions based on one's deep involvement in local situations as if they are more relevant than would objectively appear.

Modi and Trump are not similar leaders, as the author argues, despite superficial similarities in ideology and policies. Consistency has never been Trump's virtue. His positions on issues have shifted depending on what suits him best: abortion is a case in point. Modi has been unequivocally consistent from his late teens through his entire public life. Actually, Modi has a lot more in common with Barack Obama than with Trump in their respective political experiences.

George arrived in the US as *The Hindu* newspaper's correspondent only towards the end of 2015. So he may be excused for not knowing intimate details of the first Modi-Obama meeting in September 2014. Both the American side and the Indians separately shared these details with Indian correspondents in Washington at that time. The political lives of Modi and Obama ran on parallel lines, as the two discovered at a private dinner at the White House residence..

That is why the two men got along so well early on, which produced results that went well beyond India-US relations. Trump has no empathy for Modi. From what I have observed in the White House Rose Garden and in the Oval Office, Trump is bored when he meets Modi. With the opportunities that are available to a foreign correspondent in Washington, the author could have offered more insights into the personal chemistry — or lack thereof — between them. This may be why Trump turned down India's invitation to be chief guest on January 26, 2019.

The book is also well researched in other aspects and offers a wealth of material on India-US relations in the last two years. Few books have come out on this important bilateral relationship in the times of Modi and Trump. George has contributed a welcome addition to how history will judge these times.

The writer is a former Washington correspondent for an Indian newspaper

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पत्रिका

सिने पोस्टरों का सफर



पुस्तकः **पोस्टर बोलते हैं**
लेखकः **इकबाल रिज़वी**
प्रकाशकः **इंदिरा गांधी राष्ट्रीय कला केंद्र 11, मान सिंह रोड, नई दिल्ली-110001**
कीमतः **375 रु.**

ओम नारायण

उन्नीसवीं सदी के मध्य में विचारों को अधिकाधिक लोगों तक पहुंचाने की जरूरत के मद्देनजर एक नायाब तरीके का ईजाद हुआ था–जिसे पोस्टर नाम दिया गया है. यह विधा 1850 में यूरोप में जन्मी. ज्यूलियस चेरेट को पोस्टर का जनक माना जाता है.

दरअसल, फिल्मों की शुरुआत के साथ उन्हें जनता में लोकप्रिय बनाने के उद्देश्य के तहत पोस्टरों का सहारा लिया गया. हालांकि पहले पहल फिल्मों के विज्ञापन की शुरुआत समाचार पत्रों से हुई. पोस्टर विधा इसके बाद सामने आई.

विवेचित पुस्तिका हिंदी फिल्मों की शुरुआत और उनकी जानकारी आम लोगों तक पहुंचाने में पोस्टरों की महत्ता और उपयोगिता को अत्यंत सहज शैली में सामने रखती है. इकबाल रिज़वी ने गहरे उतरकर बाबूराव पेंटर से शुरू हुई इस विधा के सफर को बहुत ही सजीव रूप से उकेरा है. हालांकि हाथ से डिजाइन किए पोस्टर अब इतिहास की वस्तु हैं. आज से 70 या 90 वर्ष पूर्व वर्तमान जैसे प्रचार के साधन नहीं थे. सो फिल्मी दुनिया वालों ने लोगों तक नई से नई फिल्मों की रिलीज के बारे में जानकारी देने के लिए पोस्टरों को माध्यम चुना. जितनी बड़ी फिल्म या उसके कलाकार–उतने ही बड़े उसके पोस्टर, बैनर या कटआउट जो भारत के हर छोटे-बड़े शहर में चौराहों, रेलवे स्टेशनों और बस अड्डों पर लगाए जाते थे. 30-40 फुट ऊंचे बैनरों को पेंट करना आसान काम नहीं था. मकबूल फिदा हुसैन ने पोस्टर बनाने से ही अपनी यात्रा शुरू की थी.

> निर्माता-निर्देशकों ने आज से 70-80 वर्ष पहले फिल्मों के प्रचार के लिए पोस्टरों का उपयोग किया.

इकबाल रिज़वी ने फिल्मों पोस्टरों के जन्म, उनके क्रमिक विकास, सफर, उत्कर्ष, फिल्म निर्माताओं में मची होड़, पोस्टरों को लेकर उनकी कल्पनाशीलता, पोस्टरों में समय-समय पर आए बदलाव, पोस्टरों में आठवें-नौवें दशक में आई अश्लीलता, सेंसर के दृष्टिकोण, पोस्टर बनाने वाले कुछ कलाकार, प्रचार और विज्ञापन की बदलती तकनीक, इनसे जुड़े कुछ किस्सों एवं बातों को बहुत ही दिलचस्प और सहज भाषा में पेश किया है जिसे पढ़ते ही बनता है. इसके अलावा पिछली एक सदी के सफर को दर्शाते हुए जो पोस्टर दिए गए हैं, उनसे बहुत ही रोचक एवं सिनेजगत की अंदरुनी दुनिया का पता चलता है. इस पुस्तक से गुजरते हुए मुझे बचपन के दिनों और फिल्मों को लेकर अपनी दीवानगी की याद आ गई. पठनीय सामग्री जो अधूरी है. यह विषय एक बड़ी पुस्तक की मांग करता है.

बच्चों का संसार



पत्रिकाः ***साइकिल***
संपादकः **शशि सबलोक** और **सुशील शुक्ल**
अंकः **अगस्त-सितंबर 2018 (प्रथमांक)**
कीमत 100 रु.
प्रकाशकः ***इकतारा–तक्षशिला का बाल साहित्य एवं कला केंद्र, भोपाल-462016***

बदलते सामाजिक परिवेश में बच्चों को पढ़ने के लिए हिंदी में पत्रिकाएं नहीं मिलती हैं. इस कमी को दूर करने की कोशिश इकतारा संस्था करती रही है. सुशील शुक्ल इकतारा के निदेशक हैं और *साइकिल* पत्रिका उन्हीं की कोशिशों का नतीजा है. बच्चों की इस द्विमासिक पत्रिका का संपादन का भार भी उन्होंने शशि सबलोक के साथ संभाला. अगस्त-सितंबर 2018 का अंक इसका पहला अंक है. बच्चों के मन की सैर के लिए *साइकिल* नाम बेहद प्रतीकात्मक है. यह पत्रिका उस दुनिया की पड़ताल करती है जो सिक्के से आगे की कहानी कहने का प्रयास करती है, जिसमें आनंद हो और कल्पनाओं के पर लगें. और इसके लिए मंगलेश डबराल, नागार्जुन और अज्ञेय की ऐसी कविताएं चुनी गई हैं जो बच्चों को सहज बोधगम्य हैं. उसी तरह विनोद कुमार शुक्ल, विष्णु नागर, राजेश जोशी, कृष्ण बलदेव वैद, प्रभात, अमर फारुकी ने बच्चों के लिए लिखा है. इन लेखकों का प्रयास है कि बच्चों के मन में सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक परिवेश के प्रति रुचियां जागृत हों और वे बेहतर मनुष्य बनें. कृष्ण कुमार ने बच्चों के लिए फिल्म समीक्षा लिखी है. ग़ालिब के परिचयात्मक लेख में यह सूचना कि गालिब के इंतकाल के वर्ष ही महात्मा गांधी का जन्म हुआ था. अतनु राय, प्रोइती राय, तापोषी घोषाल और नबरीना सिंह ने अंक के लिए चित्र बनाए हैं. सुंदर पत्रिका के संयोजन के लिए इकतारा टीम वाकई तारीफ के काबिल है.

–मनोज मोहन

Teaching of languages

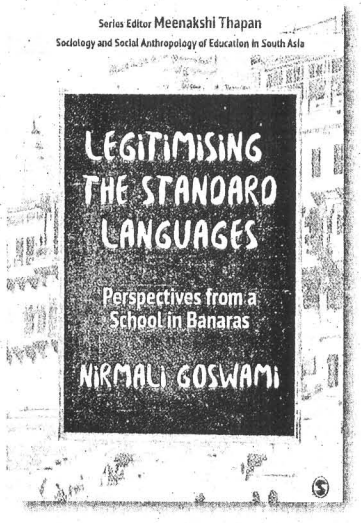
A look at the state of education in Banaras and the way school education standardises languages and valorises one language over another.

BY **MOHAMMAD SAJJAD**

EDUCATION and its sociology is a relatively under-explored theme in the Indian subcontinent. In fact, there is a considerable deficit of studies on histories of educational institutions also.

This book is an attempt at filling up some of these gaps "in order to provide an understanding of how education and society connect in diverse ways". The author, Nirmali Goswami, makes her objectives clear at the outset, by explaining that this is "a study of the practice and social consequences of standard language-learning" to unravel the axes of language and power-relations. This is her doctoral study, which seems to have been revised very well before being published. Her literature review is brilliant, crisp and concise.

Methodologically this work is very sound; the author's hard work, tenacity, analytical abilities, deep insights and sharp observations are well testified in this work. Clarity of purpose is articulated not only about the theme but also about the choice of the city of Banaras.



Legitimising Standard Languages

Perspectives from a School in Banaras

By Nirmali Goswami

Sage Series: Sociology and Social Anthropology of Education in South Asia; Series Editor: Meenakshi Thapan New Delhi, 2017

Pages xviii+225

Price: Rs.895

"The city of Banaras is selected for fieldwork because of its historic association with the Hindi Nationalist Movement which was instrumental in defining the standard form of Hindi. The field material is drawn primarily from a private school and its community located in Banaras, [where]... English and standard Hindi are used by high status groups cutting across class, community and ethnicity backgrounds... [besides] Sanskrit, Bengali and Urdu."

In Banaras, Hindi is the dominant language in terms of its numeric strength in Census results, as well as in its political recognition. Besides the standard languages of English, Urdu and Sanskrit, there are popular languages like Bhojpuri and Banarsi. Nirmali Goswami's attempt is to show "how people construct their and others' identities *vis a vis* the popular languages (or dialects) practised commonly on everyday basis but not recognised at official level".

She unravels for us "the world of vernacular medium education", making us comprehend the "power dynamics which operate at local level and how they connect with national discourses of modernity and progress through education". The book shows how the dialects spoken at home present a challenge in school where pupils encounter standardised Hindi. This homogenising project of the nation state has its own repercussions. The author finds that "Hindi in spite of gaining the official status has not been particularly successful in establishing its claims at national level, and to project itself as a vehicle of social mobility and one that belongs to everyone". The book also examines how the norm of standardised Hindi is constructed and legitimised against the local influences of Banarsi/Bhojpuri. It also examines how "Urdu has a special significance for the school population and yet occupies a marginal space in discourse of the modern school, whereas English is widely perceived to be a language of progress and modernity".

The historical context of the evolution of the schooling system in Banaras and the conflict between colonial and indigenous forms of knowledge and education have been discussed quite comprehensively. The discussion also touches on the demographic details of the city and its relations with

the state. Interesting micro details of a particular school, the class- and identity-based clientele, its enrolment, teachers and management personnel—everything has been probed deeply.

The writer finds that while the upper-middle-class families maintain their class position through school choice, the lower middle classes make their school choice for upward socio-economic mobility.

Out of the urban space, another significant study around this broader theme, but substantially different in specificities, is by Md. Sanjeer Alam, *Religion, Community and Education: The Case of Rural Bihar* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi). It studies the educational disparity between Hindus and Muslims of Patna and Purnea districts. While Nirmali Goswami takes the linguistic diversities of Banaras into account, Alam focusses on the two major religious communities.

Nirmali Goswami's field trips to diverse schools in Banaras bring out the sad state of affairs in school education. Government schools are shown up as "dying institutions" running with grossly underpaid Shiksha Mitras (contractual teachers) in the absence of recruitments over long periods. The underprivileged children catered to by these schools mostly end up dropping out after standard VIII. The practice of engaging teachers in all kinds of government work such as election duties, the Census exercise and polio vaccination drives inflicts a further blow to the overall work culture and results in low esteem, disappointment and despair (pages 64-65). This should sound a note of caution for the state and society.

However, though Nirmali Goswami has also looked into a Shishu Mandir chain of schools and its insistence on Hindi and Hindu culture, she has not been frank enough to describe them as spreading and inculcating the exclusionary cultural notions envisioned by the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS).

Tanika Sarkar ("Educating the Children of the Hindu Rashtra: Notes on RSS Schools", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Volume 14, No.2, August 1994, pages 10-15) and Nandini Sundar ("Teaching to Hate: RSS Pedagogical Programme", *Economic & Political Weekly*, Volume 39, No. 16, January 2004, pages 1605-1612) and a few other scholars have worked on some of these themes.

Nirmali Goswami's study does not examine the growth and expansion of these schools, which is also partly a result of decaying and "dying" government schools. In fact, such an exploration would possibly reveal how majoritarian communalisation has been growing since the 1990s across rural and urban Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and the rest of the Hindi belt.

Such a probing would also throw light on how sociopolitical spaces were getting communalised during the regimes of social justice that claimed to be committed to secularism. This is a significant aspect missed by both Nirmali Goswami and Alam.

Another limitation of this otherwise extremely useful study is that it does not look into the communities speaking south Indian languages in Banaras.

LANGUAGE AND RESPECTABILITY

Its overall conclusion that schools are the major sites of learning about cultural resources can hardly be contradicted. However, the higher social prestige associated with the standardised language also "conceals the violence implicit in the process where only certain forms of identities are legitimised at the expense of others". Denial, shame and inferiorisation are therefore attached with the dialects (such as Banarsi-Bhojpuri) spoken at home/mohalla as against the respectability that is attached to Hindi, English and Urdu standardised by the schools.

This work has taken note of the status of Urdu in the city: "The learning of Urdu in the school continues only in a token form by continuing to enrol students from a particular community while failing to provide the adequate support-base for learning it" (page 185). It has also looked into some of the "Muslim"-managed schools and a madrasa called Dar-ul-Ulum (pages 72-75). This madrasa, Nirmali Goswami tells us, can be compared with any other school in Banaras as it teaches all subjects. The only difference is it trains students in *diniyat* (religiosity; a more correct translation would however be theology) and the medium of education is Urdu. It is surprising that Nirmali Goswami's attention was not drawn to a much better known madrasa of Banaras, Jamia Salafia, founded in 1963, a premier madrasa of the Ahl-e-Hadis sub-sect of Sunni Muslims.

The fact that Urdu newspaper reading is increasingly getting confined to madrasa-educated communities is something Nirmali Goswami has missed. She also misses the point that newspapers help in propagating and perpetuating standardised forms of languages against the "informal languages" or dialects spoken in families and mohallas.

Notwithstanding such minor limitations, Nirmali Goswami has been successful in exploring a challenging subject and she has been helped by certain advantages. An Assamese, she did her schooling from a Hindi-medium school in Banaras.

The book is useful for policymakers, besides academics concerned with the subject. The chapters are organised with a logical interconnectedness with many subheadings, which makes the book reader-friendly. Along with the author, the Sage Series Editor should also be appreciated for making this book (on a relatively difficult theme) a lucid read. One eagerly waits for other volumes in the series, which will hopefully be quite interesting and stimulating. □

Mohammad Sajjad is Professor, Centre of Advanced Study in History, Aligarh Muslim University.

A struggle for peace

Hindu 25/11/18

How Nadia Murad carries on the fight for her people

RADHIKA SANTHANAM

It is not often that I am equally eager and reluctant to turn the pages of a book. *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity and My Fight Against the Islamic State* details the working of the hermit kingdom of the Islamic State, but through the story of a young girl who has endured unspeakable brutality at the hands of monster men. It is not only Nadia Murad's tale, it is also a primer on Yazidis. It is a disquieting peek into a world of extreme depravity, a test of resilience in the face of the worst adversities, and a call for peace.

Nadia lives in a large family of Yazidis in Kocho village, Sinjar, Iraq. Her community has been persecuted for centuries, but it is faith that keeps her strong throughout her ordeal. For as long as Nadia can remember, Iraq has always been in a state of war: with the Americans in 2003, with itself, and then with the Islamic State.

Through these conflicts, "old prejudices harden easily into hatred".



The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State
Nadia Murad
Hachette India
₹499

The year is 2014. Extremists who denounce non-Sunni Muslims, Christians and Yazidis are provided shelter in parts of Iraq. The military forces, or peshmerga, abandon the Yazidis after promising to protect them, and Kocho falls into the hands of the militants. The jihadists slaughter men and older women and sell young women as sex slaves.

Nadia is sold in Mosul to a skinny judge. She is converted to Islam, repeatedly raped, beaten, humiliated, tortured, and passed on from one militant to another. After weeks of suffering, she manages to flee into Kurdistan posing as the wife of a Sunni man, Naseer, an embodiment of all good things in the world. The two of them embark on a heart-stopping journey filled with the prospect of death, but finally enter into safe territory.

Yet Nadia's test is far from over: her personal story becomes a tool for politics. Naseer and Nadia are detained by Kurdish officials, their stories are recorded on camera on the promise of confidentiality, but leaked almost immediately to the press.

These are officials who are eager to take down their rivals who had failed to protect the Yazidis before the siege of Kocho.

The Last Girl is a book of staccato and plain writing, but it is an important and devastating read. Nadia, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2018, says, "I want to be the last girl in the world with a story like mine." The burden falls on us to ensure that the evil that men do does not live after them.

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IN SHORT

Hindu ; 25/11/18

Dreams and the city

An authentic portrait of Patna despite some Bollywood touches

BY MIHIR VATSA



Patna Blues
Abdullah Khan
Juggernaut
₹499

Two story arcs overlap in this slim and engaging novel. The first is the story of Arif Khan, a young IAS aspirant conflicted by his infatuation for a married Hindu woman. The second is the story of his family's transition through time. The novel is a winding tale of perseverance, failure and hope, with a bit of uncertainty. Through Arif and his family, Khan attempts also to create a larger narrative about Bihar, Muslim identity, and dreams that can prove fatal. He passes, although not with distinction.

Arif is the son of a respectable sub-inspector who is an idealist in the wrong State. His younger brother Zakir is an actor struggling for his big break. The women in the family are not voiceless but have little agency to accomplish anything concrete for themselves. Gender roles within the family, though occasionally questioned, are seldom flouted. Hollow cultural codes are examined not with noise but with a subtle tenderness which is perhaps truer to reality.

The story begins steadily but soon grows convoluted. Certain passages feel excessively dramatic, tailor-made for Bollywood. Khan seems to be trying to pack the universe into just 291 pages. His decision to link chapters to specific emotions results in sections in which particular sequences of events generate only particular, foretold effects. For example, in the second last chapter, 'Grief', the family is put through a chain of incredulous trials that end repeatedly in, well, grief. By the time the chapter ends, one is close to despair.

Khan's success lies in the portrait he presents of a shifting Patna. It may not be detailed, but it is true to life. Stereotypes have little space here: though an aspiring IAS may be deemed a stock character for the city, Khan is careful to develop Arif into a human being. There are flaws in the book, but they do not stop the book from being enjoyable.

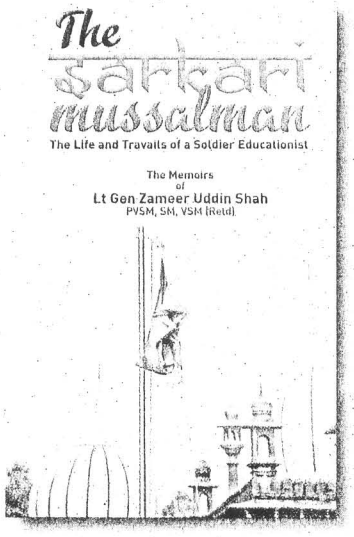
The writer is the author of *Painting That Red Circle White*, a poetry collection.

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A Muslim soldier

The test of a Sarkari Mussalman is the selling of the soul. The author is not a Sarkari Mussalman, but ambition drives him to hover precariously on the periphery of being one. BY **A.G. NOORANI**

THE author's broad shoulders suffer under the weight of two unwelcome visitors that rest on each of them. He does nothing to banish them. He nurses them. One is a strange obsession about being a Muslim. The other is a massive ego of ridiculous proportions. This is a pity because he deserves respect for his accomplishments and abilities despite pronounced failings.



The Sarkari Mussalman

The Life and Travails of a Soldier Educationist

Lt Gen Zameer Uddin Shah (Retd)

Konark Publishers

Pages: 202

Price: Rs.600

Who is a Sarkari Muslim, pray? Chandra Shekhar once said: "The tendency in this country seems to be that if any member of the minority community pleads for his own religion he is taken for a communalist but if that is done by any person belonging to the majority community, it is assumed to be the thing to do" (*The Telegraph*, November 10, 1989).

The Sarkari Muslim seeks cover by lauding the government's policies, abusing Muslims and attacking Pakistan. Kashmir was made a touchstone of Muslims' loyalty. In the 1960s, the Muslims of riot-torn Sambalpur held a meeting—not to ask for police protection but to send a resolution to the United Nations Security Council in support of India's claims on Kashmir.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) brought out more than one brochure on "Muslim Voices" on Kashmir. A notorious Muslim contemporary of the author revels in this. The writer avers: "Readers would certainly be intrigued by the title of *The Sarkari Mussalman*. The term defines a Muslim who is pro-establishment supporting the government of the day and the environment. For him, the bitter truth is secondary over discretion to the point of sycophancy. Instead of challenging the stereotypes about his community, this 'courtier' positions himself as the voice of reason among the majority elite. He defines his religion in a way that is acceptable to the establishment and projects himself as a modern nationalist by being submissive, or worse, by actively pandering to bigotry against his co-religionists. The media uses him to reinforce ridiculous stereotypes about Muslims and, in return, he earns brownie points, and sometimes lucre, on the lecture circuit and publishing contracts." Part of this definition applies to our author himself. He is eager to please the establishment.

"On the other side of the spectrum, the 'Sarkari Mussalman' is also a derogatory sobriquet/title given by the Muslim community to denigrate their better-placed co-religionists, usually in government service, when the latter do not pander to their demands, which are sometimes unfair and unjustified. The term implies that the 'Sarkari Mussalman' has sold his soul to the government for '40 pieces of silver' and cannot, in any way, be relied upon by his community (usually to shower unwarranted favours)." This is nonsense. The community, though downtrodden, has no such opinion of its Shahs.

He adds: "I have, unfortunately, come across some Muslims who shun others of their religion in order to be considered 'secular'. A Muslim government servant has to walk a tight rope between loyalty to his job and expectations of his community. Many swing to the opposite extreme and practise discrimination against their co-religionists to prove their secular credentials. ...

"I always felt that Muslims in India needed opportunities for education like the one I had received. I never had to prove my loyalty or secular credentials by being 'holier than the Pope'. I was fortunate never to have experienced any anti-Muslim bias in the Army; in fact I always experienced affirmative action. Post-retirement, however, I found the social media awash with articles with venomous, communal undertones. What surprised me most were social media posts by some retired colleagues

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from the Armed Forces joining the bandwagon of divisiveness. Had they been closet Muslim-haters all along?" He ought to have sensed that, surely.

"The Hindi cinema has taken the cue and started depicting all terrorists, gangsters, smugglers and wife-beaters with beards and bearing names like 'Abdul' or 'Karim'. I define a terrorist as one who terrorises other members of the community. I have battled terrorists and rogues of all religions and communities in North East India, Punjab and Gujarat. Anyway, the negative depiction of only one community has dangerous ramifications since Hindi cinema is a profound opinion builder and conditioner of human minds. In the early 1950s, the Hindi cinema vamps were always 'Mary' or 'Lucy' and bootleggers and smugglers were always 'John' or 'David'."

ON ROLE AS AMU VC

Now come to the core of his essay on this: "When I resigned from the Armed Forces Tribunal to join Aligarh Muslim University as Vice Chancellor, my well-wishers were astounded and inquired why I was creating trouble for myself. I have always felt it was a 'calling' and my decision was justified. Someone had to take the bull by the horns and restore the University to its former glory. As its Vice Chancellor, I had to deal with some entrenched alumni 'parasites', politicians of various hues and the hostile media 'defending' the reputation and interests of the institution of which I had been appointed guardian. "In May 2014, before the general elections, mediapersons asked me if I was apprehensive about Shri Narendra Modi becoming Prime Minister. I replied 'Why should I be worried? Do you know the history of Thomas Becket?"

Much in the first paragraph applies to Shah himself. His desire to ingratiate himself is reflected in the puerile reference to Becket and so does his "Open Letter" to Modi. This from a man who served in Gujarat during the pogrom. The gasbag is very Sarkari. The test of a Sarkari Mussalman is the selling of the soul. Judged by this test, the author is certainly not a Sarkari Mussalman. He is honest. But ambition drives him precariously to hover on its periphery. Who was behind the Gujarat pogrom? It was a Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and Bajrang Dal operation concluded under Chief Minister Narendra Modi's nose. But to our author it was a "right-wing political organisation", as if it was an ideological war between the Right and the Left in all the massive literature. None, but none, has ever used this expression. The author is not so innocent as not to know the difference. The expression is used repeatedly and deliberately, in pages 115 and 123. He is afraid to speak of Hindus and Muslims and uses the lingo of certain sections of the media. Why? You can guess. Women in older times never mentioned their husbands' names.

"The partisan attitude of the police lay exposed when I observed that when minority-populated localities were surrounded by mobs, the police did not fire at the rioters laying siege, but into windows of surrounded homes of minorities, instead, ostensibly to 'keep the two rioting communities apart', as sheepishly explained to me. I did not hesitate to show disapproval at this contemptible and partisan attitude....

"Property of the minority community and individuals were being systematically targeted and large-scale migration was taking place. The major trouble spots were minority ghettos. Successive communal riots had forced the minority community [into] walled communes. The mixed localities had progressively shrunk, and exclusive ethnic ghettos, with a 'siege' mentality, had sprouted. ... Those who had lost everything were 'ripe for plucking' by anti-national elements. An unbridgeable communal divide had been created."

Who fomented this divide but Narendra Modi, whom the author never criticises?

K.P.S. Gill is attacked twice in language which reflects the author's clear animus against him.

Read this: "The police, as has always happened in communal riots all over the country, was blatantly partisan and abdicated its responsibility of dealing with majority community mobs to the Army. It was observed that, on several occasions, the police melted away when faced with majority community rioters, ostensibly on the excuse that they were called away to deal with another situation elsewhere.

"The higher police hierarchy was totally politicised and virtually divided along *political* lines. A large number of assertive officers were occupying non-consequential appointments. A further blow to police morale was inflicted by the reported reshuffle and large-scale transfers of police officers who had dealt firmly with rioters. There had been an erosion of authority of senior officers with undue importance being given to Station House Officers (Junior Commissioned Officer equivalent). These junior police officers had become a law unto themselves taking directions from 'up' instead of their chain of command." Note, "political lines", not communal lines. Is this honest? To which political parties did they belong? The AIADMK or the Forward Bloc? Of course he knows which—but is too Sarkari to name them.

The author notes an aspect which few care to note. "The Gujarat riots of 2002 were different from earlier riots. There were some striking dissimilarities: There were no attempts to convene peace committees. The inter-community chasm had become far too wide to allow this to happen. Earlier, riots were the handiwork of a handful of trouble-makers. This time rioting assumed the dimension of a mass activity, involving the middle-class citizens too. The self-deluding belief that riots were the handiwork of the lumpen elements and outsiders no longer rang true. The most

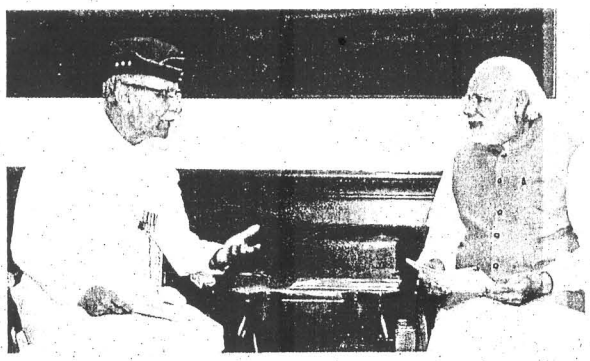
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disturbing factor was the participation of women provocateurs. Women of the majority community, taking a cue from Jammu and Kashmir and the NE [north-eastern] region, participated, for the first time, as instigators. The minority community too used women as 'shields' to discourage police incursions into minority pockets." To this day people have not been rehabilitated. Shah's hero, the Nero as the Supreme Court called him, closed down the camps as "baby manufacturing" units. He never criticises Modi. This betrays his outlook. This was not a riot. It was a pogrom blessed by people at the top. Hence Justice Khare's reference to Nero. Our author ignores that because one part of him is Sarkari; authentically.

To repeat, he is honest. But he comes precariously close to the tribe by his pronounced desire to ingratiate himself with the powers that be. The language is odd. He refers to himself as "a person bearing a Muslim name".

His record is not served by braggadocio which drips from every page, beginning with the very first. Referring to his none too illustrious record as Vice Chancellor, he claims that "during his tenure [the university] was propelled to the top post among Indian universities in international rankings"—at one remove projecting the author to the pinnacle of glory. The man is just full of himself.

One hopes that now in retirement his reading will go beyond Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking*.



PTI

LT GEN. ZAMEER UDDIN SHAH with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May 2016. He was then the Vice Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University.

Judging by his book one suspects that the author is also a reader of *Readers' Digest*, the Bible of Higher Learning. The author might with advantage read the late Omar Khalidi's book on Muslims in the Armed Forces.

On February 7, 1991, while the Gulf war was raging with fierce intensity, General Colin L. Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—and the first black person to hold this position—was asked about the role of minorities in the U.S. Army when he testified before the House Armed Services Committee. The General lauded the opportunities afforded to minorities in the military but did not stop there. He said with candour: "I wish that there were other activities in our society and in our nation that were as open as the military is to upward mobility, to achievement, to allowing them in." No society in the world can afford to be complacent about its record on reconciling the diverse interests of a pluralistic society. Acknowledgment of imperfection is proof of integrity and maturity. The U.S. Congress has enacted several laws to protect the rights of minorities.

On May 5, 1992, he reverted to the theme. The PTI report reads: "The recent racial riots in Los Angeles and other American cities show that despair still exists in the black American community and their inability to fully share the American dream, according to General Colin Powell, Joint Chief of Staff. A visibly shaken Gen. Powell, the first black American to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and whose troops are now maintaining order in Los Angeles, told students of a black university today that the problem 'goes beyond Rodney King, beyond Los Angeles'.

"The biggest problem, Gen. Powell said, 'is the despair that still exists in the black community over the inability of black Americans to fully share the American dream.' 'Our hearts are hurt because of violence,' he said. 'This should never have happened but it did. We see once again the long way we [black Americans] still have to go.'" Can you imagine a Muslim chief of any of the wings of our armed forces speaking in this strain and speaking without being subjected to denunciation? Nor did Powell talk or write of his record as a Sarkari American. Contrast this with the author's reaction to the Gujarat pogrom, which was far worse. Powell never ended his speeches or articles with "God Bless America". The author does that, ridiculously, with "Jai Hind". He regrets that.

"The constant refrain among AMU students was an apprehension of discrimination. I explained that *this trend was ingrained in human nature* but I also explained that discrimination was largely against the lesser educated. The Dalits and Muslims were in this category and hence faced discrimination. I questioned why my family members, or myself, were never discriminated against. I rose slowly up the ladder to a three-star rank and retired as the Deputy Chief of Army Staff. I was entrusted with the modernisation of the Army and its budget running into thousands of crores of rupees. There was never an occasion when my presence was viewed with apprehension or mistrust." Success did not blind Powell to the fate of the blacks. It did not blind our author either. Simply enlarged his ego. A brief tenure as Vice Chancellor does not make him an "educationist". The man is utterly insensitive. Is his experience a typical one? Has he read the Sachar Report? Most unlikely.

Shah has achievements and faults. His pathetic book exaggerates the achievements and thus highlights the flaws. Written to evoke admiration, it arouses ridicule. □

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The city of verse

Hindu ; 4/11/18

Eight poets of the past capture Delhi's joys and sorrows

MAAZ BIN BILAL

Saif Mahmood's *Beloved Delhi: A Mughal City and Her Greatest Poets* offers offers a window into the life, times, and poetry of Delhi's greatest Urdu poets from the 18th and 19th centuries, with witty and critical insight, in a conversational style that has become Saif's hallmark in many a literary gathering.

Focusing on eight poets, he allows us to touch Delhi's past and rethink its present through Urdu. Each chapter on a poet is divided into two sections – the first is biographical and provides the reader with insight into Delhi's material conditions through the vicissitudes of the poet's life. Thus, the 18th century poets are nomadic because of the post-Nadir Shah instabilities of Delhi.

The 19th century poets lead more sedentary lives, as the British Residency of Delhi provides the military support, at least until the cleavage of 1857. This upsets the tradition of the classical Urdu ghazal, and so the last poet analysed is Daagh Dehlvi, already writing in 1857, and a step-grandson of the last Mughal King, Bahadur Shah Zafar. The book records this decline visually through Anant Raina's photographs of the current gravesites of these poets, exhibiting the absolute lack of public or state support toward heritage maintenance.



Beloved Delhi: A Mughal City and Her Greatest Poets
Saif Mahmood
Speaking Tiger
₹599

The second part gives an excellent commentary on their poetry.

Saif's familiarity with the tradition and his capacities for literary criticism shine through, as the raconteur in him narrates the stories of these poets' poetry with coherence, complexity, and lucidity. The book highlights Urdu poets who are well known to Urdu readers, but not to listeners of ghazals or those interested in the literature from the outside.

Apart from Ghalib (described by Saif as 'Master of Masters'), and Mir Taqi Mir ('the Incurable Romancer of Delhi'), poets such as Sauda ('the Great Satirist'), Mir Dard ('Urdu's Dancing Dervish'), Ustad Ibrahim Zauq ('The Poet Laureate'), Bahadur Shah Zafar (the 'Emperor' who has an 'Affair with Urdu'), and Daagh ('the Last Casanova of Delhi') get the attention they deserve.

The collection also brings out the specificities of their poetry including the great licence, often through satire, that many of these commanded with the ruling powers as dissenters. Tolerance for such criticism today rests uneasy with the crown.

Beloved Delhi is for keeps and must be read by all with the remotest of interests in Urdu, Delhi, or poetry and poets.

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Hindu ; 25/11/18

PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM

Metaphor for modern society

One can never look at a supermarket worker the same way again after reading this book

BY G. SAMPATH



Convenience Store Woman
Sayaka Murata
trs Ginny Tapley Takemori
₹599

The Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky, in his famous 1917 essay, 'Art as technique', coined the term 'defamiliarisation' to describe the essence of the 'literary'. What makes a piece of writing 'literary' is its power to make the 'familiar' seem strange, to make us see it as if for the first time. For Shklovsky, literature is writing that 'defamiliarises' the world.

In modern consumer society, there is perhaps nothing more 'familiar' – and boringly so – than the supermarket, or the 'convenience store'. If there is one character whose ubiquity in our lives is matched by her absence from literary fiction, it is the supermarket worker who scans the bar code on your purchases, hands you the receipt, and sends you on your way. Does she have a rich inner life, like, say, the middle-class Indian immigrant angsting away about love and loss in the U.S. of A? Or is she merely the fictional equivalent of furniture amid which more exalted characters have their interior monologues in measured prose?

Underwater earthquake

These uniformed store employees are such a familiar feature of big retail topography – along with the shrewdly arranged product displays, the queues at the cash counter, and the trolleys determined to thwart your will – that they rarely make a ripple in the sea of our self-absorption. And that is part of their job description too – to not make a ripple, and serve invisibly as an efficient organ of retail.

Well, Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman* is not a ripple but an elegant underwater earthquake whose shock waves will haunt the shores of the reader's consciousness long after the last page has been turned.

Its protagonist is 36-year-old Keiko Furukura, who has spent half her life working at the Hiiromachi [illegible] We learn early on in Murata's novel that Keiko has always been a bit odd. As a little girl, she wasn't 'normal' like the other kids.

Once, when she found a dead bird in the park, she wanted her mother to cook it. On another occasion, much to the horror of her classmates and teachers, she broke up a schoolyard fight by bashing a boy's head with a spade, because "I just thought that would be the quickest way to" stop the fight.

Her parents find her behaviour worrisome enough to take her to a therapist. But there is no 'cure' for Keiko's nameless disorder, if there is indeed a disorder.

But she does find a 'cure' of sorts when she joins the convenience store at the age of 18. It is in the brightly lit, uniformed, time table-driven discipline of the supermarket that she finally finds meaning and purpose in life.

The store's instruction manual becomes her instruction manual for life – offering her tips on how to conduct herself in front of strangers and what configuration of facial muscles represents the appropriate expression in a given social situation. As she puts it, "...for the first time ever, I felt I'd become a part in the machine of society."

Sublime reversal

Not only is Smile Mart the only place where she feels like a normal person, it is also the only one where she is treated like one. "I still don't have a clue how to be a normal person outside that manual," says Keiko. As the novel unfolds, in first person, from Keiko's perspective, Murata manages to achieve a sublime reversal: the 'normal' world with its set milestones of getting a 'proper' job, marriage, children, and so on takes on the contours of a strange idiosyncrasy, while Keiko's subsistence as a poorly paid blue-collar worker in a dead-end job, with no possibility of economic advancement, no family, no sex life, and no interests other than a passionate commitment to the success of the convenience store seems more and more sensible. After all, it is precisely this machine-like existence that allows Keiko to feel that she fits into society.



> Not only is Smile Mart the only place where Keiko feels like a normal person, it is also the only one where she is treated like one. 'I still don't have a clue how to be a normal person outside that manual,' says Keiko

When she meets Shiraha, another drop-out from the mainstream, she invites him to move in with her – not as her lover, but as her "pet", with designated feeding times. It is a testament to Murata's skill that it is impossible to identify the point where the novel trades psychological realism for psychopathic grotesquery, or even to say if such a trade happens at all. Throughout, there is a subtle undercurrent of menace in Keiko's narrative that perhaps mirrors the violence that underpins what we know as normal society.

Society as a game of fiction

While some of the motifs, such as asexuality, and the anxieties of living in an extremely conformist society, may be specific to the social realities of contemporary Japan, the larger theme of society as a self-sustaining, multiplayer game of fiction with arbitrary yet iron-clad rules, is bound to resonate with an international audience.

In Murata's hands, the convenience store becomes a metaphor for modern society as such. In an exemplary rendering of Shklovskian defamiliarisation, social deviance is fully humanised while normal society stands revealed as a collective madness whose saving grace is its exclusive claim to the fiction known as 'normal'.

Perhaps the highest praise that one could offer this startlingly original work of fiction is that one can never look at a supermarket worker the same way ever again.

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A house for Mr. Bose

Hindu; 25/11/18.

Krishna builds her story like an edifice, slowly and methodically

BY NAVMI KRISHNA



The Escapists of J. Mullick Road
Usha Ananda Krishna
Speaking Tiger
₹499

In the 1980s, the decade in which *The Escapists of J. Mullick Road* is set, Calcutta is on the cusp of change. The Naxalism of the 1970s has abated, leaving behind a legacy of mistrust towards the establishment. The magnificent yet grimy colonial architecture is being replaced by utilitarian skyscrapers. Vendors and vehicles jostle for space on crowded roads as people live shoulder-to-shoulder. Space and greenery are a luxury.

Biren Roy, a brilliant architect who believes that life has robbed him of his due, and Pinaki Bose, a weak-willed Bengali babu spurred into action by the sudden realisation that "he didn't matter", are brought together by a simple task – to build a house. En route, they both have to battle their demons – Roy fears his abilities and circumstances will fail his masterpiece. Bose fears that the one unilateral decision he has made in life will cost him everything. Caught in the tide of their actions, each must decide how malleable their morals are, and answer the age-old question: what matters most – the end or the means to the end.

The author builds her story pretty much the same way one would build a house – slowly and methodically. Her protagonists are detailed, be it the plucky Kalol Mondal, or Roy, who has a penchant for reconstructing buildings in his head (in these moments, it is not easy to separate Krishnan the practising architect from Krishnan the wordsmith).

While the main characters are richly fleshed out, the peripheral ones leave you craving for a bit more depth – for instance, there is scant hint of her future self in our initial glimpses of Dona, Bose's teenage daughter. Bose's wife Rimi and his mother too fail to rise above the usual clichés of a nagging housewife or mother-in-law.

Krishnan etches the compromises one makes in everyday life with dry humour, but lapses into verbosity at times. She also doesn't plumb the depths of the disconnect between political ideals and social reality. Nevertheless, she manages to pack quite a punch at the end.

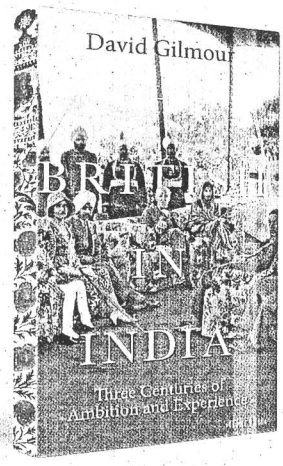
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BLIGHTY ON OUR LAND

OLD-FASHIONED IN HIS ASSUMPTIONS, GILMOUR WRITES ON THE SUBJECT WITH A DETACHMENT ONLY AN ENGLISHMAN IS CAPABLE OF

By Shashi Tharoor





THE BRITISH IN INDIA: THREE CENTURIES OF AMBITION AND EXPERIENCE
by David Gilmour
Penguin/ Allen Lane
Price: **£30**; **640** pages

The British ruled India for 200 years with unshakeable self-confidence, buttressed by protocol, alcohol and a lot of gall. Stalin found it 'ridiculous' that 'a few hundred Englishmen should dominate India'. Though not arithmetically accurate, in principle, he was right: it was remarkable that the British Raj was operated by so few people. At its peak in 1931, there were just 168,000 Brits (including 60,000 in the army and police and only 4,000 in civil government) to run a country approaching 300 million people. The British in India were never more than 0.05 per cent of the population.

In his monumental book, *The British in India*, imperial historian David Gilmour helps explain how they did it. He meticulously studies the lives and work of the British who lived and were employed in India, and in a remarkable social history describes the lives of viceroys and bureaucrats, soldiers and tea planters, missionaries and merchants, delving deep into private papers and unpublished correspondence. A decade ago, in his book *The Ruling Caste*, Gilmour had delved in depth into the lives of the Indian Civil Service (ICS). This volume, three times as long, broadens his range: the ICS is there, but

pathetic) biographies of Kipling and Curzon. He writes accessibly and often wittily on the British in India, with a wealth of anecdotage and an eye for the telling story. But, as his book's subtitle—"three centuries of ambition and experience"—reflects, he is unforgivably non-judgemental about his subjects. The very element that indicts the British imperial system in the eyes of an Indian—its foreignness and its disconnection from the Indian people for whose benefit it claimed to govern—is taken for granted. That so many of the men Gilmour writes affectionately or sardonically about were, at the very least, embodiments of iniquity and race privilege does not even seem to have occurred to him.

In this regard, *The British in India* is curiously old-fashioned in its assumptions. There is little awareness of any Indian perspective on the British and their work. What did the subjects of their administration think of them? Gilmour does not tell us. The growing political consciousness of Indians, and how the British reacted to it, is absent in the book; among other omissions, the unforgivable British attitude to famines, which cost 35 million Indian lives because of imperial policy, undermines Gilmour's portraits of glittering durbars and elegant soirees. He glosses over the prejudice and casual racism of many ICS men. Many of the British hated India and Indians, notably Churchill, who said so in as many words. The British did little to advance the welfare of the people they ruled—their concern was stability, not change; their job was to ensure imperial profit, not Indian progress, which would have undermined imperial rule. The pillage and plunder that principally motivated the British presence in India is wholly absent from Gilmour's reckoning; he writes with a benign detachment that, frankly, only an Englishman could be capable of on this subject.

THERE WERE MANY BRITS WHO DEVOTED THEIR LIVES TO INDIA. BUT THEY ALLEVIATED, NOT JUSTIFIED, THE CRIMES OF THE RAJ

As with all human enterprises, imperial rule too brought positives as well as negatives. Not every British official in India was as rapacious as Clive, as ignorantly contemptuous as Macaulay, as arrogantly divisive as Curzon, as cruel as Dyer, or as racist as Churchill. There were good men who rose above the prejudices of their age to treat Indians with compassion, curiosity and respect; humane judges, conscientious officials, visionary viceroys and governors, Britons who genuinely befriended Indians across the colour barrier. Individuals who "went native", like Charles Andrews and Verrier Elwin, find mention in Gilmour's book, as does the explorer Richard Francis Burton, "whose research into the homosexual brothels of Karachi had been deemed too diligent for an officer of the Indian Army."

Throughout the Raj, there were men who devoted their lives to serve in India—to serve their country's colonial institutions, it must be said, but also to help ordinary people in the process. There is no doubt about the heroic efforts of many individual British, who built dams, dug canals, founded colleges and even, in some cases, advocated Indian self-rule. Their names became part of the geography of the subcontinent: towns called Abbottabad, Lyallpur and Cox's Bazar, Corbett Park, Cotton Hill, the Mcnabbwah Canal. But they alleviated, rather than justified, the monstrous crime that allowed them to exist, the crime of subjugating a people under the oppressive heel of the 'stout British boot'.

Their lifestyles, for the most part, separated them from the masses they sought to rule. By the early 19th century, the British had established themselves as a ruling caste, but they did not intermarry or inter-dine with Indians; they lived in bungalows in their own exclusive areas, known as cantonments and 'civil lines', separated from the 'Black Towns' where the locals lived, patronised whites-only clubs and sneered at the Indians whose oppression paid for their comforts. They also created little islands of Englishness in the hill stations, planting ferns and roses around cottages with nostalgia-suffused English names. Their loyalties remained wedded to their faraway homeland; their children were shipped off to the British public school system and did not mingle with the 'natives'; their clothes and purchases came from Britain, as did their books and ideas. At the end of their careers in India, for the most part, they returned 'home'. As the English writer Henry Nevinson observed in 1907, 'a handful of people from a distant country maintain a predominance unmitigated by social intercourse, marriage, or permanent residence'.

That was the life of the British in India. Then, after 25 or more years in the subcontinent, most would retire to Cheltenham or South Kensington, to English suburbs that became known as 'Asia Minor' or 'the Anglo-Indian Quarter', surrounded by reminders and relics of the land they had ruled. This book is a memorial to them, in their own terms. It belongs on their shelves. ■

Shashi Tharoor is a Congress Lok Sabha MP from Thiruvananthapuram and the author of Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India

BOOK REVIEW

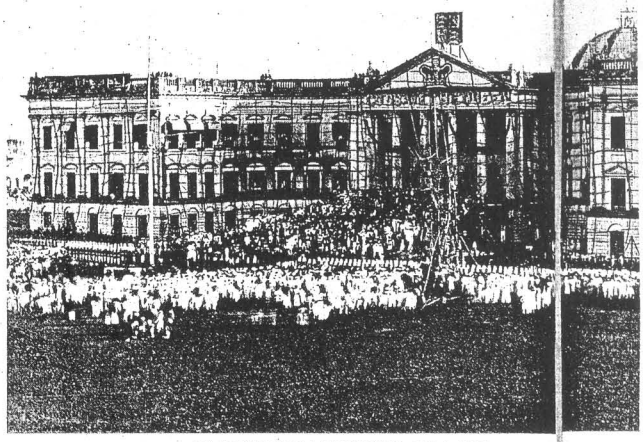
URBAN NOSTALGIA

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GETTY IMAGES

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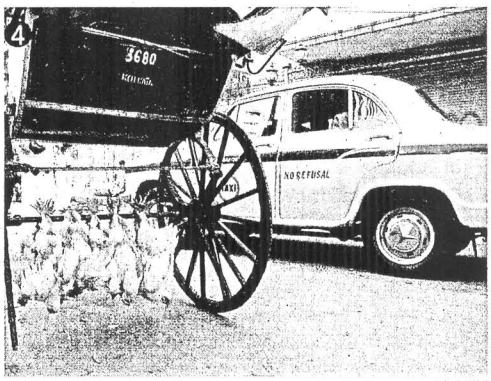
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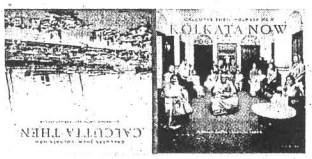




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ALAMY

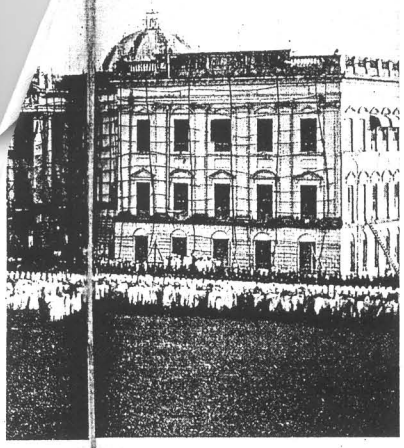


CALCUTTA THEN KOLKATA NOW
by SUNANDA K DATTA-RAY & INDRAJIT HAZRA
Roli books
256 pages; **₹3,500**

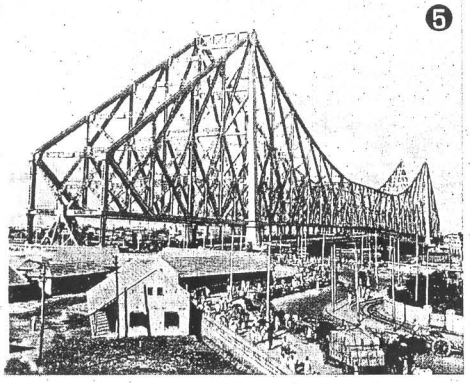
Calcutta reacts to nostalgia like slices of aubergine react to mustard oil—no matter how much you pour in, the nostalgia gets absorbed, and yet, there is still a chance of the frying slices burning. Put another way, *Calcutta Then/Kolkata Now* runs the heavy risk of trying to farm nostalgia out of the most heavily ploughed nostalgia patch of them all.

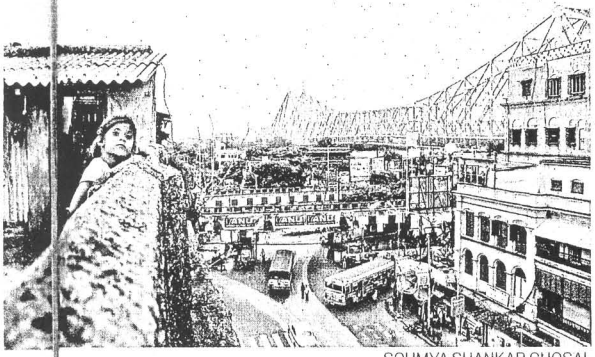
The coffee-table book is divided into two halves. *Calcutta Then* gives us a text by the veteran journalist and memory-savant Sunanda K Datta Ray, with images that first illustrate the text and then take over the pages. Both text and image build a story of how the ragged riverside settlement by the English grew into the second most important city of the most powerful empire in the world. Some of the images are familiar, but many are startlingly unfamiliar, such as the series of aerial photos taken in the 1930s and '40s and the images of Howrah Bridge being built. Datta Ray wears his vast knowledge and erudition lightly and the text is a reasonable primer for anyone who wants to know how the upper slabs of the city, once known as Calcutta, lived, studied, worked, succeeded and failed. Datta Ray mostly ignores the subaltern history regarding how the majority of the city lived their lives, perhaps because there were no photographs available

GETTY IMAGES



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SOUMYA SHANKAR GHOSAL

1. Central Avenue, October 1956
2. Celebration outside Government House after the government was transferred from the East India Company to the British Crown.
3 & 4. Trams, hand-pulled rickshaws and yellow ambassadors rule the Calcutta roads
5. Under construction Howrah Bridge
6. A view of the Howrah Bridge from a rooftop

to illustrate it, or perhaps to cater to the book's intended readers (i.e people who actually own coffee-tables). Nevertheless, for anyone with an interest in the broad narrative of how this mother of all colonial cities grew and mutated into what it has become today, Datta Ray's text is a friendly accompaniment to a whole host of fresh or not so familiar photographs.

Photographs are the weakest part of the contemporary section of the volume, *Kolkata Today*. Indrajit Hazra, a fine writer, and one passionately engaged in the realities of the city of his birth, struggles 'Bongfully' to give us a text that avoids (or mutes) cliches, that is somewhat irreverent, and tries to catch new facets of one of the most examined urban conurbations on the planet. However, Hazra is hobbled in his endeavour by a series of mostly terrible photographs and shoddy editing. The smelly ghost of every West Bengal government tourist brochure produced in the past 40 years stalks the pages of this half of the book; even seen upside down, there is no rescuing the pictures from aesthetic and conceptual capsizing. The one exception is the black and white image of a night-time tram with the caption referring to Lawrence Durrell's description of trams moving like blood through the arteries of Alexandria. A more characteristic example is the ham-fisted handling of a photo of the mass RSS *shakha* on the Maidan—whose caption gives no sense that this is a recent and rare aberration in a city that has had little time for the Hindutva groups.

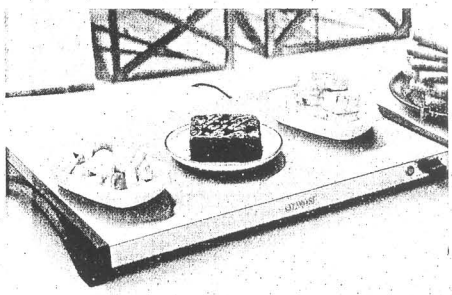
There are also other infelicities across the book, such as typos and wrong captions. But for the fans of the city, it is worth purchasing anyway, thanks to Datta Ray and Hazra's pleasurable texts and the photos in the historical section. ■

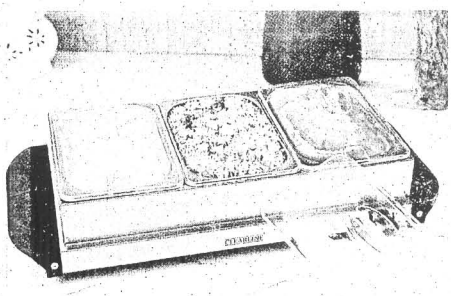
–Ruchir Joshi

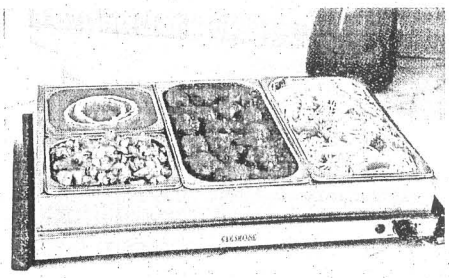
Images courtesy ROLI BOOKS

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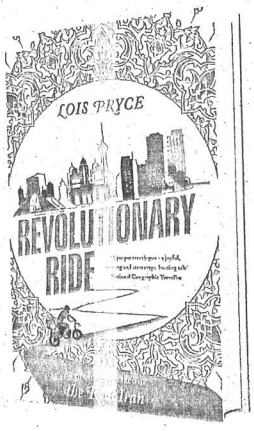
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The Price of Happiness

Pg-19



REVOLUTIONARY RIDE
LOIS PRYCE
NICHOLAS BREALEY PUBLISHING
304 pages
₹499

IN NOVEMBER 2011, Iranian protesters stormed the British embassy in Tehran, smashed windows, tore down the British flag and threw firebombs into the embassy compound in retaliation against economic sanctions imposed by Britain. A couple of months later, British travel writer Lois Pryce set off on a journey of 3,000 miles on her bike to Iran — on a written request of an absolute stranger: "We are not terrorists. I wish that you will visit Iran."

But Pryce is unnerved at the country's religious account of torture and executions. Her first dreaded encounter is with Ayatollah Khomeini, who, though dead for decades, "monitors" her moves fiercely from giant murals and billboards, likely unhappy with a Western presence on his land. Next to him is Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who, unlike Khomeini, smiles shyly and offers Pryce a cuddly "Father Christmas" look — which is a respite, and the beginning of all good things.

In *Revolutionary Road*, Iranians steal your heart, for they tell you how they discovered happiness and freedom amid all the hostility conferred by the country's religious order. Pryce's journey feels utterly delightful, filled with heartwarming accounts of all those who refused to allow a despotic regime to get in the way of living a normal life, and those who shunned a liberal life in the West and returned to Iran just because it "felt more real". As Pryce soldiers on, she draws inspiration from the young, many of whom have resolved to not live a life with restrictions. She lives each day by stories — some of love, some of loss.

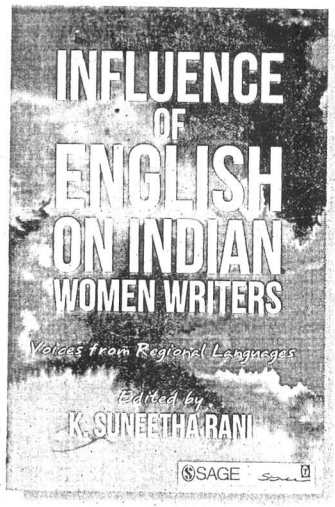
The biggest strength of *Revolutionary Ride* is that it slams stereotypes about life in an Islamic republic — effortlessly — and with a dash of humour. She keeps the narrative away from the brutality and the gore — which is unexpected — but a relief at the same time. It is easy to be drawn to Pryce's style, for she writes as she acts — fluently and with a certain playfulness, which makes this *Revolutionary Ride* a moving and entertaining journey on the whole.

ANSHIKA RAVI

New Delhi

Women writers & education

The book explores the various ways in which women in India responded to education, especially English education, and the efforts they took to step out of the traditional space society enforced on them. BY **KANNAMMA NATARAJAN**



Influence of English on Indian Women Writers

Voices from Regional Languages

Edited by
K. Suneetha Rani

Sage Publications

Pages: 188
Price: Rs.595

IN her introduction to *Influence of English on Indian Women Writers: Voices from Regional Languages*, the book's editor, K. Suneetha Rani, presents a comprehensive bird's-eye view of the English discourse in India in the 19th and early 20th centuries to throw light on how the education of women was discussed and debated from different perspectives, with the main focus on English education.

She points out how a dichotomy was created when women were provided English education to make them better wives, daughters and daughters-in-law where previously they had been denied education because it was felt that it would corrupt them and lead to the collapse of the institution of the family. Thus, voices raised for and against English education targeted the domesticity of women.

Citing women writers, Suneetha Rani shows how women took to English to use it as a weapon against prejudices and a way towards change. Although English education did not immediately bring about any significant change in the status of women or remove social evils and prejudices, it threw open new areas of knowledge and skill.

The introduction serves as an excellent backdrop to the 12 essays in the volume that examine the English discourse and the woman question from different angles as put forth by women in their writings. The volume also discusses movements that influenced women's issues in the regional context and their response in different languages and genres.

In the first chapter, "Language, Reform and Nationalism: Indian Women's Writing in the Nineteen Century", C. Vijayasree probes the subtexts of the books written by 19th century women writers to show how they were influenced by the dominant discourses of their time. She supports her argument by analysing Swarnakumari Devi's *Kahake* and Shevantibai Nikambe's novel *Ratanbai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife*.

In the next chapter, titled "Women of Reform", Alladi Uma addresses the question of "education as reform" for women with a special focus on the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She compares *Dasigal Mosavalai* (*Web of Deceit*, 1938) in Tamil by Muvalur Ramamirthammal (who was born in a non-devadasi family but forced into prostitution) and two books in English, *My Experience as a Legislator* (1930) and *Autobiography* (1964), by Dr S. Muthulakshmi Reddy (who was born of a devadasi mother and a Brahmin father) to *Kanyasulkam* (1897/1909), a Telugu play on the evil practice of child marriage by Gurajada Appa Rao (a Brahmin male writer interested in social reform). She makes the point that education made housewives better and helped devadasis free themselves from "institutionalised slavery and exploitation" and that men took to reforming courtesan women to save the man and the family woman.

The seventh chapter, "Writing Self: Writing for others", also examines these two books by Muthulakshmi Reddy. Paromita Bose presents Muthulakshmi Reddy as a doctor, legislator and social worker in an attempt to understand the close connection between her personal life, her identity and her involvement in the women's movement.

In the third chapter, "Colonised: The Bengali Woman Writer in British India", Sanjukta Dasgupta draws the reader's attention to the fact that wo-

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THE HINDU ARCHIVES

DR S. MUTHULAKSHMI REDDY. Two of the essays examine two of her books in English, "My Experience as a Legislator" and "Autobiography".

discusses what education meant for women in the colonial period and how it represented a new femininity by following the course of the debates, discussions and pronouncements on the subject in four early novels in Kannada that represent different regions under different political units: *Indirabai: Athava Saddharma Vijayavu* (Gulvadi Venkat Rao, 1899), *Indira* (Kerur Vasudevacharya, 1908), *Sadguni Krishnabai: Uttama Gruhini* (Shantabai Neelagara, 1908) and *Nabha* (Nanjanagud Tirumalamba, 1914).

The protagonists of the four novels are educated women; the objective third person narrative at no point describes their thoughts or the inner musings. The setting is symbolic with no specific place or time and the characters are representative of ideas. There are no inner conflicts and confusions arising out of new ideas and new modes of thinking. These novels, Nikhila says, show "what education made of the woman, but... not what she made of education". Her focus is on what was considered appropriate for women in the name of modern education, how women were expected to transform through the new modes of learning and make visible its impact on them.

The essay "Women and English Education in Coorg/Kodagu: A Discussion of Alternate Modernities during 1834-1882" by Sowmya Dechamma C.C. talks about why and how Coorgs were open to giving their daughters an English education at a time when mainstream nationalists were questioning whether even boys should be given such an education. It discusses how different communities understood and adopted modernities differently.

Yogitha Shetty's essay, "Nation, Ideal Womanhood and English Education: Revisiting the First Tulu Novel, Sati Kamale", is an analysis of the dominant Hindu nationalist sentiments recounted in the first Tulu novel, *Sati Kamale* (1921) by Paniyadi. The novel criticises the colonial modernity introduced to the natives of South Canara in the form of English education. It is full of debates and discussions on nationalism that were used in the attempt to make young men want to sacrifice their lives for their country, but its main ideology is "the mystical notion of female virtue and power appended by indigenous/desi education".

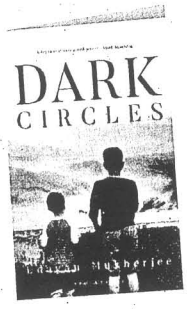
All that is evil in the society, according to Sati Kamale and Paniyadi, springs from the Westernisation process brought about by the foreign education system. Although the novel speaks for women's education, it favours desi education only.

DFFICULTIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH

Jasbir Jain's essay, "Between Language and Parole: The Forked Road to Development", delineates the common difficulties in learning English, especially in the context of rural India or the deprived sections of society. It talks of the numerous purposes for which a language is learnt and how accessibility is not equal or same for all. Beginning with the issues relating to the individual, the writer moves to classroom learning and then to globalisation, raising many critical questions regarding language and education.

The author concludes that it is necessary to be bilingual to make one's presence felt. But learning a new language is difficult because the home environment and the conditions required for learning are different. Serious efforts at social and governmental levels would alone bridge the gap between the two. "The inspiration exists; it is ambition that needs to be stirred to match the potential with the dream."

Influence of English on Indian Women Writers not only records the various ways in which women from different sections of society responded to education, especially English education, but also the efforts they took to step out of the traditional space society enforced on them. □



Udayan Mukherjee

Dark Circles | Bloomsbury | 208 pages | Rs 499

Mother's Not Home

A controlled, subtle tale of how a core of secrecy in a family secretes lasting sadness

BY ANJANA BASU

A mother's death opens up a can of worms for Rono and his brothers Sujoy—Bochka and Chotku as their mother calls them—in her last letter to Ronojoy. The letter reveals the secret behind why her marriage to their father Subir suddenly became a Cold War zone after Sujoy's birth, resulting in their father's suicide, a gruesome hanging that Rono discovered when he came home from school. The uncles, aunts and grandmothers and even the boy's ayah were unable to factor in effective damage control. Mukherjee puts together the ins and outs of a Bengali family in Delhi, two brothers, Subir's marriage to the vivacious Mala and an attractive younger brother called Apurva. Tolstoy wrote that unhappy families are unique, unlike happy ones. Mukherjee delves into the roots of this particular family's problems. Ronojoy lives alone, with a house in Mukteswar and an apartment in Delhi, recovering from clinical depression; Sujoy is almost an alcoholic and the happiness of his wife and son is threatened.

At the heart of it is the fact that their mother kept a secret from them—actually, more than one secret, including the news that she had cancer. Her sons saw this as a lack of love and trust and it added to the metaphysical cancer destroying their lives. The chapters tackle different aspects of the story, introducing the different characters and their interactions with each other. The centre is of course Ronojoy and Sujoy and their reactions to their mother's death. Mukherjee goes deep into both sons' characters, why they are the way they are and how dysfunctionality spreads over the generations unintentionally.

Dark Circles is dark, as the title suggests, and the story is a study of the nature of forgiveness—how society and most families jump to conclusions about what people can accept and what they cannot. At one level, Mala's inability to keep a secret resulted in her husband's death. At another, her decision to hide her secret from her sons caused a rift in the family and alienated the younger boy, though the decisions were linked. Most social reformers insist that there are some secrets that need to be kept that way because sharing certain information can be harmful. However, a deeper study of what went wrong in Subir and Mala's marriage is required—Subir is a failed writer, he seems to be depressive and he and his wife have had separate bedrooms for three years. Mukherjee switches the perspectives a little too quickly perhaps, because we are never really sure why what happened, though he has a 'Robi Thakur' undercurrent to the whole thing. In fact, this could quite easily have been a Tagore novel, barring the grown-up sons.

> The story is also a study of forgiveness—how families jump to conclusions about what people can accept or not. And there is a Tagore undercurrent to all this.

As a debut, Mukherjee's novel is promising because of what *Dark Circles* tells us in an increasingly harsh and disconnected world. The author's style is controlled and he tackles his subject with subtlety and the occasional arresting description. However, Mukherjee can see no happy ending ahead for his main character—the mind, once touched by sorrow, is infinitely hard to heal.

ON THE RACKS



Torill Kornfeldt

The Re-Origin of Species | Westland

How would one go about awakening a chicken's inner dinosaur? Or building a mammoth? Travelling the world, Swedish science journalist Torill Kornfeldt met scientists working on projects to give extinct animals a second chance at life—making the acquaintance of a frozen pachyderm in the process—and has produced a light and lucid account that raises some fundamental questions.



Jeffrey Archer

Heads You Win | Pan Books

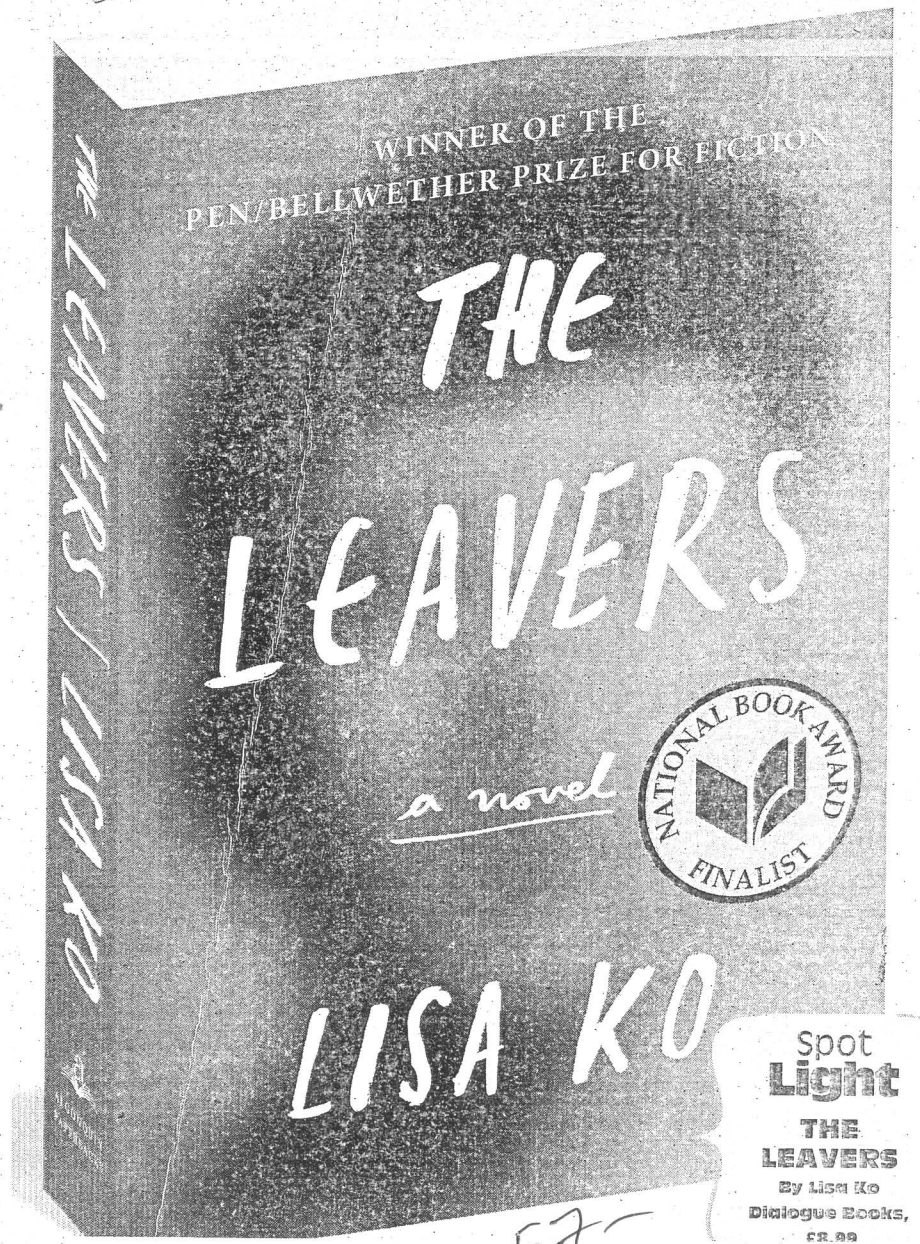
Deep in the Soviet era in 1968, Alexander Karpenko, or Sasha, is an exceptionally talented youngster who has to flee the country with his mother Elena after the KGB liquidates his father. They move to the UK, then the US—countries that serve as mere backdrops to his inexorable rise as an entrepreneur. Then, he goes back to Russia. Also featuring a nasty (of course) called Strelnikov.



Deep Trivedi

I am Krishna: Trials & Triumphs in Mathura | Aatman

A new addition to the school of mythological tales masquerading as realist fiction—book two of the 'I am Krishna' series tackles the aftermath of the teen-hero's slaying of Kamsa, with Radha and Rukmini much on his mind. Plus, it's written in the first person: "I'd been such a braggart...." Or "I was surrounded by such insane people". Oh Lord!



Spot Light

THE LEAVERS

By Lisa Ko

Dialogue Books, £8.99

A thoughtful, haunting tale

Lisa Ko's debut novel is a rich, multifaceted portrait of displacement and the trauma of not belonging. The book deserves the acclaim it has already won in America... A review



LUCY SCHOLES

Last year, Little, Brown Book Group in the UK launched Dialogue Books, a new standalone imprint dedicated to inclusivity, and this month sees the release of its launch title — Lisa Ko's debut novel, *The Leavers* — a finalist for last year's National Book Award for Fiction in the US, and a rich, multifaceted portrait of displacement and the trauma of not belonging.

Eleven-year-old Deming Guo lives in the Bronx with his mother Polly, her boyfriend Leon, and Leon's sister Vivian and her son Michael, who is Deming's

One day Polly floats the idea of her and Deming moving to Florida — she knows of a restaurant there that's looking for waitresses, she says, and they can go visit Disney World, wouldn't that be fun? Deming isn't interested; he doesn't want to leave the city or his friends.

Not long after, Polly never comes home from her job at a nail salon. No one knows where she is, Florida or otherwise. Vivian takes Deming to Child Services — "Nobody wanted him," he thinks, steeped in the rejection and grief that soon begins to define him — and before he knows it he's heading out of the city on his way to a new life he never wanted, complete with a new name — Daniel Wilkinson.

class academics who live in a small town in upstate New York. They're well meaning enough, but painfully clueless on many important points, Ko sparing no one's blushes when she calls them out. "Issues are colour-blind," Kay, Daniel's new mom blindly professes, equating her own childhood experience of being a "bookworm with glasses" to the alienation he feels as the only Asian kid in the entire town.

Ten years pass, and Daniel becomes "an expert at juggling selves; he used to see Deming and think himself into Daniel, a slideshow perpetually alternating between the same two slides." It comes as no surprise to learn that he's struggling as a young adult, feeling pressure to live up to the expectations of others, but failing at every turn, unsure of what he wants or who he is.

It is, however, in opening up the narrative by then delving deep into Polly's past — from the privations of her youth in rural China, her hopes for a better life for her and her son in the US, and the subsequent drudgery she encounters there, not to mention her barbaric treatment at the hands of the authorities — that Deming/Daniel's story is revealed as simply another piece in a larger puzzle rather than the focus of the novel.

As such, *The Leavers* itself speaks to the broader immigrant experience in contemporary America, as well as posing interesting questions about how perhaps deciding to settle down somewhere specific is actually just as hard as making the decision to up and leave, especially if there are other people or cruel circumstances dictating your freedoms. "Maybe it wasn't about moving to new places, but about the challenge of staying put," Polly thinks.

A thoughtful, haunting tale that deserves the acclaim it has already won in America.

काशीप्रसाद जायसवाल का महत्त्व

कर्मेन्दु शिशिर

परख

पिछले चार दशकों से तमाम उतार-चढ़ावों के बावजूद हमारे वैचारिक परिदृश्य पर हिंदी नवजागरण किसी न किसी रूप में विचार-विमर्श का प्रमुख केंद्र बना रहा. इस क्रम में तमाम तरह के विचारोत्तेजक बहस-मुबाहसों का यह सुफल रहा कि इसके भूगोल में विविध वैचारिक दिशाओं का विस्तार हुआ. बहस के नए-नए गवाक्ष खुले और नवजागरण के स्वरूप और क्षेत्र का वैविध्य उभरकर सामने आया. इस दौरान सबसे बड़ी बात यह हुई कि नवजागरण की मूल-स्रोत सामग्री के संपादन, संकलन और पुनर्प्रस्तुति का एक ऐसा दौर चल पड़ा जिसने पूरे परिदृश्य को ही बदलकर रख दिया. आज स्थिति यह है कि इसके स्वरूप को लेकर जो भी मतभेद हों, मगर हिंदी नवजागरण के वजूद को नकारने की हिमाकत अब शायद ही कोई करे. अनेक विश्वविद्यालयों के बहुसंख्यक शोधार्थी नवजागरण के आसंग में नए-नए इलाकों में लगे हुए हैं. प्रोफेसर रतनलाल के काशीप्रसाद जायसवाल के असंकलित और अप्राप्य सामग्री के तीन खंडों में संचयन और संपादन को इसी आसंग में देखा और सराहा जाना चाहिए. काशीप्रसाद जायसवाल जैसी मौलिक और असाधारण मेधा का अभी तक ओझल रहना हमारे बौद्धिक विवेक और सजगता को संदिग्ध करता है. इससे यह उम्मीद भी बनती है कि आगे प्रोफेसर रतनलाल इसे समग्र संचयन तक जरूर ले जाएंगे.

इसमें संदेह नहीं कि डॉ. काशीप्रसाद जायसवाल हिंदी नवजगारण के महानायकों में थे. यह खासतौर से रेखांकित करने वाली बात है कि राहुल सांकृत्यायन भी उनको अपना मेंटर मानते थे. रवीन्द्रनाथ टैगोर से उनका दोस्ताना रिश्ता था और महात्मा गांधी को भी वे सुझाव दिया करते थे. उनका इतिहास संबंधी लेखन और अनुसंधान भी बहुआयामी है. शिलालेख और पुरानी लिपियों



के प्रामाणिक पाठ से लेकर अंधकारयुगीन भारत के ऐसे अदेखे इतिहास को उन्होंने उद्घाटित किया, जो इसके पहले नहीं हुआ था. उन्होंने तत्कालीन दौर में भाषा और साहित्य के अनेक जरूरी और सामयिक बहसों में हस्तक्षेप किया. उन पर महत्त्वपूर्ण लेख लिखे और हिंदी की शीर्ष प्रतिभाओं के साथ संवाद में रहे. एक ओर उन्होंने विसेंट ए. स्मिथ जैसे बड़े साम्राज्यवादी इतिहासकार से ऐसी जबर्दस्त बौद्धिक मुठभेड़ की, जैसी इसके पहले शायद किसी भारतीय इतिहासकार ने नहीं की थी. आज भी उसे पढ़ते हुए हम एक विरल बौद्धिक रोमांच से भर उठते हैं. दूसरी ओर उन्होंने अपनी भाषा में मौलिक और जातीय इतिहास लेखन की नींव रखी. काशी नागरी प्रचारिणी सभा के वे संस्थापक सदस्य ही नहीं थे, उसकी कई ग्रंथ मालाओं के वे कल्पक और शिल्पकार भी थे. हम उस ब्रिटिश साम्राज्यवाद के पराधीन दौर में रखकर उनके लेखन और कार्यों का आकलन करें तो उनका योगदान असाधारण महत्त्व का है. वे सिर्फ एक इतिहासकार और हिंदी लेखक ही नहीं थे. वे नवजागरण के समर्पित होलटाइमर थे. उन्होंने पत्र-पत्रिकाएं निकालीं, संस्थाओं के निर्माण में सक्रिय योगदान दिया, साथ ही जगह-जगह व्याख्यान देकर नवजागरण के नायकत्व वाली विविध सक्रियता का निर्बाह किया. ऐसे में उनका मूल्यांकन एक बड़े परिप्रेक्ष्य में रखकर किया जाना चाहिए था.प्रो. रतनलाल जी के कार्य की यह शुरुआत है और हम उम्मीद करते हैं कि इसको पूर्णता तक ले जाते समय वे ऐसा जरूर करेंगे.

डॉ. काशीप्रसाद जायसवाल के अध्ययन और शोध का भूगोल बहुत विस्तृत है और उनके लेखन में भी काफी वैविध्य है. गहन शोध के तथ्यपरक विश्लेषण के साथ, बहस की तार्किकता में उनकी विलक्षण मेधा का उत्कर्ष दिखाई देता है. यह अकारण नहीं है कि विसेंट ए. स्मिथ के साथ उनकी ऐतिहासिक बहस हमें आज भी विचारोत्तेजकता से भर देती है. इतिहासकारों की दुनिया में उन पर राष्ट्रवादी इतिहासकार का ऐसा ठप्पा चस्पां किया गया कि वे उससे आज तक मुक्त नहीं हो सके. अगर ऐसा था भी तो इस बात पर विचार किया जाना चाहिए था कि उनके राष्ट्रवाद का स्वरूप कैसा था? उनका राष्ट्रवाद प्रचलित राष्ट्रवाद की अवधारणा से कितना भिन्न था? सबसे महत्त्वपूर्ण बात यह कि क्या उनके राष्ट्रवाद पर अपने समय का प्रभाव था? उनके आसंग में राष्ट्रवाद से ही जुड़ी दूसरी बात 'हिंदुत्व' की भी है. इतिहास की दुनिया में ये दोनों तत्त्व उनकी ख्याति के कारक भी रहे और सीमा के भी. प्रो. रतनलाल ने उनके जीवन की बहुविध सक्रियता और विविध अवदानों का संक्षेप में उल्लेख करते हुए उनके लेखन में

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अंतर्विरोधों के भी पर्याप्त संकेत दिए हैं. दिक्कत यह है कि उस दौर में काशीप्रसाद जायसवाल के आकलन के लिए जिस बड़े कैनवस या विशाल परिप्रेक्ष्य की अपेक्षा थी, उसे उन्होंने छोड़ दिया है. ऐसे में उनका महत्त्व ही समय संदर्भच्युत होकर सीमित हो जाता है. यही कारण है कि न तो वे उन्हें अपने समय में रखकर और न ही अपने समकालीनों के बीच रखकर विस्तार और गहनता में उनका विश्लेषण करते हैं. प्रो. रतनलाल की भूमिकाओं को पढ़ते हुए यह तो लगता है कि उन्हें उनके व्यक्तित्व की विशालता और व्यापक लेखन की पूरी समझ है, अहसास है लेकिन वे अपेक्षित एकाग्रता, दीर्घता और श्रम में कुछ कोताही कर गए हैं. थोड़ा रुककर उन्हें और गहराई में जाना चाहिए था, जिसकी क्षमता का संकेत उन्होंने जगह-जगह दिया भी है. वे लिखते हैं, ''जायसवाल की शब्दावली ज्यादातर हिंदू परंपराओं से आती है. उनके मुहावरे, प्रेरणाएं और उनके दृष्टांत हिंदू-शास्त्रीय ग्रंथों से उद्धृत थे.'' वे आगे लिखते हैं, ''जायसवाल आर्य-हिंदू में कोई अंतर किए बिना ही इन शब्दों का उपयोग करते हैं और भारत के सभी समुदायों के लिए अमूमन 'हिंदू' शब्द का ही प्रयोग करते दिखते हैं.'' (खंड 2, पृ. 20)

पहली बात यह कि डॉ. जायसवाल का विचार और अध्ययन का विषय-वस्तु क्या है और उसका काल-खंड क्या है? उसमें गैर हिंदू ग्रंथों और इतिहास की कितनी गुंजाइश है? यह बात ध्यान रखनी होगी कि सिंधु के इधर रहने वाले बाशिंदों के पूरे समुदाय को 'हिंदू' शब्द से ही अभिहित करने की परंपरा सर सैयद अहमद तक आती है. एक व्याख्यान में सर सैयद खुद को 'हिंदू' कहते हैं. निस्संदेह प्रो. रतनलाल ने सवाल महत्त्वपूर्ण उठाया है कि वे 'भारत के सभी समुदायों के लिए अमूमन 'हिंदू' शब्द का ही प्रयोग करते हैं. मगर 'राष्ट्रवाद', 'हिंदू' या 'हिंदुत्व' के अर्थ-भेद में समय के साथ काफी अंतर आता गया है. इसलिए बहुत बुद्धिमत्ता, गंभीरता, सावधानी, तटस्थता और ईमानदारी के साथ बारीकियों में जाकर गहन विश्लेषण से यह रेखांकित करना होगा कि डॉ. जायसवाल के 'राष्ट्रवाद' का स्वरूप क्या और कैसा है? आखिर 'हिंदू' के व्यापक अर्थ-विस्तार में वे क्यों सारे समुदायों को समेटते हैं? 'हिंदू' को लेकर उनकी खुद की अवधारणा क्या है? 'हिंदू' एक धार्मिक आइडेंटिटी के रूप में कब से प्रयुक्त होता है? बिना इस सब पर सप्रमाण विचार किए हुए हम काशीप्रसाद जायसवाल की मूल अवधारणा को ठीक-ठीक नहीं समझ सकते. हिंदू समुदाय के भीतर वर्ण-व्यवस्था और हिंदू समुदाय के अंदरूनी अंतर्विरोधों को लेकर उनके पूरे साहित्य की और गहरी छानबीन की जरूरत है.

प्रो. रतनलाल ने यह बात भी लक्षित की है कि उनमें कट्टरता नहीं थी. वे मूल रूप से गैरसांप्रदायिक थे. इसलिए वे हिंदू-मुस्लिम समुदायों के बीच नफरत फैलाने वालों की आलोचना करते हैं. राहुल सांकृत्यायन के उद्धरण के साथ प्रो. रतनलाल लिखते हैं कि ''जायसवाल एक 'नास्तिक' प्रतिबद्ध देशभक्त और पूर्णतः धर्मनिरपेक्ष नहीं तो गैरसांप्रदायिक जरूर थे.'' (खंड-1, पृ. 20) मसलन वे ऐसे हिंदू थे जो नास्तिक थे और ईश्वर का मजाक उड़ाते थे. सवाल यह है कि पूर्णतया धर्मनिरपेक्ष होने के लिए अगर गैरधार्मिक होना जरूरी होगा तो मुस्लिम समुदाय में तो शायद ही कोई धर्मनिरपेक्ष मिले. तब महात्मा गांधी से लियो टॉलस्टाय की धर्मनिरपेक्षता भी संदिग्ध हो जाएगी. मूल बात यह है कि हिंदू या मुस्लिम होने से किसी समुदाय को कोई समस्या नहीं है, जब तक वह दूसरे धार्मिक समुदाय के प्रति नफरत न व्यक्त करे. दूसरे धर्म की निंदा न करे. डॉ. जायसवाल के 'हिंदू' होने की आलोचना के लिए जैसा मैंने कहा उनके लेखन के वर्ण-व्यवस्था पर उनके विचार की छानबीन करनी होगी. इस लिहाज से 24वें अखिल भारतीय है हय क्षत्रिय महासभा (1927) का उनका अध्यक्षीय भाषण है जिस पर प्रो. रतनलाल ने दूसरे खंड की भूमिका में चर्चा की है. उसमें रतनलाल जी ने उद्धरण तो लंबा दिया है लेकिन उसका विस्तार से विश्लेषण नहीं किया है. उसमें डॉ. जायसवाल ने साफ कहा है कि 'जाति मनुष्यकृत है ईश्वरकृत नहीं'. उन्होंने भारतीय समाज की इस दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण व्यवस्था पर खेद और आश्चर्य भी व्यक्त किया है कि ''सब देशों में शुरू और आदिम अवस्था में जातियां होती हैं और उन्नति, सभ्यता, ज्ञान प्रसार के साथ जातियां टूट जाती हैं. इतिहास इसका गवाह है...पर भारत में हिंदुओं ने बहुत बातों में उन्नति की पर जाति अभी तक न तोड़ी...अस्तु, अभी अपना देश बीमारी की अवस्था में है.'' (खंड-2, पृ. 192) अगर आप वे होते तो देखते कि यह बीमारी कैंसर बन चुकी है. आगे वे चातुर्वर्ण्य को नर समुद्र का कूपमंडूक कहते हैं और खुलकर कहते हैं कि चतुर्वर्ण्य का इतिहास अटल नहीं है. उन्होंने कुछ उदाहरण देते हुए यह बताया है कि ''चातुर्वर्ण्य कोई पक्का सिद्धांत नहीं है. ऐसा मानकर उसकी उत्पत्ति की तलाश बिल्कुल व्यर्थ परिश्रम है. इस चर्चा को आगे बढ़ाते हुए वे इस मध्ययुगीन संकीर्णता से मुक्त होने और आधुनिकता को वरण करने की अपील करते हैं.'' 'बीती ताहि बिसारि दे, आगे की सुध लेय'. हर एक को चाहिए कि अपनी-अपनी उन्नति करे. इस उन्नति की जड़ शिक्षा है. ...इसमें जो चुकता है वह पिछड़ता है. (खंड-2, पृ. 194) वे शिक्षा के लिए जातिगत छात्रावास का विरोध करते हैं और सबको साथ रहने का संदेश देते हैं. इसीलिए उनके 'हिंदुत्व' के स्वरूप और समझ पर प्रो. रतनलाल को और विस्तार से विचार करना होगा.

अखिल भारतीय हिंदी साहित्य सम्मेलन (इंदौर 1935) में डॉ. जायसवाल ने महात्मा गांधी के सामने भारतीयों द्वारा भारत के इतिहास लिखे जाने का जो सवाल उठाया, उसका महात्मा गांधी ने समर्थन किया. आखिर इस सवाल के पीछे उनकी सोच क्या थी? क्या थी उनकी छटपटाहट और क्यों थी? इसके पीछे की राष्ट्रवादी सोच साम्राज्यवाद विरोधी थी अथवा उनके राष्ट्रवादी सोच की परिणति, साम्राज्यवाद

की ओर ले जाने वाली थी? यह बात भी गौर करने वाली है कि वे भारतीय इतिहास परिषद् (1936) की ही स्थापना नहीं करते बल्कि वे रॉयल एशियाटिक सोसाइटी से जुड़कर एशिया और यूरोप के बीच श्रेष्ठता के इतिहास की भी छानबीन करते हैं. मौर्य, शुंग और सातवाहन काल के इतिहास को उटकेरते हुए जिस भारतीय सभ्यता का अनुसंधान करते हैं, शिलालेखों और प्राचीन लिपियों के पाठ शोधन के साथ मुद्राशास्त्र पर तो उनका काम लगभग प्रारंभिक दौर का ही कहा जाएगा. ऐसे में सिर्फ 'राष्ट्रवादी' ठप्पे को चस्पां कर उन्हें इतिहास में विमर्श से बाहर रखना या अनदेखी करना किसी दृष्टि से उचित नहीं है. मध्यकाल के पूर्व या आसपास जब भारत पर बाहर से आक्रमण होता है, उस संक्रमण काल के इतिहास को समझने, उसके प्रामाणिक साक्ष्यों की तलाश करने में उनका अप्रतिम योगदान है. प्रोफेसर रतनलाल से यह अपेक्षित है कि इतिहास के परिप्रेक्ष्य में उनके मौलिक कार्यों के महत्त्व को उनके समकालीनों के आसंग में रेखांकित किया जाए.

प्रो. रतनलाल ने उनके लेखन-वैविध्य की चर्चा की है और विभिन्न विषयों और विधाओं की दुर्लभ रचनाओं को संकलित भी किया है. उन्होंने कविताएं, यात्रा-संस्मरण, जीवनियां, व्याख्यान और साहित्यिक लेखों का स्तबक प्रस्तुत किया है. अगर वे इन विषय-विधा विशेष के प्रत्येक वर्गीकरण के प्रारंभ में संक्षिप्त या विस्तृत टिप्पणियां लिखकर इसके विषय-वस्तु और महत्त्व को रेखांकित करते तो ज्यादा बेहतर प्रस्तुति होती. खंड तीन में उन्होंने डॉ. जायसवाल के कुछ पत्राचार भी संकलित किए हैं, जिससे उनकी सक्रियता और संबंध विस्तार का एक अलग पक्ष ही उजागर होता है. इससे उनके व्यक्तित्व के कुछ अलक्षित कोनों पर भी रोशनी पड़ती है. उनके अध्ययन की तरह उनकी रुचियों का संसार भी बड़ा व्यापक था. वैसे तो उनके सारे पत्र किसी न किसी नजरिए से महत्त्वपूर्ण है मगर मुनि जिनविजय के साथ लंबा पत्राचार अनेक दृष्टियों से अत्यंत मूल्यवान है. इसमें एक जगह विसेंट स्मिथ के साथ पत्राचार का उल्लेख है लेकिन सबसे अधिक ध्यान आकृष्ट करता है उनके साथ इतिहास प्रमाणों या साक्ष्यों के पाठ-शोधन की चर्चा. उनके अन्य पत्रों की भी तलाश की जानी चाहिए. लेकिन इस क्रम में एक जमींदार मित्र को संबोधित उनका पत्र उनके विलक्षण व्यक्तित्व को प्रतिबिंबित करता है. उनकी निडरता, बेबाकीपन और किसानों के प्रति मार्मिक लगाव उन्हें बहुत ऊंचे दर्जे का नायकत्व प्रदान कर देता है. उन्होंने साफ लिखा है कि "भारत की मौजूद दरिद्रता असह्य है, उसकी भूमि-प्रणाली जो अतीत की एक जरा-जर्जरित विरासत है, इस समय इस ग्रह (पृथ्वी) का एक महान् अन्याय है." (खंड-3, पृ. 188) उन्होंने अपने जमींदार मित्र से कोई मुरौवत नहीं की है और खरी-खरी सुना दी है कि जिन किसानों के दर्द से एक अंग्रेज लेखक द्रवित हो जाता है, "आप इस ग्रह के एक महान् अन्याय को दानतेमरारी बनाए रखना चाहते है." आगे तो उन्होंने लिहाज की चादर भी हटा दी है. "प्रियवर, इस क्षेत्र में एक भी ऐसी जमींदारी नहीं है जिसके जमींदार की मांगों को पूरा करने में किसान की हत्या न हुई हो, फिर भी आप उनका समर्थन करते हैं. मैं उनका समर्थन आपकी मित्रता खोने पर भी नहीं कर सकता." (खंड-3, पृ. 188) ऐसा क्रांतिकारी जज्बा, ऐसी सोच, ऐसी विरल मानसिकता—उस दौर में कितने इतिहासकारों की थी? इस किसानों की हमदर्दी और जमींदारों के विरोध में उनकी धड़कती देशभक्ति को हम सहजता से महसूस कर सकते हैं.

इस तरह उनके साहित्य में अभी बहुत कुछ ऐसा अलक्षित है जो गहन और बारीक छानबीन की मांग करता है. इसमें तो कोई संदेह ही नहीं कि प्रो. रतनलाल ने असाधारण प्रतिभा के रचनाकार काशीप्रसाद जायसवाल के लगभग अप्राप्य साहित्य को सामने लाकर स्तुत्य कार्य किया है. यह बात तो वे खुद दुहराते हैं कि अपने बहुविध लेखन और विविध सक्रियता के कारण उनका व्यक्तित्व विशाल था. ऐसे में रतनलाल जी से यह अपेक्षा भी बनती है कि वे उनका मूल्यांकन उनकी गरिमा के अनुरूप तत्कालीन राष्ट्रीय फलक पर रखकर करें. "यह याद करने वाली बात है कि मशहूर उपन्यासकार अमृतलाल नागर के प्रसिद्ध उपन्यास 'बूंद और समुद्र' में उसका एक महत्त्वपूर्ण चरित्र कहता है कि उसका वश चले तो वह हर चौक-चौराहे पर काशीप्रसाद जायसवाल की मूर्ति लगवा दे." इसलिए उनके लेखन में जो वैविध्य है उसके महत्त्व उद्घाटन के लिए यह जरूरी है कि उन सब पर अलग-अलग टिप्पणियां लिखी जाएं. लेकिन सबसे महत्त्वपूर्ण बात यह कि उनके लिखे को बहुत ही सतर्कता और गंभीरता से विश्लेषित करने की जरूरत है क्योंकि उसमें उनकी सोच ही नहीं मानसिक बुनावट भी छुपी हुई है. उनके विविध कार्यों के पीछे उनके स्वप्न, उनकी तड़प और जज्बे की तलाश करनी होगी. तमाम संपादकीय उनकी चिंताओं के अक्श जैसे हैं. आज तक उनको उनके इलाके के इतिहासकारों के बीच रखकर वह जगह नहीं दी गई जिसके वे हकदार थे. हम सबकी यह अधीर प्रतीक्षा रहेगी कि प्रो. रतनलाल इस कार्य को अपेक्षित पूर्णता तक ले जाए जिससे इस दुर्लभ विलक्षण प्रतिभा को उसकी अपनी जगह हासिल हो सके.

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मोहभंग के धुंधलके

गोपाल माथुर

परख

'पेड़ खाली नही है'—यह खालीपन वह नहीं है, जो एक पेड़ अपने पतझड़ के दिनों में स्वयं बुनता है और न ही वह भरा होना है, जैसा कि एक पेड़ वसंत के दिनों में पत्तों और फूलों से पल्लवित होता है. पेड़ का यह खालीपन एक परिंदे के चश्मे से महसूस किया गया खालीपन है, जब वह अपने लिए पेड़ पर घोंसला बनाने की जगह तक नहीं ढूंढ़ पाता.

'पेड़ खाली नहीं है' उस परिंदे की कथा है, जिसे नरेन्द्र नागदेव उसकी असीम ऊंचाइयों से जमीन पर आने की पीड़ा को पाठकों के साथ साझा करते हैं. यह वेनगॉग की भी कथा है, जिसे वे परिंदे का रूप बनाकर प्रस्तुत करते हैं. यह मोहभंग से उपजी पीड़ा है, जिसे वे व्यंजना में भिगोकर अद्‌भुत कलात्मकता के साथ प्रस्तुत करते हैं.

यह हर उस व्यक्ति की कथा है, जो तमाम उम्र आदर्शों, उच्च मानवीय मूल्यों, और सरोकारों को एक यूटोपिया की तरह जीता है, लेकिन एक दिन मोहभंग होते ही ठोस जमीनी हकीकतों से टकरा जाता है. जिन सपनों की दुनिया में वह भटकता रहा था, ठोस धरातलों पर आते ही वे चकनाचूर हो जाती हैं. उसके लिए अपने बसेरे की जगह ढूंढ़ पाना तक एक बड़ी समस्या बन जाती है.

वे लिखते हैं—"मोहभंग दरअसल एक चालाक जानवर होता है, जो हर उस शख्स के लिए घात लगाकर बैठा होता है झाड़ियों में, जो अपनी एक छोटी, एक इनोसेंट दुनिया में जी लेने की कोशिश करता है, कुछ आस्थाओं के सहारे, कुछ सपनों के बीच. कथाकार स्वीकार करता है कि "देश और वक्त बदल जाते हैं बंधु, नहीं बदलती है तो सिर्फ नियति. एम्सटरडम का सरसों का खेत हो या दशहरा मैदान के चबूतरे पर जख्मी पड़ा कबूतर—सब एक ही नियति के अक्स हैं."



वरिष्ठ कथाकार नरेन्द्र नागदेव अपने इस संग्रह 'पेड़ खाली नहीं है' के साथ एक बड़े फलक के कथाकार के रूप में हमारे सामने आते हैं. वे जीवन से सूक्ष्म संवेदनाओं को चुनकर उनके इर्द-गिर्द अपनी कथा बुनते हैं. उनकी बुनावट किसी जुलाहे की बुनावट नहीं है. वरन् किसी अप्रतिम कलाकार के सधे कलात्मक हाथों का चमत्कार लगती है, जो अपनी कलम की नोक से अद्‌भुत कहानियां पाठकों के सामने परोसता है. उनकी कहानियां मानव मन की गहरी पड़ताल करती चलती हैं. वे उलझाती नहीं, सुलझाती भी नहीं, लेकिन स्थितियों का चित्रात्मक स्वरूप पाठकों के सामने रखती चलती हैं ताकि पाठक उन स्थितियों के बीच स्वयं को रखकर किसी ठोस नतीजे पर पहुंच सके. यह भी आवश्यक नहीं कि वे किसी नतीजे पर पहुंचे ही. आवश्यक यह है कि वे उन संवेदनाओं से रूबरू हो सकें, उनकी गंध, उनकी धड़कनें, उनका पसीना महसूस कर सकें, जिन्हें लेखक अपनी कथाओं के माध्यम से उनके सामने खोलने का प्रयास कर रहा है. अपने इस प्रयास में नरेन्द्र नागदेव पूरी तरह सफल हुए हैं. उनका लेखन सफल हुआ है और इसमें इन दोनों की सार्थकता निहित है.

"तमाम परिस्थितियां ठहर गई होंगी उनके भीतर एक गहरा उदास कुहासा बनकर. ट्रेन छूटने के बाद वे रात में कसमसाते रहे होंगे अपनी इन दिव्य उपलब्धियों के भार से कि तभी तीसरे पहर के सन्नाटे और अंधेरे में ट्रेन किसी ऐसे स्टेशन पर रुकी होगी, जहां उन्हें लगा होगा कि अब तक की दुनिया पीछे छूट गई है. अब सामने यह है एक नितांत अजनबी दुनिया, जहां कोई भी नहीं है पहचानने वाला." (गुमशुदा)

दरअसल 'गुमशुदा' महज एक ऐसे व्यक्ति की कहानी नहीं है जो प्रतिभाशाली तो था, पर जिसे पहचान नहीं मिल सकी. बल्कि उसके बहाने समाज के उस चेहरे की कहानी है, जो अपने निजी सुख-दुख और लाभ के लिए किसी भी सीमा तक जाने को बेचैन रहता है.

कह सकते हैं कि इस संग्रह में नरेन्द्र जी ने स्वयं अपना विस्तार किया है जो किसी भी लेखक के लिए एक महत्त्वपूर्ण उपलब्धि होती है. कथाओं की गत्यात्मकता जो आरंभ से ही उनकी पहचान रही है, इस संग्रह तक आते-आते निखरकर नई ऊंचाइयों का स्पर्श करने में सफल रही है. कहानियों की बुनावट भी हार्श नहीं है. वह आहिस्ता-आहिस्ता अपना मंतव्य प्रकट करती है. इसी कारण कथाओं में चौंकाने वाला तथ्य लगभग अनुपस्थित है. पाठक कहानियों से मित्र की तरह मिलता है और

गलबहियां डालकर चलने लगता है.

ऐसी ही एक कहानी है 'दाराशिकोह की उपनिषद'. एक पीरियड कहानी होते हुए भी कथा की समकालीनता अद्‌भुत ढंग से उद्‌घाटित हुई है. वे लिखते हैं, "लेकिन उनके पास पल-पल की खबरें पहुंचाने वाले शातिर खबरियों की नजर से भी एक बात चूक गई कि शोभा यात्रा शुरू होने के वक्त से पहले ही उनके साथ ऊपर आकाश में एक कागज का पन्ना उड़ता चला जा रहा था...वह कभी ऊपर होता, तो कभी बेहद नीचे आ जाता था. और अब जबकि यात्रा बड़े दरवाजे पर ठहर गई है, तो वह पन्ना हवा में चक्कर काटते हुए नीचे आकर सीधे मोहर सिंग के अंकुश में आकर अटक गया है."

प्रत्येक लेखक अपनी तरह से किसी भी विषय को ट्रीट करता है, और नरेन्द्र नागदेव का ट्रीटमेंट कहानियों की प्राणवायु की तरह सामने आता है. खूबसूरत शिल्प में गुंथी ये कहानियां संयमित रहते हुए अपने कथानकों का कथा के अंत तक सफलतापूर्वक निर्वाह करती चलती हैं. रचनाकार ने जिस सुंदर शिल्प को जन्म दिया है, उसमें लगातार अभिवृद्धि होती रही है. उनका शिल्प पाठक को उलझाता नहीं और न ही कोई मानसिक व्यायाम कराता है.

उदाहरणार्थ वे अपनी कहानी 'वेनिशिंग पाइंट' में एक स्थान पर लिखते हैं–"गांठ पड़ चुकी थी. बाद के दिनों में हम आमने-सामने बैठकर अपने काम तो करते थे, लेकिन उस गांठ को महसूस भी करते थे. न पहले की तरह सिखाते हुए वे मुझ पर अधिकारपूर्वक नाराज होते थे, न मैं ही श्रद्धापूर्वक उनसे किसी मार्गदर्शन की अपेक्षा करता था."

एक लेखक का कौशल उसकी भाषागत प्रतिभा से भी प्रकट होता है. नरेन्द्र नागदेव की शैली प्रवाहमय और बोधगम्य है. वे मुश्किल बिंबों का प्रयोग प्रायः नहीं करते, और न ही उनके यहां रूपकों की बहुतायात है. सहज सौंदर्यपूर्ण कलात्मक अभिव्यक्ति उनकी पहचान है. उनकी सर्जनात्मक यात्रा विलक्षण पात्रों के माध्यम से अपनी भावनाओं को शब्दों में पिरोते हुए पूरी होती है.

इस जगह पहुंचकर उनकी कहानी 'तम्बाकू लाना जरा' की बात करना आवश्यक हो गया है. यह इस संग्रह की न सिर्फ पहली कहानी है, बल्कि अनेक दृष्टियों से महत्त्वपूर्ण भी है. यह कहानी मानव मन की गहराई से पड़ताल करती है. नर्मदा के बीहड़ों में सन् 1829 के आसपास के दिनों में जो पीले रेशमी रूमाल वाले हत्यारे ठगों का आतंक था, यह कथा उन्हीं के इर्द-गिर्द बुनी गई है. निरीह यात्रियों की हत्या के लिए वे 'तंबाकू लाना जरा' की सांकेतिक भाषा का प्रयोग करते थे. लेकिन एक दिन यही संकेत उनमें से एक हत्यारा मुखिया पिता वर्षों पहले बिछुड़े अपने बेटे की हत्या के लिए स्वयं ही प्रयोग में ले आएगा, यह उसे भी पता नहीं था. जबकि बेटा स्वयं निरीह यात्री का वेष धरकर उसे गिरफ्तार करने के मिशन पर ही निकला था. कहानी में अनेक भावनात्मक मोड़ हैं. मानव मन की उलझी हुई गुत्थियों का समावेश है और एक अनसुलझी दुविधा है. परिस्थितिवश ठग बने पिता, और उसे फांसी के फंदे तक पहुंचाने को वचनबद्ध पुत्र के अंतर्द्वंद्व को रचनाकार ने बहुत ही सघनता से प्रस्तुत किया है. कहानी का अंत मार्मिक बन पड़ा है.

अनेक कारणों से समाज से बहिष्कृत और हाशिए पर जीवन व्यतीत कर रहे लोगों को केंद्र में रखकर रची गई कहानी 'गिद्ध' को भी अद्‌भुत शिल्प कौशल के साथ बुना गया है. कथानक की बात की जाए तो यह समाज के उपेक्षित वर्ग के शोषण की कथा है. वे कितना भी बेहतर क्यों न करें, समाज का उच्च वर्ग कभी भी उन्हें मुख्य धारा में स्वीकार नहीं करता. एक अकेला उपेक्षित युवक सूने पड़े अकालग्रस्त गांव में कुआं खोदता है, जहां से जल भी निकल आता है, और पलायन किए गांववासी लौट भी आते हैं लेकिन उस नवयुवक को श्रेय देने की बजाय उसे प्रताड़ित किया जाता है. उस पर चोरी का इल्जाम लगाया जाता है, क्योंकि कुआं खोदने के लिए उसने आवश्यक औजार मुखिया के घर से उसकी अनुपस्थिति में प्राप्त किए थे. कुआं खोदते समय वह नहीं जानता था कि यह समाज उसे एक बार फिर अस्वीकार करने वाला है. गांव में अकेले छोड़ दिए गए युवक के मन की आशा को लेखक ने बहुत ही सुंदर भाषा में अभिव्यक्त किया है. पूरी तरह खाली गांव में सिर्फ प्रकृति ही उसकी साथी बची रह गई है.

नरेन्द्र नागदेव के यहां प्रकृति कहानी के वाहक की तरह नहीं, बल्कि एक महत्त्वपूर्ण पात्र की तरह प्रयुक्त होती है.

एक अन्य महत्त्वपूर्ण कहानी है 'छलांग', जो स्वतंत्रता संग्राम के दिनों की याद दिला देती है. किंतु मूलतः यह कथा अंतर्द्वंद्व की कथा है. पिता-पुत्र की अलग-अलग सोच की कथा है. क्रांतिकारी पिता अंग्रेजों के खिलाफ बगावत करने पर आमादा है, तो वहीं उसका पुत्र उन्हीं अंग्रेजों को सीढ़ी बनाकर सफलता की ऊंचाइयां छूना चाहता है. दो अलग-अलग विचार इस कहानी के मूल में निहित हैं. पिता-पुत्र के बीच सोच की यह दूरी उनके रिश्तों को चूर-चूर कर देती है.

नरेन्द्र नागदेव की कहानियां ठोस धरातल की कहानियां हैं. वे अनावश्यक भावुकता से कोसों दूर रहते हुए अपना रचना-कर्म करते हैं. प्रत्येक कहानी पाठक

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को किसी नखलिस्तान में ले जाने की बजाय उसे अपने आसपास ही घटती हुई होने का एहसास कराती है.

ये कहानियां पाठक से दूर रहकर बात नहीं करतीं, बल्कि उनका हाथ पकड़कर साथ ले चलती हैं. महत्त्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि नरेन्द्र नागदेव कहानी कहते हुए नहीं, सुनाते हुए महसूस होते हैं. कहानी के बीच-बीच में 'बंधु' का प्रयोग कहानी को आत्मीय बना देता है.

उनकी ये कहानियां वर्तमान हिंदी साहित्य की श्रेष्ठ कहानियों के बीच रखी जा सकती हैं.

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लघुकथा

नाई के पांव

नीरज कुमार नीर

"बन-संवरकर कहां चल दिए बेटा?" रमेश को बाहर जाते हुए देख शर्मा जी ने पूछा.

"ट्यूशन जा रहा हूं डैड." रमेश ने कहा.

"अच्छा इधर तो आ. देख! हमारे घर कौन आए हैं." शर्मा जी ने कहा.

रमेश ने देखा एक चौबीस पच्चीस साल का स्मार्ट-सा लड़का ड्राइंग रूम में सोफे पर बैठा था.

"आओ बेटा, इनके पैर छूओ. ये सतीश कुमार हैं. अपने शहर में बड़े अधिकारी बनकर आए हैं." शर्मा जी ने कहा.

रमेश ने झुककर सतीश कुमार के पैर छुए. जिसे देखकर शर्मा जी पुरानी यादों में खो गए.

20 साल पुरानी बात है. उनकी शादी का अवसर था. आज उनका बेटा 18 वर्ष का हो गया है. उस समय वे स्वयं सतीश कुमार की तरह 24 वर्ष के नौजवान थे. गांव में घर-परिवार की बहुत प्रतिष्ठा थी. शर्मा जी शहर से पढ़-लिखकर आए थे और उनकी शादी हो रही थी. शादी समारोह में एक कार्यक्रम के दौरान उनकी मां ने कहा, "बेटा, सभी बड़े बुजुर्गों के पांव छूकर आशीष ले लो." कई नाते-रिश्तेदार, गांव के बड़े सभी वहां मौजूद थे. शर्मा जी बारी-बारी से सबके पांव छू रहे थे कि अचानक सभी लोग बहुत जोर से हंस पड़े. इस अचानक हुए हंसी के विस्फोट से शर्मा जी अकचका गए. शर्मा जी ने सिर उठाकर देखा तो पता चला कि उन्होंने पैर छूने के क्रम में रमेशर नाई का पैर छू लिया था और इसी बात पर सब हंस रहे थे. शर्मा जी शर्म से लाल हो गए. उन्हें अपने पर बहुत गुस्सा आ रहा था. वैसे तो रमेशर नाई उम्र में काफी बड़े थे, पर पूरे गांव-समाज के सामने हंसी का पात्र बनने के कारण वे चिढ़ गए थे. शादी के बाद उनके यार-दोस्त इस बात के लिए उन्हें चिढ़ाते रहते कि उन्होंने शादी करने की धुन में रमेशर नाई का पैर छू लिया था. घर के आंगन की भाभियां भी ताना देती रहती कि बबुआ ने तो शादी की जल्दीबाजी में रमेशर नाई के भी पैर छू लिए थे. इसमें हालांकि रमेशर नाई का कोई दोष नहीं था, पर इस घटना के बाद उन्हें रमेशर नाई कभी फूटी आंख नहीं सुहाते थे. जब कभी रमेशर नाई से उनका सामना हुआ वे असहज हो जाते. हालांकि रमेशर उनका हालचाल लेने का हमेशा प्रयत्न करते एवं बड़ी ही इज्जत से उनको संबोधित करते पर शर्मा जी ने कभी उसकी ओर ध्यान नहीं दिया.

"अब मैं जाऊं डैड." अपने बेटे रमेश की आवाज से शर्मा जी पुनः वर्तमान में लौटे.

"हां-हां! बेटा, तुम जाओ." शर्मा जी ने कहा.

"आप चाय लेंगे या कॉफी?" शर्मा जी ने सामने बैठे मुसकुराते हुए सतीश कुमार को देखकर पूछा.

"नहीं अंकल, मैं निकलूंगा. कल मुझे गांव भी जाना है. आज बहुत काम बाकी है." सतीश कुमार ने मुस्कराते हुए कहा.

"अच्छा रामेश्वर जी को मेरा प्रणाम कहिएगा." शर्मा जी ने कहा.

शर्मा जी सतीश कुमार को नीचे गेट तक छोड़ने आए और गाड़ी का दरवाजा स्वयं खोलते हुए कहा, "रामेश्वर जी को मेरा प्रणाम प्रेषित करना नहीं भूलिएगा."

"नहीं-नहीं अंकल, नहीं भूलूंगा." सतीश कुमार ने मुसकुराते हुए कहा. इस बार उसकी मुस्कान कुछ ज्यादा गहरी थी.

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संपर्क : शुभ गौरी इन्क्लेव के पीछे, बुद्ध विहार,
पो. ऑ. : अशोक नगर
रांची-834002 (झारखण्ड)

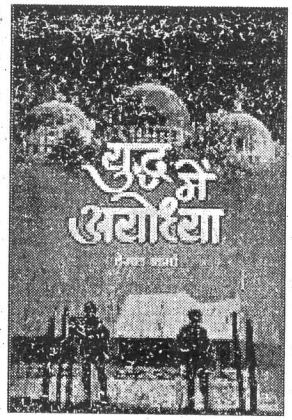
पत्रकारिता, साहित्य और इतिहास लेखन का त्रिवेणी सरीखा संगम

पुष्पेश पंत

परख

वरिष्ठ पत्रकार हेमंत शर्मा की हालिया प्रकाशित किताबें–'युद्ध में अयोध्या' और 'अयोध्या का चश्मदीद' हैं. हेमंत शर्मा लंबे समय तक जनसत्ता से जुड़े रहे हैं. उन्होंने अयोध्या को बहुत विस्तार से कवर किया है. अपनी पुस्तक की भूमिका में वे बताते हैं कि उन्होंने डेढ़ सौ से ज्यादा बार अयोध्या का दौरा किया है. साथ ही वो 1949 में मूर्तियों के 'प्रकट' होने के बाद से हुई हर बड़ी घटना में वहां खुद मौजूद रहे हैं जिसमें मंदिर का ताला खुलना, शिलान्यास, कारसेवकों पर गोली चलना और ध्वंस शामिल है. जाहिर है अयोध्या विवाद से जुड़ी ये सभी घटनाएं उनकी आंखों के सामने घटी हैं. अयोध्या का चश्मदीद में लेखक ने उस दौर की अपनी रिपोर्ट्स को भी शामिल किया है. हेमंत शर्मा की कलम की सबसे बड़ी शक्ति यह है कि उनमें एक सृजनात्मक कल्पनाशील लेखक है, जो उनसे लिखवा रहा है. उनकी भाषा प्रांजल है जो मंत्रमुग्ध कर देती है. कहीं न कहीं उसमें किस्सागोई का पुट तो होता है लेकिन उसमें काल्पनिक कुछ भी नहीं होता. उनके भीतर का सजग सतर्क पत्रकार हर वक्त वहां मौजूद रहता है. निष्पक्षता के साथ जो देखता है वो पाठकों तक पहुंचाता है.

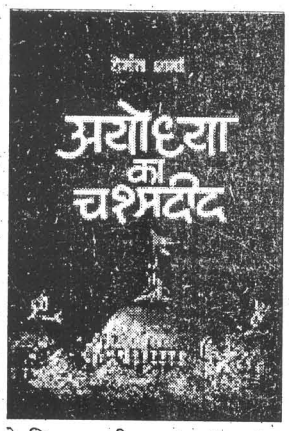
मुझे याद आता है कि कई वर्ष पहले जब वियतनाम मुक्ति संग्राम का ज्वार उफान पर था तब अमेरिकी उपन्यासकार नॉर्मन मेलर ने 'आर्मीज ऑफ दि नाइट' नाम से एक लंबा रिपोर्ताज लिखा है जिसमें युद्ध विरोधी जनांदोलनकारियों के शक्ति प्रदर्शन का रोमांचक वर्णन था. तब यह कहा गया था कि लेखक ने 'नॉनफिक्शन नॉवेल' की अनूठी विधा का आविष्कार किया है. उनकी इस रचना को प्रतिष्ठित पुलित्जर पुरस्कार से सम्मानित भी किया गया था. हेमंत शर्मा की अयोध्या पर केंद्रित जुड़वां किताबों को पढ़ते अनायास यह विचार आता है कि इस लेखक ने भी पत्रकारिता, साहित्य और इतिहास लेखन का त्रिवेणी सरीखा संगम कराने का सार्थक भागीरथ प्रयास किया है. इन तीन विषयों के अलावा राजनीतिक विश्लेषण और सांस्कृतिक विरासत और धर्म के जटिल रिश्तों की विचारोत्तेजक पड़ताल का जोखिम भी लेखक ने उठाया है. मुझे लगता है कि इस पुस्तक के जो दो खंड हैं वो बिलकुल वैसे ही लिखे गए हैं जैसे एक परिश्रमी, सत्यशोधक शोधकर्ता होता और वो इस किताब को लिख रहा होता. इस किताब के दोनों खंड जो धैर्य के साथ पढ़ेगा वो अयोध्या के अतीत, वर्तमान और भविष्य तीनों से परिचित हो जाएगा.



सबसे उल्लेखनीय बात यह है कि इन पुस्तकों पर किसी भी तरह के पक्षपात या पूर्वाग्रह का लांछन लेखक पर नहीं लगाया जा सकता है. अपने लेखकीय वक्तव्य में वो ये कहते भी हैं कि "अयोध्या पर अब खूब लिखा गया लेकिन जो भी लिखा गया वो या तो इस पक्ष की बात करता है या उस पक्ष की बात करता है. अयोध्या की किसी ने नहीं सुनी, मैंने शायद पहली बार ये प्रयास किया है कि अयोध्या को हाजिर-नाजिर जानकर अयोध्या के सच और अयोध्या के पक्ष को सामने रखूं." 6 दिसंबर, 1992 को अगर याद करें तो स्थिति ये है कि आज उस तारीख को बीते 25 से ज्यादा वर्ष बीत चुके हैं. कई चीजें जो आपको लगता है कि हमें पता तो थीं लेकिन हम भूल रहे थे ये किताबें ऐसी घटनाओं को प्रामाणिक ढंग से याद दिलाती हैं. इसके अलावा उस तारीख के बाद जन्म लेने वाली एक पूरी की पूरी पीढ़ी वयस्क हो चुकी है. शायद उनके भी बच्चे पैदा हो रहे हैं इसलिए उस पीढ़ी के लिए ये किताबें दस्तावेजी ऐतिहासिक चीज हैं. इसमें साहित्य का सुख भी है, सहज भी है और प्रामाणिक भी है. इसके अलावा बड़ी बात ये भी है कि हिंदी में 'रिसर्च' पर आधारित काम कम हुआ है. लेकिन कुछ लेखकों की ये खासियत होती है कि वे जब भी कुछ लिखते हैं चाहे यात्रा-वृत्तांत ही क्यों न हो उसमें भी इतनी सारी जानकारियां होती हैं–कहीं इतिहास की, कहीं किस्सागोई की, कहीं गैजेटियर की कि परत दर परत पाठक उनके अनुभवों को महसूस करता है. उसमें साझेदारी करता है. 'युद्ध में अयोध्या' और 'अयोध्या का चश्मदीद' की भी यही खूबी है. इन किताबों में भी सारी टिप्पणियां हैं, स्रोत हैं, गैजेटियर का उल्लेख है, अंग्रेजों के जमाने के कानूनी दस्तावेज भी सुलभ हैं. लिहाजा आप कहीं भी अपना पूर्वाग्रह या पक्षधरता पाठक पर थोप नहीं रहे हैं.

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Hindi Literature - Hindi



हेमंत शर्मा की भाषा-शैली का सम्मोहन इसे अंग्रेजी मुहावरे वाला 'पेज टर्नर थ्रिलर' बना देती है. जब आप किताब के पन्नों से गुजरते हैं तो थोड़ा ठहरकर पहले पढ़ी पंक्तियों के बारे में सोचने-विचार करने की मोहलत लेना असंभव-सा लगता है. एक छोटा-सा उदाहरण इसे रेखांकित करने के लिए काफी रहेगा. 1962 वाले भारत-चीन सीमा युद्ध की ही तरह 1992 में अयोध्या के 'अपराधियों' की सूची भी काफी लंबी है. तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री, गृहमंत्री, राज्य के मुख्यमंत्री ही नहीं बल्कि मौके पर तैनात कानून के राज और शांति व्यवस्था बनाए रखने के लिए जिम्मेदार आला अफसरों की कायरता, मौकापरस्ती आदि की गफलतों को बड़ी आसानी से 'जाने दो, जियो और जीने दो' वाली शैली में भुलाया जाता रहा है. लेखक एक पंक्ति में ही बहुत कुछ कह जाने में माहिर है. वह बताता है कि कैसे कारसेवकों की उत्तेजित भीड़ के अयोध्या पहुंचने की धमक से डरकर डिविजनल कमिश्नर मधुकर गुप्ता अपना सरकारी आवास छोड़कर भाग गए थे. यह रणछोड़ मुद्रा उन्हें बहुत रास आई. कुछ समय बाद वे केंद्र सहकार में गृहमंत्री बने. अवकाश ग्रहण करने के बाद उन्हें लोकसेवा आयोग का सदस्य भी नियुक्त किया गया. गैर जिम्मेदारी को पुरस्कृत करने का इससे अच्छा उदाहरण क्या हो सकता है?

'युद्ध में अयोध्या' और 'अयोध्या का चश्मदीद' में यह तय कर पाना कठिन है कि दोनों पुस्तकों में ज्यादा पठनीय और उपयोगी कौन-सी है. डेढ़ सौ साल से चले आ रहे विवादित जमीन के मालिकाना हक वाले ऐतिहासिक मुकदमे की पेचीदगियों को लेखक ने बड़े कौशल और आसानी से सुलझाकर समझाया है. विवाद से जुड़े एक-दूसरे के सामने मुठभेड़ में डटे अलग-अलग पक्षों के हितोन्यस्त स्वार्थों, प्रत्यक्ष और परदे के पीछे के समझौतों, कलह और सुलह का दिलचस्प बखान ही यहां नहीं बल्कि इस दुखद 'नाटक' के प्रमुख और अदना पात्रों का भी इससे अच्छा परिचय कहीं और नहीं मिल सकता. हेमंत जी ने बड़े श्रम से अब तक गोपनीय सरकारी फाइलों में छिपी सामग्री को यहां सुलभ बनाया है. समसामयिक प्रकाशित समाचारों की कतरनों से लेकर अभिलेखागारों में संरक्षित सार्वजनिक व्यक्तियों के कागज-पत्तर तक कुछ भी हेमंत की पैनी नजर से नहीं छूटा है. इतिहास के शोध छात्र ही नहीं सिद्धहस्त आचार्य भी इससे बहुत कुछ सीख सकते हैं.

अदालती फैसलों और स्थानीय स्तर पर प्रकाशित सामग्री के अलावा मौकाए वारदात पर मौजूद अयोध्या के इस चश्मदीद ने पत्रकारिता धर्म के निर्वाह में रत्ती भर चूक नहीं होने दी है. पाठक यहां जुटाए साक्ष्यों का मूल्यांकन खुद कर सकता है.

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पुस्तक : युद्ध में अयोध्या • अयोध्या का चश्मदीद
लेखक : हेमंत शर्मा
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लघुकथा

चपत

राजेन्द्र सिंह गहलोत

दोपाया हिरनियों का आखेट मेरा प्रिय शगल है. मेरा ही नहीं ग्राम के हर प्रभावशाली सवर्ण व्यक्ति का यह प्रिय शगल है. ये निम्न जाति की दोपाया हिरणियां अब विरोध नहीं करतीं. विवशता में आगोश में आते ही बिछ जाती हैं. कसम से ऐसी दोपाया हिरनियों को भोगने के बाद जब वे जाने लगतीं तो उनकी तरफ सौ-पचास रुपए के नोट को उछालकर उनके पिछाड़ी पर चपत लगाने में बड़ा मजा आता. वे जब शरमाकर बिदककर भागती तो मैं ठठाकर हंस पड़ता.

लेकिन उस दिन कुछ अलग ही हुआ. उम्र में मुझसे कुछ बड़ी पर बेहद गदराई उस अहीर की छोरी को मैंने बिछाना चाहा लेकिन उसने बांहों में जकड़कर मुझे ही बिछा दिया. मुझे एकाएक लगा मैं उसे नहीं वह मुझे भोग रही है और भोग के बाद तृप्त होकर मेरा गाल चूमते हुए बोली–"लल्लू साब आज तो मजा आ ग ओ." इसके पहले कि मैं उसके तरफ नोट उछालूं वह दूध की मटकी मेरे पास रखकर बोली–"ल्यौ राजा दूध पी लियौ और मटकती हुई चली गई. न जाने क्यों मैं शरमा गया और अगले पल ही लगा जैसे किसी ने जोरदार चपत मेरे पिछाडी पर मार दी हो. तब से आज तक न जाने क्यों मेरी पिछाड़ी तिलमिलाती ही रहती है.

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संपर्क : सिंह प्रिंटिंग प्रेस
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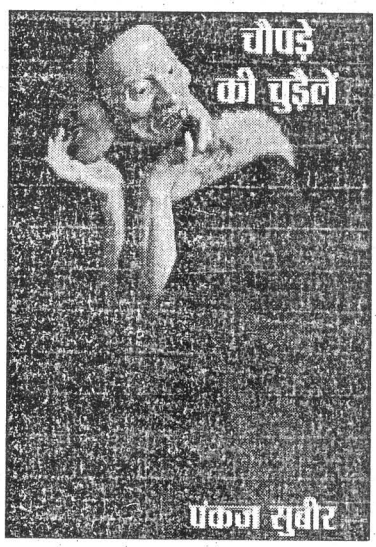
व्यक्ति और समाज के अंतर्मन की रहस्य-गाथा

प्रज्ञा

परख

आज हिंदी कहानी में कई पीढ़ियों के कथाकार एक साथ सक्रिय हैं. पीढ़ी विभेद से परे वे सामूहिक रूप से समय की विभिन्न चुनौतियों से जूझ रहे हैं. जाहिर है इन सभी का अपने समय को देखने का नजरिया और उसे कहानी में प्रस्तुत करने की प्रविधियां भिन्न-भिन्न हैं पर यह कहना संभवतः अतिशयोक्ति न होगी कि विषय, भाषा, शैली, शिल्प के अनेक प्रयोग हिंदी कहानी में हो रहे हैं. यदि मात्र विषयों को ही लें तो आप देखेंगे कि आज विविध विषयों पर लिखा जा रहा है. पर्यावरण, राजनीति, जेंडर, भूमंडलीकरण के बाद आए आर्थिक परिवर्तन, नया सांप्रदायिक रूढ़िवाद, गांवों से शहर, कस्बों में विस्थापन से लेकर अन्य स्थानीय-वैश्विक विषयों पर आज लिखा जा रहा है. आज की कहानी न सिर्फ इन विषयों को पकड़ रही है बल्कि पाठक को भी उस चिंतन धारा में लाने का बेहद सचेत प्रयास कर रही है. विविधता के इस दृष्टिकोण से हिंदी कहानी का समकाल रोचक भी है और महत्त्वपूर्ण भी.

इधर की कहानी समय के जटिल यथार्थ को अभिव्यक्त करने के क्रम में अनेक समस्याओं से जूझते हुए उस मानवीय संवेदना को पाने की जद्दोजहद में लगी दिखाई देती है जो आज समाज, रिश्तों और संबंधों से छीजती चली जा रही है. कई बार कहानी इस संवेदना को भावुकता के छोर से पकड़ती है तो कई बार यथास्थिति से वस्तुपरकता के धरातल पर संघर्षरत रहकर. कई बार कथा-भाषा मार्मिकता के तंतुओं से निर्मित होती है तो अनेक बार व्यंग्य के ताने-बाने से. पंकज सुबीर का नया कहानी-संग्रह 'चौपड़े की चुड़ैलें' इस बात की तस्दीक करता है. संग्रह की भिन्न-भिन्न विषयों पर लिखी नौ कहानियों में एक बेचैन, खतरनाक और अनेक बार मनुष्य विरोधी समय को देखने-परखने और विश्लेषित करने की प्रक्रिया साथ चलती है और साथ में चलता है मनुष्य की सहज मनुष्यता, ईमानदारी, जिजीविषा को बचाए रखने और दर्ज करते चलने का महत्तर साहित्यिक-रचनात्मक संघर्ष.



पंकज सुबीर के इस संग्रह की सभी कहानियां मानवीय रिश्तों के विविध आयामों को पाठकों तक लाती हैं पर अधिकांश कहानियां स्त्री के हवाले से समाज और संबंधों की जांच-पड़ताल करती हैं. 'चौपड़े की चुड़ैलें' की कहानियों के संसार के केंद्र में स्त्री है. कहानियां कहीं उनके अनुभवों को सामने लाती हैं तो कहीं उनकी उस दृष्टि को जो बेहद उलझे और पाषाण जीवन में से भी एक हरा तंतु खोज निकालती हैं. कहना न होगा कि कथाकार ने स्त्री की विविध छवियों को इन कहानियों में गढ़ा है. 'अप्रैल की एक उदास रात' कहानी मौसम और उदासी को रंगती हुई अतीत से वर्तमान की यात्रा है. मशहूर गायनोकॉलोजिस्ट शुचि भार्गव और चिकित्सक-लेखक पल्लवी की कहानी. पल्लवी जो शुचि की भावी बहू होगी. सारी कहानी अतीत में दफन कर दिए एक कटु सत्य को उकेरने की कोशिश में चलती है. एक स्त्री के जीवन में आया बसंत, बसंत नहीं रहता वह पतझड़ बन जाता है जो प्रेम की सारी ऊष्मा सोख लेता है. एक बसंत जो प्रेम के चोगे में भोग लिए आता है. प्रेम की आड़ में एक निर्ममता बरतने वाले बसंत की कहानी पल्लवी को सुनाती शुचि अपने जीवन के रहस्य से पर्दा उठाती है. कहानी निर्ममता का प्रत्युत्तर निर्ममता के साथ देती है. नैतिकता के मानदंडों पर आधुनिक कहलाए जाने वाले समाज में भी शुचि का यह प्रत्युत्तर स्वीकार्य नहीं होगा पर उसे न अपने प्रतिरोध पर कोई ग्लानि है न ही पल्लवी को अपने बेटे से जुड़े सच को बताना उसके लिए किसी तरह का स्पष्टीकरण है. इस कहानी की भाषा में कथाकार ने अनेक दफा कविता की लय का दामन थामा है, ''शाख से जोड़ टूट जाए, तो यही होता है. पेड़ों पर कहीं-कहीं कुछ लगभग सूख चुके फूल कह रहे हैं कि वसंत बस अभी विदा ही हुआ है. अब इंतजार है एक बरस बीतने का. जो आएगा वह भी बीत जाएगा ही. बीतता मार्च और लगता अप्रैल क्यों उदास करता है...'' (पृ. 28)

'सुबह अब होती है...अब होती है... अब होती है' कहानी एक बुजुर्ग औरत के लिए जिंदगी की नई सुबह की कहानी बनती है. विधि-विधान की अंधियारी रात, दैव-ईश्वरी सत्ता के दांव-पेचों के जंजाल से भरी पूरे जीवन की रात, मायके और घर में जेल-सी जिंदगी काट देने वाली कालरात्रि,

मशीन से अधिक अनुशासित और व्यवस्थित आदमी के साथ जीवन की दमघोंटू कोठरी की काली दीवारों-सी रात, समाज और परिवार के सामने तीन लड़कियों को जन्म देने वाली औरत के नसीब में निपूती, बांझ बराबर मान लिए जाने की लंबी अपमान से भरी काली रात, नातिन के रूप में मिलने वाली खुशियों के रास्ते में आ गई चट्टान-सी अंधेरी रात. इन सब रातों के बाद, सुबह के लिए लड़ती, रात की वजह को मिटाती अपराधबोध की लंबी रात के बाद न कोई भय, न चिंता केवल मरने से पहले जीवन को जीवन की तरह जीने की भरपूर लालसा. यह कहानी जिंदगी भर किसी पुरुष में एक इंसान की तलाश लिए चलती है. कहानी इसी तलाश पर पूरी होती है. तफतीश करते-करते एक पुलिसकर्मी के बीच इंसान का जागना. एक रोचक और मर्मस्पर्शी अपराध कथा. ऐसा अपराध जिसमें अपराधी निर्दोष लगने लगे. मरने वाला दोषी. ऐसी कहानी जो जीवन के मर्म की सुगठित तर्क शृंखला से अपराधी को क्लीन चिट दे जाए. अपराध कथा का पूरा माहौल रचती हुई अनेक रातों की एक प्रतीकात्मक सुबह लाती है यह कहानी. इस कहानी में कथाकार ने एक-एक ब्योरे को यूं दिया है कि पाठक खुद तफतीश से जुड़ जाए. हाल ही में इप्टा ने इसका नाट्य रूपांतर करके कपूरथला में इसे मंचित किया है.

'जनाब सलीम लंगड़े और श्रीमती शीला की जवानी' कहानी के शीर्षक से लगता है कि ये कला बनाम लोकप्रिय सिनेमा के द्वंद्व पर रची गई कहानी होगी क्योंकि शीर्षक के दोनों पक्ष हिंदी सिनेमा से जुड़े हैं. पर ऐसा नहीं है. पंकज जी का किस्सागो कहानी सुनाने से पहले आवश्यक जानकारियां देकर कहानी को आगे बढ़ाता है. एक साथ कई समस्याओं का निर्वाह करती ये कहानी स्त्री की समस्याओं के इर्द-गिर्द अपना वितान रचती है. शिक्षा, जीवन के दोहरे-तिहरे दायित्व, वस्तुकरण की समस्या और प्रथाओं में इस कदर अनुकूलित किया जाना कि नैतिकता की हद और मोह के बंधन से स्त्री स्वतंत्र हो जाए—सभी कहानी के कई बिंदु हैं. इस समाज में प्रथाओं के नाम पर स्त्री का यांत्रिकीकरण किया जा चुकना और स्त्री का उससे बाहर निकल जाना मुख्य है. बहरहाल ये कहानी स्त्री के दम पर पालन-पोषण, दायित्व और उपभोग की तमाम सेवा के बीच, प्रथाओं के स्त्रीविरोधी रूप के बीच शीला-सलीम के प्रेम को जीने की कहानी बनती है. प्रेम न कहें बल्कि उनके दैहिक संबंध की कहानी. दोनों का निर्णय स्वतंत्र है. शीला जीवन में पहली बार निर्णय की छूट लेती है. पर वह भाइयों के विवाह के लिए बेची जा चुकी है और विवाह से पूर्व सलीम लंगड़े से उसका संबंध सामाजिक-आर्थिक-सांस्कृतिक-धार्मिक ताने-बाने को ध्वस्त कर देता है. और कहानी का अंत सलीम के अंत से जुड़ जाता है. किस्सागोई के अंदाज में हम कहानी सुनते हैं. उसकी भाषा में प्रवाहित होते हैं. कहानी प्रतीकों में प्रेम की अर्थच्छवियां गढ़ती है और जोखिम होते हुए भी अश्लील नहीं होती. पंकज जी की अनेक कहानियों के संसार से परिचित होने के बाद यहां एक अपेक्षा बनती है कि ये प्रेम दैहिक प्रेम न रहकर यदि वास्तव में प्रेम रहता. शीला के स्वतंत्र निर्णय को जीने वाला प्रेम तब इस कहानी का पक्ष कहीं अधिक संवेदनशील हो पाता और सलीम का अंत शीला की अस्मिता की एक अन्य हत्या से भी जुड़ पाता. मुझे लगता है कि तब इस कहानी का अंत शीला की दैहिक तृप्ति से अधिक उसके स्त्रीविरोधी समाज से लोहा लेकर अपने लिए जीने का आसमान रचने जैसा कुछ अंत होता.

संग्रह की आखिरी दो कहानियां 'औरतों की दुनिया' हो या 'चाबी' या एक अन्य कहानी 'इन दिनों पाकिस्तान में रहता हूं' सभी भागते समय में तेजी से पिछड़ रहे रिश्तों को सहेजती हैं. दो पीढ़ियों के बीच जमीन-जायदाद को लेकर संबंधों में उठ खड़ी तनावपूर्ण दीवार को अपनी सहजता और स्नेह से घर की औरतें दरकाती हैं. 'औरतों की दुनिया' कहानी जिंदगी के विस्तार में इन क्षणिक तनावों को ज्वालामुखी बनने से न केवल रोकती है बल्कि जीवन के सच्चे नेह-नातों को अचानक फंस गए झंझावातों से साबुत निकाल लाती है. इस कहानी का सबसे प्रबल पक्ष है कि कहानी के पुरुष कोर्ट-कचहरी के इस भागों में जहां उग्र हैं, द्वंद्व में हैं या तटस्थ हैं वहां चाचा-भतीजे के घर की औरतें दूरियां बनाने वाली लहरों पर आवाजाही का पुल बांधती हैं. इसी तरह 'चाबी' कहानी एक बेहद सामान्य घटना के आधार पर सहानुभूति और पारस्परिक सहयोग का ताना-बाना बुनती है. आज के भागदौड़ भरे समय में जब इंसान के रिश्ते पास-पड़ोस से पूर्ववत् नहीं रह गए हैं चाबी उस बंद हो रहे दरवाजे को खोलने की एक कोशिश है. सीमा और उसके पड़ोसी सुधाकर राव के बीच एक दिन के कुछ घंटों में घटे घटनाक्रम की गवाह बनती है रश्मि. रश्मि, सीमा की ननद दीप्ति की सहेली है जो एक प्रवेश परीक्षा के लिए दीप्ति के भैया-भाभी के घर आती है. एक ही दिन में वह पड़ोसी सुधाकर के व्यवहार से तंग आ जाती है. कहानी बहुत धीरे-धीरे रश्मि की उस खीज को व्यक्त करती है जो सुधाकर के लगातार आ रहे फोन से पैदा होती है. रोज अपने घर की चाबी सीमा को देना और ऑफिस से लगातार काम और बच्चों के लिए निर्देश देना. फोन न उठाने पर लगातार फोन करने का सिलसिला रश्मि को सीमा और उसके पति की निजी जिंदगी में बहुत बड़े खलल-सा महसूस होता है. ये खीज जहां विराम पाकर विश्रांत होती है वह वास्तविकता पाठक को झकझोर देती है. सुधाकर की पत्नी की असमय मृत्यु के बाद बहुत जिम्मेदारी से पाले गए बच्चे भी दुर्घटनाग्रस्त होकर मौत की गोद में सो जाते हैं. उनकी मृत्यु के सदमे से सुधाकर का न उबरना ही पूरी कहानी के केंद्र में है. पर सबसे जरूरी बात है ऐसे असहाय, जीवन से निराश सदमाग्रस्त लोगों को सीमा जैसे लोग कहां मिलते हैं जो

न सिर्फ धैर्य और प्रेम से कठिन समय में किसी पड़ोसी का संबल बनते हैं बल्कि एक खोल में बंद हो चुकी उनकी जिंदगी के ताले को खोलने की पूरी कोशिश करते हैं. ये कहानी निजी जीवन के विस्तार और खोती जा रही सामाजिकता को पकड़ने की कोशिश की कहानी है जो त्रासद होते हुए भी उम्मीद नहीं खोती.

इस संग्रह की शीर्षक कहानी 'चौपड़े की चुड़ैलें' अपनी पूरी संरचना में संग्रह की अन्य कहानियों से भिन्न प्रकृति की कहानी है. यह कहानी अपने शीर्षक से ही एक रहस्य को बुनना शुरू कर देती है और हम दाखिल होते हैं हिंदी कहानी के सबसे कम छुए गए अनजान क्षेत्र में और यह क्षेत्र है रहस्य कथाओं का. वैसे यह बात किसी से छिपी नहीं है कि रहस्य कथाओं को हिंदी के रचनाकारों ने पॉपुलर किस्म के लेखकों के लिए छोड़ दिया है, जबकि वास्तविक जीवन में भी बहुत कुछ ऐसा घटित होता ही रहता है जिसका सिरा कहीं दिखाई नहीं देता. रहस्य कथा की बुनावट में रहस्य की कड़ियां एक-एक करके जुड़ते हुए एक शृंखला बनाती हैं जिनसे कहानी के भीतर रचित वर्तमान प्रभावित है और रहस्य की परतें उघाड़ते हुए कहानियों के अंतिम हिस्से में वे अतीत के उस अपराध का चेहरा नुमाया करती हैं जो बेहद कुरूप है. कहीं अंत में इसे पाकर पाठक सन्न रह जाता है तो कहीं उसके पूर्वानुमान सही सिद्ध होते हैं. इस पूरी बुनावट में कथाकार का प्रधान उद्देश्य पाठक की जिज्ञासा बनाए रखना है जिसमें वह सफल भी है पर कहीं-कहीं अत्यधिक वर्णनात्मकता से जिज्ञासा के कसे तार में एक झोल भी पड़ता है. इसका एक बड़ा कारण कथा में नैरेटर का प्रधान हो जाना भी रहा है. बावजूद इसके ये कहानियां पूरी तरह रहस्य की सृष्टि करने वाली कहानियां हैं जो अतीत से वर्तमान में आबाजाही करते हुए सत्य की शिनाख्त करती हैं. 'चौपड़े की चुड़ैलें' 2016 के हंस कथा पुरस्कार से सम्मानित कहानी है. किस्सागोई के अंदाज में शुरू होने वाली ये कहानी भी दृश्यांकन का कलात्मक हुनर रखती है. सिनेमा में जैसे दृश्य के विविध विस्तार के बाद क्लोज-अप सामने आता है ठीक उसी रीति से यह कहानी पाठक को पगडंडी, झाड़ी, झुरमुट से चौपड़ें-बावड़ी तक ले जाती है. बावड़ी एक खंडहर हो चुकी हवेली में है. हवेली का एक शानदार इतिहास रहा है जिस पर वर्तमान मर्सिया पढ़ता लगता है. यह कहानी जगमगाती हवेली के भीतर स्त्री विरोधी रेखाओं को चिह्नित करती है. वर्तमान में चुड़ैलों के जरिए उस हवेली की बची तीन महिलाओं के माध्यम से चल रहे देह-व्यापार को छिपाने के लिए चुड़ैलों का डर बिठाया गया है. यहां कथाकार ने आधुनिक जीवन में सामंती मूल्यों के जिंदा प्रमाण दिए हैं. सोनू सहित कुछ जवान लड़के चौपड़े के भूतिया होने के रहस्य को जान लेते हैं और बाद में शहर से लौटा सोनू हवेली की औरतों के पुराने पेशे को फोन-फ्रेंडशिप और उन्मुक्त संवाद-सुख से जोड़कर एक पूरा व्यवसाय खड़ा करता है. यानी तकनीक के युग में प्रत्यक्ष देह-व्यापार से आगे का रास्ता. यहां चुड़ैलें वर्चुअल जगत का हिस्सा बन जाती हैं. इसके लिए ट्रेंड की गई चुड़ैलें नई लड़कियों को भी ट्रेंड करती हैं. एक ओर चौपड़े की चुड़ैलों के रहस्य से पर्दा उठता है तो दूसरी ओर वे अप्रत्यक्ष देह-व्यापार की अधुनातन तकनीक से जुड़ती हैं. मुझे लगता है ये कहानी हम्मू खां जैसे पुराने दलाल को अपदस्थ करके व्यवसाय का सीधा संचालन भले ही औरतों के हाथ में सौंप रही है पर अंततः आधुनिक तकनीक को अपने लिए इस्तेमाल करने पर भी स्त्रियां सामंती ताने-बाने से मुक्त नहीं हैं. तकनीक आर्थिक लाभ देकर भी उनकी उपभोग क्षमता को ही विकसित कर रही है—यह त्रासद पक्ष भी कहानी का एक पाठ है.

कहानी में अपराध की तहें खोलने और पूरे केस की इनवेस्टीगेशन की प्रक्रिया की दृष्टि से 'रेपिश्क','धकीकभोमेग' और संग्रह की शीर्षक कहानी 'चौपड़े की चुड़ैलें' रोचक कहानियां हैं. इनकी संरचना में कुछ बातों का साम्य भी दिखलाई देता है. एक लंबी भूमिका के साथ कहानियां रहस्य का माहौल रचती हैं. कहानीकार ने कहानी में एक मुख्य बिंदु को कई बार दोहराया भी है जिससे पाठक केंद्र से भटके नहीं और जिज्ञासा बढ़ती रहे. लिव-इन में रहने वाले आशिमा-साहिल की जिंदगी में एक झटका लगता है जब साहिल की अनुपस्थिति में आशिमा के संग बलात्कार की घटना घटती है. आशिमा अपनी सहेली प्राची की मदद से उस बलात्कारी को खोजने की कोशिश करती है. इसी तरह 'धकीकभोमेग' कहानी अपने अजीबोगरीब शीर्षक से धर्म के अपराधीकरण और समाज में बढ़ रहे लूट-तंत्र और आवारा पूंजी के तिकड़मी समीकरणों की कथा को सामने लाती है. धर्म की आड़ में चल रहे भ्रष्टाचार और तमाम व्यभिचारों की पोल ये कहानी खोलती है. धर्म के नाम पर जो बाबा पूंजी का कारोबार करता है, स्त्री देह का भोग करता है उसे एक दिन उससे भी बड़ा लुटेरा मिल जाता है. धर्म की कमाई भोग में गंवाई—इस कथन की संक्षिप्ति को और उससे जुड़ी नैरेटर के बचपन की कहानी को 'धकीकभोमेग' के माध्यम से कथाकार ने पाठक को चौंकाने वाला शीर्षक निर्मित किया है ठीक 'रेपिश्क' की तरह जहां रेप और इश्क की परस्पर विरोधी भाव-सरणियों से गुजरकर रेपिस्ट, प्रेमी में तब्दील होता है.

पंकज सुबीर की भाषा मात्र पात्रों के मनोगत परिवेश, दृश्य, बिंब, ध्वनियों को ही नहीं उभारती बल्कि पात्रों का समूचा जीवन अपनी पूरी जीवंतता के साथ पाठकों के सामने उपस्थित हो जाता है. अकसर पाठक इस जीवन के अनेक रग-रेशों को पहचानता है पर अनेक बार पाठक एक नए किस्म के अनुभव से स्वयं को घिरा हुआ पाता है. यह पंकज जी के कथाकार की शक्ति और सफलता है. संग्रह की अधिकांश कहानियां दो पीढ़ियों के बीच एक स्वस्थ संवाद खड़ा करने की कोशिश करती हैं. इस

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कोशिश में कई बार दो समयों की मुठभेड़ होती है, दो दौर टकराते भी हैं और उनके बीच से कथाकार पंकज सुबीर एक तरल धारा निकाल लाते हैं. स्मृतियों की बहुत-सी घटनाएं और वर्तमान के अनेक संदर्भ मिलकर कहानियों को विस्तार देते हैं.

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पुस्तक : चौपड़े की चुड़ैलें
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लघुकथा

गूंज

सुरेश बाबू मिश्रा

प्रोफेसर भाटिया अपने ड्राइंग रूम में बैठे हुए थे. उनकी पत्नी शॉपिंग करने मार्केट गई थीं और बच्चे स्कूल गए हुए थे. घर में वे बिलकुल अकेले थे. उन्हें शायद मानसी के आने का इंतजार था. वह उनके अंडर में पी.एच.डी. कर रही थी.

मानसी बड़ी स्मार्ट और खुले विचारों की लड़की थी. नए-नए फैशन के कपड़े पहनना और हर एक से मुस्करा-मुस्कराकर बातें करना उसकी आदत में शुमार था.

पी-एच.डी. के सिलसिले में मानसी अकसर प्रोफेसर भाटिया के पास आती रहती थी और उनसे गाइडेंस लेती रहती थी.

प्रोफेसर भाटिया उसी के खयालों में खोए हुए थे. तभी मानसी ने ड्राइंगरूम में प्रवेश किया और प्रोफेसर साहब से मुस्कराकर नमस्ते की. उन्होंने उसे अपने पास बैठने का संकेत किया. मानसी ने उनके आदेश का पालन किया. वह उनके पास सोफे पर बैठ गई.

"मैंने तुम्हारी थीसिस पढ़ ली है और मैं कल अपनी रिकमंडेशन यूनिवर्सिटी भेज दूंगा." प्रोफेसर भाटिया ने मानसी के कंधे पर हाथ रखते हुए कहा.

"सर, यह सब आपकी कृपा का ही फल है." मानसी मुस्कराकर बोली.

"यूनिवर्सिटी की सिलेक्शन कमेटी के कई लोग मेरे काफी क्लोज हैं मैं उनसे तुम्हारी सिफारिश कर दूंगा." प्रोफेसर भाटिया मानसी के गालों को थपथपाते हुए बोले.

मानसी को कुछ असहज तो जरूर लगा मगर उसने कोई प्रतिरोध नहीं किया. इससे प्रोफेसर भाटिया की हिम्मत और बढ़ गई.

"अब तुम अपनी पी-एच.डी. अवार्डिड हुई ही समझो." प्रोफेसर भाटिया ने मानसी को अपनी ओर खींचते हुए कहा.

मानसी ने प्रोफेसर भाटिया की ओर देखा. उनके चेहरे पर कुटिल मुस्कराहट तैर रही थी. उनके ऊपर पड़ा बुद्धिजीवी का लबादा तार-तार हो चुका था और वह एक कामुक दरिंदे की भांति लग रहे थे.

मानसी ने उनकी गिरफ्त से अपने को छुड़ाया और झटके के साथ खड़ी हो गई. फिर उसने एक झन्नाटेदार थप्पड़ प्रोफेसर भाटिया के गाल पर जड़ दिया. गुस्से में तमतमाई वह ड्राइंगरूम से बाहर चली गई.

मानसी को गए आधा घंटा बीत चुका था, मगर उसके थप्पड़ की गूंज अब भी प्रोफेसर भाटिया को अपने कानों में सुनाई दे रही थी.

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पुस्तकें मिलीं

- ग्यारहवीं ए के लड़के, गौरव सोलंकी, राजकमल प्रकाशन, नई दिल्ली
- बहत्तर धड़कनें तिहत्तर अरमान (कहानी-संग्रह), आकांक्षा पारे काशिव, सामयिक प्रकाशन, नई दिल्ली
- गोड़ पोछना (जनजातीय पृष्ठभूमि की कहानियां), जयनंदन, अमन प्रकाशन, कानपुर
- रचनाओं पर चिंतन (समीक्षा), डॉ. मुहम्मद हारुन रशीद खान, विकल्प प्रकाशन, दिल्ली
- टिकट प्लीज, रामदेव सिंह, नई किताब, नई दिल्ली
- अनकही (कहानी-संग्रह), अखिलेश चन्द्र, अयन प्रकाशन, गाजियाबाद
- गांव का मसीहा (सामयिक उपन्यास), चिरौंजी लाल यादव, पराग बुक्त, गाजियाबाद
- मेरी प्रिय कहानियां, राजकुमार सिंह, लक्ष्मी बुक हाउस, दिल्ली
- सौ करोड़ की कविता (कविता-संग्रह), जयप्रकाश नवेन्दु महर्षि, प्रखर प्रकाशन, दिल्ली
- कहानी के पास (डायरी/चर्चा/संवाद), शशांक, अनन्य प्रकाशन, दिल्ली
- राजेन्द्र यादव जीवन और साहित्य, संपा. : रामकृष्ण किशोर, विद्या निकेतन, वाराणसी
- साहित्यिक पत्रकारिता का परिदृश्य (साहित्यिक पत्रकारिता पर विमर्श), सं. : अरुण तिवारी, प्रेरणा पब्लिकेशन, भोपाल
- व्यंग्यासन (व्यंग्य-संग्रह), राजेश जैन, कल्पना प्रकाशन, दिल्ली
- बाबू हरिश्चंद्र (नाटक), जयवर्धन, अमरसत्य प्रकाशन, दिल्ली
- छोटे-छोटे बड़े युद्ध (कहानी-संग्रह), रामधारी सिंह दिवाकर, आर्य प्रकाशन मंडल, नई दिल्ली
- दस प्रतिनिधि कहानियां, अल्पना मिश्र, किताबघर प्रकाशन, नई दिल्ली
- दस प्रतिनिधि कहानियां, रमाकांत, वही
- व्यंग्य समय, हरिशंकर परसाई, वही
- व्यंग्य समय, शरद जोशी, वही
- व्यंग्य समय, श्रीलाल शुक्ल, वही

आर्थिक गुलामी के विरुद्ध बगावत

नरेन्द्र

परख

"न चिड़ियों की आवाज रही और न हवा की सनसनाहट. अब न फूल खिलते हैं और न ही आंधियों में पीपल की टहनियां झुककर जमीन को सलाम करती हैं. लोगों के कानों को मोर की आवाज और पपीहे की किलकारी में फर्क भी पता नहीं रहा."

संदीप मील की कहानी 'कोकिला शास्त्र' में यह एक गांव की व्यथा-कथा की आरंभिक पंक्तियां हैं. पर व्यापक अर्थ में यह गांव की नहीं बल्कि पूंजीवादी सत्ता द्वारा तैयार की जा रही उस दुनिया का सच है, जहां मानव प्रकृति एवं संवेदना से बिछुड़ता जा रहा है. उसकी आत्मसत्ता इस बाहरी सत्ता के समक्ष घुटने टेकती जा रही है या उसके लिए मजबूर की जा रही हैं.

जब कोई सत्ता मनुष्य को प्राप्त नैसर्गिक अधिकारों से वंचित करने लगे तो एक विवेकशील मनुष्य में इसका प्रतिकार करने का भाव जागता है और समानांतर सत्ता का आविर्भाव होता है. अपने स्वतंत्रता संग्राम के आंदोलनों पर दृष्टिपात करें तो हमें उन कालखंडों में कई जगहों पर देशवासियों द्वारा समानांतर सत्ता चलाने की जानकारी मिलती है. वे लोग आज आजाद राष्ट्र के गौरव हैं तथा उनसे हमें प्रेरणा मिलती है, किसी अन्यायपूर्ण व्यवस्था के प्रतिकार करने की...जूझने की...लड़ने-भिड़ने की. पर आज के परिप्रेक्ष्य में वैसी ही अन्यायपूर्ण व्यवस्था से जूझने वाली समानांतर सत्ता को क्या हमारे लोकतंत्र में वही गौरव मिल पाता है?

संदीप मील की कहानियों से गुजरते हुए जो एक बात पकड़ में आती है कि इस कथाकार की मनुष्य-मात्र में आस्था है...तभी तो उसकी सार्वभौम सत्ता की रक्षा के लिए वे अपनी कहानी में अन्यायी व्यवस्था के खिलाफ समानांतर सत्ता की कल्पना करते हैं, जो उत्पीड़क के सामने घुटने नहीं टेकता, बल्कि दृढ़-संकल्पित होकर खुलेआम संघर्ष की घोषणा करता है.



जब सत्ता आवारा पूंजी के उड़नखटोले पर सवार होकर सभी संसाधनों पर अपना कब्जा जमाना चाहती है तो परिणाम होता है संसाधनों का अन्यायपूर्ण बंटवारा. यह नीति धीरे-धीरे मानव की गरिमा को क्षति पहुंचाने लगती है. अपनी गरिमा एवं अस्तित्व को विस्मृत करने को मजबूर होता मनुष्य संख्या में बदलता चला जाता है, जो पूंजीवादी सत्ता चाहती है. ऐसी ही परिस्थितियों में समानांतर सत्ता भीड़ में तब्दील होते मनुष्य की आवाज बनती है.

'कोकिला शास्त्र' कहानी के गांव को देखें तो वह पूंजीवादी नगरीय व्यवस्था का एक तस्वीर पेश करती है. यह व्यवस्था सत्ता के सहयोग से फल-फूल रही है, जहां साधारण मनुष्य का स्वामित्व उसके अपने ही संसाधनों पर से खत्म किया जा रहा है तथा वे चीजें जो उन्हें सहज सुलभ थीं, पैसे पर मिलने लगती हैं या सरकार की लोक-कल्याणकारी योजनाओं के नाम पर.

ऐसा ही कुछ हाल था कहानी की नायिका सरिता के गांव नीमागढ़ का, जहां वह ब्याह कर आई थी. आप उस गांव की जगह अपना गांव, शहर, महानगर या देश को रखके भी सोच सकते हैं. बहुआयामी एवं बहुस्तरीय कहानियों की यही तो विशेषता होती है. गांव की स्थिति देखिए–"हां, बिल्कुल बिना पेड़ का गांव था. करीब दस साल पहले गांव के दो फौजी रिटायर्ड होकर आए और उन्होंने हिसाब लगाया कि एक पेड़ को पालने में दस हजार का खर्चा होता है. आमदनी कुछ नहीं. ऐसा करें कि सारे पेड़ों को काटकर बेच दिया जाए और उन पैसों को ब्याज पर दे दिया जाएगा तो हर महीने गांव के प्रत्येक परिवार को दो हजार रुपए ब्याज के मिलेंगे. पूरे गांव में घने पेड़ थे. सारे काटे गए और अब हर घर को दो हजार रुपए ब्याज के मिलते हैं."

पूंजीवादी सत्ता की हमेशा यह कोशिश होती है कि पहले आम लोगों के आश्रय और जीवनयापन के साधन छीन लो...वे अपने आप घुटने टेक देंगे और उन्हीं के इशारों पर चलने लगेंगे. आज नगरों-महानगरों का यही हाल है. बिल्डर एवं व्यवसायी समूह आम लोगों की जमीन पर अपार्टमेंट और शॉपिंग कॉम्प्लेक्स बनाकर उन्हें नियत आमदनी पर जीने को मजबूर कर देते हैं. सामान्य लोग भी मेन रोड की अपनी जमीन पर अपना बढ़िया आवास और दुकानें बना सकते थे, पर उनकी आर्थिक स्थिति बाधा बन जाती है. फिर क्या, ये लोग उनके चंगुल में फंसते चले जाते हैं और जिंदगी भर उबर नहीं पाते.

कुछ ऐसी ही स्थिति नीमा गांव की है, जहां के लोग अपने आश्रयदाता पेड़ों को

काटकर बेच चुके हैं तथा उनसे प्राप्त पैसों के ब्याज पर आश्रित हो जाते हैं. उन पेड़ों पर रहने वाली बड़ी आबादी विस्थापित हो जाती है, सो अलग. यानी कहानी दो स्तरों पर आगे बढ़ती है...आर्थिक गुलामी एवं निराश्रय होकर पलायन कर गए लोगों की कहानी. यहां से हम गांव वाली आबादी और पेड़ों के कट जाने से विस्थापित हुए लोगों की समस्याओं को साथ लेकर चलते हैं. इनकी बदतर स्थिति के लिए जिम्मेवार पूंजीवादी सत्ता अर्थात् गांव के पटेलों की कहानी भी इनसे जुड़ी है.

तो कहानी आगे बढ़ती है एक अजनबी आवाज से, जो रात के एक बजे गांव के लोगों को सुनाई देती है और सभी मर्द-औरत पूर्व की ओर दौड़ पड़ते हैं. वहां अंतिम छोर पर कानाराम का मकान है, जिसके आगे अथाह रेगिस्तान शुरू होता है. इस आवाज के दहशत में लोग आगे नहीं जा पाते और गांव में तरह-तरह की अफवाहें उड़ती जाती हैं. कोई इसे पक्षी की आवाज बताता है तो कोई सांप की आशंका जताता है, जो आवाज देकर बिल में घुस जाता है पर किसी को कोई निशान नहीं मिलता और लोग उसे अलबेला कहने लगते हैं.

सभी का ध्यान कानाराम की तरफ जाता है, क्योंकि उसके घर के पास ही आवाज आती है. यूं तो उसका परिवार गांव का एक उपेक्षित परिवार था, पर बला की खूबसूरत बहू आने की वजह से लोग उसे पूछने लगे थे. इस पूछ में भी मर्दों की कुंठा छुपी होती है.

होता ऐसा है कि एक दिन पूरी तैयारी से सारा गांव कानाराम के घर की बगल में आ जुटा. बसंत की लाठी, प्रमोद की बंदूक और अन्य लोगों के पास भी कोई न कोई हथियार था ही. दिल में जोश, पर जहन में डर.

ऐसा नहीं था कि उस गांव के लोगों ने कभी पेड़ लगाने की नहीं सोची थी...जरूर सोचा था, पर समझाने और धमकाने पर आगे बढ़ नहीं पाए. कुछ ऐसा ही है न हमारा नगरीय जीवन, जहां पूंजी और सत्ता ने मनुष्य को मशीनी जीवन जीने को मजबूर कर दिया है...सोचने का अवकाश तक छीन लिया है.

कहानीकार को यह यथास्थिति मंजूर नहीं. स्थितियों में परिवर्तन को लेकर वे संकेत देते हैं. कानाराम का मकान पूर्व दिशा के अंतिम छोर पर है और पूर्व दिशा आशा-उम्मीद का सूचक है. यानी स्थिति में बदलाव यहीं से होना है. कानाराम भी गांववालों की तरह चारे की कमी के चलते अपनी बकरी कसाई के हाथों बेच देना चाहता है, पर बहू उसे रोक देती है. परिवर्तन की आहट मिलने लगती है. समाज का प्रभु वर्ग यथास्थिति बनाए रखना चाहता है, पर क्या उपेक्षित वर्ग हाथ पर हाथ देकर बैठा रहे. नहीं. आवाजें तो उठेंगी और ये आवाज समाज के उपेक्षित तबकों से उठेंगी...कमजोर वर्गों से उठेंगी. कहानी में परिवर्तन की सुगबुगाहट एक उपेक्षित दलित परिवार के यहां से उठती है और इसे स्वर देती है एक स्त्री.

कहानी आगे बढ़ती है. उस रात की सारी तैयारियों के बावजूद अलबेला पकड़ में नहीं आता है. उस रात की चर्चा में ही कहानी की नायिका सरिता की सास शारदा घोषणा कर देती है कि सरिता अगली बारिश में नीम भी लगाएगी आंगन में, गांव वाले चाहें तो दो हजार बंद कर दें. रात की कहानी को लेखक ने बड़ी ही खूबसूरती से साधा है...रहस्य-रोमांच, हंसी-मजाक की बातों के साथ भय का वातावरण! लोग घेरे के बाहर जाकर पेशाब करने की हिम्मत भी नहीं जुटा पाते, पर सरिता घेरे से बाहर पेशाब करने चली जाती है कि तभी आवाज आती है–गिलगिलगिलगिलगिल...! आवाज को सुनते ही सभी की आवाज पतली हो जाती है. लोग घर जाने की हिम्मत भी जुटा नहीं पाते, पर सरिता घर आकर मजे से सो गई थी. उसके बाद पूरा गांव दहशत में जीने लगता है. क्या इसी तरह चुनौती देने वाली किसी अजनबी आवाज पर पूरा नगर सन्नाटे में नहीं आ जाता है?

सरिता के सास की नीम का पेड़ लगाने की घोषणा के गांव के पटेल कानाराम को समझाने तथा मना करने गए. उन लोगों की धमकी पर सरिता घोषणा करती है कि नीम तो इसी बरसात में लगेगा चाहे दो हजार रुपए बंद कर दिए जाएं. एक साथ आर्थिक गुलामी के विरुद्ध बगावत एवं निराश्रित लोगों की वापसी की उम्मीद. गांव के पटेल उसे गांव से अलग करने की साजिश में लग जाते हैं, पर कानाराम का परिवार डटा रहता है. यहीं पर पटेलों की सत्ता के विरुद्ध एक अलग समानांतर सत्ता उठ खड़ी होती है.

इसके बाद तो एक दिन अलबेला दिन में भी बोला और गांव के दैनिक कार्यकलाप भी खामोशी में होने लगे. वहीं कानाराम दिन में हारमोनियम पर भजन गाता जिसमें उन पक्षियों के नाम आते जो आश्रयहीन होने के कारण सदा के लिए चले गए थे. कभी-कभी तो अलबेला बोलता और कानाराम का भजन भी चलता रहता. कानाराम को अलबेला से डर नहीं लगता और उसकी आवाज उसे अपनी-सी और दिल के करीब भी लगती है. अलबेला ने कभी इंसान तो क्या बकरी के बच्चे को भी नुकसान नहीं पहुंचाया. वह यह भी विश्वास नहीं कर पाता कि यह किसी पक्षी की आवाज है क्योंकि पिछले सात सालों से उसने किसी पक्षी को तो देखा तक नहीं है. कुछ पटेल सोचते कि कहीं कानाराम अलबेला को जानता तो नहीं है और उनकी शिकायत कर सकता है, सो उससे माफी भी मांगना चाहते पर उनकी अकड़ उन्हें रोक लेती. गांव के और लोग कानाराम के पास आना चाहते, पर पटेलों के आदेश के कारण पास आने की हिम्मत नहीं जुटा पाते. आज जहां कहीं भी अन्याय और उत्पीड़न है...क्या वहां का दृश्य ऐसा ही नहीं है?

संदीप कहानी को आगे बढ़ाते हैं, एक सूत्र से...वह है धर्मेन्द्र, सरिता का पति जो

अपने दोस्त बसंत से नशे में कह उठता है कि उसकी बीवी रात के ग्यारह बजे कहीं जाती है और एक बजे वापस आती है. यूं तो वह शादी के बाद से ही खामोश रहने लगा है. कानाराम के बहुत पूछने पर भी कुछ नहीं बताता. उसकी चेतना आम युवक की तरह स्वतंत्र स्त्री या स्त्री के स्वतंत्र विचार एवं निर्णय को स्वीकार नहीं करती. वह गांव की आर्थिक गुलामी वाली जिंदगी का आदी होता जाता युवक है तथा इसी के कारण परिवर्तनों को स्वीकार करने का माद्दा उसमें नहीं है. परिवार द्वारा उठाया गया कोई कदम इस कारण उसे प्रभावित नहीं कर पाता है. वह पटेलों द्वारा लगाए गए प्रतिबंधों के कारण और परेशान हो जाता है. इस संदर्भ में मुझे वे क्लीव भारतीय नरेश याद आते हैं, जो अंग्रेजों के नियत किए गए पैसों पर ही ऐशो-आराम की जिंदगी गुजार रहे थे. देश के अपने लोग ही क्रांति में भाग ले रहे थे, पर इनका संवाद तक उनसे नहीं हो पाता था. कुछ हद तक धर्मेन्द्र और सरिता की संवादहीनता भी मुझे ऐसी ही लगती है. पर कानाराम और शारदा जो वर्षों से शोषण को महसूस कर रहे हैं, सरिता में विश्वास करते हैं. यहां तक कि कानाराम अपने चरित्र पर लगाया गया लांछन बर्दाश्त कर लेता है. जब कानाराम तमाम बंधनों के आगे झुक नहीं रहा था तो गांव के पटेलों ने उसका गांव के कुएं से पानी बंद कर दिया. कोई भी सत्ता एक व्यक्ति के जीवन और गरिमा को तो इसी तरह नष्ट करने की कोशिश करती है. अब सरिता अपने गहने बेचकर कुआं बनवाने का ऐलान करती है.

अगले दिन कानाराम के घर कुआं खुदवाने के लिए मशीन आती है. यह पटेलों के मुंह पर तमाचे की तरह पड़ता है क्योंकि बड़े-बड़े पटेलों के घर भी कुएं नहीं थे. गांव में कुआं खोदने वाली मशीन का आना बड़े परिवर्तन की ओर इशारा करता है. यह गांव की जड़ता को तोड़ने का काम करती है. उसके बाद तो घटाएं उमड़ी, तेज हवा चली और साल की पहली बारिश हुई. संकेत में लेखक उस तथ्य की ओर इशारा कर जाते हैं कि प्रकृति के साहचर्य के साथ ही जीवन-धारा बहती है. कानाराम का कबीर के भजन गाना भी रूढ़ होते गांव में प्रगतिशीलता के बयार की ओर संकेत करता है. उस रात में ही आंगन में नीम लगा. पलायन कर गए लोगों की वापसी की उम्मीद का संकेत मिला.

एक रात बसंत सरिता के पति धर्मेन्द्र के साथ चल पड़ता है सरिता के पीछे. अब देखिए संदीप मील की कहानी में जादू यानी जादुई यथार्थवाद! रेगिस्तान के बीच उन्हें कलकलाहट और सरसराहट सुनाई पड़ती है. फिर तो पेड़ के पत्तों के हिलने की आवाज, चिड़ियों की चहचहाहट भी. घने पेड़ों का बाग, झरने, तालाब सभी दिखने लगे. सरिता के पहुंचते ही पक्षियों का झुंड मंडराने लगा. कौए, कोयल, कुत्ते सभी घेरकर बैठे थे.

रात है, पर पक्षियों, बिल्लियों एवं कुत्तों की आवाजें आ रही हैं. सरिता पक्षियों की बोली बोलती है...उनसे बात करती है... उनके साथ नाचती-गाती है. यह रात दरअसल हमारे समय का अंधेरा है. इस अंधेरे में पक्षियों, बिल्लियों आदि का जागे रहना हमारे आश्रयहीन और साधनहीन लोगों की जिजीविषा ही तो है. सरिता पूंजीवादी सत्ता के विरुद्ध उनके संघर्ष एवं विद्रोह की प्रतिनिधि आवाज है. अब देखिए, इन बाहर कर दिए गए लोगों के 'समानांतर सत्ता' की झलक, "उसके कंधे पर कोयल बैठी थी, घुटने पर कौआ था और बगल में इतने पक्षी और कुत्ते बैठे थे जैसे कि संसद की कार्यवाही चल रही हो." फिर सरिता ने अलबेला की आवाज निकाली तो बसंत को पैंट में पेशाब निकल आया.

फिर क्या था, राज खुल गया. गोविन्द पटेल सच ही कह देता है अनजाने में कि "पक्षी की भाषा समझने और बोलने के लिए एक शास्त्र पढ़ना पड़ता है जिसका नाम 'कोकिला शास्त्र' है. इसको पढ़ने के बाद इंसान किसी भी जानवर की बोली बोल लेता है." यह पक्षी की भाषा आश्रयहीन हो रहे उत्पीड़ित लोगों की भाषा ही तो है. पटेलों की तरफ से हुक्म आया कि गांव छोड़ दो. सरिता ने कानाराम और शारदा को हौसला बंधाया. अब लड़ाई आर-पार की होनी थी. भोर होते ही सारा गांव लट्ठ लेकर हमले के लिए आया तो कानाराम के घर पर मोर्चा संभाले मोर, कबूतर, कौए, कुत्ते, बिल्ली आदि उन पर टूट पड़े. भगदड़ मच गई और सभी दौड़कर अपने घरों में घुस गए. फिर से अपनी दुनिया बनाने की शुरुआत हो चुकी थी...खुला विद्रोह! इसके साथ उम्मीद की पहली किरण सूरज की पहली किरण के साथ फूटती है...कानाराम के आंगन में भी नीम की पहली कोंपल फूटी.

इस कहानी को पढ़कर कुछ को यह कहानी पर्यावरण केंद्रित लगी तो कुछ को दलित, शोषितों के उत्पीड़न एवं संघर्ष की गाथा. पर इन मूल्यांकनों ने संदीप मील की कहानी के जादुई यथार्थ के जादू को शायद नहीं पकड़ा. इस कहानी के विस्तृत फलक को पकड़ने की कोशिश में पता नहीं मैं कितना सफल हुआ हूं...या अभी भी कुछ गुत्थियों का सुलझना बाकी रह गया है.

कुल मिलाकर कहानी में संदीप का जादू हमें कई बार उलझा देता है, पर जैसे ही हम उसके पार जाकर यथार्थ का साक्षात्कार करते हैं तो हमें अपनी ही दुनिया का विद्रूप चेहरा दिखाई देता है और इस स्थिति से लड़ते हमारे लोग नजर आते हैं. वाकई यह कहानी इस समय की बेहतरीन रचना है.

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पुस्तक : कोकिला शास्त्र
लेखक : संदीप मील
प्रकाशक : लोकोदय प्रकाशन, लखनऊ
मूल्य : 70 रुपए

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वे अपने लेख और लेक्चर्स में जिस अनोखी आध्यात्मिक-मनोवैज्ञानिक भाषा और अभिव्यक्ति का इस्तेमाल करते हैं, उससे उन्हें पढ़ने तथा सुनने वालों में उसका तात्कालिक प्रभाव भी होने लगता है और यही बात उन्हें इस क्षेत्र का पायनियर बनाती है।

अब इसमें महत्त्वपूर्ण बात यह कि इन ग्रंथों में भी कृष्ण के जीवन से संबंधित कई बातों में विरोधाभास है। लेकिन मैंने यह विशाल कहानी लिखते वक्त उनके जीवन की जो बातें या किस्से उनके व्यक्तित्व से मेल खाते हैं, उन्हें ही चुना है। मैं यह स्पष्ट कर दूं कि मैं एक मनोवैज्ञानिक हूं तथा अध्यात्मिक मनोविज्ञान लिखता, बोलता और जानता हूं और आध्यात्मिक मनोविज्ञान का अर्थ है कि संसार में कुछ भी रहस्य नहीं, यानी कोई ऐसी बात नहीं जो जानी और कही न जा सके।

मैं कृष्ण हूं; दीप त्रिवेदी; आत्मन इनोवेशंस, 7वीं मंजिल, तनिश्क शोरूम के ऊपर, न्यू लिंक रोड, अंधेरी (प.), मुंबई; 349 रुपए।

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शब्दों का अपना एक इतिहास होता है, अतः उनकी संज्ञाएं और अर्थ काल-प्रवाह में बदलते भी रहते हैं। संगीत संबंधी कोश के निर्माण में जो एक कठिनाई सामने आती है, वह है उसका विस्तार। रागों की संख्या, तालों की संख्या, वाद्यों की संख्या; संगीत के शास्त्रकार, गायक, वादक और नर्तकों की संख्या; इसके अलावा कर्नाटक संगीत से संबंधित आवश्यक जानकारी और वर्तमान काल में प्रचलित तथा अप्रचलित पारिभाषिक शब्द एवं संगीत के घरानों से संबंधित परंपराओं आदि के आधार पर 'संगीत कोश' के निर्माण में किस प्रक्रिया को अपनाया जाए और क्या ग्रहण किया जाए, जैसा चिंतन लेखक के सामने एक चुनौती के रूप में प्रकट होता है।



शब्द-व्यापार के माध्यम से ही हम संगीत-कला की प्रयुक्त परिभाषाओं को समझ पाते हैं। इसीलिए तत्संबंधी पारिभाषिक शब्दावली का महत्त्व बढ़ जाता है। एक छोटा-सा शब्द हमें क्रियाशील बना देता है, जो शास्त्र तथा गुरुउपदिष्ट मार्ग से प्राप्त होता है। 'तराना' या 'तिल्लाना' कहते ही उसकी गायन-विधा स्पष्ट हो जाती है। 'आलाप' या 'झाला' शब्द हमें तत्संबंधी वाद्यगत क्रिया का संकेत दे देते हैं। इसी प्रकार 'अलारिप्पु' या 'तत्कार' नृत्य गतियों का स्मरण कराने में सक्षम होते हैं।

प्रस्तुत कोश में राग और तालों को स्थान नहीं दिया गया है, क्योंकि उनकी कोई निश्चित संख्या नहीं है, वे निर्मित होते रहते हैं और होते रहेंगे, क्योंकि वे अनंत हैं। कालांतर में उनका स्वरूप भी बदलता रहता है। इसी प्रकार कोश में केवल ऐतिहासिक महान कलाकारों का संक्षिप्त विवरण दिया गया है, जिनके बारे में जानना आवश्यक है। लोक में प्रचलित ऐसे शब्दों को भी ग्रहण किया गया है, जो केवल विभिन्न संप्रदायों की परंपरा में प्रचलित रहे हैं। भरत ने संगीत को नाट्य की शैया बताया है। संगीत तथा नाट्य का अभिन्न संबंध भी हमें स्पष्ट दिखाई देता है। इस दृष्टि से नाट्य से संबंधित ऐसे शब्दों को भी इस कोश में स्थान दिया गया है। प्रस्तुत कोश में छह हजार के लगभग शब्द हैं।

संगीत शब्दकोश : डॉ. लक्ष्मीनारायण गर्ग; संगीत कार्यालय, हाथरस; 500 रुपए।

जनसत्ता जिंदगी 50-50 4/11/18; पृ. 7

भावनाएं, जरूरतें, महत्त्वाकांक्षाएं- ये सब एक स्त्री की- लेकिन शरीर पुरुष का! एक बेहद दर्दनाक परिस्थिति, जिसमें जिंदगी, जिंदगी नहीं, समझौता बन कर रह जाती है। ऐसे इंसान और उसके घरवालों को हर मुकाम पर समाज के दुर्व्यवहार और जिल्लत का सामना करना पड़ता है। अनमोल इस बात को अच्छी तरह समझते हैं, क्योंकि उनकी अपनी एकमात्र संतान और छोटा भाई, दोनों की यही वास्तविकता है, दोनों किन्नर हैं। भाई को पल-पल पिसते, घर और बाहर प्रताड़ित और अपमानित होते हुए देख अनमोल यह दृढ़ निश्चय करते हैं कि वह अपने बेटे को अधूरी जिंदगी नहीं, बल्कि भरपूर जिंदगी जीने के लिए हर तरह से सक्षम बनाएंगे! किन्नर होना कोई अभिशाप है और ऐसे तमाम सवाल इस किताब में उठाए गए हैं।

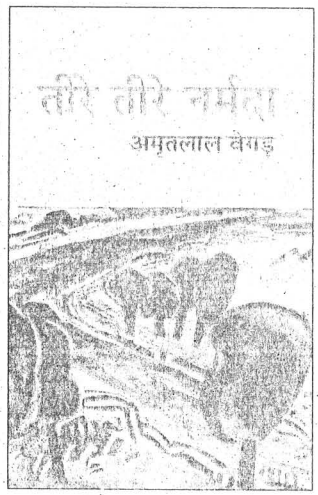


जिंदगी 50-50 : भगवंत अनमोल; राजपाल एंड संज, 1590, मदरसा रोड, कश्मीरी गेट, दिल्ली; 225 रुपए।

किताबें मिलीं

तीरे तीरे नर्मदा

अमृतलाल वेगड़ नर्मदा-व्रती चित्रकार-लेखक थे। वे नर्मदा की पूरी परिक्रमा कर चुके थे। नर्मदा-परिक्रमा पर आधारित उनके चित्र अनेक प्रदर्शनियों में प्रकाशित हो चुके हैं। कला के साथ लेखन में भी रुचि रखने वाले वेगड़ ने नर्मदा पदयात्रा वृत्तांत की तीन पुस्तकें लिखी हैं। एक अच्छी पुस्तक का यह लक्षण है- उसका जादुई चमत्कार- कि लेखक के साथ सिर्फ उसके सहयात्री ही नहीं, पाठकों का एक लंबा काफिला भी साथ हो लेता है और रास्ता दिखाने वाला वेगड़जी जैसा गाइड हो, तब तो सोने में सुहागा है, क्योंकि तब वह नर्मदा के अतुल सौंदर्य को एक निपट नई निगाह से देखने लगता है। क्या कभी हमने सोचा था कि- "प्रवाह नदी का प्रयोजन है। अपने अस्तित्व के लिए उसे बहना ही चाहिए। बहना उसकी अनिवार्यता है। लेकिन प्रपात उसका ऐश्वर्य है, उसका अतिरिक्त प्रदान है। यह अतिरिक्त प्रदान ही किसी चीज को सौंदर्य प्रदान करता है। जहां प्रयोजन समाप्त होता है, वहां सौंदर्य शुरू होता है।"



यह प्रपात के अनुपम सौंदर्य का बखान तो है ही, स्वयं सौंदर्य की अवधारणा के बारे में एक उज्ज्वल अंतर्दृष्टि देता है, जो बखान हमारे साहित्य के प्रयोजनवादी आलोचकों को कुछ सिखा सके! वेगड़जी के यात्रा संस्मरणों में सहज ज्ञान और समझदारी के इस तरह के अनमोल रत्न हर जगह बिखरे दिखाई दे जाते हैं और तब पता चलता है कि नर्मदा हो या हिमालय, जो लोग प्रकृति के सान्निध्य में रहते हैं, उन्हें जीवन के गहन सत्य बूझने के लिए किसी कॉलेज या विश्वविद्यालय में जाने की जरूरत नहीं। उन्हें पत्थरों में पारस, सर्मन्स ऑन द स्टोन मिल ही जाते हैं।

वेगड़जी का यात्रावृत्त पढ़ते हुए एक और बात मन में आती है- केवल भारतीय परंपरा में रसा-पगा व्यक्ति ही प्रकृति की नैसर्गिक सत्ता को इतने आत्मीय सगेपन और श्रद्धा से देख सकता है। नदी, पहाड़, वन सिर्फ भूगोल के उपादान मात्र नहीं हैं, वे मनुष्य के समूचे मिथक-संस्कारों को अपने में प्रतिबिंबित करते हैं। इसलिए वेगड़जी की नर्मदा यात्रा सिर्फ एक नदी की परिक्रमा नहीं है, वह एक पुरातन संस्कृति की अटलता को उसकी सतत प्रवाहमयता में आंकने का 'आंखों देखा' वृत्तांत है।

तीरे तीरे नर्मदा : अमृतलाल वेगड़; भारतीय ज्ञानपीठ, 18 इंस्टीट्यूशनल एरिया, लोदी रोड, नई दिल्ली; 650 रुपए।

मैं कृष्ण हूं

बेस्टसेलर 'मैं मन हूं' और कई अन्य किताबों के लेखक, दीप त्रिवेदी की खास बात यह है कि वे जीवन के गहरे से गहरे पहलुओं को छूते हैं और उन्हें सरलतम भाषा में लोगों के सामने प्रस्तुत करते हैं, जिससे कन्फ्यूजन की कहीं कोई गुंजाइश ही नहीं बचती है।



मनुष्य जीवन की गहरे से गहरी सायकोलोजी पर उनकी पकड़ का अंदाजा इसी बात से लगाया जा सकता है कि मनुष्य के जीवन, सायकोलोजी, आत्मा, प्रकृति के नियम, भाग्य तथा अन्य विषयों पर सर्वाधिक (लगभग 12038) कोटेशन लिखने का रेकॉर्ड उन्हीं के नाम पर दर्ज है। साथ ही मनुष्य जीवन पर सर्वाधिक लेक्चर्स और 'भगवद्गीता' पर सर्वाधिक लेक्चर्स देने का रेकॉर्ड भी उन्हीं के नाम पर है, जिसमें उन्होंने अट्ठावन दिनों में गीता पर एक सौ अड़सठ घंटे, अट्ठाईस मिनट और पचास सेकेंड तक एक लंबी चर्चा की है। इसके अलावा अष्टावक्र गीता और ताओ-ते-चिंग पर भी सर्वाधिक लेक्चर्स देने का रेकॉर्ड उन्हीं के नाम पर दर्ज है। ये सारे रेकॉर्ड्स और अंतरराष्ट्रीय रेकॉर्ड बुक्स में दर्ज हैं और ये तमाम भाषण भारत में प्रत्यक्ष श्रोताओं के सामने दिए गए हैं।

शंख घोष

मौन की संवेदना का कवि

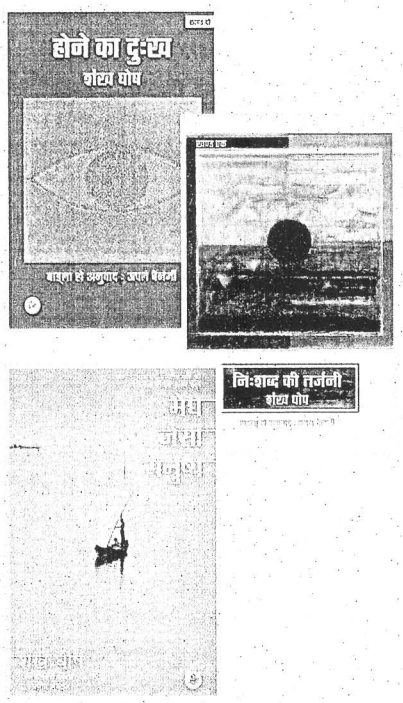
निशांत

शंख घोष की तीन किताबों का एक साथ हिंदी में आना सुखद आश्चर्य है. वे सिर्फ बांग्ला भाषा के कवि-चिंतक नहीं बल्कि भारतीय मनीषा के प्रतीक हैं. बांग्ला कविता के वे एक उज्ज्वल नक्षत्र हैं और बांग्लाभाषी समाज में उनकी उपस्थिति एक मुखर सामाजिक आलोचक की भी रही है. जीवन और साहित्य उनके यहां एकाकार हो गए हैं. इसलिए गद्य की दो पुस्तकें *निःशब्द की तर्जनी* और *होने का दुःख* (अनुवादकः उत्पल बैनर्जी) में साहित्य के साथ खासकर बांग्लाभाषी समाज के मानस में हो रहे परिवर्तनों की खासी जांच-पड़ताल है. साहित्य अपने बदलते हुए समाज का दस्तावेजीकरण करता चलता है, इसलिए कभी-कभी इतिहास से ज्यादा मानवजाति साहित्य पर भरोसा करती हुई दिखती है इतिहास तथ्यों का संग्रह करता है, साहित्य मनोभावों और संवेदनाओं का. घोष की कविताएं (*मेघ जैसा मनुष्यः* अनुवादक प्रयाग शुक्ल) और गद्य इन्हीं मनोभावों और संवेदनाओं का दस्तावेजीकरण है.

'कवि का अभिप्राय क्या होता है' शीर्षक से शंख घोष का एक निबंध है. कविता करती क्या है? कविता की रचना प्रक्रिया कैसे घटित होती है? एक कवि के मनोभावों में ऐसे प्रश्न उठने स्वाभाविक हैं. इनके उत्तरों की तरफ जाने से पहले कवि की कविता को देख लेना ज्यादा जरूरी है. उनकी एक छोटी-सी कविता देखें, जिसका शीर्षक ही है, *एक कविता*

गान नहीं कोई अब मेरे शरीर में/ आते हैं लकड़हारे/ ले जाते काटकर सूखी सब डालें/ रखते फिर डाल उन्हें, खुले मैदान में, पश्चिम किनारे पर/ धूल सने पांव लिए आते हैं लोग दूर-दूर से/ करते क्रय-विक्रय.

पहली पंक्ति के बाद कविता अपना पूरा रूप बदल लेती है और जीवन के एक बड़े सत्य की तरफ इशारा करते हुए खत्म होती है. कवि हमारे समय को, एक गजलगो के शब्दों में कहें तो *जागते लोगों को बस इशारा ही काफी है/ सोने वालों को जो कहना है हिलाकर कहिए*, की तर्ज पर बयान करता है. घोष इसी इशारे यानी मौन की संवेदना के कवि हैं. यह पूरा संग्रह छोटी कविताओं का विशिष्ट चयन है. यहां शंख घोष कम शब्दों में बड़ी बात कहते नजर आते हैं. कभी अज्ञेय ने कहा था कि कविता मौन के अंतरालों के बीच होती है. घोष की कविता मौन की मुखरता की कविता है. इस मौन के बीच करुणा, भाव-प्रवणता और बुद्धि-वैभव अपने उच्च धरातल पर है. मुक्तिबोध के शब्दों में कवि किस सतह से बोल रहा है, उसकी कविता में उस सतह का पता चलना चाहिए. घोष की सतह का पता, उनकी कविताएं बिन मांगे ही दे देती हैं.



शंख घोष की तीन पुस्तकें
निःशब्द की तर्जनी;
होने का दुःख, *अनुवादकः* उत्पल बैनर्जी;
मेघ जैसा मनुष्य, *अनुवादकः* प्रयाग शुक्ल; *प्रकाशकः* राजकमल प्रकाशन;
कीमत (तीनों की): 1,548 रु.

कई बार आप कविता के पास या रचना के अंत में खुद चौंक जाते हैं, आश्चर्यचकित होते हैं, स्वयं से प्रश्न करते हैं कि यह मैं ही था क्या? वास्तव में कभी-कभी रचना रचनाकार के हाथ से निकलकर अपना स्व का अस्तित्व गढ़ लेती है और रचनाकार से दो कदम आगे जाकर खड़ी हो जाती है. हम जैसा जीवन जीना चाहते हैं, जीवन उससे आगे बढ़कर अपना चुनाव कर लेता है.

घोष पाठकों से गपियाते-बतियाते आगे चले चलते हैं. संवाद करना उन्हें प्रिय है. उनके गद्य की भी यही विशेषताएं हैं. अधिकतर गद्य की रचनाएं पत्र शैली में हैं. वे अपने किसी आत्मीय मित्र, संपादक या किसी जिज्ञासु को पत्र शैली में कुछ लिख रहे होते हैं और वह प्रबंध, निबंध या लेख हो जाता है.

लिखना एक यात्रा पर निकल पड़ना है. हर लेखक अपने कुछ सवालों, जिज्ञासाओं, आत्मा की भूख और सत्य की खोज के लिए कलम हाथ में लिए यात्रा पर निकल पड़ता है. कभी कुछ पाता है, कभी नहीं. पाने, न पाने से ज्यादा यात्रा का आनंद, खोज का वैभव उसे आश्चर्यचकित करता है. पाठक लेखक की इस यात्रा में सहयात्री बनता है. उतना ही आनंदित होता है.

शंख घोष के गद्य के केंद्र में भी यहां यही यात्रा है. मैं से तुम तक की यात्रा. व्यक्ति से लेखक तक की यात्रा, उसके अनुसंधान की यात्रा. घोष जब-जब उस यात्रा को वाणी देते हैं, भाषा की छटा देखते बनती है–"हमारा अस्तित्व तो वैसे ही भीतर से टुकड़ों में बंट चुका है और उसका एक आयाम बाहर मुंह फेरे हुए है और दूसरा केंद्र में अवस्थित है. इन दो के बीच सम्यक संगति जितनी छिन्न होती जाती है, कविता उतनी ही वेदनारक्तिम हो उठती है, उतनी ही प्रशस्त चेतना इन दो विषयों के संग्राम के भीतर से दिखाई देने लगती है." इसी का एक आयाम कवि का 'मैं' है और दूसरा आयाम कवि का 'तुम'. भले ही निष्ठुर ध्वनित हो लेकिन यह बात सच है कि अक्सर कवि खुद ही खुद के साथ बात करता है (पृष्ठ 76, *निःशब्द की तर्जनी*). इस पुस्तक और *होने का दुःख* दोनों में घोष की इस तरह की अनुसंधानपरक गद्य रचनाएं ही अधिक हैं. रवींद्रनाथ एक तरह से उनके आदर्श हैं पर आदर्श का अंधानुकरण उन्होंने नहीं किया है. शिष्य वे सत्य के अनुसंधान के हैं. सत्य एक सतत साधना की मांग करता है. शंख घोष की लगभग सारी रचनाएं इसी सत्यानुसंधान की खोज में की गई यात्रा है.

बार बालाओं के बीच थर्ड जेंडर

बॉम्बे बार-चिटके तो फटके
लेखकः विवेक अग्रवाल
प्रकाशकः राधाकृष्ण प्रकाशन
मूल्यः150 रु.



मनीष दीक्षित

महाराष्ट्र की राजधानी मुंबई की बार बालाओं पर मीडिया में पहले से काफी सामग्री मौजूद है. इसके बावजूद पत्रकार विवेक अग्रवाल की पुस्तक *बॉम्बे बारः चिटके तो फटके* कुछ नया और फर्स्ट हैंड तजुर्बा देती है. उन्होंने कुछ बार बालाओं से साक्षात्कार को किस्सागोई के लहजे में पेश किया है. जाहिर है, बार बालाओं के तजुर्बे लाल-नीली गहरी रोशनी में नहाए नहीं बल्कि धूल-धूसरित ख्वाबों की फेहरिस्त होते हैं. एक रात में ही लाखों कमा लेने वाली बार बाला तरन्नुम पर पूरा एक अध्याय लिखा गया है और बताया गया है कि तरन्नुम के दीवानों में स्टांप घोटाले के आरोपी अब्दुल करीम तेलगी से लेकर हरियाणा के एक पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री का बेटा भी था. यह भी बताया गया है कि बार बालाएं किस तरह अपने लिए दो-चार फिक्स ग्राहक रखती हैं जो आए दिन उन पर मेहरबान होते हैं; बार मालिक उनकी कमाई का बड़ा हिस्सा यानी 60 फीसदी तक उड़ा लेते हैं.

एक दिलचस्प किस्सा अहमदाबाद के कथित धर्मगुरु अशोक जडेजा का है, जिसने बार बालाओं से ही लाखों रुपए ठग लिए. देहजीवाओं की कहानियों के बीच वेश्यावृत्ति के लिए विदेश ले जाई जाने वाली लड़कियों के लिए लड़ाई लड़ने वाली शर्वरी सोनावणे पर पूरा अध्याय है. उससे बातचीत है और इसमें शर्वरी के चट्टान की तरह डटे रहने की पूरी कहानी है.

> सना से बातचीत को पढ़ते वक्त महसूस होगा कि आप खुद उससे बात कर रहे हैं

लेकिन इससे भी दिलचस्प है सना शेख की दास्तान. सना शेख थर्ड जेंडर है और वह बार में डांस करती है. घाटकोपर के कभी कुख्यात रहे कामराज नगर इलाके के रास्ते सना शेख तक पहुंचे अग्रवाल ने बेहद दिलचस्प तरीके से उसकी कहानी को बयान किया है. 11 साल की उम्र में मां-बाप के देहांत के बाद सना ने हिजड़ों के समूह में प्रवेश किया और फिर बार में डांसर तक का सफर तय किया. सना की मानें तो बार में हिजड़ों की कमाई कम, सम्मान ज्यादा है. बार बालाएं उन्हें दीदी कहती हैं और बार मालिक डांस फ्लोर पर सबसे पहले उनके कदम पड़ने को शुभ मानते हैं. सना के सारे जवाब मुंबइया हिंदी में हैं और पढ़ने पर ऐसा लगता है कि आप खुद सना से मुखातिब होकर बात कर रहे हैं.

बार बालाओं के इस पेशे में आने की वजह धोखा और बेबसी हर कहानी में मिलेगी. ज्यादा कमाने वाली लड़कियां बैंक बैलेंस से लेकर प्रॉपर्टी और खेती की जमीन तक में निवेश कर रही हैं. वे अपनी पहचान अपने ही परिवार वालों से छिपाकर उनका पेट पाल रही हैं और तरह-तरह के शौक पूरे कर रही हैं. अग्रवाल ने उनके दर्द को बेहद संवेदनशीलता से बयान किया है. पुस्तक वाकई पढ़ने लायक है. ■

बस दो मिनट...

अगर कोई लेखक कवर पर ही यह घोषणा कर दे कि ये टूटी-फूटी रचनाएं हैं तो क्या उसे छूट दी जा सकती है? फेसबुक पोस्ट को कहानी का नाम देकर प्रकाशित करना लघुकथा के दायरे में आता है तो मुकेश कुमार सिन्हा की *लाल फ्रॉक वाली लड़की* को लघुकथा संग्रह कहा जा सकता है. पर शुरुआत किताब के शीर्षक पर आधारित एक कविता से है. सिन्हा की कहानियों में रवीश कुमार के लप्रेक आंदोलन की गहरी छाप है और *इश्क़ में शहर होना* नाम की एक कहानी भी है. ज्यादातर

लाल फ्रॉक वाली लड़की
लेखकः मुकेश कुमार सिन्हा
प्रकाशकः बोधि प्रकाशन
कीमतः 120 रु.



कहानियां फेसबुक पोस्ट सरीखी हैं जिनमें से कुछ में, संयोग से थोड़ी किस्सागोई भी है. किताब में शब्दों के साथ चस्पां इमोजी और नुक्ते का मनमाना प्रयोग खटकता है. कई जगह पूर्णविराम का भी मनमर्जी इस्तेमाल है. सिन्हा ने कहानियों की शैली और लंबाई में एकरूपता नहीं बरती है जो विविधता लाने की बजाए बोरियत पैदा करती है. किताब बेमजा हो जाती है जब लेखक एक कहानी *पुस्तक मेला* में अपनी ही एक अन्य किताब का प्रमोशन करता दिखता है. हालांकि कुछ कहानियां दिलचस्प हैं. फटाफट साहित्य की शौकीन नई पीढ़ी को किताब पसंद आ सकती है.

–मंजीत ठाकुर

MADE IN INDIA

A new book suggests that high pressure on students and long term family support in a multicultural environment makes the adult Indian manager adept at rocking the boat without sinking it. An excerpt

Hindustan Times; 10/11/18; Pg-15



The Made In India Manager
R Gopalakrishnan and Ranjan Banerjee
196pp, ₹499
Hachette

R Gopalakrishnan and Ranjan Banerjee
letters@htlive.com

On 1 august 2011, Time magazine published a story titled 'India's Leading Export: CEOs' by Carla Power. Featuring Vindi Banga of Unilever and Ajay Banga of MasterCard, Powers's article asked a dramatic question: 'What on earth did the Banga brothers' mother feed them for breakfast?' The story went on to chronicle the rise of several Indian managers on the global stage, including Vikram Pandit at Citibank, Indra Nooyi at PepsiCo, Sanjay Jha at Motorola, Dean Nitin Nohria at Harvard Business School and Dean Dipak Jain at INSEAD. In their 2011 Global Leadership Survey, the executive search firm Egon Zehnder... found that Indians led more S&P 500 companies than people of any other nationality apart from American...

Do India-born managers really achieve more success abroad than other immigrants? If so, why? What really sets them apart? The late CK Prahalad expressed the view that, 'Growing up in India is an extraordinary preparation for management.' This statement is debatable and contentious and at the same time expresses a thought worth reflecting upon. .. Consider this: Snails are a delicacy for gourmets, and it is always a challengeto procure large and juicy snails. Left in their natural environment, snails only grow to a certain size. But when the same snails are placed in a tank with a lobster, a natural predator, they work incredibly hard to stay alive, and they grow bigger and juicier...

Management as a profession is largely about understanding a problem, finding multiple ways of solving it, and executing the chosen approach... The more the problems faced and overcome, the more versatile the manager becomes. A person growing up in India, whether he or she works in management or in any other field, has a large number of diverse challenges to overcome from a relatively young age. Yet, the intensity of competition to get into schools and colleges, the hassles of daily living, inadequate financial resources and infrastructure are compensated by a supportive family environment, the strong influence of values instilled by elders and an inherently spiritual bent of mind. There are many nations in the world that have one or other condition similar to India's... But the combination of challenges in India is quite distinctive. Navigating those challenges while growing up endows distinctive capabilities in made-in-India managers...



Authors R Gopalakrishnan (L) and Ranjan Banerjee COURTESY HACHETTE

India has over 4,000 management institutes – though, admittedly, only a handful of these qualify as providers of superlative management education – and every year, over 1,00,000 students gain a diploma or degree in management. Such a volume of managerial output is comparable only to the US and far exceeds that of every other country. How and why India developed an active managerial culture compared to other developing economies makes for an interesting story. Although our first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, believed that promoting business and thinking about profits should not be independent India's primary concern, the rest of the country did not necessarily follow his path...

A number of factors converged before and after Independence to enable a 'manager' to acquire the status of a professional in India. The railways, the Army and the civil service were all set up during the colonial era to enable the British agenda in India. As a consequence, long before Independence, these institutions gave rise to a professional workforce... A flourishing, corporate form of professional management emerged by the time India became independent... However, after 1947, Indian academics grappled with the problem of how to consider management as a profession in the absence of academic training. Thus, academics in the social sciences and practitioners in emerging organizations came together to develop a pedagogy to train professionals in the field. In Jamshedpur, the Xavier Labour Relations Institute (later XLRI) was set up in 1949, followed by the Indian Institute of Social Welfare in Calcutta in 1954. The Indian government started setting up the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and, by the late 1950s, iconic Indian managers like Prakash Tandon, the frst Indian chairman of Hindustan Lever Ltd (HLL) of the time; KS Basu and KT Chandy, also of HLL; and stalwarts of management education such as Ishwar Dayal teamed up with academics to help set up and run these management schools...

In our view, India-born managers are products of a set of four unique circumstances... Life for a student in India requires enormous ability and determination to overcome adverse situations: commuting in chaotic cities, inadequate privacy and space to study at home, poor sports and library facilities and the crushing burden of exams... Success is not only about being ambitious, it is also about overcoming roadblocks, sometimes through sheer persistence. Indian children learn this early on... Fortunately, parental influence and support through the Indian family system is prolonged and more significant than in most other societies...

These circumstances come together in various combinations to produce a sufficient number of highly competitive, creative and competent potential managers. Made-in-India managers are, thus, not only culturally and socially trained to be effective in Indian conditions, which are highly variable and kaleidoscopic, but can hit the ground running in any overseas employment. Far more instinctively than their counterparts elsewhere, made-in-India managers assess a professional landscape, the soft factors around an issue, and act in a manner in which they rock the boat without any risk of sinking it...

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Resistance of Maithili to Hindi's Hegemony and Undemocratic Nationalism

PRANAV PRAKASH

BOOK REVIEWS

Language Politics and Public Sphere in North India: Making of the Maithili Movement by Mithilesh Kumar Jha, *New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017; pp 368, ₹1,195.*

Mithilesh Kumar Jha's *Language Politics and Public Sphere in North India: Making of the Maithili Movement* has been published by the Oxford University Press five years after he defended his doctoral dissertation, "Language Politics and the Construction of 'Dialects': A Case Study of Maithili," under the supervision of Pradip Kumar Datta, at the University of Delhi. After the publication of two seminal studies in the 1970s (Brass 1974; Jha 1976), the cultural subjectivity and political consciousness of Mithila, particularly the pluralistic and diverse backgrounds of its speakers and leaders, has received little attention (for notable exceptions, see Singh 1980; Burghart 1993; Jha 1996; Kumar 2013; Davis 2014; Rorabacher 2017). Furthermore, the inclusion of Maithili in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in 2003 and the Interim Constitution of Nepal in 2007 exposed the outdated and inadequate nature of most previous reflections and analyses of the Maithili movement. Against this backdrop, Jha's book is a timely and valuable contribution to the study of literary and political cultures in South Asia.

The introduction of the book offers an instructive overview of some of the most resilient ideas, concepts, and theories deployed in the field of literary and political studies in India. Among the three dozen scholars who appear in the main body and endnotes of the introduction, a handful of them resurface in the other chapters of the book and contribute directly to Jha's analysis of the Maithili movement. By casting a wide range of critical ideas, expository themes, and theoretical concerns, Jha grapples with the challenge of exploring the history of modern print, nationalist ideologies, colonial modernity, and vernacular politics in India.

Enumerative Processes

In the first chapter, Jha elucidates how colonial practices of enumeration—like the use of census, mappings, surveys and classifications—influenced both popular and academic conceptions of regional, communal, and linguistic identities. Building on previous scholarship, particularly the writings of Bernard S Cohn, Thomas R Trautmann, Ronald Inden, and Sudipta Kaviraj, he contends that when traditional societies witness and experience different kinds of enumerative processes in colonial and postcolonial settings, the self-perception of their people is radically and substantially transformed. This is mainly because the availability of statistical, empirical, and historical data allows individuals to grasp and reimagine the scope of their cultural history and linguistic identity in novel ways. In the context of the Mithila region and the Maithili language, Jha illustrates how Maithil communities responded to the positivist philological writings of orientalist scholars, colonial administrators, and Christian missionaries as well as to the issue of introducing English education in their schools.

Towards the end of the first chapter, Jha takes exception to the view that the "newly emergent linguistic movements" in India are the outcome of "parochial and backward-looking mentalities" or "uneven economic growth" (p 60). There is absolutely no denying that the rhetoric of "backwardness" has unjustly undermined and marginalised the intellectual, humane and creative contributions of the Bihari people in contemporary times (cf Rorabacher 2017). Jha's forthright denouncement of such retrograde attitudes in academia is, therefore, a timely and necessary critical intervention. This, however, does not absolve Jha from explaining why he downplays the role of conservative views, regressive attitudes, and uneven economic development in the making of a political movement in India. This is inconsistent with his description of the conduct of "orthodox" Maithils and opponents of the Maithili movement during and after the colonial rule in India (for instance, see pp 86, 96, 153–54).

Furthermore, Jha argues that both these linguistic movements "are/were the outcome of the same processes of enumeration, which gave rise to modern Indian nationalism and particularly Hindi's and Urdu's linguistic nationalism" (p 60). However, it remains unclear why he prioritises the mediated role of official enumerations over some of the immediate effects of "caste, class, gender, region and religion" in the people's perception of their linguistic identities (p 60). In Mithila specifically, the overt influence of caste, religion, and gender, among other sociological parameters, is conspicuous not only in the collective consciousness of the Maithils, but also on the decision-making processes and actions of the Bihari elite (cf Pandey 2014; Davis 2014).

Had census data and positivist descriptions of Indian languages regulated the political agenda of the regional and national elite, then documents like Maithili Sahitya Parishad's *The Case of Maithili before the Patna University,* or Jayakant Mishra's *The Case of Maithili before the Sahitya Academy* would have readily persuaded various university commissions and literary organisations to recognise Maithili as an independent language. It would have prevented the Janata Dal-led state government from removing Maithili from the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) examinations

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in February 1992, or the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led central government from refusing to acknowledge the historical existence of the *Tirhutā* or the *Maithilākṣar* script in March 2018. This tendency to disregard, devalue and/or manipulate the evidence of enumerated data and empirical historical details has persistently characterised the behaviour of the political elite in India.

How effective, then, are "enumerative processes" in illuminating and altering the subjectivity of both the political establishment and the common masses in India? Even when these processes cause all other sociological and economic factors to "reconsolidate [themselves] in newer forms" (p 68), what is ultimately responsible for the mobilisation of politicians and masses at large? Is it the rationale of the empirical data, or a desire to preserve one's religious, linguistic, and cultural identity? When Brahmins and Kayasthas choose to support the cause of Maithili, are they really under the sway of the census data or are they simply reaffirming their religious, casteist, and male-centred cultural identity? Put differently, do these enumerative processes inadvertently diminish and/or dissipate the influence of other factors like caste, religion, gender, region, class, or vocation?

Jha is certainly cognisant of the fallouts of bestowing exclusive interpretational power to empirical data in a revisionist approach to political theory. However, instead of proffering a direct response to these theoretical issues, he tends to apprehend some of these concerns in his adept narration of how Maithili activists and Hindi hegemons forged novel conceptions of their cultural history, linguistic identity, and nationalist ideology during and after the colonial rule in India.

His narrative is by far the most comprehensive and insightful account of the unfolding of the Maithili movement in the last two centuries. He has consulted a wide array of primary documents and historical sources: literary histories, journals, magazines, periodicals, newspapers, political pamphlets, government reports, official memorandums, project reports, political speeches, private papers, personal letters, autobiographies, biographies, monographs, commemorative volumes, and works of creative literature. He has investigated the involvement of more than 70 organisations and institutions in the making of this movement. He has composed brief biographies of 47 Maithili writers and activists in the appendix to his book. He has interviewed several intellectuals, scholars, activists, and politicians who were associated with the movement. Thus, he meticulously extracts a wealth of historical details and political insights, which is the basis of his rich narrative of how this movement evolved in the 19th and 20th centuries, and how it resisted the hegemony of the Hindi establishment and the undemocratic nationalist ideologies of the state. His narrative delineates the political history of the movement in a chronological manner. The second chapter focuses on a period stretching from the 1850s to the 1920s, the third chapter from the 1920s to the 1950s, and the fourth chapter from the 1950s to the present.

The Maithili Movement

The second chapter discusses the publication of modern histories of the Maithili language and the Mithila region. It subsequently examines the rise of print journalism and Maithili readership as well as the institution of new language policies and regulations for public education and official transactions. Furthermore, it documents the formation of modern *sabhās* and *samitis* which led the movement for the greater recognition of the Maithili language.

By the first decade of the 20th century, the Maithili elites had laid the groundwork for the promotion of their regional, cultural, and linguistic identities. The histories of Maithili and Mithila had been published in three different languages: *Riyāż al-Tirhut* (1868) by Ayodhyā Prasād "Bahār" and *Āʾīnā-i Tirhut* (1883) by Bihārī Lāl "Fiṭrat" in Urdu, *Mithilā Darpaṇ* (1915) by Rās Bihārī Lāl Dās in Hindi, and the *History of Tirhut* (1922) by Shyam Narayan Singh in English. Maithili journals and newspapers were being published and circulated in different parts of India: *Maithil Hit Sādhan* (1905) from Jaipur, *Mithilā Moda* (1905) from Banaras, *Mithilā Mihir* (1909) from Darbhanga, *Mithilā Hitshikṣā* from Maniyari, and *Tirhut Akhbār* from Muzaffarpur. New printing presses and railway lines were established in different parts of Bihar, and Maithili writers were able to connect with their readers and interlocutors in several other towns and provinces of India, most prominently in Jaipur, Ajmer, Alwar, Jhansi, Mathura, Aligarh, Firozabad, Allahabad and Calcutta. Among all these groundbreaking developments, the creation of the Maithil Mahāsabhā under the patronage of Rameshwar Singh, the Maharaj of Darbhanga, in 1910 constitutes a watershed moment in the political history of the Maithili movement.

Although the Maithil Mahāsabhā was founded as an "apolitical" organisation, its financial funding, internal policies, and social activities were thoroughly political in nature. At a time when Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā was actively promoting Hindi as the *rāṣṭrabhāṣā* ("national language") and suppressing the use of the *Kaithī* script, the members of the very first session of the Maithil Mahāsabhā resolved to promote the use of Maithili language in primary education and academic institutions. Furthermore, Maharaj Rameshwar Singh, who greatly espoused the Brahminical tradition of Sanskrit learning, restricted the membership of the Maithil Mahāsabhā to Brahmins and Karna Kayasthas only. This alienated other caste groups who also formed exclusive organisations to serve the communal interests of their respective castes. Not only were Maithili speakers divided by their caste and religion, the prevalence of divergent (at times even pejorative) views about the literary history, linguistic identity, social status, political cachet, cultural significance, and economic value of the Maithili language further prevented the common masses from

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developing a sense of deep pride in their Maithil identity.

Jha's narration of the political history of Maithili is denser and more incisive in the third and fourth chapters of the book. They are aptly clubbed together as two parts of a common thematic unit, "Maithili Language and the Movement." The third chapter sheds light on controversies surrounding the shared origin of the Bengali and Maithili languages, particularly the influence of Vidyāpati (c 1350–1448) and Govind Das (c 1535–1613) in both traditions. It describes the role of *Vidyāpati Parv Samāroh* and *Jānakī Mahotsav* in generating a sense of regional identity among the inhabitants of Mithila. *Mā Jānakī* became the feminised embodiment of Mithila in the same way as Bhārat Mātā represented the nationalist spirit of India. An illustrated cover of *Mithilā*, a magazine published by the Vidyapati Press in Laheria Sarai, portrayed *Mā Jānakī* as if she were receiving blessings (*āshīrvād*) from Bhārat Mātā. By exposing the ideological leanings and political views of several Maithili journals and newspapers, Jha shows how the modern print media continually shaped and transformed various public and academic discourses on literary history, cultural hegemony, linguistic identities, social reforms, educational policies, and nationalist politics.

The Four Phases

Jha divides the post-independence history of the Maithili movement into four phases (p 167). The first phase unfolded in the 1950s when the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC), established in 1953, began exploring the possibility of remapping Indian states on linguistic grounds. Maithils demanded a separate statehood for Mithila. During the second phase, they campaigned for the recognition of Maithili in literary organisations (particularly Sahitya Akademi), academic institutions (for example, the drive for opening a Mithila University), and mass media (like the demand for setting up a Maithili radio station). The third phase of the movement emerged immediately after the state government, under the leadership of Lalu Prasad Yadav, removed Maithili from the BPSC on 27 February 1992. Agitated by the unjust decision of the government, Maithils demanded not only the reinclusion of Maithili in the BPSC, but also the implementation of Maithili education in primary and secondary schools, the publication of Maithili textbooks, and the official recognition of Maithili as an administrative language. This phase, Jha notes, was rife with public protests and mass demonstrations. As evidenced by the massive protest against the government on 27 March 1992, this movement witnessed the participation of thousands of "Maithili speakers cutting across caste, class, gender and region" (p 218).

Although the momentum of the third phase failed to effect a change in the policy of the state government, it definitely attracted the sympathies of the BJP, which included Maithili in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution in 2003 after they came to power in the 13th session of Parliament (pp 231–32). This moment of national recognition constitutes the beginning of the fourth and contemporary phase of the Maithili movement. According to Jha, this ongoing phase has revived the demand for separate statehood, but, unlike previous phases, their demand focuses less on language and culture and more on "poor economic development" (pp 168, 233–35).

Jha's formulation of a "four-phase" model is predicated on his critical appraisal of the previous scholarship. For instance, he criticises Paul Brass and Hetukar Jha for adopting "an ahistorical approach towards the movement" and for subsequently ignoring the pluralistic nature of Maithili identity and denying "subjective consciousness" to the Maithili people (pp 29–30, 32, 210). Both scholars postulated that Maithili elites were aloof from the common masses, which is why they could not disseminate their "sense of regional identity [among] the mass of the Maithili-speaking people" (Jha 1976: 5).

Contrary to their characterisation of a "failed" movement, Jha justifiably contends that the Maithili movement should be viewed as "a very successful movement" because it not only achieved most of its political goals (p 33), but also resisted Hindi hegemony and undemocratic nationalist ideologies. Instead of succumbing to the dominance of Hindi, the Maithili movement evolved and distinguished itself both internally and externally, "internally, through its negotiation of different castes, regions and varieties of Maithili speakers; and externally, by its attempts to distinguish itself from other linguistic communities" (p 2; also pp 253, 255). This "double movement" of Maithili communities was inadvertently responsible for "the accommodative approach" of Maithils towards Hindi apologists, for the increasing mobilisation and politicisation of the masses (p 33), and, most importantly, for turning it into "a peaceful literary cultural movement for a very long time" (p 32).

The "four-phase" evolutionary framework proposed by Jha is in effect a chronological periodisation of the political history of the Maithili movement from the 1950s to the present. This framework excludes the first hundred years of the Maithili movement, and no alternative periodisation documents the growth of the movement between the 1850s and the 1950s. Furthermore, his periodisation of the movement in independent India is based on three calculated political moves by central and state governments—the formation of the SRC, the expulsion of Maithili from the BPSC examinations, and the inclusion of Maithili in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution—which foregrounds the power and agency of non-Maithil elites at the expense of Maithili subjects.

The opening and closing terminals of each phase, therefore, is more representative of the radical changes in regional and national politics than of the performance of Maithili activists or the political momentum of the Maithili movement. Even though the movement became "increasingly politicised" (p 33) and it "acquired the form of a mass movement" (p 256), Jha's narrative of its evolution is absent of Maithil activists who were/are Muslims, Dalits and members of the

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Scheduled Castes or tribal communities. One female author appears briefly in the appendix to the book (p 330).

Notwithstanding the issue of determining appropriate terminals for the successive periods of a long movement and of identifying Maithili activists from diverse religious, caste and gender backgrounds, Jha steadfastly retains his focus on the political activism of Maithil Brahmins and Kayasthas while depicting the development of each of the four phases of the movement. In the end, he provides unrestrained access to his rich archival data and political insights on the making of the modern Maithili movement. Jha, thus, offers an admirable exposition of the Maithili movement that will leave a lasting impact on the study of literary and political cultures in South Asia.

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A Tale of Tangled Lines
Whither Accountability?

T R RAGHUNANDAN

A Bureaucrat Fights Back: The Complete Story of Indian Reforms by Pradip Baijal, *Noida: HarperCollins, 2016; pp xvi+366, ₹499.*

A Bureaucrat Fights Back, authored by Pradip Baijal, a former civil servant who served as the chairperson of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) during a critical period of its existence, claims to tell the reader the "complete story of Indian reforms." That is an ambitious and bold promise for an author to make; however, the competency of the author to follow-up and deliver on such vast intentions cannot be doubted. He was a distinguished member of the Indian Administrative Service and held several important positions, eventually culminating in his ascent to the chairpersonship of the TRAI. Earlier, the author served in the Ministry of Power as additional secretary, and then as secretary in the Department of Disinvestment (now the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management [DIPAM]). With this rich experience under his belt, if he cannot tell us the story of Indian reforms, few others can.

The book is rich in detail. Part I relates the reforms story in the telecom sector, Part II contrasts the success of telecom sector reforms with the lack of it in the power sector and describes the successes of the disinvestment sector. In all of these, the author was a critical player and saw plenty. Part IV traverses the history of market reforms, disinvestments, opening of sectors, de-licencing, and privatisation. In Part V, the author speaks of his early years in service, relating how his administrative experience evolved and why he was drawn to the idea of liberalisation and privatisation. The book, therefore, fills a vital gap in the understanding of the reforms process for the average reader. The only fault, if any, is that of form rather than content. The back-and-forth nature of the text and the wealth of detail combine to ensure that the reader's attention ought not to falter.

Yet, one feels a disquiet in the combative nature of the title. Why should a bureaucrat fight back if there is a general consensus that the nation must move forward on liberalisation? The tone for the overall nature of the book as a defence of the author's actions, particularly after his tenure as the chairperson of TRAI, is set in the preface. The author reflects upon the dynamics of reform processes and how a reformer is often caught in the trap of either choosing inaction for their own safety or to choose to be decisive and face the risk of having their motives and tactics questioned.

Reforms in the Telecom Sector

Part I of the book takes up the telecom sector as a case study of the typical dilemmas faced by a regulator. The author's depth of knowledge is revealed through his narration of the reforms that led to the explosion of telephone connectivity in India. Chapter 1, "The History of Telecom, Corruption and Politics," makes not more than a cursory reference to the latter two matters. However, that is more than redeemed by the depth of detail in Chapter 2, "India's Unusual Telecom Growth." This chapter is the backbone of the book; its raison d'être. The author not only details the statistics of the growth, but also explains the dilemmas and choices faced by regulators in the face of fast-changing, high-potential technologies knocking at the doors of India.

By way of background, the author explains that in furtherance of the National Telecom Policy, 1994 that enabled the entry of private sector players, bids submitted by them were too high to make telecom services affordable. The government capped the number of

Books

POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN ANCIENT INDIA by Upinder Singh. Harvard University Press, Delhi, 2017.

ARGUABLY the doctrine of non-violence has played a foundational role in constituting the modern imaginaries of ancient India. The anti-colonial struggle led by the Congress party, especially leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, helped in popularizing this myth or imaginary of ancient India as non-violent. They argued that the constitutive basis of Indian civilization has always been non-violence, in stark contrast to modern western civilization which, in their opinion, was based on speed and violence. The primary credit for this 'myth making' goes to Gandhi who championed this idea in a phase when the groups believing in violence were growing in the struggle for national liberation.

It is important to acknowledge that even when Congress and Gandhi enjoyed hegemonic status and had a defining influence in shaping a vision for India, there were many groups and individuals supporting the use of violence. Equally over time, there have been numerous intellectual debates and discussions coinciding with the everyday prevalence of socio-religious and political conflicts in India. Unsurprisingly, in our contemporary political discourse, the continuing justification of violence tends to question not only the practice but even the relevance of the ideals of non-violence.

In such a context, *Political Violence in Ancient India* by Upinder Singh provides a timely, rich and critical account of the discussions and debates around political violence in ancient India. Although her attempt in this book is to study the history of political violence as an idea, Upinder Singh's exploration of the subject

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is more like that of a political theorist. Using a variety of sources to studying ancient India, her engagement and narrative style is exemplary and will help open up new kinds of inquiry into political and social thought in ancient India.

Singh's narrative style is easy and accessible. Although a dense 600 pages, the book is an absolute *tour de force* in terms of its engagement with the various sources and schools of thought in ancient India. The book presents a panoramic view of different schools of thought and intellectual traditions in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism and texts like *Dharmashastra*, *Arthashastra*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Situating her enquiry in the larger context of state formation and kingship relations in ancient India, Singh presents not only how violence was not just rooted in the practices of state formation and maintenance of order but also how it had been richly debated, discussed and made invisible by numerous scholars and intellectuals. The author explores the theory and practices of kingship and empire building over 1200 years from 600 BCE to 600 CE through a detailed study of texts, inscriptions, coins and artistic representations.

There are altogether five chapters in the book excluding the Introduction and an analytically rich conclusion which discusses the travels and circulation of key texts and ideas beyond the Indian subcontinent. The first three chapters – Foundation, Transition, and Maturity – cover the entire period of twelve hundred years and establish how violence or the *danda* was regarded as inevitable even in Jain and Buddhist philosophy despite their singular emphasis on non-violence. Even Ashoka, once he relinquished war and supported Buddhism and took to promoting social and religious harmony through his numerous rock edicts, did not completely rule out the use and role of violence. The last two chapters are about 'the state's involvement in warfare against other states, and its age-old conflict with the wilderness and its human and animal inhabitants' (17). The fifth chapter on Wilderness presents an interesting argument about the complex relationships that existed between 'state', people and forest dwellers. Some of these complexities and conflicts continue to resonate in our post-colonial politics as well.

Ancient Indian political thought is very rich in its deployment of conceptual categories for understanding or explaining social and political realities. There have been interesting developments in terms of the use of the concept of *Dharma* which encompasses not just all spheres of individual and collective lives but also shapes, possibly even determines, the meaning of various other concepts such as religion, politics, duty, violence or non-violence. It would perhaps be too simplistic to ascribe any hierarchy among these concepts here. Nevertheless, despite the inherent slipperiness of the term, Dharma did provide a basis for not just the organization of social and political life but also as a resource for intellectual debate and discussion. One defining feature of ancient Indian political thought has been its engagement with various facets of an issue in an effort to retrieve/excavate different layers of meanings embedded in a concept. So in this book one finds a rich account of debates on the issue of political violence in ancient India. And Singh has done commendable work in bringing together all these traditions to present a wide range of responses around the question of political violence in ancient India.

Mining Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain texts, the author argues that in all these traditions, despite the emphasis on *ahimsa paramo dharmah* (non-violence is supreme religion) violence, both in worldly life and more specifically in the life of a king, is considered inevitable. Contrary to popular imagination, Jainism and Buddhism also recognize the role and inevitability of violence in the life of a king. Many texts even go to the extent of celebrating violence.

Generally speaking, there are two major traditions of political thought represented by the Dharmashastra and Arthashastra within the Brahmanical perspective on state and politics. Buddhism and Jainism constitute the other major traditions. Though substantially differing from each other, they also share many common ideals. Their views on Dharma, kingship, power and violence reflect these differences and similarities and Singh effectively captures such distinct and yet overlapping argumentation. Fortunately, all these concepts are discussed and debated, not in absolute terms but as relative and context specific, making the reading even more rewarding.

We are introduced to an engaged, rich and critical narrative of progression of political argumentation in ancient India on the issue of political violence which equally continues to affect our contemporary public-political discourse. In doing so, she draws upon not only epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana but also Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntala* and *Raghuvamsha* and Vishakhadatta's *Mudrarakshasa*; and the real-politik argumentations in Kautilya's Arthashastra to Kamandaka's *Nitisara* that combines the realpolitik of Kautilya with the ethical percept of the Dharmashastras. All these treatises show that kingship is inherently embedded in violence, and that any invocation of abso-

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lute non-violence for a king is not just undesirable but can lead to disastrous consequences.

Even more interesting are the responses and justifications for the use of political violence. Nevertheless, it is critical to underscore that in addition to Kautilya's Arthashastra, other texts and scholars have also made similar effort and, therefore, the question of violence and non-violence has been discussed from a range of perspectives. In the most elaborate exposition, even when the use of violence by the state or king is acknowledged, recognized or celebrated by the later poets and theorists, there has simultaneously been a persistent questioning of the use of violence.

The two chapters on War and Wilderness examine the everyday embeddedness of violence in state politics/kingship and the conflicts and tensions between 'state' people and forest dwellers. The inevitability of war is elaborately discussed in almost all the major traditions of political thought in ancient India. Buddhism and Jainism too considered it unavoidable. There is an elaborate discussion and treatment of war in Kautilya's Arthashastra and Kamandaka's Nitisara. Kautilya meticulously classifies war into three categories: open war (*prakashyuddha*), crooked war (*kutayuddha*) and silent war (*tusnimyuddha*) to discuss in minute details the tools and techniques of warfare. The Mahabharata and Ramayana elaborately discuss the nature, inevitability and justification for the war. War and warriors, heroic efforts and courage became the celebrated topics for later poets and writers. War and violence were not only seen as normal in state relations but also celebrated and commemorated. However, equal emphasis has been given to the negativities of war. Both the Mahabharata and the Ashoka pillar edicts are testimony to the rich and critical engagements with the question of war in ancient India. Ashoka's renunciation of war for what he called *Dharma-vijay* is probably the most radical response to war based on an absolute 'moral commitment to nonviolence'. However, even in his formulations we do not find a total negation of violence as Ashoka continued to justify capital punishment as also the use of force against the border and forest people.

The chapter on Wilderness provides a rich account of the imagery of forest and animals in the normative framework on state and kingship or as a royal symbol in ancient Indian political thinking. Broadly speaking, there are four ways in which the forest is imagined: first, 'forest as a rich economic and military resource'; second, 'forest as a place of exile for political rivals'; third, forest as a site of royal hunt', and the fourth and the most problematic as, 'forest as the abode of people who posed a violent political threat to the state'. And thus there have been ever present tensions and conflicts between forest dwellers and inhabitants of the state. In a sense the forest became a playground for not just royal hunting but also the assertion of royal power. Extracting forest resources, taming animals and controlling forest dwellers were seen as integral to the attempt by an ambitious ruler to expand his territory and assert his authority. And Singh's work rightly explores these to better understand the larger political processes and argumentation over violence and non-violence in ancient India. In fact, these conflicts and tensions continue to influence our post-colonial politics two thousand years later.

This book also presents a sketchy account of travel and the circulation of Indic texts and ideas beyond the Indian subcontinent. Singh explores not just the power and influence of these ideas and texts in shaping the political process in the subcontinent, but also their impact on the political and socio-religious processes in Indonesia, China, Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Thailand. These critical and elaborate explorations help open up new ways of doing and studying Indian political thought.

This book is a novel attempt in terms of treatment of subject by situating it in the larger context of debates and discussions over the use of violence and paradoxically, extolling the virtues of non-violence in contemporary India. Political violence is situated in the larger corpus of concepts in ancient India such as dharma, artha, moksha and so on. One question that arises is: can we think of violence and non-violence in ancient India without relating them to the concept of dharma, no matter how slippery that term might be? This is not to prioritize one concept over the others but to understand the overlapping and interrelated worlds of kingship, religion, state and violence in ancient India.

Another question which merits deeper exploration relates to the ideal of non-violence as promoted by Gandhi, Congress and many modern Indian thinkers. Was this merely 'myth' making or selective use of history? Equally, has the emphasis on the promotion of peace, order and harmony through non-violence been central to Indian political thought including in modern India? And is it also the case in other parts of the world and civilizations?

We must acknowledge the innovative ways in which Upinder Singh has attempted to engage with our past. A tour de force, the book successfully explores the multiple layers of argumentation between the

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extremes of violence and non-violence by situating them in the larger context of history, religion, state formation and scholarly debates and discussions in ancient Indian political thought.

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NATURE AND NATION: Essays on Environmental History by Mahesh Rangarajan. Permanent Black, Ranikhet (in association with Ashoka University), 2018.

Rangarajan's book offers a rear-view mirror insight into India's ecological history and the opportunity to learn from it. 'The past matters as it can illustrate how the present came about. By knowing better what choices were made in the past, when and why, the dilemmas of the present can be seen in a more holistic way' says the author, and he is right. So many modern day conservation policies have been shaped by India's colonial past as well as by the leaders who inked our first wildlife laws that continue to shape our ecological future.

The book titled *Nature and Nation* is a collection of 10 essays and is an exhaustive reminder of the events that shaped current conservation policies. The journey from a British colony to becoming independent, to an economy that hunted wildlife till the passing of the Wildlife Protection Act (1972), was a long and arduous one and only a scholar of history of Rangarajan's eminence with an eye for detail could capture it in an intriguing way that makes for scholarly reading as well as engaging storytelling.

A political History of the Lion in India (Chapter 3) makes for an interesting read and how the lion became a symbol of power as well as of the modern Indian state fits in well with the central theme of the book. The record of hunting over 57 lions in the region of Delhi seems hard to imagine but it is a fitting reminder of the factors that have shaped the rapid decline of the species. Post-independence, the clash between middle class enthusiasts and the local people again provides an insight into competing visions and how Gir evolved from a princely reserve to a major tourist destination.

I found Chapter 5 – Striving for a Balance – particularly fascinating as it delves deeper into the decisions taken during Indira Gandhi's tenure – a prime minister who is often lauded for the bold decisions she took in favour of wildlife and conservation. Gandhi in the 1970s and 1980s faced the same dilemmas that confront contemporary leaders today, especially the debates that are centred around large dams. While Gandhi may have taken a bold decision by not giving the go ahead to the Silent Valley project, Rangarajan reminds us that she also said no to the Moyar Dam that would have flooded the entire Mudumalai National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu. These and other nuggets of information makes 'Nature and Nation' a lucid read with just the right level of detail thrown in.

Rangarajan takes us back in the past to remind us of battles that were fought before, the ecological dilemmas that previous leaders were confronted with and the decisions they took. The author takes us on a journey from colonial India to the present, reflecting on how our natural world shaped up – the challenges it faced and the political interventions that preserved large tracts of nature.

Rangarajan is a historian par excellence but he is also a political commentator of the present. He does touch upon the present times in the final chapter – The Politics of Ecology – but this stops at 1995. One had hoped to read in greater detail about our current times and that is my singular disappointment about the book. One is left wanting to know more about Rangarajan's sharp incisive views of current conservation policies, especially in the light of his tremendous knowledge of the past.

That said, Nature and Nation is an imperative read for anyone interested in the ecological history of South Asia and how we managed to preserve our rich biodiversity amidst many upheavals in the past

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IN PURSUIT OF PROOF: A History of Identification Documents in India by Tarangini Sriraman. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2018.

WE are today so subsumed by the coerced ubiquity of Aadhaar and its various inefficacies and encroachments that it's possible that we have lost sight of the true nature of the relationship between identity documents and welfare processes in India which, in many ways, goes back to the very inception of the state. Indeed, to understand the popular making of ID documents, as Tarangini Sriraman argues in her fine new book, *In Pursuit of Proof: A History of Identification Documents in India*, we must consider various

Learning from ageing

Hindu 11/11/18

On a new approach to understanding the elderly

ARVIND SIVARAMAKRISHNAN

The United Nations says that by 2050 over two billion people – 20% of humanity – will be 60 or over; Kavita Sivaramakrishnan traces rapid worldwide transformations in conceptions of ageing.

In the 1940s and 1950s, western scientists saw ageing as mainly bio-medical, with implications for productivity and national security. Non-western oncologists like Vasant Ramji Khanolkar and Theodore Gillman investigated the effects of poverty, malnutrition, diet, and infections on ageingWestern anthropologists, nevertheless, identified enduring patriarchal networks and the unsettlement which industrialisation and urbanisation were already causing in agrarian societies.

It was extremely difficult, however, to establish chronological age in cultures where age and status were marked mainly by events like circumcision or initiation rites. After 1947, Indian officials tried to determine age by people's recollection of, say, famines (the author's inference that the officials were trying to shape national memories is somewhat implausible). After the war, gerontological associations expanded. U.S. anti-communism dominated policies, and in the early 1970s oil-price rises caused sharp cuts in state funding for public services. Neoliberals criticised the so-called failure of development, but obscured two key points – the specifiable global successes of post-war social democracy, and the documented managerialist hijacking of social-democratic institutions in the 1980s.



As the World Ages: Rethinking a Demographic Crisis
Kavita Sivaramakrishnan
Harvard University Press
₹3,999

Challenges to neoliberalism were ignored, including Irene Taeuber's demonstration that transitions to low-fertility societies would not be globally uniform, and Simon Szreter's exposure of the fallacy that population control alone enables development.

Governments around the world make the family responsible for the aged. India was publicly criticised for its Vienna statement that it had "no problem of the aged," but its Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007 lays a duty on adults to support their parents. Secondly, the author's comment that the private sector's increased involvement is "pragmatic" seriously understates that ideological takeover.

Sivaramakrishnan notes organisational improvements within NGOs, but her comment that many of them do not evaluate states' and international bodies' welfare priorities is unfair; India often threatens to expel world-renowned NGOs.

The text is unfortunately diminished by many grammatical and other errors, but the author shows that ageing must be seen in the context of practices, cultures, and histories; those, however, are as challengeable as earlier gerontologists' racist assumptions.

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Statesman ; 4/12/18 ; Pg-12

Idea of sovereignty

Scholarly and incisive in its presentation, and using concepts transcending disciplines, this book is a very timely contribution to the debates on sovereignty and national unity, especially in India... A review



SREYA MAITRA

Sovereignty has been intrinsically linked to power. In theoretical debates and discourses, the "command of the sovereign" has been deemed undisputable. However, the basis of acceptance of this sovereignty as legitimate authority, worthy of obedience of the people has been variously theorised in scholarship.

As an accomplished and sharply observant historian, Milinda Banerjee begins on a remarkable journey of interrogating the roots of sovereignty in democratic India, by examining two conscious constructs running parallel in the 19th century and climaxing in the 20th century — the idea of legitimate authority of the British as colonial masters, and the obedience garnered by the royal dynasties in princely states on the basis of divinity and kinship. The author's argumentative framework weaves together a narrative that compels us to re-think not just the current notions of sovereignty as the ultimate authority of the state, but also the demands for secessionism and radical politics.

Structurally, the book begins with a detailed Introduction, which elaborately sets its remit, the methodology followed by the author and the literature review on the subject. The central question studied in the book is about the hierarchical, though fragmented construction and eventual democratisation of sovereignty and rulership in the 19th and 20th centuries' South Asia. The rationale for this particular time-line is not specified though.

The work admittedly gains confidence from the rumblings created by the Greater Cooch Behar movement in February 2016, which demands a separate statehood (or the status of a Union Territory) outside the state of West Bengal. This movement, spearheaded by the Rajavamshi community claiming association with the princely state of Cooch Behar provides testimony to the attempt of martial peasant communities to democratise sovereignty on the basis of kinship. Independent Indian democracy recognises these communities as "Scheduled Caste", and this movement is a backlash against the attempt to "inferiorise them".

Banerjee further observes that peasants, pastoralists and artisans in South Asia have frequently ascribed kingly and divine descent and selfhood to their community members. Yet, the locus of sovereignty in modern South Asia was constantly redefined by British as well as Indian actors. Among the empire, the nation, the community or the individual citizen, whichever political form was chosen by a specific actor as the holder of sovereignty, was ascribed with kingly or divine status. But similar claims by "plebeianised Indians" were suppressed in South Asian scholarship, as the mainstream continued to be dominated by the high-caste. And this forms the crux of the discussion.

Having set this tone, the Introduction is followed by five neatly divided chapters of almost equal length.

The arguments are organised in sub-sections, followed by a Conclusion. They draw on a rich resource base of primary and secondary materials (including rare historical texts), with extensive endnotes from the author.

Interestingly, the author chooses an epithet to highlight the aspect under lens in each Chapter. Thus, Chapter 1 debates the British monarchy and Colonial Rulership by questioning its proclamation as the "Caesar of India". Here, the author essentially contrasts the two notions of sovereignty fuelling imperial monarchy in the 19th and 20th centuries. For the British officials, politicians and intellectuals, it was a symbol of civilising and modernising the backward society; "colonial state power was articulated through a claim of ersatz godhood." (p 91)

But for Indian nationalists, it was a fake kingship that disguised diverse economic and racialised processes of exploitation and subordination. The difficulties of constructing an idea of modern state sovereignty by translating the theological into the political were made obvious as a result of this contrast.

Almost as an absolution to this dilemma, the author argues in the next chapter (State is the Household Vastly Enlarged: Imagining Sovereignty through the Princely States), that the princely states offered "a new grammar of imagining national rulership, charismatic and paternalist governance, political theologies of monistic sovereignty and economy, as well as idioms of progress and civilisation" to the Indian nationalists. By examining the historical narratives of the princely states of Cooch Behar and Tripura (both associated with Bengal), the author dives straight into the imagination of the centralised sovereign provided by the princely States. This chapter is a rich contribution to the existing literature, as little research exists on the impact of princely states on ideas of sovereignty. The author also observes that in different parts of South Asia, and especially in Tripura, Cooch Behar, Manipur, Jammu and Kashmir and Balochistan, traditions of political autonomy inherited from the princely era have provided a ground for powerful movements for political independence until today.

In Chapter three titled "One Law, One Nation, One Throne-Debating National Unity", the author moves forward to delineate the makings of national sovereignty of independent India, through the imaginations of then Indian intellectuals and politicians.

He argues that the Indian nationalist elite found it convenient to use the British monarchy as the model for constructing sovereignty as "single rulership". The nationalists invoked the idea of the Hobbesian "mortal God"; European and Japanese experiences heavily influenced them, which had demonstrated the success of royally-led unifications.

However, in the inter-war years, interactions with ruling elites while touring South-east and West Asia convinced many Bengali intellectuals that monarchy seemed to offer a "privileged route to nation-building". However, the organised state violence in Europe and Japan and the discourse on anti-colonialism made many Indians wary of a centralised idea of sovereignty and prefer collectivised and democratic idioms of divine and human rulership.

Continuing this train of argument in the following chapter (One has to Rule Oneself: Collectivising Sovereignty in Peasant Politics), the author focuses on how peasant communities, including tribal communities flexibly combined pre-colonial South Asian ideas about "collective rulership and godhood" with Western ideas of democracy and socialism to collectivise and democratise notions of rulership, divinity and sovereignty in 20th century India. This helped them demand reservations in political representation, education and employment from the state. The author traces the rise of campaigns by subaltern communities in postcolonial India, and examines the claim of being a "Kshatriya" as a stakeholder in sovereignty. He elucidates how the Kayasthas offer an instance of elite Kshatriyaisation in colonial Bengal. In this context, the case studies of Kshatriyas of Tripura and the Rajavamshis of North Bengal are examined in detail. The sociological ramifications of the rise of these movements are minutely observed to underline the "lower caste visions of sovereignty articulated through the claims of divine and royal identity".

Banerjee makes the twains meet in the final Chapter (God's Kingdom has Come: Messianic Sovereignty in Late Colonial India); the dialectics between dual claims of sovereignty converge as he illustrates how messianic politics from 1919 to 1947 assisted in forging ideological links between elite nationalism and popular politics. Borrowing on Indic, Islamic and European frames of reference, combining local grievances and trans-regional solidarities, new concepts of authority were formed, which dwelled heavily on the imaginations of anti-colonialism.

However, the radical insurgencies of post-colonial India can be viewed as the failure of "nationalist messianism" and the continuation of earlier political moments of assertions. Politically, the mainstream tried to decolonise modernity and construct a more just vision.

But plebian populations produced their own version of messianic justice which were "sometimes complicit with various elite nationalist projects, and sometimes in antagonism to them". (p 387)

In Conclusion, the author concedes the complexities of undertaking an examination of "chameleon facets" of the sovereign. He reiterates the core argument that an intellectual-historical study of the democratically oriented vision of sovereignty must take into cognisance the multiple decolonising and subalternising versions of sovereignty, going beyond Hobbes' mortal God. Localised grievances, clashing fantasies of justice and strategies of struggle have the potential to design claims to sovereignty and repeatedly stir radical politics. That point is well taken.

Scholarly and incisive in its presentation, and using concepts transcending disciplines, the book is a very timely contribution to the debates on sovereignty and national unity, especially in India. The crisis of modern democracies in South Asia, in the form of continuous subaltern challenges to a distinct notion of authority can also be viewed afresh in the light of the arguments and historical narratives chronicled in the book.

The work opens a door for further historical and social research on three distinct themes —the role of princely states in constructing the notions of sovereignty in India, comparative study of the rise of movements for statehood based on "royalism" in different parts of India, and an interrogation of the prevalence of radical, subaltern notions of sovereignty in other South Asian democracies.

The reviewer is assistant professor, department of political science, Maulana Azad College, Kolkata

Milinda Banerjee



Spot Light

THE MORTAL GOD: IMAGINING THE SOVEREIGN IN COLONIAL INDIA

BY MILINDA BANERJEE

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018; RS 995

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Hindu, 25/11/18

The face behind the mask

A probe into Narendra Modi's failures, in a rather 'partisan' way, glosses over his paradoxical personality and performance

SUDHEENDRA KULKARNI

Accidental prime minister? No, Narendra Modi is far from that. Is Modi a self-obsessed prime minister? He certainly is. Apart from what Shashi Tharoor has written about the narcissistic nature of our PM ("the one area Narendra Modi has succeeded in is his own self-projection"), the cover image of the book under review illustrates it strikingly. But it is the title of the book (*The Paradoxical Prime Minister: Narendra Modi and His India*), when contrasted with its contents, which raises a question. Wouldn't 'The Failed Prime Minister' be a more appropriate title for the book? This is because Tharoor probes Modi's failures far more – and in a somewhat excessively partisan way – than his manifestly paradoxical personality and performance. Almost all the 50 rather disparate essays in this book highlight Modi's failures.



The Paradoxical Prime Minister: Narendra Modi and His India
Shashi Tharoor
Aleph
₹799

Tall promises

True, Modi's performance falls far short of his tall promises, and people's (also many of his erstwhile admirers') disillusionment is growing fast. Tharoor may or may not be right in his prediction that "this disastrous government will be gone" in 2019, but many will agree with him when he writes: "The liberal mask has long since fallen off. The gap has widened. The result is another paradox: a prime minister of lofty ambition, laid low by underachievement."

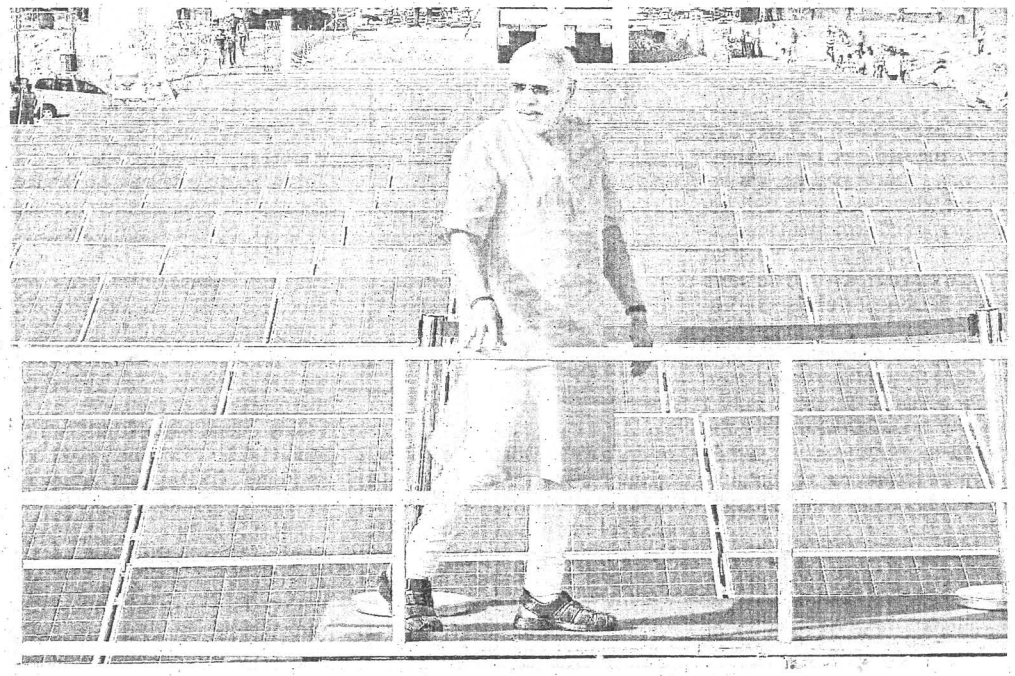
In the section 'Moditva and Misbe contradicted when he questions the PM's empty claim about 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance', to which the author confesses "to being attracted" initially. However, a neutral reader could well ask: "But weren't these and other examples of misgovernance true also of the previous Congress (UPA) government?" Tharoor is largely silent on the shortcomings of his own party's long, and not always praiseworthy, stints in governance. This has greatly contributed to the partisan nature of the book.

The writer's block

Tharoor's inability to be non-partisan highlights the paradoxes in his own personality and politics. For example, he justifiably bemoans: "Why shouldn't our politics allow for mutual expressions of respect across the political divide? Why should we not, by praising politicians on the other side when they say or do the right thing, raise the can judge their subsequent conduct? Why shouldn't we be able to see or hear the good things said or done by those we fundamentally disagree with or oppose?" His conclusion from these questions is indisputable: "It reduces our democracy to a zero-sum game where everything done by one side is automatically bad and unacceptable to the other."

Sadly, Tharoor rejects his own wise prescription by slamming just about every aspect of Modi's soon-to-end five years in office. This pattern of the government other as sworn enemies can be seen in almost all other areas of politics and national life. Here, the PM is more at fault. Is it the same Modi who tweeted "Let's work together to create a better India!" to Tharoor, on the day of the latter's victory in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections? Was he really honest? If he was, his party wouldn't have come up with the arrogantly undemocratic slogan: "Congress-mukt Bharat".

For any Indian PM or political leader, finding a lasting solution to the Kashmir issue and normalising greatest challenge. Tharoor's own self-contradictions in his longish essay 'The India-Pakistan Yo-Yo' are obvious. He disapproves of his party colleague (without mentioning the name) Mani Shankar Aiyar's oft-repeated stand on "uninterruptible" talks with Islamabad "even if new terrorist strikes emanating from Pakistan were to occur". On the other hand, he also writes: "[i]nsisting that Pakistan must change fundamentally before India can make peace with it is not particularly realistic. A creative Indian government must seize float its way from Pakistan to explore the prospects of peace."



Right turn: 'People's disillusionment with the prime minister is growing.' ▪ PTI

The Kashmir question

On the one hand, he "requires us to see the Pakistani military not just as the problem, but as a vital element of the solution". (He is entirely right in this.) Yet, he advocates that "we should open our doors and hearts to Pakistanis *who have nothing to do with the military establishment*" (He is right on the first part, and wrong on the italicised part.) In the same breath, he also seems to endorse Modi's manifestly failed hawkish line: "[p]unish each incident of violence by freezing official talks or by surgical strikes" and "We must not be deluded into making concessions, whether on Kashmir or any other issue." (Here he is completely wrong.)

Tharoor surely knows that "the two countries came extremely close to a definitive conclusion on a number of pending issues, including Kashmir" when Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Dr. Manmohan Singh were India's prime ministers and General Pervez Musharraf was Pakistan's president. Could it have happened, and can it ever happen, without India, as much as Pakistan, "making concessions" on Kashmir?

Tharoor is one of the most cerebral – and balanced – Indian politicians. He is entitled to his criticism of Modi. But he could have written a more incisive, analytical and non-partisan account of the paradoxical prime minister, his communally polarising politics

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Immoral education – the assault on teacher's identities, autonomy and efficacy, by Simon Gibbs, London & New York, Routledge, 2018, 169 pp., £115 (hbk), ISBN 978-0-8153-6836-6; £37 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-351-25484-7

The author states that the "Main aim of this book is to raise awareness of psychological factors that may be harmful to education" (p.13). He describes it as a treatise whose central tenet is the defining inter-subjectivity of human existence. This thread is the linking theme that runs throughout the book.

Though quite academic and intellectually complex (particularly in the early chapters), this is in essence a very personal book. The author's underlying passion and commitment to his argument shines through very strongly. He cares! On occasion this gives the book the tone of a polemic, a sort of intellectually sophisticated "tub-thumper". Whilst the author, to his credit, is aware of the risk of the book being seen as self-indulgent, he wants to externalise and communicate his anxieties and criticisms of what he sees happening to education and teachers.

Summing up the tone of the book is an easier task than summarising the content. The author presents complex and relatively abstract ideas using complex and abstract language, making use of metonyms and marshalling frequent quotes from other authors to illustrate or reinforce points he makes, for example.

'The point is not to know whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather to know whether, when I speak of myself, I am the same as the self of whom I speak" (Lacan and Fink, 2006, p.14)

As the author notes, this sometimes gives the book the feel of a palimpsest (a manuscript on which more than one text has been written). However, the common thread relating to the development of identity, both private and professional (particularly of the teaching profession), how education should be about enabling children to "become human" and how the current educational system in England acts to subvert this process is clearly present through the book. The concerns the author raises will chime with many EPs in relation to how the current system appears to depersonalise and commercialise the educational process and diminish the role of teachers to the deliverers of a product (the curriculum) rather than relatively autonomous professionals whose main purpose is to help children to learn.

The latter chapters of the book (Categories, labels and stereotypes; In – and – out groups: segregation and inclusion: Leadership, efficacy and inclusion) are particularly well written with good examples that would be familiar to most EPs from their everyday experiences. I suspect (or hope) that the views expressed by the author within these chapters will resonate with the moral and ethical views of the vast majority of EPs. The author feels EPs could be more active in raising and promoting these moral and ethical factors related to good education.

Educational Psychology

Summary

This is a book that I think will stimulate and inspire some, will baffle others, and will provide succour to some who share the author's concerns about the culture of "performativity" eroding the nature of professional relationships amongst teachers and schools. Given the challenging nature of the early chapters it is likely to be a "when the schools are on summer break" read for most EPs. However, though not an easy read, it is well worth the effort. It is a book that I think needed to be written and the author's perspicacity is admirable. The supplementary notes following each chapter are very helpful and the referencing is very thorough.

Recommended for: Those who have an underlying interest in the broader moral and ethical purposes of education and may be concerned about the current practices within the English education system (possibly the majority of EPs), but also others in the education sphere who may have an interest in these issues.

Style: Theoretical, in some parts complex themes presented in a complex/academic style.

Value: Good value as a book bought for the service library to be passed round and discussed as part of the process of professional development/dialogue.

References

Lacan & Fink, 2006. Ecrits: The first complete edition in English. London:WW Norton & Company.

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PDA by PDAers, by Sally Cat, compiler, London, Jessica Kingsley, 2018, 360 pp., £14.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-78592-538-8

Sally Cat has compiled this book from discussions that have taken place within the Facebook Adult PDA Support Network. The contributors are self-identified as having Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) or are the parents of children they have identified as having PDA. Sally Cat constructed the book around a series of "starter questions" she posed within the Support Network and includes her own graphic memes, and the blogs of another contributor, to illustrate and highlight experiences and share insights and feelings.

The aim is to provide "a window into adult PDA" (p. 11) and to enable both those who identify as PDA and those described within the book as "neurotypical" to learn more about the lived experiences, strengths and difficulties of adults coping with extreme demand avoidance. The book also illustrates the complexity, co-morbidities, similarities and differences in the manifestations, implications and issues experienced.

The current debate around whether PDA is a separate clinical diagnosis (as it is not yet included in the DSM-V or ICD-10) is not acknowledged beyond Sally Cat clarifying her position in the Introduction as being that PDA is an "Autistic Spectrum Condition." She offers many graphs to illustrate the differences between PDA and neurotypical respondents, and to demonstrate the commonalities of experience of those with PDA, although she does not explain where she sourced the subjects of her research, or how those deemed neurotypical

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The neurodiverse classroom: a teacher's guide to individual learning needs and how to meet them, by Victoria Honeybourne, 2018, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, 189 pp., £14.99, (paperback) ISBN 9781785923623

This book sets out to propose an alternative paradigm for viewing, and supporting, individuals with special educational needs (SEN). The author sets out to highlight "neurodiversity" as a paradigm in which schools may approach issues of SEN. Within this book the author aims to explain "neurodiversity", offer a viewpoint for why schools would benefit from adopting this paradigm, and insights into how they may do this.

The book is separated into eight chapters. The initial chapters provide an overview of "neurodiversity", to help readers understand its origins and current position. According to the neurodiversity paradigm, individuals think, learn and relate to others in different ways. These different styles of neurocognitive functioning are considered equally valid under the neurodiversity paradigm. The remaining chapters provide insight into the different challenges individuals come up against in their learning. These challenges are highlighted under commonly known terms; for example,ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity discorder), dyslexia, dyspraxia etc. The book progresses to explore different vital components of learning, as well as how schools might consider supporting their students in overcoming barriers. The author highlights multiple ways in which school professionals can adopt an approach which is preventative in nature, as opposed to reactive. That is to say, reducing the likelihood of barriers existing in the first place rather than reacting to the struggle of students as they arise.

This is an easy-to-read book, clearly set out with succinct key points appearing at the end of each chapter. The author not only highlights important and useful strategies for school professionals, but also provides a context for why these are helpful to children and young people. The book provides a clear overview of the diverse neurocognitive functioning influencing and impacting children and young people in schools today. More importantly, the author aims not to single out unique strategies for supporting specific difficulties, but rather to offer ideas for how schools can adopt a holistic approach in supporting the neurodiverse children and young people attending their settings. The author acknowledges the struggles of the modern-day school in addressing the varying needs of students. Instead of having multiple lists for different group of individuals, the author sets out to help school professionals consider adopting practices which support many students, whilst hindering none.

I believe the book would be useful for teachers, trainee teachers (it would be a good addition to teacher training reading lists), learning support assistants, special educational needs coordinators (SENCos), senior leadership teams and head teachers. I also feel this book provides a nice summary of "neurodiversity" for trainee educational psychologists. It can encourage reflection on how settings can adapt their current practices to ensure inclusion of children and young people with SEN. It's an accessible book, affordable for organisations as well as individuals.

Recommended for: Teachers, SENCos, Trainee educational psychologists (EPs)
Style: Practical
Value: Worth buying for yourself

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The A-Z of therapeutic parenting: strategies and solutions by Sarah Naish, 2018, London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 343pp, £15.99 (paperback),ISBN 978-1-78592376-0

The author states that the aim of her book is to provide a quick, practical, jargon free guide covering day-to-day issues for parents and caregivers of traumatised children. The book is split in to two parts; Part 1: The Basics, and Part 2: A-Z of Behaviours and Challenges with Solutions. Part 1 provides an overview of common behaviours, explanations of where these behaviours may come from, and commonly used therapeutic parenting strategies. Part 2, the A-Z, provides an explanation of 60 behaviours, what each behaviour looks like, why the behaviour may occur, and strategies for that particular behaviour.

The author's writing style is pragmatic, approachable, and with her use of anecdotes and analogies to provide further explanation, it is easy to read. Further to this, the author provides her own model, P.A.R.E.N.T.S, to support parents/care-givers to work through incidents with their children, which adds to the user-friendliness of the book. Strategies to avoid, and why these shouldn't be used with traumatised children are also highlighted, which is an additional strength of this book.

Part 1 includes a description of the foundations of therapeutic parenting, allowing those who are unfamiliar with the approach to understand the foundations of the strategies suggested in Part 2, and for those who are more familiar to dip in to if they feel they need a refresher.

Part 2, the A-Z, covers a range of common behaviours such as, absconding, aggression, bedtime issues, damaging, and sabotage. It also redirects the reader to the appropriate section ie if looking up *"addiction"* the reader is referred to *"drugs and alcohol, obsessions, and smoking"*. For some behaviours the author also signposts the reader to the resources for further information or training.

The book is practical, well laid out, and relatively easy to navigate. The book lacks a contents page for the A-Z which, I feel, would have allowed the reader to find issues relevant to them more easily.

The "tried and tested" strategies provided are drawn from the author's extensive experiences of being a therapeutic parent to traumatised children and a professional in the field, as well as ideas from other parents and professionals. As a professional I want to be assured that strategies are backed up by research, but this evidence is not outlined in this book. However, I am not the intended audience for this book and the absence of this research evidence adds to the "jargon free" readability and usability of the book for its intended audience.

This book is a good resource for parents/caregivers of traumatised children. With Part 1 and Part 2 it feels like two books in one. I would feel comfortable recommending this as a resource to parents/caregivers who are familiar with therapeutic parenting as well as those who are not. Furthermore, this book would be useful to professionals in schools supporting and understanding traumatised children.

Recommended for: parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, and schools.

Style: practical and easy to read

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Inventing ourselves: the secret life of the teenage brain, by Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, 2018, London, Transworld publishers, 240pp, paperback £14.99, ISBN 978-0-857-52371-6

In this book "inventing ourselves" Sarah–Jayne Blakemore has set out to present an accessible and easily read overview of the current status of neuroscientific research into this much maligned and often misunderstood period of development. The book falls into the popular science category and can be read as an interesting "holiday" read but also satisfies the criteria of a rigorous science text book and a useful CPD opportunity. It is written largely in first person and the anecdotes, both personal and professional, presented throughout the book add to its lively and engaging style. One finishes the book thinking they know more about the adolescent brain, and a bit more about the author and the motivation behind her research.

This book encapsulates the history of neuroscientific research into adolescence. To set the scene a short history of well-known neuropsychological findings are presented, covering familiar ground, such as the cases of HM and Phineas Gage. Sarah Jayne Blakemore describes her own and other scientists' research into the structural brain changes that occur during this time frame. In addition, she also describes the functional differences and how social behaviours become mapped functionally onto different areas of the brain over time as maturation occurs.

The book provides food for thought when formulating our casework with adolescents. The importance of peer acceptance and the impact of peers on decision making is described in detail. In addition, a chapter devoted to exploring the pros and cons of risk taking summarises an interesting hypothesis outlining how risk taking could be mediated by the different maturational timeframes of the pre-frontal cortex and the limbic system. The chapter exploring mental health highlights the intricate relationship between environmental influences (e.g. drugs, alcohol and screen time), genetic predisposition and cerebral development on mental health in teenagers. Many points made in these chapters would be relevant in EP casework and understanding some of the complexities in behaviours shown by teenagers with whom we work.

The chapter titled "educating the brain" starts by discrediting some of the myths which surround neuroscience and education and encouraging scepticism when reading the latest findings linking neuroscience to education. However, she does finish this chapter on an interesting point about school start times and circadian rhythms and the importance of sleep for development. In addition, she considers the issue of the Juvenile Criminal Justice System and the ethics of trying adolescents when their pre-frontal cortex is not yet fully matured.

Overall, this book provides an engaging overview of a misunderstood and stereotyped period of development. It highlights how important adolescence is to the development of becoming an independent adult who has a secure sense of self and understanding of others. It successfully builds on the research evidence to shed a positive light on behaviours demonstrated by many teenagers and explains the rationale and the underlying physiology behind many of the "behaviours" shown during this critical developmental period.

Recommended for: Secondary School Teachers, Educational Psychologists and Parents

Style: easy to read and also theoretical

Value: worth buying for yourself

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EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY IN PRACTICE
2018, VOL. 34, NO. 4, 450–456 1 Dec. 2018

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

BOOK REVIEWS

Person centred planning together – a resource to develop your person centred planning skills, by Colin Newton, Derek Wilson, Claire Darwin, School's Choice and Inclusive Solutions, 113 pp., £24.95 (paperback).

In my view this book delivers what it intends. It is a very practical resource that aims to support those who need a handbook for Person Centred Planning activities, with a helpful introduction, a chapter on One Page Profiles, and step-by-step accounts of how to set up and run PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) and MAP meetings. It is written collaboratively by the two Educational Psychologists who set up Inclusive Solutions, and the PEP of Schools' Choice (Suffolk-based schools' service), and adds to and complements the Inclusive Solutions website section on Person Centred Planning very well.

I confess to already being a convert to the work of Inclusive Solutions, having undergone Service training many years ago, so for me this book provides a hugely useful refresher/reminder to the practicalities of Person Centred Planning and with additional practical ideas to add to my toolbox. I anticipate this book may also be very helpful to someone who is completely new to Person Centred Planning approaches, although I would highlight the warning/recommendation in the response to the FAQ on p109 "Ok, how do I learn this stuff?" about experiencing it and practising it with colleagues on a regular basis in order to build up experience and confidence.

I welcomed the recognition of the practical challenges of running successful Person Centred Planning meetings. Observing or participating in a person centred planning meeting (eg a MAP or a PATH) conducted by Newton and Wilson, whom I consider as "experts" in this field, is very different from taking on the role of facilitator, as I know from experience. The sections which resonated with me in particular were ones that refer to the dissonance one might experience as part of a local authority service which runs on a medical/deficit model in terms of thresholds and access to the service, while trying to be person-centred (as opposed to "service-centred") in the way that one aspires to work with children, young people and their families and schools. Again, I recognised the reference to how some services appear to be paying "lip-service" to person-centred approaches, using a "tick-box" mentality in that, just by having a 1-Page Profile for a child or young person, they believe they have achieved a person-centred approach.

From a practical point of view, I would have valued an FAQ or additional section referring to the time requirements of setting up and running a successful Person Centred Planning meeting, as I anticipate that this is one of the prohibitive factors for some teams/services in making a bigger commitment to working in this way.

Recommended for: the Service Library, personal library

Style: Practical, easy to read, innovative

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EDUCATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH
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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

BOOK REVIEWS

Forms of practitioner reflexivity: critical, conversational and arts-based approaches, Ed. Brown, H., Sawyer, R.D., and Norris, J. (2016), New York, Palgrave Macmillan, (Hardback). 249 pages, ISBN 978-1-137-52711-0, £99.99 (Hardcover), ISBN 978-1-137-52712-7 (eBook) £79.50

This book should become a welcome addition to scholarly literature on reflection, reflexivity and professional development, for university libraries and thoughtful practitioners. It might be helpful to refer to Alvesson and Skoldberg's third edition (2018, London: Sage) on of *Reflexive Methodology, New Vistas of Qualitative Research* to situate this book in the varieties and approaches in reflexive methodology. Although action research is not a common phrase or a major theme, there are underlying threads in the collection of papers of improving practice by systematic reflection, and therefore many of the chapters will be of interest to individuals, and to the organisers of higher education courses in action research.

The volume is a collection of 13 chapters on forms of practitioner reflexivity by a range of international qualitative researchers and academics in education, nurse training, leadership, arts-based research, assessment and professional development. After an illuminating and demanding introduction to deep Dialogic Reflection, there are three parts: the first on arts-based approaches, the second on critical approaches and the third on integrative responsiveness approaches.

The Introduction by Hilary Brown and Richard Sawyer explains how the book builds on Dewey, and Schon to open a new perspective for me on Reflexivity and what they call *Dialogic reflection*, a pedagogy of imagination and reconceptualisation of practice. The writers explore the question of 'What are innovative practices of reflection in professional education that expand approaches for professionals to develop their work in caring for others?' The chapters present creative ways 'to (self) reflexively navigate through professional educational situations', believing it is prudent for caring professionals to both examine and become aware of biases and assumptions they hold when working in pluralistic situations. To solitary reflection, ongoing enquiry and perpetual problem-solving, they add *dialogic practice.*

The promotion of self critique and changing practice.... The participant involves himself or herself in a process in which he or she disrupts and reconceptualises their views in relation to their narrative (p.4).

In the first section on *arts-based approaches,* there are three papers that allow multiple representations and a way for researchers to express understanding not always accessible or presentable through other means. Garrett and Matthews write about using photography as reflective practice to assist their students to make sense of global violence as they learn to teach social studies. The students look at photographs not just as reflections in the mirror, but *behind the mirror.* They drew on a theoretical framework of complexity and containment from psychoanalytic enquiries of pedagogy and curriculum to help students reflect in times of uncertainty, breakdown and frustration in learning. The authors claim that reflecting about practices rendered psychoanalytically offer the opportunity to shift perspectives to think differently about what it means to engage.

This reviewer found Melody Rasmor's paper on digital storytelling in nurse practitioner education accessible, engaging and found himself entering her narrative imaginatively as she

discusses how the digital story allows her students to share introductions, personal histories, reflections and personal information while deconstructing and reconstructing the students' own culture and identity. She illustrates how stories help people make sense of their world. The assignment she set created a new media pathway for literacy, learning, creativity and reflexivity to flourish, allowing for personal, emotional, experiential and embodied expressions of knowledge.

In the next paper by Woods and Sebok *Promoting Professional Conversations and Reflective Practice among Educators: unpacking portfolios using duoethography*, I was introduced to re-examining professional learning and teaching practice through what they call duoethnographic conversations about professional portfolios. They generate, structure, compare and contrast personal narratives, examining lived experience and reflecting upon how these help develop views about teaching learning and particularly assessment. I was interested to read how they employed electronic means of communication and professional learning. I could see how professionals could adopt these ideas in their own discussions and action research with colleagues. As with all these papers, this chapter was well referenced.

Moving on from arts-based approaches, to *critical approaches*, where authors examine ethical, social and political consequences of practice, questioning and excavating their underlying assumptions, biases and values. The first paper by Lisa Decker a nurse educator *Cultural Safety and Critical Race Theory* uses story, poetry and literature to illuminate 'cultural safety'. She unearths her own cultural roots, and learns about the values of her clients so that she can provide a more culturally sensitive care. Then she transfers her knowledge into the classroom where she provided a framework to guide her nursing students through a critical reflective course focused on their practice. I enjoyed the mini case studies or short narratives and appreciated her mastery of the relevant literature. This chapter prompted me to reflect about the application of *cultural safety* in my own practice.

In the second paper *Shifting Personalities: A Critical Discussion of a Duoethnographic Inquiry of a Personal Curriculum of Post/Colonialism*, by Rick Sawyer, the author is committed to thinking and teaching in post-colonial ways that avoid privileging any group, by respecting and the inclusion of different cultures. He describes his research with a colleague as exchanging perceptions and beliefs, and examines those values in a past lesson plan, and in teaching approaches. He draws on Foucault to open the text of their teaching to new and generative meanings. He says in his self-revealing and sometimes complex account that he benefited by seeing his practice through another's eyes, by reading underlying historical discourses, and promoting change through dialogic self-critique.

The final paper in this section by Le Fevre and Farquhar is *Feminine Identity and the Academy*. They write within a post-feminist theoretical position. In the editors' words, this paper: *flows beautifully between the dialogic conversation of the two researchers and the interspersing of the formal literature that corroborates how women experience their positions within the Academy.*

The authors illuminate how they live their values and beliefs within the patriarchal institutional of the academy. They reveal that there is a potential for miring the possibility of women in leadership positions. They provide a springboard for a more creative ethic of leadership practice and reflect how they can facilitate the ground up approach within their own organisations.

As I move into the third section of the book *Integrative Responsiveness Approaches*, I am aware of how difficult it has been to do justice to these papers in limited space. Wallace's paper, *A Hybrid Educator's Approach to Improving Education* is the paper that many action researchers may find of most interest. The writer describes how hybrid educators live in both worlds of state schools and the Academy helping preservice teachers to integrate theory and

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practice. The main goal of the course designed is to gain an understanding of the cyclical action research process in real classroom contexts. It is claimed that through action research teachers more systematically improve their practice while collecting evaluation data.

Brown and Hamilton's paper *Going Beneath the Surface: What is Teaching for diversity anyway?* will be of interest to action researchers for its rich autobiographical narratives and analysis of the duoethnography as the authors explore together after the pattern of Hero's Journey (Campbell, J. (1949). *The hero with a thousand faces. Praying* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press) what teaching for diversity means for them. I found the paper engaging and accessible in style as they listen and learn from each other in deep reflection seeking to disrupt the status quo of their education system working out what teaching for diversity means in their work.

The next paper by Rico Breault *Shape Shifting in the Classroom: Masks and Credibility in Teaching* uses a solitary reflective approach as a professor in which he looks at his professional identity behind the masks he has worn that allowed him to flourish in his work. He explores the idea of professional masks in a thought-provoking way. I found the paper demanding reading needing to revisit it to take in the flow of ideas that should be of interest to colleagues transitioning from schools to the academy or those reflecting about their own professional persona.

I found the final paper by Joe Morris *Reflecting Upon Teaching Assistant Roles in Higher Education Through Participatory Theatre* one of the high points of the book, more transparent, engaging and creative chapters that narrates new stories for me on the use of Drama and theatre in education as a methodology of practitioner reflexivity. I have been pondering on how I might apply insights to my work with post graduate teacher trainees.

In conclusion, the style and language of the chapters is somewhat uneven as one would expect. Some are easily accessible narratives, while others are more dense and demanding. Some are complex and a little esoteric to readers unfamiliar or ill-at-ease with relativistic and constructivist ideas of post-colonial discourse, or to action researchers uncomfortable with the language of critical or emancipatory approaches. However, this reviewer found the struggle with the unfamiliar rewarding in insights into the nature of reflection and reflexivity.

The editors' have fulfilled their aims to: *...unveil innovative dialogic methods of reflection in professional education, which were intended to expand approaches for professionals to work with diverse others (p.10).*

They claim that the authors of these papers have deeply examined their biases, values and assumptions to reframe and reconceptualise practice to serve the needs of their clients. The papers stand as models for reflexivity for professionals working in caring professions such as nurses seeking *revalidation*. Action researchers may find much to learn from this book, and an interesting journey in relating these ideas to their current practice.

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The Palgrave international handbook of action research, by Lonnie L. Rowell, Catherine D. Bruce, Joseph M. Shosh and Margaret M. Riel, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 863 pp., £135.00 (Hardcover), ISBN 978-1-137-44108-9, £108.00 (eBook), ISBN 978-1-137-40523-4

The relevance of Action Research has grown exponentially across disciplines. Evidence of this growth is the publication of five different handbooks all within the last 16 years (The Sage Handbook of Action Research, 2001; 2008 and 2015, The Sage Handbook of Educational Action Research and The Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research). Nonetheless, the Action Research literature is not limited to handbooks as various academic journals have contributed substantially to the development and promotion of Action Research in its various forms, in addition to the published books. Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) were not mistaken when they claimed that social sciences were changing, and the influence of Action Research did not go unnoticed. Indeed, what Action Research literature brings to the fore is the forgotten political side of sciences. It reminds us that there is no word without a political meaning and no individual without a political responsibility to transform the world.

The *Palgrave International Handbook of Action Research* has done justice to its mission, providing a fresh and ambitious international overview that accounts for the past, present and future of Action Research. This is important to enhance collaborations for social change across academic disciplines in international research. Through the handbook, readers will become acquainted with the current debates, challenges and potentials of Action Research as a strategy to bolster decolonisation, the diversification of knowledge and the empowerment of the marginalised at a time when the hegemonic use of research and knowledge if left unquestioned, threatens both human and environmental well-being across the globe.

All six well-delimited sections in the book are of interest because they bring together, in one collection, the numerous typologies of Action Research along with current debates which enables ease of comparison and reference.

The first section is dedicated to current debates on Action Research, with contributions from renowned authors such as Robin McTaggart, Rhonda Nixon, Stephen Kemmis or Lonnie L. Rowell. The knowledge democracy and Action Research chapter (Ch.5) is particularly timely, upholding the commonalities and tensions between Action Research and knowledge democracy. For the authors, a way to secure the promotion of knowledge democracy through Action Research is to challenge the epistemic barriers that impede an alternative globalisation.

Despite the editors being part of the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA community), the book covers Action Research beyond that continent. This is very clear in the second section of the book which encompasses an international group of scholars and provides illustrative international examples where common strands can be found across continents.

The third part is dedicated to Action Research networks. This section is critically important, due to the fact that previous handbooks have not paid attention to the importance of creating networks and how they work in the area of Action Research in particular. This book is the first handbook of its type to dedicate a section to this matter. Each chapter in this section is dedicated to actual networks activities, examining them historically to highlight their origins and transitions. Networks such as the Living-theory research community, the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), the Action Learning and Action Research Association (ALARA), the Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), the Action Research in Nordic countries, the Pedagogy Education Praxis Network (PEP) or Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) are meticulously reviewed here.

Research Methodology

Challenges, tensions and issues are explored in the fourth section of the book; issues such as the influence of donors on our practice, the ethical and epistemic challenges of working in educational contexts, or the importance of awareness and openness are explored through the chapters. All these issues are of substantial relevance for practitioners and are explored in depth by diverse authors. I especially enjoyed Chapter 37, by Nathalis Wamba, which beautifully reveals – in a first-person narrative – the challenges and struggles of her researcher positionality.

The fifth section explores five cases of Action Research, focusing on its methodology. Despite the rich details provided in this section, the book would have benefited from the inclusion of cases beyond the educational sector. Of the five case studies that the section provides, only one is based on a sustainable waste management program partnership between the recycling cooperatives and local government.

To conclude the book, the sixth and final section tries to look forward. It asks the question 'How can Action Research live up to its promise in the years and decades to come?' (764). The last chapter of the book (Ch.49) is particularly important and timely. In this chapter, major concerns within the Action Research field are uncovered in an informal conversation between diverse Action Research members. Many of the ideas discussed represent, perhaps, uncomfortable questions for Action Research practitioners; for instance, the 'inexplicable silences' across different traditions of Action Research (821). Nonetheless, the reader is left with a sense of optimism and responsibility to draw from Action Research as a vibrant approach for strengthening knowledge production.

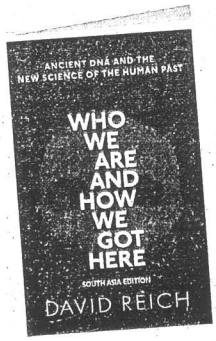
Indeed, *The Palgrave International Handbook of Action Research* is a rich source of examples and typologies of Action Research together with substantial debates and challenges in the field. It provides a comprehensive revision of Action Research across its numerous debates, with a brilliant wide-ranging international perspective. This book is a must-read for both young and experienced scholars, along with those who are not yet in the field, but are interested in Action Research.

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books David Reich

Who We Are And How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the New Science of the Human Past | OUP | 368 pages | Rs 495

Leap Into Our Branches

Paleogenetics is evolutionary sleuthing. The way DNA sequencing throws light back into the foggy paths of prehistory is explained lucidly by a practitioner.

BY SHOBHIT MAHAJAN

IN 2010, a team of paleo geneticists at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, led by biologist Svante Pääbo, published an astonishing result—they had managed to sequence the Neanderthal genome and found that there had been interbreeding between Neanderthals and West Eurasian humans. In a sense, the field of paleogenetics had come of age. Paleogenetics, or the science of using genetics to study ancient humans and other populations, relied heavily on advances in technology to extract and sequence genomes since the Human Genome project. This new book by David Reich, a member of this team, is a popular exposition of the revolutionary potential of paleogenetics to understand humanity's origins and 'histories'.

The workhorse of paleogenetics is the DNA molecule—a helix-shaped molecule which is the blueprint for life. It consists of arrangements of four bases denoted by the letters, A,T, G, and C whose ordering determines the coding of amino acids and hence the production of different proteins in a cell. During replication, sometimes there is an error in the copying of the bases and a wrong base is added to the new DNA strand. These errors or mutations are what form the basis on which natural selection operates. Interestingly, the rate at which mutations accumulate in a genome is constant over generations, allowing us to determine how long back two segments shared a common ancestor. What we have is a kind of biological stopwatch.

The DNA in a cell is of two kinds—nuclear DNA or nDNA which is what we usually refer to as our genetic code, and a second type of DNA found only in structures known as mitochondria, which are outside the cell nucleus. The mitochondrial DNA or mDNA is much smaller than nDNA and much simpler to sequence. Also, mDNA is passed down from the mother and reflects a purely matrilineal heritage.

With advanced gene sequencing machines, sequencing DNA from living people can now be done rapidly, in a relatively straightforward manner. But doing the same from samples of ancient populations is extremely challenging. The DNA in ancient remains degrades with time, the sample gets contaminated by microbes and fungi and finally there is a chance of contamination from human handling.

This book offers an overview of how the study of ancient DNA has radically transformed our view of prehistory. Around two million years ago, an archaic species of humans emerged in Africa—the ancestor of us Homo sapiens, and of at least two other populations: Neanderthals and Denisovans. Around 700,000 years ago, Neanderthals and modern humans separated while the Denisovans separated from Neanderthals later. The Denisovans inhabited the eastern part of the Eurasian continental mass while the Neanderthals were concentrated in Western Eurasia. Modern humans migrated out of Africa around 50,000 years ago.



> Reich's book makes it clear that though we all share our ancestry with other populations, there are real genetic differences on the average between members of different groups.

Reich traces the origins of modern humans, including the peoples of modern Europe, the Indian subcontinent, East Asia and native Americans. The determination of the lineages of these major population groups reads like a detective story, where scientists follow clues from anthropology, archaeology and linguistics to establish our origins with genetic evidence. Though the book is written in an easy style and technical aspects are explained lucidly, the case studies can be confusing. The terms for various populations and their chronologies are easy to mix up for the lay reader.

There are salient points from the case studies here. Firstly, there are no 'pure' populations. All of us share our ancestry with other populations. The multitude of interconnected populations has contributed to each of our genomes. This does not mean that repeated admixtures have made population differences meaningless. In fact, populations are different; both in the average and in their variation. Scientific analysis shows real genetic differences on the average between members of different groups. Yet, accepting this truth does not mean that one needs to accept racism or sexism. As the author says, we accept larger differences among individuals within a population and aspire to treat them with equal respect. The differences across populations are on an average much smaller. There is no reason to treat them differently.

Genetics has revolutionised the study of our past. The future will throw up many more surprises. This book is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand how we know what we know about our ancestors. And, as the subtitle suggests, in doing this, it sheds some light on who we are. In these days of increasing identity politics, it serves as a reminder of our shared heritage at the most fundamental level.

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No place to call home

Hindu, 25/11/18

Why the Rohingya are one of the most persecuted minorities without citizenship, and what the world and India are doing about it

SUDIPTA DATTA

Last week there were desperate scenes at refugee camps as Bangladesh tried to repatriate a group of Rohingya Muslims to Rakhine from where they had fled to escape a Myanmar army crackdown last year. The United Nations refugee agency had all along insisted that doubts persisted about their safety and conditions in Myanmar, and that they shouldn't be forced to return. Bangladesh, which has taken in more than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims over the past 15 months, gave in after protests at the Cox Bazar camps and put off the repatriation move for the time-being.



Never give up: At a camp in Bangladesh, hundreds of Rohingya refugees, including children, protest against their repatriation. • REUTERS

Perilous journeys

Why are the Rohingya reluctant to return? After all, questions have been raised about conditions in the refugee camps, the cramped quarters, poor sanitation and the uncertain future of people living in them. In *The Rohingya in South Asia: People Without a State*, we get a fair idea of the magnitude of the crisis. Edited by Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury and Ranabir Samaddar, it explains why the Rohingya are "now the world's most persecuted minority without citizenship."

In Myanmar, they became a "stateless population" in 1982 when the revised Myanmar Citizenship Law excluded them from the list of 135 national ethnic groups. But the fact is even before this, as they write in the introduction, for decades Muslims in Arakan (now called Rakhine), and particularly the Rohingya, have been subjected to "excessive violence, human rights abuses, and forced resettlement both within Myanmar and across borders..."

Last year, once the military operation began – the Myanmar government said it was targeting militants; the UN human rights chief saw it as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" – hundreds of thousands fled to Bangladesh in rickety boats, many losing lives at sea. Most refugees said their homes and livelihood had been destroyed in Myanmar, and was wary of undertaking the journey back.

Fieldwork in Bangladesh

In 'Stateless, Floating People', Sucharita Sengupta traces the Rohingya journey, not merely from Myanmar, but from Bangladesh to other Southeast Asian countries across the 'kalapani' of the Bay of Bengal. Her fieldwork in Bangladesh shows that it is usually members of the second and third generations of Rohingya, between the ages of 18 and 21, who try to leave Bangladesh for countries like Malaysia and Thailand, and even to India.

In 2015, after 32 shallow graves were found in a remote district of Thailand, the enormity of the situation became apparent. "What was unveiled was a petrifying picture of death, a smuggling-trafficking nexus and torture on the high seas and border detention camps," she writes. Their plight in India is another story which Sahana Basavapatna brings to light in 'Where Do #IBelong?: The Stateless Rohingya in India.' Reports say there are over 40,000 Rohingya dispersed all over the country.



■ **The Rohingya in South Asia: People Without a State**
Edited by *Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury & Ranabir Samaddar*
Routledge India
₹895

The 'other' in India

According to Basavapatna, in India, the "image of the Rohingya is unenviable: foreigner, Muslim, stateless, suspected Bangladeshi national, illiterate, impoverished... and the other..."

Rohingya are said to have been trickling into India since the 1970s and remained largely under the radar. But in 2012, when some 4,000 Rohingya protested in Delhi against living conditions, it "caused much alarm and made this stateless community visible." The Rohingya demanded UNHCR documentation that would recognise them as refugees and give them access to some protection. The government may have launched the Refugee Status Determination system that will scrutinise asylum claims and issue long-term visas, but the experiences on the ground tell a different story, with a large number being arrested for violation of the Foreigner's Act, 1946, and a majority living in "deplorable conditions in slums or unauthorised colonies." The book provides an account of Rohingya life in Delhi, Jaipur, Mewat, Jammu, Hyderabad and West Bengal.

Following the law

What are the refugee laws in India? Will being recognised as a refugee give them a better life?

While India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, what about customary international laws, like the principle of non-refoulement, which forbids a country receiving asylum-seekers from returning them to a country in which they would be in danger of persecution? That the Rohingya live desperately in India is apparent. This October, seven Rohingya men, arrested in 2012 for illegally entering Assam, were handed over to Myanmar authorities at Moreh, the border town in Manipur.

Read together with *The State of Being Stateless: An Account of South Asia* (edited by Paula Banerjee) and Azeem Ibrahim's searing portrayal of an acute marginalisation in *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide*, this book is another reminder that the world needs to "make a decision about them."

The Rohingya want the world to give them back the land that they can call their home, but in reality, argue Basu Ray Chaudhury and Samaddar, they are being pushed to 'oblivion of rightlessness'.

CM K

Indian Express; 16/11/18; BS; 19

The Crisis of Identity

That which defines is also that which reduces, writes Kwake Anthony Appiah in a deeply perceptive analysis of the problematics of selfhood

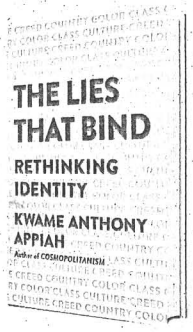


People waiting at the UIDAI Centre in New Delhi's Pragati Maidan to apply for and update their Aadhaar card details *Abhinav Saha*

PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

OF THE many paradoxes associated with discussions of identity, one in particular stands out. The first is that philosophers and social scientists are often very good at exposing the errors that lie behind identity claims. And yet, at the same time, identities seem to acquire an inescapable social hold on us; the more we seem to deconstruct them in scholarship the more necessary they seem to become in politics. Kwame Anthony Appiah's *The Lies That Bind* is a brilliant, eloquent, measured and deeply humane exploration of identity. It will cement his reputation as one of the important public philosophers of our time. He begins with some general considerations of identity, acts of classification by which people are made one thing rather than another. Identities, as Appiah argues, involve "taking a label and a picture of how to apply it, that entertains norms about how people who have the label should behave and how they should be treated." And, in this very act of classification, we see the paradox emerge. On the one hand, the act of classification can involve a number of dangers. An act of classification, by its very nature, relies on abstraction, making us less than what we are. It abridges the complexity of who we are. It often relies on the fallacy of essentialism: like imputing something in common to members of particular group. It can involve normative mistakes — assuming that moral claims follow from some fact of group membership. It can also involve naturalisation — assuming that a set of social relations like gender are rooted in some biological facts.

And yet, at the same time, identities are all around us. Most significantly, identities are not just abstractions we carry in our heads; they are often central to how we deploy our bodies. They shape a set of dispositions, of how to behave and respond to the world, that have extraordinary durability; often more so precisely because we are not conscious of the habits that shape us. Identities, in some ways, seem necessary to being an agent at all. To not have an identity might seem less a recipe for liberation, more a recipe for existential vertigo. But we are often concerned about the ways in which identities, to use Appiah's phrase, go "awry." They can go awry in different ways: normatively our obsession with our identity can displace claims of justice; psychologically, our identities can mutilate the complexity of our experience; politically, they can prevent the emergence of societies that can intelligently deal with the facts of differences; and epistemologically they can force us to live a lie that denies the complexity of history or in some cases even scientific facts.



THE LIES THAT BIND: RETHINKING IDENTITY
KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH
Profile Books
256 pages
₹2,119

Appiah explores the senses in which identities go awry across a numbers of domains: creed, country, colour, class and culture. Each of these sections is a beautifully written meditation on a particular aspect of identity, with trademark Appiah sentences that capture clearly in a few words, what other scholars might take tomes to elucidate. For example, Appiah is spot on in his account of the complexity of religious experience. He brilliantly manages to capture what a genuinely religious engagement with scriptures looks like. He writes, "To be a scriptural adept is to know which passages to read into and which to read past," a rebuke both to scriptural fundamentalists, but also, I suspect, many secular readings of scripture. Similarly, on nationalism, he sees the nation as a "fabric to be woven, not a mineral to be minded." In an age when class and identity politics are often seen as alternatives to each other, Appiah's chapter is a reminder that class is still, perhaps, the most enduring form of identity.

Appiah's discussion of these matters is enlivened with vivid examples, a stunning range of historical references, and his own extraordinary heritage and personal biography. It is in some ways a model of what a deeply lived and embodied cosmopolitanism looks like. There is a gently persuasive force to Appiah's argument that is hard to resist. But like identity itself, the book seems both deeply satisfying and incongruous at the same time. I think the incongruity comes from two things. Appiah's own generosity often seems to minimise deep conflict (particularly evident in his discussion of class or Singapore as a model of multiculturalism). And, somehow, the calmness of the discussion, perhaps itself a necessary political and philosophical gesture, seems to leave you a bit puzzled about the passionate furies of identity politics. Can the scriptural fundamentalist, racist, rabid nationalist, cultural colonialist, simply be cured by pointing out their intellectual mistakes? How has bad identity politics survived decades of intellectual suspicion? Perhaps is there a distinction to be made between identity and identification? Is it the case that very little about the "facts" of identity explains how people choose to identify with something? Is telling the nationalist that his history is false, his conception of other people essentialist, and his ignorance of diversity morally problematic, all there is to resisting a nationalism gone awry? Perhaps, a future book will explain how identification survives the exposure of the "lies that bind".

Pratap Bhanu Mehta is vice-chancellor of Ashoka University

Book Review

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T. S. Saraswathi, Shailaja Menon and Ankur Madan (Eds.), *Childhoods in India: Traditions, Trends and Transformations*. New Delhi: Routledge Press, 2018, ₹1,395, 449 pages (Hardback).

The idea for a symposium on the theme of Indian childhoods was first conceived by the lead editor of this volume, Professor T.S. Saraswathi when she was a visiting fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IAAS) in Shimla in 2014, although it finally came to fruition only in November 2015 at the Azim Premji University in Bangalore. The symposium entitled 'Childhoods in India: Traditions, Trends and Transformations' brought together a large number of scholars from a variety of disciplines to reflect on the idea of childhood, the variety of disciplines that informs it, and policy and practice associated with it. The present volume is the final product of the proceedings of the symposium.

It is not a coincidence that Professor Saraswathi chanced upon the theme of multiple childhoods in India. It is in fact a logical outcome of her long and distinguished career of teaching, research, mentoring and publishing while located in a field that in many senses reveals the shifting terrain of the study of children. She spent her entire teaching career in what is now called the Department of Human Development and Family Studies and is in fact associated with studies of childhood, although primarily from the perspective of psychology. The changes in nomenclature from child psychology to child development and finally human development are a reflection of how conceptualisations about children and childhood have shifted in important ways even within the domain of psychology. It is also interesting that departments of child development (in India, the most distinguished ones were located in home science settings), although strongly grounded in psychology, have traditionally incorporated an interdisciplinary approach and have from time to time reflected on some of the troubling issues that were raised at the symposium and that the volume attempts to address.

The focus on children within the social sciences therefore is not new, and the child has been an important if not central figure in psychology, in education and in law and all three viewpoints are substantively represented in the volume. The focus on children, and the child as precursor to understanding the human mind, has been central to the discipline of psychology. Child psychology as a sub-discipline developed almost concurrently with the parent discipline and has had a major influence across the social sciences. In education where the child is central, psychology has been the dominant discipline for understanding children and for its theory and practice. Although this is a field that had ample scope for initiating more complex and broader understandings of children and childhood, it has by and large confined itself to a narrower agenda. Children have also figured extensively, although often contentiously, in legal discourse and the changing definitions of the child and debates around this are important sources for examining prevailing social and political tensions.

These disciplines have been integral to the consolidated idea of childhood that is now central to 'Childhood Studies' but this consolidation has a long genealogy and needs to be understood differently. As Balagopalan notes in her chapter

> as a process that got consolidated over several centuries, research on the rise of childhood in the modern West includes detailed historiographical research on children and also forms part of a wider interrogation of political economy, moral philosophy, imperialism and new imaginations of the poor, work and self-discipline. (p. 25)

The history is long and complex, but there are critical landmarks: the industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism before the 19th century, the experience of colonisation (especially for the countries of the South), the revolutionary transformation in social and economic structures from the 19th century onwards and the modernist agenda and the introduction of a mass and near compulsory system of formal education.

In particular, a significant and important shift is documented by the sociologist Viviana Zelizer in her 1985 study and thought-provoking analysis of the changing social value of children. She traces how the 20th century 'economically useless' but 'emotionally priceless' child displaced the 19th century 'useful child', and how this new sacred child occupied a special and separate world, regulated by affection and education, not by work or profit. 'The emergence of the economically "worthless" but emotionally "priceless" child', she notes, 'has created an

essential condition for contemporary childhood' (1985, p. 3). She is referring to the 1980s when the current changes were just setting in. This condition is far more serious today where the new world order, the withdrawal of the welfare state and the neoliberal economic agenda, while maintaining the rhetoric of the emotionally priceless child, is unable to support the economically useless child and in the process of withdrawing from social sectors, is pushing vulnerable childhoods into overwhelmingly precarious conditions.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 and subsequently ratified almost universally, has been a major factor in the renewed interest in the lives of children in a global context and closely linked to international politics and global economic and development concerns. It has very important impact on local policy and the many complex ways in which all this gets worked out, especially in the nations of the South, make it imperative for the debates initiated in this volume to be carefully considered.

Since a more inclusive perspective on childhood and the discipline of childhood studies is only beginning to take shape in the Indian setting, the significance of this volume and its contribution lies in bringing together disparate strands and disciplines, to initiate an exchange and a dialogue and to examine '...issues related to children and childhoods fairly exhaustively, with nuance and rigour' (Menon and Saraswathi, p. 1). The symposium and the subsequent volume that includes additionally invited papers, grew, according to the editors, 'out of a commitment to invest in knowledge building about childhoods in India and an acknowledgement that such knowledge building would require crossing disciplinary boundaries'. With these objectives, the symposium brought together scholars, thinkers and practitioners from a range of disciplinary perspectives such as sociology, psychology, history, mythology, medicine, law, literature and the arts.

In addition to a foreword by the eminent child rights activist and scholar, who was also chairperson of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Professor Shanta Sinha and an introduction by two of its editors, the book consists of 16 chapters divided into 4 sections, each organised around a major theme. The four themes are categorised as follows: (a) 'Recovering Histories, Deconstructing Childhoods', (b) Narratives of Power and Representation in Childhood, (c) The Normative Child: Institutionalization through Education and Schooling and (d) Law, Practice and Policy. A summary of the themes with reference to every chapter, given in the introduction by Saraswathi and Menon, does an excellent job of presenting the gist and the main arguments of

each author. It is difficult for a review to do justice to every chapter in a volume of this magnitude, with its variety of topics and perspectives. I will therefore restrict myself to commenting on some of the major issues and debates that have been addressed, the tensions that are highlighted and the important questions that the volume raises.

The three chapters that address the construction of 'childhood' and set a context for understanding the tensions in the idea of multiplicity are those by Sarada Balagopalan on Colonial Modernity' and the 'Child Figure', Vasanthi Raman on 'India's Children and the Brave New World' and Asha Bajpai on 'Right to Childhood and Equitable Access to Justice'.

In arguing that the distinctions between a singular, normative childhood and 'multiple childhoods' are fraught with relations of power, Sarada Balagopalan puts forth the argument that the 'project of liberal tolerance that underlies the (concept of multiple childhoods) has inadvertently set up a 'separate but equal' comparative register for understanding the lives of marginal children in the global South' (p. 24). Her paper then describes a prior moment within India's colonial history that constructed children's lives as multiple, and therefore deserving of 'different' and lesser obligations from the State. She uses four child figures—the juvenile delinquent, the coolie child, children of peasants and factory children—to demonstrate how the modern apparatus of schooling was deliberately distorted to naturalise the learning of labour for the marginal child. She uses this moment of Indian colonial modernity in the early 19th century to make an argument for reanalysing the extent to which 'the current framework of multiple childhoods condones larger structural exclusions that continue to affect the lives of marginal children' (p. 40). 'This historicising' she hopes 'might move us away from the naturalizing of these children's everyday lives that both 'multiple childhoods and policy-making around children', ironically appear to share' and allow 'researchers to critically reread the current 21st century landscape of efforts to "educate" and "improve" the lives of marginal children through a more deliberate focus on postcolonial capitalism, the informal economy and the reconfiguration of the state' (p. 40).

Vasanthi Raman traces developments in the West that have had long lasting consequences for understanding the phenomena of childhood, along with the development of childhood studies, during the period of late capitalism. Referring to the UNCRC, she draws links between the discourse on child rights and globalisation and the dominance of the neo-liberal paradigm in the field of international political economy. The chapter focuses on the children of the periphery in the Indian content,

the jettisoning of the idea of welfare and the withdrawal of the state in significant ways, especially in the social sector with serious consequences for the marginalised and the poor. She very pertinently notes that

> if the plight of children were to be seriously addressed, many stages of history would have to be traversed, many layers of structures negotiated and many histories and world views accommodated in an effort to arrive at a democratic consensus among the peoples of the South. (p. 67)

Lending support to the arguments in Sarada Balagopalan's chapter, she highlights the importance of contextualising childhoods within both the international framework of neoliberal politics and its interface with the national sociopolitical structures and priorities.

The third paper that helps to frame the context and to understand how childhoods get constructed is Asha Bajpai's piece entitled 'Right to Childhood and Equitable Access to Justice' that presents a thought provoking and important analysis of childhood in the Indian legal system and the inherent contradictions in its evolution. Examining a broad gamut of spaces that bring the child face to face with the law and legal systems ranging from the juvenile justice system; children as victims of sexual and physical abuse; children as parties in civil proceedings and custody battles to child labour laws; and with the support of historical evidence, the author establishes the complex legal implications of the concept of childhood. She refers to the UNDP practice note which recommends that, 'access to justice is not only a procedural matter but also a matter of substantively just, equitable outcomes, with strong links to democratic governance and poverty reduction' (p. 315) and to the Indian National Policy for Children 2013, that 'commits to promote child-friendly jurisprudence, enact progressive legislation, build a preventive and responsive child protection system including outreach emergency services and promote effective enforcement of punitive legislative and administrative measures against all forms of child abuse and neglect' (p. 316).

Although the constitution of India provides special status and protection to children and guarantees the fundamental rights to all children in the country, the contradictions of the legal system and jurisdiction under different laws causes its own complications. There is no one definition of the child in law and varies (sometimes for good reason) for different domains—thus it is 14 years under child labour law and 18 for marriage laws while juvenile justice laws are silent on minimal age of criminal responsibility which remains at 7 years as per the IPC.

The second section of the volume around the theme of 'Narratives of Power and Representation' includes five chapters that elaborate social and cultural factors, and focus on representations of the child and its implications.

The research perspective of the first two chapters is broadly within the paradigm of psychology with a focus on the child as a unit and cultural factors as variables that impact outcomes. Parent–child relations are analysed in the chapter by Ankur Madan, Rajashree Srinivasan and Kinnari Pandya and 'the central objective' as the authors state, is to 'examine the criticality of this contextual and cultural structuring of the parent–child relationship over a period of time in the multiple socio-cultural contexts of India' (p. 112). The attempt is to trace the changing contours of this relationship through manifestations of care, control and autonomy. The chapter sets the context for Nandita Chaudhary's article that also analyses the changing contours of Indian families and children's lives. Chaudhary explores the multiplicity of experiences that the local cultures provide and comments on how these get ignored when a single Western model of childhood is taken for granted. She selects examples of 'patterns of care of children that at are seen among Indian families which are valued and frequently encountered' (p. 93).

Jane Sahi, in her analysis of the life of Bala Krishna, explores alternate understandings of the child within the Indian cultural context and its Hindu mythology, as a counter to the singular Western model of childhood. The attempt is to retrieve within this mythology, the idea of a child as creative, as a source of wisdom and one who is ready to challenge adult authority. The author has been involved for decades with the education of the marginalised in India and this is her attempt to find indigenous models for a more progressive agenda as a counter to the common experience of children in schools where hierarchies are entrenched and where pedagogy allows little scope for playfulness or creativity, especially for the marginalised. Unfortunately, the tradition that she uses is so fraught and forms the source of so much oppression that it is hardly likely to offer a potential for change.

The chapters by Nidhi Gulati and Devika Mehra look at representations of marginalised children, in Hindi cinema and in children's literature. Gulati concludes on the basis of her analysis that the attempt is to normalise the marginalised child (in this instance, the orphan) and restore them to an idealised vision of childhood. Her attempt is to uncover how a 'normal' child and a 'normal' childhood is needed as a reference point since marginality is seen as threatening to social order. Mehra analyses

some recent works of children's literature that 're-evaluate normative constructions of childhood and reclaim childhood for marginalized children' (p. 199). She documents a welcome, and what she describes as, a 'burgeoning trend of visualizing alternative and marginalized childhoods, especially Dalit and tribal' and recommends these as educational tools for unsettling those who ignore these discriminations and for empowering those who suffer them.

The theme of institutionalisation through schooling and education is examined through four papers that deal with four different aspects of children in the school system. The chapter by Menon and Banerjee traces the representation of the child, of learning and of knowledge through an analysis of official educational documents in post-independence India. The analysis has few surprises, given that the modern formal educational system was instituted on the Western model. The disciplines of child psychology and child development have been at the core of the enterprise of schooling and of educational processes and advances in these fields in the English-speaking world have strongly influenced educational thinking in India and have shaped our understandings of children and thus influenced policy formulations. Although this perspective is somewhat limiting, it nevertheless provides progressive strategies within the confines of the classroom and for the purposes of teaching and learning. Although they are reflected in the policies, their influence in schools and classrooms is not always evident, and some of the other chapters in this section itself testify to the strength and resistance of traditional belief and practice.

R. Maithreyi's excellent analysis and reflections on life skill education examine the social implications of a psycho-educational programme that has become ubiquitous in the educational context and is projected as the 'caring' aspect of education in a world that is become increasingly technologised and impersonal. While there is much literature on the developmental and educational aspects of these programmes, the author attempts to 'identify the social, political and economic conditions under which these programs have emerged' (p. 253). With theoretical backing, meticulous data and a keen understanding of social hierarchies, the study examines how a seemingly progressive shift in education, of preparing children for 'all of life' in fact "discipline" them according to particular socio-economic ends' and how these skills 'emphasise personal responsibility against a context of structural disadvantage' (p. 269). It is a fair warning of how, like much of what is unthinkingly offered as education, life skills education is in fact disempowering and disadvantaging the poor and the marginalised child.

Rahul Mukhopadhyay and Kamala Mukundan also focus on what is usually considered a psychosocial issue—namely the experience of fear in the context of schooling—but go beyond the psychological to analyse its sociological underpinnings. The chapter is a comprehensive analysis of how power, social identities of caste, class and religion, and institutional spaces are implicated in this creation of fear. All of this is done with the hope that other kinds of spaces for children can be created and this 'glimmer of possibility' is envisioned in 'alternative' school settings that could 'provide counter-narratives to more mainstream school environments' (p. 278). They provide wonderful examples of schools and learning spaces that have been able to provide less fearful environments. Although the chapter stops short of a more complex interpretation of the structures and institutions that create fear, it does open up this psychosocial space for critical questioning of a broader nature.

Jyotsna Jha's chapter on gender inequality, through a critical analysis of policy and programmes with particular focus on two specific initiatives—the Mahila Samakhya, a women's empowerment programme and selected conditional transfer schemes that are meant to incentivise girls' education—that have met with reasonable success. Although not focused specifically on childhood, the chapter examines the powerful hold of patriarchy within educational structures and the enormous efforts needed to counter them.

The other chapter that examines gender is by Uma Chakravarti, an outstanding scholar and a pioneer of feminist historiography in India. She represents a discipline that has not had much interest in children and bringing in this perspective is a welcome move that enriches the volume. She explores the status of the girl child in ancient Indian texts through the lens of mythologies, ideologies and histories and how invisible the girl child is in all of these, to appear only at the time of marriage or in preparation for it. In contrast to the liberatory potential that Jane Sahi finds in Hindu mythologies and the life of Krishna, Uma Chakravarti documents the ideological bias of the same sources of early Indian history. She describes the early texts as 'compositions of a very small group of men, the religious literati, obsessed with rituals and with maintenance of a caste based social order which presumes the man/boy of the upper caste, mainly Brahmins, as the proper subject of their attention'. She points to early Buddhist literature for a glimpse of 'the child as the future moral and ethical being, concerned about the world in which suffering can be minimized' (p. 46) although even in these texts the girl child is 'a mute person as far as historical records go; she is not the subject of anyone's attention' (p. 47). She reminds us that the speaking voice

of the girl child in Indian history comes only in the 19th century following the print revolution and uses these stories of women to illustrate the enormous burden of being a woman. Although the texts are mostly from upper caste women (who were more likely to have access to literacy at the time), she also uses the account of a *Dasi,* from a poor, stigmatised lower class family, to remind us that although the accounts speak of extremely difficult childhoods of women as a whole, they were always also shaped by the imperatives of class and caste that transform the workings of gender and marginalisation in important ways.

The theme of law, practice and policy includes the chapter on childhood through the lens of law and the justice system by Asha Bajpai that has already been discussed. The chapter by Venita Kaul and Meenakshi Dogra on challenges and prospects for social policy and research interface is an excellent review of policies related to children and childhood in India. The chapter presents a rich overview of research on children and evaluates the impact of the policies to explore the gaps in the interface between the two and highlights the need for more effective and comprehensive assessment.

The two last chapters relate to practice and focus on children's physical well-being. Pratibha Singh and Arushi Saini's chapter documents practices of childrearing and child care from Vedic to the present times with detailed instances of Ayurvedic practices. They also catalogue current maternal and child health practices and the sociocultural factors that influence these. Shreelata Rao Seshadri investigates food and nutrition in childhood, and the serious concerns associated with it in the Indian context. She analyses the high incidence of malnutrition in India in the context of food policies and health programmes and explores the links between health, nutrition and education and how this affects the millions of poor children in India. The chapter raises questions on the persisting levels of poverty and the social and economic hierarchies that provide or withhold access.

The epilogue to the volume has an unusual and interesting format and is an effort to bring in the dialogic aspect that the symposium initially set out to do. Accepting the tensions that underlie the framing of childhood and childhood studies, the epilogue presents a dialogue that was initiated with participants and discussants after the symposium and focuses on a critical and current theme—that of child rights.

The significance of the volume is in bringing together academics, researchers and practitioners from a wide variety of disciplines, perspectives and vantage points to reflect upon and to interrogate the idea of 'childhood' and the child. It is from a psychological perspective and

understanding that these categories have traditionally and primarily been understood and although the social and sociological aspects have often been referred to, they have not been meaningfully integrated into this understanding with the consequence of rendering both as decontextualised and ahistorical. Reading the child through sociology, the law, mythology, literature, through schools and classrooms but most of all through relations of power, hierarchy and marginalisation reveals a host of unresolved contradictions that readers will be forced to confront. Several chapters in the volume offer perspectives for understanding these tensions and suggest ways for researching them. Others furnish rich material that needs to be subjected to scrutiny in arriving at a more nuanced and sensitive understanding. The volume will form a valuable and important resource for academics, researchers, activists and policymakers and comes at a time when it is much needed.

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extremes of violence and non-violence by situating them in the larger context of history, religion, state formation and scholarly debates and discussions in ancient Indian political thought.

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NATURE AND NATION: Essays on Environmental History by Mahesh Rangarajan. Permanent Black, Ranikhet (in association with Ashoka University), 2018.

Rangarajan's book offers a rear-view mirror insight into India's ecological history and the opportunity to learn from it. 'The past matters as it can illustrate how the present came about. By knowing better what choices were made in the past, when and why, the dilemmas of the present can be seen in a more holistic way' says the author, and he is right. So many modern day conservation policies have been shaped by India's colonial past as well as by the leaders who inked our first wildlife laws that continue to shape our ecological future.

The book titled *Nature and Nation* is a collection of 10 essays and is an exhaustive reminder of the events that shaped current conservation policies. The journey from a British colony to becoming independent, to an economy that hunted wildlife till the passing of the Wildlife Protection Act (1972), was a long and arduous one and only a scholar of history of Rangarajan's eminence with an eye for detail could capture it in an intriguing way that makes for scholarly reading as well as engaging storytelling.

A political History of the Lion in India (Chapter 3) makes for an interesting read and how the lion became a symbol of power as well as of the modern Indian state fits in well with the central theme of the book. The record of hunting over 57 lions in the region of Delhi seems hard to imagine but it is a fitting reminder of the factors that have shaped the rapid decline of the species. Post-independence, the clash between middle class enthusiasts and the local people again provides an insight into competing visions and how Gir evolved from a princely reserve to a major tourist destination.

I found Chapter 5 – Striving for a Balance – particularly fascinating as it delves deeper into the decisions taken during Indira Gandhi's tenure – a prime minister who is often lauded for the bold decisions she took in favour of wildlife and conservation. Gandhi in the 1970s and 1980s faced the same dilemmas that confront contemporary leaders today, especially the debates that are centred around large dams. While Gandhi may have taken a bold decision by not giving the go ahead to the Silent Valley project, Rangarajan reminds us that she also said no to the Moyar Dam that would have flooded the entire Mudumalai National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu. These and other nuggets of information makes 'Nature and Nation' a lucid read with just the right level of detail thrown in.

Rangarajan takes us back in the past to remind us of battles that were fought before, the ecological dilemmas that previous leaders were confronted with and the decisions they took. The author takes us on a journey from colonial India to the present, reflecting on how our natural world shaped up – the challenges it faced and the political interventions that preserved large tracts of nature.

Rangarajan is a historian par excellence but he is also a political commentator of the present. He does touch upon the present times in the final chapter – The Politics of Ecology – but this stops at 1995. One had hoped to read in greater detail about our current times and that is my singular disappointment about the book. One is left wanting to know more about Rangarajan's sharp incisive views of current conservation policies, especially in the light of his tremendous knowledge of the past.

That said, Nature and Nation is an imperative read for anyone interested in the ecological history of South Asia and how we managed to preserve our rich biodiversity amidst many upheavals in the past

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IN PURSUIT OF PROOF: A History of Identification Documents in India by Tarangini Sriraman. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2018.

WE are today so subsumed by the coerced ubiquity of Aadhaar and its various inefficacies and encroachments that it's possible that we have lost sight of the true nature of the relationship between identity documents and welfare processes in India which, in many ways, goes back to the very inception of the state. Indeed, to understand the popular making of ID documents, as Tarangini Sriraman argues in her fine new book, *In Pursuit of Proof: A History of Identification Documents in India*, we must consider various

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dispersed moments throughout the country's history: from the move towards producing ration cards in wartime colonial India, the everyday mobilization of a patchwork of documents during the time of the 'License Raj', the arbitration over evidence of refugee status post Partition, the issuing of distinctive identities to slum dwellers, and, finally, to the recent move towards a so-called 'unique' digital ID.

'In Pursuit of Proof' as Sriraman, a professor at Azim Premji University, concedes, isn't a comprehensive history of identification documents in India. Yet, it makes for essential reading for those of us trying to understand the present moment, where every day we have before us new evidence of the state's sovereign power, of its ability to use identity as a precondition for welfare. 'Identification documents function simultaneously to reinforce the state as an arbiter of people's welfare claims and render it liable to popular manipulations,' writes Sriramanan. 'If they occasionally make people and their representations legible, they more often obscure and render opaque the claim-making and the welfare-allocation process.' It is this dialogue between the state and the individual that forms the core focus of 'In Pursuit of Proof'. Or as the author puts it, the book hinges on the basic premise that one cannot separate a question over how a welfare claim is pieced together from the question over the resources that the state possesses in validating claims made by people seeking benefits and entitlements.

Sriraman tells the story of the relationship between welfare and identity through five crisply written chapters. She uses the ration card which, as she writes, has seen various different recasting of moulds of citizenship, on account of a migrating urban poor, as her research site. In the first chapter the book harks back to the decade leading up to Independence and the decade that followed. This period, she argues, helped set the tone for the broad mechanics of the welfare state, in that it predicated the grant of entitlements to the existence of stable and enumerable households. Colonial authorities, she points out, were interested in the ration card purely as a means to alleviate wartime scarcity in resources, but the administration found that they could achieve this end only by documenting home and homeless subjects.

In the second chapter, Sriraman shows us how the ration card, which came to serve as both a marker of family and as a ground for corruption, solidified a power inherent in the ID document which, in turn, instilled in low ranking officials of the bureaucracy an ability to fluidly mend the rules to serve different purposes. The 'ID document can lure, tantalize and animate officials located within a culturally bureaucratic world,' she argues. During the period generally designated as the License Raj, 'officials crafted, on the go, affidavits and declarations of the kind that had no precedent and no basis in existing administrative legislations.' This mending of the rules, and this place that the ID document came to occupy in Indian society, Sriraman argues in the third chapter, came to be deeply interwoven with the manner in which refugees that came into Calcutta, Chandigarh and Delhi, among other places, staked their claims for citizenship. The ability of refugees to muster ID documents in their possession, ration cards, or employment letters, or any other such piece of documentation, she shows us, was critical to their being successful in 'narrativising' their identity.

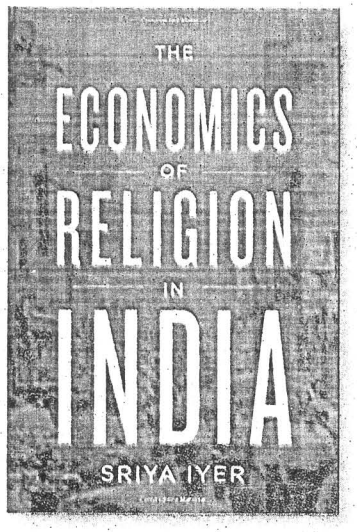
The fourth chapter, which focuses on the creation of identity in the Delhi slums in the 1990s, is perhaps the most fascinating account contained in the book and, in and of itself, tells us a larger story about the relationship between welfare and identification. The move, initiated under the helm of the former Indian Prime Minister V.P. Singh, to enumerate the homeless, and to issue to them three kinds of identification documents: a ration card, a card that came to be called the V.P. Singh card, and a metallic token, Sriraman argues, helped set up a 'tenuous legal infrastructure of identity.' The intention here was to nullify the absence of an identity document serving as an impediment to the poor from receiving welfare, but it forced the administrators of the plan, the book tells us, into making different manners of enquiry to determine proof of identity.

Finally, 'In Pursuit of Proof' tackles the digital ID, the Aadhaar card that has become omnipresent, without which it has become impossible for any person in India today to stake a claim for welfare. This chapter shows us how the Aadhaar architecture simply cannot serve as a means to fortify the welfare state. The ID penalizes, Sriraman argues, those who inhabit the 'in-between modes of dwelling'. The porters at the Delhi bus terminal, for example, 'can neither be the ideal urban residents nor homeless subjects because they cannot demonstrate permanent residence and because they dwell in their place of work.' Ultimately, as the book contends, a valid claim can neither be purely electronic nor purely documentary.

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Retailing religion

An attempt to use economic theories and tools to understand the economics of religion. BY **C.T. KURIEN**



The Economics of Religion in India
By Sriya Iyer
Harvard University Press
Pages: 292

THE best way to introduce the book under review is to use the author Sriya Iyer's own words taken from the last chapter. She writes: "The book argues that economic theories and empirical examples might be useful in evaluating the role of religion in society comprehensively, and that they contribute to the work on religion done over the centuries by philosophers, theologians, sociologists and historians. It also suggests that social scientists must never lose sight of the fact that they seek to understand real people in the real world, especially when we study real people in the real world. What do we really know about the economics of religion in India?" The book is her attempt to answer that question.

Gathering fruits from trees, production of grain from land, the division of labour in these processes, the distribution of the produce among the participants are primordial activities of human beings. These activities also give rise to dependence on nature and beliefs and speculation about forces beyond nature. If such questions are the basis of religion, they may also be considered an innate impulse of humans. However, the nature of the relationship between the two cannot be taken for granted.

Many scholars have undertaken professional inquiries on the relationship between religion and economics. Richard Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926) and Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) are noted examples of an earlier era. While they dealt with economics and religion, the economics of religion is a new branch of study started around the 1990s. It has picked up immensely as the 25-page bibliography in the present volume shows.

According to the author's initial statement, it is an attempt to use economic theories and tools to understand religion.

Surely, it will not go unchallenged. Those who consider economics to be based on rational behaviour and treat religion as essentially emotional, if not irrational, will consider the two basically antithetical. The author's approach is different. As a social scientist, she studies religion because it affects the organisation of society and hence economic life. At the same time, she also knows that there is a great deal of "marketing of religion" and hence economists' tools of studying markets—competition, branding, advertising, dissemination of information—can be used to study religion empirically.

The author and her colleagues conducted a detailed field study of religious organisations of Hindus, Muslims, Christians and a few others in selected districts of seven States in India. The survey consisted of a series of sensitive questions on basic demographics, areas of operation, number of adherents, religious practices, provision of religious and non-religious services, sources of income and expenditure and perceptions of competitive intensity with other religious organisations. Those interested in the details of the survey method should study Chapter 3. The main findings follow.

Temples (and other centres of worship) are as much an economic site as a place of religious upliftment. Construction and maintenance of temples provide jobs and encourage ancillary cottage industries that sustain the local population. Providing education is seen to be an important service of religious organisations.

"Propagating the faith and religious education are key religious services, and technology and the media, including mobile phones, are used innovatively to promote religious services." When poverty and economic inequality are high, religious organisations may even provide

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V. RANEESAN

HAIR OFFERED BY pilgrims in fulfilment of vows being sorted at a godown at the Kalyana Katta building in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. Construction and maintenance of temples provide jobs and encourage ancillary cottage industries that sustain the local population.

non-religious services such as food distribution. Compared to the period before 1991, organisations across the board have increased their provision of non-religious services, which also leads to competition among them. Individuals choose the organisation that gives them higher utility from among the competing units.

NON-RELIGIOUS SERVICE

The most common non-religious services are education, food distribution and health care. Child care and employment, drug rehabilitation centres and old-age homes are also among the activities that religious organisations undertake. Field studies undertaken by the author brought out the services that religious groups were more inclined to provide. "Hindu organisations are more likely to distribute food, while Muslim and Christian organisations are likely to provide education. Christian organisations are also more likely to provide health and child care services."

Chapter 6 is devoted to a discussion on inequality, demography and the socio-economic status on which many studies have been done all over the world.

One of the major findings from the field studies is that higher fertility rates are more associated with low education and low income rather than religious belief. Chapter 7 has a detailed study on madrasas, both traditional ones that provide only religious education and modern ones that experiment with incorporating subjects such as English and mathematics. Chapter 9 deals more directly with the main theme of economics of religion. It begins with the statement: "Globally, there has been a growing concern about 'retail religion' or 'commercial religion'." An example given is that of a California (not surprising) pastor who described himself as a "religious retailer" and was in business for a while, flourishing, and then finally going bankrupt.

Other parts of the globe, including India, have also been witnessing this phenomenon providing an excellent opportunity to study the economics of religion. Consumer preference of the "brand" of religion then becomes important, followed by "market positioning", "advertising", "competition", "asymmetry of information" and, indeed, "bankruptcy". The media (broadcast) and modern technology play an important role in such religious organisations. All tools applied in the study of modern corporations become relevant too.

Interested readers will decide whether the book is the economics of religion or economics and religion. One of the findings of the book is that although the influence of religion is declining in some parts of the world, globally religion continues to play a significant role in the daily lives of the rapidly growing population and is likely to become even more important by the middle of the century. This book, although distractingly repetitive, will be required reading for anyone who wishes to explore the relationship between religion and economics. □

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Hydraulic Citizenship in a Leaky State

NAKUL MOHAN HEBLE

Hydraulic City: Water and the Infrastructures of Citizenship in Mumbai by Nikhil Anand, *New Delhi: Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2017; pp xiv + 296, ₹995.*

Nikhil Anand's book, *Hydraulic City: Water and the Infrastructures of Citizenship in Mumbai* is a neat weave of the water stories of the city of Mumbai. The argument that he builds in the everyday politics of claims and articulations, and depiction of the city water infrastructure that enables it, is insightful and deeply engaging for both an ethnographer as well as a lay person. Particularly for a first-time reader of anthropological work, the interludes that find themselves wedged between the six chapters act as islands of familiarity within such detailed work. A collection of short videos titled "Ek Dozen Paani" mentioned in the book drives home some strong points with simple narratives. These stories shed light on the role that water plays in the settlements of Mumbai. These videos have also been reviewed here as they neatly lie alongside the stories that the author tells. Water, the enabler of urban life as Anand puts it, or as Ismail Sharif from the first video calls it "Zindagi" (life), is reinvented in this book just as the role of the citizens, the political representatives and the infrastructures of water supply.

Most ethnographers find that the boundaries between friendship, research and politics amalgamate while engaging with research subjects. Recently, a young ethnographer in a workshop in Bengaluru, expressed how her positionality as a researcher came into question when a suicidal pregnant girl landed at her doorstep one night looking for help. At that moment, words from the second interlude "Fieldwork" from Anand's book came to my mind. To see him analysing the researcher–subject relationship from his experience of being inundated with requests to resolve everyday troubles that the people in the settlements face, and apply it back into his narrative of everyday negotiations over water, is fascinating. This review begins with the second interlude because of the importance that Anand gives to the space that the researcher occupies and experiences while doing ethnographic research in the city. Within the larger story lies a lesson for young ethnographers who sometimes may miss out on giving sufficient attention to methods, experiences, positionality and reflexivity while conducting ethnographic research.

Hydraulic Citizenship

The introductory chapter begins with the descriptions of infrastructures, which are often seen as mere physical set of pipes and keys through which water is made to flow into the city of Mumbai. But, Anand breaks the hierarchical boundary between infrastructure and the beneficiaries/users by tracing the everyday mix of the material and subjective relationships, and how they shape each other. As citizens contest for the varying degrees of "hydraulic citizenship" and access to water, they in turn shape the infrastructures through which they claim water. A case in point is Alkatai, a resident of a settlement in Mumbai who is "... compelled to draw the state and its water into her home using her own bodily labour, by sucking water out of the pipes" (p 9). It is in this act of transforming public infrastructure that a citizen forces her citizenship to reach to her, fighting both the high pressure exerted by the state's inaction in service delivery and the resultant low water pressure in the pipes. Anand goes on to explain that the concept of "hydraulic citizenship" is, therefore, not linearly defined by the processes of lawmaking or social and political recognition, but it is rather a "cyclical, iterative process that is highly dependent on social histories, political technologies, and the material-semiotic infrastructures of water distribution in the city" (p 9).

The Neo-Malthusian approach to water provisioning as a political agenda is swiftly deployed in cities such as Mumbai to alienate a certain (often marginalised) group of people. In Chapter 1, the author explains how such a rhetoric not only resides deep within the solutions offered by international urban think tanks and multilateral agencies, but also become tools in the hands of entitled first-class citizens to restrict the marginalised groups. Questioning the idea of scarcity itself, he shows how power over the "scarce" enables cities to draw water from watersheds like rural Shahapur to the north of Mumbai, while the rural residents slowly become lesser citizens being left with drying agricultural lands.

Anand's poignant words from the video, "System" tells us how these people are now forced to flow, like the water, to the cities in search of an alternate livelihood. In Chapter 2 of the book, he shows that their urban counterparts living in the settlements, are made "not of the city" simply because "they have not successfully mobilised the relevant documents to establish their urban citizenship" (p 57).

Having established that the notion of scarcity is created rather than located within its biophysical evaluators, Anand turns our attention to the settlers who struggle to become hydraulic citizens through a set of informal relationships expressed through friendships, promises and patronage with the state actors. By stating this, he emphasises on the locational and transactional meanings of the word "settlement" which are fused together when citizens of Mumbai "carefully and creatively manage and manoeuvre between different political subjectivities to make more durable forms of settlement possible in the city" (p 72).

In Chapter 3, Anand begins by drawing from Katherine Verdery's concept of "etatizating of time" where states have the potential to seize time from its citizens who want to use it for their own purposes. By making mere time-seeking bodies out of its citizens, the state truly controls all means of production, including labour, which are bound temporally to their daily lives. Anand claims that it is

in the large keys that are used to turn the valves of the city pipelines by the *chaviwallahs*, that the power to produce time resides. Dictated by the ward-wise water schedules, the chaviwallahs are connected to the citizens closely, especially to the presumed identities of women as collectors of water whose identities go beyond mere citizenship into a more gendered form of hydraulic citizenship that is not contested but forcibly accorded to women.

The corresponding video, aptly titled "Chakraview," a play on the word *chakravyuha*, or a battle formation in which one becomes trapped with no means of escape, is emblematic of the unending wait that women have to endure by the tap. Although at first glance, this chapter may not seem like a good fit into the larger book, it, in fact, is a fresh perspective on the gendered state of the settler in the slums in Mumbai.

Politics of Water Supply

If one knows the city well, it would be easy to understand how various activities of a settlement in Mumbai, especially those that benefit the settlement as a whole, are run by locally managed and collectively run units of non-profit organisations. The manner in which these organisations garner political attention, reproduce socially beneficial acts and manage to keep the community together helps them negotiate for rights and stake claims over resources. In the detailed description of organisations such as Asha and Vikas in Chapter 4, Anand tells us of their proximity to the political and resource provisioning fraternity with whom such negotiations and contestations are made. Collectively, he calls the citizens, "groups" that represent them and the political actors as "the hydraulic public" (p 149) that form "social connections and discursive formations that are critical to accessing water and other critical services." In his deep study of the people that run these organisations and their spatially located articulations of the exclusionary and discriminatory processes of water provisioning, Anand shows how the settler within the larger hydraulic public attempts to gain citizenship.

The introductory quote from Chapter 5 is contradicted by the lines from the Interlude, "Miracles." While engineers express the inability of a normal person to understand the nuances of water supply (p 161), city bureaucracies (through their engineers) spend extraordinary efforts to "make water predictable, legible and boring" (p 220). This constant play of distancing and simplifying allows us to examine the leaky state a little closely. Within the technological narratives of detecting, reconfirming, fixing and avoiding leakage of precious fresh water from the dams that supply water to Mumbai, he describes how some leakages exist both physically and politically, and sometimes completely out of the control of the department.

According to him, such leakages also exist within the engineer's frame of vision but is often ignored or corrected for their illegality rather than being dealt within the frameworks of the waterworks department. On the other hand, the relationships that criss-cross between the hydraulic citizens who want their water "time pe," engineers who want to avoid leakages among other things, and the councillors whose spatial control gives them the power to dictate how water flows, allow for a reproduction of a leaky state that is always managed but not fixed.

Enveloped within the "differentiated social, material and political histories that form these infrastructures" (p 187), state officials struggle to keep up with the pace at which water complicates the urban landscape, while some engineers, decide to "work *through* it" rather than "work *on* it" (p 187).

Speaking of disconnection in Chapter 6, Anand also places an argument of unavailability that is viewed within the realm of the wider arena of cultural politics both within the city spatially and in terms of rights over access of a citizen temporally. Drawing from Amita Baviskar's argument of how the political economy of a city's resource becomes meaningful only when it is seen through the lens of its cultural politics, he paints a strong picture of the dichotomous cultures of two neighbouring settlements, Meghwadi and Premnagar, where the power of the politician and water engineer reigns supreme. In the short video "Pyaasa Premnagar" (Thirsty Premnagar), shot by a resident of the same settlement, a pattern emerges.

Legality and illegality coalesce into a web of leaky infrastructures, and dirty groundwater to create citizens who

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depend less on the chaviwallahs and more on plumbers who insist that their influence in the offices of the water department will ensure a steady and free supply of water to the predominantly Muslim residents of the settlement. In contrast, the political clout garnered through the electoral might, allows the largely Maharashtrian residents of neighbouring Meghwadi to influence their councillor to cut connections that pass to Premnagar leaving more for them.

Conclusions

As one goes through the book, it is not hard to realise that water is addressed and felt in numerous ways in the city, as it is in any part of the world. Embedded in various systems of knowledge, practice, access and power, the epistemic premise of water remains highly varied depending on its users and uses. By defining water as perceived in "multiple and incommensurable ways" (p 220), Anand urges the reader to notice the relationship that culture, myth, gender, religion and material benefits play in defining water and consequently the hydraulic citizen. But, what does this all mean? What does it mean to the citizen and to our larger understanding of urban cultural anthropology in particular?

Clearly, there is no one category of the citizen. Given that there are multiple citizenships that citizens can assume through negotiations and claims over the water infrastructure, the author also urges us to consider a multitude of citizens themselves who are divided between caste, class and gender among other differentiators. These degrees of differentiation influence how the social and material contracts between the citizen and the state over water distribution are honoured.

Having established that there is no one citizen, this book puts forth the claim that there cannot be just one "solution" to the water woes of a city, be it in the global South or in the developed West. Given that "public infrastructures are productive of abandonment, abjection, and exclusion in everyday life" (p 226), how can we even begin to imagine future cities? Anand provides no unique answer, but leaves us with a detailed explanation of the complexity of urban water provisioning and how future infrastructures can be carved out of the messy present through the use of tools that citizens gather in their everyday lives while dealing with the provisioning of water.

To summarise, the author brings in a fresh perspective into urban cultural anthropology of water and its users. His critical analysis of the construction of the hydraulic citizen within a leaky state is acquiescent of the historical, sociological and regional problems that define the relationship between water, state and society. Anand has been successful in his attempt of teasing out the characteristics of the inherently discriminatory water infrastructures, and has brought to the fore several stories of scarcity, disconnection, gendered contestations and leaky states, which are also seen in the videos.

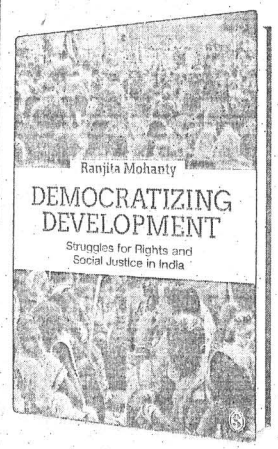
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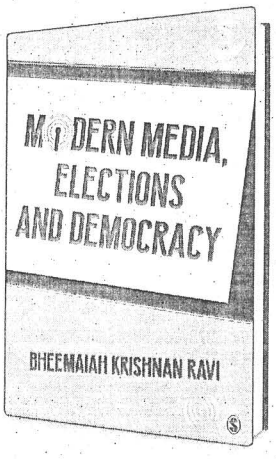
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It further reveals the problematic character of a "sarvajan" electoral politics (BSP), middle-class casteist anti-corruption (AAP), and a statist imbroglio (Ambedkarites). Yet, the fight against a rising tide of ultra-nationalist fascism in India demands articulation of a transitional programme and goals (aside from ultimate or maximalist ones) for a united front. Mobilisation around a Dalit–left perspective therefore needs goals accessible to a majority in the present and yet incompatible with the system in the long run. This requires showing how a growing movement for protecting the Constitution needs a critique of statism and populism, a growing demand for employment needs a critique of capitalist relations that make employment chimerical, and the ongoing struggle against atrocities needs a cultural transformation through annihilation of caste.

Caste violence and violence of caste: This book is a powerful argument against viewing caste as a benign institution or as having redeeming facets or as withering away with modernity. There is one clear thread throughout the book—that caste has nothing to recommend itself since caste is itself a form of violence. Keeping this in mind allows us to appreciate Ambedkar's vociferous defence of the annihilation of caste (nor simply casteism or untouchability). The question that remains is: How to annihilate a violent institution? If Ambedkar viewed a bloodless constitutional path as promising a way out, how do Dalits defend themselves when the state itself fails to protect them (given the brazen dilution of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989)? How do Dalits defend themselves against caste atrocities when society is celebrating caste identities as a cultural right in an age of multiculturalism? The question then is: How to characterise this defence? As Paul Farmer notes, structural violence against the poor of the world not only produces social suffering, but also a violent silencing of that suffering. Subalterns have long ceased to remain silent in India (were they ever?), and their speech and actions have begun to rattle the echo-chambers of a liberal discourse about non-violence. It is time to heed Teltumbde when he notes,

> The wrath of the wretched scares the world. The fair demand is that the world sit up and recognize their wretchedness. (p 180)

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A World of Curiosity and Inquiry

MALINI NAIR

Refractions of Islam in India: Situating Sufism and Yoga by Carl W Ernst, *Sage/Yoda Press, 2016; pp 520, ₹1,050.*

Carl W Ernst has a lyrical explanation for the intriguing title of this collection of essays published over the last three decades on Sufism in South Asia, particularly Muslim scholarship on India's cultural, mystical and religious practices. He says that long before the onset of the bitter politics of communalism in the region that was further exacerbated by partition, and in the period before the arrival of colonialism when people wore their religious identity with ease, Islamic and Hindu traditions interacted with a remarkable lack of self-consciousness, bouncing off each other like light on amber.

The book could not have come at a better time than when conversations around religions and communities are so polarised in the subcontinent. And reading Ernst's fantastic research work shows that these hostilities come from a complete ignorance of the integral place India occupies in what he defines as "Islamic cosmology," a place that he establishes with thoroughness citing famous and lesser known works of scholarship. Even those of us who take a keen interest in Urdu and Persian cultural traditions in India probably have little idea of some of the material he uses as evidence spread over a thousand years. This book is certainly for the erudite but it is also for lay readers who take interest in the many strands of the Ganga Jamuni *tehzeeb* (urbane way of life) that once firmly bound people of various communities and their lives.

If you are in the latter category of readers, to understand the context that drives these essays, it might be a good idea to actually begin with Chapter 6 which talks about Islam and Sufism in contemporary South Asia and then wind one's way back to history. Ernst quotes Pakistani President General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq's proclamation at a conference on South Asian Islam to explain the many problems with how Islam is now popularly perceived: "There is no such thing as South Asian Islam. There is only one true Islam, based on the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad." Haq is often credited for nurturing Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan.

As Ernst puts it, Haq's statement means that Islam "has no history or location," a thought that, he adds, Hindu fundamentalists today are likely to share because they see Islam as being totally alien in India. To argue against this view and give Islam its due geography and history in India, Ernst looks to the story of Sufism—which is the polar opposite of the rigid "purity" of Wahabism—in the subcontinent.

Ernst is eminently known for his work on Islamic studies and acclaimed books *How to Read the Qur'an: A New Guide, with Select Translations* and *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*. He is currently the Kenan Distinguished Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of

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North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the United States. He is also a co-director at the ambitious Perso-Indica project that is working on documenting and researching Persian texts and translations of Sanskrit text on Indian sciences and culture between 13th and 19th centuries. This book is narrower than the scope of the project which includes fables and works on medicine, astrology, mathematics, sexology and so on.

Pluralism of Sufism

Why Sufism as a window to Islam's rich cultural past in India? Sufi saints, according to Ernst, define the distinctiveness of South Asian Islam, pointing to the huge and secular popularity of sufi centres across the region. They composed poetry in local languages and the legends around them were rooted in very local flavours and practices. The pluralism of that Sufism is at direct odds with the monolithic and shrill view of religion that is growing all around us.

Ernst often goes to the works of the 18th century poet and scholar from central Uttar Pradesh, Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami, and his seminal four-part Arabic treatise *The Coral Rosary of Indian Traditions*. This was an insight into the world view of an Indian Muslim for whom "Arabia is the ritual centre, but where networks of religious scholarship and humanistic culture are firmly based in India."

Bilgrami's considerable scholarship extends to Islamic texts, "non-Muslim" or Hindu literature and aesthetics, and embraces themes like *nayika bheda* (heroine types in situations of romance) and its Arabian and Persian versions in poetry and literature. But more on that later. This kind of pragmatic pluralism in Islam in India, Ernst says, was to soon go out of fashion with the entrenchment of colonial rule and emergence of more singular religious identities. The links between yoga and Sufism, with shared notions of meditation and breath control, have been a subject of scholarly interest. Last year saw the launch of *Roots of Yoga by* Mark Singleton and James Mallinson.

The book that studied over 100 core texts in Tamil, Avadhi, Marathi, Kashmiri, Pali, Tibetan, Arabic and Persian, from 1000 BCE to the 19th century, looked at the Buddhist, Jain, even Sufist ascetic practices and established the fact that yoga is not the all-Hindu practice that revivalists are claiming it is.

False Orientalist Belief

There is, however, a widespread reverse theory among Orientalists that Ernst passionately debunks in this book—that Sufism, being a mystical tradition that talks of breath control and meditation, could only have sprung from yogic grounds, and, at a broader level, from Hinduism. The assumption was that Islam being rigid could not have birthed a phenomenon so pluralistic.

The only prominent Sanskrit text on hatha yoga that was translated and interpreted for the Muslim world—"Islamisation of Yoga" as Ernst calls it—in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Urdu was the *Amrtakunda* or *The Pool of Nectar*. This text, on which Ernst dwells at length in multiple chapters, is known as *Hawd al-Hayat* (the pool of the water of life) in Arabic and in a later translation in Persian by Sufi master Muhammad Ghawth Gwaliyari, as *Bahr al-Hiyat* (ocean of life).

This work, widely known among Sufi mystics of India, talks of

> Sanskrit chants and mantras, breathing techniques, postures for meditation, a version of kundalini meditation with depictions of the seven chakra or psychic centres, invocation of feminine deities and other specific practices.

According to Ernst some elements of these practices were adapted in Sufi practices by the Shattari order, whose origins lie in the subcontinent of the 15th century. From here it is believed to have been exported around the world, including North Africa and South East Asia.

In Ernst's calculation, by the time Sufis started interpreting and using elements of yogic practices, Sufism was already a fully and firmly established order. The *nath jogis*, masters of hatha yoga, as well as the Sufi fraternity had both consolidated by the 13th century. Obviously then, the two practices met and mingled but Sufism did not owe its existence to yoga or Hinduism, as the Orientalists believed.

The jogis were on the fringes of the Brahminical caste order which allowed them the freedom to interact with the Sufis, says Ernst. This then was a period of dynamic interaction between the two schools of asceticism rooted in two

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different religions. The Shattari order assimilated yogic practices so well that those who castigate it in the modern world today for its emphasis on ideas like chakras and levitation—such as a contemporary online critique Ernst refers to—do not know that the criticism can all be laid at the door of yoga, not Sufism.

Another, lesser known but fascinating account of yogic practices that circulated in the Islamic world and that Ernst dips into often was the Persian rendering of *Kamaru Pancasika* or *The Fifty Verses of Kamarupa* (17th century Italian traveller Pietro della Valle refers erroneously to this work as *Damerdbigiaska*). The work talks of magical means of summoning feminine divinity through the cult of 64 yoginis. "Just as we have prophets, saints, and miracle workers, so the Hindus have faith in them," the translator says simply.

Interestingly, some of the occult ideas followed by the cult found their way into Muslim society as well, what Ernst calls the "unselfconscious domestication of yogic practices." For instance, seeking favourable litigation when "breath from the right nostril is favourable" or talk of Muslim magicians performing in Muslim/Hindu graveyard or empty temple mosque.

In the larger context, Ernst's work is aimed at chipping away at the commonly held, jaundiced view that Islam's cultural world is inward-looking, straitlaced and grim. And nothing disproves this as much as the chapter on the delightful fourth part of Bilgrami's *The Coral Rosary of Indian Traditions*, which makes a study of the *nayika bheda* tradition in Indian literature—typifying the different kinds of lovers, female and some male—in the context of similar traditions in Persian and Arabic literature.

"The creators of meaning in Arabic and Persian spill blood from the vein of thought, and they convey the style of subtle imagination to the highest of levels. The fable reciters of Hindi have also made no little progress in this valley, but in the art of *nayika bheda* they have taken a magical step forward," Bilgrami says. Hindi poetry, Ernst points out, was "fully integrated into a literary continuum alongside Persian and Arabic" in the scholarly world to which Bilgrami belonged.

This world of beguiling and vivid cross-cultural exchanges that was organic to the society of the time is one that can now only be imagined—of Hindu Persian scholars, of discussions among Mughal administrators "debating figures of speech" in Hindi poetry. It is a world of curiosity and inquiry that is long gone but gives us good reasons to question our assumptions about religion, society and culture.

Malini Nair (*malininair1@gmail.com*) is consulting editor, *IndiaSpend*, and writes on cultural issues.

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Daring to Imagine Caste's Antithesis

BALMURLI NATRAJAN

BOOK REVIEWS

Republic of Caste: Thinking Equality in the Time of Neoliberal Hindutva by Anand Teltumbde, *Delhi: Navayana, 2018; pp 432, ₹600.*

At a historical moment when the project of Hindu *rashtra* tears into the project of bourgeois liberal democracy in India, how can we think of equality? Anand Teltumbde's book *Republic of Caste: Thinking Equality in the Time of Neoliberal Hindutva* combines sober analysis with relentless critique to seek a way out of this moment. While the title is a reminder of how caste is central to what India means today, the subtitle dares to imagine caste's antithesis—an India shorn off its deep roots and long shadows of inequality. It represents what Gayatri Spivak (1996) calls a "storying" for the "clearing of a space from where to create a perspective." Verily, Teltumbde's storying is an interpretation of the world (of India) for the task of changing it fundamentally.

As a successful corporate management executive, even while resisting capitalism as a scholar–activist on the street, Teltumbde identifies the problem:

> In this context of the Indian system, where caste and capitalism amalgamate, the biggest obstruction to the growth of a politics of change has been the growing divergence between the dalit and left movements. (p 20)

Such an identification is generative of the logic of the book clustered around three themes—rapprochement of left and Dalit movements (Chapters 1 to 5), analysis of neo-liberal Hindutva from the left–Dalit perspective (Chapters 6 to 10), and critique of alternative political formations (Chapters 11 to 13).

Teltumbde takes on the task of showing how the Dalit and left movements share interwoven ideals and goals, if not methods in Chapter 2. He rescues Marx from Marxism/Marxists and Ambedkar from Ambedkarism/Ambedkarites to show how caste and class inhere in each other, and that both Marx and Ambedkar grasped this fact in different but related ways. While Marx operated with a universalist view of history and abstract categories (of class), Ambedkar operated with a particularist view of Indian reality and concrete categories (of caste). Yet, both of them frequently converged through Ambedkar's view of "caste as an enclosed class," and Marx's view of castes as internally fragmenting class formation.

Teltumbde severely indicts Indian communists for their particular reading of the base–superstructure metaphor in Marx, which rendered caste irredeemably as an ideological rather than a material reality. Chapter 3 follows with a historical journey to the "pragmatic" philosophical roots of Ambedkar's politics. Here Teltumbde shows how Ambedkar's political actions operated within a notion of a Deweyian Fabian socialism which shaped his view of Marxism and communism (shared ideals, divergent methods), the Indian state (possibility of "revolutionary change without bloodshed"), and education (need for enlightened beings, *prabuddha*). He critiques an Ambedkar*ism* as hollowing out Ambedkar through opportunistic electoral politics shaped by a virulent anti-communism/anti-Marxism, combined with a "hero-worship" of Ambedkar. As he carefully documents, both these views were anathema to Ambedkar.

The author deepens his analysis with a critical look at reservations (Chapter 1). He critiques reservations without being against it by shoring up the case for "reservations within reservations" (first put forward by the *vidvat sabha*, council of intellectuals led by Prakash Ambedkar). This takes reservations out of the thrall of electoral politics while ensuring its benefits to the most needy among Dalits. The ultimate objective in this chapter is to reveal the character of the Indian state for left–Dalit politics. To this end, Teltumbde offers a fresh reading of India's democratic spinal cord—the making of its Constitution. He argues, with historical backing, that the Constitution was not Ambedkar's signature achievement. Indeed, Ambedkar distanced himself from it on grounds that the Constitution (as it finally stood) did not carry the spirit of his intended reforms, which made the project of annihilation of caste a near impossibility. This is a call for Dalit movements to rethink the character of the Indian state, and to move beyond assumptions about the guarantees of the state.

Anti-Dalit State

It is deeply disturbing for readers who think about Indian polity as a form of democracy to read Chapters 4 and 5, which expose the Indian state's anti-Dalit, authoritarian, and class character. Teltumbde shows how the (changed) character of the Indian state (since the 1980s) makes it increasingly against Dalit interests (long and medium term). Consequently, state-guaranteed impunity to perpetrators sustains caste violence against Dalits. This disables Dalit state functionaries' capacity to react in a timely fashion to atrocities. Chapter 5 shows how the technology of "nationalism" and the crushing of all dissent to neo-liberal governance is realised through labelling dissenting citizens (Dalits and others) as Naxalites or Maoists, backed up by draconian laws of sedition. When combined with the tokenism of major political parties who project pliable Dalits as representatives, we get a sense of how a neoliberal Indian state is deeply anti-Dalit.

Not a Caste-free Market

Taken together, Chapters 1 to 5 outline a left–Dalit perspective that challenges orthodoxies of Marxists and Ambedkarites. Chapters 6 to 10 put such a perspective to work. In Chapter 6, Teltumbde recovers a social history of Dalit struggles around the land question, starting with Gujarat (the state with the highest rate of violence against Dalits) and in other parts of India. It also reminds us of how Ambedkar

engaged the land question. Sadly, as Teltumbde points out, the dominant Ambedkarite movement shied away from making land a central point of its struggles, and hence faces a challenge from the new and invigorated grammar of a Dalit movement today that has embraced what is typically thought of as a "left" agenda. Chapter 7 further explores the distinctions between a left–Dalit politics (that brings class and caste together) and an Ambedkarite politics (focused only on identitarian issues). Drawing from the history of Black struggles in the United States (US), Teltumbde exposes the hollowness of the claims of a section of Dalits who view the market and capitalism as "caste-free." He argues that the notion of Dalit entrepreneurs is neither new nor signals the erasure of caste by capitalism. Indeed, caste-based entrepreneurial networks are the hallmark of India's colonial and post-colonial economy into which "Dalit capitalists" enter without transforming the caste–class relations.

He launches a blistering attack on neo-liberal Hindutva by exposing its attempt to saffronise Ambedkar (Chapter 8). He shows how it relies on misreading Ambedkar, misrepresenting his actions, fabricating and transmitting "fake news." Instead, Teltumbde documents how uncooptable Ambedkar is, given his consistent and openly articulated views against Brahminism, Hinduism, and communalism. In the same vein, he also shows how important Ambedkar is in a struggle against a looming fascism. Chapters 9 and 10 take on two of the most lucrative lies of neo-liberal Hindutva reforms—education and sanitation (both fundamentally shaped by caste). Privatisation guides both sets of interventions to the detriment of the bulk of the population—poor, marginalised, and vulnerable due to caste-based exclusions. In both domains, the attempts have either been haphazard or wanton publicity stunts. The result is that Indian society grows increasingly unequal without attending to the fundamental issues of education and healthcare.

In the last three chapters, Teltumbde packs a punch against an identitarian Dalit movement (exemplified by the Bahujan Samaj Party—BSP), the middle-class movement around corruption (exemplified by Aam Aadmi Party—AAP), and the continuing opportunism of the Congress. He skilfully shows how the BSP works within a system-reproduction rather than system-transformation mode since its core concept of "Bahujan" neglects contradictions inherent in a caste–class society. Despite a modicum of benefits that accrued to sections of Uttar Pradesh's Dalits, the inequities of caste remained under BSP's rule. Similarly, he indicts AAP for its refusal to admit, let alone engage with, the structural reality of caste and capitalism in Indian society, succumbing to the personality cult of middle-class puritanical nationalism around corruption. The Congress is severely critiqued on its historical opportunism vis-à-vis Dalits and the caste question, but nonetheless Teltumbde leaves open some scope for a new leadership to emerge that would face the caste question squarely.

Republic of Caste is a public and scholarly engagement with India's most complex and durable problem—inherent inequality between humans. Its arguments cannot be easily dismissed as being unrealistic, or uncharitable to opponents. Teltumbde historicises each argument, cedes ground to some opponents (such as BSP), and takes the left to task where needed. The following four themes aid the clearing of "space" in Teltumbde's "storying" of a Dalit–left perspective.

Identity: The book rightly problematises an identitarian approach to caste and points to the need for a left–Dalit perspective. However, notions and sensibilities about identity go along with a quest for dignity and community belonging; they undergird political mobilisation. Given this, the question of the identity of the category "Dalit" needs reflection. For instance, the book (perhaps wishfully?) notes that its view of reforming reservations may aid the "consolidation of all subcastes of dalits into a class" (p 90). Yet, obviously, the notion of "class" here is not one related to positions occupied in the production process since Dalits are internally differentiated by class. Neither is it about shared "culture" since there is immense variation of shared beliefs, world views, habits and "learned information" among Dalits. Consequently, the notion "Dalit" needs to be clarified as neither a caste, nor a class, nor a cultural identity.

Dalit is primarily an anti-caste identity—a liberating political identity born of historical and social necessity, not a primordial and provincialising (caste) identity. Such a view of "Dalit" also brings r in the question of non-Dalits within a left–Dalit formation to be in "solidarity but in/as difference" (invoking Spivak again). Identity cannot be eschewed. It needs to be unpacked to enable what Mouffe (1991) called a "political community" held together only "by a common bond, a public concern," a "common recognition of a set of ethico-political values." This is the possibility to pursue upon the ruins of an identitarian caste politics.

Caste-patriarchy: Except for raising the deeply troubling facts of rapes and humiliation of Dalit women, the book does not explore the imbrication of gender with caste and class. This takes away from the value of its main thrust—crafting a left–Dalit perspective. For, Brahminism and neo-liberal capitalism operate on casted-gendered bodies—wherein Dalit men and women, and non-Dalit women appear as subjugated identities producing surplus. Caste-patriarchy is a primary form of violence, structural (systemic) and conjunctural (situational). It operates in brutal and banal ways. We "see" caste-patriarchy when violence erupts publicly as "honour killings" and "caste atrocities." But caste-patriarchy is also banal, operating silently as a "normal" structuring force. Bringing into focus a caste-patriarchy enriches a left–Dalit perspective by showing how production relies on reproduction. This is because caste-patriarchy animates key institutions and practices that are part of our "traditions"—patrlineality, arranged marriage, "traditional" family roles, and purity/pollution rituals. We can never understand the brutality of caste-patriarchy without understanding the banality of its violence.

Transitional programme: The book offers a devastating argument about the fragility of bourgeois democracy in India.

It further reveals the problematic character of a "sarvajan" electoral politics (BSP), middle-class casteist anti-corruption (AAP), and a statist imbroglio (Ambedkarites). Yet, the fight against a rising tide of ultra-nationalist fascism in India demands articulation of a transitional programme and goals (aside from ultimate or maximalist ones) for a united front. Mobilisation around a Dalit–left perspective therefore needs goals accessible to a majority in the present and yet incompatible with the system in the long run. This requires showing how a growing movement for protecting the Constitution needs a critique of statism and populism, a growing demand for employment needs a critique of capitalist relations that make employment chimerical, and the ongoing struggle against atrocities needs a cultural transformation through annihilation of caste.

Caste violence and violence of caste: This book is a powerful argument against viewing caste as a benign institution or as having redeeming facets or as withering away with modernity. There is one clear thread throughout the book—that caste has nothing to recommend itself since caste is itself a form of violence. Keeping this in mind allows us to appreciate Ambedkar's vociferous defence of the annihilation of caste (nor simply casteism or untouchability). The question that remains is: How to annihilate a violent institution? If Ambedkar viewed a bloodless constitutional path as promising a way out, how do Dalits defend themselves when the state itself fails to protect them (given the brazen dilution of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989)? How do Dalits defend themselves against caste atrocities when society is celebrating caste identities as a cultural right in an age of multiculturalism? The question then is: How to characterise this defence? As Paul Farmer notes, structural violence against the poor of the world not only produces social suffering, but also a violent silencing of that suffering. Subalterns have long ceased to remain silent in India (were they ever?), and their speech and actions have begun to rattle the echo-chambers of a liberal discourse about non-violence. It is time to heed Teltumbde when he notes,

> The wrath of the wretched scares the world. The fair demand is that the world sit up and recognize their wretchedness. (p 180)

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A World of Curiosity and Inquiry

MALINI NAIR

Refractions of Islam in India: Situating Sufism and Yoga by Carl W Ernst, *Sage/Yoda Press, 2016; pp 520, ₹1,050.*

Carl W Ernst has a lyrical explanation for the intriguing title of this collection of essays published over the last three decades on Sufism in South Asia, particularly Muslim scholarship on India's cultural, mystical and religious practices. He says that long before the onset of the bitter politics of communalism in the region that was further exacerbated by partition, and in the period before the arrival of colonialism when people wore their religious identity with ease, Islamic and Hindu traditions interacted with a remarkable lack of self-consciousness, bouncing off each other like light on amber.

The book could not have come at a better time than when conversations around religions and communities are so polarised in the subcontinent. And reading Ernst's fantastic research work shows that these hostilities come from a complete ignorance of the integral place India occupies in what he defines as "Islamic cosmology," a place that he establishes with thoroughness citing famous and lesser known works of scholarship. Even those of us who take a keen interest in Urdu and Persian cultural traditions in India probably have little idea of some of the material he uses as evidence spread over a thousand years. This book is certainly for the erudite but it is also for lay readers who take interest in the many strands of the Ganga Jamuni *tehzeeb* (urbane way of life) that once firmly bound people of various communities and their lives.

If you are in the latter category of readers, to understand the context that drives these essays, it might be a good idea to actually begin with Chapter 6 which talks about Islam and Sufism in contemporary South Asia and then wind one's way back to history. Ernst quotes Pakistani President General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq's proclamation at a conference on South Asian Islam to explain the many problems with how Islam is now popularly perceived: "There is no such thing as South Asian Islam. There is only one true Islam, based on the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad." Haq is often credited for nurturing Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan.

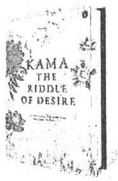
As Ernst puts it, Haq's statement means that Islam "has no history or location," a thought that, he adds, Hindu fundamentalists today are likely to share because they see Islam as being totally alien in India. To argue against this view and give Islam its due geography and history in India, Ernst looks to the story of Sufism—which is the polar opposite of the rigid "purity" of Wahabism—in the subcontinent.

Ernst is eminently known for his work on Islamic studies and acclaimed books *How to Read the Qur'an: A New Guide, with Select Translations* and *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*. He is currently the Kenan Distinguished Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of

Hindustan Times; 10/11/18; Pg. 15

THE ARROWS OF OUTRAGEOUS KAMA

An exploration of desire establishes that Kama is at the very root of being human



Kama: The Riddle of desire
Gurcharan Das
548pp, ₹799
Penguin

Sudhirendar Sharma
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Kama or desire has a compelling quality that preys on human vulnerability often at the cost of the other three goals of life ordained in the scriptures, Dharma, Artha and Moksha. Overt emphasis on these three goals may have devalued kama to the extent that its immense creative force has been left unexplored by most. In reality, middle-class morality has placed kama solely within the sensuousness of a human body, limiting it to the idea of romantic passion that fulfils one's capability for (sexual) pleasure alone. If it is indeed as deplorable as it is made out to be why do philosophical treatises and ancient texts feature it as one of the four goals of life?

With an astute mind and a keen romantic eye, Gurcharan Das pieces together the riddle of desire to restore some balance as kama continues to oscillate between what he calls kama optimists and kama pessimists. While the optimists seek to draw a meaningful purpose of life from it, the pessimists consider it a human limitation.

A FICTIONAL MEMOIR, THE BOOK IS AN AMBITIOUS UNDERTAKING ON BALANCING THE DICHOTOMY OF KAMA'S EXISTENCE IN THE BODY AND ITS REFLECTION IN THE MIND AND ITS ROLE IN FINDING THE MEANING OF LIFE

Simply put, kama's creative and destructive powers are manifested within the confines of pleasure seeking. Not only a force of nature, kama is a product of culture and history reflected in myriad human emotions ranging from love, affection, compassion and joy to adultery, betrayal, jealousy and violence. The challenge lies in striking a balance between these extremes.

Unlike poets and philosophers who are usually pessimistic about kama, protagonist Amar meanders from the socialist to the liberal era without denying kama a place in his life. He nurtures it as an investment to transcend human limitations. From a childhood crush to an obsession in middle age, with family life and two daughters in between, he is hit by kama's mythical five arrows during various stages of life only to learn that love is a process that develops and changes with time. The fundamental loneliness of the human condition gets the better of societal moral constraints as Amar sees that attachments beyond those permitted by society are anything but an infringement on human freedom. Can desire be allowed to remain hostage to the norms set by society and religion?

Told as a fictional memoir, the book is an ambitious undertaking on balancing the dichotomy of kama's existence in the body and its reflection in the mind and its role in drawing the individual towards finding the true meaning of life. Subject to how the reader perceives the narrative, kama is a story of physical desire seen through the percepts of the mind. It views desire, as espoused in the Rig Veda, as the first seed in the mind. It is the unique chemistry between the profane and the sacred, marked by a journey that begins with romantic love and culminates in primal energy. Kama is at the very root of being human.

It is through this story of predictable characters that Das weaves his study of desire which helps the reader understand its contemporary relevance. For all the purusharthas, the goals of life, the task is to repossess the creative life force of kama to restore harmony in the chaos of modern experience. It is time to think beyond the narrow confines of kama as a subject of sexual desire. The essence of the Kamasutra, as a metaphor, needs to be reinterpreted to free it from the gratuitous sense of guilt, thereby helping people gain relief from the stresses of life. Were the principles of the Kamasutra part of the contemporary way of life, the world would have been different indeed.

This book could not have come at a better time even as different meanings are being ascribed to human sexuality and relationships. Marriage, monogamy, adultery and, vengeance will perhaps have different connotations in the future. To make it easy to comprehend the impending irresistible transformation, Das invokes Proust: 'What matters in life is not whom or what one loves... it is the fact of loving'. As the book sketches the subtle landscape of desire, it reminds the reader of the individual's duty to fulfill his or her own capability for pleasure and to live a full life.

Das deserves praise for tracing the history of kama and its multiple strands across the history, cultures and philosophies of both the East and the West and creating a mosaic of meanings and interpretations while addressing the riddle of desire. What must not be forgotten is, as Tolstoy remarked, '...the evidence of other people is no good, all of us must have personal experience of all the nonsense of life in order to get back to life itself'.

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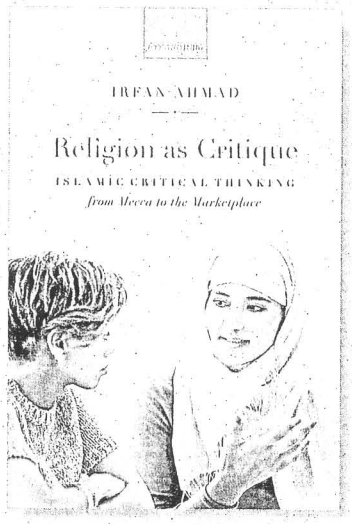
In this miniature dated circa 1754 from the album of Ragamala, the man holds a bow and arrow. These are symbols of Kama, god of love. GETTY IMAGES

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Islamic inquiry

On self-critique as a fundamental tenet of Islam, women's equality and the evolution of the Jamaat-e-Islami. BY **ZIYA US SALAM**

IRFAN AHMAD, professor at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Gottingen, Germany, has carved out a reputation for himself as someone who can delve into the corridors of the faithful and come up with rare gems. A little under a decade ago, Ahmad, then based in Melbourne, revealed to readers the heart and head of the Jamaat-e-Islami, an organisation founded in 1941 by Abul Ala Maududi. Navigating through the chequered history of the organisation, he provided glimpses of the role of the madrasas in the life of believers and showed how faith acted as a glue on a population divided by language, attire, arts and abode.



Religion as Critique
Islamic Critical Thinking from Mecca to the Marketplace
By Irfan Ahmad
OUP
Pages: 270
Price: Rs.1,195

His book *Islamism and Democracy in India: The Transformation of the Jamaat-e-islami* (2009) was a profound exercise in understanding the Jamaat.

Not many scholars had sought to understand the Jamaat and its unique ideological persuasion. None had exhibited the breadth of understanding in doing so in English. Ahmad delineated the purpose of the Jamaat, its evolution and explained how an organisation that had fundamentally aimed at establishing a society based on the Sharia came to use the tools of modern secular democracy and found a place of its own.

In the book under review, Ahmad makes bold to critique religion, not just reveal or expose it. Not for him patterns of parallelism, instead Ahmad goes into the hows and whys of Maududi's politics. He shows how a man who was profoundly nationalist, and had written biographies of Mahatma Gandhi and Madan Mohan Malviya, found himself pushed to the margins of the polity rather than be allowed to swim along with the mainstream. The blame is laid at the door of the emerging contours of the Indian freedom struggle in the 1920s and, particularly, the 1930s. It was a time when the Indian National Congress, for all its frequent espousal of pluralism, failed to discern the differences between Hindu nationalism and Indian nationalism, much like a layman today often equates Hindutva with Hinduism. While prominent Hindutva votaries such as V.D. Savarkar, K.B. Hedgewar and M.S. Golwalkar had not yet overcome their inclination to see Muslims as the first enemy and the British as the next, the Congress was guilty of accommodating certain shades of religious nationalism that did not go down well with a vast section of the population, among them Maududi. Electoral compulsions and the struggle to achieve the larger goal of ousting the British from India made Congress leaders use the Ganapati mahotsav and other Hindu festivals to draw more people into the freedom movement. With prominence given to the likes of Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai, Muslims were disaffected and almost disillusioned. If the immersion of Ganapati idols was synonymous with nationalism, there was little for Muslims in it. While some Muslims bought into the two-nation narrative propounded by the Muslim League, as indeed the Hindu Mahasabha, others chose to chart their own course.

Maududi was among them. His faith in a multi-religious nation was shattered at the altar of electoral politics. He took recourse to religion and came to the conclusion that the interests of the Muslim community were best served by ushering in an order based on the Sharia. Thus came about the Jamaat-e-Islami, founded by a man whose views evolved with the changing dynamics of politics around him. Many criticise him for this move, saying it had driven the community into insularity from which it is yet to recover.

However, unlike other scholars, Ahmad is able to explain why Maududi took this distinct course. When the Congress failed to dif-

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ferentiate between Indian nationalism and Hindu nationalism, Maududi "opposed the pervasive move with the strong backing from within the 'secular' Congress", of rendering "Hindu nationalism and Indian nationalism coterminous".

EVOLUTION OF MAUDUDI

Ahmad gives us the evolution of Maududi in the section titled "The Message: Critical Enterprise". Using a fine-tooth comb and dispassionate analysis facilitated by distance in time, Ahmad writes: "Any discussion of Maududi ought to begin by noting that his views were far from monolithic and static. The writings of young and early Maududi are significantly different from those of late Maududi. The year 1937 was a watershed because under the Government of India Act of 1935, for the first time elections were held to form provincial governments. The 1937 elections, not based on adult franchise, were crucial as they unveiled the challenges and problems of democracy in a multi-religious polity and the minoritisation of Muslims.... In the 1930s, two formations had emerged as almost hegemonic on the Indian political scene: the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. In 1941, Maududi founded Jamaat to contest the vision of Muslim politics represented by both the League, and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH), an organisation of Deoband ulema founded in 1919, of which Maududi had been an ardent sympathiser. In the 1920s, and subsequently, the JUH and the Congress formed an alliance. Initially, Maududi supported the Congress and published biographies of Mohandas Gandhi and Madanmohan Malviya.... Maududi grew disenchanted, however, with the Congress's nationalism, which he held, favoured Hindus and marginalised Muslims and their culture."

Maududi had spotted the problem or what he perceived it to be. The solution was far to seek. If the League could not safeguard Muslim interests, what else could? If the Congress could not accommodate all faiths, then what else could? The Jamiat was not too distinguishable from the Congress those days. There were no easy answers. Maududi took recourse to religion. He studied Islam in depth and came to the conclusion that a lot of corruption had crept into daily life. When the Congress formed Ministries in the provinces, Ahmad says, Maududi "equated the policies of the ministries as heralding the Hindu raj".

If Maududi's views crystallised around this time, the same is true of the author's. It is in this section that he raises the book above the level of a mere academic discourse and attempts to project a complete picture of Maududi with his strengths and weaknesses and seeks to place him in the socio-economic-political idiom of the day.

Ahmed writes: "Across the ideological divide, academics and social scientists, including philosophers, not to mention journalists, hurried to cite Maududi's later writings as proof of Muslims' hostility to democracy as manifest in his notion of theodemocracy. Since their purpose is to 'theologise' Maududi, they rarely mention his writings on economy, where he critiqued colonialism for impoverishing India. To Maududi, the exploitation of Indian labour and the working poor was not a national issue; it was part of global colonialism, the leitmotif of which was the 'pursuit of self-interests by the capitalists'."

These thoughts on Maududi are insightful, but there is much more to *Religion as Critique*. Limiting the book to the Maududi strand would be as erroneous as regarding Maududi as the most conservative Muslim leader. Ahmad critiques the Jamaat with relish, reminding all those who take umbrage at the criticism that even the companions of the Prophet were not removed from *tanqid* (critique).

Interestingly, for the vast majority of readers who do not have a passing acquaintance with Urdu, he gives a neat list of practices approved or disapproved by Islam. Ahmad, rightly, puts *tanqid* in the approved section, reserving the disapproval for *taeib* (to find fault with others), *takbir* (to glorify) and *tazhik* (to mock). If Ahmad's scholarly skills come to the fore in this section, they shine splendidly in the section titled "The Difference: Women and (In)equality". Beginning the section with a reflection on the murder of Pakistani Muslim League leader Zille Huma by Ghulam Sarvar at Gujranwala near Lahore in February 2007 "in full public view", Ahmad writes: "According to the BBC report, Sarvar killed her because he opposed rule by women."

Zille Huma had just then joined the League and recruited 10,000 women to the party. Ahmad contests the labelling of all Islamist movements as right wing, arguing that it simplifies the complexity of Islamism. Here, too, he refers to Maududi's views on women, citing his treatise *Pardah* (The Veil) in which he argues that women's freedom had led to the decline of many a nation.

Maududi talked of moral degradation of women, particularly, among Westernised Muslims. He attacked the League for flouting Sharia limits on women. In fact, Maududi did not find any difference in the attitude of the Congress and the League when it came to women. Maududi blamed men for the "degradation of women" as they "encouraged women to step out of their 'natural' space: home". Little wonder then that Maududi called co-education "poison".

Credit must be given to Ahmad for refraining from repeating stereotypes. Whether he talks of Maududi in particular or religion in general, he backs up his arguments with words of scholars from different eras. Never once is he found amiss while talking of the verses of the Quran or the hadith. *Religion as Critique* clears away many cobwebs and opens the windows of the mind to things and individuals past. □

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THRILLER

Hindu; 25/11/18

Reading the tea leaves

This Old China Hand brings alive the Beijing of the 2008 Games

BY VENKY VEMBU



Nineteenth-century foreign merchants who set up a flourishing trade practice in the "treaty ports" of China came to acquire the honorific title of "*Zhongguo-tong*" ('China Hands'). In more contemporary times, that badge of honour – as acknowledged experts of Chinese language and culture – has been conferred on diplomats and even journalists who have built a career out of reading the tea leaves and pounding Beijing's vanishing hutong alleyways in order to 'interpret' a rapidly transforming China for the world.

Robert F. Delaney's immersive experiences – as a Chinese-speaking financial journalist who had front-row seats to one of the most awe-inspiring economic miracles and who soaked up the local culture for nearly two decades from 1995 – qualify him as a confirmed 'Old China Hand'. And in *The Wounded Muse*, a novel based on real-life events, he distills all his experiential learnings to craft a thrilling narrative of international intrigue set in a Beijing in the throes of sweeping change in the run-up to the 2008 Olympic Games.



The Wounded Muse
Robert F. Delaney
Mosaic Press
$19.95

> The aroma of steamed pork buns wafts off the pages, and you can almost visualise men in their 'Beijing bikinis'

Coming-out party

Those Games were billed as China's "coming-out party", when a 5,000-year-old civilisation would showcase its 'modernity'. The success of that Olympian project was of vital importance to China's leaders, who therefore went about rebuilding the country anew: entire neighbourhoods were marked for demolition with the accursed word *chai*, to allow them to be 'gentrified' and for gleaming high-rises to come up in their place. Simultaneously, public security authorities mounted one of the most comprehensive electronic surveillance mechanisms to monitor dissenters and political activists.

It is against this backdrop that the action is set. Journalist Jake Bradley is collaborating peripherally with Silicon Valley-returned social dissenter Sun Qiang, who is documenting the displacements wrought on communities and ordinary people's lives by the Olympics-driven redevelopment drive. In the course of his interviews, he secures a sensational on-the-record admission by a former Chinese Communist Party official about the party's mala fide actions during the students' protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989, which were brutally put down. Two decades after the massacre, the official's revelation still has the capacity to stir social turmoil, and Qiang is 'disappeared' by panicky security officials.

Trying to track down Qiang, his sister Diane and his same-sex ex-partner Ben join forces with Jake, who himself was looking to hitch up with Qiang. Their lives become cosmically intertwined with those of a bureaucrat in the films division and a drifter, both of whom come on the radar of security officials. Jake initially has inhibitions about Diane's and Ben's commitment to securing Qiang's release, but they earn his trust over time. After an initial failed effort to lobby a visiting U.S. politician to raise with Chinese officials the issue of Qiang's unacknowledged detention, the three plot to secure some leverage with a high-stakes, high-risk gamble. Such is the power structure in China that even countries – much less individuals – cannot hope to 'blackmail' officials into releasing a dissident. But by harnessing elements from Ben's spooky past, and Jake's journalistic network, they pull off the impossible feat.

Delaney is a masterful story-teller and his prose sets a pulsating pace; in particular, the denouement is a heart-stopper that could lend itself to gripping cinema. The author's descriptions of China's capital bring the city alive; the aroma of steamed pork buns wafts off the pages, and you can almost visualise the city's men in their 'Beijing bikinis'. Delaney also throws vivid light on the city's gay scene, which is in many ways central to the plotline, given that the sexual orientation of the key characters enhances their vulnerabilities.

In addition to being a racy thriller, *The Wounded Muse* offers endearing insights into the lives of ordinary folks. It also offers a peep behind 'The Great Firewall of China', which has emerged as the kind of surveillance society that every authoritarian leadership dreams of. Given the limitations on reportage within China on its security apparatus, that is a formidable challenge. Delaney's sensitive portrayal of the protagonists breaks free of cultural stereotypes and, for that reason, enhances their authenticity. This 'Old China Hand' does a sterling job of 'interpreting' the country that has implanted itself on the world's imagination in recent decades.

As a Foreign Correspondent perched in Hong Kong, the writer did a bit of 'China-watching' for nearly a decade straddling the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

ND-X

A follower of Kanu Sanyal making preparations for the celebration of 50 years of the Naxalite Movement in Naxalbari in 2016. *Partha Paul*

Indian Express ; 3/11/18 ; Pg 25

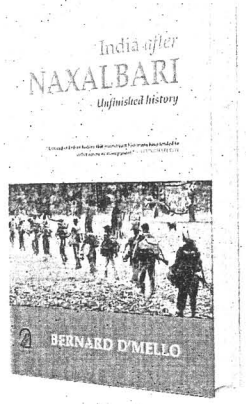
SANJOY HAZARIKA

THIS IS an important book, not just because of its relevance to a challenging topic and set of concerns that sprawl across India and which continue to defy political solution. It is relevant not just because the focus of D'Mello's work hits the headlines with regular intensity, with accounts of battles against the State (the latest is an incident in Dantewada in which a Doordarshan cameraman and three policemen were killed, and which was filmed by lighting assistant Mor Mukut Sharma) as well as coercive, oppressive measures by state governments and their agencies and the harm that befalls innocents caught between official power and the left-wing forces opposed to them.

It is important for the simple reason that there are few detailed accounts, nay, contemporary histories, which bring together ideological roots, pugnacious narratives and academic research which make no bones about where the author is coming from, or about his ideological persuasions and beliefs. One does not have to agree with D'Mello's perspective to understand the deep distress and exploitation to which the Adivasi and other significant as well as smaller tribal groups and vulnerable populations have been subjected for many decades.

D'Mello sets this substantial book in a framework, informed by a strong Marxian review of the Indian economy. In the first part of India after Naxalbari, he cites Paul Baran's *The Political Economy of Growth*, where he draws a comparison between "Japan's independent capitalist development after 1868 and India's dependent capitalist underdevelopment with native compradors as junior partners." He shows the failure of the Congress Party after Independence to live up to its own proclaimed convictions of ending inequality because it was too afraid of offending landed interests, business, merchants and moneylenders, and though "anti-imperialist by background, it is courting favours from foreign capital."

This ideological mooring resonates through the various phases of the book and is well articulated in a succinct Introduction that spans not just the Naxalbari movement's structure but also draws upon D'Mello's passionate espousal of the rights of ordinary people, especially the oppressed. He speaks without fear and with acute determination about the present as history — this principle and perspective has guided his writing.



INDIA AFTER NAXALBARI: UNFINISHED HISTORY
BERNARD D'MELLO
Aakar Books
384 pages
₹995

It is his own words: "Revolution didn't happen but it forced reform... I have put myself in their (revolutionaries') shoes to feel their rage, fury, revulsion, moral indignation directed against the powers that be, their empathy and compassion toward the oppressed both in the face of the terror and the inhumanity of the counterrevolution." The poor have risen, because the oppressed "have no choice" but to challenge the structured violence against them.

Weaving a narrative hewn out of Marxist logic, interspersed with the predictable and repetitive prose of that ilk, he takes a different path by weaving Naxalite poetry and folk songs into his story. He knows that the struggle is nowhere near won for the Maoist cadres and their units are but small guerrilla armies "operating on the margins of Indian society". Ponderous at times, the author's purple prose with reference to the fighting Naxalite units in India after Naxalbari is not much to get excited about.

Yet, D'Mello combines the searing honesty of his own feelings and ideas with the compelling stories of the lives, deaths, sexual abuse, trauma, poverty and torture that the fighters, their families and their friends faced. He does not hesitate to attack traditional Marxists who connived with capital to undermine the Maoists, and, eventually, produced a situation in West Bengal that resulted in the rise and rise of Mamata Banerjee. He says that Maoists today see the value of protecting those who suffered at their own hands and not just at the hands of state agencies. "Pray, how can anger and indignation, empathy and compassion, this in the face of terror and inhumanity, be considered out of place? Are not passion and rage the stuff that drives revolutionaries to make them what they are?" he asks.

D'Mello nuances the fighting as well as the infighting and betrayals in depth and enriches the book with extensive end notes, drawing on published and unpublished material as well as interviews. He writes graphically at times, drawing on large sources of material, whether it is of the various ambushes of paramilitary convoys, the life and brutal death of Kishenji in West Midnapore (one account says that "there is no part of the body where there is no injury") or the factionalism within the CPIML-PW, or the manner in which the Salwa Judum functioned. This last episode is fast fading from public memory, although the harm it did to the poor tribal groups that the Judum claimed to represent has left a lasting mark.

The State's traditional efforts to divide, absorb, buy out or intimidate groups opposed to it are well established; this 'traditional' process is well known both in the Northeast and other parts of the country which have seen prolonged conflicts.

While the chapters are filled with detail, reflecting the writer's access to extensive material related to the Naxalite movement across the country, D'Mello acknowledges that the "Maoists are nowhere near winning over the majority of the oppressed and the exploited in rural India." Yet, it is his belief that the growth of semi-fascist forces and the Hindutva agenda will trigger a rise in Dalit and OBC liberation.

This is a major contribution to help us understand the Naxalite movement and the literature around it, even though we may not agree with Mr D'Mello on a number of issues.

Sanjoy Hazarika is director, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)

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The people of a movement

An anthropologist examines what drove the marginalised towards Naxalism, while recognising the ideology's weaknesses and dangers

DYA RAM

In 2010 Alpa Shah, a London-based anthropologist, embarked on a seven-day, 250-km trek through jungles and tough terrain from Bihar to Jharkhand, dressed as a man, with a platoon of Naxalites heading to a state-level committee meeting of Maoists. The rare access accorded to Shah – this lengthy and dangerous journey, at the height of the counter-insurgency against the guerrilla, reflected the relationships, trust and understanding that Shah had built up with Adivasi communities – and the Naxalites who regularly visited them.



Nightmarch: A Journey Into India's Naxal Heartlands
Alpa Shah
HarperCollins India
₹699



Long road: The author, marching with a group of Naxalites, from Bihar to Jharkhand, in 2010. COURTESY: ALPA SHAH

Adivasis and Naxals

She had lived with Adivasis for the previous year and a half in Lalgarh, Jharkhand, as she sought to build her understanding of why so many people from Adivasi communities in the area opted to join the Naxalites and shunned the traditional societal structures, and tempting promises of an economically-thriving, forward-moving India.

"Perspectives on Naxalites have tended to fall into two broad and diametrically opposed camps. There are those that have treated them purely as enemies of the state and believe those who associate with them in any way should feel the full wrath of the law, with little weight given to circumstance, and secondly there are those

powerful, emotional and painstakingly detailed analysis, engagingly built up through the course of the book, offers a third way: recognising the innumerable social, economic, personal forces that drove some of the most marginalised in society towards the Naxalites while at the same time recognising the movement's many weaknesses, contradictions and dangers.

Shah makes no pretence of it being an unemotional exercise: an academic who had previously done her work in Jharkhand, Shah chronicles the personal journey that brought her from her childhood in Nairobi to the point where she returned to the 'Red capital' of Jharkhand, years after completing her Ph.D., haunted by questions around the draw the Naxalites continued to have for the local

coated idealisation of Naxal life, and her emotional investment is an advantage, leading her to probe – through frank conversations with everyone from high ranking cadres to young foot soldiers – deeply into their motivations, actions and ensuing consequences. While ostensibly committed to routing out caste-hierarchy, many within the Naxalites remained bound by it, unwittingly reinforcing its existence in communities it sought to engage with and 'free'.

This was also the case when it came to gender equality, where a

fundamental contradictions: while seeking to undermine the capitalist system, the Naxalites often relied on some of capitalism's strongest forces for its survival (the Wikileaks cables infamously exposed payments made by miners to the Naxals), giving it elements of a Sicilian mafia protection racket.

However, she is at pains to stress that to simply treat it as this would be to grossly simplify. The violence is not glossed over, nor is the terrifyingly nonchalant way in which many have internalised and

communities. "As the world marvelled at India's economic growth rates there was no provision of electricity or running water healthcare or sanitation in any of the villages in which I lived in Jharkhand," she notes.

'Frankenstein's monsters'

The trek through the jungle emboldened her to ask tough questions, giving a rare insight into their world. At one point one of the protagonists acknowledges the movement was creating its own

mathematician who spurned his middle class roots. There's Shah's young 'bodyguard' for the trek, who joined the movement after his father hit him over a cup of spilt milk. There's a young man whose regular encounters with the Maoists while out grazing cattle made him a passionate, committed soldier. There's a woman leader who turned to the movement after her work for slum-dwellers was met with brutal repression.

Nuanced study

What is noteworthy is that the characters and their motivation fit no neat box often accorded to them but are complex, sometimes contradictory and deeply human. She draws on Indian cultural traditions (such as the long history of renunciation) as well as the deep, personal ways in which the Naxalites enmeshed themselves into communities. To some, the movement was their heart and soul and what they gave their life to, for others it was a way of life they moved in and out of seamlessly.

Plans for the book and its release predated the recent national debate over dissenting voices, and the now infamous concept of urban Naxalism, and it will undoubtedly feed into that debate.

There will inevitably be some on the right who dub it an anti-nationalist, anti-India book but these