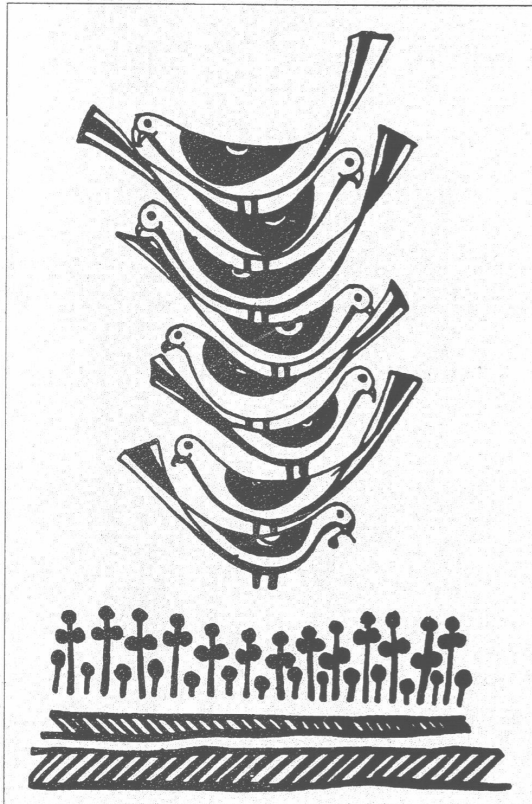


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Cover: 'The Landscape of Love: The Poetry of the Parajas'—Illustration taken from the book *Unending Rhythms: Oral Poetry of Indian Tribes*.

Aerial Inspection In The Verification Triad

K. Subrahmanyam

OPEN SKIES, ARMS CONTROL AND COOPERATIVE SECURITY

Edited by Michael Krepon and Amy E. Smithson

St. Martin's Press, New York, 1992, pp. 269, price not stated.

This is a volume with contributions from thirteen authors, all focussing on the 'Open Skies' technique of verification and mutual confidence building, put together by the editors from the Henry L. Stimson's center. Among the various verification processes canvassed by the US arms controllers for developing nations 'Open Skies' is on the top of their sales list. They could claim that their interest in the 'Open Skies' proposal is entirely altruistic because the US satellites are in any case photographing every square centimetre of the earth's surface and American high altitude reconnaissance aircraft are able to fly over almost all countries and photograph what they want to.

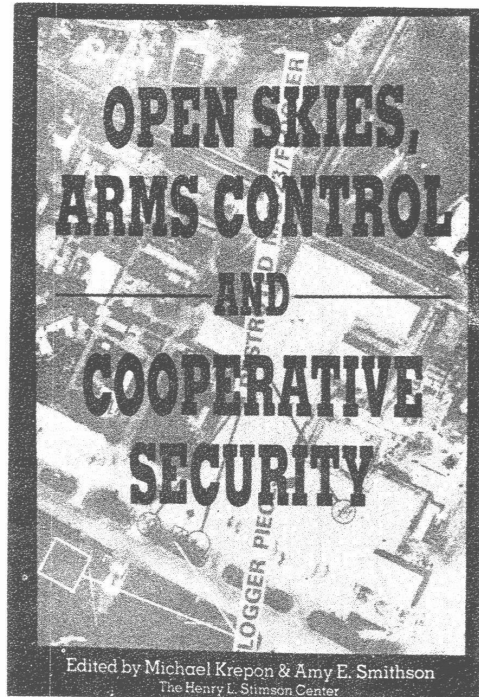
The 'Open Skies' agreement was signed on 24th March, 1992 after the end of the cold war and disintegration of the Soviet Union. According to the agreement, 25 states from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the former Warsaw Pact and the former Soviet Union will conduct unarmed overflights of one another's territories to assess the disposition, strength, and preparedness of opposing military forces. Though the proposal was originally mooted by President Eisenhower during the Geneva summit meeting in 1954, nothing much happened for the next thirty-five years and in 1989 President Bush revived the proposal to counter President Gorbachev's new thinking. The agreement was concluded sixteen months after the cold war came to an end in the Paris conference of November, 1990. Therefore 'Open Skies treaty' was not one of the confidence building measures that helped to bring an end to the cold war. It could be more appropriately considered as a byproduct of the end of the cold war and constitutes a confidence expression measure.

It was therefore not surprising that when Ambassador Hawes, one of the negotiators of the Open Skies treaty came to India and Pakistan and tried to sell the treaty he found the going hard because here he was not dealing with a post cold war situation but one of current confrontation. Pakistanis did not show much enthusiasm and in India he was asked that if sincere about the Open Skies treaty why was the United States preventing India from acquiring its own national technical means of verification (Satellite launching capability) by penalising the Indian Space Research Organisation for

trying to acquire Cryogenic Rocket engine technology from the GLAVKOSMOS of Russia. The US expectation appears to be that other nations should accept the framework US prescribes and not have their own independent global satellite monitoring capability. As happened with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and Missile Technology Control regime the Western nations did not bother to associate major nations like India, China or Pakistan while drafting the treaty but only recommend to others what they have already decided. In spite of this attitude of the White man's burden underlying the Open Skies proposal there is nothing objectionable in the proposal itself. India may find it advantageous to join in such an arrangement with its neighbours if they would agree. It is however highly doubtful whether China and Pakistan would agree. At least the diplomatic advantage of having made the offer will be gained by India.

The contents of the volume are rich and varied. They cover the history of the treaty, the role of aerial inspection in the verification triad, the other two being national technical means (satellite photography) and on site inspection, sensors and platforms for aerial overflights, the legal implications, and an abbreviated history of multilateral aerial inspection, as which include the cases of Sinai, Yemen, Cyprus, Lebanon, the Persian Gulf, South and Central America, Western Sahara, Angola and Cambodia. Two chapters are specific case histories of Hungary and Rumania and Iraq. Monitoring military equipment by aerial overflights has been covered in two chapters. These are mostly applicable to the industrialised countries and will be relevant in verifying the conventional forces in Europe reduction (CFE) agreement. Transfer of equipment to developing countries from the industrialised countries can be more easily checked from the UN arms register provided the supplier countries honestly report them though aerial inspection has been recommended in this volume. Once again the US satellite monitoring should be able to keep a check on such transactions—as has recently been reported in respect of M-11 missile transshipment from China to Pakistan.

It recognised that aerial inspections cannot replace on site inspection or military satellite intelligence as a means to monitor nuclear proliferation. In the case of chemical weapons convention, aerial



The US expectation appears to be that other nations should accept the framework US prescribes and not have their own independent global satellite monitoring capability. As happened with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and Missile Technology Control regime the Western nations did not bother to associate major nations like India, China or Pakistan while drafting the treaty but only recommend to others what they have already decided.

inspections in conjunction with inspections on the ground could increase the reach and effectiveness of the secretariat. In the last chapter the authors argue the case for aerial inspections in the Middle East since carefully circumscribed aerial inspections have already been employed in the region to help confirm demilitarised and thin out zones and to assist in establishing a few relatively quiet borders.

For aerial inspection technology the book is a useful primer for those interested in this verification technique. Once countries have agreed to a cooperative security arrangement as the members of the Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe (the twenty-five countries of NATO, former Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union) have, Open Skies is a logical mutual confidence expression measure. It is a consequence of the cooperative security arrangement. In respect of hostile pairs of countries where the Open Skies has not been accepted it is obvious that that is because they have not arrived

at the appropriate stage of cooperative security. In other words where the open skies are most needed they are likely to be opposed and where they are least needed there will be ready acceptance for their implementation. Being an intrusive measure it is more an expression of the non-antagonistic state of relationship among the nations and is not likely to constitute one of the first measures likely to be accepted among nations who need to build confidence among themselves. Any open skies plan forced on hostile pair of nations without their having reached the appropriate level of mutual confidence can become a fertile source for mutual recrimination and tension.

K. Subrahmanyam, a former Director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, is a scholar of international affairs and reputed defence analyst, and currently consultant editor (foreign affairs), Economic Times.

Kaleidoscopic Patterns Of Change

R.R. Sharma

ETHNICITY AND POLITICS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Edited by K. Warikoo and Dawa Norbu

South Asian Publishers, 1992, pp. vii+291, Rs. 300.00

For about a decade now the whole of Middle Asia is witnessing changes that can influence countries beyond the region. With the unfolding of new political and economic processes, the geopolitics of the entire region is bound to change. Central Asia is in the process of redefining its relationship with other countries of the region like China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey.

This whole exercise, however, is determined as much by economic necessities as by ethnopolitical factors like complex ethnic relations, national and religious resurgence, demographic imbalance and so on. While seeking to free themselves from dependence on the former Soviet partners, the Central Asians are also aware of the positive features of the old union as well as the relevance of future cooperation with the European states of the erstwhile USSR.

There are substantial number of Russians and other Europeans in the Central Asian cities who constitute the major component of the higher-skilled category of the labour force. The issues are so complex that any simplistic notion is ruled out. For example, the growth of Islamic identity which was supposed to be the major source of challenge to communism, has been encountering serious problems with the growth of nationalism in the late 1980s. The pan-Islamic appeal has been weakened by national separatism and aggression. Then there are differences like Shia-Sunni, Turkish-Persian, and tribal identities. The Ferghana riots are an indicator that Islam cannot be a cementing factor as have also been proved by other following riots. In order to visualize the present and emerging scenario, one needs to have a close look at the complexity of the issues involved. One such effort which contributes to develop a perspective on the recent changes and future developments has been made in *Ethnicity and Politics in Central Asia*, edited by K. Warikoo and Dawa Norbu.

There is a comprehensive section on Central Asia with five articles dealing with socio-economic, political and ethnic

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issues. All the articles are in agreement about the Soviet efforts to eliminate age-old backwardness and socio-economic inequality in Central Asia. The development of Soviet Central Asia proceeded much ahead of neighbouring countries like Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan (p. 72). Dr Warikoo's article gives a detailed account of the widespread religious revival in Central Asia, which, according to him, has been a growing tendency since the 1970s that has thwarted Soviet efforts to achieve the ultimate goal of fusion of different nationalities (p. 63). He also looks at Islamic revival as a spillover effect of the Khomeini revolution in Iran (p. 67). The pan-Islamic forces, however, are not confined to Iran only. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are seeking to fill the vacuum created by the breakdown of Soviet authority (p. 76). This process has been helped by the fact that Central Asia has been opening its economy to foreign investment. One case in point is the Turkmen-Iran trade links for export of Turkmen gas, cotton and other resources to external markets through Iran (p. 75). Dr Warikoo is of the opinion, however, that the Central Asian leadership would prefer to proceed slowly and cautiously and would like to be a part of the present transitional arrangement till they are able to build a self-sufficient economic structure (p. 81).

An excellent article in the book by Professor Devendra Kaushik analyses trends in Soviet nationality policy during the Gorbachev years. He traces the origin of a new trend at the All-Union Conference on relations among nationalities held in Riga in June 1982, where Bagamorov expressed differences with Kosolopov's position that fusion of nations is the goal of socialism. Bagamorov emphasised greater recognition of national diversity. Under perestroika this trend gained an upper hand (p. 124).

Professor Kaushik has also taken up the issue of bilingualism that was the focus of debate at the March 1988 plenum of the Board of Writers' Union. Writers like Chenigiz Aitmatov and Nikolai

Shundik criticized the existing policy of greater stress on the popularization of Russian language and the principle of voluntary selection by parents of medium of instruction, which in the absence of adequate number of national language schools and kindergartens was a mockery of free choice. They expressed the hope that perestroika may create conditions under which selection of the mother-tongue would become the most obvious

The growth of Islamic identity which was supposed to be the major source of challenge to communism, has been encountering serious problem with the growth of nationalism in the late 1980s. The pan-Islamic appeal has been weakened by national separatism and aggression. Then there are differences like Shia-Sunni, Turkish-Persian, and tribal identities. The Ferghana riots are an indicator that Islam cannot be a cementing factor.

necessity. The principle of free choice by parents of the language of instruction, though not completely scrapped, was nonetheless relegated to a secondary place with priority given to encouragement of study of the national language by non-local nationalists, both at the 19th CPSU Conference (June 1988) and at the Central Committee Plenary meeting (20 Sept. 1989) which adopted the "CPSU platform on the Nationalities Policy of the Party in Present-day conditions" (pp. 126-27).

Professor Kaushik is also of the opinion that the previous language policy was the cause of some resentment among the local nationalities that has escalated

steeply under glasnost (p. 128). The demand for giving the local language the status of state language and riots in Ferghana, Ashkabad, Dushanbe, Tashkent and Novyy-Uzen, etc., pointed to the need for not only socio-cultural and political efforts but also a long-term psychological restructuring.

There are other informative articles on Central Asia by Professor Gidadhubli, Dr P.L. Das and Dr K.N. Pandita. Dr Pandita draws attention also to the response of the Central Asian leadership to the August coup and to the new Union treaty initiated by Gorbachev. Professor Gidadhubli with use of data points to the relative backwardness of Central Asia in the former Union. Added to this are the problems arising out of the ecological and environmental degradation. He is of the opinion that the economic autonomy proposed under perestroika did not offer great possibility for Central Asian republics to forge ahead in their socio-economic development (p. 140).

It is not possible to do justice to the book in this short review, since the book contains five sections, dealing with Chinese Central Asia, Tibet, Afghanistan and Mongolia, both from historical and contemporary perspectives. However, this review would be incomplete without mentioning Dr Norbu's article on China's policy towards minorities in the 1990s. It begins with a historical approach to the evolution of CPC's ideological position on minorities beginning with a democratic approach at the Jiangei Soviet (1931) followed by its reversal by Mao who subsequently was opposed to the idea of the right to secession by minorities (pp. 145-6). Dr Norbu visualises no change, inspite of the so called Deng Xiaoping revolution. The fundamental tenets of the Han policy towards non-Han social groups in China would continue to remain so for the next decade or so, due to the fact that minority nationalities in the PRC constitute only a little over 5% of the total Chinese population, but their homelands occupy over 65% of the total Chinese territory, which are not only strategically located but are also resource rich. Minor modification in the economic and cultural spheres notwithstanding the future of China's minority nationalities would remain the same, at least in the political domain (p. 142).

Considering the scarcity of material on the region in this country, this book would be useful for research scholars and students interested in this region. The price of the book, however, may prevent many from possessing it.

Professor R.R. Sharma is Director, Soviet Area Studies Programme, Centre for Soviet East European Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Learning From The Past

Lt. Gen. J.F.R. Jacob PVSM (Retd.)

BEHIND THE SCENE: AN ANALYSIS OF INDIA'S MILITARY OPERATIONS 1947-1971

By Major General Jogindar Singh VSM (Class 1)

Lancer International, Spantech and Lancer, New Delhi, pp. 273, Rs.380.00

Major General Jogindar Singh is a distinguished soldier of high repute and professional integrity. He has undertaken to analyse military operations during the period following Independence. The book is an account of events as he saw them.

In his first chapter he discusses five major factors that he considers have influenced Indian history, namely, Indian History and military geography, Hindu socio-religious culture, the impact of Islam, British colonisation, Partition and post-independence experiences.

He stresses both the negative and positive legacies left by the British. Most of the negative aspects covered are valid. However it is an over-simplification and somewhat unfair to blame them for "a loosely defined border, essentially undemarcated Border from the trijunction of Afghanistan, Sinkiang and Kashmir to the trijunction of Tibet, India and Burma". Before a border can be demarcated it has to be delimited. It takes all parties involved to agree where the border runs on the map. The maps then in use were rough and ready. The British visualisation of where the borders should be kept changing with their perceptions of the threats posed by Russia and to a lesser degree by China. Even though the Chinese representative intialled the McMahon map, which was a rough compilation, they refused to ratify it. He gives the British due credit for laying sound foundations for the Indian Army which we were able to build on. He categorises the 1962 war as a "combat by politics", the 1965 war as a case of missed opportunities and 1971 war as "The Generals' war."

Jogindar Singh dwells on our lack of strategic culture. It is true that there does not exist a proper vehicle for the formulation of national strategy. He stipulates that there are three core perceptions for regional strategy, firstly the effect on neighbouring states, defence policy, foreign collaboration in defence posture. Secondly that we should avoid two fronts on land and a third at sea and thirdly that we should use diplomatic means to neutralize these threats. It may be recalled that in 1965 we had to face threats on land from the West, a lesser possible threat from East Pakistan and a potential threat from China in the North. He however has failed to mention that Chinese belligerent threats in 1965 led to our withdrawal from the crest line on the Jelap La and to

the Chinese physical possession of that crest line. Further he may also recall that Mrs Indira Gandhi in 1971 was seized of the necessity of diplomatic moves to counter the possibility of Chinese intervention in the event of hostilities. The Indo-Soviet Friendship treaty negotiated at her initiative was a diplomatic triumph. It was a major contributing factor to our victory.

Joginder touches on the false fears in higher political and bureaucratic echelons of a possible Army take over which inhibits allotting more resources for a more effective state of military preparedness. He feels that this has not changed. This reviewer agrees and considers that not enough is being done to give the three Services what they require not only to ensure the country's defence but provide for sufficient backup to sustain operations in case of any future war.

The first few chapters describe his earlier experiences in the Army and make interesting reading. This reviewer was GSOI operations Western Command for a short period ending March 1961. Before he left he briefed the new BCS, Brigadier Jogindar Singh on the ambiguous directives received from Army HQ, the flawed concepts of the directives and the totally inadequate military infrastructure in Ladakh. Jogindar agreed particularly regarding with the building and alignment of roads. The progress of the 1962 war is sketched in some detail and his comments are valid, particularly that "the normal civilian thinking that battles must be fought on the country's frontier irrespective of whether the ground is suitable or not can lead to disaster". This reviewer further opines that this has led to a tendency on the part of commanders to defend every yard of frontier leading to a linear deployment lacking in depth and resulting in inadequate reserves. Ground must be used to advantage. Jogindar describes the 1965 war in detail. As Chief of Staff his role was pivotal. This reviewer has always had great regard for his sincerity and integrity. His record of events should therefore be taken as authoritative. His assessment of likely Pakistani thrusts were generally correct. He had problems with the Army Commanders' peculiar style of functioning.

The Pakistani infiltration campaign 'Operation Gibraltar' was launched on 5 August 1965. The operation did not succeed primarily on account of the fact that

it did not have wide enough support from the locals. Students of military history will benefit by his detailed descriptions of operations around the Haji Pir Bulge and the Kishanganga valley following the abortive Pakistani 'Operation Gibraltar'.

The Pakistani offensive in the Chhamb sector was initially successful and Akknur was directly threatened. Fortunately this offensive was blunted.

Jogindar describes the operational planning for XI Corps in the Punjab. He describes how the Army Commander initially wanted to base his main defences on the River Beas and later swung in the other direction to secure the Ichhogi Canal in Pakistan. 4 Mountain Division's offensive operations and the Pakistani counter-attack are dealt with in detail. This battle was critical and had the Pakistani offensive not been halted the results would have been disastrous. Losses on both sides were heavy. Jogindar could have mentioned the role of the then Vice Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General P.P. Kumaramangalam in countering the wavering resolve of some at Delhi and at Western Command.

He avers that his advice not being taken for launching 7 Infantry Division on the Bhikhiwind Burki axis an opportunity to alter the course of the entire campaign was missed.

In annexure II Jogindar gives Major General Niranjan Prasad's version of events leading to the 15 Infantry Division's failure to carry out its allotted tasks on 6 and 7 September 1965 and his escape from capture after abandoning his jeep when it came under Pakistani fire, resulting in the loss of some papers. Niranjan Prasad was summarily removed from command. In all fairness his version of events deserves to be studied. Jogindar describes the operations of our strike corps, 1 Corps in the Sialkot sector. Like XI Corps the objectives selected were peripheral. The Corps was hastily orgainised for the offensive which was supposed to be on the lines of a blitzkrieg. Even though we had numerical superiority the strike power was dissipated by commitment to a wide front and apprehensions of a flank threat. The whole approach to the offensive was marred by over-caution. The proper handling of divisions of the Corps and to a large extent specific directions from Western Command and Army HQ were wanting.

The overall operations achieved little and as Jogindar referring to the commanders concerned puts it, "their combined professional delinquency ended in a big butcher's bill".

The author feels that the results achieved by the Air Force were not commensurate with the effort put in. He asserts that this was rectified in the 1971 operations in the East as "the team of Sam Manekshaw and P. C. Lal made all the difference". This however is not true as relations between Lal and Manekshaw were strained and as Lal asserts in his book each Service was

left to its own devices. What was lacking in Delhi was more than made up for by cordial relationships between the Army and Airforce commanders and Staff at Command level and good relations between wings and squadrons and the corps and divisions involved. Understandably Jogindar's portrayal of event in 1971 is limited and lacks the authority of his previous chapters. He mentions the disaster at Chhamb. This reviewer is of the view that Chhamb's importance lies more in relation to Pakistani strategic defence concept than to its opening up an axis to Akhnoor. Chhamb is across the Munna-war Tawi. It is the last obstacle after which the central plain of the Punjab opens up. It is the result of the 1971 ceasefire that Pakistan is firmly established on the Southern (higher Bank) of the Munna-war Tawi and has heavily fortified the river line and the high ground. Any future crossing will require exceptional effort. The loss of Chhamb is indeed a serious set back.

Field Marshal Manekshaw has written a foreword to the book. He has used this as a vehicle to oppose the spread of rumours "For the proposed reorganisation of the Indian Army into mixed units on the basis of State population under the garb of recruitment imbalance... If this imprudently proposed political decision is accepted by sycophantic generals, I forecast doom and calamity... May perdition fall on the heads of the perpetrators of such a crime—A crime to the traditions of these famous Regiments, a crime to the Nation".

In conclusion, the 1962 disaster was due largely to political failure, failure in intelligence and failure of our higher command to resist political pressures. In 1965 we were able to hold our own. In 1971 we achieved a great victory and liberated Bangladesh. However there were no great gains in the West. This reviewer feels that we did not learn the lessons of 1965 in the West. We tried to attack all along the front. No thrust was sufficiently weighted. Resources were frittered away on minor thrusts from Rajasthan. 1 Corps learnt little from events in 1965. We lost Chhamb. We made territorial gains in Ladakh which can in no way offset the loss of Chhamb and the subsequent fortification of the south bank of the Munna-war Tawi.

Jogindar has written a refreshingly honest and generally objective account of events as he saw them. His version of the 1965 war is authoritative. Perhaps at times he appears to be subjective. However he cannot be faulted for this. Any personal involvement in momentous events cannot ensure that recording of events can be entirely divorced from subjectivity. This book is a thoroughly good and honest read and is highly recommended.

General Jacob played a pivotal role in the war for the liberation of Bangla Desh. An amateur archeologist he is interested in literature and the arts.

FOCUSSING ON SPECIFICS

Onkar Goswami

GROWTH, STAGNATION OR DECLINE? AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN BRITISH INDIA

By Sumit Guha

Oxford in India Readings, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992, pp. i-x+288, Rs. 290.00 (hard back)

In 1966, George Blyn published his seminal work on agricultural output and productivity in British India from 1891 to 1947. Since then, considerable research has gone into determining whether acreage, output, and yield had increased, declined or remained stagnant in the last five decades of the raj. This volume, edited by Sumit Guha, brings together eight articles on agricultural productivity. Of these, two (Ashwani Saith's and P.P. Mohapatra's) are brand new; the rest are reprints.

The backdrop to the debates on area, yield, and agricultural productivity was provided by the gloomy prognostications of Blyn and S. Sivasubramonian. They independently argued that foodgrain yield had either declined over time or, at best, stagnated. Consequently, food output could not keep abreast with the growth in population. Thus, the last half century of British imperialism was characterized by declining foodgrain availability. When this is superimposed by growing cash crop yields, it provides immense firepower for the nationalist historian—damning evidence of yet another ill effect of colonialism. Such research gave impetus to censure the strategy of agricultural commercialization in British India: cash crops at the expense of food, imperial gains from centre-periphery trade at the cost of hunger.

Most of the work produced in this volume—indeed, most of the research on the topic—focuses on substantiating or disproving the contentions of Blyn and Sivasubramonian. The first duel on the subject is the now famous “Heston-Desai” debate, between Alan Heston, the sceptic of official statistics, and Ashok Desai, the sceptic of Heston. I still remember how painful it was for a graduate student to plough through and memorize the myriad facts of the debate. Guha reproduces the three articles: Heston's initial piece (published in the *Indian Economic and Social History Review* in 1973), Desai's rebuttal and Heston's rejoinder (both published in 1978).

In a nutshell, the argument goes thus. Using data for the Bombay Presidency during 1879–1946, Heston (1973) argued that

- a) The “standard” or normal yields (the stuff used with the so-called “condition factor” is multiplied with acreage to estimate agricultural output)

remained unchanged throughout the period.

- b) Therefore, variation in yield could only be due to changes in the condition factor (since yield = standard yield x condition factor).
- c) These variations in the condition factor were not *real* (due to soil, seed, or climatic factors). Instead, they reflected changes in administrative attitudes. There was a false downward trend in the condition factor: initially too high, and then gradually adjusted downwards to realistic levels. This purely administrative decline over time constrained Blyn and Sivasubramonian to conclude that there was a secular downtrend in yield.

Thus, Heston argued that yields were, at best, stagnant; these certainly did not decline over time. Moreover, he believed this to be true in other temporarily settled regions of India.

Desai's critique still makes good reading—not necessarily because he is right (he sometimes isn't), but because of his droll and caustic style. According to Desai, Heston errs in

- a) Making conclusions on the basis of comparing two arbitrary points, which can dampen or exaggerate trends compared to proper time-series trends.
- b) Making too much play with the unclarity of standard yields and condition factors.
- c) Making specification errors when he attempts to find the causality between rainfall and the condition factor: Heston implicitly specifies linear rainfall (more rainfall, higher condition factor), whereas it should be an inverted U-shaped non-linear relationship (rainfall good upto a point, bad thereafter).

Heston's 1978 rejoinder widened the scope of the debate. He now attempted to show that the downward bias in yields was not only due to the condition factors, but also in the standard yields—and these two biases compounded each other in the official yield estimates. He then argued that the best option was to assume constant yields as the default, and utilize the estimates around Independence to gen-

erate time-series for the entire fifty year period—in effect, creating fifty-plus numbers on the basis of one or two. Such strange statistical procedures characterize a great deal of work on this subject, a good example being Mufakharul Islam's book, *Bengal Agriculture, 1920–1946*.

Four other essays in this volume can be quickly summarized. Two are on the Punjab: Carl Pray's work for 1907–1947, and M. Mufakharul Islam's for 1891–1906. Pray argues that the official yield series is inaccurate and greatly underestimates output—the conclusions for cotton arising out of a comparison between data on baled crop and ex-factory consumption, and the official yield. This a valid method, provided it is done for most, if not all, years of the period. Elsewhere, I had done this for jute for 1900–1947 (comparing official output with ex-factory consumption plus “home” consumption plus exports plus change in stocks), and had reached a similar conclusion: official output was systematically understated. Regarding cotton, however, Pray errs in

Most of the work produced in this volume—indeed, most of the research on the topic—focuses on substantiating or disproving the contentions of Blyn and Sivasubramonian. The first duel on the subject is the now famous “Heston-Desai” debate, between Alan Heston, the sceptic of official statistics, and Ashok Desai, the sceptic of Heston.

using a one-time estimate of “home” consumption. It assumes that the purchase of raw cotton in villages and towns remained unchanged over time—presumably, the babies born at a net growth rate of 2% per year after 1921 shivered without the supply of additional blankets and quilts! If this is incorporated, the downward bias would be even more apparent. Islam continues his work on Bengal by assessing crop output in undivided Punjab. He explains how certain biases occurred in Blyn's work, resulting in overestimation of the growth of yield and output. P.P. Mohapatra focuses on the Chotanagpur division of Bihar—a difficult region given the paucity of reliable data in permanently settled tracts. He does careful interpolation to recreate time-series estimates of acreage, condition factor, standard yield, yield and output, and then compares the revised output series with independent consumption figures derived from nutritional surveys of 1938–1947. The results conclusively support his revised output estimates. R.C. Desai's essay on crop production is an old 1953 classic, predating Blyn and Sivasubramonian. As Guha rightly observes, while Desai was trying to estimate national income, “his discussion of the agricultural statistics remains one of

Saith's work is excellent on three counts. First, he looks at long term trends, and goes back to the mid-nineteenth century for two districts, Muzaffarnagar and Bareilly. This in itself is laudable, for there is an urgent need for carefully researched work covering that period. Second, he succeeds in integrating his findings for the nineteenth century with an analysis of the first fifty years of the twentieth. Third, he shows much more quantitative rigour than what one typically sees in this area of research—which reflects his training as a quantitative economist.

the best to date”.

Finally, there is Ashwani Saith's hitherto unpublished essay on Uttar Pradesh—by far the most carefully worked out article in this volume. Saith's work is excellent on three counts. First, he looks at long term trends, and goes back to the mid-nineteenth century for two districts, Muzaffarnagar and Bareilly. This in itself is laudable, for there is an urgent need for carefully researched work covering that period. Second, he succeeds in integrating his findings for the nineteenth century with an analysis of the first fifty years of the twentieth. Third, he shows much more quantitative rigour than what one typically sees in this area of research—which reflects his training as a quantitative economist. Saith shows that while there was hardly any change in yields between 1840 and the turn of the century, these tended to move downwards in the years that followed. To an extent, the overall effect was countered by an expansion in canal irrigation. But, once this stopped in the 1920s, the yields deteriorated exactly as shown by Blyn. According to Saith, “yield per acre made a negative contribution to economic expansion in the United Provinces in the period after 1880–1900, and no discernible positive contribution before then”.

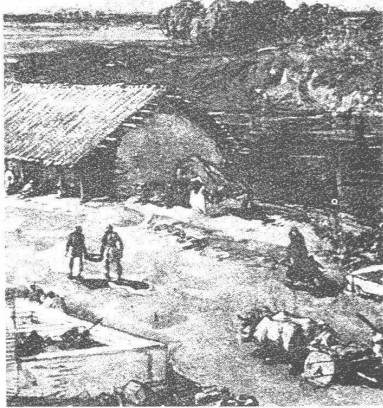
This is a well produced volume of essays, rounded off by a comprehensive (though lengthy) introduction by Sumit Guha. Moreover, the editor has done great service by reproducing Blyn's appendices. However, it is not a volume for the lay reader, not even for anyone specializing in Indian economic history. It has a very specific focus and, being terminologically technical, does not make easy reading. Nevertheless, it is a must for those interested in agricultural productivity. But be warned: never approach at night-time, and always do so after drinking several cups of strong black coffee!

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The Blue Devil

Indigo and Colonial Bengal

AMIYA RAO and B.G. RAO



The Mirror Of Indigo

Rudrangshu Mukherjee

THE BLUE DEVIL: INDIGO AND
COLONIAL BENGAL

By Amiya and B.G. Rao
Oxford University Press, Delhi,
1992, pp. 271, Rs 280.00

This book brings together two interrelated texts. One is a detailed analysis carried out by the authors of the indigo uprising in Bengal between 1959 and 1862. And the other is a translation of Dinabandhu Mitra's famous play *Neel Darpan*. The publication of the play and its translation by Michael Madhusudan Dutt became a *cause celebre* in Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century. The present translators admit the difficulties of communicating the earthy flavour of the original in English. But they do not explain why *Neel Darpan* (The Mirror of Indigo, literally) should become the Blue Devil in translation.

The authors reject Ranjit Guha's analysis of the play as a loyalist piece of writing. In their words in the play, Mitra conveys "his own sympathetic comprehension of the world of the neglected, the literate, the exploited from their own angle of vision, entering the recesses of their minds, he has told the story from below" (p. 135). According to them, "The few words in Sanskrit, introducing the play, made it abundantly clear why and for whom the play was written; it was to comfort the peasants so grossly oppressed by the indigo planters." The irony of

addressing peasants in Sanskrit escapes our authors. Further, it should be highlighted that the same prologue which according to the present translators makes Mitra's purpose clear, states, "I shall deem it my reward if, in return for the labour I have put in, relief comes to the peasant, and the image of England and the British Government is refurbished". The indigo planters had "tranished the entire community of the British" and they, by their "lust for money", had "like worms eating into a lotus, damage(d) the unsullied reputation of the British race" (p. 183). In the context of such explicit statements, Dinabandhu Mitra's loyalism is not as unproblematical as Amiya and B.G. Rao make it out to be.

This is not necessarily to denigrate or abuse Dinabandhu Mitra. The nineteenth century Bengali intelligentsia was not unambiguous in its opposition to imperialism. Dinabandhu shared this ambiguity. Thus underlying the criticism of the lawlessness of the planters and of the irresponsibility of a handful of English officials, there was an abiding faith in Al-bion-Just. The oppression of the planters was an aberration, or to borrow the term used by the generation that came after Mitra, it was "un-British". If such aberrations were removed, if certain improvements were introduced, British rule was the safest possible guarantee against lawlessness, superstition and despotism. Thus it did not cross the minds of the literati in the nineteenth century to question the legitimacy of British rule.

To put it differently, men like Mitra, did not pose the question of subjection, of power. In the nineteenth century, at least, acceptance of British rule came easily to the modern, the Western educated; resis-

tance to foreign rule, the first moment of any nationalist consciousness, was carried out by those outside the privileges of English education and Western science. A rebellious peasant, of which Torap is the archetype, could never be properly reflected even in the powerful prose of Dinabandhu.

Amiya and B.G. Rao are on more familiar and less controversial territory in their analysis of the uprising and its background. The authors take the readers through the beginnings of indigo cultivation and the changes that it entailed in agrarian society in Bengal. And then through the story of the peasant uprising itself. These sections are competently written. But one is left dissatisfied with the cavalier treatment of certain very relevant themes. The discussion on the financing of indigo cultivation is a case in point. The authors discuss the Agency Houses but not the crucial position indigo had, in what was known as the remittance trade. Yet, it is this latter aspect which holds the key to understand-

ing the forced and exaggerated cultivation of indigo in the first half of the 19th century. One suspects that these lacunae are products, if the bibliography is taken as an indicator, of the lack of awareness of the third volume of N.K. Singha's *Economic History of Bengal*, of Amales Tripathi's *Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency* and Blair Kling's biography of Dwarakanath Tagore. Similarly, the authors write about the beginnings of peasant resistance in Bengal without reference to Ranajit Guha's *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. These gaps and the general documentation and analysis that is provided? put the book in a peculiar slot. It is a good book to someone who is unfamiliar with the subject but provides no enlightenment to those who have read the existing literature on the subject.

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"SAVE PAPER SAVE TREES."



THE HINDUSTAN TIMES GROUP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES,
HINDUSTAN,
EVENING NEWS,
KADAMBINI, NANDAN,
EYE WITNESS

In Defence of *Anadi Kavya*

K.G. Verma

UNENDING RHYTHMS: ORAL POETRY OF INDIAN TRIBES

By Sitakant Mahapatra

Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 396, Rs 350.00

In the hey-day of environmentalism as a global phenomenon, not many have found time or shown an inclination to turn to our tribal heritage. With the exception of a few pioneers we do not know of much tribal song-poetry in translation. The present volume is, therefore, a step in the right direction. Eminent Oriya poet, Sitakant Mahapatra, who has eight collections of poetry to his credit, is also a distinguished anthropologist. For years, he has been a close witness to a culture which epitomizes the ultimate in sheer 'zest' and 'delight in lived experience.' How a poet of cultivated sensibility, attuned to a modern mindset, was irresistibly drawn to the unending rhythms of oral enunciations, is evocatively recounted by him: "It was a sparkling moonlight in 1969 and the landscape a lonely tribal village of Orissa lost in the midst of dense forests: the night of the full-moon in the month of Pous (corresponding to January) and one of the most important festivals of the Mundas. The lonely village street near the akhra was gradually filling up with the villagers. In groups they came, boys and girls, old men and women, dressed for the dance, humming tunes in high spirits. It was no longer the same village I had seen in the day-time—featureless, squalid and ordinary. It had been transformed by the magic touch of moonlight and the exuberance of spirit all around. They danced and they sang. Ancient timeless songs. Old as the neighbouring hills, ancient as the moon."

Between 1968 to 1977, Mahapatra (first as a Deputy Commissioner in the tribal districts of Orissa and then on a Homi Bhabha Fellowship worked among the 'hilly and jungle areas' of this belt. As a result, he is now in the thick of a cultural discourse on the primitive life and traditions. The author is in agreement with Jereme Rothenberg who 'sees primitive cultures not as mere targets for objective study, but as series of communally structured and ecologically sound models, from which to learn something about the reorganisation of society and the revitalization of life and thought.' In his case, therefore, the involvement is not merely another recondit addition to the stack on ethnological studies. For Mahapatra it is

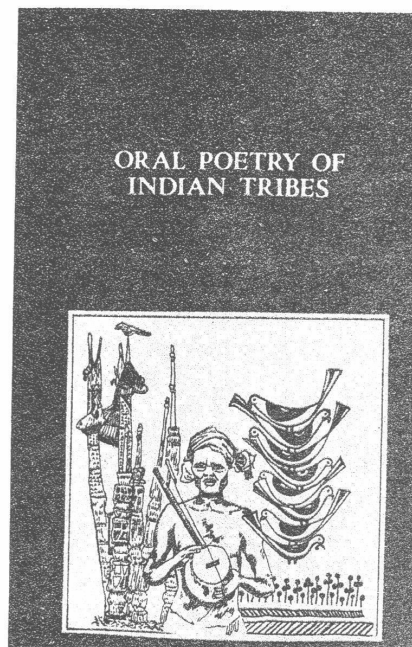
'faith and concern' for culture largely unexplored. He would like to rediscover in the tribal world an alternative for the man of mass technological societies.

In order to make the milieu which for centuries has remained on the periphery, withdrawn and marginalised from the so-called mainstream, come alive the foremost task he set for himself was to 'recapture' 'document' 'preserve' and finally 'render' into an accessible medium.

In the lengthy and exhaustive introductory note the poet in Mahapatra persuasively builds a case for a way of life which is complete and self-sustaining in itself. Based on the songs and performance of the Mundas, the Oraons, the Kondhs, the Parajas, the Santals, the Hos and the Koyas he was privileged to have been admitted to strictly ritualistic and invocatory functions of these disparate groups. He finds an unbroken continuity in a highly complex community life. To be a close observer of a rhythm he had to be an integral part of their functions, rituals and norms; in order to grasp the full range of the culture, he tried to acquire considerable proficiency in the tribal languages which are always "unwritten." This vast reservoir of oral text spread over large areas in the form of song-poems in hundreds and thousands is what forms the *Anadi* tradition of Indian poetry.

A notable feature of the songs is the lack of desire in the tribal to project his personal or individual self. Total anonymity marks a tradition of unbroken continuity. A sense of belonging, among the respective groups is kept alive. Except for minor 'interpolations' or improvisations at the level of refrain as a sudden outburst there are not many examples of violations in the text.

But things may change in the wake of rapid industrialization and enlarged developmental activity. Acculturation has turned the young indifferent to their own traditions. Before long the coming generations under the impact of hybridization may virtually discard a way of life of simplicity and harmony. The 'songs may be sung no more' and eventually disappear into oblivion. Therefore any move to preserve and analyse the legends, mythologies and cosmologies as has been



done in other areas such as Sanskrit, Pali and other Indian Prakrits is highly commendable.

Evidently, song has not earned favour in specialized ethno-anthropological circles as a component of sociological enquiry. While preparing anthologies Archer and Elvin, as connoisseurs among them, have translated a good deal of oral poetry in India as elsewhere. The colonial anthropology fixed a typology of the tribal as untamed, natural, at once passionate and vivacious, expression of the primeval, the irrational in man. Quite a few consigned them as feature-pieces and specimens to the museum. Mahapatra will have none of this. According to him tribal poetry is literature *per se*, a 'living,' 'vital,' 'warm' and authentic voice of a 'life-affirming' culture.

Mahapatra does not hide his avowed pluralism while critiquing primitivism. Rejecting the worn-out assimilationism of the theory of the melting-pot he would rather like to emphasize the universal content in the value-systems, beliefs and rituals of the tribal culture. He is a staunch upholder at the same time of the uniqueness and autonomy of a vanishing ethos. In our troubled times the need is to evolve the mechanism which can marry the imperatives of technological progress with the preservation of cultural autonomy of the group. Like a dreamer Mahapatra is waiting for the day when the savage in his nobility and specificity will

fit with the rest into the broader cultural "mosaic." And city—the modern mess—will transform into a 'conglomeration' of groups and emerge each with its distinct flavour.

And here lies the rub. Not many will buy the dream. In fact there is a lurking fear in the minds of the well-meaning that in a fast changing post-modern scenario the primitive may simply find themselves crushed under the onslaught of forces beyond control. As for the mechanism the noted Hindi novelist Phanishwar Nath 'Renu' who was a son of the soil apart from being undividedly devoted to the predicament of the tribal in Bihar had lamentably this to say: "And those poor cultivators with helpless looks. No party has the guts to take up the land question; nor do the kisans and the landless have any faith in the programmes of political parties." Renu is commenting on the fall-out of the Green Revolution in Purnia District in Bihar where large tracts of *parti* (barren) land was systematically grabbed by the traditional middle-classes.

A mechanism by which to approach the tribal question in its entirety has not been devised so far. No amount of explanation or study of the cultural peculiarities on the lines of structuralist thought can yield results which could undermine the ahistoricism inherent in such concepts. The search for human universals in binary oppositions, behavioural classifications and kinship institutions conceals

The Poetry of the Mundas:
Jadur Songs

*Dreaming of you in bed
I woke and took to the road.*

*Stumbling on the stone
On the village-road
I remembered.*

*I remembered my
Caste, my gotra
And stood transfixed.*

*Are you a kunduru or palandu
creeper, my love
Enfolding me in your loving coils
The creeper round my tree
Twining round my heart its tender
tendrils
Giving me warmth and life?*

*The mahul tree
Full of branches and leaves
How it made the paddy field look
lovely!*

*They are cutting down the mahul
tree
You five brothers
Save it, save it!*

From Unending Rhythms

well-entrenched attitudes supportive of the ideology of the *status-quo*.

But in a significant way Sitakant Mahapatra goes against the centrality of the tribe of anthropologists namely by privileging writing over orality. The "oral" timeless captured in script; the rendering into 'other-tongue' English alien-songs is to construct a milieu which, claims Mahapatra, may act "as a significant other" to the impoverished creativity of modern man. On similar lines, Hindi poet Thakur Prasad Singh on the publication in 1959 of his famous collection of song-poems *Vanshi Aur Madal* in his quest for new options reiterated the 'regenerative' role of the throbbing Santal region—when many chose to go West, he moved eastwards. Fairly representative of the varied shades of a system of communication tribal poetry is both symbolic and social—

Where do you roam, dear ancestor
The long day and the endless night

The high moon on the rocks
The rainy months in the forest,

It is the Dasain festival
Whose is this land, whose this soil?
And dust swirls in this village street.

Essentially akin to music, 'oral' poetry poses a challenge to the translator which has been eminently met by Mahapatra. The haunting quality of the life-cycle from birth to marriage and death is wrapped up in rituals, riddles and rites in all its minuteness. Levi-Strauss said of myth that it is both 'intelligible and untranslatable.' It is true of all poetry anyway. By retaining a good measure of the vitality and the resonance of the original in song-poems by not letting the image/rhythm equations get unduly disturbed, the delicate sound-structure has enabled the reader to be in communion with the untranslatable—

In the field of til
The parrots have entered.

Having made space for the uncharted region of the timeless in human consciousness which has so far remained unscripted, the anthology makes a transition from the 'unwritten' tradition to the realm of writing. Thus a beginning has been made to decode the Brahmi of the 'innocent'. The enterprise nevertheless leaves a distinct impression that the translator is in no way suspicious of the written languages as classical anthropologists have us believe. To him writing is not an 'instrument of oppression' and a 'means of colonising' the primitive mind. Since the dawn of civilization, discarded in the sacred discourses the tribal may have to construct his own textuality. Insensitivity and indifference on the part of the secularists on the tribal issue has in sheer reaction developed into a movement for the assertion of their rights. This upsurge as a matter of fact in an age of unreason and cracking convictions is an indication that the tribal would change from a mere, 'the insignificant other' to a social adversary. A Munda song poignantly refrains—

The cut-away twig, mother
The cut-away twig
The cut-away twig never sprouts again.
The waters of the river, mother
The waters of the river
The waters of the river never turn back again.

The tribal text in translation with invaluable nineteenth century colonial reports and musical notations of the nine songs in original in Roman script in Appendices are a welcome supplement for the erudite and the curious alike.

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Prioritising Health Care

Rama Baru

OUR PLANET, OUR HEALTH: REPORT OF THE WHO COMMISSION
ON HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

WHO, Geneva, 1992, pp. 282, Rs 150.00

PAYING FOR INDIA'S HEALTH CARE

Edited by P. Berman, and M.E. Khan

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 326, Rs 295.00 (cloth)

TAKING SIDES: ISSUES IN SOCIAL MEDICINE AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

By Sathyamala, Sundharam and Bhanot

Horizon India Books, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 320, Rs 300.00 (hardbound)

After almost a decade concern about health is back on the policy agenda of developed countries. This growing concern is a result of environmental degradation, the threat of AIDS, decline in living standards due to a prolonged recession and the rising costs of medical care in most countries. In the United States, health care reform has become a political issue and the Clinton administration is trying to 'humanise' the health care industry. It is no exaggeration to say that the crisis in the American health care system is a direct fallout of President Reagan's policy to cutback for the play of market forces.

In the developed world there is an increasing emphasis on the link between development, the environment and health. The report of the WHO Commission on Environment and Health reflects these concerns of people in both developing and developed countries. The report points out that the immediate problems in the world are ill health and premature death, both of which are directly linked to poor living conditions, lack of potable water and adequate food. It is estimated that four million children die every year

from diarrhoeal diseases and over a million die from malaria. Bulk of the people affected by these diseases live in developing countries. The report sees the need for greater cooperation between developed and developing countries since the causes for ill health are not restricted to specific conditions but have their roots in the macroeconomic policies of governments. Since health is not a priority for most governments, there has not been a significant growth in expenditure over the last decade. This has resulted in a financial crunch for the health sector in many countries.

The financial crunch in the health sector has prompted economists to ask questions regarding priorities in investments, cost effectiveness, alternate choices for investments and pricing of health care. Berman and Khan's edited volume, *Paying for India's Health Care* is a collection of articles by leading economists and social scientists which address some of these questions. This volume is a collection of articles which provides valuable data and analysis regarding patterns of public and private expenditures for specific programmes. This kind of information could well be the starting point for working out

In the developed world there is an increasing emphasis on the link between development, the environment and health. The report of the WHO Commission on Environment and Health reflects these concerns of people in both developing and developed countries. The report points out that the immediate problems in the world are ill health and premature death, both of which are directly linked to poor living conditions, lack of potable water and adequate food. It is estimated that four million children die every year from diarrhoeal diseases and over a million die from malaria. Bulk of the people affected by these disease live in developing countries. The report sees the need for greater co-operation between developed and developing countries since the causes for ill health are not restricted to specific conditions but have their roots in the macroeconomic policies of governments. Since health is not a priority for most governments, there has not been a significant growth in expenditure over the last decade. This has resulted in a financial crunch for the health sector in many countries.

strategies to optimise the meagre resources available. Apart from looking at public expenditure on health care, this collection also looks at issues related to private financing. Even in a poor county like ours, there is quite a significant private sector and household surveys reveal that a fairly high expenditure is incurred on private medical services.

The financing of the voluntary sector has also been dealt with in some detail in this volume. Voluntary organisations are financed through a variety of ways viz. by the government, by foreign agencies as well as through community and self generated sources. Berman and Khan have put together a few experiences of community financing as an alternative model. There is no doubt that this collection is extremely useful for researchers and policy makers who can use it to further the debate on health care financing in India.

While such exercises in health care financing are important, experiences of most democratic societies have shown that decisions are dictated more by political considerations rather than cost effectiveness. This would explain why India has evolved a health care system which is curative and urban based and therefore does not respond to the needs of the majority who live in rural areas. Sathyamala, Sundharam and Bhanot in their book *Taking Sides* discuss how socio-political forces have shaped health and health care in India. Their analysis is based on a wide range of data: government documents, international and national studies. These show how socio-economic and political considerations play a crucial role in determining priorities in health. This book should be extremely valuable to grassroot workers, health activists, researchers and policy makers who want to gain an insight into the complexities of the interface between health, health care and development.

The issues raised by the three books under review are important specially at a time when many developing nations are facing an economic crisis. In many cases this has resulted in a cutback on expenditure in social services like health and education which will have a negative impact on the health status of the people in the long run. When the Alma Ata Declaration was signed in the late seventies, its signatories recognised the need for an integrated approach to primary health care. It was at this meeting that the slogan 'Health For All by 2000 A.D.' was adopted. However most countries are nowhere near attaining this goal in the next seven years. If anything the global picture of health and health care is even more grim. What is really required is political will on the part of governments and a popular movement among the people demanding better health care. Neither of these is in evidence in India.

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To Live, Light And Lead

Sangeeta Agarwal

DIET DISEASE AND DEVELOPMENT

By Wade C. Edmundson, P.V. Sukhatme and Stella Edmundson

Macmillan India Ltd., 1992, pp. 324, Rs 145.00

"The interactions between diet, disease, human health and the surrounding environment are so intense and so variable from person to person and place to place that we can accept no single theory of development."

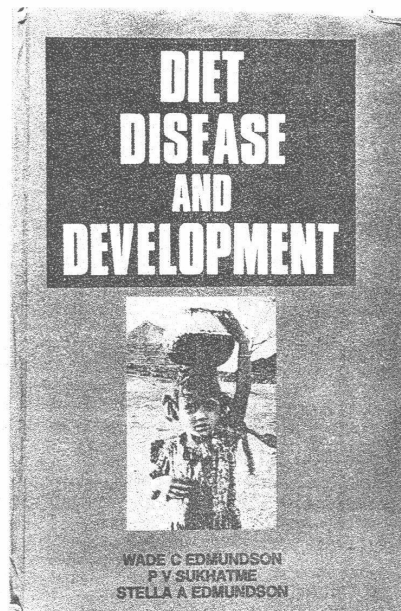
In a world still grappling with complexities of human interactions and susceptibilities to forces both internal and external—a host of intermediary variations with environment, diet, disease and human health make it a difficult task indeed to deduce from these variations a simplistic theory. It is this very thing that the authors are avoiding in their book, *Diet, Disease and Development*.

At the outset we are told that the dominating and everchanging relations within make it impossible to explicate or even to comprehend aspects of diet, disease and development. However, the attempt here is to understand these variables/interactions in a specific context at the macro level of the developing world and at the micro level in India and Indonesia—both populous and diverse with common approaches to and difficulties with development.

The book can serve as a basic text for social science students concerned with the third world health problems and indicators and even as a supplemental text for doctors, nurses and primary health care workers. It is only opening the door to acknowledging the importance of human and environmental variation in the developing world and to questions leading to those variations.

On a larger scale the book has specific concentrations on major diseases and nutritional problems of the context yet it manages at the same time to keep a balanced focus on the individual's well being which is really the bull's eye: "Health is not the absence of disease and stress; health is human balance. Good health corresponds to dynamic stability, normal function and homeostatic control. Ill health corresponds to a state of instability, loss of function and failure of self-regulation."

While still grappling with the complex interactions the book directs us to some key determinants which can attempt—even within the constantly variable scenario—to redress the situation.



As it happens India and Indonesia share a development background and also health patterns and priorities given a similar sociological locale, yet studies indicate variations in mortality and prevalence of disease.

In the exploration of these patterns the authors have paid careful attention to the complex relations between diet and disease and infer that diet deficiency and disease not only interact with each other but also with the immediate economic, physical and cultural environment. Very often infections, inadequate medical knowledge and the inability to access proper treatment become the most common causes of ill health in the poor nations.

Whereas there are no simple and universal solutions to health problems it is true that self care and self responsibility can be treated as keys to good health. Sustained improvement in the minds of individuals, a sense of responsibility for one's own health and welfare with education as the catalytic aspect can clarify concepts of nutrition, health, hygiene to eventually lead to a decrease in morbidity and increased productivity.

Education is clearly the key to development where sustainable socio-economic development will be a result of a shift from traditional to innovative ways of thinking. New thought patterns are fine-tuned with the benefit of education and have a better chance of being realised into incremental development over time.

This book is not only about the distribution, incidence and significance of disease, it is also not about the medical background and the therapeutic management of priority problems in the field of diet

and disease—in fact in dealing with the context of the developing countries it does not talk at all about the health care facilities and systems prevalent. Perhaps any mention of those would require a separate study altogether. The book is about belief—belief in the fact that we as individuals, partaking of this holistic complex can mould our levels of health and fitness. "The human organism is constantly changing. We are our own authors. We believe in plasticity and variability of the adapting human organism."

Thus one can see education and motivation as crucial to determining human health and development. The authors admit also that as exponents of these complex relations and resultant understanding they will ever be involved in a process of examination and definition, the searching for a still higher level of understanding. Since the most dramatic and genetic fact about human beings is their intelligent adaptability—the authors promise—that it would remain their goal to define a range of human health options within which one could effectively and sustainably develop and comfortably function as physically sound organisms.

The book is dedicated to a village girl Jyoti, to live, to light and to lead her family—the illiterates is important as this book too serves to offer options of living, lighting and leading despite many questions remaining unanswered and many problems still unsolved.

Sangeeta Agrawal, a freelance writer, is currently working as Project Officer with the Australian Development Assistance Programme in India.

A Fascinating Study

Anju Virmani

STRONG WOMEN, WEAK HEARTS: WOMEN AND HEART DISEASE—A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

By Mantosh Singh

Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., Delhi, 1993, pp. 210, Rs 95.00

In hospital studies of practically any illness in India, the number of males affected is more than the number of females. This does not mean that women are less prone to diseases, but rather that when ill, they are brought to hospital for consultation or for treatment less often and much later. The gender bias which has existed so strongly in most societies has been reflected in medical care as well. When the female falls ill, she is given less attention, and taken to medical professionals much later; expensive tests and treatment are refused by the family more often; mortality is higher. On the professional side of it, physicians are more likely to dismiss a woman's symptoms as "all in your mind", "attention seeking" or "oh, some gynae problem", less likely to order investigations, and when planning research, less likely to focus on women.

This situation is changing somewhat as women's issues are gaining attention, particularly in the US. In medicine, it is being realized that the previous assumption that many illnesses were less serious in women, was perhaps because they were less seriously studied in women. Heart disease is a case in point. Researchers find that heart disease is an equal opportunity killer, and the apparent immunity women seemed to enjoy from heart disease is not so absolute. In this context the book by Ms Mantosh Singh focussing on heart disease in women is topical and relevant. After she was found to be having a heart rhythm problem (attacks of very high heart rate), she spent three years researching on women and heart disease. This

book is a result of that labour. Born and brought up in India, settled in the United States, she has tried to evaluate the impact on Indian and American women, giving it a personal, lay focus.

The author has tried to cover all areas of heart disease, looking at the philosophical side (the doctor-patient relationship, the Body-Mind Connection, the double standard), at individual conditions (mitral valve prolapse, rheumatic heart disease, coronary artery disease, etc.), as well as investigations (EKG, TMT, Echo, Thallium test, angio, etc.). Each chapter begins with the major points which are explained in detail in the following text. Her points are made using her own experiences as human being, woman, patient, researcher and friend, her illustrations and quotations drawn from her experiences, conversations and reading. It is a task of formidable proportions, and her attempt has been throughout to "understand women and heart disease, . . . to put it down in a simple and personal way. The message is simple and clear: Inform yourself about heart disease and refuse to be its victim. I will show you how."

She presents some frightening statistics. Disease of the heart arteries take 12 million lives annually, of which half are from the developing world. 68 million Americans and an estimated 40 million Indians are suffering from some cardiovascular disorder; 1 million Americans, of whom half are women die of these illnesses every year. Women are relatively protected till menopause: if post-menopausal, diabetic, or smokers, especially if black, they do worse than men. Heart attack, in fact, is the number one killer of American women. Several large epidemiological studies in the US have studied only men. It was shown that only 4% of women who tested positive for heart disease (vs. 40% men) were recommended further testing.

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She makes several telling points. Much of this morbidity and mortality is preventable or reducible. Obesity, smoking, wrong diets, a sedentary life, constant stress, diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, and high blood lipids, all contribute to heart disease. Healthy life style is stressed again and again. Physicians can often be overly patronizing, dismissive, or just plain wrong: more so if the patient is a woman. Therefore do not ignore body

all our beautiful silk clothes outside, underwear was like gunny sack, [who needs to strip their underwear for an EKG??], . . . I put on my red silk dress and flowing red coat, my favourite, the Indian bridal red color, great for my Indian coloring. . . . I put on my wonderful extravagant Gucci shoes. . . . She quotes only American statistics, yet often seems to extrapolate them to the Indian context (with occasionally incongruous results). She seems to be writing this book more with an American readership in mind, so the elaborate explanations of Indian phenomena and of 'Eastern serenity' get a bit tiresome at times. More seriously, perhaps while trying to be easily understood, she assumes the reader's intelligence to be so low that she frequently repeats the same fact or point several

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The strong points of the book are the personal touches, the mixed perspective of Ms Singh (who has seen life both in India and America, both strong family ties and a broken marriage, both the patient's and the healer's side), the mix of facts and opinion, and its simplicity and conversational style. These are also its weak points. Ms Singh often gets carried away by descriptions of her own anecdotes and experiences, not always strictly relevant ("I get up and put on my beautiful American underwear, in India we wore

times, often on the same page. This is the book's biggest flaw: it is so very loosely written, flitting back and forth, with repetitions, garrulous diversions, mix-ups, that at times it needs perseverance to keep plodding through it.

All this is a pity, because the area is, as I said, topical and fascinating. While extensive work has gone into the book, it could have been far more readable if it had been more tightly written.

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Urdu Literature in the Nineties

Syeda Saiyidain Hameed

In its series of Regional Languages Special, *The Book Review* is presenting an issue on modern trends in Urdu literature. To provide a contemporary view of Urdu literature, we are featuring reviews of works that have appeared in the 1990s. This review article is an overall view of literature with special emphasis on the trends that have emerged in the last decade. At the start, a popular misunderstanding has to be removed, an instance of which we encountered while explaining the purpose of this issue to a friend. "Your task must be easy," she said. "Surely, there must be very little being written for you to have much of a choice." It is important to remember that this type of ignorance and stereotyping is not only factually incorrect but inadvertently hurtful. Despite Urdu readership having suffered a major setback since Independence, and Urdu publishing going through dire straits, literature has survived and survived well, through the tireless efforts, albeit of a few writers, readers and publishers. The evidence of this is presented in this issue.

The greatest volume of work has been produced in poetry, followed by the novel and short story. Drama and humour and satire have fewer practitioners although an increasingly enthusiastic audience.

Urdu has always been fertile ground for poetry. During the decade in question, the ideology of progressive writers was respected by the younger poets as defective and deficient. It was generally believed that the poet should have complete freedom of expression and not be subjected to any external control, like a manifesto etc. *Jadeediyat* or modernism had been gaining ground from the late 50s and 60s. The poets of the 80s and 90s have generally defended their freedom to write on subjects of their choice and not be bound by any guidelines. Their poetic devices too are highly individualistic and innovative—a far cry from the "Gul-o-Bulbul" of traditional poetry.

Ghazal and Nazm anthologies abound during this period. Although there is greater interest in ghazal, *nazm* has seen more experimentation. *Nasri-nazm*, meaning prose, has gained acceptance, also has *azad nazm* (free verse) and *mukhtasar nazm* (brief poem). Among the important poets of *nazm* are distinguished seniors like Akhtarul Imam, Sardar Jafri, Kaifi Azmi. The younger ones who have made a deep impact include Shahryaar, Zahida Zaidi, Amiq Hanafi, Sajida Zaidi, Rifat Sarosh, Mazhar Imam, Waheed Akhtar, Balraj Komal, Kumar Pashu. Regarding poets of

ghazal, there are hardly any who restrict themselves solely to this form, generally, they write both ghazals and *nazms*. But there are some who while maintaining its classical origin, have used the ghazal to reflect modern sensibility and contemporary concerns. Among the well-known are Bani, Shahryaar, Mohammad Alvi and Mazhar Imam.

Some of the important poetry anthologies published in the 90s are Ghulam Rabbani Taban's *Ghubar-e-Karwan*, Zahida Zaidi's *Sang-e-Jaan*, Mashr Imam's *Band Hota Hua Bazaar*, Balraj Komal's *Parindon Se Bhara Aasman*, Zubair Rizvi's *Dhoop Ka Saiban*, Ajmal Ajmal's *Safarzaad*, Rifat Sarosh's *Vadi-e-Gul*, and Mohammad Alvi's *Chautha Asman*. Although modernism is the dominant trend, conventional poetry, complete with rhyme, metre and prosody continues to abound in magazines, journals and *mushairas*.

Another feature which began in the 50s and still continues is the revival and continuation of traditional forms of *Doha* and *Geet*. This is the manifestation of the research for Indian roots right from medieval and ancient India, including the Buddhist period. Krishan Mohan,

in 1907. He called his "invention" *afsana*, from the Persian *fusoon*, meaning magic. The trend of *Adab-e-Latif* (light literature) was thus started. The second trend started with Premchand's collection published in 1908, called *Soz-e-Watan*. Both trends found faithful adherents in the years to follow. After Premchand, the progressive movement became the dominant literary prose. In fact the first example of progressive literature is the last story of Premchand, *Kafan*.

In 1932, a short story collection *Angarey* created a stir in literary circles. It contained stories by Sajjad Zaheer, Rashid Jahan, Ahmed Ali and Mahmud-uz-Zafar. Subsequently banned by the Government of India, it was the prelude to the progressive movement which was formally launched in 1936. Writers like Krishan Chander, Ismat Chughtai, Rajinder Singh Bedi and K.A. Abbas dominated the literary scene. While the era was dominated by the Progressives, there were other important writers who were pursuing their own individualistic styles. In the direct line of Premchand were Upendra Nath Ashk, Razia Sajjad Zaheer, Ali Suhail Azimabadi, Hayat Ullah Ansari, Abbas

models. Individualism was emphasized in literary expression since it was the expression of the writer's innermost feeling. Prominent among followers of this trend are Balraj Meura, Surinder Prakash and Joginder Pal. Parallel to *Jadeediyat* is the Premchand style story, practised by Ramlal, Amina Abul Hasan, Kalam Hyderi and Sugra Mehdî.

The latest breed of writers while adhering to individualism are also social commentators, though often in post-modern idiom. Prominent among these are Salaam Bin Razzaq, Anwar Khan, Qamar Hasan, Anwar Qamar and Sajid Rashid.

The history of the novel is intricately connected with the short story because often the same writers use both genres. Maulvi Nazir Ahmed, regarded as the father of the Urdu novel wrote *Mirat-ul-Uroos* in 1869 with the objective of teaching mores and morals to young ladies. Ten years later Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshaar wrote *Fasana-e-Azad* in eight volumes, about the dying culture of Avadh, plus a dominant love interest. Twenty years later Abdul Haleem Sharar wrote his epoch-making novel *Firdaus-e-Bareen* starting the tradition of the historical novel. These three novels became the fountainheads of most of the ensuing trends.

Umrao Jan Ada was written by Mirza Ruswa in 1899, a naturalistic novel about the life of a prostitute. Premchand started writing in the early 1900s and created far-reaching currents of influence with his novels and political and social themes. The end of Premchand's life coincided with the beginning of the progressive movement. Sajjad Zaheer's *London Ki Ek Raat* set the ball rolling, and a spate of novels appeared, of varying degrees of excellence. Ismat Chughtai wrote *Tehri Lakeer*, Krishan Chander wrote *Shikast*, Ramanand Sagar wrote *Aur Insaan Mar Gaya* and Khwaja Ahmed Abbas wrote *Inqilab*. A type of writing, different from the progressives, is evident in Aziz Ahmed's *Gurez* and Aisi *Bulandi Aisi Pasti*. Other novelists continued to pursue their independent styles during what was essentially the progressive era.

One novelist who dominates the literary arena right from 1947 to the present day is Qurratulain Hyder who published her first novel *Mere Bhi Sanamkhan* at the age of 20. During the decade under review she has written two novels *Gardish-e-Rang-e-Chaman* about exploitation of women, and *Chandini Begum* about man's instinct to possess and the ephemerality

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Kumar Pashu and Sheen Kaaf Nizam are influenced by classical Indian mythology as reflected in their poetry. Recently people with a Hindi base have started writing in Urdu, creating a syncretic style.

During the period under review several short story collections and novels were published. In the short story genre, two parallel trends have existed from the beginning. The first was established through the earliest story by Sajjad Hyder Yaldaram, published in *Makhzam* (Lahore)

Husaini and others. Saadat Hasan Manto, Urdu's most controversial short story writer, wrote freely about the sordid aspects of sex to shock the staid society. Qurratulain Hyder's first short story selection *Sitaron Se Aagey* was published in 1945, and since then her individualistic style has continued to evolve towards excellence.

Jadeed (modern) *afsana* began to be written in the 1960s. *Jadeediyat* meant a revolt against oppressive traditional

of material possession.

Besides *Chandini Begum*, other important novels of the 90s are Abdus Samad's *Do Guz Zameen* and *Mahalma*, Haseen ul Haq's *Furaat*, Imamul Haq Naqvi's *Teen Bhatti Ke Raina*, Anwar Khan's *Phool Jaise Log*, Kashmirilal Zakir's *Mera Shehar Dhuun Dhuun Saa*, Paigham Afaqui's *Makaan*, Shifaq's *Baagh*. Most of these writers have first written short stories, and then by way of expanding their social, political and economic themes on larger canvases have written important novels.

Since the novelette is often discussed separately in Urdu, one may list the important practitioners in this field, writing in the 90s: Devinder Issar's *Khushboo Ban Ke Lautenge*, Yogeh Kumar's *Peggy Kramer Ka Ruhani Safar*, and *Sunflower*, Sajida Zaidi's *Manj-e-Hawa Paichan*, and Sughra Mehdi's *Jo Bachey Hain Sang Samet Lo*. Mehdi's earlier novelette *Raag Bhopali* is about a woman's struggle for identity. *Jo Bachey*... selected for review, is an ironical look at the tendency to judge others only on established social norms.

In the dramatic genre there have been momentous changes from the past. The first play was Agha Hasan Amanat's *Inder Sabha* written in 1953. Next came Agha Hashr Kashmiri's historical-poetic-romances like *Yehudi Ki Laiki*, *Rustom-o-Sohrab*. Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj's *Anarkali* created a landmark in Urdu drama. The richness of Urdu translations from Russian, then English, French and German plays, gave further impetus to playwrights. In 1926, Syed Abid Husain wrote *Parad-e-Ghaflat*, the first comedy using the modern idioms. Mohammad Muejeb, a contemporary and colleague of Syed Abid Hussain, wrote and produced several successful plays on the Jamia Millia stage in the 1940s and 50s. His *Khana-e-Jangi* is about Shahjehan's last days and the conflict between his sons, with particular emphasis on Dara Shikoh, and his Sufi pir, Sarmad Shaheed. *Aazmaish* is about the 1857 struggle for independence and *Habba Khatoon* an eponymous play, about the Sufi poetess of Kashmir.

Theatrical sub-genres like radio plays, operas and dance-dramas were also written in the last three decades. Significant dramatic works of the 90s are Shamim Hanafi's *Zindagi Ki Taraf*, Ibrahim Yusuf's *Uljhaave*, Rifat Sarosh's *Dagar Pangat Ki*, Sajida Zaidi's poetic-play *Dard Ki Sarhad Koi Nahin*, Anand Lahar's *Nirvaan*, Kamal Ahmed's *Gardaab*. Zahida Zaidi's two plays and a book of Anton Chekhov's translations are recent publications. *Doosra Kamra* is a unique example of the theatre of the absurd. *Sekh-e-Azam* which she calls an epic has been selected for review.

Humour and satire, also an important part of Urdu literature, was first seen in poetry. *Zarafat* (humour) was an endearing quality, which often formed only a part although sometimes the entire corpus of a poet. In prose it started appearing right from the works of Nazir Ahmed

and Sarshaar, in the form of brilliant passages of humorous writing. It is an important component of Mirza Ghalib's letters, and becomes a popular feature of the magazine *Awadh Panch* published from Lucknow in 1877. The humorists who have been an unending source of inspiration for future generations are Fatehullah Beg, Rashid Ahmed Siddiqui, Patrus, Shaukat Thanvi and Azim Beg Chughtai.

The themes popularly explored by the present day humourists are on as varied subjects as the pathetic state of Urdu language, corruption in all places, hypocrisy as a universal phenomenon, economic disparities and our dying values and civilization. Writers like Fakir Taunswi, Yusuf Nazim, Ahmed Jamal Pasha, Wajahat Ali Sondalvi, Bharat Chand Khanna, have been faithful practitioners of humour. Travelogues are another vehicle of humour, e.g. Mujtaba Husain's *Japan Chalo*, Sughra Mehdi's *Mushahidat-e-Ibn-e-Batuti*. Some of the important books on humour and satire, published in the 90s are Dilip Singh's *Sarey Jahan Ka Dard* and *Goshey Mein Qafas ke*, Shafiq Farhat's *Gol Mall* and Yusuf Nazim's *Fil Haqeeqat*.

This brief summary of Urdu literature has obvious limitations, the most formidable one being the difficulty of making literary judgments and assessments based on an output of only ten years. Writers have experimented with content and style, but while their issues momentarily appear crucial and their styles samples of well-wrought artistry, the question is, will this literature endure the judgment of time? In poetry, new experiments have ranged from 'simple modernism', to what may be called 'anti-poetry'. With the reader being untutored in classical traditions, writers have had to turn to indigenous sources and devices. Interestingly the new writers and readers are approaching Urdu by way of Hindi. This is equally true in prose. Experiments in prose, particularly the short story, consist of frequent use of and innovations in allegory, symbolism, parable, in new sounds and tones. Some stories do not have a beginning, middle or end. There are writers who seem to be on 'their own trip' without much concern for fame or publicity. Others are painfully conscious of their social milieu. In a word, Urdu literature, like the literatures of other Indian languages, has to race ahead in order to keep up with the fast-moving life and fast-shrinking world that it is grounded in.

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LANDMARK IN URDU FICTION

S.M.H. Burney

CHANDNI BEGUM; A NOVEL

By Qurratulain Hyder

Maktaba Jamia, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 422, Rs. 125.00



Qurratulain Hyder began writing at a time when Urdu novel was yet to establish itself as a serious genre in the poetry-oriented world of Urdu literature. In fiction, her immediate predecessors were Saadat Hasan Manto, Ismat Chughtai and Rajinder Singh Bedi— all of whom were writers of extraordinary merit. They divested Urdu literature from its world of fantasy and romance and gave it the hard and convincing texture of realism. However, it was left to Hyder to give it an extraordinary range and depth, and to bring into its ambit the hitherto unexplored areas of human thought and sensibility.

Hyder's first novel *Mere bhi Sanamkhane (I too have idols)* was published in 1949. Since then she has written seven novels and four novelettes, including the novel of epic dimensions *Aag ka Darya (River of fire)* 1959, and two volumes *Kar-e-Jahan Daraz hai (Life's tasks are endless)* 1977 and 1979.

Miss Qurratulain Hyder is a major figure in Urdu fiction in the second half of this century. She is a path-breaker, a trend-setter and an iconoclast. She has been deeply influenced by contemporary English novelists—James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen and Evelyn Waugh, to name a few. To my mind, she seems to have imbibed the spirit of the 'cerebral' novels of Aldous Huxley and Saul Bellow.

Her latest novel *Chandni Begum* published in 1990 is an important landmark in Urdu fiction. It is based on the story of a feudal Muslim family of Oudh, its countless relations and hangers-on before and after partition in one of the most turbulent periods of Indian history. The scion of the family Qimber Ali shunning all luxuries takes to radical and leftist ways, starts a newspaper, contests an election, loses it, marries a bohemian girl Bela from a down-at-heels 'family' theatrical company of Bombay and perishes along with her in a terrible fire accident in the ancestral mansion. Along with this other tales are woven together through meandering relationships and connections of the people working for the family. One such tale relates to a cousin Chandni Begum who narrowly missed being married to Qimber Ali and dies in this fire accident. Another tale is based on the fortunes of their cousins of 'Teen Katori House' one of whom migrates to U.S.A., another is deserted by her husband proceeding to Karachi, and the youngest Sofia, disabled by polio dies suddenly at the threshold of her long-awaited marriage. The story now passes on to the next generation linking it to numerous family connections—Parsees and their ways, an uncle in Calcutta and through him glimpses of the upper middle class in Bengal and an expose of the seamy side of life in slums in Bombay.

The novel brings out the decadence and decline of feudal Muslim families in U.P., fragmentation of such families in the wake of partition, supersession of old values, increasing immigrations to the West and impact of Western ways and mores, growing obsession with pseudo-mysticism. The author has also exposed, in a subtle and skilful manner the goings on of a God-man, funny ways of hippies and even Masjid-Mandir trouble in its embryonic form. At the same time she

has described the local fairs and festivals enriched by the folk-lore of Oudh.

Miss Hyder is an excellent story-teller. The novel is a web of tales so exquisitely interwoven that it reads like a connected, coherent and absorbing narrative.

Her protagonists are not mere marriage partners but true-to-life men and women. Although her canvas is fairly wide, yet she invests each one of her characters with a distinct identity. The portrayal of a third rate Urdu lyricist in a tinsel film company is very amusing indeed. The unforgettable character is, however Vicky Mian who is mentally disturbed by the catastrophe of partition but later regains sanity and acts as a general commentator on all that is happening around him. His comments are the essence of wisdom, though cynical at times.

Miss Hyder has perfected her own inimitable style suffused by her vast readings in the literature of the East and the West, philosophy, history, Sufism and the fine arts. Her prose is simple, unvarnished and limpid like the flowing water of Ganga. She uses known literary devices to the best advantage, and yet she excels in innovation. She has a subdued sense of humour that penetrates the narrative. She laces her prose with apposite Urdu verses that add to its charm.

Miss Qurratulain Hyder, as a novelist, is unique in Urdu literature in that she has synthesised our past with the present in order to usher in a better and brighter future. That is why in this age of marginalization of man her disillusionment does not degenerate into despair and defeat does not become disintegration. For her life does not come to an end with one 'lost' generation but goes on, as in this novel, with a new generation endowed with a greater determination, courage and hope.

S.M.H. Burney, retired I.A.S. officer and former governor of Haryana, is the author of several books, including *Iqbal: Poet Patriot of India which has been translated into several Indian languages. He is currently working on the compilation of the letters of Iqbal in five volumes, four in Urdu and one in English, entitled Kuliyaat-e-Makateeb-e-Iqbal.*

Exploration of Human Relationships

Syeda Hameed

JO BACHE HAIN SANG SAMET LO

By Dr Sughra Mehdi

Maktaba Jamia, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, 1990,
pp. 108, Rs. 24.00

The title of the novelette *Jo Bache Hain Sang Samet Lo* is taken from a poem of Faiz Ahmed Faiz. The quatrain is:

Na ganwao naruk-e-neem kash
dil-e-reza reza gunwa diya
Jo bache hain sang samet lo
Dil-e-daaghdhaar luta diya

Don't waste your half-drawn arrows
I have wasted my shattered heart
Take away whatever stones are left
I have gambled away my bruised heart.

"Why this title?" I asked the author. "Because, I see Husain, the protagonist as a target of social forces. He is surrounded by people who hold stones in their hand. It is a replay of the ritual of 'sang-saari'." The line from Faiz is plaintive. Husain's silence seems to echo the words, "gather up the remaining stones, because my heart which was full of bruises, I have gambled away." In other words, 'don't waste your target'."

An appropriate, though simplistic description of the novelette is 'exploration of human relationships'. In his preface, the well-known critic Shamim Hafsa says, "people remark that contemporary life, in keeping with the times has become much more complex than it ever was regardless of the fact that analysis and rationalization is ever on the increase, interpersonal relationships and human emotions continue to be difficult to understand, to say nothing of the impossibility of trying to unravel them. Sughra Mehdi tries to come to terms with this question" This novel, set in an intimate domestic situation is about the difficulties of interpersonal relationships.

The first Urdu novel *Nashitar* was written in 1790 by Hasan Shah. But novel as a popular genre developed after the 1857 uprising with Maulvi Nazir Ahmed's reformist novels *Mirat-ul-Uroos* and *Banat-un-Naash*. Around the same time Pandit Rathana Nath Sarshar wrote the first novel of romance and adventure, *Fasana-e-Azad*, and Abdul Haleem Sharaf

created the historical novel with *Firdaus-e-Bareen*. Rashid-ul-Khairi followed the reformist mode of "Deputy Sahib" as Nazir Ahmed was popularly known, with his *Subh-Zindagi, Sham-e-Zindagi* and *Hayat-e-Salika*. Mirza Ruswa wrote his famous reformist-romance *Umrao Jaan Ada*. During this time, the women who were reading Deputy Sahib and Rashid-ul-Khairi were preparing to enter the world of novel-writing specifically to address the problems of women. During this period the women were often reluctant to reveal their true identity; their authorship was anonymous.

From those initial forays into novel writing to almost a century later in 1990, Urdu novelists experimented with every type of narrative, but the most popular tradition was the reformist and the social novel introduced by Munshi Premchand. The novel under discussion belongs to another genre—the increasingly popular psychological or 'nafsiyati' novel. In her earlier novels *Purnai and Dhund* (the titles are evocative and suggestive), the author grappled with the problem of complex personalities juxtaposed against one-dimensional 'others'. In this, her latest novel, the problem, once again, defies solution.

The male protagonist of *Jo Bache...*, Husain is the existentialist hero, forever suspended between hope and hopelessness. The three female protagonists are shown in relationship to him—Sabahat, Rima and Zeba. Sabahat is his childhood playmate for whom his love remains unabated throughout his life. Zeba is the woman he lives with in a loveless marriage. Rima is a lifelong friend and confidante, for whom his feelings are never clear, even to himself. In every aspect of life Husain sees himself as a failure and an outcaste. Held in contempt by his own parents because of his inability to measure up to his siblings, he turns for comfort to the old family retainer Mamdu Cha and his young and devoted cousin Sabahat. The world which offers him solace and comfort is located in the servants' quarters, and consists of forbidden escapades with the servants' children, accom-

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panied by the faithful Sabahat. Mamdu Cha's spontaneous love and homespun wisdom, combined with Sabahat's unquestioning loyalty buffers him against the joint front offered by his entire family. So far, we encounter the world of children located in "good" and "bad" spaces. Enter Rima, a college friend of Husain and Sabahat, who reminds one of some of literature's most inscrutable heroines. She is at once the modern female, free from conventional sexual taboos. She fills her evenings with new lovers, but carries in her heart a secret desire to wear sindoor and dandle a child. She hides her passionate longing for Husain beneath an intricate swathe of friendship which she describes as "demanding nothing in return for the privilege of the permission to love". She is not a "bad" character in any sense of the word, but the havoc she causes in the lives of Husain, Sabahat and Zeba is nothing if not thoroughly evil. The only inexorable truth is her unawareness of the consequences of her actions. When she persuades Zeba to marry Husain, she is convinced that this would heal Zeba's wounds. She justifies her advocacy of Zeba to Husain on the ground that it was the only way he could be made to forget Sabahat. Thus she plays God and in doing so takes on the trappings of a sanyasin. White cotton saris and rudraksha malas are her license for meddling with lives and loves. The passage describing the discordance between Rima's newly acquired devdasi image and her old sensual core, is typical of the author's insight and facility with language.

"She had broken off with Kirti and become involved with 'bhagwan'. Now, she visited mandirs, fasted on Tuesdays,

spent days at Kashi and Hardwar, stopped eating onions and started wearing white. A small mandir had come up in her home... But even as the idols of gods and goddesses proliferated in her temple, it was the human idols ever on the increase in her heart. The highest pedestal was occupied by one with the likeness of Husain".

Mehdi's forte is creating gender awareness. The society of her novels is poised at the threshold of the post-modern. She does not impose her own judgement on the characters. Sabahat and Zeba are women who marry to fulfill society's expectations and perform their duty without expectation or excitement. Rima's deviant behaviour is offered without comment as if the novelist is saying *Ce'est la vie*. Husain remains a shadowy background figure providing a springboard function for the women. The gentle self-effacing hero is in much greater vogue in the literature of the last decades than the macho, so popular in earlier fiction.

The novel's canvas is restricted. Mehdi does not place her story against a historical background. There is very little regional or political flavour in her narrative. But the psychological expression is universally applicable. Although set in an Indian context *Jo Bache...* is a "happening" that can occur in any temporal or spatial frame.

* Stoning to death

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In The Existential Mould

Zohra Saiyidain

COLOUR BLIND

By Anwar Qamar

Qalam Publications, Bombay, 1990,
pp. 180, Rs. 30.00

During the 1960s, a new trend emerged in the Urdu short story writing as a reaction to the progressive writers movement which dominated it in the preceding decade. The subject and the focus of the progressive short story writers had been "the crowds" and the conditions of the material world. They viewed literature as a vehicle of political mobilization and Marxist commitment. In contradiction to this view, the post-modern trend is a shift from the external material world to the inner man. Literature is seen as an expression of man's inner life—its turmoils and torments and struggles and ambiguities. To convey it all, the post-modern writers adopted the abstract style of writing, borrowed their images from ancient Indian culture and mythologies, and expressed their meaning in symbolism. Added to this has been the belief that it is not necessary for a writer to struggle to be understood. *One writes for oneself*. Human life is so complex and layered that its depiction in a common idiom is impossible. The collection of short stories by Anwar Qamar represents this particular trend in Urdu literature.

The main and overpowering theme, running through all the stories in this collection is a relentless sense of desolation, despondency, narrowness and closure of life—its boredom, its stagnation, and its suffocation. In a couple of stories, there is a pale search for meaning, beauty, and hope in an otherwise unrelenting universe, whereas in all others are depicted an unrelieved sense of horror and violence and death. Thematically, these stories fall within the existentialist tradition in literature which, according to Gopi Chand Narang, is a growing trend among the new generation of Urdu writers. These stories are, in a distant way but clearly reminiscent of the Sartrean trilogy, particularly the *Age of Reason* and *The Iron in the Soul* which also depict hopelessness, and absurdity of life in the post World War II Europe.

These trends are capably tackled

through the use of symbolism, broken narrative, timelessness and a sense of the mysterious. The main characters are usually mysterious, so also the locales, the events, the atmosphere. The events of the stories leave the reader with a sense of the uncanny, and, at times, macabre.

In "Colour Blind", the first story, the author portrays, through a group of disabled persons in a small mountain town, life's stagnation, snail-like pace and utter boredom; he also shows, through a palatial home with beautiful coloured glass windows, a weak search for beauty and colour. The loss of that colour in the lives of the disabled leads to mourning and desolation. The contrasting irony is shown through the mysterious owners of the palatial house who are totally colour blind and are ultimately responsible for the destruction of the only patches of colour.

Again "Mohar Band" (*The Enclosed*) succeeds in conveying the suffocation of life. An unknown character tells the narrator, "We should keep this house as we got it (boarded). Who are we to change its form." Again, "A man came to my father and said, with dread in his voice, 'Save this child from exposure to this world'. My father wrapped me in a sheet and brought me home. I have not stepped out of this house since." The last lines of this story reflect a feeble search for the inner self rather than the outside world, through the symbolism of a deep underground basement and an upward climbing elevator. But the narrator becomes frightened of the inner search and closes the door.

In the same vein, a character in "Post Card" is shown to feel, "There exists a universe within me. Some parts of it is known, others, like deep dark woods, unknown." The narration of this story has no beginning, no end, nor a context in reality. Its locale is neither reality nor fantasy; no names, no relationships, no affiliations. A young man, two guardians, two post cards, death. It is hard to grasp what the central point is which adds up to a feeling of contextlessness and senselessness of life.

Two stories, "The Sacrifice" and "An Afternoon Entertainment" in this collection hit the reader like an explosion in creating a sense of unrelieved horror, desolation and revulsion, through perfection of bestiality and brutality in man—showing the extremism of "the act". The first succeeds in depicting the sickening dread and depravity in human existence and one man's unwilling acquiescence to it. Two men take a human being in place of an animal for sacrifice; banking on the superstitions of the villagers to accept their story that the animal transformed itself into a man through an evil spirit in him. The second story, "An Afternoon Entertainment", portrays the horror of sheer violence and its experience and dread by a man, T. Through part real, part hallucination, including paintings of an artist, are created feelings of fright, panic and desolation everywhere, "in tea houses, roads, in entertainment places".

Another important device in some of these stories is the allusions to ancient Indian culture, its philosophies, practices and mythologies as a backdrop. The author claims that his stories are "based upon" (the tazmeen) of the epic of *Mahabharat*. "Father Lost", "The Hunt" and "In Trust of Luki" belong to this category.

In "Father Lost", an old man tells the youngmen, who, frightened and suspicious of the inexplicable change in their father are cruel to him: "According to our faith, your father has now moved from worldly life (Grahasth Prasth Ashram) to the life of renunciation (Van Prastha Ashram). I am convinced that very soon he will take sanyas. The moment he begins his sanyasi life, he will, from that moment on, cease to be a member of your family, he will be one with the whole human race. The unit will merge and be lost in the totality".

In the story called "The Hunt" an ancient village on the banks of a rivulet, with the fish dying, has villagers with naive faith in the guidance of a cave-dwelling Sadhu, Shambhoo (who turns out to be a fraud) whose solution to this calamity consists of making an offering of seven grains, seven fruits, seven vegetables tied to a corpse to the evil wrathful one—the entire depiction, locale and language is illustrative of the device of using Indian Mythology.

The final story, "In Trust of Luki" (Luki being the river God), depicts pessimism, escape and a directionless search, epitomized in the remark of a character, "Future path leads only to a dark cave"; however it ends with a ray of hope in entrusting the future to the young though they can destroy it also.

In sum, this post-modern trend among the Urdu short story writers, i.e. to turn from the modern Westernized idiom locale to the images of ancient Indian culture and mythology, mirrors their urge to find roots for their art and literature solidly in their own country and heritage with the backdrop and references from ancient Indian beliefs, superstitions, magic, as well as religion and philosophy. The author presents stories with hopelessness and superstitious dread as their main focus. Through mysterious characters and timeless and de-contextualized events are created images of suppressed evil, dread, hopelessness and stagnation in human existence today. These two themes reflect the symbiosis between the author's deep concern with the anomie of his own times and his keen awareness of the naive faith of an age past, expressed in and through the art of his writings.

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Social Exposés

Surinder N. Sehgal

NAKHLISTAN MEIN KHULNE WALI KHIRKI

By Saajid Rashid

Samta Prakashan, pp. 125, Rs. 40.00

Urdu short story as a genre emerged in the early 20th century. Stories have been a part of human life from times immemorial. Sometimes they have featured supernatural beings, but always romance and adventure. Most of the stories have been handed down through the generations, as grandmother's tales. Many of them were gathered into collections of stories and thus preserved for future generations.

Premchand was the most prolific short story writer, who dominated one-third of the 20th century. His stories were reflective of his times. Concerned with social, political and economic issues, he later became influenced by progressive ideas. His writings continued to attain force, until the end of his life when he wrote *Kafan* which reflects his literary maturity and visionary talent.

In 1932, a group of writers, Sajjad Zaheer, Rashid Jahan, Mahmood uz Zafar and Ahmed Ali brought out an anthology of short stories called *Angarey*. These writers were aware of the European literary trends which were reflected in this collection. This anthology paved the way for the Progressive Writer's movement. In 1936, a conference of Progressive Writers was held at Lucknow, which was presided by Premchand. At this conference a Manifesto was drafted, urging the writers to adopt new experiments based on the Marxist ideology. This movement attracted many new writers to Urdu fiction, some of the outstanding ones being Krishan Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Ismat Chughtai and Khwaja Ahmed Abbas. They created a new ambience of social realism, as opposed to the conventional norm.

Towards the end of the sixties, the influence of the Progressive Writers Movement started declining. A mood of disillusionment took over. The older writers held onto their optimism, while the younger ones like Anwer Azeem, Surinder Prakash and Balraj Mehra felt more despondent and desperate. They moved from straightforward narrative towards abstract expression. Their inspiration came from Sartre, Camus, Kirkegaard and Kafka.

The next decade saw the return to realism, but of a different nature. This realism was manifested in structure, form, unity, concept and characters of short stories. Some stories of this period blend the natural with the supernatural to create a new reality. The narrative form, however continues as a convenient mode for those writers who prefer to tell a straight story. Younger writers follow this tradition with the stamp of their distinctive styles.

Sajid Rashid is not only a story writer, he is an artist, cartoonist, and a social and political activist. His stories reflect all these various facets of his life. He paints a verbal picture of the times we live in. He draws sharp caricatures of the inequalities in our society. As a journalist he comments on the political and social conditions, and as an activist he speaks out against social ills, political hypocrisy, and human exploitation—all these while adhering to the technique of story telling.

Sajid Rashid is among the new writers who came into prominence during the seventies and eighties. These writers were modernists, who chose topics and themes to portray their own inner agony, and use abstract expressions and symbolic idioms to express them.

At the beginning one finds that under the influence of the abstract their stories were merely confused dreams of an agi-

tated mind. Gradually, however, their writings became more peaceful and they started relating to the outside world. The collection of short stories by Sajid Rashid *Nakhlistan Mein Khulney Wali Khirki* is one such effort.

Sajid Rashid is not only a story writer, he is an artist, cartoonist, and a social and political activist. His stories reflect all these various facets of his life. He paints a verbal picture of the times we live in. He draws sharp caricatures of the inequalities in our society. As a journalist he comments on the political and social conditions, and as an activist he speaks out against social ills, political hypocrisy, and human exploitation—all these while adhering to the technique of story telling.

The theme of his first story "Sham Ke Parindey" is nothing new. He shows human greed in the form of hatred between two brothers for the sake of ancestral property. But the manner in which the author has dealt with it is new. This story makes a profound impact on the reader.

The focus of the stories "Sone Ke Dant" and "Nakhlistan Mein Khulney Wali Khirki" is on women. In the first one he shows how even in these modern times a woman is subjected to all kinds of cruel and unjust treatment and how helpless she is when pitted against such indignities. He also portrays how this male-dominated society exploits her in the name of religion. In this story, a husband sets his wife on fire, and then with the connivance of a mullah, he manages to change her dying statement which had been given earlier by her to the police on the insistence of her younger and liberated sister. The cruel irony of the situation is that the sister is then forced to marry this murderer whom she detests, for the sake of the children, family honour and out of fear.

The second story is of a woman who considers her sexual desires a sin and tries to repress them. She is then raped repeatedly and as a consequence feels such intense sexual pleasure that she refuses to identify the culprit even though she recognises him. She keeps reliving the experiences and gets a guilty kind of

thrill out of it. This story is a hard-hitting satire on the double standards in society where different yardsticks are applied in dealing with the sexual desires of men and women.

"Barf Ghar" is a symbolic story. In this the writer has portrayed the decline of the socio-political value system of the country. This is achieved through the words and deeds of various passengers travelling in a Rajdhani train. An old man ventures into this compartment and finds himself at odds with this atmosphere. He is unceremoniously pushed out of this compartment. The old man symbolises all the traditional values and ideals which have become outdated in this modern society. The end is expressed beautifully, "The old man is no more among them. The khadi clad worker, the turncoat, the police constable, T.C., the municipal counsellor and the young man are all quiet. But for some unknown reason, the ticking of the old man's ancient watch continues to be distinctly heard in the compartment".

The theme of "Do Pahar" is again the exploitation of women. Whenever a woman seeks justice, she finds to her horror that her tormentors are the very same people who sit in judgement on her and who are called as witnesses. She has no option left but to maintain complete silence.

The story "Daku" has a similar theme. It relates to police brutality. There is a dacoity in a village and the police force that comes to save the villagers from the dacoits rapes and molests their women instead, and returns triumphant, having done its duty, and the question hangs, who is the Daku?

"Ham Sab Aur Woh" is the weakest story in the collection. It has a journalistic trend. "Mulzim" is a good story in which the writer tries to show that all those who perpetrate tyranny and injustice are found at all times and in all societies. They may wear different masks but their evil deeds remain the same. Yet there are some people whose lives are dedicated to lofty ideals and who keep fighting against injustice and terrorism without any desire for personal gain or fame. The hero of "Mulzim" is one such person, Dadaji, who is a thorn in the flesh of the self-seeking types that perpetuate this corrupt system. He succeeds in pricking their conscience and then fades away.

The writer has successfully raised his voice against the injustice, inequality, and hypocrisy in our society—this not done with loud fanfare but subtly by exposing the ills that plague society. Saajid Rashid has mastered the art of story telling. He does not get entangled unnecessarily in abstractions and complicated symbolism in his narration.

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Born Of Journey

Sugra Mehdi

SAFARZAAD

By Ajmal Ajmali

Sophia Publishers, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 150, Rs. 30.00

When Mir Taqi Mir said—
Don't call Mir a poet because
It is the sorrow that he has
gathered
which has become his collected verse

it was neither poetic conceit nor an undue emphasis on excessive pain and sorrow. What he meant to express was that it was not he who made a conscious effort to become a poet. On the contrary it was the muse or poetry who compelled him to adopt her. The same is true of the poetry of Ajmal Ajmali.

While he continued to transact the business of daily life, poetry remained for him the dominant, not dormant factor. His poetry is a commingling of his internal and external world. *Safarzaad*, meaning "born of journey", is a poetic account of his existentialist quest. In his own words, "*Safarzaad* is a collection of my *ghazals* and *nazms* reflecting my experiences during life's travels. This journey began forty years ago the essence of which is contained in one couplet".

Since we embarked on our journey
We have never looked back.

Ajmali was the successor to Khanqah-e-Ajmali, a Sufi hospice. His tutelage under liberal thinkers like Dr. Aijaz Husain, Firaq Gorakhpuri, P.C. Gupta, Ram Kumar Verma, nurtured his socialistic inclinations. Under this influence he joined the communist party.

This recognition as a progressive poet came as early as his Allahabad days. Later, he moved to Delhi where Sajjad Zaheer influenced his formal affiliation with the communist party. That politicised his struggle for democracy and secularism. His poetry is a protest against ignorance, social injustice and narrow-mindedness, finally combining his heredity with his acquired belief. Whenever the daily grind of living gave an opportunity, he poured his feelings into exquisite compositions of *nazms* and *ghazals*. The type of individual he is disallows him from using poetry as a ladder to fame or a means for acquiring wealth.

Sincerity is the distinguishing feature of Ajmali's poetry. Poetic devices are not

used for decoration. He does not soar to high philosophical heights. His poetry defies labelling. His long poem "Sarguzisht" (The Happening) is an example of this quality. The emptiness of his wakeful nights symbolizes his entire life. The last stanza is particularly evocative.

Ham magar un-ginat afraad ki is
duniya mein
kis ko ek fard ki haalat ka khayal ata
hai.
Meri uljhan meri bechaini ke hasaas se
door
waqt maanus guzargaah pe guzra hi
kya
Dhal gayee raat mere khwaab bhi dum
tor chuke
subh ayee hai par is darja thakan hai
ke na puuchh
Har ghari jaise quayamat kighari guzri
hai
Raate guzri hai ke ek puri sadi guzri
hai.

In this world of numerous people
Who cares for an individual?
For away from my restless companion
Has time passed over a familiar road?
Night ended, my dreams have gasped
their last.
Morning dawned, but what bone-tired-
ness!
Every moment has passed like the stroke
of doomsday
was it one night or one century?

Another facet of Ajmali's poetry is optimism. He is never defeated by life although the setbacks sometimes cause intense tiredness. When his dreams of a brighter future disintegrate, he gathers himself with lines such as these:

Chalo phir soch letey hain
ke ham par khatm hoti hai aziyat ki
amaldari
Hamaery baad kal jo log is dharti pe
ayenge
Voh is suraj ki dilkash roshni mein
Apne armanon ki mehfil khud sajay-
enge
Shikast-e-khwab ke is karb se na
asshna honge
Jo hum sab ka muqaddar tha

Chalo phir soch letey hain.
("Shikast-e-Khwab Ke Baad")

Come, let us think again
That with us has ended the supremacy of
pain.
After us the people who will come to this
Earth,
In the beautiful light of this Sun
Will arrange the mehfil of their longings
They will not know the pain of broken
dreams,
Which was the fate of all of us
Come, let's think again.
(After the shattered dream)

The two parts into which Ajmali has divided the *ghazals* of his *Divan* are "Nazr-e-Ghalib" and "Nazr-e-Mir". The titles suggest that some *ghazals* were written under the influence of Ghalib and others were inspired by Mir. But I don't find this division significant. The two natural categories into which his *ghazals* fall are "classical" and "modern". The influence of Ghalib, Mir and other classical poets is evident in the former category. Examples of his classical style are given in a few random couplets.

Nakhun apne dil bhi apna, sar mein
junoon bhi lazzat-e-gham bhi.
Charagaron kuchh hosh mein aao,
zakham bhi ab kya achha hoga?

(The nails are ours, ours are the hearts,
centres of madness and pain-pleasure in
our brains. Physicians, wake up! This
wound, how will it ever heal now?)

Dil bajuz tere kise ilm ke ye qatra-e-
ashk
Kitney dukh jhele hain jab deeda-e-tar
tak punhchey.

(Oh heart! Besides you who knows how
these drops of tears
Suffered endlessly before rising to these
dampening eyes.)

Some examples of his modern *ghazals*:
Khoon tapka to na Hindu na Musal-
man nikla
Marne wala bhi hamari tarah insaan
nikla.

(When the blood dripped he was neither
Hindu nor Muslim. Like us, the dying
man was just a human being.)

Har taraf qatilion ka majmaa hai
Apni basti ko karbala kahiye

(Surrounded on all sides by Executioners
call your basti "Karbala".)

Dil ki haalat kya batlayen reza reza
toot raha hai

(What can I say of my heart's condition,
it is breaking piece by piece.)

Kuchh din tehero puchhney walon
chappenge akhbaar hamen

(Wait a few days O well-wishers, Newspapers will publish us)

Finally, one couplet that contains the essence of Ajmal Ajmal's poetry:

Ajmal bharak rahi hai zamane mein
jitni aag
Ji chahta hai seeney ke under samet
loon.

(Oh Ajmal! I wish I could gather up in my heart the fire that is raging and consuming the world)

Although the poet of *Safarzaad* has equal facility with the *nazm* and *ghazal*, I feel he is a consummate artist of *nazm*.

The *nazms* of this volume can form a part of the best anthologies of Urdu poetry. This collection of poems projects the author's angst in the present social and political conditions. He does not capitulate before the current oppression and express the positivist view that it will change for the better. *Safarzaad* is a significant addition to the current corpus of Urdu poetry.

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immense possibilities of creative expression to young poets but also scope for experiment and innovation in the forms of poetry. In this connection mention may be made of the *ghazal* form that has been exploited with great variety and vigour by the new poets.

Mohammad Alvi, right from the beginning, betrayed dissatisfaction and apathy towards the popular trends of poetry which he seems to have found neither genuine nor authentic. He stopped writing after some attempts at poetry in the conventional style, until he discovered his moorings in the emerging literary trend in the late fifties and soon came to be recognised as one of the *avant-garde* of the new poetic sensibility in Urdu.

Alvi, like most of his kindred souls, writes about experiences and observations from daily life which remained unnoticed or were not considered worthy of mention by earlier poets. The said experiences are posited in short poems, refreshingly, and quite often with such vigour that the reader is really delighted and feels enlivened. Some of Alvi's earlier poems like "Tbne, Mariyam" (The Son of Mary) "Ghar" (Home) and "Kaun" (Who) are fine specimens of the poet's grip over his subject matter and novelty of approach. In the poem "Samandar Ka Bulava" (Invitation of the Sea), Alvi seeks refuge in the Sea, as he finds himself abandoned by Heaven as well as Earth:

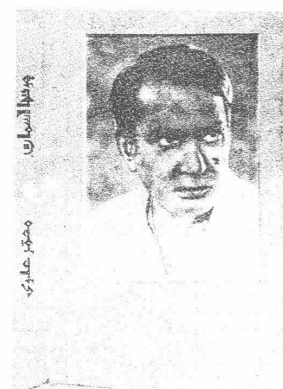
The sea is calling,
The sea is still restless for us;
It sobs and shrieks nightlong,
And looks for us the whole day on the shore.
The Earth is getting wary of us,
While we remain unnoticed by the heavens,
The sea alone offers a sanctuary.

Let's return to the sea,
In the bluish deep
Where shiny fish await us.
To learn to swim,
Is better than flying.
The sea is calling,
Let's return to the sea

In *Chautha Aasman*, Alvi has included a poem entitled "Pesh Lafz" (preface) which best defines his concept and view of poetry:

Words,
Words, that I and you speak,
In the twilight of those luminous words,
I make an attempt to see
Familiar objects—
More intimately.

This is not only Alvi's view of poetry but may also be taken as the unwritten credo of all the modernist poets who rejected the declamatory diction of the progressive writers and the conventional stock imagery of classical literary tradition. Another poem of the book under



review, entitled "Peshkash" (Offer) betrays remarkable innocence and simplicity:

Refrigerated water to drink,
Generous dose of *ghee* on *rotis*,
Spotless white bed-spread on a cot
A T.V. set to watch,
Come *Allah* to my home and,
Hide yourself where you like,

The poem may be likened to the great mystic poet Jalaluddin Rumi's "The Shepherd's Prayer" in which a shepherd makes a similar offer to God in a different, pastoral setting. The shepherd offers to serve God by 'sewing his shoe', 'combing his hair', 'washing his clothes', 'killing his lice', bringing milk to Him', and kiss His little hand and rub His little feet. Alvi's poem offers interesting comparison to Rumi's poem in an altogether different setting without losing the charm and innocence of the shepherd's offer. "Kashmir in November" and "Rishwatkhori Dahae" (The Bribe-extracting Decade or the Deadly 60s) offer very pungent comments on the helplessness of man as a victim of the vagaries of nature and ageing. Another poem of Alvi published in his earlier collection of poems, *Teesri Kitab* (1978) entitled "Raaste Tumse Naraz Hain" (Roads are cross with you) deserves to be mentioned as a fine specimen of the poet's sensitivity and extremely unusual treatment of the familiar and the commonplace. It says:

Do not come out of your houses
in the morning.
Roads, in early morning hours,
Holding young children to their
breasts,
Take them to school.

...
Seeing you, it is feared, the roads
might panic,
and in confusion,

In Quest Of New Idioms

S. Naqi Husain Jafri

CHAUTHA AASMAN

By Mohammad Alvi

Zehn-e-Jadid, Delhi, 1990, pp. 160, Rs. 50.00

Mohammad Alvi, whose collection of poems, *Chautha Aasman* (The Fourth Sky) was selected for the prestigious 1992 Sahitya Akademi Award gets a rather belated recognition. He has been writing poetry since the late fifties and has published four collections of poems—*Khaali Makaan* (The Empty House 1963), *Aakhiri Din Ki Talaash* (In Search of the Last Day 1968), *Teesri Kitaab* (The Third Book, 1978) and lastly, *Chautha Aasman* (1991), the work for which the Academy of Letters has given him the award.

The Urdu poetic tradition underwent a change in the late fifties; partly disillusioned by the monotony and hollowness of the progressive writers and partly disenchanted by the soul-less rhetoric and cliché-ridden themes of the classical genres of Urdu poetry, as championed by the *Halqae-Arbaab-e-Zauq*, (Circle of the Friends of Taste). Poets like Khurshid Ahmad Jaami, Sulaiman Areeb, Shaaz Tamkanat, Nasir Kazmi, Majid Amjad, Zafar Iqbal, Khaleelur Rahman Azmi, Sheharyar, Nida Faazli, Kumar Paashi, Zahida Zaidi and Mohammad Alvi looked towards exploring new poetic idioms and fresh treatment of conventional themes. The progressives writers, in the forties, had no doubt given the lead and a new kind of vigour both to the *nazm* and *ghazal* forms in Urdu but it did not last more than a decade as the scope of such literary traditions, by its very nature, has only a limited purpose to serve.

The young poets of the 50s not only discarded the beaten track of the *ghazal* but also the sound and fury of the senior contemporary writers as reflected in the *nazm* form, including the poetry of rebellious dissent and noble rage which characterised the dominant stream of Urdu poetic tradition in this period, particularly in the works of Faiz, Makhdoom, Majaaz, Jazbi, Sardar Zafri and Kaifi Azmi.

The younger poets of the 50s looked towards themes more earthly, familiar and pertaining to the world of sensations. The technically perfect composition of the poets of the Lahore school and the declamatory verses of the prophecy of the 'red-dawn' of the progressive writers, both lost their charm and relevance. The new poets looked 'inwards' re-creating and reassuring their existence and faith in themselves. They talked of things which were neither stunning nor morale-boosting. There was neither profound grief nor any reassertion of lofty ideals. The dominant voices of poetry in this decade reverberated with the echoes of a sense of defeat, alienation, hollowness and futility of the high ideals that once guided human destiny, and a sense of lack of purpose and direction in life. These poets were not only wary of 'commitment' but also suspicious of any kind of common strategy that might lead to the use of stock imagery and expected responses. They were highly individualistic and stuck to their personalised experience and view of life. This trend not only provided

some child may fall from their lap. Besides, the short poems improvising upon some of the better-known epithets and lines from Ghalib in *Chautha Aasman* are also noticeable for their freshness of treatment and inventiveness. There are some poems addressed to animals and birds which bring forth their familiar facets in an interesting manner.

Alvi's *ghazals* are also remarkable for their felicity of expression and refreshing treatment of the commonplace and the familiar themes. The *ghazal* form in its purist tradition did not entertain subjects other than what was considered high and lofty and worthy of a good man's consideration, not-withstanding occasional forays into the mundane and the lustful. The progressive writers replaced the 'beloved' with 'revolution' and its attendant imagery. The *ghazals* of Faiz are fine examples of the transformed *ghazal*. But the new writers of whom Alvi is a representative enlarged the canvas of *ghazal* so as to include everything familiar and unfamiliar, rare and commonplace and lofty and trivial into it. Alvi's *ghazals*, included in the book under review, offer to the reader a wide variety of themes—the cycle of days and nights; the sun, the moon and the stars; the mysterious knock at the door; the familiar bridge and the river; the sea and the rain; the apathetic, indifferent God; the city by night; the trees, the leaves and the Neem tree on the bank of a river; introspection and the most recurrent of them all, 'the home' which he strives to locate and discover.

Rishwatkhori Dihae
(The Bribe-extracting decade)

BY MOHAMMAD ALVI

Sixtyfive stopped me and asked,
"Who are you and what is your intent?
O.K., Want to proceed ahead
That's fine, but what do ye have to offer?"
I said, what more shall I give—
Sixtyone took away all my teeth
Sixtytwo, Sixtythree and Sixtyfour
Claimed my hair—
I now have only my eyes,
Though journey ahead is difficult,
If that makes you content
You may take away half of my eyesight,
But give me the Visa to proceed to Sixtysix.

From *Chautha Aasman*
Translated by Naqi Husain Jafri

Dr. Naqi Husain Jafri is a Reader in English at Jamia Millia Islamia University. His work in comparative literature has resulted in excellent English translations of Urdu poetry. He is the author of *Aspects of Drayton's Poetry* (Doaba House, Delhi, 1988).

An Artist's Response to Contemporary History

Amina Kishore

SEHRA-E-AZAM

By Zahida Zaidi

Aabshar Publications, Aligarh, 1991, pp.150, Rs.68.00 (hard cover), Rs.40.00 (paperback)

Sehra-e-Azam, the Urdu play recently published by Professor Zahida Zaidi, is self-admittedly a political satire. It is in fact extremely topical. Written even while the Iraq-US tangle was holding all other world interests at bay, it immediately brings to the fore, the point of view, not only of the author herself, but of millions of those who were acutely conscious of the unjust nature of the war. Many intellectual sensibilities were offended at the high-handed hoax and the monitored media-feeding by the US. To give credit to the judiciousness of the intellectual within the artist, one must speak of how Zaidi avoids high eulogies of the dramatic prototype of President Saddam—the much talked-about Behram. She sets him up as a protagonist by virtue of condemnation of the forces opposing him, led by the abominable Shahenshah Cactus. So did in real life Saddam acquire a hero status by virtue of the mass condemnation of the US stand. It is also interesting that the playwright has succeeded in creating reader sympathy for Behram (who is absent throughout the action) even while the ubiquitous Cactus stands condemned by his own words and deeds. It is a unique triumph of irony!

The play is powerful in more than one way. It projects all the tensions of a concentrated problem play while the topicality allows the play to achieve immediate relevance. It can also hold attention by its loyalty to a universal concept, Truth.

The conscious and comprehensive use of dramatic devices places the play in the genre of formal literature. The author's command over the formal structure of drama is obvious in the ease with which she combines the elements of the absurd with a realistic mode. The most beautiful aspect of the play is the manner in which she has made use of literary figures as modes of comment. The use of Beckett's characters, Didi and Gogo (from his masterpiece *Waiting For Godot*) as chorus characters has invoked the ethos of an endless wait for an ideal. Students of literature and Beckett fans will appreciate the way in which Zaidi has extended the roles of the original characters. In their reincarnation in *Sehra-E-Azam*, Didi and Gogo have many more roles to perform than in the original play. The innocent bewilderment of the simple-minded Gogo and the acute anxiety of the some-

what wiser Didi, represents the pained puzzlement of the common people. It also gives the necessary question-answer format to the narration so that the commentary is effective without costing the play its realism.

In one stroke of mastery over the medium, the author makes the two referential characters quite conscious of their literary origin. This feat renders the point of view they represent and also their function easily verifiable in terms of literature. As Didi says to his partner in distress, Gogo:

"...no one can see us. We have the power to be invisible at will. We represent the common man who can be neither seen nor recognised."

And, comforting the fearful Gogo, Didi says again:

"...We are characters from a literary masterpiece; and, we shall always live in the hearts of men. Some actor somewhere will always be playing our roles." (Translation mine)

Above all this, the value of the two Beckettian characters is mythical. They operate on a referential plane. They have been invested with a moral overtone and a dynamic dimension which demonstrates how literature can be used to create new meanings; in this context, to bring to bear a critical judgement upon current events. From this point of view, the note of purposefulness which is heard in the last words of Didi and Gogo, viz, the proposal to take the play to a wider public is, I think, an extremely suggestive device. The figures participating in the resolve being figures overlaid with literary motifs, the message one can easily read therein is that literature and literary voice alone can grasp or state the truth underlying contemporary events. The culling of universals from the immediate experiences is the business of literature alone. Thus Zaidi has definitely made a very valuable comment on the reusability of literature.

Another notable feature of the play is the pattern of sound that it generates. The speeches of the negative characters have a cacophony, a shrillness which at once arrests the attention of the reader and is opinion-forming in its function. The egotistical forces inimical to simple truth, affect us negatively by the degree and the quality of the sound they produce, in contrast to the tentative and uncertain

voices from the other side; e.g., the long and loud speeches of Emperor Cactus are in total contrast to the brief utterances of Didi and Gogo who voice the doubts and anxieties of the oppressed milieu.

There is a promise by the author in the foreword that the play will be produced on stage. No doubt a stage performance will highlight the suggestions of the play effectively. The author has also promised as English version of *Sehra-e-Azam*. One hopes that the English version will reach a larger readership and audience.

Contemporary history has been exploited time and again by literature as its subject matter, for the simple reason that its obvious relevance gives to the writer a sense of meaningful expression. However, there are at least two problems involved in that kind of thematic contemporaries. It is quite possible that the artist, being personally involved, and, writing about the event from close proximity to the issue, may tend to become subjective. In the present case, it is quite obvious that the crisis in the Gulf had affected the writer very strongly. (As she says in her introductory note, "The play *Sehra-e-Azam*, started to be written at the time when the Gulf war was at its critical peak. I was so deeply affected by that bloody drama that if my feelings were not translated into a creative venture, their intensity would have been unbearable for me.") Written under such compulsions, the play could easily have degenerated into an anti-US propaganda play. Having been a keen and insightful scholar of classical and modern drama, Professor Zaidi seems to have seen the risk of subjectivity. The devices of objectification are used skillfully but with utmost care so as not to intrude upon the unity of the action. In fact, the use of modern drama techniques like mime, the play-within-play format, disinterested commentators, euphemisms, hyperbole, fantasy—all these are dramatic measures which help to convey an ironic tone. And, if there is any tone which is antithetical in its effect to subjectivity, it is irony. On the other hand, Professor Zaidi's self-conscious use of the Absurd Drama conventions performs another and curiously different role from the one just alluded to. This is a very important achievement as it allows the dramatist to make that universal statement which a serious artist is expected to do.

At the moment, there is excitement in decoding the names and traits and in discovering familiar political figures hiding behind a thin allegorical façade. It must be admitted, however, that the play has that quality which will enable it to sustain interest long after the topic ceases to concern anyone but a stray researcher. That quality is its coherence and artistic integrity and a highly creative use of theatre language as mentioned above.

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Speaking of literature, Yusuf Nazim says, "The world of literature is the only world which has no pollution, provided it bears the name-plate of humour." Hence it was very refreshing to dip into this world and read the unpoluted collection of humorous essays, *Fil Haqeeqat* (In Truth) by Yusuf Nazim. These days there is a dearth of humour in Urdu literature. Gone are the days of great humorists like Shaukat Thanvi, Azeem Beg Chughtai, Patras, Farhat Ullah Beg and Rashid Ahmed Siddiqui. Hence writers like Yusuf Nazim, Mujtuba Husain, Dilip Singh and Aasi Saeed are very welcome.

Yusuf Nazim's *Fil Haqeeqat* is not really "Haqeeqat" or Truth, but his own humorous concept of one truth and many untruths. In one of his essays he points out, "Truth is not only bad for health but dangerous as well", and certainly he has no intention of courting danger or falling sick! Not only that but he staunchly defends this stand by saying "The negation of "hoot" cannot be "such" but a bigger "hoot". But this "hoot" in his book is harmless and very obvious, so it should be taken as the comic license of a humourist.

Yusuf Nazim is very skilful with the use of words. He uses them as a magician, producing rabbit after rabbit from his hat (read "hat" think "pen") If one could unravel his use of pen it would be an interesting exercise. But this requires an intellectual approach. More than funny it is very artfully executed, and to appreciate it one has to be well versed in Urdu literature, poetry, idioms, metaphors and

CLEVER HUMOUR

Syeda Saiyidain Hameed

FIL HAQEEQAT

By Yusuf Nazim

Nai Awaz, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 152, Rs. 45.00

phrases. His writings are full of anecdotes described with fun and pun. His humour is not straightforward or direct like Shaukat Thanvi's and Chughtai's. One has to decipher the sentences and the unending association of ideas from one thought to another to be able to enjoy them and appreciate his literary skills. He himself suggests to the reader at times to "re-read a sentence to be able to understand it".

Some of his essays like "Darwazay" (Doors) "Hooting ke Favaid" (Advantages of Hooting) "Chatrion" (Umbrellas, with which he is obsessed), "Unwan" (Title) and "Khuda Na Kare Hum hospital Jaen" (God forbid we go to the hospital) are pure clever humour with the humourist's exaggeration. Here we find fun for fun's sake and clever manipulation of words.

One of the functions of a humourist is also to be able to expose the hypocrisy and ills of the society he lives in, in such a manner that people can be amused by it, and yet get the hidden message. In his essay "Dhuvan Dhuvan" (Evils of smok-

ing) "Fashion" (about changing trends) "Naukri ki Talaash" (Joblessness and futility of degrees) and "Flap Nigari" (How to sell a book by a flap), he has tried to do just that. In describing the ridiculous and phony trends in our life in his own satirical and witty style, he also gives us a warning. The article on "Mirza Ghalib" is a hit at Door Darshan and its unlicensed licence to change the facts of recorded history. (This sentence reads like a phrase a la Nazim!)

The author's characterisation of his colleagues and literary personalities is specially engaging. He has described his fellow writers with wit, humour, honesty and affection but without any malice. For example, calling Ismat Chughtai "Queen Empress of Literature" and apologising for not calling her Mother Teresa (which in truth is the exact opposite of Ismat Apa). Not even a humorist can dare that comparison! His portrayal of Kunwar Mahinder Singh Bedi is specially touching and full of affectionate humour, and his description of Rashid Hasan Khan takes a fond dig at him while showering

praise as well. He writes about Fikr Tansvi that his greatest geographical achievement was to bring the name of a small place "Taunsa from the realm of insignificance to notorious importance". The mark of a successful humourist is that he can laugh at himself before he ventures to make fun of others in such a manner that they can laugh with him and not feel offended. Yusuf Nazim does just that.

In his last essay about "Hind-o-Pak humour seminar", he makes fun of himself when he is asked to preside over one of the sessions. Whenever he talks about himself it is with modesty (hoping, perhaps, that it will be considered false modesty!)

Like a true humourist Nazim exhibits the art of making a humorous mountain out of a molehill of a small incident. This is successfully evident in his descriptive essays. His portrayal of people, places, events and happenings in "Qayam Nama Karachi" (Stay at Karachi), "Thora sa Karachi" (A bit of Karachi) and "Hind-o-Pak Taz-o-Mazah Seminar, Delhi" (Indo-Pakistan Humorous Seminar) shows observation, instinctive appreciation of the ridiculous and the capacity to turn any situation witty.

Hali has called humour "A whiff of breeze in which the flowers of smiles and laughter bloom". Nazim's book evokes chuckles and amused smiles, but not outright laughter.

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The tradition of *Marsia* (Elegy), arrived via Iran and Arabia to the Indian soil. Here it was not confined to Urdu alone, but finds its influence in all the regional languages and dialects. In Rajasthan and Gujarat both Hindu and Muslim women recite these *rasai masnavis* (elegiac poems) with great pathos during the month of Moharram—the days of mourning, in lamentation for the tyranny unleashed on the martyrs. These *rasai masnavis* are called *Zaari* (lament). Perhaps, the time has come again today, when all of us, women in particular, should lament the fate of our martyred sisters, and weep for the tyranny and degradation unleashed on them during the recent riots.

*I am a woman, just a woman.
I am the splendour, wonder of life.
Foundation of humanity, not just a wife.*

*I am the certain fact of Being
Procreator of man, for all time fleeing.*

*Intoxicating fragrance of rose am I
Enchantment of youth, (a delight for the*

ODE TO THE LAND OF SURAT

Amina Kishore

ZAARI (Lament)

By Dr Razia Shabnam Abidi

*(eye)
I am the breeze, and I the cloud
The whirlwind, the vessel, the rain so
loud.
A butterfly so lovely, with rainbow wing
—A bolt of thunder, with lightning ring.
The luminous winged firefly alight
Like branches of flower, my arms in flight.
A sparkle of fire, a burning flame
A stream of light, that is my name
I, the gentle cooling of the moon.
The glow of Sun, that burns so soon.*

*The brilliance of stars, one sees perchance.
I, the inspiration of an amorous glance.
I am the flower, the dagger unsheathed.
A soul so simple, a gentle breed.
I am the song, and I the ghazal
And I the palace of marble, the Mahal.
I am the melody, the Singer's word
Am also the echo of the instrument heard.
This whole universe, is of my being.
The life, the breath, and all its meaning*

I am a woman, just a woman.

*I am the masterpiece that God created
A tale of beauty, that man narrated.
And thus all these, and fables more
Strangers and loved ones, they all swore
Day after day was I to hear
Tales heart-warming by near and dear.
Relishing these words, I know not why
I laugh, I sway, with joy I cry.
Each word, a pearl, I pick with care
With joy abundant, to dream, I dare.
Alas! but the dream so suddenly shattered
In the land of Surat barbarically battered.
The hate, the venom, the poison, the malice.
Villany of man, a man who's jealous.
It has shown me the mirror, and my visage
I wake from slumber, it was a mirage.
I think and ponder, reflect and mutter,
Burdened with shame, degradation I suffer
Am I so cheap, so worthless, so low*

No self, no being, no existence, no go
 A thing, a possession for traders galore
 To be auctioned and sold and used to lure
 It's me and my face that sells the ad
 My body, my flesh, in business bad.
 Dwellings of pleasure, do I adorn
 Tinkling of ankle bells, and I, the prone

I am a woman, just a woman
 The honourable, the modest, and demure
 To men insensate, that do procure
 Like the arid, land barren am I
 Bearing fruit and yet my earth is dry
 I, the devdasi, the sacred maiden
 Disgraced in worship, in temples ridden.
 Am pure and virtuous in heart and mind
 The beloved of all, the love one can find
 Yet puts me to test, the one, I desire

And burnt as proof, on a smouldering
 pyre.

Each breath I draw can cut me so deep
 For I, the chattel am the brother's keep
 i am put to stake in a game of dice
 Burning quietly, bearing this vice.
 Their wicked deeds and acts droll
 My shame, my violation, my naked soul
 Recorded by cameras, in photos obscene
 By plotting and shooting the sordid
 scenes.

Is this the faith?, the religious fervour?
 Is this the mode of the pious observer?
 The parting in my hair is no longer red
 My wounded womb, my soiled bed.
 My veil is torn, in shreds and tattered
 The kohl in my eyes, smeared, scattered
 The bangles broken, the bracelet torn

The tie of Raksha, of brothers is blown

I am a woman, just a woman
 Worthless, useless, hopeless, helpless
 The lovers of ghazals, of lyric and, bard
 The moths that flock to the candle of art
 The artist, the poet, the singer, ye all
 Sculptor, actors, the wherewithal
 The painter of portrait, so lovely it be
 The ones who have lost, their hearts to me
 Oh, you romantics who sing of beauty
 Come one, come all, and look at me!
 No more so lovely, so handsome, me
 No more a beauty, a sight to see
 I am reduced to just an ugly sight
 A creature of grief, a cause for fright
 A broken cry from the lowest of low
 A morsel of the devil, I am fit to throw

I am no one's daughter, and no one's
 child

A sister to none, am I so defiled?
 No hope is ever, of a bride to be
 I am just a monument of naked glee
 Never a mother, may I be called.
 Mum's the word, for my womanhood
 mauled.
 Showers of tears are raining high.
 Just one wish, a desire, a sigh.
 Oh, you haters, who have set me afire
 A shroud is all, I seek, and desire
 I am a woman, just a woman.
 Disgrace of humanity, ignominy of man!

Translated from the original Urdu by
 Zakia Zaheer

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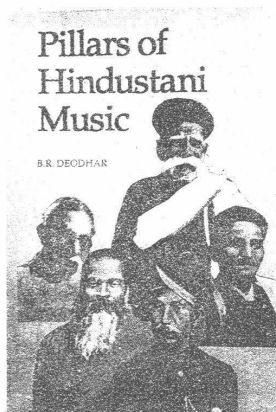
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BITTER-SWEET MEMORIES

Raghava R. Menon

PILLARS OF HINDUSTANI MUSIC

By Professor B.R. Deodhar
Popular Prakashan, 1993,
pp. 303, Rs. 225.00

Professor B.R. Deodhar was among the earliest renaissance musicians in Hindustani classical music. His musical education was traditional through Pandit Vishnu Digambar Palusker, yet he stood apart from the conventional musical inheritance in several ways. He was perhaps the only Hindustani classical musician of quality who also passed the examination of the Trinity College of Music and could sight read a score. He was also interested in voice production exercises of Western music and tried hard to incorporate some of its techniques into Hindustani classical music. The problem of course was that in Indian music we do not produce our voices. We sing. There is a difference. Deodhar's life was devoted to the running of his famed music school in Bombay and in the relentless pursuit of musicians in an effort to probe the powerful forces that act upon their lives. As the editor of *Sangit Kala Vihar*, the magazine published by the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya across several decades this collection of essays on musicians and their lives first appeared in Hindi and has been translated into English by Ram Deshmukh for this book.

Deodhar's material has been collected through interviews with the subjects themselves and from close association of

friendship and admiration. What it does is to bring a whole new world into bright and engaging focus in an area of our national endeavour that for several centuries through the sordid prejudices of our social system remained veiled in myth, legend and rumour.

To the generation that was born after India became independent most of the musicians described in the pages of this book must remain merely names. History is particularly hobbled when we are dealing with an oral tradition so intensely dependent on personal vision that its lineaments merely break the surface in the manner of an iceberg, a tip showing above the infinite blue of the ocean.

From musicologists like Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande and the sitar maker of Miraj Farid Saheb, its pages sizzle with the heat and light of men like Bade Gulam Ali Khan and the Aftab-e-Mousini Ustad Faiyaz Khan and musical evangelists like Pandit Vishnu Digambar Palusker who it could be said ushered in classroom teaching in Hindustani classical music. The Italian music teacher Giovanni Scrinzi who was Deodhar's Western music preceptor appears in its pages. There is Pandit Vasant Rao Chafekar who as a child could imitate the whistle of a railway train so realistically that when in a fit of play he whistled the sound of a railway train outside the Hairbaug railway station the signal man lowered the signal to let the train pass. The train never put in its appearance much to the surprise and embarrassment of the officials at the station.

Little vignettes fill its pages that illumine the kind of men the great musicians of our tradition used to be. Bade Gulam Ali Khan is described discussing practice techniques. There is the story of how the great Sarangi Nawaz Bundu Ali Khan did not know that India was becoming independent and when told asked "who from?" He thought Mohamad Ali Jinnah had come to the Radio Station to listen to the Khan Saheb's performance.

There is a penetrating interview with Surshee Kesar Bai Kelkar that reveals a keen mind and intellect. There is Allaudin Khan's early years running away from his newly married wife of only twelve years old to study music and repeating this once again later when forced by his parents to return home.

The strange questing nature of Hindustani classical musicians' lives comes through vividly in the pages of this book. Ichalkranjiker, Bhasker Rao Bhakle, Rajab Ali Khan—the bitter sweet stories make it difficult to put the book down. It certainly is compulsory reading for those who have only attended concerts or loved music from a distance. Here you find the hard rocky road through which musicians must pass before they can claim their inheritance and find answers to the final quest of man, which is himself.

Raghava R. Menon is a music critic of repute.

Studies In Contrasts

Manjari Sinha

BHARATA NATYAM IN CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Edited by George Klinger

Manohar Books in association with American Institute of Indian Studies,
New Delhi, 1993, pp. 191, Rs. 300.00

BALA ON BHARATA NATYAM

Compiled and translated by S. Guhan

The Sruti Foundation, Madras, 1991, pp. 23, Rs 6.00

"The pure dance of Bharata Natyam is a study in contrasts, contrasts in the use of body parts, time, space and energy. And it is these contrasts that create excitement and diversity in performance. While expressive dance requires an informed audience—an audience knowledgeable of the traditional literature and symbolic code of movement—pure dance can be appreciated by even the uninformed. Although based on a complex theory of movement, the purpose of pure dance is simply to display the beauty of the body in motion—a kind of motion that comes about through an intricate interplay of movement and stillness that is distinctive to Bharata Natyam."

In these words Professor Judy Van Zile summarises 'the characteristics of Nrta in Bharata Natyam' in a book titled *Bharata Natyam in Cultural Perspective*. Earlier in the same chapter talking about the effortless appearance and the illusion of a tremendously high level of energy projected by Bharata Natyam dancers the author writes that this energy level seems to come from five elements—the speed with which the movements are executed, the density of movement, the driving, percussive nature of the intricate rhythmic patterns stamped out with the feet, the tension created between dance rhythm and music rhythm, and the occasional tension created by the concurrent use of differing qualities in different parts of the dancer's body. While fluidity is present in many movements, the predominant quality is sharp and staccato.

The excerpt cited from the book mentioned above provides insights into the deep understanding and the articulate description of the subject by the learned contributors who are all western scholars. The book tries to take into account nearly every aspect of Bharata Natyam—starting with history, cultural heritage and current practice of the art form, to Indian Aesthetics, Characteristics of Nrta, Musical Dynamics in Bharata Natyam—freedom, constraints and devotion and also Dynamics of Interaction between

Indian Dance and Sculpture, concluding with a whole chapter on the Devadasi, in which the author David Kopf discusses in detail the cultural meaning and identity of the 'notorious Hindu temple dancers often indecorously referred as Devadasi or slave of God—wondering whether they are dancing virgins, sexual slaves, divine courtesans or celestial dancers in historical and religious context. He reaches the conclusion that the dance traditions performed by Devadasis for centuries as a sacred duty, have not only been preserved but have been revitalized and modernized by having been removed from the temple precincts to concert halls.

George Klinger has not only edited the book but has also contributed along with Judy Van Zile, Alan Kagar, Michael Radbe and David Kopf. In fact the book is a collection of lectures given in conjunction with the two week residency of Alarmel Valli—a contemporary exponent of Pandanallur style of Bharata Natyam, which included classes on Bharata Natyam dance technique and music of Bharata Natyam, lecture demonstration and choreography workshop and her recitals at the University of Minnesota.

The editor along with the other scholars who have contributed were all fascinated by the rich repertoire of Bharata Natyam's poetical text, its highly developed vocabulary of expressive gestures, its intricate syntax of pure dance patterns, its music displaying a wealth of complex rhythm and melodies and its sumptuous costumes. Inspired by the event they resolved to produce a volume which would contribute to an interdisciplinary understanding of the great living art form—in its historical, social and cultural context.

The contributing scholars come from a variety of disciplines including philosophy and humanistic studies, dance ethnology, ethnomusicology, art history and comparative history. The first chapter tracing the history, cultural heritage and current practice of Bharata Natyam is written by the editor George Klinger spe-

cially for this volume. George has also focussed on Indian Aesthetics and Bharata Natyam in the next chapter. The first is written with a sharp analysis of the complex nature of the Bhavas and Rasas in the context of Indian Aesthetics as depicted in the expressional aspect of the art form.

With the best of research and other facilities George Kliger in the introductory chapter takes us back to the well known copper figurine of the young female dancer from Mohenjo daro (2300 to 1750 BC) and suggests that the figure might even represent a class of dancers who served in the temples of Harappan culture which may be linked to the Devdasi tradition of the Middle Ages but leaves this conjecture in the absence of any independent evidence.

He finds abundant evidence of the importance of dance as a performing art in Indian culture generally, and specifically in Tamil society where Bharata Natyam originated and evolved. The Tamil literature and poetry of the golden Sangam age and later the *Silappadikaram* (circa 600 A.D.) testify to dance traditions. He writes about the dynasties of the Pallavas of Kanchi, and the Pandyas of Madurai, the Cholas of Tanjore (9th to 13th A.D.) where this art form flourished and also about the Bhakti movement when the institution of Devdasi evolved in the context of temple ritual.

The Devadasis he writes about were trained in music and dance and followed their mothers' occupation of temple service. The sons of the Devadasis were trained from boyhood to become Nattuvanars—teachers, directors and musical accompanists of dance. Then he talks about the Maratha dynasty in Tanjore when the three great composers of Carnatic music—Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri flourished and the Tanjore Quartet—Subbbaraya Ponnai, Chinnaiah, Vadivelu and Shivanandan perfected and codified the technique of Bharata Natyam and established its typical repertoire of dance items like alaripu, svarajati, padam, varnam, jatiswaram, shabdam, tillana etc. The dedicated effort of E. Krishna Iyer and Rukmini Devi in re-establishing and renaming it from Sadir to Bharata Natyam and its present day dignified status—every bit is discussed by the author in the minutest details. For instance he not only mentions the Karnas (the sculptural depiction of basic dance movements) but elaborates it with photographs of the Chidambaram temple display taken by himself.

Talking about the Indian Aesthetics and Bharata Natyam, George Kliger not only speaks about the eight dominant emotional states—the *Sthayi Bhava*, the transient *Sanchari Bhava*, the four types of *Abhinaya*, the *Nayika bheda* and so on but also mentions that the effective employment of *Sattvika abhinaya* and the *Sanchari bhava* technique is a measure of the dancer's stature as an artist—far beyond the mastery of technique it depends on her knowledge of literary tradition,

vitality, emotional maturity and creative imagination, as well as self-forgetful involvement in the performance, which infuses soul and life in it.

The writer also shows concern about the recent trend towards popularization i.e. simplification of rhythm, increasing emphasis on the *lokdharmi* mode of *abhinaya* etc, which has invariably resulted in a decline of artistic standards. The only hope he finds is in the few gurus and performing artists who are committed to the transmission of standards and technical perfection, purity of form and the range of subtlety of expression which traditionally has been the landmark of Bharata Natyam at its best.

The book under review provides penetrating insights. For instance, concluding his exploration of some interaction between dance and sculpture, Michael Rabe explains the looking glass metaphor as follows: "Both arts offer illuminating reflections of the other. The sculptors have often sought to evoke in their icons a dance-inspired kinetic quality, while dancers have returned the compliments as it were by striking sculpturesque poses." Or "When the viewer of her performance partakes vicariously in the *Rasa* of her emotions, it is like seeing one's own soul reflected in the *abhinaya darpana*, the mirror of dramatic expression." Likewise Alan L. Kagan in his chapter on 'Musical Dynamics in Bharata Natyam' says "the association with dance brings to music an additional set of meanings and intentions which are not otherwise present." Or, "the demands made upon music in dance have a fuller range in expressive, intellectual and spiritual presentation and creativity."

Considering that funds are not a hurdle in the West, a book like *Bharata Natyam in Cultural Perspective* could have been a little more beautifully designed and illustrated. The first impression this hard-bound book gives is that of a dissertation/thesis. Apart from eight color plates and twelve black and white plates the book is also illustrated with line drawings of different *adavus* and rhythmic patterns of basic motifs and variants. Then there is a full-fledged glossary at the end which explains in alphabetical order various terms used throughout the book, apart from the notes and bibliography provided after each chapter respectively.

After the line drawings by Suzanna Stough there is also an appendix of Labanotation scores of *Nattu Adavu* by Judy Van Zile. "Because of the versatility of Labanotation, the scores contain a greater amount of detail and accuracy than the preceding verbal descriptions and illustrations," says the author but it would have been helpful for readers who are not acquainted with this notation to comprehend the notation glossary better if the songs used were explained in the manner the diacritical marks are earlier explained for proper pronunciation.

First published by the American Institute of Indian Studies in 1993, the 191

pages book *Bharata Natyam in Cultural Perspective* does not have its price mentioned anywhere. The modest volume is obviously not for the coffee-table but it definitely provides a deep and analytical study of the classical dance form of India—its intrinsic character as well as its historical, social and cultural context.

Bala Saraswati belonged to the time-honoured orthodox tradition of Tanjavur style of Bharata Natyam formatted by the Tanjavur Quartet. She believed that the traditional structure gives fullest freedom for individual creativity within it, and to alter or amend it would be to destroy its integrity. But Bala had a disarming way of treating the contours of the traditional Bharata Natyam with a visionary delight that was awesome in its ease and casual power. There was no attempt to dazzle with technique or physical skill, instead reticence and economy were the hallmark of her art. She cherished old classical values and scrupulously adhered to them giving no room to any melodramatic effect. Her dance revealed a strange presence and a disturbing dignity, a style of movement that had poise and reflection, and a humility where art rather than the artist was stressed by the dancer.

For Bala dance had to be danced and not spoken about. But in recognition of her stature and status as the peerless exponent of Bharata Natyam, she was invited to preside over a number of conferences. These occasions included the annual sessions of the Music Academy, Madras (1973), the Tamil Isai Sangam, Madras (1975), the East West Conference held in Hawaii (1979) and the Indian Fine Arts Society, Madras (1981). On these occasions she spoke about her conception of Bharata Natyam, its philosophy and practice, her reminiscences relating to her Guru, family and other sources of training and support, her views on the contemporary scene of Bharata Natyam etc.

The present work published by the Sruti Foundation, Madras is an accurate and reliable compilation of her valuable speeches by S. Guhan who has also translated the original Tamil text when the translation was not available. The topics covered in these speeches have been thematically arranged into three sections, the first part deals with the philosophy and practice of Bharata Natyam, the second part is an autobiographical account of her Guru, family, other teachers and supporters and the third part shows her concern about the contemporary dance scene.

The mystery and wonder of Bala has been captured in her own words in the book under review. A clear, concise and precise introduction provides insights into the philosophy and thinking of Bala. Her exceptionally comprehensive understanding reflects the depth of her experience in every topic she deals with. For her, Bharata Natyam was Yoga "because it is a spiritual discipline perfecting the

mind to thought-free serenity. The expertise of the artist enables her to gain the equipoise of yoga, in a rapid change of differing moods."

To Bala, Bharata Natyam was grounded in bhakti. Music is worship through sound (*Nadopasana*). "A dancer" she says "proficient in music is able completely to melt and mould her body in submission to God". She compares the structure of a Bharata Natyam recital to that of a great temple when she says, "We enter through the *gopuram* (outer hall) of *alaripu*, cross the *ardha-mandapa* (half-way hall) of *jatiswaram*, then the *mandapam* (great hall) of *shabdam* and enter the holy precinct of the deity in the *varnam*. This is the space which gives the dancer expansive scope to revel in the music, rhythm and moods of the dance. The *varnam* is the continuum which gives ever expanding room to the dancer to delight in her self-fulfilment, by providing the fullest scope to her own creativity as well as to the tradition of the art."

Bala says, "Abhinaya is as far removed from acting as poetry is from prose. Dignified restraint is the hall-mark of *Abhinaya*. Even in the best of laughter there is a restraint of the mouth movement, even in the height of wonderment there is a limit to the opening of the eyes, even in the white heat of amorous sporting, the dancer has no use for movement of the torso but gestures only through the face and hands. It is this decency, decorum, and dignity that help to impart to Bharata Natyam its divine character."

About her Guru Kandappa Pillai, full of reverence she says, "he taught me not only the art of dancing but also to fear praise and to accept criticism." Within the family it was Veena Dhanam who outlived the repertoire of *padas* and its scope for her. She says, "My interpretation of the *padas* depends on Dhanam's interpretation of all her music and not just the *padas*. She has set an ideal of richness and subtlety of emotional expression that shines like a lamp before those who have heard and appreciated her music—your head, your whole body, must move with the *sangatis*, with the *gamakas*, and not just the *tala*."

Speaking about the universality of Bharata Natyam she says, "My experience with American students proves that Bharata Natyam truly transcends geographical and ethnic barriers. It has a universal domain because the human soul is the same everywhere and Bharata Natyam seeks to make it blossom in corporeal form."

In fact this small booklet of only 23 pages reminds you of a Hindi saying—"gagar mein sagar"—i.e. an ocean poured into an earthen pot. The book, no doubt, will go a long way to help readers understand Bala, and what she thought of Bharata Natyam.

Manjari Sinha is a freelance dance critic.

New Day in the Morning

Jacquelin Singh

CRANES' MORNING AND GWENVER FIRINGEE

By Indrani Aikath-Gyaltzen

Penguin Books, India, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 201, Rs 85.00

Toward the end of *Crane's Morning*, Miss Kushari, grand old lady of an aristocratic yet somewhat impoverished family, says to her lawyer, "Kunal is accustomed to having practical matters arranged for him behind his back by his womenfolk. ... He is that type of man and his wife and I are that type of women."

She is talking about her middle-aged nephew, and her remark neatly sums up the relationships that are depicted in this novelette about a family badly in need of revitalising. The men are soulful, but ineffectual as husbands and lovers. It is the women who hold things together. Much as in Aikath-Gyaltzen's previously published novel, *Daughters of the House*, we are presented with strong, steadfast women and bumbling and/or disruptively destructive men.

The story line involves a wife, married to a distant cousin on the rebound, and a former lover who suddenly turns up on a morning the cranes are flying, harbingers, it is hoped, of better days to come.

Care and sensitivity are there in the delineation of character, and the couple, their three young daughters, the former lover and the two old aunts come through vividly. Moreover, Aikath-Gyaltzen obviously has a special relationship with the world of nature and is able to convey a scene with power. Children and animals are likewise carefully rendered. However to one like this reviewer, unfamiliar with the area where the novel is set (Bihar), details of the physical surroundings seem more reminiscent of Europe or England. Villagers' thatched-roofed hovels are called "lodges" and villagers themselves "countrymen". A person who looks after a cow is called a "cow man" (a mature cowboy?).

Furthermore, formerly rich landlords, more at home with English fairy tales, nursery rhymes and Shakespeare than with Hindu mythology and Tagore, are difficult to "place". Everyone goes around talking like Nirad C. Chaudhari. There are no gun-toting hunters, hard-drinking men, or hearty gourmards that one usually finds amongst the landed gentry. However, all these anomalies on the Indian scene would doubtless make the setting more accessible to foreign readers at whom the novelette may be aimed. Be that as it may, my sources assure me that such families do indeed exist in out-of-the-way places in Bengal and Bihar, that silksaris can "rustle" just as enchantingly as hoop-skirts and crinoline can, and that the country aristocracy need not all be hedonists.

The second item in this volume, *Gwenver Firingee*, has been included, one suspects, to fill out the 200 pages that seems to be the standard length for paperback fiction. While this short novella does little to enhance the author's reputation, it did rivet my attention as the other one did not. It did this because it brought out as vividly as one could desire one of the biggest problems an Indian writer in English (or for that matter an American

writer writing about India) has.

I am talking about what we come up against the minute we are obliged to get fictional characters to speak. The puzzle does not arise as long as educated, English-speaking, public school types are doing the talking. It doesn't matter whether they are Biharis, Punjabis or Gujaratis: they all speak the "same language", and they behave more or less the same in given situations. They "belong" not only to their own regions and to India, but are at home in the world.

The troublesome characters are those who do not fit this description. What do we do with them, these speakers of native Indian languages, or little-known dialects of these languages, who are monolingual and often illiterate? And socially deprived as well? How can we make them speak convincingly in a language that is absolutely foreign to them? One temptation is to create for them a sort of basic, even sub-standard, speech, in an effort to convey their impaired status. Another approach is to make use of a kind of biblical (King James Version) language meant to characterise them as plain, simple, God-fearing folk. Some (like Khushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan*) simply translate an oath or two here and there to lend local flavour. And in his case, it works well. However, no matter how well we feel we understand these characters, their motives and drives and hopes and fears, we still come up against this linguistic barrier. The minute they open their mouths, our "people" have to reveal their characters, express their emotions, and sound authentic. Often, we are satisfied if their speech attracts no special attention to itself; if, indeed, it appears to flow and not get in the way of what is going on in the story.

Gwenver Firingee is about an illiterate Nepali "swamp-man" living near Darjeeling and his orphaned granddaughter, the illegitimate offspring of a German tea estate manager and a native woman. The young girl finds—and keeps—an unusual lizard for a pet and as the story unfolds, we have yet another work on the popular "save-the-environment" theme. A good cause, we would all agree, but one that is currently being run to the ground. The setting is rendered in beautiful detail, however, and the heroine is winsome and appealing. But sadly, what gets in the

way of this tale is the way Aikath-Gyaltzen has the characters speak. It is that old dialogue problem when dealing with simple, uneducated, poor folk. Since she is a careful writer and takes her work seriously, we must suppose her choice of syntax was deliberate. And yet, it has only succeeded, for this reader at any rate, in wildly drawing attention away from the story to itself.

This is how it happened. After reading a page or two of dialogue between the grandfather and Gwenver, I found myself reading to myself in a Texas drawl (a la Clint Eastwood or John Wayne). And I stopped for a moment to try and somehow reconcile the image I had of the old Nepali and his granddaughter with the way they spoke to each other—like stars in a Hollywood western. Later, there were a couple of places where they started sounding like the women in J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (in other words like inhabitants of the Aran Isles off the Irish coast). Then it was back to Clint Eastwood again.

A character speaks of "a little old .20 gauge", a "little old girl lizard". The verb *plan* is replaced by *aim*, as in "What do you aim to call her?", "I aim to catch it," "Aim to stand there all day?" There is the use of *call* as a noun meaning *reason* as in "Had no call to laugh at you."

The use of the double-negative is there to denote the uneducated status of the grandfather when he says, "Can't no lizard nor snake make music like that" and "Can't nothing smell that far." Right out of the Hollywood western come such utterances as, "Right up yonder. Dead ahead." and "Wildmules couldn't pull this creature away from here." (My informants could not verify the presence of wild mules in the Darjeeling area, though there are plenty of domesticated ones, they say.) And at one point a rustic character says, "Well, now, a fellow was out from Darjeeling about a week ago to buy some stuff and he heard the folks in the store talking about your lizard," a line more likely to be heard in late nineteenth century Dallas than Darjeeling; (try it out with a John Wayne accent and see).

The point I am making is that all these peculiarities of the Southwestern dialect of the United States roll awkwardly off the tongues of the citizens of Darjeeling and outskirts who inhabit this story.

Occasionally, there is a real mix-up when the cowboy phrase, "It's right nice of you" becomes "It's rightly nice of you," or "I don't rightly know" becomes "I rightly don't know." *Right* as an adverb gets confusing indeed! "Sure as shootin'", a well-worn Western phrase, becomes "Sure as shooting". Quite predictably, the old man "slaps his knee in approval" when the scene calls for it. Further, the word *store* is preferred by Aikath-Gyaltzen to *shop*, the term familiar on this continent for a place where you buy things. Here, as I understand it, *store* means a room or place where you store things, so when *shopkeeper* is replaced by *storekeeper*, we may wonder just what kind of person we're hearing about.

In several places, as mentioned above, we're amongst Irish fisher folk, with phrases like "It's busy he is with all the wood to be cut," "Knows something about everything, old Dewan does." And then, "maize" is sometimes "corn", sometimes "maize".

If all this seems to be flogging an idea to death, it is because such phrases as quoted above hit out at one from every page, illustrating so literally and dramatically the problem every writer in English in this country must come to terms with. That a skilled crafts person like Aikath-Gyaltzen can flounder in this respect is all the more reason for others to beware of the pitfall!

Having said all this, I feel the least I can do is to end this review with some remedy: it's not enough simply to carp. What can one do to render simple, uneducated, characters believable as far as their speech goes? How can this nagging problem be solved? Being aware of it in the first place is the first step. And I hope this piece has raised the consciousness of not only the writers who read it, but discriminating readers of all the fiction that is originating these days in English in this country.

My suggestion, then, would be to stick to plain, standard English and simply avoid highfalutin vocabulary that the characters would not be likely to use.

Less, in other words, is more.

Jacquelin Singh is a novelist and writer of occasional columns in the English press.

Shamsher Bahadur Singh IN MEMORIAM

Shamsher Bahadur Singh (b. 1911), one of the pioneers of New Poetry in Hindi, was born at Dehradun. He came of a sturdy middle class Jat family. After his M.A. (Part I) in English from Allahabad University, he worked as an assistant in the office of Rupabh, a Hindi magazine edited by Sumitranandan Pant. In 1940, he collaborated with Trilochan in editing Kahani, another Hindi magazine. In 1948, he joined the Maya Press, Allahabad, as assistant editor and worked there for about six years. Between 1965 and 1976 he worked as editor of the Urdu-Hindi Dictionary in the department of Urdu, University of Delhi. He occupied the Premchand Chair at Vikram University, Ujjain.

Shamsher Bahadur Singh started writing poems in the thirties. He was predominantly influenced by classical Urdu poetry and its fragmentariness. Ghalib in Urdu poetry discovered the 'nobodiness' of an individual in the world. Shamsher Bahadur Singh tries to bring this nobodiness into the fragmented texture of his poems. His poetry is born out of the cleavage between man and his world; this cleavage finds a formal manifestation in the brokenness of the poetic structure of Shamsher Bahadur Singh's poetry whereas Trilochan Shastri, a great admirer and an oral interpreter of Nirala, maintained a classical discipline in writing his sonnets. Most of his poems are written in the form of the sonnet. One can easily discern the ethos of Kalidas, Tulsidas, Ved Vyas, etc, in his sonnets. He does not modernise them but develops a dialogue with them, reminding one of the poetic consciousness of Nirala.

Shamsher Bahadur Singh's first poem was published in Saraswati in 1931. Some of his poems appeared in Doosara Saptak (ed. by Agyeya, 1951). Shamsher Bahadur Singh started experimenting around 1945 and his basic sensibility was shaped by neo-romanticism. There is a pronounced element of delicate lyricism in him and the lyrical lilt is all along present even in his free-verse. His poems are intense and short, like moving vignettes of symbols and condensed imagery. This symbolic suggestivity is his primary power, but it also places some limitation on his communicability at times. His important poetic works are Kuch Kavityayen and Chuka Bhi Hun Nahin Main. But there is no doubt that Shamsher's contribution to modern poetry has been very original. He is one of the major poets who combines most artistically the best elements of the new poetic sensibility.

Shamsher Bahadur Singh won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1977, the Tulsi Award of the Madhya Pradesh Sahitya Parishad in the same year, and the Delhi Sahitya Kala Parishad Award in 1979.

A master of poetic craft, Shamsher Bahadur Singh's essays and reviews are also of importance. His collection of essays Doab (1948) is a manifesto of New Poetry. The very first article "Saat Adhunik Kavi" (Seven Modern Poets) focusses on the Tar Saptak poets who paved the way for the new movement, in Hindi poetry. He published his collection of short stories Plot Ka Morcha in 1952, He is also the editor of Faiz (1979), a selection of poems from Faiz Ahmad 'Faiz'.

Shamsher Bahadur Singh died in
May 1993.
Chatting with the Moon
(A Ten or Eleven Year Old Girl)

BY SHAMSHER BAHADUR SINGH

I see you're truly round
but a little odd
You have the entire
starry sky on
only your fair round face
I can see
Your robe flies all around
I can't say why
you look a little odd
but you're okay!

Come on
You think I'm a fool
Don't I know
you ain't all that cool?
When you wane you go on waning
and when you wax you
just go on waxing you
do not stop until you are
absolutely round
I mean absolutely.
You have this
Incurable disease
otherwise I swear
I would have
married you
in a jiffy!

I see you're laughing
but you know you do
affect my heart
a bit too much
I tell you
just as you do the sea

The Works of Shamsher Bahadur Singh

KUCHH KAVITAYEN
(Some Poems, 1959)

KUCHH AUR KAVITAYEN
(Some More Poems)
Rajkamal Prakashan, Delhi, 1961, pp. 94

CHUKA BHI HUN NAHIN MAI
(I Am Not Spent Yet)
Radhakrishna Prakashan, Delhi, 1975, pp. 103

ITNE PAS APNE
(So Close To Self)
Radhakrishna Prakashan, Delhi, 1980, pp. 75

BAT BOLEGI
(This Will Speak Out, 1980)

UDITA
(The Coming Up, 1981)

KAL TUJH SE HOD HAI MERI
Vani Prakashan, Delhi, 1988, pp. 106

PRATINIDHI KAVITAYEN
(Some Representative Poems)
Edited by Namvar Singh
Rajkamal Prakashan, Delhi, 1990, pp. 192

KUCHH AUR GADYA RACHNAYEN
Edited by Ranjana Aragare
Radhika Prakashan, Delhi, 1992, pp. 239

Bibliography: Namvar Singh, 'Shamsher Ki Kavita', *Kriti* magazine (1958); Ramvilas Sharma, *Nai kavita aur astivivad* (Delhi, 1978); *Poornagrah*, No. 24 (Bhopal, 1980); Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena and Malayaj (ed.), *Shamsher* (Delhi, 1971).

and I get so very restless
like the waves
I don't know why
but my heart begins to
ebb and flow for no
rhyme or reason.

Well never mind!
I can't fall in love with
someone like that
who wants my everything
in exchange for a mere look
who is always out of reach
who listens to others' woes
I mean poems without
saying a thing
about what is in his own heart
who causes confusion
every time he comes
no I can't love someone like that
I hope you understand.

Translated from the Hindi by Krishna Baldeo Vaid

Rock Blood Root

BY SHAMSHER BAHADUR SINGH

The rock fed its blood
to the root
hardened into rock

The cloud ladders
swayed in the wind
like branches

and that paved platform
tilted and smooth:
Was that the under-soil
of the wishfulfilling
tree of the soul?

Translated from the Hindi by Krishna Baldeo Vaid

■ BIOGRAPHY, AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography

Sankar Ghosh
This absorbing and well-documented biography portrays the many-sided personality of Jawaharlal Nehru. This book is a blend of history, biography and political philosophy. Objective and scholarly, the book portrays the multifaceted personality of Nehru and his impact on modern India.
Allied Publishers, 1993, pp.353, Rs. 200.00

Leaves from a Diary

Shyama Prasad Mookerjee
This collection contains Dr Mookerjee's autobiographical writings in English and the English translation of some of his Bengali writings. They chronicle important events of the period between 1937 and early 1946.
Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 240, Rs. 300.00

Aankhon Dekhe Pachchar Varsh (1917-1992)

Dr Parmeshwar Deen Shukla
Written by the former Chairman, Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi, this book spans the period between 1917 and 1992.
Bharatiya Sewa Sansthan, Ghaziabad, 1993, pp. 260, Rs. 81.00

Rickshaw Ragtime: Calcutta Remembered

Jug Suraiya
The unconventional memoirs of a Calcuttan in exile.
Penguin Books, 1993, pp. 120, Rs. 85.00

■ ECONOMICS

Selected Economic Writings

Sukhamoy Chakravarty
An economic theorist of international repute Professor Chakravarty's contributions to development theory as well as to Indian economic thought and policy-making will long be remembered. There are 29 essays in this volume put together by the author himself.
Oxford University Press, 1993, pp.591, Rs. 490.00

■ EDUCATION

Caste, Class and Education, Politics of the Capitation Fee Phenomenon in Karnataka

Rekha Kaul
This book explores the extent to which the structure of education depends on the nature of society and the state. The capitation fee phenomenon reflects the persisting inequalities and the elitist bias of the education system while lowering standards. To counter this the author offers possible intervention and corrective measures.
Sage Publications, 1993, pp.276, Rs. 275.00

Indian Theory of Education

H.H.A Bourai
The first of its kind to dig out the essentials of educational thought from a variety of sources. It underlines the dynamic philosophy of Upanishads, Vedanta, Nyaya, Gita, Buddhism, Jainism and Sankhya and relates it to the present system of education.
B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1993, pp. 253, Rs. 175.00

■ GANDHIAN STUDIES

Raising Up A Prophet

Sudarshan Kapur
In this book the author examines the long history of debate and experimentation among African-Americans on the meaning of Gandhian methods and the Independence movement in India. Looking at the African-American community in the years of Gandhi's greatest activity, from the early 1920s to 1947 he analyses the implications of the struggle for the African-Americans in their own situation of discrimination and segregation.
Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 222, Rs. 150.00

■ GENERAL

Some Common Ailments

Anil Aggarwal
Written by a medical expert, this book explains common ailments which plague us all and about which we know so little.
National Book Trust, India, 1993, pp. 98, Rs. 25.00

Untold Stories of Doctors and Patients

Edited by M.V. Kamath and Dr Rekha Karmarkar
In this book some well-known doctors of the country share personal experiences of their professional lives relating true stories of patients whose courage and fortitude has been inspiring.
UBS Publishers Distributors Ltd, 1993, pp. 262, Rs. 125.00

■ HISTORY

Hindu Revivalism in Bengal 1872-1905.

Some Essays in Interpretation
Amiya P. Sen.
The period of roughly thirty years separating the Brahmo Marriage Bill controversy and the launching of the anti-partition agitation is one of the most fascinating and yet under researched areas in the history of modern Bengal.
Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 456, Rs. 425.00

■ LITERATURE

The Shattered Thigh and Other Mahabharata Plays of Bhasa

Translated from the original Sanskrit with an introduction by A.N.D. Haksar. A selection of the earliest existing plays by

one of the most celebrated names in classical Sanskrit literature two thousand years ago, this volume brings to the reader, six plays linked by thematic unity.
Penguin Books (India), 1993, pp. 117, Rs. 85.00.

The Jam Fruit Tree

Carl Muller
This story of the Burghers of Sri Lanka is hilarious, affectionate, candid and moving.
Penguin Books (India), 1993, pp. 210, Rs. 85.00.

Passing Time in Biharipur: A Novel

Pranav Kumar Vandyopadhyaya.
Translated from the Hindi by Rama Kant Agnihotri and Aditi Mukherjee. A sincere portrayal of the life of the people of the U.P. heartland and deeply rooted in their language and culture.
Penguin Books (India), 1993, pp. 221, Rs. 75.

The Permanence of Grief

Nisha Da Cunha.
This second collection of short stories by the author is full of powerful insights into the human condition.
Penguin Books (India), 1993, pp. 158, Rs. 85.00

Iqbal: The Poet and the Politician

Rafiq Zakaria
The author clears up some of the popular misconceptions about one of twentieth century India's greatest poets.
Viking, Penguin Books, 1993, pp. 189, Rs. 195.00

Shreya of Sonagarh: A Novel

Uma Vasudev
This novel is based on the story of a woman who emerges from the rigid traditionalities of a feudal order to become a politician.
UBS Publishers and Distributors, 1993, pp. 319, Rs. 125.00

Mulligatawny Soup

Manorama Mathai
A wise, sad, and sometimes funny novel about rootlessness and the yearning to belong, this acutely observed and perceptive novel looks into the lives of the much maligned Anglo-Indian community.
Penguin Books India, 1993, pp.150, Rs. 85.00

Emerson Dictionary: Published Works

D. Shivaji
This book contains selection of some of the best lines from Emerson's published writings including those from his poems as well. Contains over 5500 thoughts.
Wiley Eastern Ltd., 1993, pp.266, Rs. 350.00

Emerson Dictionary: Journals

D. Shivaji
This contains a selection of over 8500 thoughts. Sentences from his jottings recorded over a period of time from 1820

to 1882 and which it was never his intention to publish and make public detailing 'the march of the mind'. It brings out the multiple influences on an unusually receptive mind of eminent writers of different nationalities, of the best of all religions and of all the sciences and arts, modern and ancient.
Wiley Eastern Ltd., 1993, pp. 464, Rs. 500.00

■ MILITARY STUDIES

Operation Blue Star: The True Story

Lt Gen K.S. Brar
An account of one of the most controversial military operations in the world by the army officer who led it in June 1984.
UBS Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 173, Rs. 150.00.

■ MANAGEMENT

Young Managers at the Crossroads: The Trishanku Complex

Pulin K. Garg and Indira J. Parikh.
This study presents a unique insight into the world of the young managers in India and is a sensitive portrayal of a human being in search of values.
Sage Publications, 1993, pp.198, Rs. 225.00

■ SOCIOLOGY

Socio-Legal Status of Muslim Women

Muniza Rafiq Khan
This study evaluates the legal and sociological status of Muslim women and explores the issues which have emerged from the Shah Bano case. It examines the prevalent practises about marriage, divorce, *mehr* and maintenance among Muslims.
Radiant Publishers, 1993, pp. 136, Rs. 150.00

Ethnic Minority Identity: A Social Psychological Perspective.

Nimmi Hutnik
The author explores the correspondence between the way ethnic minority individuals categorize themselves and their styles of cultural adaptation. Her data is gathered from second generation Indians in Britain and though the situation in India is more complex, some of her ideas and solutions may help enhance national integration in our country.
Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 205, Rs. 385.00

■ WOMEN'S STUDIES

Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry

Fatima Mernissi
In this book, the author both a feminist and a Muslim, aims to shed light on the status of women in Islam by examining and reassessing the literary sources as far back as seventh-century Islam.
Kali for Women, 1993, pp. 228, Rs. 225.00

NEW FROM OXFORD

Dalit Movements and the Meanings of Labour in India

Edited by PETER ROSS

This book traces aspects of the story of labour from the eighteenth century to the present day, assessing the degrees of continuity with past practice, and whether the 'modern' assumptions about work, its separation from other aspects of daily life, its 'commodification' and its 'class' implications have often been reflected in Indian experience. The essays propose a number of general points on how ideological and religious ferment accompanies economic change, and also treat particularities that resonate against entrenched social conditions and attitudes.

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PETER ROSS is currently Chairman of the Centre of South Asian Studies and Senior Lecturer in the Modern History of South Asia at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London.

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