

EDUDOC SERVICES: BOOK REVIEWS



Book Reviews

October - 2019



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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

We eagerly await to receive your views and comments.

Chairperson, LDD

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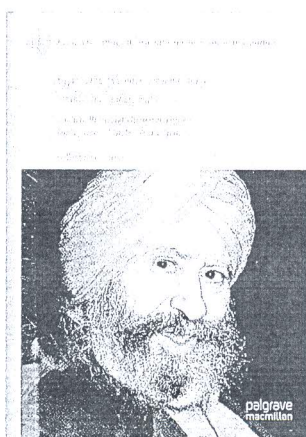
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The practical economist

The biography of the economist Ajit Singh is also the history of the tactics neoclassical economists have adopted all over the world to drive out reality-based heterodox economics. BY AMIYA KUMAR BAGCHI

THIS is the most impressive intellectual biography of any economist I have ever read. It is eloquent and passionate, engaging closely with every theme Ashwani Saith touches, be it Ajit Singh's Punjabi Sikh background, his early engagement with the support of student demands in Cambridge, his opposition to the Vietnam War, his almost 50-year-long battle to save the core of the Marshall-Keynes-Kaldor tradition of economics as a subject grappling with real-life problems from the neoclassical mafia of theory without content, and the enormous contribution Ajit made to economics as a professional. The book sometimes appears to be hagiographic, written by his PhD student, Ashwani Saith, but Ajit attracted affection amounting to reverence from his other students also. For example, when Andy Cosh, another of his PhD students, was offered by Queens' College, Cambridge, a Fellowship to be created in his name, Cosh wanted it be named after Ajit: so there is now an Ajit Singh Fellowship in Queens' College.

Ajit came from a privileged Sikh background on both his mother's and his father's side. Saith's use of



Ajit Singh of Cambridge and Chandigarh

An Intellectual Biography of the Radical Sikh Economist

By Ashwani Saith
Palgrave Macmillan,
New York

Pages: xxxviii + 463
Price: \$113.99

“radical Sikh” as the appellation of Ajit is justified, because Ajit was radical, and he wore his long hair covered with a colourful Sikh turban as a proud marker of his identity without being a regular gurdwara-goer all his life. He was born in Lahore on September 11, 1940, to Sardar Gurbachan Singh and Pushpa (nee Bawa). Gurbachan was a sub-judge in the Punjab judiciary and Pushpa, a university student. Pushpa's family stood in the direct line of descent from the third Sikh Guru, Amar Das. Ajit's paternal grandfather was Deputy Inspector General of Punjab Police. Pushpa studied in a “convent” school and enrolled for a BA in history at the elite Kinnaird College. Her maternal grandfather

was a doctor. After Partition, Ajit's father rose to be a sessions judge in Ambala. Both his parents were keen that their children study in a local government school with vernacular (not English) as the medium of instruction so that education would not distance them from the ground reality of their country.

Ajit was a precocious student. In 1955, aged 15, he enrolled for a BA degree at Government College for Men, Chandigarh. He chose to study Sanskrit for nationalistic reasons and mathematics as the main subject. But, in his own words, “in order to understand how India could become a modern, prosperous country”, he also studied economics. There was no formal faith instruction in Sikhism at

home. There were no regular *diwan* trips every Sunday to the gurdwara. These trips were limited to gurpurabs, Diwali and Baisakhi festival days; the annual *akhand path* and monthly *sangrant* were performed at home. There was a separate *darbar sahib* where the holy book, Guru Granth Sahib, was kept. But ritual obeisance to the book was not taught to the children. Pushpa's mother being a Hindu, the children learnt tales of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and sang bhajans.

Ajit got into politics in college. He won the election to be president of the students' union of the college, but the principal forced him to stand down in favour of then Punjab Chief Minister Pratap Singh Kairon's son. The second brush with the principal was more serious. The principal had upset the entire student body by using his arbitrary authority over some disagreements, and the students went on strike. At this time, the annual college magazine was released, with a full-page photograph of the principal. When the principal arrived in the classroom, student after student ripped out the page containing the

photograph of the principal. The student who was punished for this act was arrested and the ensuing

JOURNEY

Experiencing the journey, Ajit Singh's trip to India for the first time in the winter of 1960, cured a long-standing ailment. Howard Callahan, a Washington, D.C. resident, was a member of the network of Sikh students in India. Through his Sikh friends, he obtained a job at the Supply Mission in Delhi. Those earnings were used for his evening classes at Howard Callahan. He led in organizing the gurpurabs. He catered to the needs of the students and Ajit Singh's face with racial prejudice was completed in economics with a PhD in 1960. On the way, the Sikh cab driver in Berkeley, California, was persuaded to tide him over. He found supplementary support in the expatriate community.

At Berkeley, the competition for a departmental Assistant Professorship was fierce. Fellow students in 1961-62, boost their reputation and reputation. He mentions particularly influential figures like Leibenstein, Jorgenson and Scitovsky and his inclination towards the theory was further strengthened under the influence of Brian Reddaway's bridge. Seren

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photograph of the principal. The latter picked on Ajit as the ringleader, and as punishment his marks were arbitrarily docked in the ensuing examination.

JOURNEY TO U.S.

Experiencing this harassment, Ajit decided to leave India for further study. In the winter of 1958, Ajit secured admission to Howard University, Washington, D.C. In that city, he was welcomed by a network of Sikh families. Through the influence of his Sikh friends, he obtained a job in the India Supply Mission and with those earnings he financed his evening studies at Howard. He also took the lead in organising gurburabs. Howard mainly catered to African Americans and Ajit came face to face with racism, a form of internal colonialism. Ajit completed his MA in economics with straight As in 1960. On the advice of a Sikh cab driver, Ajit made a three-day journey to Berkeley, California, arriving there penniless. Another Sikh lent him money to tide him over. There also he found support from the expatriate Sikh community.

At Berkeley, Ajit won the competitive interdepartmental Alice J. Rosenberg Fellowship in 1961-62, boosting both his reputation and finances. He mentions being particularly influenced by Harvey Leibenstein, Dale W. Jorgenson and Tibor Scitovsky and realised that his inclination was in testing theory with facts; this was further strengthened under the influence of Brian Reddaway at Cambridge. Serendipitously,



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FEBRUARY 17, 1981: Miners picket outside the Nantgarw/Windsor Colliery near Caerphilly in South Wales. Under Margaret Thatcher, new laws allowed employers to sack strikers, reduced dismissal compensation, forbade workers to strike in support of others, repealed protections preventing courts seizing union funds, and made unions liable for huge financial penalties.

Robin Marris was spending a year at Berkeley, when he took on Ajit as his research assistant in the summer of 1961. Marris arranged for Ajit to go to Cambridge to work on Marris' magnum opus, *The Economic Theory of Ma-*

nagerial Capitalism. Marris thanked Ajit fulsomely for his help in his book.

When Labour won the election in 1964, Marris joined the government as an economic adviser, and Ajit took over his teaching. Alan Brown left Cam-

bridge for a Chair at Bristol, leaving a gap in the Department of Applied Economics (DAE) and in the teaching at Queens'. Ajit joined the DAE in 1964-65, and in the course of 1965 became a Fellow (Economics) of Queens'

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and Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Economics and Politics. Saith (page 62) gives a list of South Asians and Sri Lankans who did their PhD in Cambridge, from the 1950s through the early 2000s, which begins with Amartya Sen and ends with Sukti Dasgupta. I would add to that list G. Uswatte-Aratchi, S.K. Rao, Jitendra Gopal Borpujari and S.M.P. Suriya Aratchi.

When Ajit joined the faculty of economics and politics, the Vietnam War was raging. As in other universities, the faculty was divided between hawks who wanted the Americans to continue the aggression and doves who wanted them to withdraw from the war. Ajit naturally belonged to the latter camp. According to Martin Bernal, Ajit and he had been involved in protests against the Vietnam War from 1962. Ajit and Tariq Ali were involved in the teach-in on the Vietnam War at Oxford Union on June 16, 1965. On the American side, there was not only the U.S. Ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr, but also the Labour Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart. Stewart and especially Lodge were so raucously heckled by the audience that Lodge appealed to Christopher Hill, who was chairing the meeting, to bring the audience to order, but to no avail. So the teach-in ended in chaos. Ajit immediately followed this up by writing a booklet, published by CND, in which he demolished Stewart's arguments point by point.

From 1969, Ajit was actively involved in addressing several thorny is-

suues, including the reform of the examination system that the students of economics demanded. The first formal Staff-Students Examinations Committee was set up in Lent 1969 and was jointly chaired by Nicholas Kaldor and B. Rivers-Moore for the students, with Ajit as a member; a second Staff-Students committee was set up with William Brian Reddaway and Rivers-Moore as co-chairs and Ajit as a member. There was finally a third committee set up by the Faculty Board to look into the specific issue of having a by-dissertation-only option as a substitute for written examinations, again with Ajit as a member. It shows how much Ajit was central to the whole process and how much students trusted him.

Of the reform proposals, the dissertation-only alternative to Part II was dropped but the other proposals were sent by the Faculty Board to the General Board for approval. But the General Board peremptorily rejected the proposals. The Faculty Board persisted and asked the General Board for its rationale. This was immediately followed by a huge Staff-Students meeting in Lady Mitchell Hall. This meeting became confrontational, with students from other faculties being present and demanding student representation on faculty councils and boards.

After a student sit-in there was an inquiry by Lord Devlin into the events. Devlin first wanted to know what Ajit Singh and Bob Rowthorn, both

members of the Faculty of Economics, had said in Lady Mitchell Hall. Ajit then overnight prepared a crystal-clear document for Devlin. The latter was impressed both by this document and another prepared by Ajit, a 24-page statistical analysis of the pairs of marks from first and second readers. Though Lord Devlin pulled up the student body for excesses, the student body had effectively won its argument at the highest level, so the university was now obliged to introduce changes demanded by the students. The students' arguments had clearly been boosted by Ajit's radicalism and hard work.

BATTLE OF IDEAS

From the 1970s, a battle began between Keynesians, post-Keynesians, Marxists and other heterodox economists on the one side, and the neoclassical economists on the other side. The neoclassical side was led by the triumvirate of Frank Hahn, Partha Dasgupta and Robin Matthews, and those ranged against them by Ajit and Robert Rowthorn (the latter changed sides later). Behind the triumvirate was the benign presence of James Meade (who also happened to be the father-in-law of Partha Dasgupta), who was the author of an elaborate neoclassical theory of growth and whose Nobel Prize was primarily for the neoclassical theory of international trade. What Hahn and Co. wanted to do was to mathematise economics into pure theory without content. They accused the heterodox economists of mathematical illiteracy

(although one of the three had done badly in the Mathematics Tripos and minted gold by shifting to economics). The heterodox side comprised some brilliant mathematicians, David Gawen Champernowne, Brian Reddaway, Richard Stone and Richard Goodwin. Except for Stone and Goodwin, who used formal mathematics in their work, the others generally followed the Cambridge tradition descending from Marshall to Keynes of hiding their mathematics in footnotes or appendices, giving their findings in clear prose. Goodwin was a creative mathematician, collaborating with Le Corbullier and Iliya Prigogine (a Nobel laureate in chemistry) in his work and using differential equations to solve a variational problem in his paper "Optimal growth path for a developing economy" (*Economic Journal*, 1961). His short paper for the Maurice Dobb Festschrift, modelling the Marxian theory of growth cycles, has generated a huge literature.

So the battle over the soul of the Faculty of Economics and Politics was not about the use of mathematics in economics but whether economics would be based on empirical evidence or not. Ajit, with his firm grasp of sophisticated statistical methods and his determination to confront all hypotheses (or theories) with hard empirical evidence, was a natural leader of the group. That Ajit was no respecter of persons was shown by his *Economic Journal* article in 1975 in which he refuted the theory of takeovers put forward by Robin Marris,

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the person who eased his path to Cambridge. Before I go on, I must correct a misapprehension of Saith, who writes on page 89 that "Kahn and Sraffa, Keynes and Robertson, or Kaldor and Sraffa, were unlikely to consult each other". In fact, Kaldor and Piero Sraffa were good friends and went mountain climbing together. For many of that generation, for example, Joan Robinson, Sraffa was the final arbiter on questions of theory. Saith calls Sraffa a recluse, but he was not: he was choosy, as I know from my own experience. Sraffa used to have long conversations with Amartya Sen, Luigi Pasinetti, Pierangelo Garegnani and Krishna Bharadwaj.

To get back to the main story of the fight over the control of the faculty, if Hahn was Machiavellian in his tactics, so was Ajit. In the election of the Faculty Board, members of the Faculty of Economics and Politics as well as members of the DAE had voting rights. The latter, being hard empiricists, were naturally on the heterodox side. Ajit would mobilise all faculty members as well as DAE members on his side. But the seniors in the heterodox camp had little strategic sense. They failed to recruit young hopefuls on their side. For example, they did not try to retain Pasinetti or recruit Amit Bhaduri, one of the most brilliant theorists of the younger generation.

AGE OF CAPITALISM

In the meantime, the external environment turned increasingly in favour of the neoclassical economists. (*The Golden Age of*



1981. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher with U.S. President Ronald Reagan during a summit in the Palace of Versailles, France.

Capitalism: Reinterpreting the Postwar Experience was a book co-edited by Stephen Marglin and Juliet Schor, published in 1990. Two years earlier, in 1988, Andrew Glyn, in collaboration with Ajit Singh and two others had published a working paper, "The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age".) The wages and working conditions of workers in the advanced capitalist countries of western Europe, north America and Japan were boosted by post-War reconstruction in Europe and Japan and the investments of countries trying to catch up with U.S. technology, which had come out economically much stronger than before. Workers' movements and the threat of spread of communism led most western European countries, formally social democratic or not, to institute wide-ranging social insurance measures such as public healthcare, free education up to the university level in Germany, France, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, scholarships for

poor students in the United Kingdom, old-age pensions and insurance, unemployment insurance, and so on. In several countries, public utilities such as railways, electricity and gas were brought under public ownership. Rates of investment in advanced capitalist countries were unprecedentedly high and labour productivity rose faster than before. For the world as a whole, manufacturing output more than quadrupled between the early 1950s and early 1970s.

The whole structure began to unravel when the U.S., battered by the costs of the Vietnam War and competition from a resurgent Germany and Japan in crucial sectors such as steel and automobiles, had large, unsustainable balance of payments deficits and decided to delink the dollar from gold in 1971 and thereby greatly disturbed the currency markets. Also, the profitability of capital had been eroded by high and rising wages, and capitalists began their counterattack, getting the state to undertake repress-

ive measures against striking workers, banning trade unions in their companies and so on.

The counterattack acquired massive force with the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister of the U.K. in 1979 and Ronald Reagan as President of the U.S. in 1980. Even before that, the appointment of Paul Volcker as chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York marked the advent of monetarism and the pursuit of deflationary policies in order to protect the assets of the wealthy and creditors in general.

In Britain, Margaret Thatcher smashed the miners' strike by building up enough coal stocks, getting some miners to work and using the police to break up pickets by miners. The coal industry was privatised in 1994. Under Margaret Thatcher, new laws allowed employers to sack strikers, reduced dismissal compensation, forbade workers to strike in support of others, repealed protections preventing courts seizing union funds, and made unions liable for huge financial penalties.

Changing the law was not, however, enough: examples had to be made. The government inflicted "a series of defeats on unions in set-piece battles with the public sector, and encouraged private sector employers to take on the unions". The first to face Margaret Thatcher's iron fist were the steelworkers in 1980, who lost a 13-week strike battle and would pay the price with thousands of jobs. She also privatised public utilities, the railways, electricity

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and gas. All of them were downsized and trade unions lost members. By the time Margaret Thatcher finished her 11-year reign, trade unions had lost half their numbers. As Sir Alan Walters, official adviser to Margaret Thatcher, told me at an Asian Development Bank seminar in Manila: "I told Mrs Thatcher to kick the trade unions, and go on kicking them when they were down."

THE CAMBRIDGE STORY

To go back to the Cambridge story, the first attack by Sir Keith Joseph, the Minister for Education in the Thatcher government, was against the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), then headed by Michael Posner, a Cambridge don. Posner managed to persuade Joseph to allow the inquiry to be made by Lord Rothschild, a respected zoologist and scientific adviser to several governments. Rothschild renamed the SSRC as Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in 1983, ridding the word "Social Science", which, according to the Conservatives, turned its scholars into troublemakers.

One of the first groups, headed by Wynne Godley, as head of the DAE, was the Cambridge Economic Policy Group (CEPG). There were basically two reasons for this. "First, the economic strategies—such as import controls on manufactured goods, keeping out of the European Common Market (ECM)—recommended by the CEPG were not compatible with the new orientations of the government and its finan-

cial back-stoppers, the IMF [International Monetary Fund], which underwrote the precarious bottom line of the economy" (Saith, p.118).

"Second, the CEPG analysis forecasts and policy prescriptions were quite unpalatable for the Tory monetarists" (Ibid). In 1982 the SSRC decimated the funding for the CEPG, which it did without paying a site visit or engaging in any significant consultation. As a protest Godley resigned as head of the DAE, and the Hahn group secured its first scalp.

The Cambridge Growth Project (CGP) was started by Richard Stone and Alan Brown in 1960 and received substantial SSRC funding support from 1967 onwards under various chairmen.

From 1981, however, "the CGP applications met hostility from SSRC, and in 1987, after a couple of rounds of grudging conditional extensions, funding was rejected altogether, leading to the termination of the project and its team of researchers. The decision was made by a Consortium comprising, among others, experts from the Bank of England, Her Majesty's Treasury, and the SSRC itself" (Ibid, page 120).

The first issue of "Cambridge Journal of Economics" featured Ajit Singh's important paper on deindustrialisation of the U.K. economy under the impact of globalisation.

The next stage of the attack on the DAE was operationalised by an unexpected Review of the DAE by the General Board of Faculties of the University. The Review lasted from 1984 to mid 1987, the Review hanging like the sword of Damocles over DAE staff.

The Review recommended that the DAE should be managed by the director and a management committee of professionals—mostly outsiders—with no representation of the DAE staff. It also recommended separation of the sociologists from the DAE. The new director of the DAE was David Newbery, a staunch member of the Hahn camp. The vote bank of the heterodox economists was greatly weakened and the victory of the neoclassical camp was more or less complete.

The truncation of the faculty and the DAE resulted not only in the expulsion of the sociologists to a new faculty of Social and Political Sciences (SPS) but also in the termination of economic history after the retirement of Phyllis Deane, and the extreme truncation of development studies. Many of the heterodox economists, but not Ajit, migrated to the Judge Business School, led by

Alan Hughes. When *The Economic Journal* was taken over by the neoclassical economists, the Cambridge Left started *Cambridge Journal of Economics* (CJE), with Brian Reddaway, Goodwin and Luigi Pasinetti as patrons. The first issue featured Ajit's important paper on deindustrialisation of the U.K. economy under the impact of globalisation. The CJE has continued to thrive both professionally and financially.

I will not try to summarise Ajit's contributions to the theory and practice of economic development or on stock markets. On the latter, his basic contribution was to show that the stock market is rudderless: it neither operates efficiently, nor does it reveal fundamental values. Takeovers are more a matter of financial muscle than of perception of undervaluation of firms. Ajit also crafted policies for industrial development and advised many governments in the Third World. What is remarkable is that his energy in fighting battles of the Left and writing an enormous number of papers on diverse subjects remained undiminished over a 35-year-old battle against Parkinson's disease. What is also remarkable is the number of collaborators he could attract: I counted 24 of them.

This book will be useful not only to the aficionados of Cambridge University but to all students of economic development and of the tactics neoclassical economists have adopted all over the world to drive out reality-based heterodox economics. □

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Growing gains

Brigitte Norland enjoys a new book on gardening by Dave Goulson

The Garden Jungle: Or Gardening to Save the Planet
Dave Goulson

Jonathan Cape, 2019

ISBN: 9781787331358

Dave Goulson, entomologist, smallholder, professor of biology and founder of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, writes with a conviction grounded in detailed field studies as well as his own two acres in Sussex. He offers us a conversational overview of all the potential habitats we might find or create in our gardens, a vision of extensive wildlife networks that could regenerate an environment diminished by decades of industrial farming. It's not difficult to warm to the man, who combines the most serious messages with an idiosyncratic gardening manual and some favourite recipes. He readily admits his garden practice is still a work in progress – a truth all gardeners can share.

Goulson's expertise lies in the ecology of insect life, so it is not surprising to find the garden's purposes set out for insect groups. His discourse on bees, moths, pond life, ants, earwigs and worms opens up their life cycles and the conditions they thrive in, demanding of us an aesthetic based on our behaviour. There is a great deal of information lightly delivered, and knowledge illustrated with captivating anecdotes and imagery: a cockchafer named Colin adopted by his son, giant worms, the passion of the Belgian moth hunters, and his own unsuccessful attempts to breed the pine hoverfly in his garden. Stories of friends and colleagues show that the capacity for wonder is a part of good science, carrying through the painstaking work that reveals so much more about intricate ecologies. You will look at your garden anew, each buttercup, fallen apple or heap of forgotten weeds a resource in itself.

The chapter on pesticides is an essential read, for it exposes the fallacy that testing each chemical on its own gives reliable data on its safety. Studies of neonicotinoids and glyphosate demonstrate their all-pervasive presence in the environment and living creatures. There are now major cities whose administrations have banned the use of pesticides within city limits. Less salutary are the statistics on peat, which continues to be extracted for the garden nursery industry in spite of the availability of genuine alternatives. I appreciated Goulson's advocacy of 'grow local' to fill your garden: look around your area and grow what does well – propagating from neighbours and growing from seed will give you healthy plants and successful planting.



Painting by Lucy Grossmith www.heart-to-art.com

Human sustenance is by no means bypassed; Goulson also grows a great deal of food, and he weighed every part of his crops in 2017 to illustrate the productive potential of gardens. In fact smallholders and allotment growers win out against industrial farming in quantity, carbon capture, biodiversity and human health, as well as linking us into a life cycle in which death, predation and decomposition all have a place. Goulson's garden contains eight compost heaps, as he has the space and the time to let them mature, and he advocates a pond in every garden to enliven and inspire. His orchard currently provides apples for cider. He suggests favourite plants: just sixteen for pollinators and eight for birds, an easy minimum to benefit any garden. While he acknowledges that his perception of animal behaviour is limited, he expresses some scepticism about permaculture and biodynamic growing. It all left me wanting to continue the conversation. You will put the book down and change your habits, whether it's to leave old vegetation standing for the winter, become better acquainted with solitary bees, or campaign for peat-free potting compost. It's an essential in every garden bookshop. R

Brigitte Norland gardens on a small plot in Somerset.

Reconnecting the landscape

Hugh Warwick reviews an important book on hedgerows

The Ecology of Hedgerows and Field Margins

John W. Dover (ed.)

Routledge, 2019

ISBN: 9781138562981

Since the 1950s the UK has suffered a net loss of around 41% of its hedgerows. Not all were ripped up: many have suffered the disease of neglect. Hedgerows and the margins that surround them are vital for both wildlife and the farmed environment, yet have not been treated with the respect they deserve. Around 70% of the UK is under farming of one sort or another, and the vast majority of wildlife on those farms relies on these marginal areas.

I have long been prejudiced in my fondness for hedgerows. My principal study animal, the hedgehog, as the name suggests, spends a disproportionate amount of its life in and around

the hedgerow. I am also strongly of the mind that the fragmentation of our landscape is one of the most important conservation issues we need to overcome – and the easiest way to do that is to repair the damaged ‘linescape’.

It is pleasing to find that my prejudices are reinforced with this rigorous book. Hedgerows are clearly vital and are also clearly under threat. While now there is a presumption to keep hedgerows – not that the recent news surrounding developers netting and destroying hedges would suggest that was the case – they are at risk from the drift of agrochemicals applied to the fields they enclose. I was shocked to see that just 0.1% of pesticide applications reaches the target pest, the remaining 99.9% being absorbed into the wider environment.

The problem with agrochemicals hitting hedgerows is that they undermine their capacity to be useful habitats and corridors for wildlife. For example, fertiliser encourages the growth of grass or crops, preventing the diversity of life that makes a hedge rich from flourishing. So

the field margins are vital in insulating hedges from that insult.

The key point to take from this necessary book is that hedgerows play a vital part in maintaining wildlife’s tenuous grip within our farmed landscape, and that hedgerows and field margins can be managed in such a way as to strengthen that grip. We have 300,000km less hedge in the UK now than we did 60 years ago, and of the remaining hedges around 60% are not in ‘favourable condition’. We will lose what we have through neglect and the control required by the cult of tidiness, unless there is a real transformation in the manner in which they are managed.

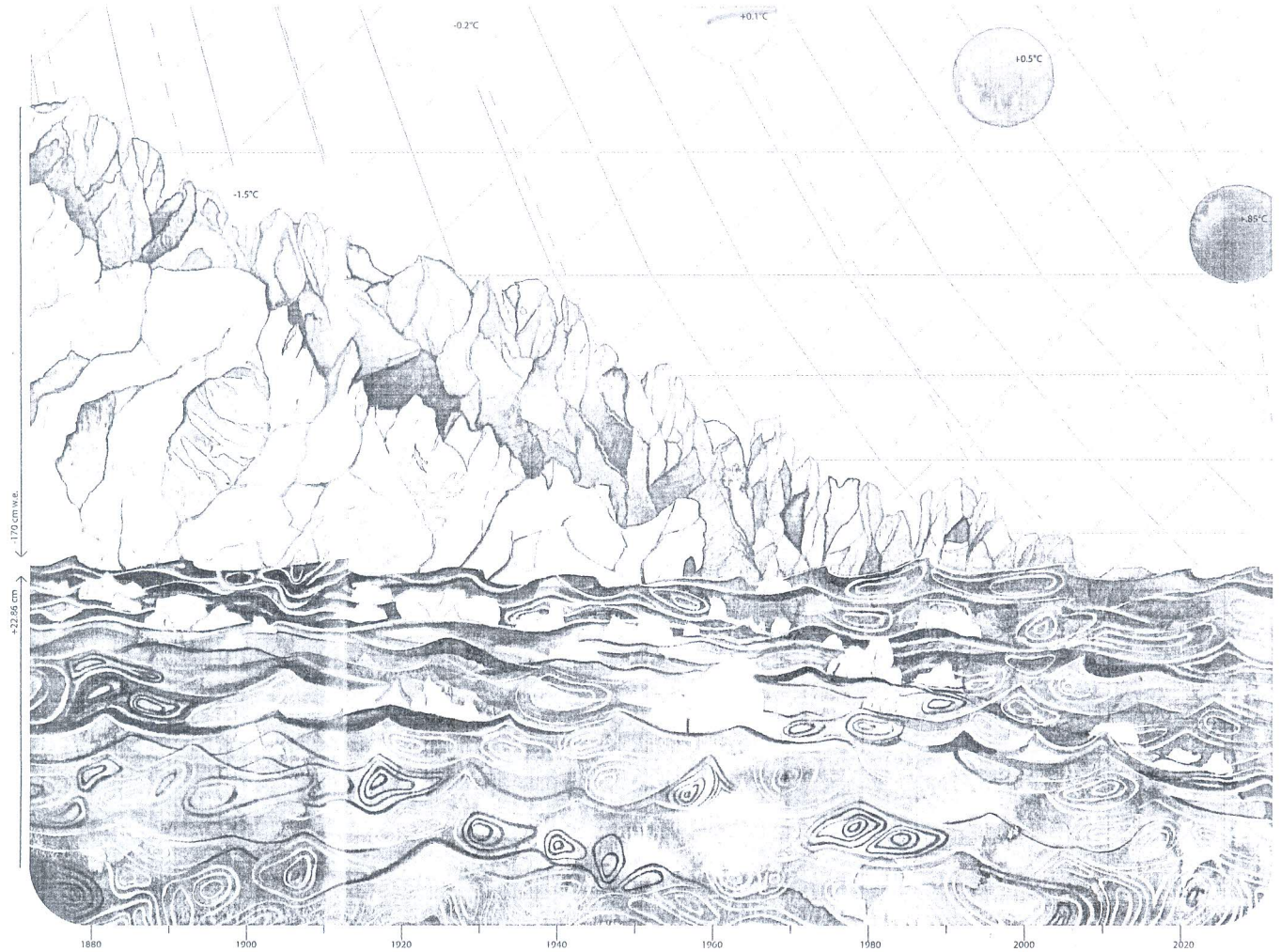
The loss of hedgerows mirrors the decline of much rural wildlife. Without hedgerows, some landscapes are reduced to ecological deserts. This book provides the robust scientific evidence for the importance of this rural feature and is therefore a powerful tool with which to challenge the present requirements for management and subsidy payment. We can rebuild this network, if there is the political will and courage to do so – but it will not be rebuilt unless we care enough to argue for its importance. We need these relicts of wildness to be treated with seriousness, as they are key to the reconnection of our fragmented landscape.

I suppose this review needs a warning – this is an academic tome, and some of the chapters are denser than others. But it remains accessible and above all important. I wish this volume had been around while I was researching for my last book, or at least when I was recruited to the Chris Packham project of the People’s Manifesto for Wildlife. But now it is available for us all – and well worth the wait.

Hugh Warwick is an ecologist, and author of *Linescapes: Remapping and Reconnecting Britain’s Fragmented Wildlife* (Square Peg, 2017). www.hughwarwick.com



Print by Lynn Bailey www.lynnbailey.co.uk



Jill Pelto, Climate Change Data www.jillpelto.com

Waking up to future Earth

Anna Turns responds to a compelling call for action on climate chaos

The Uninhabitable Earth: A Story of the Future

David Wallace-Wells

Allen Lane, 2019

ISBN: 9780241355213

This is your wake-up call. Climate chaos is happening right now, and there's no time to waste. David Wallace-Wells's book *The Uninhabitable Earth* is an urgent, fact-packed call to action. As deputy editor of *New York* magazine, Wallace-Wells is primarily a storyteller. He doesn't claim to be an activist, a scientific boffin or even an environmentalist. But he has thoroughly researched his subject, and his fresh take on the latest climate science, predictions and solutions is robust,

comprehensive, and possibly too close to sci-fi for comfort.

What he does so beautifully is something few communicators have managed with this tricky subject: he makes climate chaos relatable and tangible. Natural disasters, from floods to hurricanes to the polar vortex, are becoming a more frequent feature of our weather than ever before. Wallace-Wells connects the reader directly to current extreme scenarios and builds a picture of what climate change might look like with two, four or even eight degrees of global warming.

He explains that climate change is not a binary issue – it's a function. It gets worse over time as long as we continue to emit greenhouse gases, and every increase in temperature brings more climate suffering.

This book equips a new generation

with the knowledge to make informed decisions, and the impulse to voice the need for dramatic and global change to put the brakes on fossil capitalism and avert catastrophe. Wallace-Wells distils complex science into 12 easy-to-read chapters about the elements of chaos, and disparate issues from heat death to climate conflict and economic collapse share a common thread. Ocean acidification, air pollution, water shortages, flooding and particulate pollution are all part of the same problem.

A country's carbon footprint might be very different from the climate impact it is experiencing – geopolitics isn't fair. While some of the book is a little US-centric, Wallace-Wells does well in putting across the global perspective: India takes the brunt of the western world's obsession with fossil fuels, and, as a rising power, China has the biggest

Easy Listening

BOOKS

Shubha Mudgal's stories make transparent the often difficult world of Hindustani classical music

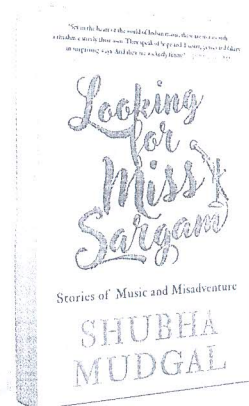
Shubha Mudgal's lovely singing voice takes a backstage in these seven tales from the world of Indian classical music. In tangy, tasty street-food language, she tells us of the mayhem taking place behind the curtains of a modern musician's life.

Each story covers some aspect of Indian classical music in our era. There's a concert featuring two popular singers, one Indian, one Pakistani. An acclaimed Hindustani classical vocalist goes on her first 'foreign tour'.

Many stories in **SHUBHA MUDGAL'S** book are like TV commercials promoting uniquely Indian forms of tastelessness

An ambitious classical music competition is attempted in Punjab. A brilliant young singer in Bengal struggles with conflicting loyalties. The tale of a man with a sling-bag full of original songs precedes the story of a singer who confronts a musical pimp. In the final piece, a simple-hearted devotional singer dips his toe in the shark's pool of commercial cinema.

Despite the light tone and the claim on the front cover that the stories are 'wickedly funny', these are desperately sad tales. It's not clear whether the author's aim was to entertain readers who know nothing about music in today's India, or to warn talented young artistes of the ugly choices awaiting them at every turn in their careers. The recurring theme is one of gifted but innocent artistes brushing up against the brigands who patrol the creative airwaves, deciding whom to



LOOKING FOR MISS SARGAM
Stories of Music and Misadventure
 by Shubha Mudgal
 SPEAKING TIGER
 ₹499; 205 pages

suppress, whom to promote.

The many set-pieces are like TV commercials promoting uniquely Indian forms of tastelessness. In 'A Farewell to Music', for instance, a video is played to the executives of a major music label in Kolkata of a girl-band called The Badass Bandariyas. 'The dense black dissolved into light to the sound of heavy breathing, to reveal a young woman in *ushtrasana*, the camel pose, with an enormous eye painted in the middle of her forehead.' In 'Foreign Returned', there's that moment when the classical diva is made to listen to her host's young daughter in their home in Philadelphia, 'accompanied by a tanpura and tabla generated from an app on her Mum's phone.'

Mudgal's keen ear for linguistic quirks results in spicing passages of Indian slang. They're charming in their variety but the bracketed translations into English break the flow. As for Miss Sargam? She flits about in the wings, a perfumed phantom presence, reminding us of the values and grace of a now-vanished era. ■

-Manjula Padmanabhan



PANKAJ TIWARI

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Book Review

Hermann Kulke, *History of Precolonial India: Issues and Debates*, English edition revised and edited by Bharabi Prasad Sahu, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018, 383 pages, Rs 1195

The book was originally published in the year 2005 as a volume in German, as *Indische Geschichte bis 1750*. It was a part of Oldenburg Grundriss der Geschichte series. The South Asian volume has been translated into English by Parnal Chirmuley, and revised and edited by B.P. Sahu. The original text was more than a decade old, and so this book has been updated and made relevant to current readership. The book follows a clearly defined structure of being divided into three main parts. The first part is a concise presentation of historical events, following Ranke's principle, *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist* (how things actually were), and is titled 'Historical Representations'. The second part, '*Grundprobleme und Tendenzen der Forschung*' ('Basic Problems and Trends of Research') appears as 'Trends in Research'. The third part titled, 'Bibliography', comprises comprehensive and thematically structured bibliographies which are not only used in substitution of footnotes, but also provide references for further reading too. This kind of formatting is quite student-accessible.

The revised version of the text is specially targeted towards South Asian students. So, apart from changing some Eurocentric expressions such as 'Near East', 'Middle East', 'Far East' to 'west Asia', 'central Asia' and 'South East Asia', depending on context and usage, an effort is also made to weave the narrative with an understanding of historical processes befitting an interaction with South Asian students, rather than keeping it very generalised. Another welcome intervention is the placing of India in a wider Asiatic/Eurasian backdrop and not confining it to a narrow subcontinental definition. Hermann Kulke clearly states that 'linking Indian history with that of other regions need not arise from a Eurocentric idea of history, but results from multiplicity of interrelated, though largely autonomous process in Eurasian context' (p. 143). This is in line with the new thinking on the issue. For instance, Irfan Habib's small text on *Indus Civilisation* also pushes young students to look at the Indus civilisation not as an isolated phenomenon but as a part of larger global processes.

The first part of the text is especially useful for those who seek synoptic information on pre-colonial India. In over a hundred pages, India's history

from early to Mughal times is etched out. It is interesting to note that the Mughal period is placed under the title of 'Early Modern Period', quite in line with current notions of periodisation, particularly that of European history. In India, however, the Mughal period is still considered medieval by many. A snapshot of largely political history is provided in this section. For a German readership this is a good starting point, but for those delving into serious research the first part of the volume may appear a little too concise for the historical sweep undertaken. To be fair to the author, he has acknowledged the compact nature of this rubric of the text, and states the rationale as making his German students conversant with broad frames of South Asian history before serious thematic issues could be taken up subsequently.

It is the second part of the book that grasps the focus of Indian readership. The subsection on periodisation (chapter 7) holds attention in no time. It starts with issues relating to the dating problem of the Buddha's and Kanishka I's reign, but it is the question of historical periodisation that occupies central space in this subsection. Kulke informs us that the division of Indian history between ancient, medieval and modern is critiqued by many scholars as being 'alien conceptual hegemony' (pp. 142-43), and yet there are other Indian scholars who do see a merit in the periodisation as it 'counters the conception of unchangeability in Indian society'. James Mill's division of Indian history into Hindu, Muslim and British periods remains a thought-provoking issue for Indian historians; many nationalist historians followed it, while some scholars felt that such periodisation divided Indian history into three different cultures. An interesting theme within this subsection revolves around what has been referred to as the 'feudalism debate'. Borrowing the concept of feudalism from the European model, R.S. Sharma, B.N. Yadav and D.N. Jha applied it to the Indian context in the middle of first millennium CE, to what they understand as a similar crisis represented by the '*kaliyuga* age' and decline in long distance trade, while others such as B.D. Chattopadhyaya, B.P. Sahu, Kesavan Veluthat and even Herman Kulke oppose this application for lack of proper evidence. B.D. Chattopadhyaya, influenced by N.R. Ray and in line with Kulke, has put forth the concept of 'early medieval' as a more tenable one, and outlined its attributes that also emphasise a very strong 'regional and yet integrative dimension of ideology and culture of the period'. On a closer reading of both these schools the overlap of arguments is hard to miss, and one wonders whether the two approaches are substantively distinct and do not represent mere semantic differences.

The sub-theme on historiography is of special interest to readers as the author reflects on a revisiting of historiographical traditions since the early nineteenth century. For a long time, the issue of whether ancient Indians had a sense of history or not was tied to nineteenth-century European notions of history largely revolving around 'administrative, diplomatic and military history'. Anything that did not fit into this understanding was deemed to

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be ahistorical. But the issue has not gone uncontested. Many scholars have subsequently dwelt upon reasons for the 'denial of historical consciousness' and elimination of historical knowledge. Kulke has focused on how some historians have now begun looking at the politics behind eclectic transfer of information. Many local chronicles may have fallen prey to 'political climate and intrigue of time' as *brahmans* and others were less concerned about preserving earlier chronologies and more about 'creating elaborate fictitious genealogies of emerging dynasties' (p. 156). The chapter also takes a look at ethno-history as well as historiography of medieval and early modern India. Earlier historiographical traditions such as the one represented by *Cambridge History of India* (published in 1928 and 1937) may have been rich in factual and descriptive aspects but lacked critical historiographical analysis of the chronicles. This has been corrected with new researches. One such work worthy of mention is Tilman Kulke's on *Maathir-i-Alamgiri*, which reveals multifarious dimensions of the text not considered earlier.

The question of Indo-Aryans, discussed in chapter 9, is very topical. It is perhaps one of the most controversial issues of contemporary Indian historiography. Both the questions of the origin of Indo-Aryan as well as the use of term 'Aryan' as an ethnic or linguistic and cultural category, have been given space for discussion. Various theories of Indo-Aryans essentially touch upon three areas of concern; migration and its route from Central Asia, whether migration was in waves or invasions and whether there was a cultural overlap between Aryan and Harappan culture thereby claiming that India was the original homeland of the Aryans. All these issues have been linked to political milieu in the past and present. No wonder Rakhigarhi DNA finds (*India Today*, 31 August 2018) of a male skeletal that gave an idea of Central Asian origin of the people of Rakhigarhi four and half thousand years ago became a little unsettling for those who advocated Indian homeland theory for Aryans. Somewhere these finds have also got linked with issue of knowledge and use of horse by Harappan people. It goes to the credit of author and editor that all possible theories based on study of archaeological reports, linguistics and mythology have been incorporated in the chapter and have been organized under various classifications such as Migration theories, Recasting Migration theories and The Hindu Nationalist Aryan debate that makes it easy for students to grasp a rather complex debate.

Equally interesting are chapters on 'State and State Formation' (chapter 10) and 'Cities and Urbanisation' (chapter 11). State and its structural development, state formation, are fairly contentious issues within academic circles. Given the size of Indian subcontinent, numerous states emerged over time and space and the process of state formation also witnessed distinct trajectories. There have been varied vantages from which the issue has been perceived; colonial, nationalistic and still later Marxist. The chapter entails discussion of many paradigms of state in early India and early medieval period such as oriental despotism, Asiatic Mode of Production and British

historiographical concepts of Hindu and Muslim states which nationalist historian inadvertently followed. Within the context of early medieval India different models are discussed; feudalism propounded by R.S. Sharma and supported by B.N.S. Yadav and D.N. Jha, Segmentary state delineated by Burton Stein, and the Integrative model subscribed to by B.D. Chattopadhyay and Kulke himself. It is interesting that the author gives due recognition to R.S. Sharma, doyen of debate on Indian feudalism, even as he differed in stance from him. But more importantly all ongoing researches in the area are covered and so the chapter becomes a valued read for all, especially undergraduate students.

The chapter on 'Cities and Urbanisation' looks at three levels of urbanisation: Harappan, Second Urbanisation and Third Urbanisation, interspersed with phases of decline. In addition, there is discussion on urbanisation in South India and the emergence of temple cities, monasteries and pilgrim sites. There is mulling over a connect between first and second urbanisation where writings of A. Ghosh take primacy as is between the spread of iron technology and second urbanisation. This discussion was initiated by R.S. Sharma but found both advocates and critics. The sub-theme on decline of 'classical urban culture' almost forms the preface to Third Urbanisation between thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. It did become a contentious issue as some scholars (once again the pioneer being R.S. Sharma) pointed out the process of urban decay in the post-Gupta period while others (such as B.D. Chattopadhyaya) showed a spurt in exchange networks regionally. The merit of this chapter lies in streamlining these seemingly contradictory processes. The urban decay in north India, so well proven by archaeological evidences, gave way to dissolution of larger empires and was followed by emergence of smaller states in south, eastern and western India where there emerged towns as centres of exchange and regional mobilisation of resources for the regional states. These would eventually become precursor to full-fledged urban centres of medieval period.

One of the best chapters in the text is the one on 'Histories of Women' (chapter 12). In the context of an increased awareness on gender studies, this is a much-wanted addition. Even as the issue of 'women's question' was taken up by A.S. Altekar as early as 1930s in *The Position of Women in the Hindu Civilisation*, the articulation of women's agency in historical processes is a more recent development in the area of women's studies. What the early historians had missed out was the location of women in their social contexts. They also took patriarchal subordination of women as natural (p. 245). The scholars of early twentieth century were far more concerned about understanding women in the context of social reform and the possible roles they could perform in independent India than looking at their agential capacities that could dent social or historical processes. The authors have discussed a range of social practices such as marriage, *niyoga*, women's inheritance rights or the lack of those, the true implication

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of *stridhana*, extension of religious patronage and so on. What became evident in this short study is that the real power over property or decision making within and outside household in early India did not rest with women. With the growth and spread of caste system gender hierarchisation and subordination of women became more pronounced, running well into the medieval times. The practice of sati that 'exemplified wifely chastity through public immolation, following the death of the husband' gained ground. The ideals of *pativrata* and *stridhrama* resonated in the texts of the day especially the Puranas. With the emergence of temples and regional kingdoms some women such as devadasis, nuns and queens appeared as religious patrons and at times held some important political position too. But largely they derived their identity from men folk and many a times were willing to transfer their religious merit to them as well. The author has also touched upon location of women in Bhakti traditions commenting on works on Mirabai, Akkadevi and the like as well as women in Mughal court and harems. The household acquired a new meaning in the world of the elite. The important part of this chapter is the acknowledgement that a simple exploration of historical women has to be matched with an understanding of gender relations. This opens up a new foray; looking at issues related to masculinity and alternative sexualities. Today Women's Studies have also given way to the more expansive Gender Studies. Along with focusing on women's histories there is a need to look at other gender categories while making use of 'gender' as a tool of historical analysis.

Finally, a word on the last section of the book, 'Bibliography', with its sub-title 'Sources and Literature'. As stated earlier it is a very unique aspect of the text. The purpose seems to be more than simple referencing; it opens up vistas of research for students and serious researchers. The section certainly provides a 'representative sample of the range of the material available' (p. xvi) but becomes really handy for those academics interested in deeper study. The historiographic sweep covered is both intensive and extensive even as the bibliographies are arranged in smaller classificatory sections. The author and editor have sought to take latest published works into account and have, therefore, made both the contents of the text and its encyclopaedic referencing relevant to current readership.

Overall the book in its English translation is a valuable text on Indian history for all across the globe. The only disconcerting aspect for some of us may be the use of the term pre-colonial in the title which inadvertently highlights the importance of colonial studies and divides studies on India into two halves, merging all that happened before the colonial period as an undifferentiated macro-historical phase. Interestingly, the book itself discounts that despite its title.

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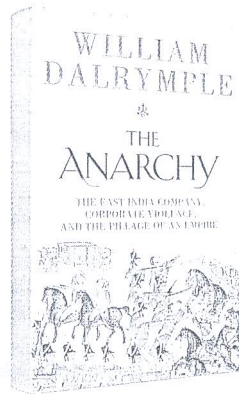
PLUNDERERS EXPOSED

By Ashok V. Desai

It is difficult to describe William Dalrymple. He does not write fiction, but his books are as readable as fiction. He is not a historian as historians understand their craft: he does not plumb obscure sources to modify marginally the picture of the past that historians have built up. But most of his books are about the past. Indologists would not recognise him as one of their tribe; among his best books is one on Byzantium, and he has also ventured into Afghan history. But he is one of the most entertaining writers in our part of the world and he brings to it his own, unique point of view.

This book is unlike his others in two respects. One, it exudes outrage. Dalrymple's love of India is reflected in his writings, but it is subdued enough for his books to pass as historical travelogues. This is the first book in which he is engaged. As the title suggests, he regards the East India Company as a predator; this is a story of how it vanquished the Mughal Empire and looted India, and how it then faded away when the British parliament woke up to its misrule. Two, the source work of this book is much wider. Dalrymple has delved into archives in Exeter, Chambéry, Edinburgh, Pasadena, Lahore and other places to find obscure material; over 400 sources and 1,000 footnotes give an idea of his labours. But, it is not a labour of love; it is more a work of passion. And it is a serious historical study.

The book begins with the voyage of Sir Thomas Roe. He brought presents including a stage coach, a virginal (a musical instrument like a harpsichord), mastiffs and greyhounds, mannerist paintings and crates of red wine and expected that Emperor Jahangir would fall for them and grant him permission to trade. Jahangir was pleasant and



THE ANARCHY
The East India Company,
Corporate Violence, and the
Pillage of an Empire
by William Dalrymple
BLOOMSBURY
₹699; 576 pages

Jahangir made
Sir Thomas Roe
wait three years for
permission
to trade. Some
would wish Roe had
waited forever

curious about the English, but he made Roe wait three years for permission. Some would wish he had waited forever.

It goes in some detail into the career of Robert Clive, an incompetent young man sent to India by his father as a writer. He made a fortune, returned to England to bribe his way into parliament, lost the fortune, failed and had to return to India to make a second fortune. Dalrymple describes in detail the contretemps between Siraj-ud-daulah, the Mughal governor of Bengal, and Clive, which led to the

battle of Plassey and the beginning of Company rule in India. It was Clive who established the company in Bengal. Later in life, he was charged with corruption, and though he was cleared by parliament, he could not bear the disrepute and committed suicide.

Shah Alam, the Mughal emperor, was painfully aware of the Company's sinister plans and tried through the second half of the eighteenth century to thwart it. Shah Shuja, his nobleman, fought and lost two battles against the Company in Patna and Buxar; his defeat sealed the fate of the Mughal Empire. Shah Alam turned to the Marathas for support; their defeat by the Company in Assaye and Aligarh sealed his dynasty's fate. These, for me, were the book's highlights; it goes on to cover the rest of the Company's history up to 1803.

This is history well told. But history is not just a sequence of events and the fracas of fighters. Technology matters: the British won battle after battle with a very small number of soldiers. Maybe they were supernatural; more likely, their guns and powder were better. Money matters: India's prosperity in the 16th and 17th centuries had much to do with the bullion the Spaniards found in Latin America which multiplied European demand for Indian spices and textiles, and its decline may have something to do with the end of the bullion bonanza. And organisation matters: the Company brought to India an economical organisation unlike the chaotic structure of Indian kingdoms. Dalrymple has proved his prowess as a historian, I hope he will broaden his variables to bring in the impersonal in history. ■

*The reviewer is a former
chief economic advisor*

God's Eye View On Untouchability

Uneven as a group of articles must be, Pillai crowds his canvas with all the main types that make history, with a thread of iconoclasm running through it

BY P. A. KRISHNAN

I am one of those who believe that the idea of India having always been a kaleidoscope of contesting ideas, religion and people hardly needs any emphasis. Of late, however, I am frequently assailed by the fear that our tribe may soon be reduced to a hopeless minority. Manu Pillai's *Tales from Indian History* assures me that India has seen worse days and has come out of it looking the better for wear.

His book is thus a beacon of hope. It covers a period about 700 years and speaks about some remarkable Indians. Kings, queens, concubines, saints, villains, gods, goddesses, poets, musicians, and soldiers spill out as soon as you open the book. It will be quite a task to house them in your memory. Even if you don't, it has many stories which you can read and savour at leisure. This is certainly not a serious work of history. It, however, has a unity which is as bewildering as that of our country—real yet indescribable. The author himself says, "...in the end each reader must draw her own conclusions—the book seeks only to light the way." In its light, we meet several characters and works, some well-known and some hardly known and freshly liberated from dusty records.

Take, for instance, the story of a Brahmin who falls instantly in love with an untouchable woman. This was written by Shahuji (or Shahaji), the king of Thanjavur who ruled between 1684 and 1712. It is a rip-roaring parody conveying that Brahmins who consider themselves superior to all others are quite capable of making asses of themselves and it requires Lord Shiva himself to intervene and un-ass them. The dialogues of Sati Dana Suramu are an absolute delight: "We eat beef, we eat liquor ... don't talk to me," she says.... "We drink cow's milk," he replies, 'but

you eat the whole cow. You must be more pure.'" Incidentally, the original anthology in which this story finds a place has another lovely story of a Brahmin widow feeding Shiva's devotees who are considered untouchables. The Brahmins of the village are aghast but, in this story too, Shiva appears in person as an untouchable and makes them say that the real untouchables are they, the Brahmins.

Consider the Mappilas. Pillai tells us that their language developed into a unique blend of Malayalam sound and Arabic script, influenced over time by Persian as well as by Tamil and Kannada. Their festivals resemble the Hindu ones. There is even a Mappila Ramayana, featuring Ravana as a sultan. Surpanakha's proposition to Rama in this version seeks a sanction from the Sharia.



Pillai shows how Victoria was more humane than those around her. In her proclamation she wanted a statement of equality, but was overruled. She added other generous promises.

Pillai speaks of Muddupalani, a courtesan in the kingdom of Thanjavur and of her Radha, who is not timid: "She turned the convention on its head and claimed her right to bodily pleasure. For the first time in compositions of this type appeared a woman determined to quench her desire." The author, I am afraid, is not right. Tamil tradition has the glorious Andal, whose poems bristle with sexual longings and who predates Muddupalani by at least 1,000 years.

The essay I loved is the one on Queen Victoria. She was much more sensible and humane than the officials surrounding her. She wanted to insert in her proclamation a firm statement that Indians would be placed on an equality with all other subjects of the British crown, but couldn't succeed. However, it was she who managed to add in the document promises of 'peaceful industry', 'works of public utility' and a government 'for the benefit of all Our subjects'.

I have a suspicion, which may be unfounded, that Pillai has this "oh, yes, they got us freedom... but then" attitude towards our freedom fighters. As a historian, he is entitled to have his doubts. Even then, I found his 'What if...' essay on Gandhi overdone. He, a professional, must surely know that the imponderables are close to infinity and it is futile to pick a few and present them as possibilities.

The problem with a collection of pieces written for a news magazine is that its quality is usually uneven. This book is no exception. It has both gems and pebbles—fortunately more gems than pebbles. In any case, 'bits and pieces' have become more than acceptable to Indians since the adventure of Ravindra Jadeja in the recently concluded World Cup semi-finals. I am sure Manu Pillai's bits and pieces too will be received well by his fast-growing number of admirers. □

BOOKS

MRS PARKES PLAYS THE SITAR

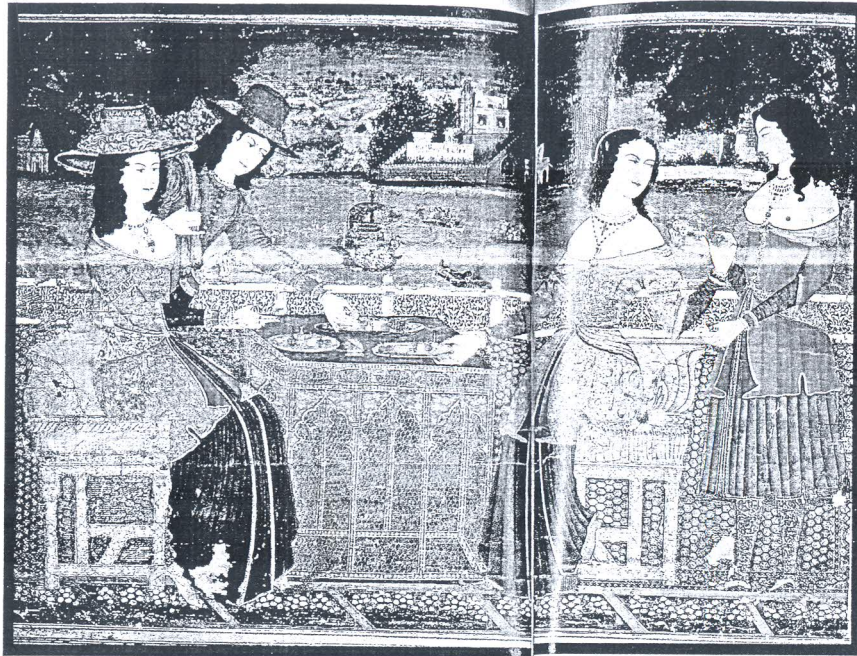
The story of the British in India is old, but when told by its women, there is something new to discover

I had tied the clothes we took off in a handkerchief; with that in one hand and brandishing my stick in another I boldly sallied forth..." *She-Merchants, Buccaneers & Gentlewomen* charts British exploits in India from their earliest beginnings through to the inauguration of the Raj, but with an original twist. Katie Hickman delivers this story from the sidelines, in the voices of the women of the era.

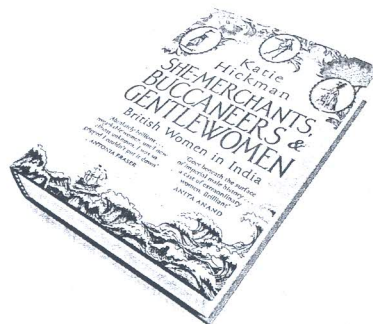
Historically, women's voices have rarely been deemed worth recording, especially of those without social status. Hickman turns this scarcity to her advantage and, instead of a few in-depth studies, assembles a pacey collection of women of every kind. Some are priggish and feathered, while some are doughty creatures with more grit than a quarry. All are fascinating and together they create a nuanced portrait of 'Anglo-Indian' life in the centuries leading up to the Empire.

In the early 1600s, the world's first transnational corporation, the notorious East India Company, was nothing more than "a handful of quarrelsome, drunken, sea- and battle-hardened sailors". As its tentacles expanded deeper into the Indian territory, its women-folk went from "being an expensive nuisance" to a "necessary evil".

Many came over as part of the "fishing fleet" of women seeking husbands and few for the sheer joy of adventure. As a recently-departed British woman in India, I warmed to the latter, especially the unvanquishable Mrs Parkes. Deemed an embarrassment by her more



WERNER FORMAN/GETTY IMAGES



SHE-MERCHANTS, BUCCANEERS & GENTLEWOMEN
British Women in India
by Katie Hickman
VIRAGO
₹699; 400 pages

WHEN IN INDIA... A painting of European ladies wearing clothes made from Indian textiles and an Indian maid in similar garb

of *zenanas*, showing how the ignorance belonged, in fact, to their white observers. Elite women in *purdah* were far from powerless, they were politically influential in ways that, had they but realised it, would have confounded British women'.

There's an ominous slide from the more 'tolerant' 18th century towards the Victorian era, explored here at its most hypocritical. In 1830, the EIC banned its employees from wearing Indian clothes in public, increasingly seeking to 'demonstrate the cultural superiority of their civilisation'. There follows a harrowing chapter on the massacre at Kanpur, including the viciousness of the subsequent backlash.

There's lightness too. The 18th century shopping lists are hilarious and there are gems, such as the advice that 'the *khitmatgar* (butler) should be generally discouraged from making [the butter] a medium for a display of his powers in the plastic art; it is doubtless gratifying to observe such yearning after beauty, even in butter, but it is suggestive of too much handling to be pleasant'.

Occasionally the author's own grandness slips through in phrases such as 'a whiff of the demi-monde' and 'She was also a tennis blue'. You can't help but see her in her own ostrich-feather hat. But the solid scholarship combined with an expert touch in catching poignant moments, create a gorgeous and satisfying read.

This is a perfect holiday book thanks to the ancient truth at its heart: that life is kinder to travellers who embrace a destination with all their heart. The words of Mrs Parkes are true of this book: 'How much there is to delight the eye in this bright and beautiful world ... Oh the pleasure of vagabondizing through India!' ■

—Bee Rowlatt

posh acquaintances, she was "in love with all things Indian". She learnt the sitar and hated her compatriots' lack of respect for local culture.

A similarly immersive approach was taken by Jane Smart, the first British woman to visit a courtly *zenana*: 'The Nabob's Lady and her Attendants admir'd us all, but thought our dress very odd. Two of the Ladies examin'd my Dress till they came to my Hoop-Petticoat, which they were astonished at.' The lavish account of a diamond-strewn harem in 1743 is extended to imagine the encounter from both sides. 'The Englishwomen's plain dress and lack of jewellery would have been suggestive of inferior rank or, worse, that their husbands and fathers held them in low esteem.'

Hickman challenges contemporary assumptions on the supposed ignorance of the female inhabitants

भाविविष्य की झांखी

होमो डेयस: आने वाले कल का संक्षिप्त इतिहास
लेखक: युवा नोआ हरारी
प्रकाशक: मंजुल पब्लिशिंग हाउस;
कीमत: 450 रु.



मोहम्मद वक्रास

अपलब्धि पर इनसान की सबसे सामान्य प्रतिक्रिया संतोष नहीं, बल्कि और ज्यादा की चाहत होती है; या, हम शांतिपूर्ण या समृद्ध जीवन जीकर संतुष्ट नहीं होते. इसके बजाए जब हकीकत हमारी आकांक्षाओं के अनुरूप होती है तभी हम संतुष्ट होते हैं. लेकिन बुरी खबर यह है कि हालात सुधरने के साथ ही हमारी आकांक्षाएं बढ़ जाती हैं; या, फिर असली खुशी हासिल करने के लिए अपने सुखद एहसास की कोशिश कम कर देनी चाहिए, उसे बढ़ाना नहीं चाहिए.” युवा नोआ हरारी ने संतुष्टि, आकांक्षा और खुशी की कोशिश में दुनिया में हो रहे निरंतर बदलावों के मद्देनजर *होमो डेयस: आने वाले कल का संक्षिप्त इतिहास* रच डाला. इसमें वे इतिहास की घटनाओं और मौजूदा दौर में विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में हो रहे बदलाव के आधार पर ऐसी दुनिया की कल्पना-कपोल नहीं-करते हैं जो धीरे-धीरे हमारे सामने उभर रही है.

इससे पहले उन्होंने *सेपियन्स: मानवजाति का संक्षिप्त इतिहास* में पृथ्वी पर इनसानी जीवन को महज एक संयोग बताया, और जिन वजहों से उसकी तरक्की हुई उन्हीं वजहों से उसके ख़त्म होने का अंदेशा जताया है. उनकी तीसरी किताब *21 लेसंस फॉर 21 सेंचुरी* पिछले साल अंग्रेजी में आ गई. (इसका एक अध्याय आप इस साल की *इंडिया टुडे साहित्य वार्षिकी* में पढ़ सकते हैं.)

बहरहाल, येरुशलम की हिब्रू यूनिवर्सिटी में विश्व इतिहास के प्रोफेसर हरारी *होमो डेयस* में बताते हैं कि तीन वजहों से सबसे ज्यादा

लोग मरते थे: अकाल, महामारी और जंग. अब इन तीनों की वजह से होने वाली मौत काफी कम हो गई है; वे ढेरों मिसालों के जरिए इसे स्पष्ट करते हैं. इनके पीछे कोई दैवीय शक्ति नहीं बल्कि इनसानी चूक दिखती है. फिर बताते हैं कि मौत तो तकनीकी समस्या है और सिद्धांततः इससे पार पाया जा सकता है. जीवन का अधिकार मौलिक अधिकार है और मौत इसका हनन करती है. कोई व्यक्ति महज दिल का दौरा पड़ने या किसी दुर्घटना में नहीं मरता बल्कि धमनियों के संकुचित होने से दिल का दौरा पड़ता है या किसी की गलती से दुर्घटना होती है. इसी तरह सुख तलाशने का भी अधिकार होता है. इन अधिकारों की रक्षा के लिए वैज्ञानिक प्रयोगशालाओं में युक्तियां लगा रहे हैं और इसी का नतीजा है कि इनसान की औसत आयु निरंतर बढ़ती जा रही है. वे दलील देते हैं कि इनसान खुद में सुधार करके *होमो डेयस* या 'मानव देवता' या 'अतिमानव' बनने की कोशिश करेगा.

वे बताते हैं कि ऐसा तीन तरह से होगा: पहला, बायोलॉजिकल इंजीनियरिंग के तहत शरीर के पुराने और विकृत अंगों को बदल दिया जाएगा या फिर उन्हें जल्दी खराब नहीं होने दिया जाएगा. दूसरा, साइबोर्ग इंजीनियरिंग के तहत शरीर में गैर-जैविक हिस्से जोड़ दिए जाएंगे. तीसरा, गैर-जैविक चीजों की इंजीनियरिंग के तहत इनसानों जैसी सोच वाले आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस को प्रोत्साहन. इन सबका मकसद इनसान को हमेशा के लिए जिंदा रखना है और गुगल की कंपनी कैलिको

इस दिशा में काम कर रही है. वैसे, हरारी यह स्पष्ट कर देते हैं कि विज्ञान और टेक्नोलॉजी में तरक्की के बावजूद, अभी इनसान की प्राकृतिक उम्र करीब 90 साल है. लिहाजा, कैलिको निकट भविष्य में गुगल के मालिकान को हमेशा के लिए जीवित रखने में कामयाब न हो, उनकी अगली पीढ़ी कुछ उम्मीद कर सकती है!

हरारी की दलील है कि इनसान और उनकी सोच अंततः रासायनिक प्रक्रियाओं और एल्गोरिदम में बदल जाएंगे. इन एल्गोरिदम को आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस में तब्दील किया जा सकता है. मिसाल के तौर पर वे कहते हैं कि हर सोच हमारे दिमाग में चल रही रासायनिक प्रतिक्रिया है, जिसे दिमाग के स्कैन में ऐसा होते देखा जा सकता है. हालांकि हरारी ने इसे महत्वपूर्ण आधार बनाया है लेकिन दिमाग के बारे में अभी बहुत जानकारी नहीं है.

बायोलॉजिकल इंजीनियरिंग के कमाल दिख रहे हैं. इसके जरिए अमीर लोग महंगी से महंगी दवाओं या प्रक्रियाओं का इस्तेमाल करके दूसरे लोगों से अलग हो जाएंगे, एक तरह का एलीट वर्ग तैयार हो जाएगा.

एक दुखद पेशानगी: आने वाले समय में एक वर्ग किसी काम का नहीं होगा. उसे न सिखाया जा सकता है और न ही कहीं रोजगार में लगाया जा सकता है. वह यकीनन भयावह स्थिति होगी. एआइ इनसानों की जगह लेंगे. इसी की वजह से आर्थिक रूप से बेकार लोगों का वर्ग तैयार होगा. वाहन उद्योग का ऑटोमेशन इसका जीता-जागता उदाहरण है.

इसी तरह, डेटा युग में बुद्धि और चेतना अलग हो गए हैं. और हम ऐसी मशीनें बना रहे हैं जो हमसे जल्दी और बेहतर ढंग से सोच रही हैं और उसका परिणाम सामने ला रही हैं. इससे चेतना की जरूरत कम होती जा रही है. हमारी आदतों को डेटा के रूप में सिलिकॉन वैली में चुटाया जा रहा है और बहुत मुश्किल समझे जाने वाले मसलों का हल चुटकियों में पेश किया जा रहा है.

किताब में अनगिनत घटनाओं के मद्देनजर ये निष्कर्ष निकाले गए हैं. पाठक इनमें से कुछ से सहमत भले न हों पर हरारी की दलील को नजरअंदाज नहीं कर सकते. अनुवाद अच्छा है पर रीलिंग के लिए बार-बार मजहब और एक जगह 'शाचद एक धर्म के अनुयायी सही हैं' (पेज-196) में 'धर्म' का प्रयोग संभवतः हरारी ने भी नहीं सोचा होगा!

यह किताब उन सब लोगों के लिए पठनीय है, जिनका कोई भविष्य है! इससे उन्हें खुद को वक्त के साथ बदलने और बेहतर दुनिया में योगदान करने की सलाहियत मिल सकती है. ■

AN UNEVEN ACCOUNT

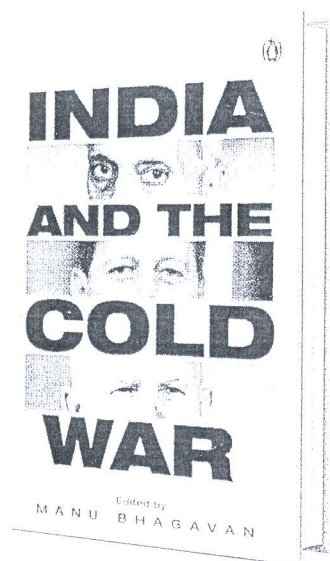
By Sumit Ganguly

There is no dearth of scholarship on Indian foreign policy. In fact, in recent years, academic and policy-oriented work on India's foreign relations has flourished. In part, this has been made possible in the past decade through the efforts of a new generation of enterprising, young researchers who have made deft use of newly declassified Indian, as well as foreign archives. Yet, few historians or international relations scholars have explicitly dealt with India's foreign policy in the Cold War years. From that perspective, Manu Bhagavan's edited book *India and the Cold War* is a welcome contribution and addresses an important lacuna in the field.

That said, it does suffer from a bane that afflicts most edited volumes. Bhagavan in his introductory chapter makes a reasonable argument that the contributions to this volume highlight India's role in the Cold War. He also underscores that this focus represents an important departure from previous scholarship that mostly examined the impact of the Cold War on India.

Despite this welcome and novel emphasis, the chapters amount to a veritable hodge-podge of subjects with little or no organic or substantive connections between them. For example, what possible link can one establish between a chapter dealing with the poetry of Faiz Ahmad Faiz and India's decision to pursue nuclear weapons in the late 1960s? Consequently, despite Bhagavan's efforts in his introductory chapter to suggest a degree of thematic unity, the odd selection of subjects results in a lack of intellectual coherence.

Apart from this, the chapters are also somewhat uneven in quality. Some chapters, such as Srinath Raghavan's, while dealing with familiar issues, such as the failed summit between Jawaharlal Nehru and Chou Enlai in 1960,



INDIA AND THE COLD WAR
edited by Manu Bhagavan
PENGUIN
₹599; 264 pages

The collection seeks to highlight India's role in the Cold War—a time when the country was a peripheral actor in the international arena

nevertheless proffers new evidence and insights. Among other matters, through a deft use of archival material, it shows how Chou's prevarication on the delineation of the disputed Himalayan borders ultimately led to Indian intransigence on the subject.

Rohan Mukherjee's chapter on India's nuclear policymaking in the wake of the 1962 war utilises existing secondary literature (and a handful of primary sources) to argue that considerations of status certainly influenced India's nuclear choices during the 1960s. Never-

theless, it does not wholly demolish the role of security considerations in shaping India's quest for nuclear weapons.

There are other chapters that offer some useful insights, though their connection with the Cold War years is rather tenuous. For example, Rahul Sagar's essay deals with the tensions between idealism and pragmatism within India's conservative thought and practices. However, it's far from clear what these opposing forces meant for the conduct of India's foreign policy during the Cold War.

Some essays, such as Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhus's discussion on India's international peacekeeping efforts, though historically sound, tread familiar ground. Similarly, Priya Chacko's chapter on India's economic diplomacy during the Indira Gandhi years, while tackling an important era in India's foreign relations, does not offer novel theoretical analysis nor substantive evidence about the era. Instead, it effectively recapitulates much that already exists in the pertinent literature on the period.

Apart from these limitations, the volume also lacks a critical discussion of India's marginal significance to the global order during the latter decades of the Cold War. Its hoary commitment to the doctrine of non-alignment combined with its material weaknesses made it a peripheral actor in the international arena. Its policy pronouncements and stances were of little or no consequence and mostly ineffectual. Indeed, it was not until the end of the Cold War that India would again emerge as a player of any weight on the global stage. ■

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Sundqvist and Sylvén's book focuses on extramural English (EE), a term coined by the first author to denote L2 learner-initiated involvement with English outside the classroom walls. The book provides an overview of theory and research related to EE and discusses the implications it has for L2 English teaching and learning. The impetus for writing this volume was the lack of a comprehensive handbook for ELT practitioners, student teachers, teacher educators, and researchers that addresses the new challenges of teaching L2 English in the 21st century to primary and secondary school learners, many of whom engage in English-mediated activities in their spare time. The authors are based in Sweden, the educational context for the specific EE-labelled research reviewed in some sections of the book. It may in some respects be more relevant to that context, as extreme EE consumers have been identified among adolescent Swedes, a case in point being Olsson (2016), whose participants in one category spent an average of seven hours per day on EE. However, the book explicitly involves target readers around the world.

The eight chapters of the book are divided into two parts: Part I, 'From Practice to Theory and Research', comprising five chapters (1–5), and Part II, 'From Theory and Research to Practice', comprising three chapters (6–8). Two-thirds of the book are literature reviews of theory and research presented in Part I which form the basis for ELT practices suggested and discussed in Part II. A range of researcher-developed EE-related materials—activities, forms, tests—is also included in the appendices.

Chapter 1 defines EE as an umbrella term for any form of voluntary and informal learner involvement with English outside school. This definition separates EE from related concepts such as online informal learning of English, which excludes important sources of exposure to spoken English through watching subtitled films or television programmes. Such exposure is a crucial factor accounting for the general high English proficiency levels of (notably young and adolescent) Swedes and other northern Europeans. The authors allude to this factor but it is my impression—based on my ELT experience in Sweden—that it could have been emphasized even more strongly. Sundqvist and Sylvén introduce a theoretical model that conceptualizes EE activities

in relation to other L2 English learning activities in a graph with four quadrants formed from the intersection of the x-axis (other-/learner-generated) and the y-axis (\pm distance from the classroom); all EE activities are thus placed in the upper right-hand quadrant—learner generated and distant from the classroom. This model is discussed at length and provides new explanatory power for 'what the broad field of L2 English language learning looks like and how EE fits into that field' (p. 10). Intentional and incidental learning are also mapped onto the model: the former placed to the left of the x-axis and the latter to the right of it. These are, however, ambiguous and loaded constructs and a more nuanced discussion of them is therefore needed (cf. Hulstijn 2003).

Chapter 2 describes the background to the global dominance of English, based on Kachru's (1985) influential three concentric circles introduced in the pre-Internet mid-1980s: the inner/outer/expanding circles. However, the Kachruvian approach is no longer valid as the boundaries between the circles are fuzzy when it comes to the use of English, particularly in northern European countries where the ubiquity of English in society entails that it no longer can be called a 'foreign' language, though the countries belong to the expanding circle. This new sociolinguistic reality (cf. Crystal 2003) has pedagogical consequences for two important areas of ELT: norms for L2 English assessment and the diversity of L2 English classrooms. For the former, a successful L2 English user should be the new yardstick for L2 English proficiency rather than approximations—and enfeebling failures—of the unrealistic native speaker ideal; for the latter, most L2 English classrooms today are made up of learners with a wide range of proficiency levels rather than being homogeneous. This heterogeneity poses new challenges for ELT practitioners, who need to acknowledge it and adapt their practices accordingly (procedures for which are presented in Part II of the book).

Chapter 3 presents the history of language teaching methodologies and describes recent L2 teaching and learning programmes, notably CLIL, which is covered in detail. An overview of L2 English curricula around the globe is provided, from which important issues emerge such as the optimal age for starting L2 English teaching where the research evidence indicates that 'the younger, the better' rule is far from universally applicable. Chapter 4 reviews the large body of SLA theory and research on factors that impact on L2 learning. A research rationale for focusing on EE in L2 English teaching and learning is also highlighted: literature reviews found that a strong predictor of high levels of proficiency was when learners consistently used the L2

in ways 'that had personal significance for them' (p. 99). Assessment of L2 performance is surveyed. Chapter 5 concludes Part I by summarizing empirical research on the effects of amount and type of EE on L2 English learning, a major focus being the language learning effects of digital gaming. The EE house is introduced, a metaphor that places EE activities inside a house with two floors: the first floor for easily accessible activities, such as watching films and television programmes (activities that are located in separate rooms), and the second floor for more demanding activities, such as using the computer in the office.

Chapter 6 opens Part II, in which the implications of the literature reviews from Part I are put into practice in the ELT classroom. A necessary starting point for this implementation is the mapping of learner interests related to EE, and concrete suggestions for doing so are introduced. The suggestions are followed by theoretical models for capitalizing on the results of said mappings, relevant hands-on classroom activities, and an ELT practitioner initiative: the '30-Day Extramural English Challenge'. In this activity the teacher challenges learners to try as many different types of EE activities during a month and report on them, an innovative activity with great L2 English educational potential in addressing both learners who already engage (heavily) with EE and those who are new to it.

The diverse chapter 7 examines how teachers can scaffold learners to become motivated, independent, and lifelong learners of English. The EE house is revisited at length, with a tour of the 'rooms' and their affordances and constraints for L2 English learning, putting the inherent metaphors of a house to maximum use. In line with the book's practitioner-oriented approach, the chapter also considers EE in light of the disparate learner types that teachers face, and outlines strategies for planning L2 English lessons. Furthermore, the authors discuss the concept of 'subject education', *ämnesdidaktik* in Swedish. It is used in the Scandinavian context and has been defined for language education as the 'teaching-studying-learning process of a foreign language' (Harjanne and Tella 2007: 204). Sundqvist and Sylvén elucidate the meaning and use of the concept in relation to overlapping pedagogical terms and concepts in English introduced by Shulman (1986). Chapter 8 closes the book by reconsidering the new demands on ELT practitioners in the globalized Internet age, emphasizing the need for collegial cooperation to meet these demands and recapping the take-home message of the book: successful ELT practitioners do not ignore the fact that most of

their learners are heavily involved in EE activities but choose instead to embrace it, empowered by collegial support and an informed understanding of its implications for optimal classroom practices.

Sundqvist and Sylvén achieve their aim of raising awareness of the importance of acknowledging and taking advantage of EE in ELT classrooms. They have taken the task of promoting this message seriously by providing a solid theoretical and empirical research background synthesized in clear prose, and by conducting an in-depth, balanced and practitioner-oriented discussion of the classroom implications of EE. However, while useful *per se* for the target audiences of the book, the extensive literature reviews are unfortunately under-exploited in Part II. This is most notably the case for the detailed history of language teaching, CLIL, and theories of SLA (the exception being motivation, which is reconsidered throughout the book). Furthermore, more could have been done to engage the different categories of target readers of the book: pre- and in-service teachers of English, teacher educators, and also researchers to some degree. Based on the accessible presentation of previous work and the many well-meant recommendations on how to be a 'skilled L2 English teacher', the main target readers of the book seem to be student teachers of English. Although the Study Questions after each chapter may be useful, it is my impression that more could have been done to involve these readers, notably during their teaching practicums. This could have been achieved by including ideas for trial-and-error lessons followed up by reflection sessions together with the supervisor, or by suggesting topics for degree projects on EE-related matters for which the rich contents of the book may be put to optimal use, particularly the consistent inclusion of relevant theoretical frameworks to explain the phenomena under consideration. As researchers are included among target audiences, the authors could also have suggested avenues for future EE studies, perhaps related to assessment issues, one of several important pedagogical areas that are introduced in the book but subsequently not fully developed. However, it is no simple task to write a handbook on a burgeoning research field such as EE that caters to all categories of readers, and on balance, Sundqvist and Sylvén succeed in contributing to the field of ELT by making a case for putting learners' engagement with English outside school (EE) high on the pedagogical agenda, and by suggesting viable ways of equipping teachers and learners to use EE as an educational resource.

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The reviewer

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Reviews

Feature Films in English Language Teaching

Britta Viebrock (ed.)

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Most language learners watch feature films as a form of entertainment, and whether they prefer viewing in English or their L1, watching films constitutes an important means by which they interact with an influential cultural product. As a communicative device, most feature films expose learners to language scripted for an L1 audience. Although the language used in films might not be a realistic portrayal of how speakers use language in the real world, films are still authentic resources that can be harnessed for language teaching purposes. In fact, feature films can serve to enhance language learning by acting as a medium with which learners may cognitively and affectively engage in the classroom and in informal learning settings.

Britta Viebrock's edited collection explores the use and value of feature films in ELT. In the book's introduction, Viebrock argues that 'the use of feature films in educational settings connects to the learners' experiences outside the classroom and at the same time has the potential to equip them with a critical media literacy' (p. 9). In this book a significant amount of importance is given to the development of film literacy. This is informed by the belief that in order for feature films to achieve their true potential in language learning, form and function, or form and content need to be studied in an integrated manner.

Viebrock considers film literacy to be so vital that she devotes an entire chapter to it at the beginning of the book. This chapter discusses some of the theoretical underpinnings for the rest of the book's five sections, each of which focuses on a small selection of films from a particular nation or region. The book recognizes films as multimodal texts, multimodality being 'the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event,

together with the particular way in which these modes are combined' (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001: 20). The multimodality of films requires learners to bank on the development of multiliteracies in order for them to be able to experience effective engagement. According to the New London Group (1996: 78), 'One of the key ideas informing the notion of multiliteracies is the increasing complexity and inter-relationship of different modes of meaning.' In line with this idea, Viebrock maintains that films 'require an extended notion of literacy, which enables the learners to analyse and decode the different semiotic systems employed and their interplay' (p. 13). She suggests that through the crafted combination of visual images, sounds and other semiotic systems, films are a prime example of multimodal texts that expect learners to engage with them via some level of understanding of how the different systems work together. As a means of clarifying how such engagement may occur, Viebrock proposes a useful model of film literacy that builds on a range of seminal theoretical works related to film literacy and communication. The model illustrates how such components as BICS and CALP (Cummins 2008), learners' perceptive competences, as well as their aesthetic and critical competences feed into the ability to critically and autonomously engage with feature films, either in a receptive or a productive manner.

Given that feature films are aesthetic products characterized by specific techniques and effects, Viebrock discusses some of the main cinematographic elements with which language learners might need to become familiar in order for them to engage with films in the classroom. These include camera perspectives, movements, shots and field sizes, as well as colours, lighting and auditory cues. A glossary at the end of the book provides definitions of some of the key terms that teachers and learners might need to use when engaging with films in the classroom.

Besides considering some of the legal issues and criteria that teachers may want to bear in mind when selecting films for the language classroom,

Viebrock provides a brief overview of the different approaches that are typically used when inviting learners to engage with films in a lesson. She outlines the advantages and disadvantages of each approach and then explains how the three-step process of pre-, while- and post-viewing activities works. Although this is the framework followed by the rest of the book's authors when describing a range of useful activities related to each one of the films they focus on, Viebrock does concede that 'universal ideas cannot be imposed on any possible scenario, but have to be applied reasonably and purposefully to a specific film in view of the objectives one wants to achieve in the foreign language classroom' (p. 26).

The films that the book's chapters focus on are grouped according to where they were produced: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the USA and the UK. If one of the criteria for selecting the films to focus on in the book was the official status accorded to English in the countries in which they were produced, it is somewhat disappointing that the range of countries is so limited. This lack of diversity means that films from countries with an established film industry—such as Canada, Ghana, India, Ireland and Nigeria—fail to feature in the book, as are films from countries with a much smaller film industry but that have produced films in English (e.g. Jamaica and Kenya). However, this limitation is due to the risks involved in seeking to achieve representation. Aware of 'the danger of equating the representation of just one film with a differentiated and accurate portrayal of a particular nation or region', Viebrock opted for a smaller 'selection of films ... that allows for different perspectives, which can in turn be compared and coordinated' (p. 9). The ability to critically compare and analyse films from the same region or from different countries is another important characteristic of film literacy, especially since feature films can be used for the purpose of making language learners aware of various geographical, historical, political and social issues.

The bulk of the book is made up of 16 chapters, in each of which a feature film is evaluated in terms of its content, context and the main issues it deals with, besides consideration being given to its pedagogic potential in the English language classroom. The films that the authors focus on are aesthetically varied and in some cases have attained critical acclaim and commercial success. For example, many readers will be familiar with *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, *Whale Rider*, *Invictus*, *12 Years a Slave* and *Brick Lane*. In every chapter there is a detailed analysis of selected scenes from the film in question in terms of how the narrative, dramatic and cinematographic qualities relate to each other.

Readers are most likely to appreciate the section on teaching potential in each one of the chapters because in it the authors discuss a myriad of activities that can be used in the pre-, while- and post-viewing stages. These include discussing film posters in the pre-viewing stage, filling grids highlighting major aspects of film analysis in the while-viewing stage, and creating flowcharts or diagrams to illustrate character development in the post-viewing stage. Given that in most of the chapters it is recommended that learners be shown the entire film—not necessarily in one sitting—some readers might be unable to utilize all of the suggested activities if they prefer using a clip approach to films in the classroom. This also applies to those teachers who are limited to working only with brief clips because of time constraints, curricular restrictions or assessment considerations. However, the ideas on how to exploit feature films in the language classroom presented in the various chapters are sufficiently rich and adaptable that teachers can deploy the suggested activities when working with short segments of the selected films or else with other feature films they might wish to focus on in their lessons.

In addition to the detailed description of the range of activities devised for each film that the book focuses on, an online teaching resource accompanies every single chapter. This consists of a document that provides further ideas on how to use the film with learners in the pre-, while- and post-viewing stages. Most of the tasks are interactive in nature and a helpful set of icons indicates whether specific learner support is required, whether the task is based on visuals or online sources, whether the task requires learners to write, and whether the task involves pair work and group work. The set of 16 online teaching resources are available for free from: <http://www.narr-studienbuecher.de/index.php/14-roksprocket-mosaic/120-feature-films-in-english-language-teaching>

Besides the somewhat restricted geographical and cultural representation in its selection of films, another limitation of the book is perhaps its exclusive orientation towards the needs of learners at upper levels of language proficiency. This is partly in acknowledgement of the fact that the selected 'films are rather challenging in terms of language and content and should thus be used in upper secondary school' (p. 9). Viebrock claims that this is in line with CEFR descriptors for audiovisual perception, which specify that learners can follow a film as long as the content is 'delivered clearly in straightforward language' (Council of Europe 2001: 71). However, as already indicated, teachers can adapt many of the activities mentioned in the book for use with films and

clips that they might want to use with learners at lower proficiency levels.

Feature Films in English Language Teaching is a valuable contribution to the pedagogic literature on the use of films in the English language classroom. Just like Stempleski and Tomalin's *Film* (2001) and Donaghy's *Film in Action* (2015), Viebrock's edited collection of chapters provides readers with plenty of practical ideas on how to exploit films for language teaching purposes. The book is also a worthy reference guide because its theoretical grounding means it can serve as a solid introduction to the rationale for which teachers might want to harness the potential of such multimodal texts as feature films in the language classroom.

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Reflections on Task-Based Language Teaching is a collection of nine of Rod Ellis's seminal publications on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), some with modifications, threaded together with four new chapters synthesizing the reprinted chapters' contribution to the field as a whole, as well as Ellis's thoughts on progress in TBLT and on his own professional commitment to TBLT. Upon initial inspection, one wonders if a book that presents chapters and/or past articles from 2000 through to 2018, all linked together with new chapters, is a feasible format that might come across as disjointed. On the contrary, the text presents a seamless reading experience and is arguably a valuable contribution to the profession.

Part I provides the introduction to the text and outlines the history of TBLT. It is comprised of two chapters: a new chapter on the development and evolution of TBLT, and then an article written by Ellis in 2000 on the theoretical tenets of TBLT. In the introductory chapter, Ellis explains the emergence of TBLT out of the inefficacy of the structural approach to language teaching. Stating that the 'proliferation of definitions' of task is not productive (p. 12), Ellis provides his own definition of a task as a workplan that is comprised of four criteria: (1) a primary focus on meaning, (2) a presence of a gap, (3) a requirement that learners rely on their own resources, and (4) a clearly defined communicative outcome. A wide range of issues and developments in TBLT are touched upon, including task complexity, technology-mediated TBLT, and task-based assessment. I find great value in the conclusion of this chapter, in which Ellis highlights some of the continued challenges in the field, such as the extent to which TBLT should be implemented based on psycholinguistic versus cultural factors in teachers' local contexts.

Part I then provides a second chapter, which is a reprint of Ellis (2000), and presents the cognitive and sociocultural foundational perspectives of TBLT and why they (should) complement each other. Of interest to me was the relationship between this chapter, written 19 years ago, and the way in which it flowed naturally after the new introductory chapter. Many of the theoretical constructs mentioned, as well as task

design features (e.g. dialogic scaffolding, planning time, task repetition, knowledge of subsequent public task performance) are still and will always be relevant to TBLT.

In Part II, 'Researching Task-Based Teaching', the reader is presented with three reprinted articles (all recent publications) and two new chapters. Starting out as the introductory chapter is Ellis (2013). The concrete examples (with illustrations) reprinted are useful as they illustrate tasks that would be ideal for, for example, beginning-level learners whose task outcome does not require the production of output, but rather requires the production of a drawing or other non-linguistic responses. The next chapter, Ellis (2016), is a classic read on focus on form (FonF), in which he explains its psycholinguistic basis and how it came to be a methodological principle in TBLT. The differences between FonF and focus on meaning, and the cognitive variables that can moderate the efficacy of FonF, such as working memory capacity, are explained. Chapter 5, Ellis (2018a), provides the reader with a thorough review of everything that she/he can do in order to set learners up to perform a task to their fullest potential. Ellis dismisses the common dichotomy between pre-task and within-task planning, and argues instead for the construct of 'task preparedness' (p. 91). This can include factors related to internal readiness such as task familiarity, external readiness factors such as differently timed planning, and task repetition, to include guided and non-guided repetition. The recommendations here on distinguishing between implementation and task-design variables are helpful.

The remaining two chapters in this section are new contributions. Chapter 6, 'Is There a Role for Explicit Instruction in Task-Based Language Teaching?', debates the effects of pre-task explicit instruction at different timings around a task. Ellis synthesizes research on the effects of explicit instruction in the pre-task phase, in the during- or main-task phase (p. 121: I note here the updated term 'main-task phase'; in the past Ellis has most often used 'during-task phase'), and in the post-task phase, as well as delayed feedback. He also summarizes the different types of explicit instruction that have been used in this research base. Ellis concludes this chapter by arguing that explicit instruction *does* have a place in TBLT, including in the pre-task phase. I appreciated this section, as I feel that the topic of explicit grammar teaching in the pre-task phase is a potential linchpin that unifies diverse ways of doing TBLT (e.g. task-based, task-supported, and traditional contexts in

which a teacher might slowly be introducing tasks). This chapter is also a good read for researchers, teachers, and methodologists like me whose job is to support and serve teachers, and I look forward to the continued debate in the field that this chapter will spur. The final chapter of this section, Chapter 7, is a new contribution titled 'Measuring Second Language Learners' Oral Performance of Tasks'. This chapter caters more for the researcher audience, and concisely synthesizes ways in which we can assess learners' task performance in accordance with different theoretical paradigms (interaction, sociocultural, psycholinguistic, and personal investment approaches). The personal investment approach, with discussions on engagement, engagement-as-a-state, flow, and engagement-as-a-process, was novel and exciting to read about. I look forward to more research in this area; Ellis's summary of the limitations of this approach are elucidatory as more researchers explore these variables.

Part III, 'Task-Based Language Pedagogy', presents five key reprinted works, some with minor modifications and updates. In the brief introduction to this section, I appreciate how Ellis compares the ways in which his views on TBLT overlap with, and deviate from, the work and recommendations of TBLT expert Mike Long. It is helpful to see where they differ on the roles of needs analyses, *a priori* explicit instruction, and even consciousness-raising tasks in TBLT. Chapter 8, 'Task-Based Language Teaching: Sorting Out the Misunderstandings' (Ellis 2009), is a classic reprint and a critical read in both my general and specialist TBLT courses. Chapter 9, 'Moving Task-Based Language Teaching Forward' (Ellis 2017), judiciously discusses real problems that TBLT faces. These include task-based versus task-supported language teaching (although I personally do not view this as a dichotomy), the definition of task, the timing of explicit language teaching around a task, how to sequence tasks of increasing complexity, and teacher training. Chapter 10, 'Towards a Modular Language Curriculum for Using Tasks' (Ellis 2018b), espouses a way to create a syllabus that allows for tasks alongside a structural checklist. The recommendations here are fantastic for teachers who want to implement focused tasks in a task-supported context, and/or who have to teach, or are used to teaching, with a grammar-focused syllabus and want to introduce tasks into their repertoire. Chapter 11 is an updated reprint of the task-based methodology chapter from Ellis (2003). Ellis's task-based methodology model is comprised of the pre-task phase, the main-task phase, and the post-task phase. Methodological options for each of the phases

are described here for teachers. Chapter 12, 'Teachers Evaluating Tasks' (Ellis 2015), explains ways to micro-evaluate tasks and presents mini case studies of how teachers individually evaluated tasks. The chapter concludes with other means of evaluating tasks, such as obtaining student perceptions.

The final component of this book, the Conclusion, is Ellis's synthesis of the collection of chapters presented, elaborating on how teaching and research have developed in TBLT. Based on this, Ellis presents a challenge to the field by suggesting that we must stop focusing so much on theory/ies for task performance, and rather, move forward with a research agenda that is focused on supporting teachers. In fact, this is a key theme throughout. In his introductory chapter, he states: 'I would like to propose that researchers should focus more on the implementation of tasks in actual classrooms rather than on the design of tasks in carefully controlled experiments' (p. xii). These avenues for future research include how to best support teachers, TBLT in real classrooms, and how to design teacher-training programs. I could not agree more with this plea. Many other researchers have called for this same focus in the field, and I think this emphasis says a great deal about the shared preoccupations of SLA researchers.

To summarize, this text can serve as a great introductory reader for a course on TBLT, or as a resource for graduate students, teachers, language program directors, and anyone looking to have a better understanding of TBLT. It does not provide anything new, but does serve as a key reader of essential publications in the field of TBLT. If I had to highlight any limitation, it would be the lack of detail on other perspectives, such as others' definitions of tasks, and different models for task-based methodology. There is value in having others' perspectives, and I wonder if this volume would have been stronger had it been an edited version of multiple scholars' contributions. For a course on TBLT, for an understanding of the field, or for teachers who want to learn more about TBLT and incorporate it into their practice, I would thus also recommend key readers such as Long (2015), Samuda, Van den Branden, and Bygate (2018), Van den Branden, Bygate, and Norris (2009), and Willis and Willis (2007). González-Lloret (2016) and González-Lloret and Ortega (2014) are additional must-reads for teachers aiming to develop language teaching tasks in the online environment. Ellis (2003) is also—still—a classic reader. This current text differs in that it is focused on Ellis's contribution to the field over the past couple of decades, providing a collection of these

contributions in one single book, and in a way, is an honour to the work of one of the most esteemed scholars in TBLT.

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Social Interaction and English Language Teacher Identity

J. Gray and T. Morton

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There has been a strong and steady wave of language teacher identity (LTI) research as evidenced by recent special journal issues (e.g. Varghese, Motha, Trent, Park, and Reeves 2016; De Costa and Norton 2017a) and edited volumes (e.g. Cheung, Said, and Park 2015; Barkhuizen 2017). And as I write this review, another special journal issue (Yazan and Lindhal 2019, forthcoming) on TESOL teacher identity and two LTI-oriented conferences—the inaugural Conference on Language Teaching and Learning (<https://www.eduhk.hk/ele/ltlci/>) and the Eleventh International Conference on Language Teacher Education (<http://carla.umn.edu/conferences/lt2019/call.html>)—are being planned. Given this keen interest in LTI research, Gray and Morton's *Social Interaction and English Language Teacher Identity* is decidedly refreshing because it provides an up-to-date account of how this vibrant segment of language teacher education has grown over the past few years. A unique contribution of this book is its fine-grained analysis of social interaction as the authors demonstrate how teacher identities are enacted in and through interaction. They balance this delicate and important task by connecting microanalyses with wider debates such as the neoliberal turn in language education (De Costa, Park, and Wee, in press).

The book can be seen as consisting of three sections. The first section comprises an introduction (Chapter 1) and an overview of identity research (Chapter 2). In their introduction, Gray and Morton posit that the surge in LTI research can be attributed to the emergence of practice-oriented theories. Teacher identity work, they add, is pivotal because it addresses the fundamental issue of what it means to be an effective practitioner (for a further discussion of this issue, see De Costa and Norton 2017b). Readers are then treated to a concise and helpful overview of identity research, as the authors trace how understandings of this construct have evolved into a 21st-century poststructuralist conceptualization of identity as being fluid and socially situated, before articulating their own discursive view of identity. Chapter 3, which examines the relationship between identity, agency, and social interaction, draws on a set of theoretical and methodological tools that can be utilized to explore how English language teacher identities are co-constructed. The notions of field,

habitus, indexicality, and positioning theory are introduced to the readers. In addition, the authors also discuss conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis as methodological tools which guide their analyses in the chapters that follow. Interviews and focus groups, they point out, become valuable data sources that provide insights on discursively constructed identities. Indeed, it is this wonderfully seamless discussion of theory and method that makes this chapter and the rest of the book appealing and accessible. Such a discussion also sets the stage for Section 2, which is constituted by five data-driven chapters.

Section 2 addresses a range of teacher education, professional practice, and research settings in ELT and investigates different teacher identities in myriad ways. Chapter 4, for example, examines how knowledge, power, and identity are mediated between student teachers and teacher educators in a pre-service ELT course. Focusing on trainer–trainee interactions, we are privy to how practical knowledge and power asymmetries occur in interaction. As the authors rightly observe, '[t]hese micro acts of compliance index compliance on a wider scale' (p. 52), thereby underscoring the link between micro-level interactions and macro-level power dynamics that characterizes pre-service English language teacher education.

Whereas detailed transcripts of lesson-planning sessions and stimulated recall interviews constituted the data sources in the preceding chapter, Chapter 5 focuses on the small stories (i.e. stories we tell each other when we are doing other things) that teachers narrate in research interviews as they talk about the mandatory 'individual learning plans' (ILPs) that teachers complete to track students' progress. Through their analyses of their ILP-based small stories, Gray and Morton succeed in drawing our attention to everyday pedagogical aspects as the teachers position themselves in relation to wider institutional and societal expectations. The true value of analysing the teachers' small stories is that such stories demonstrate how the teachers take up different positions within their respective work contexts, thereby illuminating our understanding of the ways top-down imposed bureaucratic practices such as ILPs impact professional practice.

In contrast to the individual research interviews in Chapter 5 with 'native speaker' ESOL teachers in England, the teacher participants in Chapter 6 are 'non-native speakers' in Madrid, Spain, who participated in a group discussion. Analytically, the authors also change tack in this chapter, adopting a membership categorization analysis (MCA)

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framework to guide their analysis. MCA, as Gray and Morton observe, 'is concerned with how people, through their talk, make certain identities relevant by ascribing themselves, and others, to certain categories' (p. 80), with its main benefit being that identity categories are named by the participants themselves. Their findings revealed that the teacher participants placed themselves in three categories, namely, as 'users of English', 'learners of English', and 'teachers of English'. Encouragingly, on the one hand, these teachers emphasized the practical goals of communication, rather than focusing on specific varieties (e.g. 'British English', 'Spanglish'); on the other hand, the teachers also seemed to reproduce a subaltern attitude with regard to their so-called native-speaker peers, thus illustrating the complexities surrounding language teacher identities. Although the authors do briefly invoke World Englishes and English as a lingua franca in this chapter, the chapter would have been enriched if Gray and Morton had made links to more recent developments in English as an international language (e.g. Matsuda 2017) pedagogical research.

A group interview involving three ESOL teachers forms the primary data source of Chapter 7. In this chapter, the authors focus on small stories told by these teachers, analysing how the latter's social class and political identity positions emerge from their stories. Significantly, these stories are situated against the broader landscape of a marketized ESOL education sector that is subject to funding cuts by the British government. Readers are thus introduced to the systematic unfairness that permeates the teaching of English to migrants in the UK. Equally politically charged is the authors' problematization of the erasure and lack of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) representation in commercially produced ELT materials in Chapter 8. Applying the concept of framing to analyse the small story of Mark, a gay teacher, Mark and (John) Gray's identity as gay men is repeatedly made relevant in the research interview. The sustained affiliative identity work in which both the participant (Mark) and researcher (Gray) engage is also a fine example of how teachers' sexual and professional identity inevitably 'intersect and mutually inform one another' (p. 7). That said, the chapter could have benefited from a more in-depth discussion of researcher reflexivity and the ethical issues that entail conducting research with teachers, a point that the authors do briefly raise in their concluding chapter but one that could have been explicated in this chapter, given the topical intimacy of Chapter 8.

In the third and final section, consisting of Chapter 9, readers are reminded that 'identity research needs to take into account the dynamic and co-constructed nature of the interactional settings in which identity-related language and discourses are produced' (p. 142). Gray and Morton do a fine job in generating a general future LTI research agenda and referencing the preceding chapters as they also discuss the implications and applications for English language teacher education and professional development. Their looping back on what was discussed in the earlier chapters contributes to the coherence of the book. I would like to have seen, however, a more specific mapping of LTI research tasks for readers, one that would have extended the delineation of general identity-inflected tasks suggested in Norton and De Costa (2018). That aside, I applaud the authors for placing social interaction front and centre in LTI research. I also appreciate their willingness to take on the precarity of discussing key issues such as social class and sexuality—issues that have often been overlooked in language teacher education.

I teach a graduate seminar on identity and ideology in multilingual settings at my home institution. This seminar is generally well attended by doctoral students in second-language studies and teacher education, as well as MATESOL students. The timeliness of this book and its theoretical and methodological detail have coaxed me into making this volume a primary course text when I teach the course again in the spring of 2019. I urge other teacher educators to do the same because a book like this is necessary if we are to make language teacher identity a central facet of language teacher education.

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The reviewer

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books Numair Atif Choudhury

Babu Bangladesh! | Fourth Estate | 402 pages | Rs 599

Forged Under A Magical *Bot Tola*

This brilliant first, and last, novel is a phantasmagoric exploration of Bangladesh's torn past, conflicted present and projects itself into a riddle-ridden future

BY PUNEET NICHOLAS YADAV

It is rare to come across an epic work of imagination as powerful and compelling as *Babu Bangladesh!* A novel that might come to be regarded as the *Midnight's Children* of Bangladesh, 'unputdownable' is too inadequate an encomium to describe this startling debut by Numair Atif Choudhury. It is a pity that Numair is no more—he died in an accident just a few days after he had completed the first draft of the book, which, incidentally, took him nearly 15 years.

Set in the future, in 2028, and narrated by a nameless compere, each word and line, each passage and chapter breathes passion—a hungry fire that devours all, but unsatiated for that. Covering the bloody birth of Bangladesh in 1971, the book flits between fantasy and reality, the magical realism that does impinge into the narrative is of a starkly darker nature. From the tropical swamps of Bangladesh to the immigrant colonies of New York, myth, history and truth merge till it is difficult to disentangle. The systematic genocide carried out by West Pakistan on 'mutinous' East Pakistan, the horrific rapes of Hindu women, ethnic cleansing—the book chronicles it all. You cringe as you watch a young Babu watch the violent killing of his beloved Kanu; you watch the despair of the Dhaka University students as their beloved *bot tola* (the shady expanse underneath a banyan tree) is axed, dynamited and ultimately pulled down as they themselves take to the marshy ponds to avoid Khansena bullets.

When Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation, comes to power, it looks as if things will be stable. They are, albeit for a short while. Soon, 'secularism' is expunged from the constitution and Islam is made the state religion. Amid rising corruption and nepotism, assassinations, military coups and dictatorships are back. Intermittently, democracy—like

at present—raises its head. Combined with all this is the relentless fury of nature that ravages the nation almost every year. Numair knows that in order to show Bangladesh in the light of all this and more, he needs a worthy shoulder—Babu provides him with more than that.

Numair has great symbolic use for architect Louis I. Kahn's design marvel—the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, the Bangladeshi parliament—and the giant, iconic banyan tree at the heart of Dhaka



Numair gives readers no answers, only perspectives and questions. Puzzles are handed out; maybe answers are outlined. Babu, too, is glorified and derided.

Therein lies his appeal.

University. A young Babu, aided by two "mysterious men who shall remain unnamed" discovers that the Sangsad Bhaban is more than a marvelous and grand structure; he finds that it is located at a rare intersection of 'cosmic' influences. This leads him to study shamanic practices globally. The banyan, on the other hand, is no longer there by the time Babu makes his entry

into the world, but he is nonetheless connected to it, as if by an umbilical cord—the boy was conceived under the dying *bot tola*. The capacious banyan was also where the student wing of the Muktibahini was conceived; it served as a rallying point for nationalist struggle. Naturally, when the Pakistani army starts its indiscriminate killing, uprooting the tree is high on its agenda.

Divided into five sections—Building, Tree, Snake, Island and Bird—the book covers Babu's birth and growing up years, his mystic/student/activist days, his self-imposed exile from the land he loves to New York, where phobias engulf him and ultimately his perplexing disappearance in 2021. In Babu, the narrator gives us Bangladesh. The bold language bursts forth with explosive audacity, where buildings acquire consciousness, trees defy troops, and cosmic influences decide crucial outcomes. But, perhaps, the most important aspect of *Babu Bangladesh!* is that it gives the reader no answers, only different perspectives. It, of course, throws up questions: Why? Where? How? But, answers it has none. None of the loose ends are tied up. Puzzles are handed out, maybe the answers are outlined. But, the answers could be right or wrong. The reader is free to decode it. While some see superpowers in Babu, he appears with grave flaws to others. Babu Bangladesh is decidedly both. And, therein lies his appeal.

Like his protagonist, there will always remain an aura of mystery around Numair Atif Choudhury. He left without letting the world get to know him better. His first, and unfortunately last, book hints at a brilliant mind. A mind filled with a thousand different things at once. A mind that was not afraid of exploring, going beyond the unknown and patient about the outcome. Here was one author who could have, arguably, travelled farther on the road trodden by Marquez and Llosa. It was not to be. □

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BOOKS

The First Casualty

By Prasanto K. Roy

The alleys of Manila's slums filled up with corpses. Bikers would shoot people and ride off. No one really knows how many died in the Philippines' brutal war on drugs since its vigilante president, Rodrigo Duterte, was elected in June 2016. Rights organisations estimate 12,000; some politicians say 20,000.

One politician who pushed back against the extra-judicial killings found herself on trial, with online mobs baying for her blood. An archbishop condemned the killings, and the online mobs turned on him too. Next it was the media's turn: the 'presstitutes' who dared to accuse the president of murder.

Freedom of speech versus censorship was a clearer conflict in the 20th century, the former often triumphing. But what if those in power today were to use information overflow to drown dissenters, let fake news build online mobs and crush dissent, while always leaving enough anonymity for deniability?

That is what this superbly researched book is about. More information was supposed to mean more freedom to stand up to the powerful, but it has also given those in power new ways to silence dissent, often via proxy mobs and trolls. There is so much information, fake news and forwarded videos, that you don't know what's true any more.

The Soviet-born author, Peter Pomerantsev, frequently dips into family memoirs for contrast. His father was interrogated repeatedly by the KGB, often simply for owning books. Then, the Soviet regime censored and stifled information. Today, the Kremlin has adapted to the internet age. Troll farms in Russia wield inordinate power over people near and far, including over US voters (as the 2016 election showed).

In his 2014 book, *Nothing Is True*

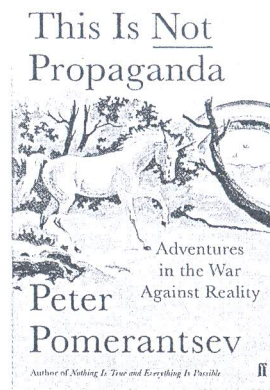
and *Everything Is Possible*, Pomerantsev, today a visiting fellow at the London School of Economics, said that the capacity to bend public perception was a key part of Putin's rule in Russia. This 2019 sequel shows the post-truth era at our doorstep: in democracies worldwide.

Mexican blogger Alberto Escorcia finds words that will get people talking to each other online; he can 'summon up' protests. In Belgrade, digital resistance guru Srdja Popovic can find common factors to unite supporters. Far-right movements find and use words such as Islamification, immigrants, Muslim fertility.

What if the powerful were to drown dissenters in a sea of information, let fake news drive online mobs and crush dissent?

Obsessively, the author keeps turning back to Russia. Yet his insights span the 2019 world. 'I see people I have known my whole life slipping away from me on social media, reposting conspiracies from sources I have never heard of. Internet undercurrents pull families apart...the algorithms seem to know more about us than we do.'

India appears only once: In 2018, at a conference in Rome, Indian fact-checkers told the author about efforts to stop murder sprees by vigilantes. Hindu nationalists were spreading rumours on



THIS IS NOT PROPAGANDA
Adventures in the War
Against Reality
by Peter Pomerantsev
₹314 (Kindle edition)

WhatsApp about Muslims killing cows, eating beef. Fanatics would then descend on the Muslims and lynch them.

Pomerantsev explores the wreckage of liberalism, searching for sparks of sense in 'the dank corners of the internet where trolls torture their victims'. He takes us from Soviet to modern Russia, from the Balkans to Latin America and the EU, where we learn of the new methods used to break resistance movements.

The stories go back and forth, from digital to real life and death. Take La Felina, who shared drug-violence bulletins on her Twitter handle, so citizens could be safe. Then a narco gang in Reynosa, Mexico, was in a shootout and one of their men was hit. To treat him, they kidnapped María del Rosario, a doctor. They checked her phone, and found La Felina's account. Dr del Rosario's last two Twitter messages had a photo of her looking into the camera, and then, lying on the floor with her face blown off. They had live-tweeted her execution.

The worldwide war on reality is starkly outlined in this deeply disturbing book. Pomerantsev's solutions are far less clear, though. That, perhaps, is another sequel. ■

Prasanto K. Roy is a policy consultant and technology writer

WHEN THE MUSIC'S OVER

To know how our society changed, one only needs to read this history of a *tawaif* family



TAWAIFNAMA
by Saba Dewan
CONTEXT
₹899; 606 pages

hold on to middle-class notions of respectability against the backdrop of poverty.

Men and boys have no role in these stories and when they do appear, as lovers or patrons, they are incidental to the plot. Dewan also explores the nationalistic discourse and how the *tawaiifs* fared within it, occupying a space on the cross-section of Hindu and Muslim cultural practices. The *tawaiifs* and their (often) Muslim *ustads* were seen as 'interlopers' in an otherwise sacred music tradition, by 'cultural nationalists'.

'Nationalism', Dewan writes, 'had brought with it the need for music that was spiritual, classical, morally uplifting and reflective of India's ancient Hindu heritage'. Pushed out of royal palaces and *baitmaks* of *rasik* merchants, and purged from centuries-old inner-city quarters during 'clean-up' drives by civic-minded citizens and policemen, some found fame and fortune in the film industry and, later, dance bars. But many fell by the wayside.

Dewan retrieves their stories and foregrounds them against the ebb and flow of grand historical forces. *Tawaiifnama*, then, is not the story of a *tawaif* and her extended family; it's a sweeping narrative of the forces of societal change. '*Sab time-time ka khel hai*,' an ageing *tawaif* and the main narratorial voice tells the author. 'It is all a play of time/ fate.' ■

—Rakhshanda Jalil

Their art usurped by concert performers from 'shareef' families, their lives distorted when not marginalised, their stories papered over, their contribution, to not merely the development of Hindustani music but also popular culture, effaced, the *tawaiifs* have been the worst victims of an overzealous missionary impulse in modern Indian society. Saba Dewan attempts to correct an old wrong in her collection of stories, all from one family of professional singer-dancers with roots in Banaras and Bhabua (in Bihar).

Feted as artistes and

sought after as lovers, elite *tawaiifs* enjoyed access to high prestige and considerable wealth. Yet their non-marital sexuality and the stigma attached to women who were in the public gaze, accessible to all, placed them on the margins of "respectable" society; neither totally contained within pre-colonial patriarchy nor entirely outside it. It was this liminal space that I was interested in exploring," she writes.

Having made three documentaries on stigmatised women performers, Dewan brings a store of knowledge,

empathy and wry humour to the task. In the process, she also legitimises many 'self-histories'—the stories of Dharamman Bibi who fought the *angrez* in the revolt of 1857, Bullan and Kallan who took on the colonial enterprise, as well as Asghari, Phoolmani, Teema, Bindo, Sultana, and their sisters, cousins and aunts, who, in different ways and to varying degrees, try (and occasionally fail) to live up to the legacy of their foremothers. Many in the present times struggle to



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The Strongest Constitution

A quirky compendium of cartoons and the accompanying detailed commentary spark a bumpy ride to the past, and elicits doubts, thoughts and insights

BY AAKASH SINGH RATHORE

REVIEWS of books generally exhibit a relatively fixed pattern: the reviewer guides the reader through a tour of the book's backstory, then its contents and main arguments, then of course a few of its shortcomings, and concluding with its recommendation (at times lukewarm, at times enthusiastic).

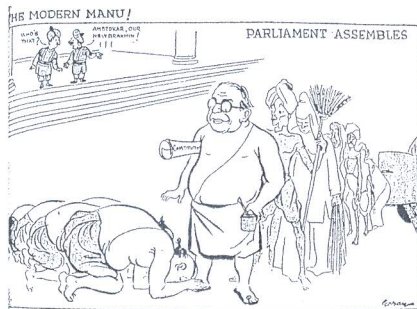
Just as reviews of books generally fall into a pattern, so do books themselves. *No Laughing Matter*, however, does not: it is unique and idiosyncratic; it has few (if any) predecessors setting its precedents; it is unstable in its genre, switching back and forth like a gestalt image, some moments looking like 'political imperative' (as the editor, Unnamati Syama Sundar states is his task), which operates in the world of action, and other moments looking like 'serious scholarship' (as its foreword writer, Suraj Yengde describes it), which operates in more contemplative spaces, like museums and universities.

If the book eludes usual patterns, then why not its review? So instead of creeping toward a thoughtful recommendation by way of a narrative enumerating its qualities, I am going to just say it straight, outright, here at the outset: You. Must. Read. This. Book.

Not because it's a masterpiece—it has its shortcomings. But because it is a treasure. With over 122 cartoon images culled from archives, it is a feast for the eyes. And with so many triggering concepts (like hate speech, or atrocities) and so many flashpoint subjects (like freedom of expression versus defamation; or, 'take it easy, it's just a joke' versus downright humiliation), it elicits irrepressible emotions in the reader, and that in turn leads its affected reader to reflection, doubt, reconsideration, new thoughts, and even insights.

People are talking about this book in many different forums—journal reviews, public discussions and debates, and arti-

cles in the press. All this is well merited. If you have yet to hear about it, the gist of it is that its editor, Sundar (a cartoonist himself, and a doctoral student well versed in the cultural politics of visual arts), has collected together as many (anglophone) cartoons that he could find that captioned Ambedkar, and presents them chronologically, along with editorial comments that contextualise them historically, and evaluative comments that critique them socially and aesthetically. In addition, there is a 30-page edito-



Cartoons rely on shared experiences and mores for the humour to work. In the case of the Ambedkar cartoons, one of the shared values across much of the readership is casteism.

rial introduction explaining the overall project, and a six-page foreword. These deserve praise too: both are pensive but lucid, moving but well-reasoned, modest but assertive.

Sundar's own point of view throughout this magical history tour is transparent and unmasked. He writes: "Shankar or any cartoonist was not quite free to give expression to his freedom of expression. Working for a wage, a cartoonist often obliges his masters. Besides, given their social and caste background, love for Gandhi and the nationalist

cause, an easy contempt for the Dalit cause and Ambedkar came almost naturally to many." (p.39)

This 'easy contempt', Sundar claims, is a sort of unifying feature throughout all the diverse cartoon depictions of Ambedkar from 1932 to 1956. And Yengde adds in his foreword: "So many Dalit leaders are profiled in the exact same manner in print and web media outlets even now." (p.19)

Sundar includes among the cartoonists not only the renowned Shankar (from *Shankar's Weekly*), but many other masters, like Enver Ahmed (from *Hindustan Times* and *Pioneer*) and R.K. Laxman (from *Times of India*). He also includes propagandists like Ravindra (*Organiser*), which creates a bit of ambiguity in what is collected here. At least, it begs the question, What, exactly, does Sundar understand by this term 'cartoon'?

We usually take 'cartoon' to signify simple, satirical drawings that attempt to humorously exaggerate their subject, while aiming to capture the essence of an event or issue (the latter explaining why newspapers publish them). In these, the comic element relies on shared experiences, values and mores in order for the humour to work. In the case of the Ambedkar cartoons, one of the shared values across much of the readership is casteism.

But there are also propaganda cartoons, which aim to manipulate their target audience and change their values, or, alternatively, which derisively exaggerate their subject aiming to foment hatred or strong feelings. These deploy vilifying caricatures to achieve their aim. It would be a mistake to totally collapse one form into the other form, as *No Laughing Matter* sometimes does. And yet, what is so engaging about this book is that, by blurring the lines between these two distinct forms, it obliges the reader to try to reestablish that sharp line herself. This task turns out to be much harder than you might think. □

स्वप्न और यथार्थ के बीच

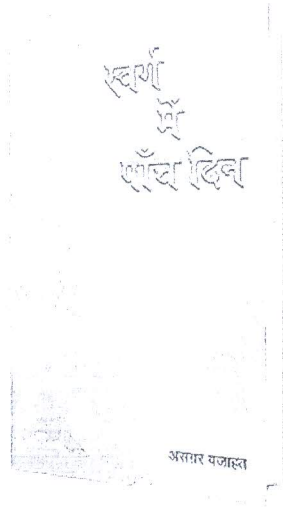
सुरेस सत्तित

हाकवि नाज़िम हिकमत की एक कविता में कुछ पंक्तियां इस तरह हैं: "मेरे पास एक छोटी-सी पेंसिल थी/जिसे मैंने एक हफ्ते में घिस डाला/अगर तुम पेंसिल से पूछो, वह कहेगी, 'मेरी समूची जिंदगी' / अगर तुम मुझसे पूछो, मैं कहूंगा/ 'कहां?...सिर्फ एक हफ्ता.'" जिंदगी के बारे में भी ऐसा ही एक मुहावरा है—चार दिन की जिंदगी. इस निगाह से देखें, तभी हमारे दौर के हर-दिल अजीब अदीब असगर वजाहत के नए सफरनामे *स्वर्ग में पांच दिन* को सही अर्थों में समझा और सराहा जा सकता है.

असगर बहुत उर्वर रचनाकार हैं. उन्होंने सात आसमान जैसी श्रेष्ठ कथाकृति हिंदी को दी, जिन लाहौर नहीं देखी...जैसे कालजयी नाटक से समकालीन रंगमंच को समृद्ध किया, फिल्मों बनाई और शाहआलम कैंप की रूहें जैसी विचारोत्तेजक कहानी लिखी. वे राहुल सांकृत्यायन, नागार्जुन की घुमक्कड़ी को वर्तमान तक लाने वाले अचिराम सैलानी भी हैं और ईरान, जॉर्डन आदि देशों के बहुत रोचक और ज्ञानवर्धक सफरनामे हमें दिए हैं. समीक्ष्य कृति भी एक सफरनामा ही है और इसके केंद्र में है पूर्वी यूरोप का देश हंगरी.

असगर 1989 से मुतवातिर हंगरी की यात्राएं करते रहे हैं और 1992-97 तक, पूरे पांच साल विजिटिंग प्रोफेसर के बतौर वहां रहे हैं. उन्होंने वहां के कोने-कोने को, रोएं-रेश को एक जिज्ञासु और हार्दिक की दृष्टि से देखा और एक इतिहासान्वेषी, एक समाजशास्त्री की भांति उस सबको अपनी स्मृति में दर्ज कर कागज पर उतारा है. लेकिन हंगरी की जिस खूबी ने उन्हें गहरे तक प्रभावित किया वह है वहां की प्राकृतिक सुंदरता. कहते हैं, "यदि मुगल सम्राट शाहजहां हंगरी आए होते तो निश्चित रूप से कहते कि गर बहिश्त बर रू-ए-ज़मीं अस्त/ हमीं अस्तो हमीं अस्तो हमीं अस्त. ऐसे स्वर्गोपम देश में अगर किसी दिलनवाज को पांच साल का अरसा महज पांच दिन जितना लगे तो हैरत क्या!

खुद लेखक के शब्दों में *स्वर्ग में पांच दिन*



स्वर्ग में पांच दिन

प्रकाशक: राजपाल एंड संस,
कश्मीरी गेट, दिल्ली
कीमत: 395 रु.

में "हंगरी प्रवास के संस्मरण ही नहीं हैं, न वहां का इतिहास, न सामाजिक-राजनैतिक अध्ययन, न हंगेरियन साहित्य और कलाओं का कोई विशद विश्लेषण", लेकिन एक पाठक की नजर से देखें तो इसमें वह सब है, और भी बहुत कुछ है, जो हंगरी को जिज्ञासु पाठकों के करीब लाता है, इतना करीब कि वह हंगरी को चाहने लगे, वहां के खवाब देखने लगे.

इस यात्रा पुस्तक के शुरू में ही एक 'अनजाना इतिहासकार' हमारे सामने आ खड़ा होता है. "इस अनजाने इतिहासकार ने सन् 1200 से 1230 के बीच अपना इतिहास लिखा था, जिसे *ग्रेस्ता हुंगारोरुम* कहा जाता है. अनजाने इतिहासकार की यह काल्पनिक मूर्ति हंगरी के *कैसल ऑफ वय्यदाहुन्यद* के बाहर लगी हुई है." मूर्ति में वह अनजाना इतिहासकार एक लंबा हुडकोट पहने है, जिसने उसके पूरे सिर और चेहरे को ढक रखा है. बस उसकी लंबी नाक ही नजर आती है. वह अनजाना इतिहासकार यूराल पहाड़ों और कैस्पियन सागर के पास बसे एक कबीले के सरदार प्रिंस ओनैदवैलिया की खूबसूरत शहजादी एमैशै और एक कबीले के सरदार के स्वयंवर की दिलकश दास्तान लेखक को सुनाता है और यह भी बताता है कि उन दोनों के संयोग से पैदा हुए आलमोश ने अलग-अलग सात कबीलों के सरदारों को एकजुट किया और कहा, "हमारे शरीर में अलग-अलग खून दौड़ रहा है...हम सबका खून अलग है...हम अलग हैं...हमें एक होना चाहिए...जब तक हम एक नहीं होंगे, तब तक मैं तुम सबको लेकर आगे नहीं बढ़ूंगा... हमारा खून मिल जाना चाहिए, तब हम सात

नहीं रहेंगे, एक हो जाएंगे." नौवीं सदी के एकता के इस संदेश के साथ जहां हंगरी का इतिहास आगे बढ़ता है, वहीं लेखक का सफरनामा भी रफ्तार पकड़ता है.

इस दास्तान के हवाले से अरसे से चली आ रही एक गलतफहमी भी दूर होती है. हंगरी को प्रायः हूणों से जोड़ा जाता रहा है और यह कि हंगरी नाम हूणों से पड़ा. लेखक के अनुसार, आठवीं-नौवीं सदी के आसपास मध्य यूरोप के इस भूभाग में बस गई जनजाति का नाम मज्यर था. उन्हीं से जुड़कर हंगेरियन भाषा में हंगरी का नाम 'मज्यरा सांग' पड़ा. तुर्की जबान में भी हंगरी को मज्यरिस्तान कहा जाता है.

हंगरी की जिन खूबियों के कारण लेखक ने उसे स्वर्ग कहा है, उनमें किसिम-किसिम की वारुणियां हैं—सम्राटों की वाइन से लेकर आम लोगों की शराब तक—एशिया और यूरोप के सम्मिश्रण से पैदा हुई हूँ हैं, जिनकी "सुंदरता आक्रामक सुंदरता नहीं है. उनमें सहजता और सरलता है." आम लोगों की जेब से चाबी का गुच्छा उड़ा लेने वाली जिप्सी वारांगनाएं हैं, कला संग्रहालय हैं, रचनाकारों के नाम से जुड़ी इमारतें हैं, खूबसूरत औरतों से दोस्ती करने में मददगार सुंदर कुत्ते हैं और है बर्फ, तरह-तरह के पैटर्न बनाती, तरह-तरह के रंगाभास देती बर्फ, धरती को आसमान से जोड़ती बर्फ. बर्फ के अनेक रंगारंग संस्मरण हैं इस बेहद पठनीय सफरनामों में.

स्वर्ग में पांच दिन में असगर वजाहत ने एक ऐसा हंगरी हमारे सामने उजागर किया है, जो जिंदगी जैसा जीता-जागता हुआ है और सपने जैसा सुंदर. ■

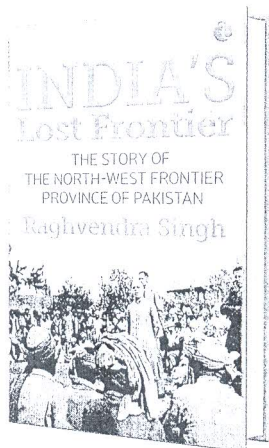
HOW THE WEST WAS LOST

By Kaushik Deka

Since Narendra Modi took charge as prime minister in 2014, there has been an increasing trend—primarily among Sangh Parivar leaders—to attribute the historical mistakes India made to the country's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. There could be some legitimacy to these claims, but it is also part of a concerted propaganda campaign. In the first week of August, a surprise voice joined this chorus—former president Pranab Mukherjee, considered one of the closest confidants of Nehru's daughter and former prime minister Indira Gandhi.

Speaking at the launch of *India's Lost Frontier: The Story of the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan*, authored by former textiles secretary Raghvendra Singh, Mukherjee blamed Nehru for ignoring the conspiracy hatched by British civil servants and the Muslim League and letting the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP)—now known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa—slip away from the grip of the Congress and eventually India. “Two elections were held, in 1937 and 1946. Despite the province being Muslim-dominated, the Congress won a large number of seats. British civil servants conspired with the Muslim League to ensure that support was transferred from the Congress to the League,” he said. “The League started gaining strength, and the Congress started losing support in just a couple of months—between February, when elections were held, and August.” When Nehru was alerted, he was dismissive of the developments, Mukherjee claimed.

The intent of Singh's book, though, is not Nehru-bashing. It's a work of passion by a history buff. Right from the preface, the book showcases in-depth research based on a rich trove of declassified documents, includ-



INDIA'S LOST FRONTIER:
The Story of the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan
By Raghvendra Singh
Om Publications
₹995; 491 pages

The Muslim-majority NWFP elected a Congress government in 1946—but it was dismissed in 1947

ing exchanges between the British administration and Indian political leaders of various hues. In 2006, Singh travelled by road from Rajasthan to Balochistan—on the southern border of NWFP—for a research project. The former bureaucrat was in an enviable position to access historical documents, thanks to the positions he held in the ministries of home, external affairs, finance and agriculture. He was also director general of the National Archives of India.

NWFP, unlike Kashmir and

Balochistan, has been missing from the dominant India-Pakistan discourse. This province negated Pakistan founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah's 'two-nation' theory. Muslim-dominated NWFP elected a Congress government in 1946. A referendum was ordered and the elected government dismissed on August 22, 1947. While Mahatma Gandhi and the Khan brothers resisted the move, the Congress leadership did not pursue the issue.

With historical anecdotes and analysis, the author explains the strategic significance of NWFP, and why the British government favoured giving the region to Pakistan. In February 1946, the India Office in London had circulated an important paper to a select few, like Sir Stafford Cripps and A.V. Alexander, on the subject of the viability of Pakistan. The paper highlighted how without the inclusion of mountainous NWFP, which shares a border with Afghanistan, Pakistan would remain vulnerable to external aggression. The province was also significant for army recruitments, as the paper contended that those from East Pakistan—now Bangladesh—did not make good soldiers and the inhabitants of Sindh and Balochistan did not take to army life.

But the book is not just about lamenting India's lost opportunity in history. It also examines how the docile acceptance of NWFP's integration with Pakistan may have dangerous consequences for India's security in the future. “The region can only be ignored at one's peril. The China-isation of the region through One Road One Belt will have serious repercussions,” says Singh. An interesting argument at a time when India's renewed assertion in Kashmir—in the form of the ‘dilution’ of Article 370—has evoked desperate reactions from Pakistan and its ally China. ■

Food for thought

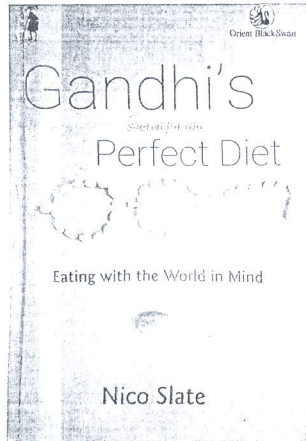
The book explores Mahatma Gandhi's obsession with diet and food and his experiments and innovations in them to improve health and nutrition. BY J.N. SINHA

To add to the vast body of literature already existing on Mahatma Gandhi, a fresh series has appeared on the centenary of his first visit to Champaran, Bihar, in 1917. The earlier literature deals mostly with his contributions to India's Independence through a non-violent struggle that inspired people across the globe.

However, this focus has meant that Gandhi's extensive experiments in his personal life and his innovations in the socio-economic domains were ignored. All of them have deep implications for the development discourse, the role of science and technology in human progress, and for the environment. From this angle, the book under review, *Gandhi's Search for the Perfect Diet: Eating with the World in Mind* by Nico Slate, is a welcome addition. It is a work that has insights from various disciplines, but I review it as a social historian of science.

SEVEN CHAPTERS

The book is divided into seven chapters: "Salt"; "Chocolate"; "Goat Meat and Peanut Milk"; "Raw, Whole, Real"; "Natural Medicine"; "Farming" and "Fasting". The simple-



Gandhi's Search for the Perfect Diet

Eating with the World in Mind

By Nico Slate

Orient BlackSwan, Hyderabad, 2019

Pages: 237

Price: Rs.850

sounding chapter titles are deceptive, however, as the chapters contain intricate details culled from diverse sources and analysed from various angles. The introduction sets the tone for the study, briefly sketching Gandhi's approach to diet in terms of his sociopolitical and ethical grounding and goals. Through Gandhi's diet preferences, Slate follows his evolution from a shy and reticent student in Britain to a public leader. Gradually, the author delves deeper into Gandhi's passion for diet and food in general, a theme little examined in the past or, at least, never in the way Slate has done.

For Gandhi, diet was crucial in life in many ways: Personally, he was concerned about diet to

keep himself healthy to serve humanity, and control over his palate was an exercise in control over his temptations and desires.

Beyond that, in Gandhi's view, the correct diet was vital for national health, productive labour and national development. Many of the ideas and practices that defined his diet also "came to shape all facets of his politics: not just non-violence, but also tolerance, humility, and relentless experimentation" (page 6), the author underlines in the successive chapters.

The author starts with Gandhi's views on salt, chocolate, sugar and sweets (Chapters 1 and 2) and then tackles Gandhi's engagement with the issues of vegetarianism, and this

mirrors his non-violent opposition to colonial rule. He associated himself with the vegetarian movement in Britain before he turned to South Africa and finally to India (Chapter 3).

"Raw, Whole, Real" looks at the problems of poverty and backwardness of the country and Gandhi's concern for the diet and health of the poor. Raw food "would emancipate not only India's poor but also its women. If cooking could be avoided, ...women will be set free from the prison-house of the kitchen", Gandhi believed (page 80).

As he pursued multiple goals—the unity of India, the end of poverty, and the liberation of women—he juggled multiple dietary plans to achieve them (page 80). While focussing on the various elements of a diet, he also tried to find substitutes for them from the wild, and after experimenting with many plants and tubers, he recommended some of them for public consumption, including *luni* (purslane), *chakwat* (white goosefoot), *sarsau* (mustard) and *suva* (dill) (pages 97-98).

The author looks at simple facts or episodes and unlocks deeper meanings in them though he occasionally fails to grasp



GANDHI (middle) at Tolstoy view of self-sustaining ashrams in India

their subtleties. He is shown to have ample influence on the vegetarian movement in Britain, but through his indigenous inclusion of Jain ingredients, somewhat undervalued (though referred to on pages 26, 50-51), is an error in using the background.

Nonetheless, the book presented an evolutionary history of Gandhi's diet. The book is shown to perceive a kind of violence in the pursuit of agricultural consumption (pages 95-96).

It may be seen as the earliest exponent we call "deep mentalism" today.

The chapter "Natural Medicine" tallies Gandhi's perception

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AFP/SOTHEBY'S

MAHATMA (middle row, fourth from left) and his close friend Hermann Kallenbach (next to him) at Tolstoy Farm, Transvaal, South Africa, in 1910. Gandhi had conjured up a romantic view of self-sustained village life. He tried to recreate it, first at Tolstoy Farm and later at his ashrams in India.

their subtleties. Gandhi is shown to have imbibed ample influences from the vegetarian movement in Britain, but the impact of his indigenous culture, including Jain influences, is somewhat underestimated (though referred to on pages 26, 50-51). Maybe it is an error in understanding the background.

Nonetheless, Slate has presented an excellent history of Gandhi's dietary evolution. The Mahatma is shown to perceive some kind of violence even in the pursuit of agriculture and consumption of fruits (pages 95-96). In that, he may be seen as one of the earliest exponents of what we call "deep environmentalism" today.

The chapter "Natural Medicine" talks about Gandhi's perception of

food as a preventive agent against illness. For this and to mitigate widespread starvation, he researched and experimented with numerous ingredients, developed new recipes and even offered them to celebrities such as the American activist Margret Sanger (pages 113-18).

HEALING PRACTICES

He also scrutinised all forms of healing practices—Ayurveda, Unani, naturopathy and allopathy. He criticised the traditional schools for the tall claims they made without evidence. He opposed modern medicine but praised its practitioners for not shying away from learning from others and for owning up to their mistakes. By the mid

1930s, Gandhi was undergoing significant changes in his attitude towards Western medicine and modern science essentially because of their emphasis on evidence, data and experimentation (pages 111-12). While he learned from all traditions, he praised "evidence-based medicine" rooted in nature and diet (page 101).

Gandhi's interest in food led him to look at farming and agriculture, where he was confronted with a variety of problems. Malnutrition and starvation introduced him to famine and unequal land distribution and, finally, to the role of colonialism in the matter. Gandhi had conjured up a romantic view of self-sustained village life. He tried to recreate it first in South Africa

at his Tolstoy Farm and later at his ashrams in India. But his stint in rural India revealed the harsh realities—poverty, starvation, malnutrition and insanitary conditions.

Therefore, he stepped up his efforts to alleviate the situation. He prioritised innovation in diet. He experimented himself and consulted with experts in the field, such as Wallace Ruddell Aykroyd, director of nutrition research in India. When the All India Village Industries Association was founded in 1934 to promote rural uplift, Gandhi brought on its board the noted expert Robert McCarrison, Director of the Nutritional Research Laboratories, Coonoor (pages 90-91, 135-36). Thus, "Gandhi developed an ecological diet that respected the many connections between his food and his physical, social, and political environments. He re-

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THE HINDU ARCHIVES

MAHATMA GANDHI, with a six-year-old Indira Priyadarshini, during his 21-day fast in 1924 in Delhi for communal amity.

efined nutrition in a way to build a more just world” (page 4).

Initially, Gandhi considered the measures the colonial authorities took during famines to be philanthropic. But once he realised the complexity of the problem, he traced the genesis of famine to colonialism. Thus, food became a tool of his opposition to the Raj. The starvation during the Bengal famine of 1943 laid bare the realities. Unequal land distribution was a major contributory factor but was tricky to deal with because many of the big landlords were members of the Congress. So, while Gandhi did not give up the issue altogether, he chose to appeal to the rich to address it on moral grounds; however, he himself stepped up initiatives on the issue in many ways. He had already been employing fasting as a method to achieve his political, social and ethical goals; over time, he used it also at the level of spirituality (Chapters 6 and 7.)

Slate concludes with an intricate discussion on Gandhi—the man and the Mahatma—torn between

worldly desires and spirituality. The author inquires into Gandhi’s psyche and philosophy, illustrating his points with examples such as Gandhi’s love for mangoes and his fond relations with Sarla Devi Chaudhurani, a Bengali feminist who at the time was working for women’s empowerment.

A little baffled, Slate, a historian, calls on experts from other disciplines to resolve the puzzle that goes beyond both diet and science (pages 162-69).

Slate is no doubt impressed by the Mahatma, and the epilogue is in part a tribute. He happily notes that many key elements of Gandhi’s diet (raw, vegetarian and fasting) are undergoing a “renaissance” and there is a movement afoot “to link food to the social and economic empowerment of the poor and to the health of the planet”.

The book depicts Gandhi’s obsession with food—which resembles a phenomenon medically known as the eating disorder anorexia (page 8)—in numerous instances. But one must not forget that Gandhi was almost

equally obsessed with everything he decided to work at, be it the freedom movement, the practice of ahimsa, sanitation, communalism or the *charkha* and khadi. He had the stamina and capacity to work on many things at the same time and still maintain his composure. His daily routine was packed with engagements, yet he never lost sight of his concerns relating to freedom for his countrymen and for humanity from subjugation, exploitation and poverty and the welfare of all species. This was apparent also from his diet. His constant interest in experimenting and innovations in diet as a means to good health were ultimately aimed at many of his life goals. He kept ethics and the socio-economic considerations of the country always at the forefront, Slate demonstrates.

There are many things one can learn from Gandhi’s experiments. The present-day agencies dedicated to food and nutrition in India may learn valuable lessons for research and food and agricultural practices. Gandhi’s approach in re-

gards to calories, nutrition, suitability and economic viability for people employed in different sectors, particularly those involved in hard labour, deserves attention. Was Gandhi a faddist or futuristic? Most of his dietary fads have been favourably validated by science now. Additionally, his approach and preferences (as the one for raw food) are not only feasible for everyone but also reduce energy consumption and may increase economic productivity and reduce health care expenses.

Similar innovations by Gandhi may be adopted to develop healthy and affordable food for public food outlets in places such as railway stations, government canteens and university campuses.

The author’s use of the obscurest of sources is amazing. He elaborates on his theme with current information and perspectives (pages 50, 61, 98 and 117). Yet it is welcome as it helps the reader understand the issues properly. However, the repeated use of quotation marks reduces readability; plain text with occasional footnotes would have been better. The book is an excellent example of interdisciplinary and micro research. It is well produced, and its bibliography and notes will be helpful for further research.

The simplicity and novelty of “Recipes from Gandhi’s Diet” make one feel like joining the Mahatma at mealtime. The narrative is engaging, and the book is sure to be a trendsetter. □

J.N. Sinha was an associate professor of history at the University of Delhi.

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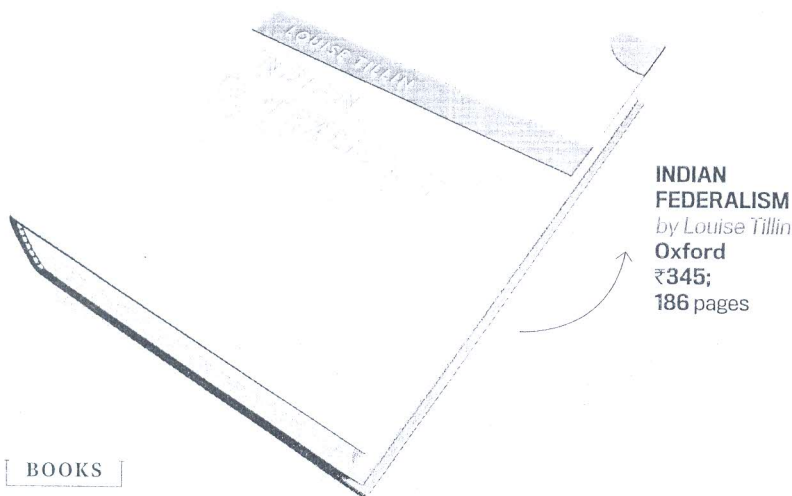
BY SANJU

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**INDIAN
FEDERALISM**
by Louise Tillin
Oxford
₹345;
186 pages

BOOKS

FEDERAL EXPRESS

By Gilles Verniers

The BJP's rise to power and the consolidation of its dominance, both at the national and regional levels, mark a profound departure from a decades-long process of political decentralisation in India. Since 2014, the central government has asserted its pre-eminence over states in multiple instances, such as demonetisation, the introduction of GST and the early dissolution of the Planning Commission of India. The recent bifurcation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and the demotion of the two new entities to the status of Union territory is yet another manifestation of the Centre's predilection for a unilateral top-down approach to decision-making that does away with the necessity of discussing or negotiating such consequential decisions. In this backdrop, Louise Tillin's *Indian Federalism*, part of the most-useful Oxford Short Introduction series, provides a timely context to the debate on political centralisation in India.

In four chapters, Tillin covers key aspects of federalism in India. Chapter one covers the origins of India's federal model, rooted in the aftermath of Partition. The Constituent Assembly, anxious to build a system capable of preserving India's newfound unity, designed a 'cooperative' model of federalism based

on the idea of interdependence between the Centre and the states, albeit skewed towards the former. Tillin describes a unique system that is strongly centralised by design, but not rigid to the point of cracking under regional pressures. The argument is that the pre-eminence given to the Centre vis-à-vis the states has historically enabled it to introduce major institutional reforms with greater ease than a more conventional interlocked model of federalism would have allowed for. These landmark reforms, such as the creation of new states or the drawing of linguistic boundaries, have always been initiated by the Centre on its own terms and on its own calendar.

Chapter two deals with the question of diversity and is another illustration of the inbuilt flexibility of India's central-

**Our social, political
and economic
challenges, the
book argues, need
a Centre-states
collaboration rather
than centralisation**

ised model of federalism. The strong prerogatives of the Centre have enabled it to accommodate various forms of social and political identities over time, although with significant limitations, such as in Jammu and Kashmir and parts of the Northeast, where adhesion to the Union had to be secured by coercion rather than by persuasion.

Chapters three and four detail how India's federal system has evolved under pressures from political and economic change. Successive transformations of the party system—from one-party dominance under Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi to a phase of alternation in the 1980s and the subsequent fragmentation of the political landscape from the 1990s—have pushed India towards decentralisation, a movement compounded by the gradual opening up of the economy, which also encouraged competition between states.

Tillin argues that over time, India's federal system has proven to be compatible not only with various configurations of party systems but also with contrasting forms of exercise of power, which oscillate between centralisation and cooperation. The original design has proven to be remarkably resilient as well as flexible, stabilising India's tumultuous tryst with democratic politics.

The book's conclusion, however, leaves the reader wishing for greater elaboration on today's situation. The author hints that the success of India's responses to its current social, political and economic challenges will depend on the ability of the Centre and the states to collaborate and learn from each other, rather than in the current unitary, imaginary and centralising tendencies of today's BJP. The book falls short of substantiating this view.

Indian Federalism is a remarkably clear and well-written account of India's unique model of federalism and a fitting tribute to the imagination of its makers. Students, scholars and citizens alike will find it both useful and enlightening. ■

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Reviews

A Handbook for Exploratory Action Research

R. Smith and P. Rebolledo

British Council 2018, 108 pp., freely available from bit.ly/handbook-EAR

ISBN 978 0 86355 885 6

The relationship between research, researchers, and teachers is a complex one. It is normally acknowledged that teachers do not read research articles on a regular basis, only few carry out any research, and an even smaller number publish their findings. Not reading research is less of a problem if we assume that SLA research is mostly irrelevant for language teachers (Medgyes 2017). It is more of a concern if we assume that, just as general practitioners need to keep up with medical research, teachers should be aware of the latest developments in L2 acquisition (Paran 2017). In the latter case, however, we face the problem of lack of time and financial resources for access. When it comes to conducting research and then publishing it, the hurdles for ordinary non-native speaker English teachers (the majority in the profession) are almost insurmountable. As for teacher-research, not that many years ago, Ur (2013) emphasized that teachers are too busy preparing for and giving lessons and cannot research or publish because these activities are usually not perceived as part of their job. Throw into the mix the ambitious ministry directives for continuing professional development for recertification and the requirement (at least at tertiary level) to publish research-based articles (preferably, in journals indexed by prestigious abstract and citation databases such as Scopus), and you end up with serious research and academic writing anxiety.

Unquestionably, there is an emerging trend that focuses strongly on channelling research activity towards 'evidence-based second language pedagogy' (e.g. Sato and Loewen 2019) and makes a strenuous effort to promote the transfer of SLA findings to the classroom. There also seems to be a renewed impetus

for classroom practitioners to conduct systematic inquiry and, as a result, the body of teacher-research is growing. This is exactly what Medgyes (2017: 491) calls for when he urges the profession 'to accord more prominence to the "teacher-inquirer", who is a professional capable of analysing their work on their own and exchanging their knowledge and experience with fellow teachers.' In this vein, British Council projects in Chile, India, Nepal, and Peru have produced several freely downloadable publications and a wealth of online video materials (Smith, Connelly, and Rebolledo 2014; Smith 2015; Rebolledo, Smith, and Bullock 2016) on how the challenges associated with difficult circumstances and low resources can become the focus of an exploratory journey. At a later stage, these inquiries can lead to action research whose findings are just as credible in their given context as the hard-to-access, too-complex-to-understand research results presented by SLA academics. The present volume is the most recent expression of this trend.

The Introduction sets out the aims of the publication in clear terms: it is a practical guide written in an easy-to-understand manner providing direction for teachers who wish to conduct classroom research both for their own professional development and to study their students' progress. The authors underline that exploratory action research should not add to teachers' already existing burdens, but 'can in itself be an *effective way to address and cope with difficult circumstances*' (p. 4, original emphasis). In my opinion, the volume satisfies these criteria by not *talking about* exploratory action research, but providing all the required support to teachers to facilitate *carrying out* such research by offering a clear, step-by-step 'instructions for use' manual supplying a variety of tools that I will focus on in my review. In this sense, it is different from other volumes (guides) that have been widely used in pre-service and MA in Applied Linguistics courses (e.g. Wallace 1998; Burns 1999, 2010).

The book can be neatly divided into three units of three chapters each (with Chapter 10 containing extra

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material and the answer key to the tasks set for the teachers progressing through the steps of exploratory action research). The first section (Chapters 1–3) discusses the foundations of the book, which are perceived as the teachers, their learners, and the teachers' experiences and capabilities, and elaborates on the concepts of teacher-research and Exploratory Action Research. Building on the Chilean Champion Teachers project, the book starts by encouraging readers to try out a self-diagnosis exercise that helps teachers identify their competencies with regard to exploratory action research (pp. 6–7), thereby introducing a simple, easy-to-manage research instrument 'by stealth' from the word go. The teacher stories in the following sections—describing both successful and less positive experiences—highlight the need to obtain more information (through self-reflection, by asking colleagues and students) in order to help us read and interpret the signs we see, hear, and feel. This process goes beyond reflection: it requires research in the sense of collecting a lot of good information (which is how the concept of data is introduced). It needs to be reiterated that real examples are used throughout the book; these are taken from the companion volume already referred to (Rebolledo et al. 2016) and provide narratives that are both appealing and stimulating in their own right. Not only do they help move the stages of exploratory action research forward, but these first-hand accounts also represent 'a new genre of reporting' (Burns 2014: 5), namely, story-telling that teachers can relate to.

The section on demystifying research in Chapter 2 provides further encouragement to budding teacher-researchers: research does not necessarily involve lots of reading and neither does it require writing a paper. However, it requires questions, a systematic collection of data, an analysis of the data, and answers to the research questions. Chapter 3 underlines the importance of the exploratory phase of research and why teachers need to resist the urge to act quickly and apply an intervention before understanding the underlying causes of what they find puzzling or challenging. The exploratory phase can be followed by action (as the staircase diagram on p. 25 represents), whereby exploratory research is followed by action research, leading teacher-researchers upwards one step at a time.

Chapters 4–6 look at how to design appropriate questions and explore the issue by collecting and combining information from different sources (the authors do not shy away from using key research concepts such as 'triangulation'). Due attention is given to narrowing down the research focus by using a checklist to decide if the topic we wish to explore

is manageable, urgent, significant, and engaging. Adding to the wealth of useful instruments, a tool helps us to decide if our questions are SMART (study-oriented, measurable, accurate, realistic, and topic-focused). A further section describes the sources of information, including academic research, under the title 'Other people's written ideas on the topic'. Importantly, proving that exploratory action research need not imply an undue burden on teachers when they are clarifying or narrowing down their topics, most of the sources of information are deeply rooted in teachers' everyday practice, from their own written reflections through to reflective writing by students, and to lesson plans. Focus group discussions (inviting students, other teachers, and parents) are deemed to be a valuable source of information, often leading to a higher degree of engagement from these stakeholders. By this stage the teacher-researcher might feel that they have far too many options available to them, so the handbook presents a useful checklist for data collection as well as a simple template for setting up a realistic timeline. Chapter 6 helps readers grasp the concept of how data combined with analysis lead to findings, and provides a beginner's guide to coding for the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data. Simple bar, line, and pie charts draw attention to the power of visual representation, leading up to the succeeding chapters that describe the way the results might encourage teachers to take the next step and start action research.

Chapters 7–9 provide the tools to help decide what change teachers may wish to achieve, since this will define the action itself. The teaching ideas translated into classroom changes may come from our students, conversations with other teachers, training manuals, conferences, academic research, etc. The pieces of advice provided in Chapter 7 are both sensible and helpful, especially the one highlighting that an action perceived as bringing about negative effects might have to be stopped before it has run its full course. The authors emphasize that reflection on why the decision to stop was taken is crucial and can lead to modified action and another try. Interpreting the data collected during and after the implementation of the change is similar to how the information gathered in the exploratory phase took place; the process may generate recommendations—a step that leads on to how we can share our findings.

Since sharing one's research findings is commonly associated with publishing, it is important to consider the variety of the bottom-up options offered by the book as to how the results can be publicized/disseminated. Starting from short presentations given to colleagues, through to regional workshops

and (international) conferences, every stage assumes a more polished presentation given to growing audiences. One of the suggested methods, namely giving a poster presentation, is not only a simple but also a delightfully creative tool. The oral presentation that describes what is displayed in the poster can lead rather smoothly to a written report that can be later shared 'in a blog, a newsletter, or even in a Facebook group or on your own webpage' (p. 86). This is already a step towards joining wider communities such as IATEFL, TESOL, and the Teachers Research! Facebook group. Chapter 9 then brings the book full circle: it asks the readers to fill out the same competencies table that they had filled in months before so that they can see the improvement and the opportunities for further development.

The handbook, which can be covered individually but probably works better when used with colleagues, champion teachers, or mentors, is a crucial asset for teachers in many parts of the world where the norm is large classes and low-resource environments. It provides both the rationale and the stepping stones to teacher-research, broken down to chunk-sized, easy-to-follow tasks with meticulously clear and foolproof instructions in a user-friendly, yet precise language. It is far from prescriptive and focuses on teachers' creativity and reflective capacity, encouraging them to build on what is available: their own strengths, their students' potential engagement, and their colleagues' camaraderie. As for the validity and generalizability of this kind of teacher-research, one could argue that the hundreds of teachers who have taken part in the workshops introducing them to exploratory action research may have come up with findings that are more easily transferable to similar contexts than the SLA research results that can be hard to access and digest. This is not to say that exploratory action research is a panacea. However, the approach, which is presented in a well-structured and truly bottom-up manner in this volume, can provide an opportunity for large sections of the language teaching community to set out on a journey that is not only valuable, but pleasurable as well.

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The reviewer

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TOWARDS INCLUSION OF ALL LEARNERS THROUGH SCIENCE
TEACHER EDUCATION

M. Koomen | S. Kahn | C. L. Atchison | T.A. Wild (Eds.)

2018 Brill Sense Boston, MA. 384 pages. ISBN: 978-90-04-36842-2

Towards Inclusion of All Learners Through Science Teacher Education is an edited book focused on science teacher education as the key to promoting inclusive science teaching practice (Koomen, Kahn, Atchison, & Wild, 2018). As I reviewed the text, I was reminded of the reflections of two recent students in my course on disability required of all preservice educators. One future science teacher wrote to me of his honest surprise that he would have students with disabilities in his classes; this was a true revelation to him—something that had never occurred to him as likely to be part of the role. The second reflected that before the course she had assumed that the most effective, most just approach to supporting students with disabilities was to provide specialized instruction in schools designed for their needs. Teacher education programs provide the venue for supporting these students in their journey toward inclusive practice and this needed text provides science teacher educators with rich insights on how to support them along the way.

Converging forces in the educational landscape make inclusive practice in science education a timely, essential topic for science teacher educators. From the science education perspective, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and accompanying reforms emphasize the need to support all learners, including those who have not typically been well served in science education. From the inclusive education perspective, the majority of students identified as having disabilities participate in general education classes for most of the school day (McFarland et al., 2018) and must be provided with effective access to their rigorous and rich curricula. Faced with these expectations, general education teachers overwhelmingly report feeling unprepared to effectively teach all learners (Kahn & Lewis, 2014). Science teacher educators may experience similar anxiety about how to foster inclusive practice among their future teachers.

The editors of *Towards Inclusion* bring together a diverse set of perspectives and examples to support teacher educators in addressing these trends. Anchored in a Disability Studies in Education (DSE) perspective in which disability reflects natural human variation rather than deficit, the goal of the volume is to “focus on the ability and strength of all students,” (p. xi), paralleling similar efforts in multicultural education. With sections sharing first-person perspectives of students with disabilities, models of inclusive science education, approaches to specific aspects of science learning (e.g., developing disciplinary core ideas, science practice, science literacy), assessment, advocacy, and science teacher education, chapters include both original research and practical case studies. The text will likely be useful both to current and future teacher educators and to those conducting science education research. It provides rich opportunities to consider how perspectives on inclusive education and disability might broaden one’s lens in either role.

Two key levers arise repeatedly throughout *Towards Inclusion* as promising targets for science teacher educators and researchers seeking to more effectively attend to goals of inclusive education: Educator dispositions and inclusive instructional design. Both levers naturally align with other equity-focused frameworks that may be more familiar, and they reflect the expectations for success for all in the NGSS, making them relevant to all science teacher education programs.

Science teacher educators have the opportunity to instill in preservice teachers *dispositions* toward high expectations for and engaged listening to all learners; these dispositions are key to meeting the possibilities afforded by inclusive education. Boda’s chapter makes particularly effective connections between the DSE

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perspective and multicultural education, with both narratives and stances pushing against deficit assumptions. He emphasizes the use of teacher metacognition to actively work against the risk of "included exclusion" (p. 305) in which students with disabilities may appear to be fully participating but continue to view themselves as unable. Students with disabilities are not consistently mentioned in equity-focused science teacher education efforts despite clear indications of the tendency for students so identified to experience a lack of belonging even when physically present in the classroom. As Johnson summarizes in her chapter reporting on a study of science class experiences of students with visual impairments, all reported a feeling of being unwanted and a common "desire to be treated as a valuable asset to the classroom rather than a drain on resources, or a burden" (p. 7).

Future teachers can be supported in moving away from this deficit orientation through purposeful attention to it. Asking them to read and reflect on the early chapters in which students with disabilities share their experiences would be a useful first step. In the concluding chapter for this first section, editor Wild aptly notes that the experiences described by students with disabilities emphasize not particular strategies for access but "making sure that each student was a fully included member in the classroom" (p. 69). Her summary provides several brief concrete tips for how to achieve this goal.

The power of this work on dispositions is not to be underestimated in science teacher education or in research about science education. With other typically marginalized groups, this sense of belonging in the educational space meaningfully shapes decisions about whether science is a viable and desirable academic and career interest (Wang & Degol, 2013); there is little reason to think that students with disabilities would differ in this regard. Focusing on affective and motivational experiences of students with disabilities might broaden the perspective of ongoing equity-focused research. The second section of the text, and particularly editor Kahn's vision for inclusive science education, will be useful in my own research investigating the science-focused motivational beliefs of adolescents with learning disabilities; other researchers may find this section a fruitful source of new ideas about diversity and dispositions.

High expectations for and engaged listening to all students will be ineffective without also attending to the second lever through which science teacher educators can have a particular impact: Supporting *instructional design* that addresses learner variability from the start. In many chapters, the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework is the central approach to inclusive curricula. UDL provides an accessible entry point to considering the inclusive design of science instruction because it does not require specialized knowledge of particular impairments. As described particularly well in chapters about crosscutting concepts (Hebert et al.), an ecology-focused informal science learning experience (Huffling et al.) and scaffolding scientific inquiry (Israel et al.), the framework instead focuses on three dimensions along which all learners vary: the affective dimension (what motivates and engages), the recognition dimension (how one takes in and understands information), and the strategic dimension (how one acts on and expresses understanding). This variability often reaches the level of disability in typical learning settings, but when science educators design learning environments with options that address variability, conditions are not inherently disabling.

Huffling and colleagues provide a particularly compelling demonstration of UDL in action and they honestly and helpfully describe the evolution of their curriculum from what they thought was inclusive to a more universally designed approach. This team revised their informal science learning curriculum so that students with hearing impairments could more fully participate. One example of the UDL principle of providing multiple means of representation to address variability in recognition (as especially important when considering students who are Deaf/hard-of-hearing) was the team's creativity in how to improve the inclusivity of activities using the identification of frogs via their calls. Inspired by the unique needs of a particular group of students, the team began providing sonograms and radiotelemetry on portable devices. Critically, the designers did not then designate this technology as available only to students with identified hearing impairments; instead, they made it available to all and found that many students benefited. Like universal design in the built environment—through which a curb cut in the sidewalk benefits people using strollers, skateboards, and rolling suitcases in addition to people using wheelchairs—building options into the learning environment can provide benefits to all in sometimes-unexpected ways.

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The contribution by Israel and colleagues about scaffolding science inquiry describes a critical intersection between dispositions and instructional design. The authors skillfully address a thorny puzzle in inclusive science teaching that often leads to a well-intentioned but problematic approach. Self-directed, inquiry-based experiences are essential to modern methods in science teaching, and yet these experiences may be particularly challenging for students with various types of disabilities. Because of this likelihood of students experiencing difficulty when not provided sufficient structure, students with disabilities are often provided with less autonomy and fewer opportunities to pursue their own investigations. Israel and colleagues provide a helpful framework and practical examples of how science teachers might support the transition from teacher-led to student-directed learning while both providing effective scaffolding and maintaining high expectations of competence in inquiry-based learning.

These practice- and curriculum-focused chapters will be useful as background material for teacher educators and perhaps as assignments in preservice teacher education courses to illustrate inclusive practice. They might additionally serve as sources of idea generation for researchers focused on teaching and learning. The concrete challenges described in relation to inclusive practice and the creative solutions used to address them demonstrate in accessible ways how classroom teachers, university faculty, and researchers might evaluate and improve instructional practice to more effectively support all learners.

Alongside these strong examples of inclusive practice are chapters that focus on specialized instructional approaches designed for populations of students with particular disabilities. The editors suggest in their introduction that this mix is intentional and that DSE-framed and specialized approaches "must be able to coexist" (p. xv). This is an admirable ideal that is remarkably difficult to put into practice. Examples of the merging of these approaches might be emphasized more strongly in *Towards Inclusion*, which instead presents chapters either addressing inclusive practice (primarily through UDL) or specialized instruction. This consistent separation risks inspiring the potentially stigmatizing practice that appears often in classrooms attempting to be more inclusive: Providing an alternative that is designed specifically for and provided only to certain students. When done ineffectively, this can unintentionally cause stigmatization, separation, and changing of expectations for certain class members.

Overall, this text provides a collection of perspectives and examples that address a critical gap in science teacher education and will likely also be of value to many science education researchers. As science education addresses equity across all dimensions of human variability, this is an important contribution to ensuring disability plays a role in the conversation.

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Book Review

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Sarbeshwar Sahoo, *Pentecostalism and Politics of Conversion in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 205, \$99.9 (hardback). ISBN: 978-1-108-41612-2.

Religious change and transformations in societies have been long-standing concerns of sociology ever since the emergence of the discipline. Religious conversion and subsequent sociocultural transformations have elicited scholarly attention in the sub-discipline of sociology of religious conversion especially during the second half of the twentieth century. However, as rightly observed in the 'Foreword' to the book by Professor Hans Joas, sociological attention to the global rise of Pentecostal Christianity is sparse. Such a gap in the context of Indian subcontinent which is experiencing high politicization of religion in the twenty-first century has been attempted to be filled, rather successfully, by the volume under review.

An attempt to review this book is challenging, for it has already been commended by four eminent sociologists of religion whose praises appear in the back cover of the book. The book contains an appreciative and critical foreword by Professor Hans Joas, Ernst Troeltsch Professor for the Sociology of Religion, Humboldt University of Berlin. Professor Hans Joas' concluding comments in the foreword are important to grasp the substantive contribution of the book. He commented that 'The author does not turn the one-sidedness of a materialist reductionism into a cultural reductionism... [The book] is exemplary in its achievements'. Professor Bryan S. Turner considers the book as 'A major contribution to both the study of modern India and sociology of religion'. *Political sociologically, when the nation-state is experiencing the re-implantation of Hindu-nationalistic politics in contemporary times, Sarbeshwar Sahoo's political sociological examination of anti-Christian violence helps us to understand the nature and course of social processes relating to the spread of Pentecostalism in India.*

The book is the result of Sarbeshwar Sahoo's longitudinal engagement with the field for almost a decade since 2006–2007. His sensitivity to conversion and violence emerged during his initial examination of the interface between three ideologically and politically different non-governmental organizations in the tribal-dominated Udaipur district of Rajasthan and their engagement with developmental practices. In the course of his field investigations for doctoral studies in the tribal villages of Jhadol and Kotra *tehsils*, Sarbeshwar Sahoo had noticed the prevalence of violence against the Christian missionaries and the Christian tribal population. The survey of literature made him realize the absence of scholarly attention to Hindu-Christian violence in the Indian subcontinent at large. In the introduction to the book, conceptual and methodological underpinnings of the work are articulated. The study is the result of ethnographic field research.

The growth and implications of Pentecostalism in the Rajput Hindu(tva) ideology-dominated Rajasthan have been elaborately discussed in the second chapter. Drawing on ethnographic field data, the third chapter examines multiple narratives on religious conversion. The chapter points to the multidimensionality of

conversion as a social process in tribal India. An intriguing issue of why many women are drawn towards Christianity has been examined in the fourth chapter. The chapter five highlights the reasons for violence against Christians. It recognizes economic backwardness and contested cultural identity of tribals and competing projects of conversion adopted by the missionaries and the responses of the Hindu nationalists as the sociopolitical reasons.

The book is useful for those who are interested in knowing the nature of and reasons for growing incidents of anti-Christian violence in India during the last two decades. It will be an insightful reading to those interested in Sociology of religious conversions and religion-related violence and suffering. It is written in a lucid language, and arguments have been presented cogently. I recommend it as a must reading for researchers on sociology of religious conversion. At the same time, it is of intellectual use to students of political sociology and sociology of religion in India.

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Rule of the majority

A volume that attempts to explain why and how the Hindutva project of creating a majoritarian state took off in 2014. BY **SHAIKH MUJIBUR REHMAN**

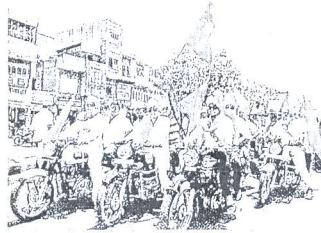
WITH no disrespect, it could be argued that the belief that mere endorsement of a great Constitution would ensure India's unshaken commitment to a pluralist polity was perhaps the most naive assumption of our founding fathers. What many wise people could not foresee was that an internal ideological threat could unsettle the very political processes and bundle of rights on which a pluralist polity is based and that the existence of a great Constitution would do very little to arrest this decline or transformation.

After the abrogation of the Article 370, particularly the manner in which it was done—accompanied by a lockdown in Jammu and Kashmir and the arrest of political leaders of all levels—no one should have any doubt that a majoritarian state has arrived with all its arms ready to respond to the diktats of the governing elite. This volume is an attempt to explain why and how it happened in 2014, and what shape it might take in future. In this volume, accomplished scholars drawn from disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology and political science demonstrate how interdisciplinary

Angana P. Chatterjee, Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (eds)

Majoritarian State

How Hindu Nationalism is Changing India



**Majoritarian State
How Hindu
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Edited by
Angana P.
Chatterjee,
Thomas Blom
Hansen and
Christophe
Jaffrelot

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2019

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scholarship can be put to good use in the scrutiny of the Indian state and its democratic traditions.

In the introduction, the three editors, who are among the finest names in South Asian studies globally today, present deep insights into the changing nature of the Indian state, especially its particularistic characteristics turning towards majoritarianism. The Narendra Modi regime, they recognise, has four particular features similar to what is seen elsewhere, say Donald Trump's America: majoritarianism, populism, nationalism and authoritarianism. These scholars further claim two additional elements about the Modi regime: its corporate and upper-caste bias, and the normalisation of anti-Muslim/minority rhetoric in public and political discourses.

By bringing these characteristics together, the Indian state has acquired a majoritarian outlook not by chance or coincidence but by deliberate choices and preferences made by Hindutva elites. While much of Modi's attributes parallel those of strongmen in politics elsewhere in the world, the rise of the Hindu Right marks a historically complex ideological evolution for India. Like most populist leaders, Modi is a

gifted communicator and he plays upon nationalistic sensitivities. As a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) and

having served as a full-time pracharak, he remains a steadfast champion of the Hindutva ideology, though with considerable sophistication. As I have argued in my book *Rise of Saffron Power* (Routledge 2018), Modi happens to be the first Hindu Right leader who has understood that Hindutva can be a backdoor agenda, and hence his slogan *Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas*. It is now apparent even to his loyalists that the slogan is a key element in anchoring the Hindutva agenda.

The editors identify four factors to explain the 2014 electoral success: anti-incumbency against the Manmohan Singh-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime (2009-14); voter alienation from the corruption-tainted UPA II regime; the perception that the UPA regime was directionless; and Rahul Gandhi's failure to measure up as an alternative to Modi. The BJP, they conclude, won by default in 2014. Voters also opted for Modi because he presented himself as a "development man", *vikas purush*. The volume has a few innovative chapters that would appear unconventional in an academic publication. For instance, it has a chapter titled "Rohith Vemula's Revolutionary Suicide" by Abdul R. Jan Mahmmed and another titled "Kashmiris in the Hindu Rashtra" by Mridu Rai.

Christophe Jaffrelot has contributed a theoretically sophisticated chapter in which he argues that India is fast becoming a *de facto* "ethnic demo-



LINGARAJ PANDE

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Das Gupta is an professor of dian history at va University

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cracy". The notion of "ethnic democracy" was originally employed by Sammy Smooha. Jaffrelot explains that an ethnic democracy generally possesses two levels of citizenship, with the majority enjoying more rights than the minority, both *de jure* and *de facto*. Jews in Israel have more rights because the Jewish state officially recognises their rights as opposed to those of non-Jewish Israelis.

Jaffrelot argues that given the fact that the 1950 Constitution continues to be part of India's political life, the *de jure* aspect of ethnic democracy is absent but the *de facto* part is omnipresent owing to radically declining representations of religious minorities (Muslims in this case) in State Assemblies and the role that vigilante militias play with the patronage of the law enforcement agencies. The chapter shares data on various types of underrepresentation of Muslims; shows how vigilante groups are acting as state actors, and how even the RSS, a so-called cultural organisation, works more as a vigilante group.

In a conclave in September in 2018, RSS sarsangchalak Mohan Bhagwat did share his concern about these vigilante groups. He noted that Muslims had a place in Hindutva but did not specify what the community's place was in society. Jaffrelot's narrative indicates a clear move towards the downgrading of the rights of Muslims in India under the BJP's rule.

The Hindutva experiment has been going for a very long time in Uttar

Pradesh. Any political party or political leader who aspires to rule India, it is said, has to win Uttar Pradesh. Even Modi is aware of this, and this is why he shifted his electoral base from Gujarat to Varanasi. Ayodhya, perceived as the birthplace of Ram, is also located in this State. Angana Chatterji has examined the process of the making of a Hindu nation by investigating the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riot. Sixty-three people died and 93 were injured in the violence. Women were gang-raped, and close to 50,000 people were displaced. Her paper, written before results of the 2019 parliamentary election were known, offers interesting insights into how the Hindu Right operates. She has expressed concerns regarding the possibility of a Hindu nation.

TECTONIC SHIFT

James Manor examines the sustainability of the Hindutva project. Between 2014 and 2019, Modi's achievements have been rather limited and even disappointing. Yet, Modi returned to power with an even greater mandate than the one in 2014, which raises doubts about Manor's reasoning. He is perhaps hesitant to recognise that a tectonic shift has taken place in India's electoral landscape, creating new patterns and invalidating safe formulations about anti-incumbency. Political scientists should jettison the old approach to make sense of the new patterns and examine the psychology of voting.

Any ideological movement has a special relation-

ship with interpretations of history. The Hindu Right is keen to pursue a particular interpretation of history in order to undercut narratives that legitimise a secular or pluralistic polity. The strategy of rewriting history is a prerequisite because the Hindu Right believes that its ideological agenda can take an enduring shape only in the context of an interpretation of history that presents Hindus as victims and Muslims as aggressors.

According to the noted historian Tanika Sarkar: "RSS history is driven by political needs, popular beliefs, and myths and construction of memory work" (page 172). The role of a massive right-wing cadre to teach history, more as propaganda, has contributed to the erosion of the influence of India's mainstream Left or secular historiography. This seems to be the natural development in an ideological power struggle. Tanika Sarkar recognises that secular histories, though written by the best minds, are written in isolation from local sociocultural processes. She makes an important point about Hindutva votaries' engagement with Ambedkar, arguing that Hindutva cannot make a serious critical engagement with caste. What she does not take note of is that the Hindu Right's engagement with Ambedkar is driven with a desire to saffronise Ambedkar. The efforts in this direction are already seen in various educational programs and institutions in regions under the BJP's rule.

Thomas Blom Han-

sen's insightful essay draws attention to the shrinking space for intellectual freedom and threats to civil liberties and points out that the Modi government has been able to accomplish its majoritarian/authoritarian agenda without enacting new laws. Instead, it has simply used the existing laws that were promulgated by the Congress regimes, and many of these laws have colonial roots. He seems to argue that the so-called deepening of India's democracy has perpetuated the legitimate power of the majority without any the percolation of liberal democratic values. Scholars of Dalit politics who have been celebrating the deepening of democracy with Dalit empowerment have now realised that what is unfolding is the deepening of Hindutva.

The volume has 21 essays covering a wide range of themes. But the complexity of Indian politics is such that even these 21 essays appear inadequate to cover all the dimensions of Hindutva politics. Nandini Sunder has an interesting chapter on how the Hindu Right responds to Adivasis. "Immoral Times" by Ian M. Cook presents a fascinating portrait of the activities of the Hindu Jagarana Vedike, particularly of an assault it organised on July 28, 2012, in Mangaluru. Ratna Kapur explores the difficult puzzle of the Hindu nation and rule of law. □ *Shaikh Mujibur Rehman teaches at Jamia Millia Central University, New Delhi. He recently edited the book Rise of Saffron Power (Routledge, 2018).*

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A subaltern history

The book is the outcome of several decades of serious research and makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of the social history of Odisha.

BY SANJUKTA DAS GUPTA

THE book under review provides a historical analysis of the life experiences of the tribal people and Dalits of Odisha and revisits the contested terrain of middle-class politics and its interactions with socially excluded groups. It thus contributes to the broader problematic of how rural hierarchies were created and how they were continually challenged.

The theme of the book is discussed over six chapters, with the author, Biswamoy Pati, taking a long-term view spanning the precolonial, colonial and post-Independence regimes. The first chapter situates the context of the research and interrogates the invisibility of marginalised communities.

The second chapter analyses the nature of colonial intervention and the social fractures that colonial capitalism created. The third chapter focusses on the complex strategies of survival that evolved within tribal and “untouchable” communities and on confrontations and resistance that challenged

both the colonial and the Brahmanic hegemonic orders.

The two following chapters explore aspects of the lived experience of tribal people and “lower-caste” communities. Chapter Four highlights Adivasi traditions and customs concerning health and medicine and the emotive concerns that characterised the incidence of disease and epidemics in tribal localities.

It also discusses the “medical” gaze of colonialism, which operated to regulate and “sanitise” Indian society, thereby conditioning the perceptions of the

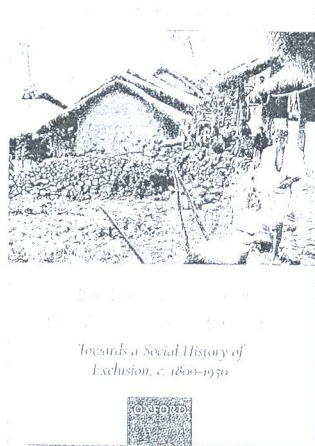
privileged classes. Chapter Five studies the diverse rituals involved in the acquisition and legitimisation of power within the caste hierarchy and underscores the subversive transgressions and the counter-rituals that arose in the popular sphere, with special reference to anti-Brahmanism, the Mahima movement and the national movement. The final chapter examines the State people’s movements in the princely state of Nilgiri between 1937 and 1948, underlining the role of the communists.

The book makes several important points. In the

first place, it argues that the impact of colonisation cannot be discussed in terms of a single narrative, given the wide geographical, cultural and social diversity of the region. The author points out the contradictions inherent within the colonial regime. This is seen, for example, in the contrasting processes of negotiations between colonial officials and the village leadership, on the one hand, and of the colonial “civilising mission” and the zeal to replace the traditional order with colonial modernity on the other.

Tracing the genealogy of the colonial construction of “tribe”, Pati points out the ambiguities and grey areas that existed between so-called tribes and the caste hierarchy. Furthermore, the author traces the continuities between colonial and post-colonial practices, drawing attention to the postcolonial “civilising mission”, and convincingly shows how contemporary concerns are mapped onto a non-existent and imagined past.

Another important contribution of the book lies in its emphasis on the interface between middle-class politics and the movements of socially excluded groups with the Kisan Sabha and the Praja Mandal movement. Challenging the assumptions of both right-wing and subaltern historiographies, the author highlights the linkages between these two domains and provides a new analytical framework to understand how the socially oppressed or ex-



Tribals and Dalits in Orissa

Towards a New Social History of Exclusion, c.1800-1950

By Biswamoy Pati
Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2019

Pages: 221
Price: Rs.945

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LINGARAJ PANDA

MEMBERS OF THE ODISHA DALIT ADMINISTRATION protesting in Bhubaneswar against atrocities against minority communities. A file photograph.

cluded sought to contest and alter the systems of middle-class control/ domination in different ways.

Perhaps the most novel proposition of the book is the author's thesis of reading survival strategies as resistance, provoking us to rethink the everyday patterns of Dalit and Adivasi confrontation of dominance and exploitation. Attempting to understand how the system of exclusion, discrimination and humiliation were rooted in and legitimised by the institution of caste, the author critically interrogates the internal order of exploitation. In doing so, he shows how lower caste/tribal resistance drew upon features of colonial modernity in order to delegitimise Brahminical Hinduism.

The author also specifies the inclusive character of such resistance, pointing to the linkages between lower-caste and tribal societies, a factor that is often overlooked in Adivasi histories.

Histories of the socially

marginalised are difficult to reconstruct since they only intermittently feature in mainstream archival

sources. The author has made skilful use of a variety of sources—both archival documents and

vernacular writings—in order to address colonial and postcolonial transitions. The book makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of the social history of Odisha. Written in lucid and readable prose and free of abstruse jargon, the book will be of interest to a wide readership.

It is tragic that Pati did not live to see the publication of this book, which was so dear to his heart. His earlier research into the world of the peasantry in Odisha encouraged him to undertake a detailed study of Dalits and Adivasis. A committed Marxist, Pati's theoretical leanings inspired him to look into the richness of peasant culture and the diversities that characterised peasant resilience against exploitative regimes.

The outcome of several decades of serious research, the book does not disappoint. □

Sanjukta Das Gupta is an associate professor of modern Indian history at the Sapienza University of Rome.



K.R. DEPAK

A MEMBER OF THE BONDA TRIBAL GROUP in her village in Malkangiri district of Odisha. A file photograph.

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BOOKS in review

House by the sea

A skilfully crafted book that paints a vivid portrait of the past as it unfolded in the life of the Governor's house in Tranquebar and its people. BY JOHN THOMAS

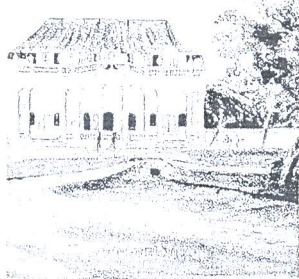
IN 2008, the Tamil Nadu Tourism Department and the Tranquebar Initiative of the National Museum of Denmark launched a joint project to restore a dilapidated and abandoned house in the erstwhile Tranquebar (now called Tharangampadi). Among other things, the house was once the official residence of the Danish Governor who administered Tranquebar. Given the growing scholarly interest in the history of Tranquebar and the plans of the Tourism Department to promote the town as a destination for heritage tourism, it was only befitting that the house was restored.

Meanwhile, a host of historians, architects, restorers and conservators who became involved in the project meticulously gathered and examined a variety of archival material so that the social and architectural history of the house could be traced and understood. This was significant as it not only determined the character and course of the restoration but also paved the way for putting together a skilfully crafted book that is lucid, imaginative and comprehensible to a wide audience.

THE GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE IN TRANQUEBAR

The House and the Daily Life of its People, 1730-1845

Edited by Esther Fihl



The Governor's Residence in Tranquebar

The House and the
Daily Life of its
People, 1770-1845

Edited by Esther Fihl
Museum
Tusculanum Press,
Copenhagen, 2017

Through a narrative interspersed with anecdotes, illustrations, maps, photographs and excerpts from archival materials, the book paints a vivid portrait of the past as it unfolded in the life of the Governor's house and its people. Written by historians, anthropologists, architects and restorers, the book has rich descriptions about the architectural splendour of the house, the material artefacts that adorned it, and the utilisation of space within it. It discusses the symbolic power and the official presence that the house had within the townscape of Tranquebar. It illustrates the people who lived in the house, visited it and worked in it and even pries into their private lives, in-

trigues, anxieties and longings. Acknowledging that restoration has, from the outset, been the "point of reference" for putting together the book, an entire chapter, towards the end, is devoted to narrating the painstaking process of restoration and its varied meanings.

Although the book may be taken for just another "coffee table book", it is far from one. It is a book designed to be read closely, not merely casually looked at or glanced through. It is rich in description and detail. The elaborate and colourful anecdotes, images, illustrations, maps, architectural plans and photographs that appear with the main text deserve to be read on their own terms. They interrupt the steady

flow of the main text but are integral to what the book is about and provide a much better understanding of the people, places and times that are being referred to.

NATURE OF CULTURAL ENCOUNTER

The larger theme underpinning the book is one of cultural encounter. Through the biography of the house, the book seeks to shed light on and comprehend the cultural encounter that occurred between Europeans and Indians in the late 18th and early 19th century (the years when the house was the Governor's official residence), albeit from the perspective of the Danish, who were minor players in the race for dominance over overseas trade in the region.

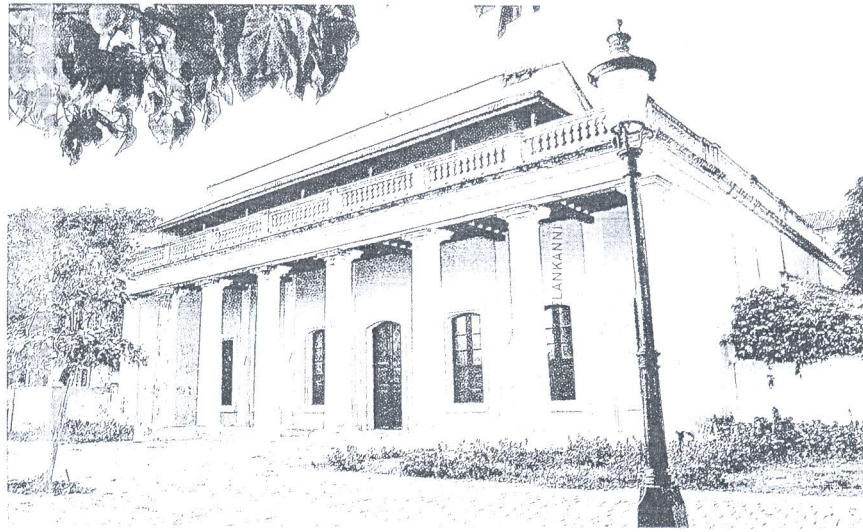
In 1620, Raghunatha Nayak, the King of Thanjavur, invited the Danes to settle in Tranquebar with the intention of stimulating trade in his territory and counterbalancing the dominance of the Portuguese. Subsequently, they built a fort and established a trading settlement in Tranquebar. However, because of insufficient investment and lack of any contact with the home country, there was hardly any trading activity in the 17th century. It was in the 18th century that trade began to prosper in Tranquebar. The neutral position adopted by the United Kingdom of Denmark-Norway in European conflicts and wars made Tranquebar a comparatively safe place for European

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traders to undertake their trading activities. By the 19th century, as the British East India Company became a formidable force in the Indian subcontinent, the Danes had to give up their control over Tranquebar and, eventually, handed the trading settlement over to the British in 1845.

In spite of its presence in the subcontinent for almost 225 years, Denmark could never establish lasting trade relations in India, nor did it become an important competitor in the race for colonies. But, for Tranquebar and the surrounding areas, those 225 years were crucial in terms of the cultural interactions that took place between Europeans and Indians—an aspect that was closely examined in an earlier book brought out by the Tranquebar Initiative of the National Museum (Fihl, Esther and A.R. Venkatachalapathy (eds) (2014): *Beyond Tranquebar: Grappling Across Cultural Borders in South India*, Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan).

In their everydayness, the cultural interactions that took place in Tranquebar were marked by conflicts and misunderstandings as well as attempts to understand and accommodate everyone's



that was once the official residence of the Danish Governor who administered Tranquebar (now Tharangampadi in Nagapattinam district).

particularities. There were attempts to protect and segregate everyone's space, but there were also moments when those lines of segregation became rather blurred. Using the Governor's house as a point of reference, the book demonstrates how the relationship between the Governor's family and the local servants, the various diplomatic parleys that happened in the house, the banquets the Governor hosted, the artefacts and furniture that adorned the house, and the relations forged by the residents of the house with other Europeans and Indians became important instances of such cultural

interactions.

Given the fact that Tranquebar was under the administrative control of the Danish Crown and that Europeans, in general, felt they were justified in asserting their economic and political dominance in the region, it would be facile to assume that these cultural encounters were not mediated by power. They were definitely tinted with paternalism, racial superiority and a sense of entitlement, something that is evident in the relations between the Governor's family and the local people. However, this does not mean that there was a premeditated and uniform manner in which power

operated. The unequal relations of power between the Danes and the local people, between the various imperialist nations vying for dominance in the region, and the social hierarchies that existed among the Danes and the local people reveal that there were multiple centres of power, and the intersections and negotiations between them made the cultural encounter a more nuanced, complex and multilayered process.

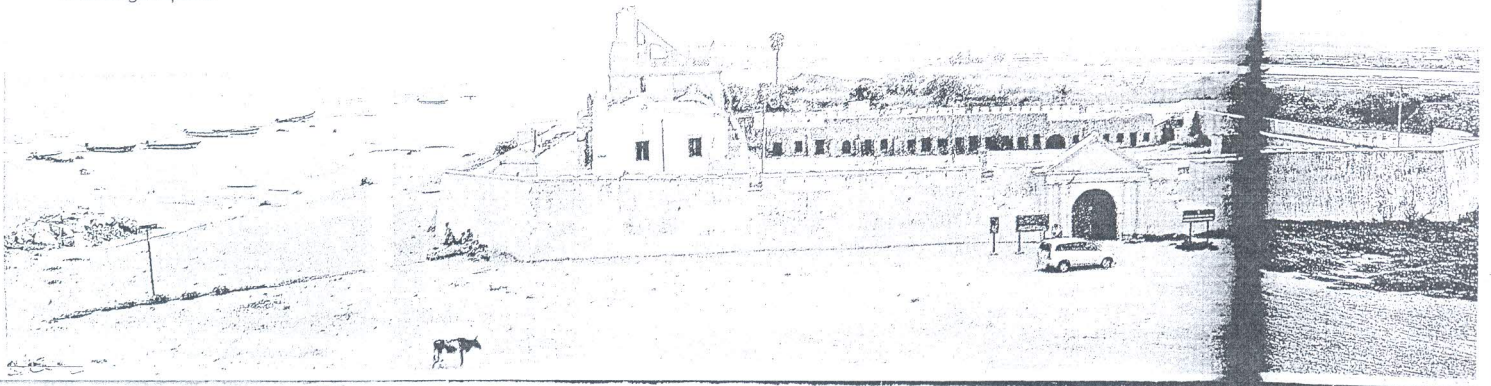
In general, the nuances, dilemmas and politics of cultural encounter are something that the book tries to be conscious and sensitive about. However, there are occasions

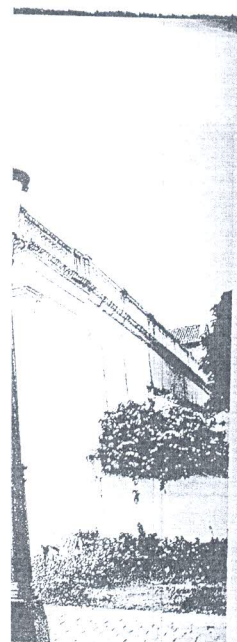
when it tends to be a casual reference to the magnanimousness imposed on local spaces in spite of their two centuries more, there is to romanticise European change, almost forgetful of the and power the were beginning the region.

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RESTORATION STORYTELLING
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THE DANISH FORT, called Dans Borg, in Tharangampadi.





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ted. The unequal re- s of power between anes and the local e, between the vari- perialist nations vy- r dominance in the t, and the social hier- s that existed among anes and the local e reveal that there multiple centres of , and the intersec- and negotiations en them made the al encounter a more ed, complex and ayered process.

general, the nu- dilemmas and polit- cultural encounter smething that the ries to be conscious nsitive about. How- here are occasions

when it tends to slip into casual references that imply that the Danes were magnanimous for not having imposed their Danishness on local society and for being accommodative of local spaces and culture in spite of their presence in Tranquebar for a little over two centuries; furthermore, there is a tendency to romanticise the Indo-European cultural exchange, almost becoming forgetful of the privileges and power the Europeans were beginning to wield in the region.

Rather than magnanimity or genuine romance for local culture, it might be more apt to say that the limits of circumstances and the negotiations of power restrained and determined the character of the Indo-European cultural exchange. The scope and limitations of the archives and museums consulted, which are primarily located in Denmark, could be one of the reasons for this shortcoming as they mostly privilege the voices, thoughts and feelings of the Danes while the local people tend to be mute and passive subjects.

RESTORATION AS STORYTELLING

The main impetus behind the book was the effort to restore the Governor's

house and turn it into a cultural centre that would contribute towards the development of Tranquebar as an important destination for heritage tourism. Although the book remains silent about the political economy of heritage tourism—despite the involvement of various stakeholders with variant interests—and its implications for local society, it does provide an extremely instructive account of the entire restoration process. It presents the minute planning and details that went into the restoration process—recovering architectural plans of the building complex, excavating the area in and around it, and carefully studying the architectural modifications and additions it was subjected to over the years; also, deliberating and working on the various aspects of restoration, for instance, the materials to be used, the craftsmanship to be employed, the colours to be painted, etc. It also delves into the various concerns and dilemmas that came up during the course of restoration.

Because of certain antiquarian anxieties, there has often been a tendency to perceive restoration as a process wherein a remnant from the past is reinstated to its “original” or “authentic” self. However, as those who were involved in the restoration work aptly point out in the last chapter, restoration involves “a loss of authenticity”. A restored structure is never an exact reconstruction of the structure as it appeared at any point of time but an entirely new structure that has been put together taking into con-

sideration what is known about the building and what remains of it. It represents a flattening of time and an attempt to combine elements from different periods in a structure's history.

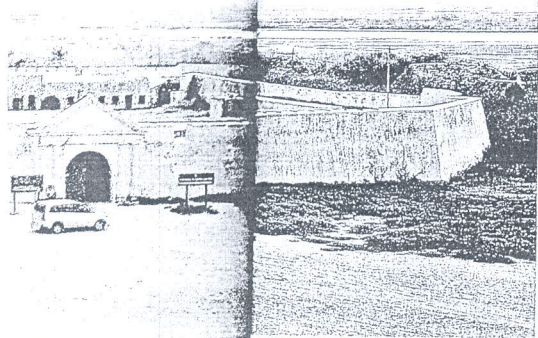
The building complex had been put to multiple uses in the past: To begin with, it was the private house of an English businessman. In 1784, it became the official residence of the Danish Governor. Much later, in 1845, as Tranquebar came under British rule, it became a place for the Collector of Thanjavur to hold “the records and the treasury”. From 1860 to 1884, it was turned into a courthouse and, afterwards, until the 1980s, an office for the Salt Department. And, the mandate of the restoration project was to restore the building complex taking into consideration its multiple lives, to compress multiple phases of its history into one.

However, in order to do this, there had to be a point of reference, a moment or an aspect that would be “the basis for the major story in the restoration process”. Given the prominence of the building complex in the town when it was the Governor's official residence and the fact that much of the architectural and historical details available on it are from that period, the obvious choice for the restorers was to treat that period as the point of reference, though they remained conscious and accommodative of the modifications and additions that may have happened during other periods. The residence was handed over to

the Tamil Nadu Tourism Department after the restoration was completed in 2011. The book, ending on a hopeful note, underlines the potential of the restored structure to become an important meeting point for cross-cultural dialogues, a hub of various historical and cultural activities. Although it is for the various stakeholders involved in the restoration process to assess if it has served that important purpose, the reflections of a travel blogger who visited Tranquebar last year may be taken earnestly, especially given the plight of various restored buildings and sites in the country. In her blog, she narrates how deserted and lifeless the town and its many restored structures seemed and wondered whether those structures were restored “only to be kept under lock and key” (<https://sudhagee.com/2018/10/01/travel-exploring-tranquebar/>).

Tranquebar is one among the several places along the coast of the Bay of Bengal that have had a history very different from the landlocked hinterlands of the subcontinent. Given their proximity to the seas, such places have been centres of cross-cultural exchange and assimilation for long. Cultural negotiations and contestations have been an inevitable part of it. In this respect, the book provides important glimpses of how lives may have been made and lived in coastal and southern India. □

John Thomas is an assistant professor of history at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Guwahati.



M. MOORTHY

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