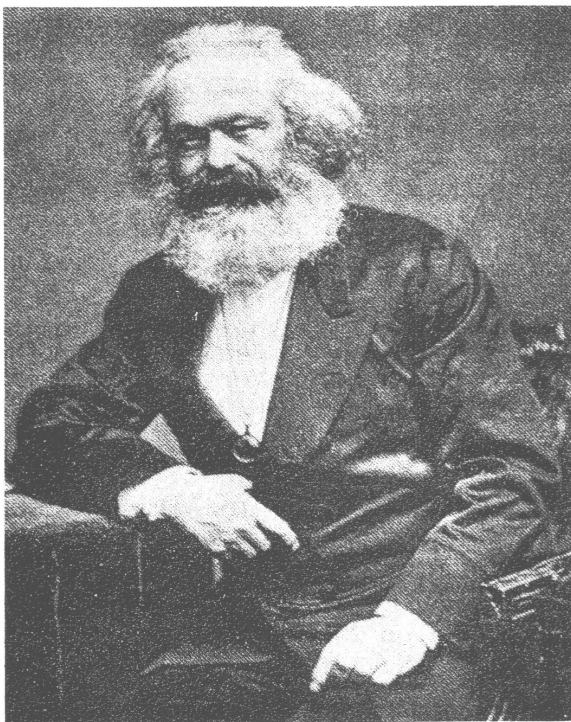


# THE BOOK REVIEW

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RAKESH BATABYAL  
*Karl Marx: A Moral Philosopher? . . . 3*

A.K. DAMODARAN  
T.C.A. ANANT  
MANORANJAN MOHANTY  
*"Winning A World"—A Debate . . . 5*

RAJAT KANTA RAY  
*Civil Society and the  
Indian Business Class . . . 13*

RALPH BULTJENS  
*A Great Debate—Suspended  
On A Fragile Limb . . . 23*

INDIRA CHOWDHURY  
*Interrogating the Given . . . 27*

RADHIKA SINGHA  
*The Slave as Subaltern . . . 28*

anti-philosophical aim from Feuerbach. Philosophy, as Brudney argues, was attacked not on any particular position, but on a particular 'mode of being' (p. 7). Marx thought that philosophy connected people wrongly to the world, and hence, his target was abstraction and not idealism (p. 8). Thus, he adopted the anti-philosophical way of Feuerbach. At the same time, Brudney contends, Marx's own critique of Feuerbach, and later that of capitalism, required him to come back to philosophy. But having once rejected it, it was difficult for him to come back to philosophy without doing violence to many of his ideas. This becomes acute in the case of justification of his normative critique of capitalism.

Brudney argues that there are two concepts of good life present in Marx. One, what he presents in his writings of 1844, and the other which is present in *The German Ideology*. The two different notions of good life also inhere in them two different critiques of the existing order. And this raises an obvious problem.

In the writings of 1844, Marx presents what Brudney calls the self-realization account of the good life. The crucial element here is that of an individual's fundamental identification with the human species, and this can only come via the individual's relation with his/her produce. The "worker's relation to the sensuous external world, according to Marx, is the same as her relation to the object she has produced" (p. 146). A good life, therefore, will be one where individuals "engaging under proper conditions, in a particular kind of activity—that is exercising, under proper conditions, a particular (in Marx's view, the essential) human capacity—would realise one's (human) nature". In *The German Ideology*, however, the premise of Marx's notion of good life, according to Brudney, changes and it is the absence of hyper-specialisation in a capitalist society that is supposed to prevent the self-realization of the individual (p. 348). Therefore, it is the absence of restrictions to choose one's vocation which creates possibilities for a good life in a communist society.

These conceptions of good life(s) required Marx to present a critique of the present capitalist system. Did he present this critique on normative grounds is a question that has long been debated. After all, the desirability of the communist society is attached to the critique of the existing capitalist society. However, it is in the critique of the capitalist society that Marx, the author believes, finds himself in a justificatory blind. He needs 'justification' for his normative critique, which Brudney thinks only philosophy, more particularly Moral philosophy, can

provide. However, since Marx rejected 'philosophy', he did not have recourse to the justificatory tools. Brudney, however, argues that Marx can appeal to moral philosophy for providing him with the required justification, without doing violence to any of his other commitments.

### III

According to the 1844 writings, it is the alienation of labour in a capitalist society that Brudney finds alienates individuals from their species. Therefore, alienation from labour creates conditions for alienation from the world. The regaining of this world and a relationship to other individuals, and through them with the species, is the kind of good life that communist society can provide. In a communist society, as Brudney reads it, the individual producer will "complete, rather than competing with, one another". This means that the consumer will mediate between the producer and the species, and thereby facilitate the self-realization. The labour, producing in plenty, and that too in a non-egoistic manner, will self-realize the human nature which the capitalist society prevents from getting realized. Here, the strategy to present a critique of the capitalist society, therefore, involves that the individual knows the (1) essential human nature, (2) flaws in the capitalist order to achieve this human nature, and (3) self-realization.

Marx employs what Brudney calls the "self-certifying" mode of Feuerbach, (whereby the individual knows about these conditions and how to change it) to critique the capitalist society. Now the 'self certifying mode' commits the individual to an epistemological situation where he/she has to surmount the epistemologically distorting condition which "reinforces the false beliefs". Brudney finds this to be an utterly hopeless situation because it takes Marx to the old standpoint/ problem, i.e.:

If certain false beliefs stem from widespread and inescapable conditions that are epistemologically distorting in a particular way, if current conditions are still epistemologically distorting in that particular way, and if the intellectual devices by which scientists and philosophers try to surmount the effects of these epistemologically distorting conditions are either inappropriate to the task or even themselves reinforce the false beliefs in question, then justifying that the beliefs in question are false is likely to be extremely difficult (p. 21).

Marx, therefore, is in a fix to mount a normative critique of capitalism. And Brudney thinks that Marx needs a justification here, which only philosophy

can provide. But then if Marx accepts any justification to defend the 1844 conception of good life, he has to do violence to his conception of good life contained in the German critique and the critique of the capitalist order in other works, such as *The German Ideology*.

### IV

In *The German Ideology*, Marx's notion of the flaw in the capitalist society stems from its hyper-specialisation, as it prevents the self-realization of the individual. "The central censure of the present in the text would be directed at the tendency to hyper-specialisation", Brudney argues, "and at the absence to choose one's activity". Here, the need for a justification of the normative critique, Brudney feels, becomes all the more acute. But Brudney argues that,

whatever capitalism's flaws, however a belief in the virtue of coercion or hyperspecialisation is not among them... A capitalist economy may impose severe constraints on agents's choices, and there maybe irresistible pressure to specialise but neither the constraints nor the specialisation are lauded as good in themselves. On Marx's non 1844 view, the failure of capitalism would be that it affords only a few people the opportunity successfully to instantiate a more or less correct conception of good life... The complaint would be that the capitalist distribution of resources and opportunity is unjust. (p. 348)

And here, Marx is provided with a justification from philosophy. Brudney makes Marx appeal to the notion of justice. And it is here that I think Brudney's sophisticated arguments face some problems. A defense of justice in a capitalist society, which Marx is apparently asked to appeal to, commits Brudney to the capitalist society (and he does so), and indirectly supports Marx's structural thesis, that individuals reflect the class bias in their ideology. And the problem of the entire liberal foundation becomes very apparent here.

### V

The conception of good life in Marx's texts reminds one of the notion of good life in Aristotle. It was in Aristotle that we come across the concept for the first time in an elaborate way. For realization of happiness, it was the cultivation of virtues (morals) that was very significant. Morals were the means (means, not in their present utilitarian sense). Marx's notion of good life, as it appears from the reading of Marx's texts by Brudney, comes closer to that of Aristotle. Marx, however, could reject the means of 'virtues' or morality because with the help of his dialectic and

Feuerbachian materialism, he could talk about a sensuous, concrete society based on individual labour. Secondly, notwithstanding his occasional moral tone in condemning capitalism he was reluctant to invoke morality in such a critique. For him, it was the part of the same legitimising structures of capitalism. For Brudney, however, Marx never rejected morality—he just avoided it as unimportant and diversionary. He thought that Marx could, without doing injustice to his other commitments, appeal to morality. And therefore, the recourse to the notion of justice, which will provide him justification for his normative critique of capitalism, will not commit violence to his other aims.

Brudney wants Marx to take recourse to moral philosophy to justify his critique of the capitalist order. He himself, however, declares that we are situated in the capitalist society. Does it not mean that Brudney himself reflects the success of Marx's structural thesis, that is subscribing to the morality of the capitalist society where the notion of justice which employed and developed most sophisticatedly in the work of liberal philosophers like John Rawls.

The discussion on justice can be looked at from the points of merit and norms. The liberal discourse on distributive justice, rejuvenated especially after the publication of John Rawles' *Theory of Justice* (1971), is premised on norms which constitute the nature and content of distribution in the society. Norms become prior in adjudicating justice. Now Brudney's attempt to bring Marx to apply to norms however will create problems. In Brudney's account itself, in his pre-German ideology writings, it is alienation which constituted the core of Marx's critique of capitalism. (One of the serious liberal scholars, Allen Wood, however, considers Dialectical Materialism rather than alienation as the core of Marx's ideas. See Wood, *Karl Marx*, 1984). For a critique of the capitalist system on the grounds that it prevents self-realization, Marx has to understand the merit or the whole character of the loss of individual's self and his essential human nature. Justice, therefore, will be secondary to realization. An appeal to norms (or thereby justice) can only come when the more substantial issues of human nature and its alienation in the world are addressed on their own merit. And quite rightly, therefore, Marx addressed these issues with the help of a thorough examination of the process and structures of alienation. And it is this that made Marx critique philosophy so that he could say that Fact was Fact.

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## “Winning A World”—A Debate

A WORLD TO WIN: ESSAYS ON THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

Edited by Prakash Karat

Left Word Books, 1999, pp, 148, Rs. 175 (HB)

The *Communist Manifesto* first published in 1848 from being Bible to blasphemy has aroused varied and vociferous reactions. Prabhat Patnaik, Irfan Habib, Aijaz Ahmad and Prakash Karat examine the contemporary relevance of the Manifesto—one hundred and fifty years after—in this new imprint brought out by Left Word Books. We carry below the reviews of three eminent scholars, A.K. Damodaran, historian and diplomat, Manoranjan Mohanty, political scientist and T.C.A. Anant, economist.

### Situating a Masterpiece in Time and Space

A.K. Damodaran

This is the first book to be released by the new publishing venture “Left Word” launched by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). It could not have begun better. The 1848 text of the Communist Manifesto is printed here with all the necessary footnotes and explanations on the changes in phraseology which came about during the translations into various European languages. The four essays which are published along with the text are not attempts at exhaustive commentary. They serve to situate this great document in time and space in the Europe of the middle nineteenth century against the historical and ideological developments in the last one hundred and fifty years.

What is most remarkable about these four essays by distinguished Indian scholars is the scrupulous objectivity and the very high standard of analysis. Both Aijaz Ahmad and Irfan Habib scrutinise the original text of 1848 against the background of earlier theoretical ventures in humanity’s unending quest for social justice. The evolution of West European society after the Enlightenment is the background; more immediate are the revolutionary developments between 1830 and 1848 in France with an awareness only, without detailed description of the Luddite and Chartist labour revolts in Britain, the pioneer industrial nation. There is also a necessary reference to young Marx’s earlier writings before the Manifesto, his affectionate contestation with Hegel’s legacy and one or two crucial areas where he revised his views after the Manifesto was written. The colonial experience was absent in the mind of young Germans. It enters the scene in a tumultuous manner when Marx wrote the articles on India in the early fifties in the *New York Daily Tribune*. A few years later came Darwin’s great book which influenced both Marx and Engels. Prabhat Patnaik’s essay along with Prakash Karat’s Introduction tries to look at the Manifesto in perspective from the point of view of the post-Soviet, unipolar, and, according to some anxious optimists, post-ideological world. The four essays are all sensitive to the remarkable fusion between precise intellectual analysis and the dazzling rhetoric of an angry contemporary document with a definitive portrayal of the success of the bourgeoisie in modern Europe and the inevitable rise of the proletariat.

The programme of the Manifesto was that of a small dedicated minority of activists in a small part of Europe. In deft brush strokes, the writers trace the chequered career of the first two Internationals until the First World War. Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin are the two main “revisionists” discussed in the book: the first for her embryonic awareness of colonialism and the other for his huge intellectual leap forward on the possibilities of revolution in an as yet “idyllic” society with no industrial proletariat. Another point which all the essays and, particularly,

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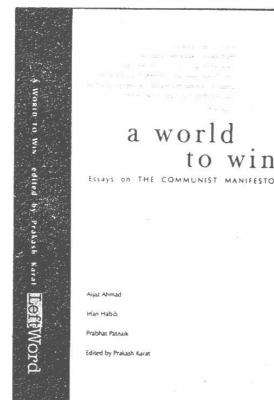
Prakash Karat’s notes is the almost dramatic contemporaneity today of the views expressed in the Manifesto on globalization without using the word. The references to the writings of Marx and Engels before the Manifesto was written are limited for reasons of space as also the story of the evolution of the ideas of the two great collaborators during the next thirty-five years.

On the whole, this summing up of the Marxist’s intellectual contributions to social philosophy and the mixed historical experience in the attempt to implement the original agenda of “winning a world” is persuasive. It is a successful attempt at communication to a new generation of the dazzling effect and the first careless rapture of a major masterpiece, literary and philosophical, in the history of human thought. What this book does not attempt to do is to try to understand the evolution of socialist thought and practice in the modern world in a universal sense. Here, Marx and Marxism provide a major and vital ingredient but not the only core of a

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great ideology. Marxism is socialism but there is a great deal of socialist thought and action outside the Marxist structure. Political parties with a carefully thought out distinction between a strategy valid for generations and a programme of action for the next four or five years in a changing world cannot afford to be eclectic. One must not forget that there is no righteous indignation like the hatred between competing interpretations of the same Scripture, whether religious or secular. That is why it seems to me necessary to choose this important anniversary event to try to understand the possibilities in the various branches of socialism within and outside a Marxist canon.

There is space here only to make a laundry list. Before Marx and the Manifesto we have the utopians, the Owenites and the other practitioners of “communal” living, very often with “spiritual” motivation. During the lifetime of the two great founders of Marxism we have the polemics with Proudhon, Bukharin and Lassalle. During the same period in the nineteenth century we have other sad wistful pilgrimages of the future in Ruskin, William Morris and Tolstoy (For an Indian, Gandhiji comes in here as a fascinated outsider, an enchanted eavesdropper). Then there is the difference that Lenin made to orthodox Marxism and, specifically on imperialism, the arguments between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. The great periods of practised socialism with all its imperfections in Russia after the First World War and in China and East Europe after the Second World War have to be studied not in black and white terms. In the Soviet Union we have the brave failures of Trotsky and our own M.N. Roy who made a seminal contribution to the world’s understanding of twentieth century imperialism. In Europe even while Stalin was at the peak of his power there were dissident leftist intellectuals in Europe and America like the Frankfurt School. This was also the period which produced perhaps the greatest post-Marxist of them all, Gramsci. Whatever might have been Stalin’s failures the idea of socialism in a single country instead of being deluded



by the grandness of global socialism was a tremendous policy decision. Then there is Mao-tse-Tung and the creative manner in which he brought in the exploited peasantry in a huge post-feudal society as the primary instrument in class struggle. At the other end of the spectrum far away from the protracted peasant struggles of Mao, are the inevitably gradual but continuously effective record of social democracy in Scandinavia and continental Europe and also Fabianism in Great Britain. During the years after the Second World War we have had remarkable examples of orthodox Marxist parties reconciling themselves to parliamentary programmes in Italy, France and, let us not forget it, in India also. According to their logic the strategy down the centuries is not affected; it is the tactics for the present generation which have to be shaped according to objective realities in the national society and in the international environment.

Here, a personal note would not be out of place. For someone in my generation the thirties was a definitive period. It was the time of the fight against fascism and imperialism, the tragic arranged trials in Moscow, Jawaharlal Nehru and his two superb articles on Marxism in *Glimpses of World History*, John Strachey's brilliant *Introduction to the Theories and Practice of Socialism*, and, to encapsulate it all, the Spanish Civil War, and W.H. Auden's splendid reminder, "Now is the Struggle". This was the decade of Haldane, Bernal and the *Daily Worker*, Palme, Dutt, the Congress Socialist Party and, later, the anguish of the Indian National Movement, faced with aggressive authoritarianism in Japan, Italy and Germany and self-satisfied, smug, colonialism in Britain. In understanding the post-Soviet developments today we have to go back to the dilemmas of earlier generations when socialism came in many forms, sometimes in effectively disguised evil incarnations like Fascism and Nazism. "We are all socialists now", said Sir William Harcourt at the turn of the last century. Today we have to guard against facile self-serving post-socialist interpretations of history. In drafting the next century's agenda we have to draw upon a far wider constituency than can be provided by a political party. We have to depend upon foolish, idealistic, angry, political and "Personal" Marxists who adore the great duo but "on this side idolatry". One good thing about Marx is that he brings you back not only to the hard realities of politics and economics but to the subtle charms of rhetoric and poetry.

A.K. Damodaran, a former diplomat and a Senior fellow at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (1980-81), is a well known commentator on international affairs.

## On Communism

T.C.A. Anant

*A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism*

Main Entry: **Spec-ter** Variant(s): or **spec-tre**/ 'spek-t&tr/ Function: *noun*

Etymology: French *spectre*, from Latin *spectrum* appearance, *specter*, from *specere* to look, look at, Date: 1605

- 1: a visible disembodied spirit: Ghost
- 2: something that haunts or perturbs the mind: Phantasm <the specter of hunger> Webster Dictionary

Few phrases command such instant worldwide recognition as these opening lines of one of the most influential documents of modern times: The Communist Manifesto. First published in London in 1848, it has aroused more anger, research and discussion than any other current document, comparable only to various religious texts. One hundred and fifty years after these words were first written, three eminent Indian scholars of the Left examine their contemporary relevance. Regardless of one's ideological persuasion, the impact these simple phrases have had on human history is clear to all. In spite of this success, the spectre remains disembodied and somewhat disturbing.

The Manifesto in various places is remarkably prescient of the patterns of economic development. Consider for instance the following description:

They are dislodged by new industries. . . that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations.

Written in 1848, when the process of international commerce was barely beginning, telecommunications and multinational industries were rudimentary, one might suppose that this has been the work of a seer rather than a social scientist. It is this foresight that is remarkable and leads some to assert, as the authors of the essays would argue, that the rest is equally inevitable and likely.

Written in 1848, when the process of international commerce was barely beginning, telecommunications and multinational industries were rudimentary, one might suppose that this has been the work of a seer rather than a social scientist. It is this foresight that is remarkable and leads some to assert, as the authors of the essays would argue, that the rest is equally inevitable and likely. In some ways a phenomenon similar to the current craze regarding Nostradamus.

The essays examine the Manifesto in a variety of dimensions. Irfan Habib examines the Reading of History in the Manifesto and later works by Marx and Engels. The papers by Aijaz Ahmed and Prabhat Patnaik focus on the laws of capitalist development and their implications for our assessment of the current global economy. It is not our purpose to examine these essays in detail but rather to comment on certain common elements of their analysis to illustrate limitations of arguing from this perspective.

The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles.

One of the fundamental insights of the Manifesto is to recognize the universality of conflict as a basis for society. However, arguing from the permanence of conflict, one can make the error of assuming the permanence of the warring factions. To illustrate, let me quote from the paper by Aijaz Ahmed:

. . . the basic fact is that, according to the calculations of the World Bank, the number of workers in the 'modern' (i.e. fully capitalist) sector has doubled in the thirty years between 1865 and 1995, the very years when capitalism is said to have abolished historic forms of labour. . .

However, merely counting the work force in the modern sector ignores some critical aspects of its composition. A much larger percentage of it is in services: as much as 34 per cent in 1995. In the US, employment<sup>1</sup> in manufacturing declined from 27 per cent in 1965 to 16.4 per cent in 1995, while the proportion in services rose from 60 per cent to 75 per cent. The composition of the labour force has also changed with increased female participation. The average worker with higher human capital and skills is far removed from the industrialized conveyor belt proletariat of the late nineteenth century. The heterogeneity in composition leads to a variety of inner contradictions, as between males and females, workers from developed vs. developing countries, manufacturing versus services. In such a fractured framework of conflict, the immediate concerns may well contradict the simple notion of a unified interest of all workers. Consider the recent attempt by developed countries to link issues in trade to labour standards. Improvements in standards of employment and association are in the long-term interest of workers. However, in the short run, linking these issues to trade has the potential of creating a dualistic privileged workforce in the developed world protected by trade barriers. Similar contradictions have been noted earlier in communist literature as well, in the Soviet debate between agriculture and industry, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The resulting cost of "resolving" these contradictions are well known.

It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put on its trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed.

If we are to compare the status of the Manifesto in 1948 to its standing now we note a marked difference. The culmination of the World Wars and the emergence of the Soviet Union as a major world power, the communist revolution in China, the nascent process of de-colonization and the experience of the Depression of the thirties, all seemed to indicate a worldwide rejection of the market. This was not a matter of mere accident, or of the mysterious dominance of some misguided ideol-

<sup>1</sup> Comparative Civilian Labor Force Statistics Ten Countries 1959-1998; U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics 1999.

ogy. Free-market capitalism had proved, in the eyes of most people who thought about it, to be unstable, unjust, and ineffective. However, Capitalism survived: not just survived, it actually thrived.

Why did this happen? We can begin with giving some partial answers. One possible explanation is that changing technology changed the rules. Improvements in communications and computing gave an advantage to those who could be flexible. Thus Russia could hold its own in a technological race to build giant rockets; but lacked the institutional flexibility which allowed the West to put powerful computers on a chip and on your desktop. Another partial explanation is that Capitalism triumphed because of "globalization". The synergies between improved transportation, communication and reduced tariffs, enabled countries which integrated into the world to grow much faster over those which sought to build "socialism in one country". A third reason is the ability of Capitalism to adapt. The Capitalism which emerged in the post war period was very different from the structures of the nineteenth century. Democratic governments played an essential part in insulating people from the depression and creating a social welfare net.

In a sense the leftist glee on the East Asian crisis is similarly misplaced. The crises indicate a form of institutional failure. The response will be to adapt and change existing structures to resolve the problem. In fact, one should note that not all economies were affected by this crisis, notably, Singapore and Taiwan insulated themselves from the worst effects of this phenomenon and even now, Korea and Thailand are well on their way to a complete recovery. It is my feeling that what will emerge out of this exercise eventually is a form of a global regulatory apparatus on the flow of capital and goods similar to the market regulatory mechanisms set up by individual countries in the 1930's.

In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.

But these explanations are partial; the main reason is that the Manifesto and the implied social programme failed because it did not take into account the role of incentives in human functioning. Markets work because they are immune from people's faith in them. Incentives are inherent in the rewards and punishments they provide in the normal course of their functioning. Non-market institutions have to create a complex web of incentives to attract the right mix of effort. Unfortunately this mix of incentives is not immune to change and has to adapt to changing technological conditions. In the short run, firms and states can maintain functionality by appealing to higher values of commitment, nationalism or religion but in the long run the incentive package must adapt or the institution close down. While the exit of a single firm or large corporation does not affect society, it is a different matter if society as a whole has to continually restructure itself. In the end, then, Capitalism survived because as a system it assumes that each man is out for himself. From times immemorial, men have dreamed of something better, of a society that drew on Man's better nature. However, dreams, it turns out, cannot keep a system going over the long term; selfishness can.

*The Laws of God, the Laws of Man  
He may keep that will and can;  
Not I; let God and Man decree  
Laws for themselves and not for me;  
And if my ways are not as theirs  
Let them mind their own affairs*

AE Housman: *Last Poems*

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## Creative Affirmations

Manoranjan Mohanty

If the epoch of capitalism still persists the political stirrings emanating from the Communist Manifesto continue to be potent. The bourgeoisie considers it to be as yet the most powerful weapon in the hands of the working people in their struggle against capitalist exploitation. Its sharp edge does not derive from its absolute accuracy in analyzing human history or its assertive predictions from its *method of understanding* the dominant formation of our epoch, namely the phenomenon of capitalism and indicating an *approach to transformation* or revolution based on that understanding.

The essays in this volume by three eminent scholars of India and the introduction by CPI-M Politbureau Member, Prakash Karat accompanying the full text of the Communist Manifesto present creative affirmations of the core ideas of the Manifesto. They point out that the method of comprehending the evolution of the bourgeois order has essential validity, but later developments in capitalism have added new dimensions to its operation which Marx had not visualised.

In 1998 Marxists all over the world observed the 150th anniversary of The Communist Manifesto. The context of the 1990's provided added significance for three reasons. First, the collapse of the Soviet Union had generated critical issues regarding the Soviet path of socialist construction. Second, the end of the Cold War coincided with the aggressive march of capitalist globalization all over the Third World. Third, the democratic upsurge of oppressed social groups continued to gather momentum through the people's movements such as the women's movement, nationality struggles, movements of dalits and adivasis besides the peasants and workers movements. Each of these developments posed challenging questions before those who upheld the historic significance of this landmark proclamation. The Manifesto seems to have stood the test of our times as a document of method and approach to socialist revolution.

The essays in this volume by three eminent scholars of India and the introduction by CPI-M Politbureau Member, Prakash Karat accompanying the full text of the Communist Manifesto present creative affirmations of the core ideas of the Manifesto. They point out that the method of comprehending the evolution of the bourgeois order has essential validity, but later developments in capitalism have added new dimensions to its operation which Marx had not visualised. That class struggle is political struggle is true even today. Yet the multiple contradictions in society are to be woven into the class struggle to advance revolutionary politics. Marx and Engels had correctly discerned the global march of capitalism to forcibly occupy markets outside Europe. But the stages through which colonialism unfolded into forms of imperialism including the current form of international finance capital were not recorded in the Manifesto. However the dialectical materialist understanding of Capitalism and contradictions in class society which is embedded in the Manifesto has a resonance even now. Hence the need to grasp the method and approach in this great document of 1848 and creatively apply them to historical conditions of our era.

This volume is dedicated to the memory of the great Marxist leader of modern India, E.M.S. Namboodiripad. It has an appendix providing valuable information on the history of translations of the Manifesto into practically all the major languages of India. While the English edition was first printed in India in 1922 the credit for the first edition in an Indian language goes to Bengali translated by Soumyendranath Tagore and serialised in *Ganawan* in August 1926-July 1927. The Urdu edition followed suit in November 1927. Other translations took place in the 1930's. Marathi by G.M. Adhikari in 1931, Tamil translation by no other person than EVR in 1931, Malayalam by I.K. Menon in 1932, Telugu by P. Sundaraya in 1933, Hindi by Ayodhya Prasad in 1934, Oriya by Bhagabati Panigrahi, the first Secretary of the CPI Orissa unit in 1936, and into Punjabi in 1944 translated by the eminent political scientist, Professor Randhir Singh. The translations show the state of the progressive movement at different places in India at that time.

The authors of the essays in the present volume present their creative perspectives on the Manifesto in their own ways. Aijaz Ahmad treats the Manifesto as a "text of an intellectual and political transition" which marked the culmination of one phase of Marx's thinking. The arguments evolved through Marx's writings such as *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, *The Jewish Question and Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, *Theses on Feuerbach and German Ideology*, *the Holy Family* and *The Poverty of Philosophy*. The political events of the next twenty years from the French Revolution of 1848 till the Paris Commune of 1871 and the further study of political economy led Marx and Engels to produce more mature texts such as *Grundrisse* which were notes for self-clarification drafted in 1857-58 and then *Capital* in three volumes. Ahmad, therefore, explains the strengths and deficiencies in the Manifesto in terms of its *transitional* character.

But one may ask similar questions regarding later texts as well. Many formulations in the *Class Struggle in France* for example about the peasantry or in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* about the state or even in the *Capital* about the evolving dynamics of the capitalist economy on a world scale may appear dated or unfinished. However, if we take the works of Marx and Engels in totality and date the Manifesto as a mid-

ogy. Free-market capitalism had proved, in the eyes of most people who thought about it, to be unstable, unjust, and ineffective. However, Capitalism survived: not just survived, it actually thrived.

Why did this happen? We can begin with giving some partial answers. One possible explanation is that changing technology changed the rules. Improvements in communications and computing gave an advantage to those who could be flexible. Thus Russia could hold its own in a technological race to build giant rockets; but lacked the institutional flexibility which allowed the West to put powerful computers on a chip and on your desktop. Another partial explanation is that Capitalism triumphed because of "globalization". The synergies between improved transportation, communication and reduced tariffs, enabled countries which integrated into the world to grow much faster over those which sought to build "socialism in one country". A third reason is the ability of Capitalism to adapt. The Capitalism which emerged in the post war period was very different from the structures of the nineteenth century. Democratic governments played an essential part in insulating people from the depression and creating a social welfare net.

In a sense the leftist glee on the East Asian crisis is similarly misplaced. The crises indicate a form of institutional failure. The response will be to adapt and change existing structures to resolve the problem. In fact, one should note that not all economies were affected by this crisis, notably, Singapore and Taiwan insulated themselves from the worst effects of this phenomenon and even now, Korea and Thailand are well on their way to a complete recovery. It is my feeling that what will emerge out of this exercise eventually is a form of a global regulatory apparatus on the flow of capital and goods similar to the market regulatory mechanisms set up by individual countries in the 1930's.

In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.

But these explanations are partial; the main reason is that the Manifesto and the implied social programme failed because it did not take into account the role of incentives in human functioning. Markets work because they are immune from people's faith in them. Incentives are inherent in the rewards and punishments they provide in the normal course of their functioning. Non-market institutions have to create a complex web of incentives to attract the right mix of effort. Unfortunately this mix of incentives is not immune to change and has to adapt to changing technological conditions. In the short run, firms and states can maintain functionality by appealing to higher values of commitment, nationalism or religion but in the long run the incentive package must adapt or the institution close down. While the exit of a single firm or large corporation does not affect society, it is a different matter if society as a whole has to continually restructure itself. In the end, then, Capitalism survived because as a system it assumes that each man is out for himself. From times immemorial, men have dreamed of something better, of a society that drew on Man's better nature. However, dreams, it turns out, cannot keep a system going over the long term; selfishness can.

*The Laws of God, the Laws of Man  
He may keep that will and can;  
Not I; let God and Man decree  
Laws for themselves and not for me;  
And if my ways are not as theirs  
Let them mind their own affairs*

AE Housman: *Last Poems*

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## Creative Affirmations

Manoranjan Mohanty

If the epoch of capitalism still persists the political stirrings emanating from the Communist Manifesto continue to be potent. The bourgeoisie considers it to be as yet the most powerful weapon in the hands of the working people in their struggle against capitalist exploitation. Its sharp edge does not derive from its absolute accuracy in analyzing human history or its assertive predictions from its *method of understanding* the dominant formation of our epoch, namely the phenomenon of capitalism and indicating an *approach to transformation* or revolution based on that understanding.

The essays in this volume by three eminent scholars of India and the introduction by CPI-M Politbureau Member, Prakash Karat accompanying the full text of the Communist Manifesto present creative affirmations of the core ideas of the Manifesto. They point out that the method of comprehending the evolution of the bourgeois order has essential validity, but later developments in capitalism have added new dimensions to its operation which Marx had not visualised.

In 1998 Marxists all over the world observed the 150th anniversary of The Communist Manifesto. The context of the 1990's provided added significance for three reasons. First, the collapse of the Soviet Union had generated critical issues regarding the Soviet path of socialist construction. Second, the end of the Cold War coincided with the aggressive march of capitalist globalization all over the Third World. Third, the democratic upsurge of oppressed social groups continued to gather momentum through the people's movements such as the women's movement, nationality struggles, movements of dalits and adivasis besides the peasants and workers movements. Each of these developments posed challenging questions before those who upheld the historic significance of this landmark proclamation. The Manifesto seems to have stood the test of our times as a document of method and approach to socialist revolution.

The essays in this volume by three eminent scholars of India and the introduction by CPI-M Politbureau Member, Prakash Karat accompanying the full text of the Communist Manifesto present creative affirmations of the core ideas of the Manifesto. They point out that the method of comprehending the evolution of the bourgeois order has essential validity, but later developments in capitalism have added new dimensions to its operation which Marx had not visualised. That class struggle is political struggle is true even today. Yet the multiple contradictions in society are to be woven into the class struggle to advance revolutionary politics. Marx and Engels had correctly discerned the global march of capitalism to forcibly occupy markets outside Europe. But the stages through which colonialism unfolded into forms of imperialism including the current form of international finance capital were not recorded in the Manifesto. However the dialectical materialist understanding of Capitalism and contradictions in class society which is embedded in the Manifesto has a resonance even now. Hence the need to grasp the method and approach in this great document of 1848 and creatively apply them to historical conditions of our era.

This volume is dedicated to the memory of the great Marxist leader of modern India, E.M.S. Namboodiripad. It has an appendix providing valuable information on the history of translations of the Manifesto into practically all the major languages of India. While the English edition was first printed in India in 1922 the credit for the first edition in an Indian language goes to Bengali translated by Soumyendranath Tagore and serialised in *Ganavani* in August 1926-July 1927. The Urdu edition followed suit in November 1927. Other translations took place in the 1930's. Marathi by G.M. Adhikari in 1931, Tamil translation by no other person than EVR in 1931, Malayalam by I.K. Menon in 1932, Telugu by P. Sundaraya in 1933, Hindi by Ayodhya Prasad in 1934, Oriya by Bhagabati Panigrahi, the first Secretary of the CPI Orissa unit in 1936, and into Punjabi in 1944 translated by the eminent political scientist, Professor Randhir Singh. The translations show the state of the progressive movement at different places in India at that time.

The authors of the essays in the present volume present their creative perspectives on the Manifesto in their own ways. Aijaz Ahmad treats the Manifesto as a "text of an intellectual and political transition" which marked the culmination of one phase of Marx's thinking. The arguments evolved through Marx's writings such as *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, *The Jewish Question and Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, *Theses on Feuerbach and German Ideology*, *the Holy Family* and *The Poverty of Philosophy*. The political events of the next twenty years from the French Revolution of 1848 till the Paris Commune of 1871 and the further study of political economy led Marx and Engels to produce more mature texts such as *Grundrisse* which were notes for self-clarification drafted in 1857-58 and then *Capital* in three volumes. Ahmad, therefore, explains the strengths and deficiencies in the Manifesto in terms of its *transitional* character.

But one may ask similar questions regarding later texts as well. Many formulations in the *Class Struggle in France* for example about the peasantry or in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* about the state or even in the *Capital* about the evolving dynamics of the capitalist economy on a world scale may appear dated or unfinished. However, if we take the works of Marx and Engels in totality and date the Manifesto as a mid-

point articulation of a thought process Aijaz's point is understandable.

Prabhat Patnaik considers the Manifesto as a peak of a 'unified theory' of its time. Another such peak was reached in Lenin's time and later in the case of Mao. According to him the Manifesto's unified theory had inherent in it the roots of its reconstitution in course of future practice. The 'unified theory' presented the materialist conception of history as an interplay of forces of production and relations of production, the dialectics unfolding through class struggle with the historical agency of the proletariat seeking to overthrow the capitalist order and end all class antagonism. Yet Patnaik points out that the Manifesto bore the imprint of its immediate context—the revolutionary situation in Europe, treating capitalism as a 'closed' system "where colonies and empires did not figure" (p. 71). It had two consequences: this narrowness of concern did not bring out the interaction of capitalism with pre-capitalist modes as in the colonies. And revolution was conceptualised as a "pure proletarian revolution."

Does the European imprint dilute the status of the 'unified theory' that Patnaik assigns to the Manifesto? Actually it should not if we agree that all theory has a limited spatial and temporal base. What makes a formulation a universal theory is the discerning of a principle or a law or a generalisation that other people find applicable elsewhere. The analysis of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the Manifesto had a few such elements. The 'unified theory' presented a hundred and fifty years ago had many universal formulations for the capitalist epoch.

Irfan Habib's states that the Manifesto was an effort of "summation and creation": summation of principles that Marx and Engels had come to grasp thus far and creation to fill up existing lacunae (p.48). To treat history as a history of class struggles was part of the summation—the core of the materialist conception of history that has abiding significance. At the same time there are pointers to creative understanding of the class struggle. As Habib notes, class struggle though "uninterrupted" was "now hidden, now open" and varied in the contestants' consciousness (p. 55). In pre-capitalist structures class struggle had elements of complexity. The bourgeois epoch, however, has "simplified the class antagonisms", says the Manifesto. Referring to the later works of Marx, especially his articles on India, Habib applies this method to the caste system which was "another form of those complex gradations which had marked pre-bourgeois societies in Europe" (p. 57). Here again there is a hint of creative analysis.

Thus, whether we take the Manifesto as a "text of transition" in the Marx's evolution or a "unified theory" of its own time or a "summation and creation", the creative comprehension of this text requires not only historically contextualizing its formulations but absorbing the method and approach underlying them and taking their help in understanding subsequent developments in history. That exercise constantly refines and enriches the method and approach as well.

While affirming the analysis of the basic characteristics of the bourgeois epoch the authors highlight three areas of silence or inadequacies in the Manifesto: on nationalism and the nation-state, on colonialism and global operation of finance capital and on ideological and cultural aspects of the capitalist epoch.

Aijaz Ahmad notes that as of 1848 Marx and Engels had not seriously studied the phenomenon of colonialism (pp. 40–41). Patnaik generalises it further: "Since Marx's analyses, not just in the *Manifesto*, but even in *Capital*, is concerned with a 'closed', capitalist economy, the interaction between capitalism and the colonies remains an area of silence in Marxist theory" (p. 77). Patnaik presents a picture of the contemporary world economy where international finance capital has emerged in a new form. It is not nation-based or nation-state aided, not 'controlled by banks and employed in industry' nor is it characterised by rivalry among capitalist powers—features that Lenin highlighted. On the other hand, it operates as a large international bloc, primarily as speculative capital and with comparative unity among capitalist regimes. This trend of globalization undermines state intervention and planning that was a hallmark of Third World nationalism and by centralising on a world scale it causes loss of sovereignty of the postcolonial states.

Even on globalization we get methodological insights from the Manifesto:

The need for a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the hole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

The Manifesto thoroughly exposed the abstract formal notions of freedom and equality in bourgeois society and it dissolved the artificial antithesis between individual and society that the bourgeois world view had advanced.

Again the following statement sounds very recent.

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls... Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West.

The colonial dependence, its basis in the superiority of technology and capital in the western countries and the process of worldwide expansion of capital are sharply stated in the Manifesto. Habib takes note of both internal and external process of primitive accumulation of capital—internal from depriving peasants of land and external by "forcible plunder and expropriation of colonial peoples" (p. 63).

Aijaz Ahmad says that the precision with which the economic issues are analysed is absent in the case of cultural and ideological dimensions of the capitalist epoch. Yet the treatment of family and also of education under capitalism has a good deal of insights that are relevant even today.

Incidentally, Ahmad's point that the Manifesto uses some inherited, unpleasant categories—'civilised and barbarian'—is well taken. But that was part of the discourse of that time and the same document castigates the bourgeois "civilization mongers" as well. The larger question that has to be kept in mind is that the bourgeois enterprise to transform the whole world "in its own image" received the severest indictment in the Manifesto.

These essays present numerous insights on the nature of the bourgeoisie and its political economy during the past century and half. The Manifesto's discussion on the proletariat needed equal or even more attention, Prakash Karat's brief references in the Introduction notwithstanding. The Manifesto identified the basic characteristics of labour in capitalist economy: "not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois state: they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overlooker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself" (p. 96). Much work has been done on technology and labour over the decades. But this basic source of alienation of labour in capitalist production is widely acknowledged. So also the reasons for feminization of labour with the development of modern industry which the Manifesto had noted.

The pauperization of labour and revolutionary mobilization of the working class in developed countries have not followed the trajectory anticipated by the Manifesto. But the gains of the working class in that situation may have been a major achievement of the Manifesto itself and also of the continuing challenge of the working people's movement to world capitalism. But the alienation of the workers in capitalism and the exploitation that is embedded in the system that denied labour its due value remain the most important features of capitalism. Here the statement of the Manifesto resounds:

The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society except by abolishing their own previous mode of production...

The collapse of the USSR and the rise of social movements have challenged us to closely analyse class contradictions in modern society and the social contradictions within the classes following the dialectical materialist method. There are insights in the Manifesto on that but we have to go much further to grasp the full implications of the specificity and the interconnection of these contradictions. The full import of caste, gender and ethnic contradictions intermeshed in class contradictions has to be comprehended. The Manifesto thoroughly exposed the abstract formal notions of freedom and equality in bourgeois society and it dissolved the artificial antithesis between individual and society that the bourgeois world view had advanced. It said:

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

For example, each dalit woman worker is struggling for her free development and her condition in the contemporary context of capitalist globalization needs to be comprehended and corresponding strategy of class struggle evolved. That would continue the creative affirmation of the Manifesto to the tradition of which these essays constitute a worthy tribute.

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## Resisting Dominant Paradigms

Pradip Kumar Datta

DOMINANCE WITHOUT HEGEMONY: HISTORY AND POWER IN COLONIAL INDIA

By Ranajit Guha

Oxford University Press, Delhi 1998, pp. 245, Rs 425.00

The sub-title *History and Power in Colonial India* of Ranajit Guha's new book is an attractive though not quite precise index of the contents, for two good reasons. Firstly, since power ought to have been the first term. This is because Guha disavows the Foucauldian notion of a power derived from disciplinary and institutional knowledge; instead he locates the latter as functioning within the social, political and economic framework of colonial domination. Secondly, although the idea of history is a crucial concern of this book, it is the examination of culture that provides its most stimulating and original part. Indeed, in conceptual terms, the analysis of history forms a sub-set of his understanding of the cultural processes under colonialism.

The advantage of reading a new book with previously-but-separately published essays, is that it allows the reader to recognize a larger argument which is otherwise dispersed in time and a diversity of publications. The fact that Guha's book consists of essays written in 1986-87, that is, within a very short period, indicates a close kinship between them. The fundamental relationship that Guha explores is one between power and, what can be awkwardly phrased as, the culture of political relationships. His starting point is to treat the character of power as an universal attribute of all societies. That is, Guha recognizes that in all social formations, power is mobilized to perpetuate class exploitation or, in its more simple form, to permit the domination of the subalterns by the socially powerful. More specifically, Guha regards the modes of power—composed of coercion, persuasion, collaboration and resistance—as shared by both colonial and pre-colonial societies.

It is this treatment of power as an universal that accounts for the book's approach to the question of cultural difference under colonialism. For it allows Guha to show that a similar vocabulary of power exists in both social spheres. However, the notions of power shaped by colonial categories and those by Indian, do not equal each other. They also possess their distinctive range of meanings, since they belong to separate cultures and social formations. Thus, the

colonial idea of order, which signified arbitrary methods of oppressing Indians, was matched by the indigenously available idea of *danda*. But while order was a secular notion, *danda* carried the idea of divine retribution through which it preserved the feudal status quo. Guha asserts that cultural processes under colonialism were made up of combinations and configurations of these similar yet different vocabularies, that were so diverse as to be analytically unmappable.

This process of cultural symbiosis marks three important things. The first is that it demonstrates the failure of capital (represented by colonialism) to universalise its cultural values. This inability of capital/colonialism supports Guha's contention that the colonial state was not a hegemonic, but an authoritarian ('dominant') one. The second aspect is that it provides an understanding of the idiom of Indian nationalism. The latter engages in popular mobilisation but also shapes it by deploying 'modern' strategies of discipline and order through distinctively indigenous concepts like social boycott. A striking instance of this phenomenon is the Gandhian method of inculcating order through persuasion, which was achieved by enjoining individual followers to observe correct codes of public political behaviour as a way of purifying themselves. The third significance of this cultural process was that it enabled the development of history writing, an activity which fulfilled the functions of the novel in early colonial India by privileging everyday time over puranic epic time, through producing (by using the vernacular) a sense of self as distinct from colonial rule and finally, by moving to a threshold situation in Bankim's writings on history, in which the anti-colonial implications of *bahubol* are arrested—though in a very unstable fashion—by the idea of *jatipratishtha*.

The advantage that Guha's approach to culture possesses over its contemporary rivals, is that it does not reduce culture/knowledge to power, even as it forefronts their relationship. On the one hand, it does not accede to the positioning of colonialism as the master text that is implied in theories of derivative discourse and mimicry, not does it absolve

cultural processes of the importance of colonial power as some approaches to cultural transaction tend toward. Instead, Guha's approach underlines the importance of resistance to and the limiting of colonialism as the key features of the symbiotic process. Of course, forefronting the importance of such resistance is not novel today when it has become a part of contemporary orthodoxy to privilege traces of the pre-colonial simply because they resist colonial power-knowledge. The significant move that Guha makes is not to see the pre-colonial as isolable, since the difference between the colonial and pre-colonial exists alongside a shared complicity in perpetuating power. This also implies that the terms of historical critique must supercede both the pre-colonial 'past' as well as the colonial 'modern'.

The other important feature of Guha's approach is that it is not structured by the binarisation of text and action. It is—and that is why it is important to recognize it as a study in historical culture—a framework by which one can analyse both text and action as parts of a complex that makes up a social formation. Indeed, some of the most interesting parts of the book consist of showing the points of convergence between them, as for instance, the phenomenon of Gandhian discipline which relies on textualisation (such as detailed instructions to volunteers on crowd control), oral and textual appeals directly aimed at the followers, as well as the points of resistance and or distortion (such as the remarkable instance when the crowd repeated the leader's plea to shut up, thereby making it impossible for Gandhi to speak).

While there is much more that is stimulating about Guha's book, what is equally interesting are the questions that it raises about itself. These are of two orders. The first belongs to a more general level. Two points are involved here. To begin with, there is a problem about Guha's allegorical presentation. Colonialism is seen as the carrier of capital and its universalistic pretensions. The resistances it encounters then becomes the marks of not only its limits, but those of world capitalism itself. This sounds a curiously naive proposition when we think of the globalisation of post-modern capital in the 1990's, a crucial feature of which (as the Pepsi and Kellogg's promotions indicate) is that multinationals sell their products not by trying to promote the supportive culture of the West as much as by catering to indigenous cultural preferences. In other words, the economic and social power of capital cannot be equated with its cultural strategies. Retrospectively this means that Guha needs to pay greater attention to the accommodations

sought by colonialism to 'local' conditions, even if one recognizes that this may have existed as secondary strand in the racist mercantilist worldview of colonialism.

The other 'large' problem with Guha's framework is the design of the three orders that informs his picture of colonial society. Thus, while colonial authority is perched on top, ruling through diktats and ideologies justifying those, it has below it the (upper class/caste) nationalist leadership which draws on the cultural resources of the middle class developed in symbiotic relationship with colonialism and uses it in part to perpetuate their leadership over the popular classes below. In other words power is transmitted vertically through three social levels. However, this model seems a gross simplification, since the subaltern groups also transacted directly with colonial authority through institutions such as those of the law and administration. This raises the question as to whether the cultural symbiosis they entered into with colonialism was based only on the similarity of concepts, or whether it also included processes of addition and repudiation. For instance, many low castes regarded colonial rule as empowering for introducing norms of legal and social equality, which were absent in indigenous power structures dominated by the upper castes. It may be observed in this connection that Guha's definition of Indian categories are invariably Brahmanical. Did low castes or women possess the same categories and if so, did they use them in the same way? What about Islamic, tribal and indeed, the even more complicating case of the Christians? These questions stem from the fact that Guha does not examine the relationships of power that marked pre-colonial society—an exercise, without which, categories themselves lose their social resonance, even as the selection of certain categories to represent Indianness becomes complicit in reproducing the idea of Brahmanical hegemony.

There is also another, more 'local' order of questions that relate to the Subaltern Studies project. Guha is, as we all know, the founder of the latter, although in recent times he has come to occupy the exalted though background place in it that is analogous to the positioning of the beatific face of Shiva in religious calendar art. However this book seems to introduce some disquieting colours in this picture. Let me touch on these through some comments on Guha's disproportionately large polemical exegesis on the Cambridge school. The burden of this consists of the eminently sensible—though oft repeated—argument that Indian politics

cannot be explained only as a matter of colonial institutions and accompanying ideas including the workings of administrative categories. So far, so good. But by inference, it raises the question as to how it relates to the second phase of Subaltern Studies (to follow Sumit Sarkar's characterisation) which, by featuring colonialism as an all-pervasive prison-house of categories, institutions and disciplines replicates, at a different methodological register, the assumption of colonial hegemony. This question becomes crucial because of the basic differences in the way in which disciplines are conceived.

For Guha, the salience of resistance to dominant paradigms in the workings out of a discipline (here that of history itself), is different from that of Foucault (where the importance of resistance lies in making disciplinary power more efficient), or Chatterjee (in which colonial power allows for a limited space for improvisation through which dominant paradigms are more deeply internalised). In Guha's argument, resistance results in the creation of a new discourse with a new range of values, including some which have substantive potentialities for, if not emancipation, at least something close to that state. For instance, his handling of Bankim's history writing indicates that there is a certain critical excess in it produced by the clash of values within his discourse—which gives grist to Guha's belief that historical criticism can go beyond the limits of its origins. The importance that Guha gives to resistance within the disciplinary structure of history is underlined by the fact that the trope he uses to denote the resistance of pre-colonial/Indian political culture to colonialism is that of 'contingency', a word drawn from the historical discipline.

But this only returns us to the problem at hand: contingency as a figure of resistance is moored in the idea of the unpredictability of non-hierarchical time together with its openness to future possibilities. This is a far cry from the current subaltern preoccupation with resistance as embodied in the notion of community with its baggage of mythic time. How would Guha approach this difference? He needed to have answered this question in a book that is published in 1998, that is, in the period of Subaltern domination of Indian historiography. If for nothing else, than to walk out of the frame of icons, legends and purveyors of inspiration. In short to historicise his influence more completely.

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## Anti-State Rebellions in Mughal Bengal

Basudeb Chattopadhyay

ADVENTURERS, LANDOWNERS AND REBELS; BENGAL C. 1575-C. 1715

By Aniruddha Ray

Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 273, Rs. 475.00

Despite its grandiose and avoidably ponderous title, Ray's is an important study of three major anti-state rebellions in Mughal Bengal. The first, led by Raja Pratapaditya of Bara Bhuiyan fame, was a post-pacification revolt and its suppression paved the way for Mughal penetration in coastal Bengal. The second, led by Sobha Singh and Rahim Khan towards the closing years of Emperor Aurangzeb's reign, shook the imperial control to its foundations. Compared to these two, the revolt of Sitaram Ray was a rather tame affair and its inevitable collapse enabled the Mughal Subahdar Murshid Quli Khan to reorganize the land revenue system of Bengal on a stable basis. What is engrossing about the story of these three revolts is that together they cover just about the entire gamut of the history of Mughal Bengal. At the same time they provide necessary entry-points to understand and explicate the possibilities and limits of imperial control over an under-administered and outlying Subah.

Before the Mughal conquest of Bengal, some significant changes had already become clearly discernible in the polity and economy of this region. In the early chapters the author seeks to identify some of these. The accession of Alauddin Hussain Shah was an event of great consequence. It ended a long period of anarchy and confusion and thus ensured the re-emergence of Bengal as a principal trading region. The arrival of the Portuguese and consolidation of their commercial presence initially in Chittagong and subsequently also in Saptagram was another event of great significance which arguably ushered in what may be called the Vasco da Gama epoch in Bengal's history. The Portuguese trading activities, especially their later day piratical raids altered the commercial climate of the region in the long run. But what was no less significant was the steady decline of the capital city of Gaur along with its feeder port of Saptagram. While Gaur was going downhill all the way, a host of small

towns began to sprout on the banks of the Bhagirathi. The author finds in this kind of 'decentralised urbanisation' based on trade on sub-regional level, the social basis of the Vaishnava movement led by Sri Chaitanya. By further extending this hypothesis he suggests that the Vaishnava ideology, based as it was on collective devotion of people irrespective of caste and ritual distinctions, symbolised a broader social demand 'for integration between merchants and weavers, the production and sale, in a hierarchical society dominated by Brahmins'. It is true that Vaishnavism became increasingly popular in the areas suggested by the author. But the linear correlation between the growth of urbanisation and the spread of bhakti cult, implicit in his assumption, is highly questionable. Even a cursory perusal of the list of early Vaishnava *Sripatas* (hermitages), available inter-alia in Ramakanta Chakraborti's writings on the subject, clearly indicate that many of these were located in rural areas inhabited by a settled population. Even Nityananda, a close associate of Sri Chaitanya who personally converted the merchants of Saptagram, had his *Sripata* in the rural setting of Khardaha on the eastern banks of the river. Secondly one should be careful not to homogenise the complexities involved in the Vaishnava movement. Apart from orthodox Vaishnavism there were other heretodox strands in the movement which did not always move in the same direction, nor target at the same set of followers. Again, while Vaishnavism ideally suggested levelling of all social or caste distinctions, in reality there was a gap between profession and practice. In any case, the suggested integration of weavers with merchants, that is to say production with distribution brought about by the spread of Vaishnavism seems a bit too far-fetched. Far more incisive probings into the social basis of popular religious movements in medieval Bengal is necessary before one can establish with certitude the precise linkages suggested by the author.

The other important development related to the decline of Gaur was the steady expansion of the Bengal frontier towards the East. The shifting of the capital from Gaur initially to Tanda, then to Rajmahal and eventually to Dhaka was symptomatic of a deeper malaise affecting the western parts of Bengal. Why did the political and agrarian frontiers of Bengal move so relentlessly from West to East? Ray suggests that political uncertainty, external threat and prolonged Mughal-Afghan conflict vitiated the climate in some parts of the West to such an extent that people began to migrate to the safer pastures in the East. Political turmoil was indeed a pertinent factor but one needs to take into account the persuasive argument of Richard Eaton that dramatic shift in the riverine movements was more important in the long run. Continuous sedimentation, arguably aggravated by tectonic activity, caused a long-drawn shift of the active delta towards the eastern parts of Bengal. This, according to Eaton, is testified by maps drawn by contemporary European visitors as well. They show 'the great Ganges river system, abandoning to former channels in western and southern Bengal, linked up with the Padma, enabling its main course to flow directly into the heart of the East'. In other words, with the shift in the active delta, what had earlier been the main course of the Ganges and its tributaries in Bengal, gradually silted up, resulting in the conversion of the area into a moribund delta. The fate of Saptagram as a trading port was adversely affected in the process. The author admits that the river Saraswati, on the banks of which stood Saptagram, was silting up since at least the end of the fifteenth century. Despite this, on the basis of the traveller Frederick's account of 1575, he asserts that Saraswati continued to be eminently navigable till the end of the sixteenth century. Hence Saptagram was reckoned as a busy port lorded over by the Portuguese. True indeed, but other accounts point to the contrary. In as early as 1532 De Barros found Saptagram 'not so convenient for the entrance and departure of ships.' In short, although Saptagram continued to be the royal port and the seat of the Governor and the imperial customs house till 1632, its heady days were decidedly over.

Against this background the author explores the process of Mughal penetration in coastal Bengal. Initially the Afghans offered spirited resistance to the advancing Mughal army, but Akbar and Munim Khan pushed relentlessly against them till the Afghan fugitives were driven to what the author calls 'river-invested deltaic Bengal' in the East. This is followed by a skilful reconstruction of the formation of semi-independent

What is engrossing about the story of these three revolts is that together they cover just about the entire gamut of the history of Mughal Bengal. At the same time they provide necessary entry-points to understand and explicate the possibilities and limits of imperial control over an under-administered and outlying Subah.

zamindaris in eastern Bengal. However, the coastal zamindars, from the very beginning, were called upon to perform a delicate balancing act. They had to find their way through the conflicting aspirations of the Arakanese and the Portuguese. They were so obsessed with this Arakanese-Portuguese tangle that they ignored the potentially more serious threat emanating from the Mughal advance till it reached their backyards. The Mughals knew precisely what they wanted: to control the three routes—Bhagirathi, Padma and Brahmaputra—with a Chittagong-Hugli axis. In order to achieve this it was first of all necessary to cut all the tall poppies to size. There was no space for Bara bhuiyans in the Mughal scheme of things. The author rightly avers that the hinterland and the base were required not only to end the dominance of the Portuguese and the Arakanese in the Bay of Bengal, but also to control the Chittagong-Hugli axis. Here, as Ray asserts, 'slightest disobedience was not to be tolerated'. Autonomous chiefs were to be either removed or turned into *amli* zamindars. Fair enough, but where does Pratapaditya figure in this scheme? Did Pratapaditya's presence pose any threat to the long term strategy evolved by the Mughals? There seems to be a mildly anachronistic confusion in the author's answer. He repeatedly suggests that Pratap was ready to make a compromise but it was the Mughals who were refusing (p. 73) or that 'he was not ready to be a rebel until the Mughals gave him no choice' (p. 77). Why did the Mughals not give him any choice? Was it because his behaviour was unbecoming of a Mughal mansabdar, or was it because the Mughals wanted to establish unfettered control over his territory, no matter how he behaved? Mirza Nathen's account makes it amply clear that after his meeting with Islam Khan, the imperial Governor, Pratap had reasons to feel satisfied. He was treated with respect, be-

stowed with honour, and shown all the courtesy. In retrospect it seems that Pratap's refusal to reciprocate this gesture by providing Islam Khan with the promised help virtually sealed his fate. Viewed in this light Pratapaditya was not 'merely a cog in the wheel' (p. 77) but was an active agent in shaping his own destiny. He gambled for high stakes and eventually paid the price.

Having established their control over the coastal region the Mughals turned to Hugli which was then under the de facto control of the Portuguese. In 1632 Qasim Khan captured Hugli and thus dealt a mortal blow to the Portuguese power. Why were the Mughals so desperate to drive the Portuguese out of Hugli? The author suggests that a large number of mansabdars who arrived in Bengal following the Mughal conquest, needed an overseas port on the Ganges. This was all the more necessary in view of the spectacular growth of textile production and trade. With Chittagong out of bounds for the Mughals, Hugli was the only available alternative. But Ashin Das Gupta had already suggested a more straightforward explanation for the Mughal resolve to capture Hugli. The Mughals were suspicious of an interdependence between Portuguese Hugli and the pirate port of Chittagong. Hence, they decided to break the Hugli-Chittagong axis by evicting the Portuguese from Hugli. This enabled the Mughals to assert their authority against the Portuguese and at the same time to emancipate the maritime outlet of south-western Bengal from vexatious control. The process was completed by Shaista Khan when he captured Chittagong in 1666.

The chapters on the revolt of Sobha Singh, Maha Singh and Rahim Khan are arguably the best part of the book. It is based on solid facts which the author has gathered from different sources. The chapters are well written, giving a perceptive account of the troubled times that preceded the revolt. This was indeed the period when the English and the Dutch Companies were busy occupying the commercial space once dominated by the Portuguese. The revolt of Sobha Singh took the Mughal administration in Bengal by surprise. The emperor was busy fighting the Marahas while the Bengal subahdar was clearly unequal to the task. In fact the revolt of Sobha Singh serves as a useful entry point to examine the efficacy of Mughal presence in the Bengal subah. The author's skillful handling of the relationship between Sobha Singh and Krishna Ram, the Zamindar of Burdwan, helps us to understand the origin and subsequent spread of the revolt. An yet unpublished letter by Francois Martin helped the author to clarify the confu-

sions concerning the death of Sobha Singh. This chapter is indeed the product of sound scholarship.

The remaining part of book looks like an afterthought. The revolt of Sitaram Ray was destined to fail. It took place at a time when Bengal was being governed by a Subahdar of unquestioned ability. Sitaram posed a temporary threat to administrative reorganisation contemplated by Murshid Quil Khan. So he had to be removed. After his removal, Murshid Quil gave a new turn to the land revenue system of Bengal which, according to some, constituted the social ba-

sis for the growth of the Nawabi regime in Bengal. In the last few chapters the author has portrayed the literary perceptions of the three rebels of Bengal.

It is a useful book. Professor Ray has focussed primarily on three rebels who had been objects of myth, vituperation and romantic hindsight. His careful contextualisation of the revolts will help us to understand the extent and depth of Mughal presence in Bengal.

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## Communalism and Politics

Bidyut Chakrabarty

CARVING BLOCS: COMMUNAL IDEOLOGY IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

By Pradip Kumar Dutta

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999, pp. 312, Rs. 495.00

Communalism is a significant influence in Indian politics. Although the nationalist leaders, regardless of ideology, fought the two-nation theory tooth and nail, the fact that Pakistan was created shows the extent to which communal politics appeared decisive in the 1947 transfer of power. Whether justifiable or not, the partition of India into two sovereign states on the basis of religion signifies the importance of Hindu-Muslim rivalry in political mobilization. The failure to unite Hindus and Muslims into a common nationhood reveals a major limitation of the Gandhi-led nationalist movement; despite its success in defeating British imperialism, the freedom struggle failed to sustain the Hindu-Muslim fraternity, evident during the Noncooperation-Khilafat movement through the propagation of a 'composite culture'.

With the division of British India and Pakistan, the two-nation theory triumphed and communalism therefore became a powerful weapon for mass mobilization and elite manipulation. How did it happen? Did it happen due to the policy of *divide et impera*? That the British adopted constitutional means to separate Hindus and Muslims is beyond doubt. But the argument attributing Hindu-Muslim animosity to the imperial machinations alone does not seem convincing because communalism, as recent researches reveal, is a much more complex phenomenon which can be understood only through a discourse

that takes into account the totality of factors shaping the attitudes of those individuals and communities which are drawn into religious conflict. So, in the context of sophisticated historical writings, monocausal explanations limit our vision by drawing our attention away from the complex interplay of factors.

Pradip Kumar Datta's *Carving Blocs* is a serious attempt to study the role of communal ideology in constructing and strengthening a separate identity in which religion is pivotal. While seeking to grasp communalism in its complexity, the author has also made a significant contribution to the study of Indian nationalism which, though it posed an effective challenge to imperialism, provided room for the divisive tendencies to thrive and consolidate. Although the subject matter is not new since there

Pradip Kumar Datta's *Carving Blocs* is a serious attempt to study the role of communal ideology in constructing and strengthening a separate identity in which religion is pivotal. While seeking to grasp communalism in its complexity, the author has also made a significant contribution

are a large number of thoroughly researched pieces, what is distinctive about this work is its focus on the roles of both the Hindus and Muslims in constructing a separate identity in the 1920s when both these communities launched an effective anti-British campaign together in the form of the Non-cooperation-Khilafat Movement.

The principal argument of the book rests on the assumption that communal ideology is the offshoot of a complex interplay of factors involving the society, economy and polity. In order to capture the complexity of the phenomenon, Datta narrates the story in two parts underlining the roles of both the principal communities in those processes that finally led to communalism. Four of the five chapters are devoted to grasp the extent to which both the Hindus and Muslims are responsible for carving blocs while the last one deals with the meaning and implications of riots. Although there is no conclusion, the author has sought to link the principal argument with his findings in chapter 5 (pp. 238-96) by simultaneously reiterating some of the well-known theoretical formulations regarding the formation of communal blocs. An in-depth study of the 1926 Calcutta riot in chapter 5 has also underlined the significance of the 'music before mosque' issue in consolidating the communal chasm between the Hindus and Muslims.

Chapter 1 and 4 dwell on the rise and consolidation of Hindu blocs that drew largely upon, what Datta calls 'communal common sense of the dying Hindu'. The Hindu demographic strength was certain to decline, as the argument runs, in view of the proliferation of Muslims due to reasons connected with their social system. The fear of being outnumbered by the Muslims appeared to be an effective instrument for those 'engaged in the mobilization for an exclusive Hindu constituency' (p. 22). U.N. Mukherjee's *Hindus—A Dying Race* is one of the most powerful contemporary expositions of the adverse consequences of the rising demographic strength of Muslims on the Hindu community. In fact, Swami Shradhanand who rose to prominence as a successful organizer of Hindus against Muslims in the 1920s seems to have been convinced by Mukherjee's thesis on the imminent extinction of Hindus due to a rapid growth of Muslim population. Connected with this apprehension was the concerted effort of producing a collective Hindu Self as the only possible defence under the circumstances. Mukherjee attributed the failure of the Hindus to emerge as 'a single collective body' to three factors: (a) the Muslim demand to effectively detach the lower

castes as a bloc from the category of Hindus, (b) the pulverization of Bengali industry by the British and (c) dispossession of land by the Muslims (pp. 25-7). What however brought about radical changes in the communal map of Bengal was the rise of the Hindu Mahasabha which grew in importance presumably because of the projection of the Muslims as 'the antagonistic Other' (p. 52). That the Muslims rose as an organized group during the Non-cooperation-Khilafat Movement was alarming for the Hindu ideologues who proclaimed the need for 'saving the dying Hindus' (p. 62).

The environment was thus charged with communal tension and the confirmation of the rising demographic strength of the Muslims in the census corroborated the anxiety about the possible extinction of the Hindus in the near future. Along with the dying Hindu, 'the abductions of Hindu women by Muslim criminals created a web-like structure of communal cognition that highlighted different points of antagonism with the Muslims' (p. 149). To defend the Hindu women, prominent Bengali Hindus formed the Women Protection League (WPL) that became a powerful forum especially in urban Calcutta and its vicinity for those who suffered due to abductions. By blaming the Muslims for abduction of Hindu women, the WPL alienated the liberal Muslims and thus helped the communal forces to reinforce and expand 'an exclusive Muslim constituency' (p. 215). While dealing with abductions of Hindu women, Dutta has brought out an interesting dimension of the contemporary social structure of Bengal where the Hindu widows were invariably ill-treated. And it was not merely a coincidence that most of the kidnapped/abducted Hindu women were generally widows. Dutta churned out evidence from the *Dainik Soltan*, *The Mussalman* and *The Mohammadi* to demonstrate the way the Hindu widows provided a pretext for counter-insinuation against Hindu society even amongst those who had been committed to communal cooperation. Hence a liberal weekly, like the *Hindu-Musalman* which was established solely for communal amity, was very critical since 'no sensation is created over kidnapping or outraging of a Hindu girl by a Hindu male, while a hue and cry is raised when a Hindu widow embraces Islam out of her own accord and marries a Muhammadan male?' (p. 222). Although the statement is partially true, most of the liberal Muslim (sic) explanations attribute the abductions, to the failure of the Hindu society to impose 'puritanical controls on women' (p. 223). Hence Hindu women were themselves responsible for their abductions. Even

Akram Khan, the editor of *The Mohammadi* who was known for his anti-ulema campaign, defended these views by stating that 'Hindu women were more likely to be morally corrupt since they frequented theatres and read novels' (p. 223).

Equally important was the process that led to the construction of a Muslim bloc and consequently the othering of the Hindus. Dutta's distinctiveness lies in the fact that unlike the conventional historians he has brought out the intricate interplay of factors that contributed immensely to the rise of Muslims with a distinct socio-cultural and economic identity. In order to grasp the complexity of the processes, the author has drawn our attention to what he calls 'Improvement Text' since 'its concern was not simply the economic well being of the Muslim peasant (through jute) ... but the emergence of an intelligentsia catering to an economically and morally improving Muslim peasantry' (p. 64). These texts illustrate the changing Muslim identity in the context of Muslim peasant prosperity and declining Hindu landlords. With their economic strength at the grassroots, Muslims emerged as key players in 'high politics' in course of time and demands were placed for reservations of seats for the community in educational institutions and government employment. Since the progress of a people is evidenced 'by the increase of wealth and knowledge' (p. 71), several leading Muslim intellectuals of various districts constantly hammered on the necessity of material improvement for their community. Islam had a role to play and thus Usman, the model farmer in *Adarsha Krishak* 'calls out the *azan* when he goes to work in his fields' (p. 73) indicating the commitment to community imperatives along with dedication to profession. Here lies a significant contribution to the available literature on Muslim identity that tends to magnify the role of Islam at the cost of other equally, if not more, important factors. It is thus perfectly plausible to argue that what was crucial in the construction of Muslim identity in twentieth century Bengal was their growing economic strength at the grassroots in which religion had a role.

While chapter 2 deals with the formation of a new Muslim identity, chapter 3 dwells on the production of a violent Islam over an apparently trivial issue concerning the burial of fakir in Calcutta in 1924. Although the burial controversy did not involve actual violence it however culminated in communalization of political forces that largely accounts for the devastating nature of the 1926 Calcutta riot. In his lifetime, the fakir was hardly known beyond the New Market where he had sat for fif-

teen-odd years. The controversy erupted when he was buried by his followers next to one of the main gates of the market. Europeans objected because they were the main patrons of the market. The Hindus Swarajist councillors of Calcutta Corporations endorsed their views. The Muslims, especially the Peshwaris and the butchers, reacted strongly when an attempt was made to exhume the body since it was an affront to their religious preacher who was transformed into a Pir after his death. What began merely as a local incident gradually turned into a serious affair involving both the leading Hindu and Muslim activists. Not only did the Swarajists take an anti-Muslim stance, both Akram Khan and his orthodox counterpart in Muslim politics in Bengal, Pir Abu Bakr vehemently opposed the campaign seeking to shift the burial site from the New Market. There was no violence, but the situation was tense with involvement of organizations with a well-defined communal goal. The burial controversy was thus not merely a quarrel between the two principal communities over sacred space, it had also shown how religious motifs, especially those of symbolism were deployed to gather popular support in a socio-political context that laid the foundation for a common Hindu-Muslim platform against the British following the Noncooperation Khilafat merger.

As a very useful commentary on the early twentieth century Bengal politics, *Carving Blocs* provides interesting theoretical insights to grapple with the multifaceted identities of the colonial subjects. It is now well-documented that colonialism was never an epiphenomenon and it had decisively influenced every aspect of the prevalent socio-political and economic structure. Datta's thorough research has brought out both the underlying assumptions of communal politics (sic) and its manifestations in actual riots. At a juncture when India is traumatized over the mandir-masjid issue, this book explaining communal identity with all its complexity provides us with an alternative approach to the phenomenon itself. Challenging the conventional approaches to colonialism, the author has initiated a new line of thought probing the role of both the organized and unorganized worlds of politics and their dialectical interpenetration. Not only is the exercise theoretically enriching, the evidence the author is able to collate in support of his argument is substantial and impressive as well. The book will prove useful to scholars irrespective of ideology.

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## Civil Society and the Indian Business Class

Rajat Kanta Ray

FOOTPRINTS OF ENTERPRISE: INDIAN BUSINESS THROUGH THE AGES

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999, pp. 420, Rs. 2500.00

This well illustrated and sumptuously produced volume is FICCI's celebration of 50 years of Indian independence. A wide array of historians, economists and businessmen have participated in the enterprise. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry played a key role in the struggle of Indian enterprise against foreign monopoly capital in the late colonial period. If this distinguished body had turned the celebration into an occasion for critical assessment, it might have made a more substantive contribution to our economic and social history. As it stands, the book is marred by several historical inaccuracies and an over-all congratulatory tone. Still it contains to its credit important material for re-thinking the role of Indian business before and after independence, especially in the context of the growth of a civil society in India. To do this, it will be necessary to approach the book, not with the wonder-struck posture of FICCI and several of the contributors, but to press the materials into a more detached and less uncritical angle of vision. Scattered over the 420 pages of the book, there are some important insights and useful information which help us gather what happened in late colonial and independent India.

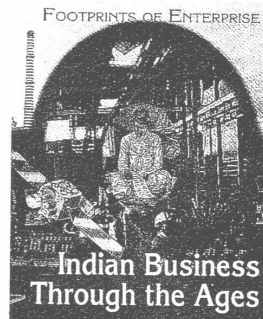
The rule of law, established by the colonial rulers, introduced the principle of individualism in the construction of Indian society, which had so far been based upon communitarianism ('communalism', in the European, rather than Indian, sense of the term). This was accompanied by the expansion of a market better integrated by modern communications. These developments during the colonial period indicated the partial emergence of a civil society in which individuals and firms would be equal in the eye of law, and where business would operate on a rational impersonal basis.

After independence, three important events occurred in close succession: the drawing up of the Constitution of 1950, the enactment of the Hindu Code Bill and the initiation of the five year plans. Together, these events resulted in the extension of civil society to a wider surface of the existing social structure. In-

dia's modern transformation seemed to be well on the way in the 1950's. Somewhere along the road, the country stumbled. And then there was a sudden change of course: at the beginning of the 1990's, the road seemed to part in three different directions: Market, Mandal and Mandir. The role of Indian business through these dramatic realignments appeared to be enigmatic, in fact ambiguous. Helplessly, the leaders of Indian business and industry were being led. The broader societal forces, mutually contradictory to one another, seemed to be in charge. But in the conflicts generated by the process, there was no sense of direction. It was no longer clear where the country was moving.

This is not the story of India's performance as perceived by some of the key contributors. The story line, as it emerges from the pages contributed by Amit Mitra, the Secretary-General of FICCI, and several others (notably Nitish Sengupta, Sanjaya Baru and R.K.P. Shankardass), is as follows: during the socialist planning regime under Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi (in her earlier radical phase), the 'draconian' industrial licensing policy and the 'dreaded' controls over industry left no room for profit-driven investment in the private sector: productivity was low, quality was poor, and the growth rate stayed down at around 3 per cent through the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's. Finally, when the rate dropped to 1 per cent in 1979, the Government was compelled to change tracks. The half-hearted beginnings of liberalization in the 1980's at length brought 'relief from the earlier stagnation' and boosted the rate to 5.5 per cent immediately. Finally, the 'revolutionary measures' adopted by the Finance Minister Manmohan Singh in the budget of 1991 initiated a new liberalization drive. Licenses were 'out', competition was 'in'. This pushed the rate of growth up to 6.8 per cent in 1997.

Amit Mitra wonders what might have happened if the pro-business Vallabhbhai Patel had been in charge instead of the socialist-minded Jawaharlal Nehru. This is to attribute an undue importance to personalities in the historical process. Given the re-



quirements of infrastructure, and capital goods for sustained industrialization, the Government of India could not have followed very different policies in the 1950's even if Gandhi had chosen Patel instead of Nehru as his successor. G.D. Birla himself pointed out at the time: 'Government, of course, will have to play the primary part ... The intentions of government are of the very best. Their industrial policy on the whole is not unsound ... It ... is the best under the circumstances.' The fact of the matter is that the business class itself insisted on massive government intervention in the economy. Such were their requirements at the time.

Socialism paved the way to laissez faire at a later stage: the policies of the 1950's and of the 1990's were adapted to very different circumstances and were appropriate to each phase. The latter followed logically from the former. As M.A. Hakeem has pointed out in his contribution to the volume, the irrigation projects, the fertilizer plants, Hindustan Machine Tools, the steel towns, Bharat Heavy Electricals, the Oil and Natural Gas Commission, all set up during the planning phase, were the pre-requisites of growth later on. When the time came, the Government of India shifted its policy to greater emphasis on the private sector: but this could not have come much earlier than it did.

R.K.P. Shankardass quotes Manmohan Singh's budget speech of 1991 approvingly in that context: 'Our entrepreneurs are second to none. Our industry has come of age.' Now the latter statement was not altogether inappropriate; but the canny Finance Minister would appear to have made the former pronouncement with his tongue in cheek. Gita Pirmal, who knows India's business tycoons of the 1980's better than most professional historians,

observes in what is a somewhat uncharacteristically caustic tone for this volume: 'The growth kings during these years were take over businessmen, with Manu Chhabria, R.P. Goenka and Vittal Malloya as role models.' Hinting that such businessmen lack in guts and are 'naturally scared', she asks how many of the mega projects announced will actually metamorphose from paper licenses to concrete reality.

Even in a piece which is otherwise quite self congratulatory in line with the rest of the volume, Sanjaya Baru hints that Indian business ought to become more quality conscious, invest more in human capital and R & D and encourage more professional management if it is to compete with the multinationals in the new era of liberalization. Not to make any bones about it, the country's business class does not appear at the moment to have what it takes. India's economic and social transformation, which would push the frontiers of civil society in what otherwise remains a communitarian social structure and a household dominated economy, still seems a long way off in the last year of the century. It is important in this context to note a fact mentioned in passing: 80 of the top 100 Indian companies are family enterprises.

Indian capitalism, which grew out of the bazaar and the Bania households which ran it, has not yet moved away from its social roots. G.S.L. Devra, describing Bania operations in the Bazaar during the colonial period, notes how Agarwals and Marwaris dealing in cotton and grain, rose to prominence in the upcountry mandis of Ferozabad Hathras, Khurja and Hapur. In due course they built cotton gins and presses and started a number of spinning mills. But the organization of such business remained the same—a network of households within the community. As Raman Mahadevan and Dwijendra Tripathi have noted for south and western India respectively, a similar pattern prevailed elsewhere too in the colonial period; Natukottai Chettis, Komatis, Kalladaikurichi Brahmans and Kamma Naidus in the south and Jains and Vaishnava Banias in Gujarat branched out from trade to industry. The communal and household networks, operating long distance through hundis between trusted partners, remained very nearly the same.

The Bania ethic still dominates Indian business. The material structure offers the key to this dominance. The immense amount of raw produce and cheap labour circulating through a vast Bazaar integrated all over the country by Bania networks inhibits the professionalization of management. There is no systematic linking of re-



search and development to industry, and the comparative international disadvantage in high tech products is thereby intensified. Given this structure, Indian business is still not in a position to contribute its due share to fostering a civil society open to merit and immune to birth discrimination. The narrow scope of civil society in the over-all social structure is stressed by the prominence of two related phenomena: (a) outside civil society, life in the villages is still encapsulated in communitarian control of private lives; (b) big business is still dominated by a narrow range of castes and communities. Caste, community and family: these factors have kept civil society at bay, confining it within a middle class which is itself not immune to these forces in Indian society. The involvement of political parties in the confrontations over Mandal and Mandir have underscored these facts.

The early historical chapters of the book have not related in any visible manner to the rather simple story line about independent India. There are several factual mistakes. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is attributed to the fourth century BC, but in the form that it has been handed down to us, it belongs undoubtedly to a later period. The *Hundika* (the early form of *Hundi*) is traced back to the treatise *Lekhapaddhati* in the fourteenth century; in fact the earliest instance is a reference to eleventh century *Hundikas* in the history of Kashmir entitled *Rajatarangini*. Sir Sarupchand Hukamchand, owner of the first Indian jute mill in Calcutta, has been pronounced to be of Marwar; in fact he was of Malwa.

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## Letter From London

Stephen Moss



have of agreeing on what happened?

Take the Balkans conflict. Something happened: but in trying to establish what and why, the causes and consequences, you would encounter a dozen different views: Kosovar Albanian, Serb, American, Russian, Chinese, British, French, Greek. Which of these perspectives is 'true'; indeed, does the 'truth' exist, or does it inevitably depend on where you stand? The view from the cockpit or the Nato cocktail party will be very different from that of a Serb who has weathered the bombers for ten weeks.

It is sometimes tempting to take refuge in the Nietzschean view that history is merely a set of stories that we tell ourselves to satisfy our egos; that what really happened is barely verifiable; that 'reality' cannot be recreated as a linguistic construct. Even if that extreme position is rejected, we must accept that history is to some degree an illusion, a conjuring trick: historians impose linearity on events which are frequently characterised by chaos. They assume logic, while life is usually a lottery. Nietzsche is a useful counterpoint to the old-fashioned notion that history was almost a synonym for progress: the so-called Whig interpretation that saw Britain (and, by extension, the world) being delivered from darkness to light, despotism to liberalism, subjugation to independence.

Yet we still want to believe there is some overarching truth that will eventually out: that if you wait long enough, the impact of the French revolution will become clear. In chess, players talk about finding 'the truth.' In a position, there are a variety of paths you can take, but only one is best; there is a reality, a truth, if you have the patience, the tal-

ent, the spark of genius to find it. Similarly, in history we want to believe we can unlock the mystery, which is why Microsoft's new Encarta Encyclopedia has had such a rough ride recently.

Encarta claims to be the premier electronic encyclopedia and is, without question, a formidable achievement. But when it was originally published in 1993, it was criticised as being too American (it was initially based on a US print encyclopedia), and has principal countries in which it is published. Now, as a result of Microsoft's efforts to localise content, the opposite accusation is being made: each version, compiled separately and reflecting national tastes, offers a different historical 'truth'.

The principal accusation—and, if true, it would invalidate the whole billion-dollar enterprise—is that history is systematically rewritten in each of the nine editions (American, British, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Japanese and Brazilian) to accord with the way those countries would like to see the past. As one critic put it: 'He is already the world's richest man but now Bill Gates has taken on the task of rewriting history to keep his customers happy.' Well, if that is the case, he had better watch his fortune, because if Encarta really is 'rewriting the facts for each edition', as has been alleged, it will not be greatly adding to his riches in future. It would be completely discredited.

The 'truth', as ever, is tricky to establish. The story originally broke in the *Wall Street Journal* with a report on the variations between the national versions. Richard Lindh, Microsoft's director of marketing services for Europe, was quoted as saying: if you look at the battle of Waterloo in the English Encarta and in the French Encarta, you get two very different versions of things, like, say, who won the battle? The report also pointed to the way that the credit for inventions tended to go to different people in different editions, depending on their nationality. In the Italian version, for example, the telephone is credited not to Alexander Graham Bell, but to a little known candlemaker called Antonio Meucci. An Italian, naturally.

Microsoft is now claiming that its position has been misrepresented, that Lindh's remark was a joke, and that it would never doctor the facts to suit local preferences. Rather, each national edition reflects the different weight accorded to the facts in that particular country. 'There is no question of rewriting facts,' Jean-Luc Barbanneau, the French-born head of Websters International Publishers, which is responsible for the content of Encarta in the UK, told me. 'Not is there an overall policy to

create versions that please a particular audience. It is not a plot on the part of Bill Gates: 'we know there will inevitably be differences of interpretation between countries'.

For the British, Waterloo is an iconic victory. But in French history it has less weight as an event, and the stress is on its aftermath, with the abdication of Napoleon. There is no argument over who won, and it is not a distortion of reality to allow for differing cultural views of the event. The facts are respected but the interpretations are different. These differences always existed, but now with electronic dissemination of information they are more obvious. That presents us with a very great challenge.'

Barbanneau argues that Encarta is an encyclopedia, the product of the collective endeavours of many, rather than a single interpretation: it offers a consensus view of history as seen in that country and makes a point of directing the user to other web sites and information sources where a rival view may be offered. Bill Gates himself celebrated that diversity, arguing that 'in the long run exposing people to worldwide perspectives should be healthy'. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encarta's chief rival, is less tolerant of such relativism and attempts to iron out contradictions across editions in pursuit of a 'truth' that transcends national borders.

It is the electronic equivalent of the old historiographical debate between G.R. Elton and E.H. Carr. Carr contended that Lord Acton's notion of 'ultimate history' was impracticable and that history was what historians wrote; Elton countered that the 'facts of history' were incontrovertible and it was down to historians (like those truth-seeking chess players) to uncover them.

The Carr-Elton argument was never satisfactorily resolved, and now it has begun all over again. Perhaps we should celebrate the many-sidedness of truth, for therein lies the source of much art, which plays on ambiguity and openness. But have any sympathy for historians as they pursue 'the truth' in a world of lies, opinions, perceptions and half-truths. As for Encarta, it was brave to admit that your vision of history depends on where you are standing, and it will be interesting to see if its rivals try to use that admission against it. Carr and Elton had only their academic credentials to worry about; Encarta and the other CD-Rom specialists have multimillion-dollar investments to fret over too. This is a battle that no one can afford to lose.

Stephen Moss is a staff writer on the *Guardian*, in which a version of this article first appeared.

## Palanpur: The Chicago Economist's Paradise!

Rajeswari Sarala Raina

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN PALANPUR OVER FIVE DECADES

Edited by Peter Lanjouw, Nicholas Stern

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. xxviii + 640, including references, glossary, name index and subject index. Rs. 695.00

Did Keynes write about Palanpur? Back in 1926? Long before the editors of this book were born, Keynes suggested that the ills of modern capitalism could be collective action. (Keynes, 1926) Now, our book on Palanpur has reiterated the need for collective action. Keynes believed that "the ideal size of control and organization" was "somewhere between the individual and the modern State" (*ibid.*, p. 288). The modern Indian State, free from the shackles of white colonialism, did make an attempt to promote collective action. There were community development programmes, cooperative movements, and industrial collectives, to prove that the Indian State was helping its people to help themselves, by organizing and being heard collectively.

What happened to the cooperative spirit and the industrial collectives, is now history. What happened to the economic ideal of collective control and organization remains a mystery. Did our planners and bureaucrats give up too early and too easily on this ideal unit of organization for development? Is this a worthwhile question now? Will the post-liberalization Indian State reconsider what was lost? Economic development in Palanpur, an ordinary (perhaps-typical) little village in Uttar Pradesh, in North India, proclaims that liberalization is no answer to the ills of capitalist development. There have been significant improvements in agricultural production and on-and off-farm income over the past fifty years. But the people in Palanpur are still frightfully illiterate and undernourished, highly vulnerable to morbidity, steeped in gender-bias and corruption. This Palanpur,

is already a highly liberalized economy, a kind of Chicago economist's paradise where an effectively unregulated market exists for almost everything—from cow dung and fodder to the services of important assets. Even a day's labour can be bought much like a bar of chocolate without the impediments of collective bargaining, safety regulations, wage legislation, social security and

the like. (Dreze, Lanjouw and Sharma, p.226)

This book on Palanpur reveals an archetypal O'Henry twist. When the first study was done, the village was chosen "as a potential location of cooperatives for credit and marketing" (p.vi, emphasis here). There is no denying the fact that market incentives have worked well in Palanpur. But there is much scope for improvement in the livelihoods and quality of life of the people there, if only they could benefit from public services and collective action!

Lanjouw and Stern have put together this book with much care to highlight the agencies and processes of rural transformation over time (drawing from five successive village surveys done between 1957-58 and 1993). The emphasis on context, both spatial and temporal is appropriate in each chapter of the book. The advantage of detailed knowledge about a particular village / context, is that it might throw up incisive observations or hypotheses that might not arise from an anonymous data set covering large parts of the country (p. xiii). In a perceptive preface the editors suggest that the evidence from Palanpur may help question existing theories about poor economies. The book does succeed in drawing the reader's attention to many an assumption or fact that she/ he had taken for granted, be it about the development impact of the green revolution, landlord tenant relationships, or the role of the State in rural education.

The book is presented in two parts. The first, a basic description of the village and a broad overview of socio-economic development, and the second a relatively technical analysis of specific aspects of development, overlap in almost every commentary and conclusion. Part II devotes a chapter to each of the following economic issues and institutions, i.e. poverty, inequality, nutrition, labour markets, share cropping, and credit. The book does promise to take us through "five decades" of economic development in Palanpur. But most of the data in the book is limited to twenty-

five years, that is 1957-58 to 1983-84; though some of the interpretation does extend to 1997, especially in Part I. There are also some minor glitches, such as the incomplete sentence at the end of p. 254, pardonable perhaps, considering the sheer volume of the book. The book remains worthwhile reading nevertheless, for all concerned with development economics; a particularly edifying one for all readers who believe in the ideal of collective organization and control.

In part I, the two chapters provide a detailed overview of the three primary socio-economic change agents in Palanpur. Population growth, growth of intensive agriculture and growth of the external (urban) economy have been responsible for many changes in this village. The population of Palanpur has roughly doubled between 1957-58 and 1993. (Chapter 2, by Dreze, Lanjouw and Sharma). If it were not for intensive agriculture and significant change in occupational structure, the village would have gone from bad to worse over the survey period. A positive growth rate of per capita income (albeit low at 2 per cent per year) is accompanied by a decline in income inequality between the first two and the last two survey years, that is 1957-58 to 1962-63 and 1974-75 to 1983-84. (Chapter 5 by Lanjouw and Stern). Both inequality in asset ownership and income do not reveal a clear trend and there is no significant impact of any particular institution on the evolution of inequality in the village over time. In a similar vein (Chapter 1 by Dreze and Sharma) shows there is little clear-cut class differentiation in this agrarian village where farming and wage employment outside the village contribute the bulk of the village income. But caste and gender differentiation are very pronounced, sustained by limited opportunities, lack of education, patrilineal property rights, patrilocal post-marital residence and a strict gender division of labour. There has been an overall erosion of caste hierarchy and a decline in the relative economic strength of the dominant caste (the Thakurs). But the Jatabs (scheduled castes) remain agricultural labourers throughout the survey period.

Even economic development programmes that target the Scheduled Castes bring no benefit to them, because they have little resources to bribe the village headman, the department officials or the development bank officers. (Chapter 9, by Dreze, Lanjouw and Sharma). All public services (be it schools or child development schemes or rural development schemes) are either underutilized or exist only on paper (Chapter 2). While exposure to the outside world through migration and

employment might change this ineffective public service in the village, it is unlikely that the people of Palanpur will bargain collectively for any of these public services they are entitled to. As of now the jobs outside are both skilled and unskilled, and secured more by kinship and bribes than merit. This is preferred to working in the agriculture sector though intensification of the sector with almost cent percentage irrigation does assure jobs (though not a good income) round the year.

Over the survey period, Palanpur has become a wheat-rice production system, with a sharp increase in productivity, intensive chemical use, increasing mechanization and increasing poverty of agricultural labour, which remains unorganized in this part of India. (Chapter 3, by Bliss, Lanjouw and Stern, and Chapter 7, Mukherjee). That the labour is still provided by the landless Jatabs who are excluded from tenancy contracts, partly explains the narrowing of the social distance and decreasing differences in asset / land ownership between the Thakurs (traditional landlords) and the Muraos (traditional tenant cultivators). Thus the increasing mobility between the landlord and tenant is not good news. (Chapter 8, Sharma and Dreze).

Contradicting this reviewer's misgivings, the chapters in the book prescribe no solutions. Delightfully enough, we find several instances where existing theory—especially modern institutionalism within a neo-classical framework is questioned, and witness a gibe or two about the econometric sophistry that has now replaced reality and our comprehension of socio-economic processes. The inadequacy of modern institutionalism to analyse and explain several phenomena is highlighted. The authors (especially in Chapters 1, 2, 7, 8) agree that a much broader framework is essential to understand rural socio-economic change. For instance, how does a Thakur woman's honour get compromised if she works outside the house, or what makes the fifty-fifty sharecropping relationship work?

We would suggest here that to explain these rural institutions, the theoretical framework will have to move from the neo-classical institutionalism that marks much of development economics today, to an evolutionary institutionalism, following the Veblenian institutional economics tradition.<sup>1</sup> The Thakur woman's labour force participation cannot be analysed within a framework of individual preference based transaction costs. There is a crucial social attitude that determines the individual's valuation of labour, be it within or outside the house.

Veblenian institutionalism marked by group-based knowledge assets and the non-consummatory evolution of society and the economy (as opposed to the movement in neo-classicism towards a preconceived state of normality), is likely to explain agrarian institutions / phenomena more than any other theoretical framework. In the book, the authors suggest that the standard principal-agent model being inadequate to explain tenancy, tenancy must be seen as a partnership "involving both conflict and cooperation between the tenant and landlord" (Sharma and Dreze, p. 499). That the principal-agent theory, an ahistorical contractual approach to the study of institutions, does not explain tenancy relationships in Palanpur, is not surprising. What is surprising is that with enough historical evidence, the authors here have not taken up the cue of cumulative causation, and used an evolutionary competence-based approach for explaining the tenancy relationships. I hope a student would take up this interesting assignment; a case study of tenancy relationships (not merely problem solving contracts in the land market) in Palanpur during the survey period of over five decades.

Is it too much to hope that the next book on Palanpur—there is reference to it already (in p. 113)—will probably witness the advent of an evolutionary economics framework for the study of rural socio-economic development? It is important "to see socio-economic development as periods of institutional continuity punctuated by periods of crisis and more rapid development" (Hodgson, 1993, p. 254). If economics must understand and break some of the fatalistic institutions such as the ones bracing gender bias and male preference, or the ones that hamper collective action, it is important to understand "the relative invariance and self-reinforcing character of institutions". (op cit)

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## ECONOMIC REFORMS IN BANGLADESH: Some Notable Gains Despite Heavy Odds

Charan Wadhva

THE BANGLADESH ECONOMY IN TRANSITION

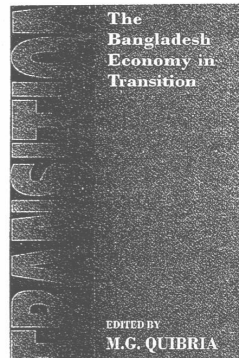
Edited by M.G. Quibria

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Bangladesh as a South Asian country is one of the poorest countries of the world in terms of per capita income at the market exchange rate. The country is also prone to recurring vagaries of nature through floods and cyclones. The conflictual politics of democracy of this nation creates its own problems in managing change for accelerating its economic development with social justice. For these and other reasons, Bangladesh had been referred to as the "basket case" (by its uncharitable critics) and as a difficult "test case" of economic development. As such, its experiences are relevant for many developing countries.

This book reviews the experience of Bangladesh in managing its market-oriented economic reforms during 1983-93 period in the overall context of similar economic reforms in South Asia. It is a collection of nine scholarly papers presented at a specially organized conference for this purpose in Dhaka in September 1993. This conference was organized by the Asian Development Bank in collaboration with the Academy for Planning and Development, Ministry of Planning, Government of Bangladesh. This volume has been edited by Dr. M G Quibria, Senior Economist of the Asian Development Bank. He has also contributed a brief Introduction (Chapter 1) of five pages highlighting the major thrust of the contributions made in each of the nine chapters that follow.

The value of the Editor's introduction lies in communicating (with supporting statistics) to the readers that all is not unwell with the health of Bangladesh's economy. Its future prospects are brighter than the critics would have us believe. The facts speak with conviction that despite some heavy odds, Bangladesh has already achieved some notable long term gains by pursuing market-friendly economic reforms. These reforms have covered various sectors like agriculture, industry, foreign trade and the financial sector. The gains from



the reforms pursued include among others: notably higher growth of rice output through technological breakthrough; noticeable reduction in the fertility rate and therefore net growth rate of population; significant reduction in poverty levels accompanied by a more egalitarian distribution of assets including land; the achievement of more broad-based growth including industrial growth and higher rate of growth of non-traditional exports (especially garments and light electronics), and of the service sector (especially in the informal sector). Economic growth has also been labour-intensive in its character and has therefore generated larger employment. Bangladesh's recent record in managing macro-economic stability is also commendable. Undoubtedly, several constraints still remain. The editor highlights the following in this context; the low level of human resource development; relatively low level of domestic savings and overall investment rates; narrow export base; and unsatisfactory performance of the sizeable public sector that still remains intact. These and other weaknesses of the system need to be corrected. Each chapter in this book lays down an agenda for future reforms in the chosen area.

Pradumna Rana of the ADB attempts to present (in Chapter 2) a comparative picture of economic reforms in Bangladesh and other Asian (South Asian) countries. He is all praise for the South East Asian model of economic reforms. Having written this piece in 1993, he cannot be blamed for not foreseeing the melt-down of these countries following the crash of Thai baht in July 1997 and the lessons which that meltdown holds for other developing countries.

Interestingly, Rana also compares some aspects of Bangladesh's experiences with economic reforms in China.

He refers to the success achieved by China in rural industrialization through the Town and Village Enterprises open to foreign direct investment for labour-intensive exports. He also points out that unlike in Bangladesh, economic reforms in the agricultural sector in China and Vietnam have significantly augmented rural savings and investment. Bangladesh and other South Asian countries can draw valuable lessons from these experiences of China and Vietnam. Rana particularly emphasizes the need for broadening and deepening of the reform process at the micro (enterprise) level and as well as at the institutional level. The micro level reforms must focus on raising international competitiveness of the enterprises. Institutional reforms must focus on improving their capacity to speedily and efficiently deliver results. Rana also advocates the urgency of the "need to establish a code of conduct for labour and employees" (p. 15).

Abu Abdullah and Quazi Shahabuddin (Chapter 3) take pains to show that appropriate policy reforms in agriculture did make a significant difference in Bangladesh through faster agricultural growth rate (especially rice production). This has helped not only in making the country self-sufficient to feed a to growing population but opened up the possibilities of its becoming a net exporter of rice in the not too distant future. Of great significance is Bangladesh's success story of privatisation of fertilizer distribution and elimination of fertilizer subsidies. The political economy of such reforms holds important lessons for India and other South Asian Countries. The authors explain that the elimination of fertilizer subsidies could be made possible in Bangladesh "due to the relative weakness of the peasantry as a pressure group" (p. 67). The bureaucratic resistance to such a policy was overcome in Bangladesh by transferring the concerned Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture allegedly at the behest of the foreign donor agencies (p. 67). Not of any less significance in managing such agricultural sector reforms was the widely held perception that such reforms "have on the whole benefited all farmers" (p.73).

Mashiur Rehman and Zaid Bakht (Chapter 4) discuss the reforms in the industrial sector with special reference to Bangladesh's experiences in the privatisation of the public sector companies (including banks). They conclude that "unfortunately the process of denationalization and privatization has also been mis-managed and has not brought about the desired results" (p. 106). The same is true of the efforts at deregulation of the industrial sector. According to the authors this implies that in addi-

tion to removing the regulatory barriers, government actions are necessary to break other structural bottlenecks to the industrialisation process (p. 111).

Mustafa K. Mujeri and Salehuddin Ahmad discuss the critical link between 'Poverty and Human Resource Development' in Chapter 5. They echo the feelings of the 1999 Noble Laureate economist Amartya Sen. The authors make an interesting distinction between "hard core" poor and the "vulnerable" poor. They advocate different policy prescriptions for tackling the problems of these different categories of poor.

Zaidi Sattar (Chapter 6) convincingly demonstrates the positive causal link between export growth (especially of non-traditional exports) and economic growth in Bangladesh. Trade, tariff, and exchange rate policy reforms in Bangladesh have surely helped to reduce the anti-export policy bias of the economic policies of the pre-reforms era. The author advocates further reforms in the above three areas with a focus on increasing the international competitiveness of Bangladesh's selected exportables.

Sadrel Reza and M. Ali Rashid (Chapter 7) try to explain the failure of Bangladesh to attract sufficiently large inflows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) especially in desired sectoral areas. This failure is striking in the face of Bangladesh adopting non-discriminatory national treatment and very liberal policies towards FDI. Among other factors, the reasons for this failure can be attributed to the role of political instability, law and order situation, poor state of infrastructure (especially social infrastructure), and image problem of Bangladesh in the eyes of foreign investors. However, the authors are optimistic that by overcoming the demotivating factors identified by them, FDI inflows will rise faster in Bangladesh in the near future.

Akhtar Hossain and Salim Rashid (in Chapter 8) analyse Bangladesh's financial sector reforms which are seen as the "brain" of the economic system. Of special interest is the discussion by these authors of some of the aspects of the political economy of the financial sector reforms particularly for worsening problems of Non-Performing Assets.

Very similar problems are faced by the Indian economy which have caused considerable slowdown of its financial sector reforms. The authors advocate emulating the approaches interestingly adopted by the Labour Party governments in Australia and New Zealand for managing the resistance by organized trade unions to financial sector reforms.

M. Zahid Hossain discusses some of the successes achieved by Bangladesh for mobilization of domestic resources especially in the public sector. This has been largely achieved through the adoption of Value Added Tax and better tax administration. Bangladesh has also taken successful initiatives for taxing the agricultural sector through the land development tax which holds further potential. India can draw some lessons from the innovations in the taxation system launched in Bangladesh in the early 1990's by the then Finance Minister, M. Saitur Rahman.

The final chapter (Chapter 10) by Mohammad Mohabbat Khan and A.K. Monawwar Uddin Ahmad focusses on selected issues of governance. Without good governance, even the best designed

economic reforms will lack credibility with the public at large and therefore will not deliver the expected results. Bangladesh has not been able to get better results from its well-meaning economic reforms due to the prevalent weaknesses in its system of governance. Bangladesh needs to put in place transparent and accountable governance for ensuring "a better future in Bangladesh" (p. 324).

Being a collection of commissioned papers for a high level Conference organized in 1993, this book has already become somewhat dated. It must be said that despite this weakness, most contributions retain their value as authoritative and candid accounts of the experiences of Bangladesh in pursuing economic reforms. This book will definitely be found highly useful as a standard reference work on the subject. The policy makers in developing countries (including India) will further benefit by considering the suggestions made by the authors for improving the reform process in future.

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## The Political Economy of Faridabad's Development

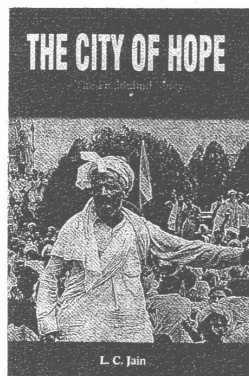
N. Sridharan

THE CITY OF HOPE: THE FARIDABAD STORY

By L.C. Jain

Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 320, Rs. 400.00

In 'the matrix of planners' (John, Udy: 1994) given below there were sixteen types of city planners from that of a 'rational-classic-legislator' to that of a 'romantic-reformer-anarchist'. However, that matrix left the gap of explaining the 'politician-reformer-visionary', to be explained by the author of the book under review through his writings on Faridabad and the role of Nehru in developing that town. 'The romantic-perceptive' are the profession's reformers, the harbingers of change; while rational-romantic synthesizers devise planning techniques to fight social turbulence. It is certain that Nehru belonged to these two groups who had a vision and used this vision to build a city to fight social turbulence. The first six chapters of the book under review vividly capture the turmoil and the politics at that time in the comity and in the mind of Nehru in developing Faridabad. It is surprising that at a time when the nation was facing a political crisis and



trying to adjust itself to the Partition, unemployment and poverty, Nehru could devote time and energy to attend twenty of twenty-one meetings of the Faridabad Development Board. That shows the vision and commitment that the great patriot had for the country and its people in contrast to the modern day leaders. The National Capital Regional Planning Board that was set up in 1985 and headed by the Prime Minister of the country hardly ever has the privilege of the Prime Minister attending its board

meetings.

Nehru's vision was different from that of the present day visionaries in the sense that it was moulded from experiences he gained from his association with Mahatma Gandhi—visionary by himself in the field of people's participation, and from the experiences he had gained himself from his studies and associations abroad, particularly Fabian socialists (Lewis: 1995). The modern day vision is what Jain calls 'grass without roots' (Jain: 1985) in rural development and where 'putting the people last' is the slogan. Nehru found himself entangled with different social ideologies that gave him a vision that the modern day political visionaries lack. This vision made him accept and encourage the cooperative system and participatory planning in urban development, that even the modern day land use planners could hardly visualise.

Unfortunately, it took almost four decades for our legislators to understand and accept people's participation in planning. In this arena also, their only effort was to bring in legislation that could amend the Constitution (Constitution 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act). The pride and involvement of the people through effective decentralisation of the kind witnessed below is still a far cry. As rightly pointed out by Nehru and aptly referred to by Jain (p. 147) 'while travelling in the town bus a foreign visitor to Faridabad township, who had come to study the project, was wonderstruck when talking to the co-passengers. He found that most of the co-passengers

introduced themselves as an office-bearer of some cooperative or the other, with a great sense of pride. It raised their social status besides what they had gained by way of ownership of the cooperative enterprise. They left him in no doubt that they were somebodies' (p. 147).

One would definitely support the anguish expressed by Jain (in the last paragraph of the introduction) that the new hope (referring to the Constitutional Amendment-73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup>) would take the experiences of Faridabad and make the people feel that they are somebody to that place. It is also necessary to have the vision and commitment of a person of Nehru's stature to set aside the rent-seeking group's efforts in a bureaucratic model of planning to that of a people-centered planning process. It is obvious that Nehru tried to experiment with new ideas. In Faridabad's case, he wanted to experiment with the concept of cooperative efforts in urban development. This was unheard of either before or after the Faridabad experience. How successful the efforts were and what type of politics affected the process of development of Faridabad never did any physical planner know. Rather they might have cold-shouldered it as the PWD chief engineer of Punjab cold-shouldered the proposal of house building by cooperatives in Faridabad. Moreover, the 'employment-centered scheme of town building' remains a theory in most of the present-day town planning schools. Present-day town planning is broadly on the lines of the



Box: 1 The Matrix of Planners

		RATIONAL					
CLASSIC	Legislator	Entrepreneur Planner	Logical Functionalist	Philosophic Synthesizer	ROMANTIC		
	— ADMINISTRATOR —		— SYNTHESIZER —				
	Bureaucrat	Local Planner	Transdisciplinary Educator	Humanist			
	Theoretician	Designer	Advocate	Visionary			
	— SYSTEMIZER —		— REFORMER —				
Empiricist	Observer	Activist	Anarchist				
		PERCEPTIVE					

grand PWD plan of Faridabad based on bureaucratic bureau shaping model that empowers the administrators to seek rent in all forms, rather than that of "empowerment model" that is the need of the hour.

Rightly or wrongly, rent-seeking has been built into the Indian system of development economics. As pointed out by Pawan Varma in his *Great Indian Middle Class*, from the time of the freedom struggle to date, interest groups capitalise on any development programmes. It is clear from Jain's book that Faridabad happened to be a place for this rent-seeking experimentation too, particularly the interesting way in which Jain has captured the Minister for Rehabilitation's interest in providing industrial development through private sector at the cost of neglecting cooperatives in generating employment.

In an era of globalisation, repeated claims and counter-claims are made by politicians and other rent-seeking groups about the good and bad effects of withdrawal of subsidies, etc. The Faridabad experiment however shows how the doles can be withdrawn without affecting the income-earning process and overall human dignity. It is sad that our country has moved into a situation where 'dole was considered as infra dig' to a situation that considers doles and subsidies as a 'right'. The lesson of 'self-help' learnt through the Faridabad experiment was slowly and safely buried in Faridabad itself only to come back after the 1970s when the

World Bank reintroduced this concept, for slum improvement and other low-income housing programmes along with their aid strategy. While the rent-seeking approach of 'the men in ministerial dress could not stomach the autonomy of the Board and committed at its downfall. (And) its lessons were not only ignored but every worthwhile experiment with new approaches in Faridabad was dismantled' (Jain: 1998, p.7), the same bureaucracy welcomed the World Bank Aid programme for a self-help housing programme for the poor later. This was because of the opening up of new avenues for rent-seeking by the new self-help housing schemes. The National Housing Policy introduced and reintroduced since 1988, safely and conveniently avoids this cooperative experiment in housing. Moreover cooperatives are also formed by the rent-seeking groups and snatch away the land that is meant for the poor in the present day context (Mukul: 1996).

One has to accept that India remains a 'plastic state' (Lewis: 1995), that is weak and gets its power through rent-seekers. The rent-seekers in fact hijack the state for meeting their own ends. In the past we had the Ram Rattan Guppies as in the case of Faridabad, now we have Reliances (McDonald: 1997-98), slum landlords (Sunil Kumar: 1996), who could influence the Government in the decision-making process. Accordingly, the government at all levels has its own costly way of planning and implementation. Jain has captured this

**Example of Waste of Manpower & Public Funds**

Doll (the boiler engineer from Germany specially called for setting right the power generating plant at Faridabad), once came rushing from the site to the Administrator's office. . . . He said that a secret service man had been at the site for several days, watching and watching, and at times even taking notes in a pocket diary. . . . The administrator drove to the site in a jeep with Doll. On arriving at the site, Doll quietly pointed out the dreaded man who was standing there with hands in his pocket.

The administrator laughed. He had himself recruited that particular man a few days ago. He was an overseer posted at the powerhouse, he told Doll. "What is his function?" Doll asked. "The overseer's job is to watch that the workers/labourers are doing their job", explained the administrator. "Oh no", said Doll. "I do not want anyone here who does not work and only watches and that too with hands in his pockets! Please take him away". India of course continues to have overseers galore regardless of the Dolls. (emphasis mine)

through an anecdote (see box 2).

The political economy of Faridabad's development did not stop at building houses. It went on to build cooperative industries, socialised health services which reached every household, basic education along with adult education and vocational training and employment generation. This was no smooth sailing despite the full support of Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya. Unfortunately in the final analysis the detractors prevailed over the visionaries. Those people who were 'somebodies' (as reported earlier by a foreign traveller) of Faridabad very soon became nobody in the eyes of the rent-seekers. Starting from the Minister for Rehabilitation, Ajit Prasad, to Barve, the ICS man who came to the scene but functioned mostly from Delhi they dismantled brick by brick the cooperative movement and the nascent development of Faridabad. The end result is what we see today, Faridabad of the industrialists, Faridabad of the poor and the Faridabad of the migrated lot who transport us in their rickshaws.

While reviewing this book, I came across one of my ex-students who is currently associated with Faridabad's development as a Town Planner. Casually I asked him whether he was aware of the involvement of Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Kamla Devi and others in Faridabad's development or if any of the documentation was available. First I was astonished at his total ignorance of these eminent leaders' contribution to the development of Faridabad. Second, he said the same thing as the ex-Governor and Chief Secretary has told Jain, that is 'forget it' and 'who would bother to preserve such a record'. Third, no one in his office was aware of any such documentation. This book provides a wealth of information on such significant events that shaped Faridabad's development. In contrast to what I have seen in Europe and erstwhile communist countries, where every brick is preserved as an object of history of the nation, in India, the value we give to human beings and their efforts is to totally ignore and buy them. Jain has hopes even in the current globalisation and politico-economic scene that we are living in. Jain states: 'it will at least ring the alarm bells' (Jain means the Faridabad experiment), but I am a pessimist. Where is the bell?

At the end, a note of caution for the readers: if one wants to know the politico-economic environment immediately after independence and the pangs of partition, one has to go through the first five chapters that is heavy reading. Jain himself says: 'The readers today may throw up their hands at these long narratives'. Kudos to Jain for painstakingly collecting, collating and disseminating

such a knowledgeable correspondence that happened during the gravest hours of India's struggle. Planning academicians and practitioners come out every day with new concepts like Participatory Rapid Appraisal, Participatory Learning and Action, people's participation, etc. on issues regarding rural and urban development. If they had time and energy to sit and read this book and try to implement at least one aspect of urban development as experimented in Faridabad, much of our chaos in urban areas will be solved. The book has come out at the right time when the Delhi Development Authority is planning to experiment with its new approaches to the third Master Plan. No university degree can give us this much experience as has been captured by Jain and aptly revealed by Salar Sukhram on this great experience of Faridabad:

Salar Sukhram told the audience in a harsh tone that Jain's father owes us Rs. 50,000, and looked at me. I was bewildered. How? I asked. He said 'the training which we have given you here living and working with us, could not have been secured by your father at the University, even if he had spent Rs. 50,000 (p. 272).

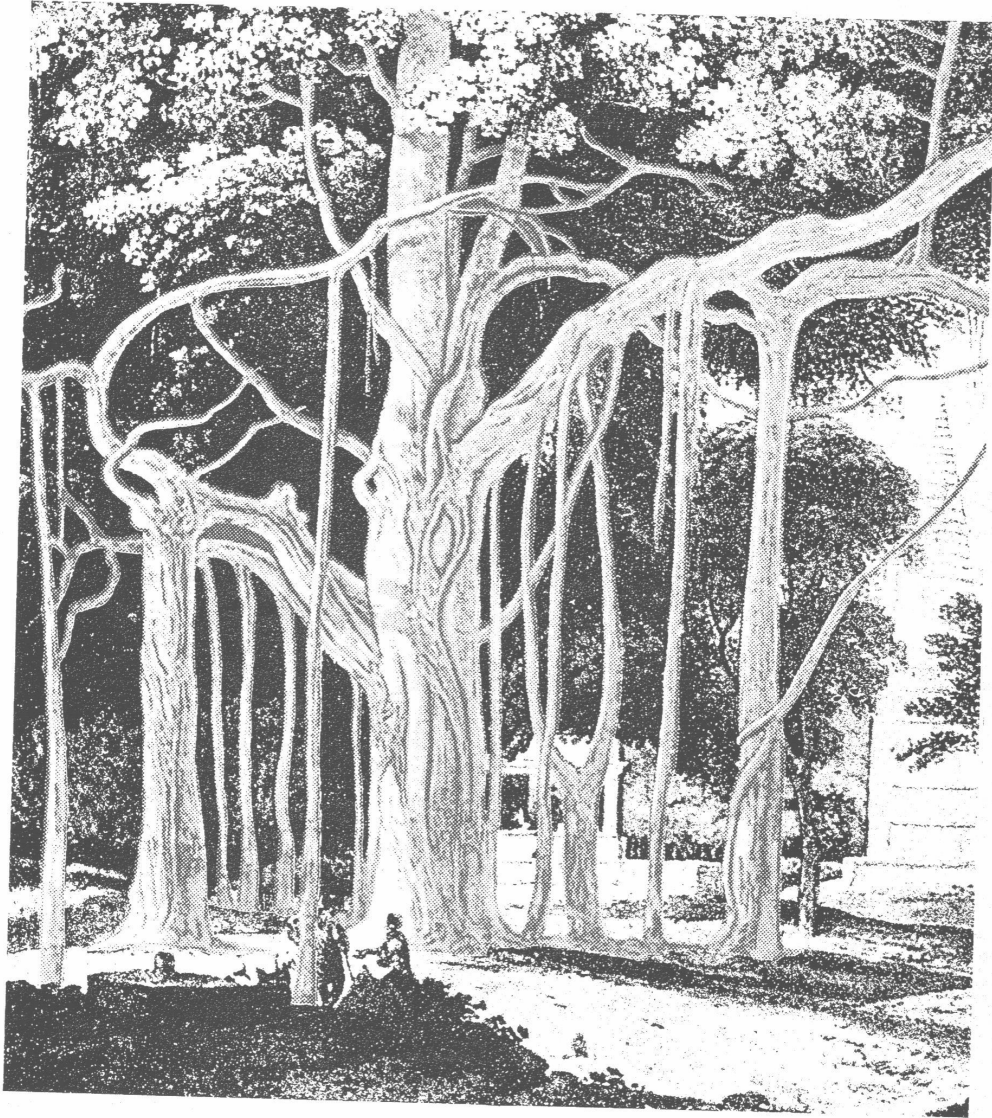
All that Jain has learnt and experienced at Faridabad during its formative years would not have come to light, but for this valuable, painstaking effort. Jain's optimistic outlook that India still has hopes of reviving such a cooperative effort even under the current rent-seeking, exploitative and bureaucratic, politico-economic scenario will be realised one day by Indian planners. Our present day physical planners would have impoverished themselves of their academic maturity and practical wisdom without 'the City of Hope'.

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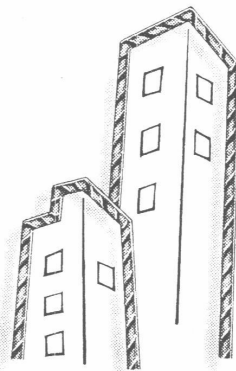
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## A Great Debate—Suspended On A Fragile Limb

Ralph Buultjens

THE GREAT DISRUPTION

By Francis Fukuyama

The Free Press, New York, pp. 368, \$ 26.00

In the past decade or so, there are tangible indications that some new global architecture is in the making. Many societies are in the midst of profound political, economic and cultural transitions. Attitudes and life ways of vast numbers of people are changing with remarkable rapidity. The struts and meridians of international relations are acquiring fresh features. All the signs and signals portend the coming of another era in history.

The outcome of this process is unclear but the challenge of defining the shape of things to come has recently engaged many serious intellectuals. Thus, Samuel Huntington (*The Clash of Civilization—1996*) sees culture as the organizing principal of a new world order. Thomas Friedman (*The Lexus and the Olive Tree—1999*) declares that economic globalization is displacing the old geopolitics, reshaping the face and fate of nations. Freeman Dyson (*The Sun, the Genome and the Internet—1999*) affirms that science and its adaptations will transform the human condition in the years ahead.

I  
An early entrant in this arena of endeavour was Francis Fukuyama. In 1989, Fukuyama, then a relatively unknown social scientist at the RAND Corporation, published an essay which was subsequently expanded into a controversial and widely-read book: *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). His proposition, simply stated, was that the old dialectics which inspire politics and economics had ceased to have meaning. Liberal democracy and modern capitalism, the apotheosis of ideology, had vanquished all. They were the final answer to a long philosophic quest. With this conceptual Holy Grail now in our hands, there is no need, indeed little possibility, for further exploration in the fields of political and economic theory. Of course, these ideas raised a storm of dispute, refutation and debate. They also brought Fukuyama a recognition that endured.

Fukuyama's next work was entitled *Trust* (1995). It sought to examine glo-

bal economic culture and extract guidelines that could make contemporary economic systems, especially the American system, more effective and secure. To do this, Fukuyama compared the socio-economics of several countries and applied lessons from this study to the United States. While his grasp of cultural complexities abroad was sometimes unsure, the analysis of the American landscape was insightful. To his credit, Fukuyama was ahead of most others in recognizing that the new globalized economy is as much a cultural phenomenon as it is an economic condition.

In discussing America, Fukuyama specifically addressed the collapse of sociability as demonstrated by the breakdown of community and the increase in social disorders. Central to these declines was the depletion of social capital—loss of values, confidence in relationships and the communitarian ethic. A convinced proponent of the market, Fukuyama also asserts that it takes more than market mechanisms to operate a modern economy. His bottom-line—successful market economics requires social capital even more than physical capital. To quote: "If the institutions of democracy and capitalism are to work properly, they must coexist with certain pre-modern cultural habits that ensure their proper functioning...reciprocity, moral obligation, duty towards community, and trust." *Trust* ends with the observation that (since ideological and institutional questions have been settled) the primary task of modern societies is to conserve and rebuild social capital.

II  
Fukuyama's new book, *The Great Disruption*, begins by building on the conclusions of *The End of History* and restating the argument of *Trust*. He then enlarges and develops the theme of *Trust* in a more hopeful direction. This is not initially obvious. The first part of his work is a rather tedious recital of deteriorating social conditions in most major industrial countries from the mid-1960s to the early 1990s. This

litany, replete with ample statistics, is hugely depressing: growth in crime, inner-city misery, drugs, falling birth rates, fewer marriages and more divorces, galloping extra-marital pregnancies and so on. Looming over everything is the old lament about the loss of social capital. The combination of these downsides and malfunctions, occurring in an unprecedented and fierce thirty year cluster, give this book its title.

The author then proceeds to analyse the reasons for these social upheavals—the arrival of the information era, the changing nature of work and the large scale employment of women, the birth control pill and the culture of intense individualism. Again, the erosion of social capital—informal rules, norms, trust—features big. This can even endanger democracy. As Fukuyama puts it, without social capital there can be no civil society and without civil society there can be no democracy. Along the way, there are long discussions of the origins and sources of social order—the seedbed for all these developments.

At this point, readers will expect modern society, especially as depicted in America, to continue on its atomizing course. It would seem natural for technological and economic imperatives to forcefully mould their own social norms, blasting away traditional patterns. The prophet of this pathway is Joseph Schumpeter, the economist whose notions of "creative destruction" in the capitalist universe would surely extend to the world of social relationships. However, this is not happening. Redemption is at hand.

Fukuyama believes that two processes will underwrite this recovery. The first is a self-corrective gene basic to human nature. Humans are both social and rational beings. They want to live in communities and they know, as much by instinct as by reason, that communities can only exist through voluntary rules and moral codes. And these impulses give them a desire to find ways to cooperate with each other. Such biological codes are powerful antibodies against prolonged social disorder. They may not work at all times but come alive in certain societies when preservation and continuity is at stake.

There is a second hope in Fukuyama's reading of the human social experience. He provides examples of past intellectual and economic transformations, in Britain and America, which were accompanied by periods of social disruption. These were inevitably followed by a return of order and the rebirth of community, belonging and trust. It is likely, says Fukuyama, that this kind of reaction—remoralizing, as he calls it—is taking place in America today. Witness improving social indicators, renewal of con-

In discussing America, Fukuyama specifically addressed the collapse of sociability as demonstrated by the breakdown of community and the increase in social disorders. Central to these declines was the depletion of social capital—loss of values, confidence in relationships and the communitarian ethic.

fidence in institutions and the turn to more conservative personal behaviour.

According to this book it is the beginning of the Great Reconstruction. Older values and norms are coming back, although the organization of society takes and keeps new shapes. This optimistic prospect is lodged in the doubtful assumption that contradictory processes can occur simultaneously—a social order can roll backwards to restore past behavioural habits while its companion political and economic orders roll forward into quite different worlds! Social, political and economic developments within countries are generally interconnected and their outcomes are not often independent of each other.

### III

While elaborating on its central themes, *The Great Disruption* tends to meander into a number of ancillary discussions. Too many sub-sections are tangential to the principal purpose of this book. This is somewhat distracting, although elements of these discrete segments can be quite interesting in themselves. Thus, for instance, a chapter on whether the Great Disruption was inevitable or could have been controlled by law or social pressure.

Other provocative passages include one which attributes the feminist revolution to increased human longevity. There is a clever exposition on how capitalism depletes social capital and why it both improves and injures moral behaviour at the same time. Equally intriguing is a description of how modern organizations promote changes in structures of command: authority which was once centralized in white-collar hierarchies necessary for managing low-skill industrial labour is being reconstituted with self-organized and self-managed networks of well-trained teams. There are also a number of cross-cultural vignettes which make valuable reading but are often similar to those contained in *Trust*. All these bits and pieces demonstrate both the strength and the weakness of this volume—its parts are more

interesting than the whole.

Despite several assets, the final impression of *The Great Disruption* is of a mixed bag which ultimately fails to cohere and stimulate. Its author does know what he wants to say and is well versed in most facets of his subject. Yet, while his erudition is considerable, it is a little too much on show. There is a wealth of supporting data, perhaps an overload, but this is often boring and needlessly complex. Flashes of insight occasionally enliven but they serve more to demonstrate what this work might have been instead of illuminating its content.

There are other good reasons why this book does not engage. Fukuyama's central message is not particularly original and frequently overlaps his previous writings. Unless told with fresh perspectives and verve, tales of long social decline and slow recovery are rarely pulse-quickening stuff. After all, most major countries, especially industrial states, have gone through periodic ups and downs in these areas. Why these waves appear and recede is not always clear or susceptible to a single explanation. Indeed, in intensely pluralistic nations such as the United States cultural diversity creates so many dynamics that a multitude of explanations is probably more appropriate.

It is also possible that all the answers do not spring from within society—geography, international influences and external elements are capable of profoundly affecting social trends. And, sometimes, the depletion of social capital may not be the cause of decline but could be its consequence; so, too, the rebuilding of social capital may not always be the wellspring of recovery but could be its by-product.

A concluding comment. Fukuyama's analysis is largely causal and descriptive. It is weak on remedy. He identifies religion and politics as the principal agents through which the stock of social capital, notably levels of trust, can be restored. But he also honestly acknowledges that both these forces present problems as instruments of regeneration—and can offer no guarantees of success. Consequently, Fukuyama has to fall back on his hope that "innate human capacities" will reconstruct a satisfactory social order. This is an uncertain and risky expectation. We are left suspended on a rather fragile limb—with little that is substantial within our grasp. This is why those who seek comprehensive theories and clear responses to big questions won't find them here.

*Ralph Buultjens, former Nehru Professor at the University of Cambridge, teaches at New York University. He is the author of several books, recipient of many academic awards, and is a Toynbee Prize Laureate.*

## Going Beyond Legislative Debates

Harsh Sethi

DEMOCRACY AND THE STATE: WELFARE, SECULARISM AND DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

By Niraja Gopal Jayal

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999, pp. x+289, Rs. 525.00

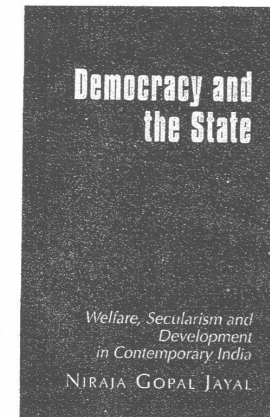
None seriously concerned about India's democratic future can claim to be particularly upbeat after being subjected to the recent political shenanigans. Whether or not the Vajpayee led coalition government fell under the weight of its own contradictions or its demise was engineered by unseemly under the counter deals and horse trading by the opposition, the inability of our political class, collectively, to look beyond its nose has become apparent. Missed in the furious commentary succeeding the dissolution of the Twelfth Lok Sabha—the implications of a fractured mandate, the unviability of coalition politics, the need to introduce constitutional amendments such as constructive vote of no confidence—was the veritable absence of any serious debate on the issues/premises that informed our founding as an independent Republic: welfare, development, secularism. If those democratically chosen by us to operationalize these concerns can so easily disregard them, then our future as a democratic Republic is clearly in doubt. Niraja Gopal Jayal's quiet study, detailed and meticulously researched, takes us into arenas far removed from our fractious Parliament. Going beyond legislative debates, she draws in other actors—political, developmental, constitutional—to examine how our system responds to, relates to, and mediates conflicts that touch at the core of our foundational principles that together structure societal response in specific contexts. The narrative further underscores our limits as a substantive democracy.

Kalahandi in Orissa has over the last decade and a half maintained its pride of place as the cause celebre of hunger and famine. How does a district which enjoys well above average rainfall and rice production manage to recurrently collapse into a situation of hunger and starvation? Since the problem clearly is not natural, a point made brilliantly in P. Sainath's 'Everyone Loves a Good Drought', why is it that the institutional bottlenecks—land relations, the overwhelming presence of petty trade and

usurious capital, the absence of adequate entitlements—have so far not been attended to?

Niraja Gopal argues that the state-society relation is a complex one; subservience to powerful vested interests is often accompanied by a relative autonomy (to be read as wilful neglect of) from marginalized sections. Kalahandi's overwhelming tribal population has little voice; it is also politically unorganized. So while catchy media exposes and fiery speeches in Parliament do sometimes spur the state into action, this is inevitably in the form of relief. This too has over time become an industry, helping the state government draw on additional central resources, and the local mediators to cream off large percentages from the relief allocations. Even after the National Human Rights Commission investigated Kalahandi, thereby highlighting that the basic prerequisites for exercising citizenship rights were absent (or at least impaired), the only long term solution proposed was irrigation. There is little understanding that large irrigation schemes, in the absence of radical land reforms, leave the marginalized landless as badly off. Thus while adversarial politics in the legislature, a vigilant press and a judiciary responsive to public interest litigation does force a measure of accountability on the government, the basic promise of welfare, food security, remains a chimera.

The discussion on the Narmada Valley Projects explores the Indian State's engagement with development as an integral part of its modernizing and social transformation agenda. The NVP has undoubtedly been independent India's most ambitious development project, bringing into its ambit four states (Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan), the Centre, and international institutions like the World Bank. As a development project it has also engendered the longest sustained protest drawing in a host of actors, both local and foreign. It has also dramatically altered the terms of discourse on development, forcing all of us, as never



before, not only to bring in externalities (both positive and negative) into the assessment of a project, but to question the very mode and process by which such decisions are taken.

It is impossible, in a brief review, to encompass the complexity of the project and the debate except to add that even in this well-traversed terrain, Niraja has managed to capture many of the nuances of this struggle. My disappointment, if that, is about the relative lack of discussion on the contradictions marring the strategic impulse of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA)—the movement spearheading the resistance. From the early debates on fair compensation for those likely to be displaced by the project, the terms and modalities for conducting a comprehensive social cost-benefit analysis, the technical debates relating to the height of the dam or the water flows in the Narmada, the mechanics of working out interstate claims about cost sharing and rewards, to the debates on substantive democracy and accountability, particularly the validity of different modes of extra-parliamentary protest (dharnas, fasts, rasta-rokos, jal-samadhis), and finally the self-conscious drawing in of extra-national actors (the World Bank, the European Union, the Japanese Diet)—Narmada has seen it all. Above all, it has decisively altered the common sense understanding of development as progress, as good.

And yet, at the time of writing this review, the movement appears at an impasse. It has exhausted all available avenues—the media is tired, the Parliament is uninterested, and the Courts have lifted the stay on the construction. What will be tragic is if the potential victims, having been mobilized to raise the ante from 'just compensation and

proper relief and rehabilitation' to 'no dam at any cost' are left no better off than the millions displaced by other, earlier, less discussed projects. The Narmada Andolan, though far better conducted than the earlier Naxal Andolan, has created its own backlash—an increasing vocal set of detractors who are seeking to provide fresh impetus to a technocratic vision and style—'development' at full speed.

Niraja Gopal's discussion of Shah Bano and the Muslim Women's Bill brings into question the third foundational principle of the Indian enterprise—secularism. More than the previous two examples, Shah Bano excited greater Parliamentary attention. It also, unfortunately, alongside Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, gave rise to the completely fraudulent debate of pseudo versus genuine secularism. The debate and its fallout not only demonstrates the troubled relationship between individual and community (particularly re-

ligious community), the right of a 'secular' state to intervene in private space and in matters sought to be designated as 'purely religious', but the strongly entrenched—tendency of our political actors, mainly male, to hegemonise the female voice.

The poor Muslim woman experiences a triple burden—of class, community and gender. The Shah Bano case exemplifies the privileging of her community identity over that as a citizen. Further, given the vagaries of electoral politics as also the reticence of the Indian State in acting as an arbiter in the case of a dispute, the divorced woman is left at the mercy of an 'imagined' community, its non-functioning institutional mechanisms (the Wakf Boards)—all under the control of a conservative male leadership. Worse, the state has willingly circumscribed its domain by 'editing even its criminal legislation so as to exclude some citizens from rights uniformly available to others'. It is, as

Niraja points out, in retreat: from its constitutional promise of social justice, and in its ability to legislate for all its citizens.

All three cases, as also the accompanying discussion, point to the need to eschew imagined theoretical positions—about the nature of the post-colonial state, about democracy, and about different institutions. Gopal argues for a non-essentializing view of both state and society, that both are differentiated and heterogenous, that their relationship is not governed by any abstract, universalistic principles. By bringing in questions of boundary, capacity and autonomy, she demonstrates the limits to the state's interventionist capabilities. Equally, by bringing in the role of non-state actors, particularly in the case of the Narmada Valley Projects, she underlines the power of citizen action and discourse to influence both the actions and the strategic vision of the Indian state. At the heart of a democratic state

lies the ability to guarantee citizenship—both the formal rights as enshrined in the constitution and the social conditions that make possible the effective exercise of citizenship rights. All the three cases discussed in the book—Kalahandi, Narmada, Shah Bano—illustrate that the exercise of equal rights of citizenship are hampered, if not denied, be it landless tribals, Muslim women or project displaced. It is also clear that both as a substantive democracy, and as a procedural one, we have a long way to go.

The picture of 'actually existing democracy' is not a pleasant one. Our democratic institutions act as filters, more restricting than facilitating access to the state. Yet, even our 'formal' democracy does episodically permit the unorganized and marginalized to find a voice. And it is this promise that needs to be more vigorously pursued.

Harsh Sethi is with Seminar.

## Encountering Courage

Harsh Mandar

SANJOY'S ASSAM: DIARIES AND WRITINGS OF SANJOY GHOSE

Edited with an Afterword by Sumita Ghose

Penguin Books India, 1998, pp. 258, Rs. 250.00

Two years ago, on July 4, 1997, a social activist, Sanjoy Ghose, was abducted from Majuli, a river island in Assam, by the terrorist outfit ULFA. No one knows with certainty what happened to him, but he has not returned. In a special labour of love, his wife and colleague Sumita Ghose has edited a collection of his writings. The pieces are dispersed and fragmentary, ranging from diary notings to an article for his college magazine, yet together they make compelling, and deeply moving reading.

For those who did not know Sanjoy personally, his random writings fall together like pieces in a jigsaw. One encounters in the pages of the book a man of cheerful energy and deep convictions, of compassion and forthrightness, of authenticity and courage. A person driven to act in accordance with his beliefs, without consideration of consequences. One committed in a genuine but unaffected sense to dedicating himself to working for a better world, willing to build often on strange, and un-

known foundations. This led him to the semi-deserts of north Rajasthan, and from there to the uncertainties of the country's north-east.

Sanjoy's prose is measured and effortless, sometimes lyrical, always incisive, as he writes about his work, his dreams, and the people and places that he encounters. His descriptions of Majuli, the largest river island in the world, perennially threatened by the waters of the Brahmaputra, are captivating. The daily elemental struggle for survival, the constantly looming threats of erosion, floods, and the scarcity of clean drinking water and jobs that he encounters in Majuli deeply influence Sanjoy. He feels convinced that he should leave behind the security of the successful milk union and the development organization URMUL, that he and his colleagues had created in Rajasthan, and plunge instead into the rigours of direct work in far away Majuli. They resolve initially only to observe and learn, but the floods and malaria epidemic draw them quickly into direct work. The pub-

lic support that they garner unnerves the ULFA, which publicly issues them threats in posters that came up all over Majuli. As he describes this phase, nowhere in Sanjoy's writings do we see him flinch or waver.

Some of the most valuable portions of the book are Sanjoy's jottings during his travels to the North-east. Too little is known about the unquiet states on this distant frontier of the country, and not too many people in the rest of India even care. Sanjoy describes vividly the restlessness and disillusionment of young people, drugs and AIDS, the despairing resort to arms, the bewildering and brutal bloodletting of rival ethnic groups, extortion by terrorists, runaway destruction of forests and rampant corruption. His writings are always perceptive and compassionate, and driven by the urgency that something must be done.

In the opening and closing pages of the book, Sumita describes vividly the

trauma of Sanjoy's disappearance and the waiting and search for him to return. The trust and courage with which Sanjoy willingly goes with his captors, the horror of his abduction, and the heartbreak of love and hope of his family and friends, wrench the heart of the reader. As I write this review, the *Times of India* (June 1, 1999, Eastern India Special) reports that the CBI has filed charge sheets against the ULFA chief and ten others for kidnapping and conspiracy to murder in the Sanjoy Ghose case. The reader still wishes to share the aching, fragile and yet paradoxically indomitable optimism of Sumita when she writes: 'those of us who know Sanjoy well, and continue to have faith in humanity, despite everything, believe he is somewhere, making the best of the circumstances that he has found himself in, and will return to us one day....'

Harsh Mandar is a civil servant.

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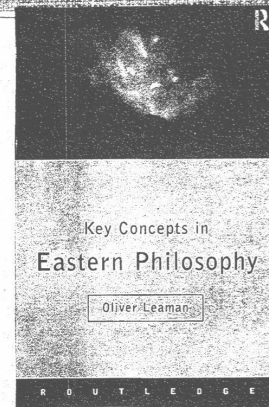
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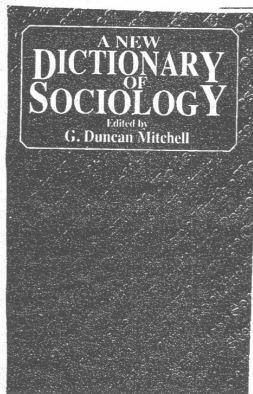
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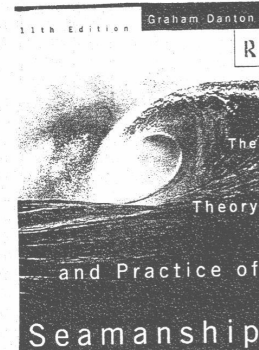
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## Interrogating the Given

Indira Chowdhury

CONTENTIOUS TRADITIONS: THE DEBATE ON SATI IN COLONIAL INDIA

By Lata Mani

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, pp. xiv+246, Rs. 495.00

Since the publication of Edward Said's path-breaking *Orientalism* in 1979 and the first volume of *Subaltern Studies* which followed shortly after, postcolonial studies in India has been propelled by the exhilaration on breaking down disciplinary barriers. More importantly, it has developed, partly at least, as a contentious discourse which attempts to challenge earlier understandings of the relationship between colonialism and nationalism, tradition and modernity. Once a space was created and a 'subject' established, contestation was initiated—it became a space for the challenging of positions. A new generation started writing about formerly ignored dimensions of Indian history, wanting to read the archives differently, interrogating given categories, and attempting at times to disperse

"For their part, widows nowhere drew on a scripturally derived rationale for *sati*, such as the presumed spiritual rewards insisted upon by the pro-*sati* indigenous lobby. Rather, the testimonials of widows repeatedly addressed the material hardship and social dimensions of widowhood. However, the colonial conception of religion as the structuring principle of indigenous society meant that, though acknowledged early in the debate on widow burning, evidence for the material basis of *sati* was unable to displace insistence on its fundamentally 'religious' character. This insistence intersected with the ambivalence toward *sati* (discernible even in those who opposed the practice) and delayed its prohibition" (p. 190).

the congealed unity of the historical subject. Lata Mani's book should rightly take its place among those earlier, pioneering works. For it was Mani's work, published as an essay of the same name in Kumkum Sangari's *Recasting Women*, (Kali: 1989), which was among the first to articulate questions about the relationship between colonialism, tradition and Indian women. Many of us who subsequently worked in the field of nineteenth century India researching on the complex relationship between colonialism, nationalism and women's history have found Mani's signposting of the direction in which colonial discourse analysis could move enabling for our own research. It is an irony of fate that physical disability caused by an accident held up the publication of this much-awaited book for so long. The delay, however, does not make the book any less significant.

In *Contentious Traditions*, Lata Mani offers the most masterly reading yet of the debate about *sati* as constituting the ground for 'a complex and competing set of struggles over Indian society and definitions of Hindu tradition'. The suffering widow whom both colonial legislators and officials and Indian reformers attempted to 'rescue' became a marginal figure within these larger debates which were 'ostensibly about whether she should live or die'. Mani begins by building up the legislative history of *sati* by reading a wide range of documents from the colonial archives. The much sensationalized debate on *sati* stretched from 1780 to 1833—four years after it was banned. Mani argues that while colonial engagement with *sati* did involve an active interaction with Hindu pandits, these pandits were instructed by the officials to base their replies strictly within *Shastric* tenets. Thus the official knowledge about the Hindu custom of immolating widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands, far from being understood as a practice became reinscribed into an already existing scriptural tradition. The official discourse thus constructed Indian society as being one which was organized by religion derived from the scriptures. Using as her source the *Parliamentary Pa-*

"A discourse that separated the spiritual from the material was one which gave a form of perpetual structural advantage to the evangelists, while simultaneously placing indigenous people in a bind. Within it, spirituality implied infatuation, while worldliness represented a kind of corrupt self-interest that moved indigenous people beyond the pale of salvation (by Christ in the Christian missionary discourse and by colonization as in official discourse). This division intersected with a particular conception of tradition as timeless determinant to reduce the individual to nothing more than tradition's signature" (p. 109).

*pers on Hindu Widows from 1821-30*, Mani offers an interesting reading of what constituted Indian tradition for colonial officials and how they went about constructing this knowledge.

The colonial officials and their 'native informants'—the pandits, were not the only players in the drama that surrounded the banning of widow immolation. In the next three chapters Mani takes up the other two—the indigenous male elite and the missionaries. Taking petitions, pamphlets and newspaper articles as the main sites of *bhadralok* articulations about *sati*, Mani attempts to show in what ways the twin worlds of the colonial officials and the indigenous elite intersected. Although Mani is careful to point out that *bhadralok* rhetoric on *sati* was far from being merely derivative, she notes that the shift in argumentation with an increasing emphasis on scriptural authority is apparent in both pro and anti-*sati* lobbies, including Tarkavagish and Rammohun who represented the two extreme points of the spectrum. This shared presumption marks for the indigenous elite the beginnings of a long and complex period of tutelage under the supervision of Orientalist scholars such as Sir William Jones. Mani's argument here stresses the peculiar nature of Indian modernity that rewrites tradition according to its own script. A highly idealized notion of tradition that was produced had as a significant by-product—an analysis of *sati* in purely 'cultural' terms divorced from history and politics. However, this impassioned cultural discourse was only superficially about women. Having emphasized this point, Mani returns to it only in her final chapter.

The two chapters about missionary activities in India and in England have not been published in any form previously. Together they make up the liveliest part of the book. Mani uses the journals of Marshman, Carey and Ward—the Serampore Baptists—to reveal not only the assumptions which underlay their preaching strategies but also their frustrations with their interactions with in-

digenous people that hardly affirmed their preconceived notions of a religious society. Both these chapters contribute to her arguments about the recasting of Hindu tradition in nineteenth-century Bengal. The missionaries saw the ignorance among the masses about the scriptures as validating their suspicions about priestcraft. The exclusive access to Sanskrit texts that the priest-caste—the Brahmins—had were seen as a privilege they jealously guarded. Thus, missionary strategy too duplicated the official move to privilege written texts over custom and practice. The reaction of their first audiences at street-corners and marketplaces in the environs of early nineteenth-century Calcutta, far from being apathetic, was truly dialogic. But the 'worldly' concerns of their Indian congregation often disrupted their preaching. As Ward was to note in his journal in 1800: '[One man] asked why we came, and said if we could employ the natives as carpenters, blacksmiths, &c. it would be very well, but that they did not want our holiness.' It is not surprising therefore to discover that the Baptists could boast of very few converts during this period.

By contrast, evangelical discourse consolidated itself in England. Mani offers a close analysis of the first and last edition of Ward's book on the texts, religion and manners of the Hindus published in 1811 respectively. Reproduced as extracts in Baptist journals, Ward's book and his letter illustrate the key assumptions in the missionary discourse about India: the centrality of religion, the submissiveness of the indigenous people to its dictates, the hegemony of the Brahmins and their texts and the degraded status of women. In England, Ward's book was perceived as an important source of information about Hindu religion and stimulated a lot of fundraising activities especially among women who belonged to the BMS or Church Missionary Society. Indeed, in his letters Ward appealed to the women in England to help deliver their unfortunate, ignorant sisters in India from the cruel practice of widow



immolation. This together with Baptist articles written in favour of the abolition of *sati* attest the consolidation of evangelical discourse which followed the legalization of missionary activity within the area under jurisdiction of the East India Company. The chapters on missionary discourse would, however, have gained considerably had the response to evangelical activities by the indigenous press and the secular press in England been included to problematize reactions further.

In her final chapter Mani turns to eyewitness accounts of widow immolation which appeared in the *India Gazette*, *Asiatic Journal*, *Bengal Hurkaru* and *Calcutta Journal* in the 1820s. As in official debates and pamphlet literature, in descriptions too, women were transformed into passive objects or the ground for elaboration of distinctively male constructions of *sati*. But while

most descriptions of widow immolation portray *sati* as oneiric sacrifice or ritual murder, women's testimonials, by contrast, tell a distinctly situated story, detailing the process and emphasizing the material and social contexts of widow burning. Mani deploys this comparative method of reading descriptions in order to reconstruct the woman as subject and to restore the suffering of the woman to the centre of these narratives. Mani's conclusions therefore, point to the startling fact that widows themselves were marginal to the debate about whether she should survive her husband or be burned on his funeral pyre.

Mani's socially and politically committed stance is apparent throughout this book. She engages with her sources consciously as a feminist who seeks to understand the ways in which the colonial interpretation of Indian tradition

had invariably taken women as its embodiments and subsequently to map the ways in which such interpretations colour many postcolonial intellectual exercises in understanding the past. Yet, in choosing to focus on women's testimonials and their actual physical suffering as ways of 'recovering' their agency, Mani risks missing the implications of the larger project which she so carefully outlines in the rest of the book. This larger project which charts the ways in which the colonial encounter reshaped Indian tradition—*sati* being one example—also begs the question: what made such a reshaping inevitable? Was it the Christian basis of western society that made them seek out a parallel structure in India and argue that religion was a cultural universal? Did such arguments provide a basis for hierarchizing the subjugation of women whereby 'civilized' Christian women occupied a

higher position compared to heathen women—though equally problematically?—questions which have serious implications for both cultural studies and feminist studies. If such questions are to be framed seriously, they will have to encompass the arguments of *Contentious Traditions*. Mani's study recovers the buried contemporary urgencies of the colonial debate on a particular tradition, and points in a direction that future studies of colonialism and culture will do well to follow.

*Indira Chowdhury is currently a Reader in English at Jadavpur University, Calcutta. She has a PhD from SOAS, London where she worked on nineteenth-century Bengal. Her book, The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and Cultural Identity in Colonial Bengal was published by OUP in 1998.*

## The Slave as Subaltern

Radhika Singha

GENDER, SLAVERY AND LAW IN COLONIAL INDIA

By Indrani Chatterjee

Oxford University Press, Delhi 1999, pp. 286, Rs. 525.00

The social range of households and communities in eighteenth and nineteenth century India which periodically drew upon a traffic in women and children for their reproduction is an alluring subject for historical investigation. Religious ascetics such as the Gosains, communities existing in a harsh ecology, such as the Meenas of Rajasthan, or those constantly on the move such as Banjara grain and cattle dealers, appropriated children through donation, purchase or in raids, to replenish their numbers or to dispose of in trade. Slave-dealing in military camps with their attendant bazaars, generated revenues for ruling chiefs. Here the soldier or camp follower could buy a wife 'on the cheap', whose labour would augment household earnings. Entertainment forms honed to sophistication by slave dancers and singers in princely entourages burgeoned into the sphere of commerce as male and female entrepreneurs borrowed capital, bought slave girls and leased out troupes to zamindars, merchants, and European 'nabobs' (Hasan Shah, 1790, Malcolm, 1823).

Indrani Chatterjee's book is a scholarly and engrossing account of how the

acquisition of slaves nourished the political and cultural values of ruling households in India and how colonialism began to drain material resources from such constellations. The Bengal Nawabs provide the case study although as the author points out, and as Varsha Joshi describes, for the Rajputana chiefs, female slavery was a feature of the zenanas of Hindu rulers as well (Joshi, 1995). In a wider frame Chatterjee describes slave recruitment 'as a principal aspect of nineteenth century households and kin structure' in a colonial economy 'based on slave labour'. The proposition that colonial rule could maintain slavery in sometimes harsher forms while taking away certain rights has been essayed in a nationalist version before (Chattopadhyaya, 1956). Chatterjee's contention is that far from de-legalising slavery, colonial legislation took an even more emphatically anti-slave direction. Judicial ideology tends to materialise as a guise for the 'real' imperative of consolidating the master's control over slave and extracting resources from slave-holding.

At the site of the magnate household the book is a valuable contribution to a

history-writing which searches for state form beyond the seeming fixity of bureaucratic and institutional structures to the fluid terrain of social relations, practices and values. It shows how slaves were crucial to the stock of human and cultural capital commanded by the magnate household, how they provided skills and managerial resources, and sustained the lineage. But let me state my doubts at the outset about the overreach of the revisionist argument from this household to all other social locations where the labour and services of those acquired through this traffic were realised. Colonial officials tried to evolve a spectrum of acceptable jural transcripts for exacting labour. These forms overlapped but their differences cannot be excised to argue that the 'real' objective was only that of reinforcing slavery. In the case of women and children the colonial regime began shifting its endorsement towards a morally more tenable form of patriarchy. The author insists on the analytic pre-eminence of 'the slave economy of the household' so patriarchy is only a 'regirding' of slavery under colonialism. This approach flattens out the ideological terrain on which the colonial government sought to mobilise and discipline labour and to stabilise its reproduction.

I will begin with the area in which the author makes her most significant contribution in a search for the subaltern 'in a history from within'. Historians examining the importance of the patrimonial household to the Mughal state form and its successors have stressed the fluidity of the line between the public and the personal, which gave a crucial political role to the suppos-

edly sequestered world of the haram (Blake 1979, O'Hanlon, 1994, Joshi 1995). The gender orientation in the social sciences encouraged a fresh look at forms of labour not given their due as productive activity, in particular, work within the sphere characterised as the household. Chatterjee's treatment of the slave underpinnings of the Bengal Nizam is a rich exposition of the importance of scrutinising the multiple of genealogy and the taken-for-granted link between kinship and affect.

From the 1880s there was also a reaction against that strand of colonial anthropology which had emphasised the rigidity of caste hierarchy within an unchanging village community (C.A. Bayly 1988). Chatterjee shows how the caste status of slaves and their offspring was a matter of negotiation rather than of original ascription in the households into which they were absorbed, and thereby the slave-born could forge a closer 'belonging' to the lineage. The path of incorporation was widened by the fact that slave women who bore children to their masters rose in status and material position. The legitimacy of such children was accepted, even if their place in the rank order could be contested. Fluid household factions often propelled the slave-born into important posts, even to succession. Slave-eunuchs occupied a crucial vantage point by their ability to move inwards into the politics of the haram and outward into public office, managing the political and financial portfolios commanded by powerful women.

However the author sometimes dismisses evaluations of servitude in other situations rather too swiftly because of the epistemic primacy given to female

slaves and eunuchs in magnate households. For instance, the caste status of slaves may have been fluid at the point when they were circulating between households and could be allocated to different uses. It has been noted in preceding work (Singha 1996) and by the author that the internal traffic in slaves was dominated by children and females who commanded higher prices because children could be made to forget their parents and birthplace, females could be absorbed into a variety of capacities, and both could be controlled more easily than the adult male. But surely the agrestic servitude of entire communities in zones of intensive agriculture was associated with a greater fixity of ascriptive status. This was both the socially specific form of domination but it also provided the cultural resources for collective resistance (Sarkar 1985, Prakash 1990).

In a fascinating section Chatterjee explains that in Muslim ruling households it was motherhood and political ceremonial rather than the marriage rite which elevated the female slave to the status of wife. Since motherhood was so important to political authority and access to stipends and endowments, powerful women exerted themselves to gain control over lineage reproduction, gifting slave women to male relatives and containing rivals by regulating sexual access. The priority of motherhood by nurture could be asserted over biological motherhood by taking control of the children born of slave women. Relationships of blood and affinal kinship did not always create lines of accord and affection but were fraught with rivalry and conflict. In fact kinlessness and dependency, such as that associated with the female slave or the eunuch, was a greater assurance of fidelity.

The book reveals how the Company's intervention in this kind of powerful household was shaped by political and administrative exigency, and by the quest to channelise resources to its own coffers or to sustain the 'public' responsibilities it was defining for subordinated ruling houses. It suggests that British contempt for the supposed miscegenation of slave with non-slave encouraged colonial officials to ascribe looser union to the cohabitation of master with female slave, and illegitimacy to their offspring. Plural forms of marriage were frozen into more rigid hierarchies in order to adjudicate on rights and claims.

In contrast to the channels of incorporation offered by Indian ruling households Chatterjee shows that female slaves bought by British men and the children of children of such unions were kept at the social margins of community, even as they provided a vital human resource for early colonialism

through the creation of a 'coloured' population. Elsewhere the author develops this theme into a very moving account of how such children were distanced from their mother's kin, schooled to cultural filiation with the father's community but barred from status and rights within it (1999a).

As the East India Company seized upon the resources of subordinated rulers British Residents sought to put the direct kin of the Nawabs in administrative positions to conserve all too finite revenues. But for the Bengal Nawabs this allowed powerful kin to exercise independent command of resources. To reduce the cost of dependents, colonial administrators also introduced discussions about illegitimacy and the status of 'mixed-jati' marriages. Chatterjee describes how the hardening of the distinction between kin and servant circumscribed the opportunities which slaves had to acquire social capital in the lineage. The drain of household revenues depleted the ability of less powerful kin to maintain dependents. In addition British agents tried to prevent slave stipends and pensions from being bequeathed as hereditary emoluments to slave kin, whether adoptive or biological. Thereby poorer kin and slaves lost certain claims on the household but the author contends that the plenitude of powers over slaves was simultaneously maintained.

This is the point at which the author constantly forces the argument to insist on the continued importance under colonialism of 'the slave social formation' in households. In fact one could speculate about tendencies which simultaneously encouraged and eroded slave filiation to the patrimonial centre in an earlier political transition as well. Regional rulers branching off in the eighteenth century seemed to entrust political patronage and revenue farms to eunuchs, female slaves and other lowly adherents to loosen their dependence on the more lofty mansabdari families who had links with the pan-Indian Mughal centre (Abu Talib, Bayly 1998). Yet the expansion of military contracting and revenue farming continued to generate an outward current from the household. The eunuch Almas Ali Khan, associated with the Awadh Nawabs, expanded his military and fiscal power as revenue farmer, and built up political and financial links with the East India Company to extend his independence. Chatterjee describes the leasing out of rent-free and low rented tenures to slaves and eunuchs for the colonial context. This was a device by which the Bengal Nawabs tried to detach revenues from the Company's grasp and yet maintain their control, because the right was not supposed to be a heritable one. To

increase colonial tax claims on such tenures, *lakhiraj* and *mufi*, the proprietary and hereditary claims of these slaves was strengthened. Surely this implies that colonial revenue policy eroded the powers of the patrimonial household over such slaves?

Some profile of the wage servants also maintained by large households and a plotting of gender along the spectrum of slave and servant might throw additional light on the changes underway. It is significant that the author found it necessary to formulate a composite term 'slave-servant' in this section. Was colonial judicial and revenue policy creating a realm of necessity in the household of rank which pushed male servitors towards the status of wage servants? Did this make it even more important to prevent female slaves from leaving?

Colonial officials posed a contrast between the 'cruelties of African slavery' and a 'mild and domestic servitude' in India as an argument for not intervening in Indian slavery (Singha 1996). The author states that the North Atlantic plantation model shaped British perceptions of slavery, and that this 'occluded' the presence of slavery in India. However there is some conflation in this persuasive contrast because the author contends that the image of domestic slavery in India was also derived from plantation paternalism—the plantation as 'one big happy family'. Could the Indian context have generated a different ideal of paternalism, one which allowed officials to reiterate that Indian slavery did not impede marriage and reproduction? Was there an implied contrast with those West Indian islands where the death rate of slaves constantly exceeded the birth rate? It would be interesting to examine how the plantation form was re-conceptualised in India in an abolitionist context, when fresh supplies of capital were being anticipated from Europe and the West Indies were clamouring for Indian labour.

The chapter titled 'Legal Complicities' is the one where the revisionist strait-jacket fits most uncomfortably over the evidence, despite important observations on the pitfalls of a teleology of abolition. The reader is not given sufficient opportunity to judge aspects of a legal case or clauses of a regulation which suggest other or contradictory imperatives to those of reinforcing the master's control over the slave. An extreme example is the interpretation of regulation 4 of 1822 which removed the justificatory plea of 'criminal intercourse' when the victim was the mistress or relative of the killer. On the basis of one case, it is read as a law which disabled a slave-husband from resisting sexual predation on his-wife. Else-

where Chatterjee convincingly shows that mercantilist rivalry with other trading companies was of greater significance than abolitionist concern in the early laws which restricted the Company's dominions could provide valuable military and labour resources for Dutch and French settlements. The Act of 1807 in England to prohibit slave trading was interpreted in India to apply only to the traffic by sea. But there is some straining at the evidence to argue that the Company even contrived to exempt its own ships from a prohibitory bond on importing slaves by sea. The author cites the case of Commander Hawkins who purchased some African boys to meet a shortage of seamen in the Indian navy. But as subjects of the Crown the commanders of such ships were already liable to prosecution for felony under 51 Geo III, Cap.23. Commander Hawkins was arraigned before the Supreme Court in Bombay and sentenced to seven years transportation though subsequently pardoned. The springs of legislation varied in different quarters of empire but abolitionist ideology cannot be dismissed only as a 'rhetoric of humanitarianism'. It was the terrain on which imperial interests and British national identity were being reworked after the loss of the American colonies and in ideological contest with revolutionary France even as slavery persisted in many parts of empire (Colley 1992). In India anti-trafficking laws against Arab shipping allowed a power which had benefited enormously from the African slave trade to shift the onus of a 'demoralising' traffic to 'the followers of Muhammad'. Within India the association of slavery with the theme of crime and cruelty in princely zenanas extended the interventionist claims of the paramount power and its efforts to control trade routes and peripatetic trading communities.

Regulation 7 of 1819, a formulation for disciplining labour at a variety of sites and stabilising its reproduction is reduced into a device for tying down all slaves 'in whatever location, capacity or function'. Using a hitherto unnoticed strand of correspondence the author makes the insightful comment that complaints about daughters and children being 'inveigled' from their homes could actually relate to slaves. The 'friends' of relatives to whom the females were restored were often their original owners. But then kinship is reduced entirely to metaphor and slavery emerges as the 'sole reality, with all transfers of women and children those between slave owners. In fact some of the cases of 'enticement', for instance from Bakarganj also related to biological children. Nor does the author explain why Regulation 7 could not formally endorse

the master-slave relationship. It authorised the magistrate to punish any person who enticed a married woman from her husband or unmarried female under the age of fifteen from her parents or guardians, for such unlawful purposes as prostitution. Perhaps slavery was given the garb of the guardian-ward relationship. But in the process Regulation 7 also introduced the contentious issue of a legal age of maturity. Was the language of kinship, and strongly gendered division of the regulation only a judicial mask for the master-slave relationship? Or should one acknowledge some shifts in the kind of household to which the state could commit itself by law? The man who sought the restoration of a female under this regulation could not claim her as a slave—the most usual case was that where he claimed her as wife. To control the product of her labour the woman would have to disown the tie of marriage, not of ownership. A concern about vagrancy among the labouring poor is addressed in a provision penalising the husband for failure to support his wife and children. By Chatterjee's interpretation this becomes a device to make the master pay for the cost of recovering and supporting his slave. Yet the recommendations of a Calcutta magistrate clearly indicated a desire to encourage a steady co-habitation among labouring men and women, to stabilise the reproduction of a fixed and therefore more tractable working population in the suburbs of the colonial metropolis.

The clauses of Regulation 7 which extended magisterial support to employers in controlling workmen and domestic servants are also viewed as reinforcing slavery though they conceptualise more limited engagements. The workman who took an advance for a piece of work would have to complete it without re-negotiating more favourable terms. In the case of the domestic servant a highly discretionary formulation almost excluded a legal defence against the employer. Nevertheless the non-payment of wages provided grounds for a severance of the relationship. The author underplays the clear gender division in this regulation—that lifelong obligation was defined only for the wife. Executive sympathy for hierarchies of personal subordination suffused all these forms for exacting labour, but this does not collapse them all into slavery.

Certainly colonial regulation of the traffic in women and children was ineffective and made ambiguous by imperial needs, whether by the demand for young and disease-free prostitutes for the army as the author points out, or in the sphere of indenture (Sen 1998). But should one characterise all such legis-

lation as a pretext for maintaining slavery because it posed 'false dichotomies' between sale for marriage and sale for immoral purposes? Legal formulations were rather more mediated by ideological change than the author allows for and I list some of the anxieties registered by officials: In the 1830s drought and famine wreaked demographic havoc in North India. The condoning of extensive enslavement as the alternative to famine-death cast an uncomfortable light on the level of the Company's tax demand. Revenue-generated enslavement had been characterised as a feature of extortionate native regimes. A colonial famine policy emerged but some officials also criticised the slave traffic as a factor which destabilised the labouring household. It was blamed for tempting the poor to improvident sale of wives and children, and encouraging the criminal depredations of slave-dealers and itinerant trading communities, who diverted children to the unproductive locations of the brothel and the 'degenerate' princely zenana. It also seemed to blur lines of social hierarchy—allowing low caste females to be passed off as Rajput brides and degrading the high caste. Anxieties about the fluidity of identity fostered by this traffic would subsequently generate constituencies of opinion among Indians as well. In the famine of 1837–38 a missionary experiment at Agra and Fatehgarh to save children from slavery in stews and harems and to found a settlement based on orderly domesticity and craft skills caught the imagination of the European community. British residents and magistrates began to refuse to restore runaway female slaves to the households of Indian chiefs, or to demand undertakings of good treatment. Such incidents developed in relation to the Mughals in Delhi, the Gaikwad and the Raja of Dharampur. In the 1857 rebellion a Mughal prince's proclamation complained bitterly that the testimony of a female slave was accepted against chiefs. The subsequent strengthening of laws against kidnapping indicated that parental rights over children were being recast as something morally more than property.

Some of these concerns might offer a way of approaching sections 367, 370, 371 of the Indian Penal Code against kidnapping, abducting or slave dealing which the author dismisses with the cryptic comment that they were 'curiously timed . . . and availed nothing'. In fact the book acquaints us with one of the constituencies emerging around the traffic in women and children. Leaders of Islamic reform in Eastern Bengal inveighed against Hindu zamindari control over Muslim prostitutes and called for their re-location as respectable

wives in labouring households.

What the imagination lingers over are the author's evocative remarks on the slave's own quest for belonging. How did those exiled from their natalities reconstruct community. How did those valued for their dependency struggle to obtain the honour of giving and donating? Chatterjee observes that for the slave, identification with Islamic *Jamaat* meant belonging to a wider group, not to the household alone. One awaits another fine exploration from this historian stemming from her concluding question: what was the significance of violence for slave identity and resistance?

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## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: Nature, Theory and Discourse

Janjit Purewal

WOMEN'S ENCOUNTERS WITH VIOLENCE: AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCES

Edited by Sandy Cook and Judith Bessant

Sage Series on Violence Against Women, 1997, pp. 265, \$ 49 (cloth), \$22.95 (paper)

Once upon a time, the women's movement rose to combat the fables and myth stigma from violence as an everyday experience in women's lives. This time was called 'breaking the silence'. A whole practice burgeoned globally, of women telling their stories and challenging the politics of silence. Today that practice, though far from complete, has to its merit a growing generation of feminist practitioners who have begun documenting violence in real and discursive terms. Academicians, from a range of disciplines, are probing this long dark and often ambivalent history of women through the finesse of theory, quantum tools, and scientific enquiry. *Women's Encounters With Violence: Australian Experiences* is one such effort by mainstream academicians to rally their scientific training around the sociology, politics and practice of violence as experienced by Australian women.

Sandy Cook, lecturer at the School of Law and Legal studies, La Trobe University and Judith Bessant at the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, have brought their diverse fields of study and experience to skillfully edit a landscape of violence which traverses a substantive threshold, from sexual violence on disabled women, lesbians and rape of daughters by mothers to spousal homicide in the case of aboriginal women, the violence of judicial bias, the public and private dimensions of violence against indigenous women, the historic annals of violence in war and the dank politics of citizenship. The editors address the controversy around the widened ambit called violence as they examine the problem of defining it as a normative descriptive concept. The multidisciplinary approach to including institutional and State violence where

genocide, incarceration and policing practices abound, is because in "not naming so many forms we make it impossible to redress them. People also use science and sexuality to harm others. They can use books and make speeches to deny agency to others. In the name of certain virtues (especially religion) people can cause insurmountable harm to others. We understand violence against women to encompass behaviours not always included or recognized in the category. Currently, the dominant definitions of violence indicate that violence can be characterized as behaviour usually by men directed against women. We believe this notion does not go far enough because it does not ensure that other expressions of violence against women are recognized. The way we frame these debates can exclude forms of violence that ought to be included."

A case in point is the 'single mother' in Australia who has been treated as a suspect figure by the State, warranting constant surveillance introduced to guarantee that no unearned welfare payments were made and she did not entertain any male partners in her home. This 'cheating, sexual single mother' image was kept in check by professional vigilance which included examining her sheets for traces of semen, counting the number of beer bottles in her backyard or both. These demonizing and criminalizing violations of a woman who was already struggling to provide for her children were rarely named as such and are absent from most standard texts on Australian history and criminology. In 'Confronting Prejudice in the Courtroom', Jocelyne A. Scutt argues that apart from the paucity of women as judges, magistrates and barristers the problems of judicial bias are historic. Unspoken or procedural discriminatory conduct, and discriminatory language and substantive discrimination in the contents of judgements are just some of the problems that have been collated from numerous records and judgements. "That women do not name a crime until some time after it has happened does not mean that they are lying or re-creating. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and seventy-five years into the 20<sup>th</sup> many women were sexually harassed at the workplace. That they did not call it 'sexual harassment' does not mean it did not happen," argues Scutt about the standard judicial response to women who complain or testify. "Any bias against women in the courtroom or in judicial or semi-judicial proceedings, whether procedural or substantive, reflects entrenched attitudes. In turn, it creates and reinforces bias", she says. An experience echoed by women everywhere. The fact that Indian feminists

have added judicial education to their growing mandate underscores the magnitude of this problem in Indian courts.

Therese McCarthy looks at the influence of feminist critiques of victimology and criminology, arguing that feminist activities challenge victimologists. She questions assumptions that discourses of victimology present "truth" about those who are the "victims". She also holds feminist theorists responsible for neglecting the area of victimology where now masculinist methodologies and theorizing have constructed knowledge and in turn helped shape policy.

"Victimological and criminological approaches have ignored or distorted gendered analyses of men's violence against women. Alternatively in taking on feminist arguments, they have misrepresented or distorted feminist arguments, which in turn has pathologized victims" argues McCarthy. The proof of the difference in intent between feminist and victimologists surveys is the use to which these findings are put. Their ungendered nature causes havoc in criminal trials which is where victimologists aim their work. Linda Hancock in her chapter on 'Aboriginality and Lawyering' offers a thorough interrogation into the issues governing the battered spouse syndrome, which in Australia is frequently used as a defence for murder. The chapter focuses on the case of Kina who after living for years in an abusive marriage with her de facto partner, killed him. She was sentenced to life imprisonment, which Hancock uses to examine the gender bias in law especially in regard to provocation and self-defence. Commenting on the mind set of lawyers, especially in the case of domestic violence she also focuses on the inherent racial bias and abuse within the Australian criminal justice system, which aggravates discrimination based on gender. A competent appraisal of the socio-legal structures and State records makes this a strong and evocative case for aboriginal women. In examining the public and private dimensions of violence against indigenous women, Melissa Lucashenko, looks at the violence that aboriginal women face within their homes. Pegging on to the problem of genderless within the public debate for aboriginal rights she advocates the need to recognize the danger of subsuming gender within racial solidarity. An issue which can be seen as generic to all groups in all countries where racial unification and self-determinism are surfacing as political pledges and ideals.

In a compelling discourse on the history of the Australia New Zealand Army Corps (Anzac of the Great War) Suzanne Davis establishes the genesis of the

masculinist construction which feed into the ongoing gender and race relations in the country. She maintains that the Anzac myth in fact authorizes and sanctions specific male interpretation of war and glorifies militarism to the exclusion of women's reality in war. In her insightful critique of hitherto unexplored territory by feminists Davis also cautions the feminist campaigns which eulogize 'war' as a principle of addressing gender relations. "War with its easy distinction between enemy and ally cannot account for the intricate relations between men and women or for their complexity. Neither can it account for the subtle ways in which oppression has been and continues to be maintained. To work within this paradigm is to replicate the same oppressive framework that we have sought to disrupt," she warns.

Sexual violence as a separate subsection of the book examines three important and emerging discussions within feminist experience and debate. Lesley Chenoweth unmasks the subtlety of the violence against disabled women even in countries which have matured to acknowledge disability as a special rights and needs group. Their marginalisation aggravates their vulnerability to abuse and even as feminists are beginning to document and rally for their rights, issues of controlling their reproduction and menstruation require a reappraisal by the feminist movement on the scale of sexual aggression that they face. Their unquestioning compliance comes both from their generic situation and the belated inclusion into feminist agendas and campaigns. Lee Fitzroy on the other hand raises the controversial and explosive issue of mother daughter rape, which owes much of its silence to ideological neglect by the feminist movement. Her pioneering research focuses on the lives of five women who have experienced child sexual abuse at the hands of their mothers. In unearthing the complexity of the abuse and its resultant impact Fitzroy makes a strong and haunting case for feminism to reassess its models lest these women are banned to a silence from that very group which raises the ideal of 'speaking out'. However the rare knowledge of such crimes makes one wonder about the perpetrators and their history and Fitzroy's explication is limited in that it does not include the perpetrators at all. Heterosexual hostility towards lesbians is documented by Gail Mason where she quotes from a survey of 1000 lesbians and gay men that 70% women and 64% men reported verbal abuse in public places because of their presumed sexuality. She examines the primacy of hetero/homo woman/lesbian binary opposites and writes about the perva-

sive social silencing of lesbian subjectivity. Her work is especially rich since it documents the narratives of lesbian experiences. Finally Kerry Carrington focuses on the state violence of heterosexual politics in the 'Criminalization and Citizenship' chapter. In a well-researched account he examines rape and the socialized impulse argument advanced by men that they cannot "control their impulse". She provides a cogent argument against the stand that male sexual compulsions are ungovernable by challenging the legal and policing systems, which refuse to acknowledge the politics of rape and sexual violence.

Cook and Bessant do not end on an altogether dismal tone but also enumerate the gains made by the feminist movement in Australia especially in influencing the State to enact legislative reforms which have made marital rape and sexual harassment at the work place unlawful. Gender sensitization of the police and institutions, and government financed community education programmes against violence have all added to widespread consciousness and gender rights. Their scholarship is significant also because it provides a timely critique of systems in place as well as paves the way for re-appraising policy. Most significantly their work contributes to setting the tracks for documenting feminist practice, perspectives and experiences in a history-in-the-making context. Which serves the critical role of also creating an accurate and more, inclusive history. In their words, "remembering the forms of violence against women gives shape to a specific Australian history that is not too dissimilar from the way orthodox historians used Aboriginal history until 1970's. We need only recall the knowledge we received as schoolgirls about our nation's past to see how an exclusionary history works."

Making 'exportable' points is a stated objective of the book since the editors underline the legacy of Australia as a 'recent settlement' nation, which as a colony still carries the socio-political codes of its colonizers. But beyond its kinship for parent nations, this scholarship is relevant for feminist discourse everywhere, echoing forever the tragic truth of the universality of violence, for women.

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## Documentation: Longitudinal and Latitudinal

Preet Rustagi

WOMEN, FAMILY, AND CHILD CARE IN  
INDIA. A WORLD IN TRANSITION

By Susan C. Seymour

Cambridge University Press, 1999,  
pp. 323, Rs. 595.00

THE UNSEEN WORKER ON THE TRAIL OF  
THE GIRL CHILD

By Sharmila Joshi and Meena Menon

Books for Change, 1998, pp. 97+4,  
Rs. 100.00

Any thematic empirical exposition requires systematic probing of many a variable associated with the subject to bring forth emphatically the multifaceted dimensions of the explored themes. The probing can be longitudinal or latitudinal or a combination of both, depending on the purpose of enquiry. While longitudinal analysis is designed to capture changes, and capturing complex processes influencing the variables; latitudinal analysis collates complex dimensions of the chosen theme on a single canvas. Common to both the types of analysis, however, is a systematic documentation of events, as they provide the edifice on which structures are erected later on, while presenting the chosen themes.

The first book under review, *Women, Family and Child Care in India*, belongs to the longitudinal category, documenting carefully the changes which have occurred in the families under study in Bhubaneswar town of Orissa, India. The second book, *The Unseen Worker*, belongs to the genre of latitudinal analysis, covering a wide spectrum of girl child workers in various occupations across the country.

The sub-titles of both the books bring forth their themes of exploration. While the first one is about 'a world in transition', the second one focuses 'on the trail of the girl child'. This apart, there is hardly any similarity between the books. Seymour's book is academic in nature, largely addressing American readers to familiarise them to a system of family structures and gender roles, which is radically different from theirs. It also tries to introduce them to different cultural assumptions and structural principles. The book by Sharmila Joshi and Meena Menon, on the other hand, has a larger audience in mind, to create awareness and sensitise readers about the issues dealt with. The narration style, in

effect, is journalistic. Due to the completely different orientation of these two books, the reviews are undertaken sequentially.

The most significant contribution of Seymour's book is the painstaking documentation of women, family and child care of the chosen families in Bhubaneswar with hardly any distortion of the information. Such an unobtrusive collection of information and distillation of rich facts reveals research of very high calibre, which is well-focused. Traversing in time, between past and present, without trespassing into many a tempting phenomena associated with her subject of enquiry, she has been able to succinctly present the case studies interweaving them in a competent manner. The end result is an excellent narration, which gives the impression of well arranged continuous still photographs. The only weak point of the book is a lack of comprehensive analytical structure, which would have enabled her to bring out much more interesting features from such a comprehensive collation of information.

The first two chapters of the book try to familiarise the readers with the town, its division into town and new town, with different kinds of family structures, values, cultures and ideologies. These two chapters also deal extensively with her research methodology.

The reader enters the threshold of her arguments in chapter three on the patrifocal family. Here, emphasising the value of interdependence, she tries to evaluate the relative merits and demerits of the joint family system. Within the socio-cultural assumptions of the joint family system, the patrifocal system to her mind seems to be a fairly well organized hierarchical structure, where women have clear spheres of responsibilities and influences. Evaluating it in terms of a western mould of a nuclear family system, however, would be misleading as individual freedom and individual space are curtailed to a great deal in a larger joint family context.

In this chapter, she has presented the process of the growth of individuals in joint family systems. Focusing her attention on women, family and child care she has clearly outlined the transformation of girl children from their childhood days to their motherhood days. The crucial junctures of life such as puberty, which differentiates roles and be-

haviour of males and females have been captured in a competent manner. Through her long narrations, she has been able to defend her position that Indian women are not as subservient or oppressed as western scholars have tried to make them out to be, because of completely different cultural and structural principles operating within Indian family systems.

Bringing into focus the changing dimensions of such patrifocal family systems in the fourth chapter, she has outlined the process of change contrasting the old town, where the joint family system though operational and disintegrating, with that of the new town, where the family structures are largely nuclear, she has brought out the role of education and changing occupational aspirations as crucial variables influencing the changes. In this transitional phase, the benefits of intended kinship network is broken, especially in terms of shared child care and women's work. So is the transformation of multidimensional relations such as that between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, husband and wife, grandparents and grandchildren and so on.

The positive fall out of such changes is that of prolonged "daughterhood" implying that girls enter marriage as more mature, educated and independent young women. Despite such changes, however, society still subscribes to the ideology of a patrifocal system, as 'love marriages' are not encouraged at all. Though society is moving towards more freedom, the patriarchal mode of thinking has not undergone significant changes over a long period of time, observes Seymour.

Chapter five, despite its catchy title, 'Caste/Class and Gender Relation' remains weak, both in terms of narration and analytical content. Except for the obvious differences between the rich and the poor, and not so original generalizations regarding the gender role, the chapter remains unsatisfactory.

The importance of education and their impact on the roles and attitudes of women have been dealt with in the two subsequent chapters. Taking into account a multigenerational perspective, she points out that 'education, marriage and women's new found career aspirations are intricately interconnected'. A corollary to this is the changing power relations, especially between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law. The emergence of conflicts in the domain of power relations has been adequately demonstrated in these chapters. Changes in attitudes and behavioural norms, including husband and wife relations have been captured through dialogues among three generations. Though the arguments are stren-

uous to follow sometimes, overall the narrations on 'continuity and changes' of women's lives are very well captured, as the essence of her arguments lie in these two chapters.

The last chapter, which tries to summarise the narrations in an analytical context is not sufficiently developed. The generalisations being quotations from many a similar study from other states of India, do not seem to sharpen her arguments. What was required probably is development of an analytical structure to decipher the complexities of changes in the specific context of the township only. Extending the arguments to a generalised Indian level with supporting statements from other studies do not make it a study on India in any way. Probably that may be because of the compulsions of marketing.

Apart from these, the book also has a few pretentious quantitative analyses, which do not enhance one's understanding at all. They seem superfluous in an otherwise interesting narration.

In contrast to the in-depth study of Seymour, the latitudinal account by Joshi and Menon in their book, *The Unseen Worker*, seems pedestrian. Despite its wide-ranging coverage of sensitive themes, not a single story stirs one's inner self. As far as awareness is concerned, it just creates the awareness that involvement of the girl child in various occupations including prostitution is not a localised phenomenon. Most of the stories, be it on the servant girl or on the agarbati worker by Sharmila Joshi read alike, as if she is more interested in meeting a time deadline than probing deeper. The stories by Meena Menon are not very different. These are sensational, not sensitive stories.

Sharmila Joshi's eight stories in this volume brings home the point that girl workers are highly exploited, there is official apathy and agencies must intervene to better their situation. Her suggestions are also generalised—lack of political and public will.

The stories by Meena Menon ranging from child prostitution to rehabilitation of child sex workers also bring forward identical sets of solutions that increasing awareness and public will can alter the situation. The articles in the book give one the feeling that the intervention strategy of the funding agency has dictated the course of the stories, or else, how can one explain the absence of emotion in these sensitive matters? Anyway, the book can be used as a propaganda mechanism by various developmental agencies for intervention purposes.

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## Spanning A Full Circle

Swati Chaudhuri

FINDING FRAN: HISTORY AND MEMORY IN THE LIVES OF TWO WOMEN

By Lois W. Banner

Columbia University Press, New York, 1998, pp. 243, price not mentioned.

Lois Wendtland and Fran Huneke met in high school, separated in college, crossed each other's paths intermittently for some years before losing each other and finally got together to find that the geodesics they had chosen as their life paths met after spanning a full circle. The circle that their life trajectories spanned contained some of the most profound and exciting developments in radical history: the eclectic spiritual movements, anti-Vietnam war demonstrations, the rise of second-wave feminism, paradigmatic shifts away from the material assumptions of consumerist society, all encapsulated under the catch-all term of counterculture. These countercultural movements, roughly concentrated in the 1960s and early 1970s brought new ways of thinking and doing, and repositioning world views held so dear in post-World War II capitalist society.

Fran and Lois (the narrator and interpreter of this story) grew up with the world view of the promise of plenty. Inglewood, the town that was the scene of their childhood and adolescence seems the archetypal sleepy little place that is often the source of much suffocation and boredom. At least that is how it appears in Banner's narrative, constructed partly out of memory and partly research; but whether the image embedded in the memory forms a unidimensional picture which research validates is a matter of academic concern. Well, more about it later. Lois constructs her's and Fran's childhood carefully, tracing family lineage for both sets of parents, providing interesting details on their origins and travails. Her description of her mother Melba and Fran's mother Lydia, in some detail, brings them out in contrasting relief. However, there are times when one wishes that Lois had painted the portraits with more ambiguity, with softer, paler lines; the gaps are all too readily filled in. On the other hand, at times it seems hard to reconcile the Lydia who practises for hours on the piano and had an academic taste for nonconformity with the one who relished upper class social circles, those seats of status quo.

Surely there is some conflict of aesthetics and beliefs here which Banner glosses over. Melba's untimely death along with the loss of other dearly loved family members triggers off a crisis of faith in Lois; she is emotionally redeemed only by her close attachment to Fran and Lydia. Fran and Lois are 'best friends' in high school and like all best friends dream of being inseparable, in their case, as independent artists in New York. Later, Fran partially realises her dreams by temporarily becoming an artist in Rochester albeit an unsuccessful one. However, the inevitable parting comes with the transition to college, which forms the cleavage in their lives in more ways than one. Fran embarks on a quasispiritual quest to 'find meaning in her life' and Lois takes the first gingerly steps towards professing feminism and celebrating sisterhood. Thirty years later Lois find herself an academic feminist, a pioneer in the field and Fran finds herself re-incarnated as Noura, a devout Muslim living in Alexandria. The crux of Lois' quest is to figure out how their lives took such seemingly different paths to arrive at a point where they are quite unrecognizable to each other. I was surprised at Lois' surprise at Fran's conversion to Islam. It was not surprising for her to be drawn to a religion which accepts each individual professing the faith as equal, regardless of gender and class hierarchies. Banner is insightful in pointing out the importance of a feeling of community in Islam, a difference that must have been acutely felt by Fran having grown up and lived in a United States of declining community life. This might be the reason why Lois too, after meeting Fran joins the Sufi Order of the West, with its simple aesthetic spiritual appeal and its preaching the oneness of all world religions.

There is a danger here that the difference in the life histories of Fran and Lois might be over stressed, for the paths taken by them—alternative spirituality and religion by one and feminism by the other—may appear to be separated by a very wide gulf. However, to use the analysis of J. Milton Yinger in his work *Countercultures*, the operative word here is the suffix 'counter', which defines all the radical ideologies of the 1960s and 1970s as running counter to a dominant ideology of what can roughly be categorised as the market, the state and organized religion. Thus both feminism and alternate religion question the materialistic and market-driven western social organization, one for its commodification of the female body and the other for its espousal of redemption through consumption. One gets the feeling that both Fran and Lois in taking up such alternatives were in effect rebelling against the enforced conformity of life

growing up in Inglewood, with its popularity cult and all-American ethos, so effectively captured in the fictional narrative of Lisa Alther's *Kinflicks*. Although Banner refers to Alther's work for her understanding of the high school sexual charade, there is a difference in their approach. For Alther infuses irony and satire into the narrative of her protagonist Ginny, dealing with playful humour the high school popularity cult and the radical movements of the 1960s. Banner's analysis is more academic, though one agrees with Fran that she treats the popularity cult with greater seriousness than it deserves, hardly surprising, as she encountered it as an insecure adolescent.

This brings us to a question which is vital and recurred in my mind frequently as I went through the book. As stated by the book's subtitle, it is about 'history and memory in the lives of two women'. The book's form coincides with what Hanna Papanek calls 'participatory history', writing history and memoir combining personal recollections with contemporaneous sources. But personal recollections are rarely about facts, more often they are about memories mediated through the prisms of personal beliefs. What makes is more complicated here is that there are three prisms; Lois', Fran's and both of them together. A mesh of autobiography and biography does not allow the leeway of the fictional tool of 'magical realism'; by juxtaposing history and memory, we produce but a version of events of which there may be many. The book thus is more about history as coded in the mind of the narrator, refracted through many layers of understandings and shaped by a certain world-view. Thus the Inglewood, high school, UCLA and second-wave femi-

nism described by Lois are her very own and may not be exactly congruent with any other narratives of the same. In the same way Fran's Stanford, Rochester, Gurdjiff's path, the Sufi order and Islam are perceived first through Fran's vision and later, her narrative is presented through Lois' mediation. This is not to take the value of the narrative away, merely to recognise that differences in perception exist.

But in spite of, or perhaps due to this, Banner manages to write an engrossing account. The Fran (later Noura) that we encounter is her Fran, created with as much flesh and blood as memory, intellect and love. So are Lydia, Melba and Eddie. The disappointments are the respective husbands in both their cases (in Fran's case both her husbands) who come across as vague and unidimensional. Lois' reasons for leaving Jim remain unstated as also the nature of her relationship with him. This may be because the defining relationship in the book is that of Lois and Fran's, their hopes, their hurts, their fantasies, their struggles occupy centre stage. And Banner is best when she describes this relationship, bitter-sweet, always straddling twin emotions of admiration-jealousy, love-indifference, separation-reunion, containing so many exhausting eras. Was Lois able to 'find' Fran after all? Not quite, but the person she found helped her to return to a faith she had abandoned and brought her the joy of 'being with someone who knew you as a child and who shared your adolescent dreams'.

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## Lived Experiences

Jayanti Seth

ENGLISH LESSONS AND OTHER STORIES

By Shauna Singh Baldwin

HarperCollins, India, 1999, pp. 171, Rs. 175.00

It is perhaps inevitable that a collection of fifteen stories by a relatively new writer will contain pieces of varied maturity and uneven literary merit. The thread that runs through the anthology is the compulsion to record the lived experiences of the Sikh women, with only slight cosmetic changes introduced from one name tag to another, and from one urban setting

to another. In other words the sameness of these women's lives is more apparent than their individuality. Having said that, however, it must also be said that while some of the stories remain at the level of magazine entertainment of brief duration, there are others which strike a chord of resonance that is the hallmark of the good and true short story.

Several of the stories record the psychological resistance to immigration, to the inevitable loss of identity which such a move entails, and the acknowledgement that while individuals decide to uproot themselves and settle in new surroundings for a variety of reasons, for the woman it is very rarely a matter of choice. At the same time they also reveal the curiously snug fit between the pioneering spirit of the Sikhs from Punjab and the strength and resilience required to settle what remains even to-

day the last frontier of North America. 'Montreal 1962' quietly raises the inherent question of gender displacement involved in such a cultural shift. It gives a positive reading to what could otherwise have been a complaint and a whine, as irritating in literature as in life:

One day our children will say, "My father came to this country with very little but his turban and my mother learned to work because no one would hire him." Then we will have taught Canadians what it takes to wear a turban.

There are some small disappointments regarding style. One would have thought that after Rushdie no writer would return to "Jeeo, Beta"—"Live, my son." (p. 11). In this and some other instances there seems to be a sort of naïveté, a literary unselfconsciousness that works both for and against the writer. The unstudied quality which lends freshness to much of the writing also allows the lapse into melodrama in the story entitled 'Family Ties':

"The Moonlight Princess comes to me in my dreams that night, telling me I can trust no one. Especially if he says he loves me."

Later in the same story we find the passage:

"I think our eucalyptus must be a girl tree, it takes too much from the soil and leaves everything around it parched and angry."

This is followed by a statement about her relationship with her brother:

"All that he and I have in common now is blood and honour."

Yet for all its laboured construction, this story too is really building up to an important statement; the young girl's discovery that

".....there is nothing in my history book about one Chandini Kaur who became Jehanara Begum and who is dead for my father and mad besides, nor any woman like her."

In certain stories the excellence of the writing leaps off the page, as in

Gayatri had been cocooned in a sulk for two days now. She wove it, look by look, spinning it slowly, clenching its threads around everyone, ominous and

accusing. She took it to bed with her, using its coolness to shut out the night heat.

and again,

"It's a strange thing about donuts. Americans have twenty names for the different kinds of donuts, more than they have for the relationships in their families."

Felicities of writing notwithstanding, many of the stories lack the quality of fiction; they are transparently histories, the personal histories of largely undistinguished women, a genre that feminist researchers have made so popular, and which nevertheless lack the texture and flight of pure fiction. One of the pitfalls of these subjective narratives is that they lack a sense of an ending, sometimes even of a beginning. Quite often they are vignettes rather than tales, glimpses of life on the move.

The best stories in the collection are good enough to signal that this is a writer with enough talent in her repertoire to merit careful reading, and to watch out for in the future. Two examples of excellent writing are 'A Pair of Ears' and

the final piece included in this collection, 'Devika'. 'A Pair of Ears' is set entirely in India and conveys the plurality of its setting without any studied contextualizing. With its bleak, unhappy subject matter it still manages to display that Shauna Baldwin is a writer whose strength is her acute observation of the things around her, and at its best her writing is confident in its own originality. 'Devika' breaks away from the convention of the rest of these stories and soars off into an exploration of what could happen rather than what repeatedly does. It rounds off a collection which seems to get steadily better as one reads on, and which perhaps would avoid the danger of overplaying the theme of providing a voice for the otherwise silent Indian woman if one came upon the pieces individually rather than bound together as they are in one collection.

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## Personal Evolving into the Political

Taisha Abraham

INDELIBLE IMPRINTS: DAUGHTERS WRITE ON FATHERS

Edited by Priti T. Desai, Neela D'Souza and Sonal Shukla

Stree, Calcutta, 1999, pp. 137, Rs. 140.00

NOT JUST MILK AND HONEY: AN ANTHOLOGY OF HEBREW SHORT STORIES

Edited by Haya Hoffman

National Book Trust, India, Delhi, 1998, pp. 226, Rs. 45.00

Not many daughters who write about their fathers get it right. Either they overstate the problematics of the relationship, or, they adopt a confessional tone that really misses the point. The authenticity of such stories lies in the psychological depth the authors bring to the subject. It isn't easy to negotiate feelings of guilt, resentment and anger with unconditional love, to tell about fathers who did not always understand the needs of their daughters even as they helped them to "blossom in ways that were unusual" (Mixed Signals, Shyamala R. Raman, p. 115), and, who invariably treated their wives oppressively. This last is most poignantly captured in Mannu Bhandari's story, 'My Eyes Brim over': "Before he died, did Pitaji ever once ask

Ma's forgiveness for a life time of harshness? If not in words at least by an affectionate gesture, a tender touch? Did he remember his daughters? No, he had not asked, he had not remembered" (p. 11).

*Indelible Imprints* is a collection of twelve short stories written by daughters who are now in their late fifties and sixties and one in her eighties. Except for Mannu Bhandari's story, which is translated from Hindi, the rest are all written in English. Short story writing in its present form in India is relatively modern as it made its beginnings under the influence of the West. Movements like Marxism, Feminism and Realism had its impact on it. This collection of short stories certainly captures Indian-English short story in its most representational form, in that it applies west-

ern movements—in this case feminism—to the Indian cultural context. Neera Desai is right in stating in her "foreword" to the collection that it isn't easy for Indian women to write about their families because in doing so they are attacking one of the strongest institutions of Indian society. But, through Women's Studies, "not only do we gain an insider's view of the working of patriarchy but also of the insidious nature of its site: the family itself" (vii).

Using Radical Feminist techniques of "consciousness raising" and "writing-as-a-process," the writers of *Indelible Imprints* met regularly to discuss conflicting feelings and complexities of their relationship with their fathers. From these discussions emerged "working manuscripts" which later evolved into full blown stories. As the editors of the collection say, "as we met and talked our early hesitation, the mental blocks, the pain and resentment of the past gave way to an exploring and sharing of thoughts and notes. Reading our efforts together helped to clarify our ideas and emotions, focus our insights and perceptions. We chipped away diligently at layers of memory and suppressed feelings" (Introduction, xii).

*Indelible Imprints* is not necessarily a generational tale about fathers who "lived through the historic transition from colonial to independent India, spanning the decades of the struggle for freedom when society changed signifi-

cantly" (Introduction, xiii). In a typical Radical Feminist dehistoricized move, it is dedicated "To daughters everywhere cutting across class, race and nation". Yet the writers of the collection are all from the middle class; this class bonding emerges in the nature of their demands for selfhood and independence in their relationship with their fathers.

In stories like 'Pressing The Wrong Nerve,' by Usha Kumar and 'Bringing Him Into Focus' by Rinki Bhattacharya, the writers reassess their formative years by objectively shaping complex interactions between themselves and their fathers. Sometimes, this reassessment gets bitter as in stories like 'Unfinished Business' by Sonal Shukla: 'I vividly recalled how cruel, negligent and self-centred he had been . . . totally indifferent to the plight of his daughters. . . ' (p.55). Others, like Iqbal Monani in 'That Summer I was Nineteen,' are more forgiving: 'We were the first generation of girls to be educated and out of purdah. There must have been a constant struggle in our parents' minds about how much freedom we were to have and they erred on the side of prudence' (p. 35). Stories like 'Who Will Cherish Us Now?' by Neela D'Souza and 'My Invaluable Mentor' by Priti T. Desai being out the contradiction between man as a father and as a husband, very sharply. 'Que Sera Sera' by Sarah Major and 'Out of the top Drawer' by Jane Pillai, bring a different angle, with their

foreign fathers, to the collection. The comfort and ease between father and daughter is brought out very effectively in stories like 'Papa On The Swing' by Bindu T. Desai and 'Let Colours Speak,' by Rekha Rao.

In general, the collection contains some wholly different moments, moments of pain and love, calm and beauty revealing the different aspects of the father/daughter relationship. The personal becomes the political but never at the expense of dispensing with love in this relationship.

*Not Just Milk and Honey: An Anthology of Hebrew Short Stories* edited by Haya Hoffman, is one in a current flurry of excellent translations that foregrounds Hebrew language not merely as reserved for liturgy but one, with a long history imbuing the social,

political and cultural experiences of the Jewish people in the past two hundred years. Hebrew language was revived as a spoken language at the turn of the century and was given a special boost with the establishment of the state of Israel. Until then, it thrived only in host cultures.

The collection immediately situates you within the complex frame of Israeli reality; with its Yiddish weekly—the *Amerikaner*, the Sabbath prohibitions, the steel helmets and wars, rootlessness and huge political changes. The stories depict the various nuances of an emerging nation with an exilic past and a volatile future. They are connected through the thread of life and sharp insights into the general human condition. Some of the stories like 'Together With Them' by Yeshayahu Koren and 'The Last Com-

mander' by Avaraham B. Yehoshua, throw the reader directly into the vortex of the war-ridden background of the nation. Other stories, like 'The Way of The Wind' by Amoz Oz and 'A Good Spot' by Ruth Almog force us to understand how political events have changed not only the lifestyles of the Jewish people but also their way of thinking. Often, the characters separate their emotions and memories to deal with life. This is demonstrated best in stories like 'Departure' by Yaakov Shabtai and 'The Beautiful Life of Clara Shiato' by Yoram Kanuik.

Underlying most of the stories in the collection are the twin themes of longing and despair; never affirming anything "new," but re-posing the old problem of self identity from different angles. In this context 'The Yeas of the

Tzop' by Yitzhak Orpaz deserves a special mention. 'Kitty' by Aharon Appelfeld, 'Scenes from the House of Light Blue Stairs' and 'White' by Leah Aini are striking in their portrayal of the changing image of women in a fast-developing nation.

Collectively, these stories show us the Jewish way of life with its rural towns and the Zionist training farms. Anat Feinberg's comprehensive introduction to the collection chronologically presents the contribution of the various generations of Israeli writers to Hebrew literature. This collection is both a sign of and a cause for knowing more about Hebrew literature.

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## The Conquistadors and The Goans

Marie Fernandes

SORROWING LIES MY LAND: A CLASSIC GOAN TALE

By Lambert Mascarenhas

Other India Press, Goa, 1999 (4<sup>th</sup> Impression). pp. 214, Rs 175.00

Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold. Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world (Yeats—'The Second Coming'). More than three quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism. It is not surprising therefore that Lambert Mascarenhas, like other post-colonial writers, Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka, should write so forcefully about this experience. *Sorrowing Lies My Land* invites comparison with a seminal African novel in English, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, written around the same time in 1958. Achebe's work is based on the culture and tradition of the Ibo clans in Nigeria. Okonkwo is an angry man whose one goal in life is to succeed his lazy father's name. He is led by anger and fear and strives to be a leader in the village of Umuofia. His relationship to the missionaries, who were newcomers, is exacerbated by the fact that he has a very great deal at stake in maintaining the old ways. All his hopes and dreams are rooted in continuance of the traditional culture. Missionaries were often viewed as agents of imperialism. Okonkwo's hostility towards them can be explained by a saying common to Native Americans and

Africans alike, which goes like this: "Before the white man came, we had the land and they had the Bible. Now we have the Bible and they have the land."

Like Achebe, Mascarenhas too vents his anger and indignation against the white rulers in *Sorrowing Lies My Land*. He tells the truth about Goa and the indifferently colonisers who after several centuries of colonial rule did nothing to improve the lives of the Goan community.

The novel written during the period of colonisation foregrounds the tension of the nationalist minded gentleman farmer Tobias Costa with the imperialist power and his anxiety to shake off the hegemony of the Portuguese rule in Goa. Unlike most of the other people in the little village of Copena, Tobias or Tob, like Okonkwo is radically different. Acting mainly from deep-seated convictions he refuses to be enamoured by either State or religion. He was born a landlord and therefore considered gentry of the village. Landlords were supposed to engage labour and not do a thing with their hands. But to the great consternation of his own father and the other landlords, he had destroyed this age old tradition by working in the fields like any common labourer.

Tob's restlessness stems from the oppression and injustice that he alone seems intelligent enough to see. He repeatedly brings out the hypocrisy he sees in the Christian faith. While his wife Ema is excessively pious, he does not hesitate to embarrass the priest who has been invited to celebrate Laxmi's baptism. In raising a toast to her he says; "... I hope you become a better Christian than most of us in Goa—and when I say most, I also include the priests, these so-called ministers of God who with the same hands that they offer the lay people to kiss, they amass fortunes, and the only charity they seem to know is the charity that begins at home" (p. 44). As one by one his sons leave home to seek their fortune in distant lands, Tob in harsh language denounces the Portuguese regime. "... These damned Portuguese have been ruling over us for the last four hundred odd years—four hundred and ... and ... sixteen to be exact—and what are we doing about it? Bloody nothing! And what have they done for us? Not a damn thing! They ought to have justification to remain here and rule over us; but since they have none, they should be packing, and the earlier the better" (p.77).

After the Revolution in Portugal in May 1926, when the army had overthrown the Government and assumed power, conditions worsened in Goa. The Acto Colonial was passed which was outrageous and base and fashioned to deprive the colonials of all vestige of dignity and self-respect, but the people remained complacent and lethargic. When a few like Tob and Senhor Menezes Braganca are justifiably incensed, they are threatened, beaten up, ostracised and betrayed by their own. *Sorrowing Lies My Land* is a monumental work in articulating through a fictional account the hardships, difficul-

ties and humiliation the people suffered under a harsh regime. Works by these post-colonial writers also attempt to celebrate the courage and sacrifice of exceptional men like Tob and Okonkwo whose rebellion and acts of defiance can only be appreciated and lauded, unfortunately, only after they have gone. Consciously or unconsciously the writer uses one of the strategies of appropriation which a post-colonial writer frequently uses. The technique of selective lexical fidelity that leaves some words untranslated in the text, such as 'balcao', 'menina', 'boleiro' and several others, is a device for conveying the sense of cultural distinctiveness. Generally the choice of leaving words untranslated in post-colonial texts is a political act, because while translation is not inadmissible in itself, glossing gives the translated word, and thus the 'receptor' cultures, the higher status. But Mascarenhas as has deliberately left certain Portuguese words untranslated, this is probably because he has nothing against the Portuguese as such. As Tob articulates: "I do not hate the Portuguese people! Who said I did? ... My fight is with the regime under which we are made to live as slaves. It is the regime of which I am the enemy" (p. 188). Through his starkly realistic representation, Lambert Mascarenhas is able to capture the Goan reality with admirable dexterity. He deserves a high place among writers of Indian-English fiction and this work will most certainly find a place alongside the works of other notable post-colonial writers.

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## The Truth About Postcolonialism

Shelley Walia

POSTCOLONIAL THEORY: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

By Leela Gandhi

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 200, Rs. 225.00

Enhancement of the quality and standards of education are a matter for those who teach and design academic curriculum. Everyone must make his own decision about where he wants to get to and how he is going to do it; the outcome of these decisions is the balance between dissidence and incorporation. There would always be some teachers who would serve a liberalising, progressive function in society especially through teaching literary works. And there are those who have never tried to question their role or, as Gramsci argues, are oblivious of the organizing cultural, moral and intellectual functioning of ideology and power/knowledge relations. Literary intellectuals must react against the pressures of the institution and the social order within which it resides in terms of specific strategies for contesting the 'politics of truth'. With the prospects of an interventionist academic politics, teaching must involve active coding, decoding, recoding of all values and forms, and reinscription against the prevailing inscribed hegemony of a ruthless operation of capitalism.

We have for too long complacently followed a programme of teaching which is now outdated and obsolete. It has lacked, as persuasively argued by Professor Ronald Barnett, 'an overarching educational rationale', devoid as it is of a coherent vocabulary, and a set of 'conceptual responses' around which we can build a curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Academics cannot now be forgiven for not being critical and inquisitive about their teaching and their research and scholarly roles. Sooner or later the leisurely attitude of the teacher has to give in to serious and purposeful curriculum development and a methodology which takes into consideration not only recent trends in literary theory and postcolonial cultural studies, but also the role of the literary intellectual whose radical work of transformation, whose fight against different types of oppression is carried on at the specific institutional site where he exercises his own expertise and his critical and political pedagogic practice. The

space within the university is not apolitical or inward looking, as it is often thought. Criticism has to continuously undermine existing hegemonies of thought and interpretation and produce what Frank Lentricchia has called, 'a culturally suspicious, trouble-making readership'.

I strongly feel that the ascendancy of modern critical and postcolonial theory, along with philosophy within English departments has led to a provocative unorthodox stance aiming to goad the students into a properly irreverent attitude towards received critical assumptions. To so comment on literary texts is to produce an active interrogation of the ways in which we are written into, are written by, and support strategies of power. What is needed is a connection between academic criticism, private feeling, and critical politics so that the literary intellectual can engage in radical work, thereby moving history in the direction of a collective will for desirable change.

It is in this context that postcolonial theory becomes relevant. Though there is a plethora of semantic quibbling over the nomenclature, it could be finally concluded that theory may be called 'postcolonialism' and the condition that it addresses may be best conveyed through the notion of 'postcoloniality'. As Leela Gandhi writes in her recent book, *Postcolonial Theory*, 'whatever the controversy surrounding this theory, its values must be judged in terms of its adequacy to conceptualise the complex condition which attends the aftermath of colonial occupation.'

The recent infatuation with nativism that we first saw in C.D. Narasimhaiah and then in G.N. Devy, now followed blindly by their many ardent lovers, is a result of post-colonial amnesia, a desire to erase painful memories of colonial suffering and subordination. The burden of colonial inheritance has to be recognized and this cannot be done solely by an emphasis on indigenous and 'pure' critical norms. The present academics obsessed by translation theory and works in translation along with the overpowering fascination with

native critical theory is fine, but this is not enough for the emancipation from the uncomfortable realities of the colonial encounter. Postcolonialism here becomes 'a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath'. Leela Gandhi rightly calls it a 'therapeutic retrieval', because it is only in the encounter with the past that we can profit by a theory that tries to define the cultural and political identities of the colonised subjects.

This enterprise is exciting because of the ambivalence of 'fetishism' and 'antagonism' that lies at the heart of the postcolonial condition. The colonial aftermath does result in a euphoria for independence and freedom, but at the same time it leaves us with a sense of anxiety that our dreams shall never fructify in the way that we had visualised and hoped.

The obsessive creativity and semantic profusion of Saleem Sinai in *Midnight's Children* is a verbal profusion that is seen in many Indian writers in English. This phenomenon is synonymous with, as Leela Gandhi points out, the word 'utterance' used by Nehru in his 'midnight speech' at the dawn of independence. The desire is to create a totally new world out of a subjugated colonised condition. As F. Jameson maintains, postcoloniality is 'something like an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps impossible, dimensions'. Thus, on one side lies its derivative state emerging from a colonial past and on the other a 'stepping out from the old to the new' to use Nehru's words again. This could be the reason of the inventiveness which underpins novels from *Midnight's Children* to *Everest Hotel*.

Gandhi barges boldly into a minefield of postcolonial theory which is currently among the most fashionable preoccupations of history, literature, and cultural studies. The tremors of this interest in modernism as well as postmodernism can be traced back to the early 1950s when writers like Beckett became interested in writing plays such as *Waiting for Godot* and Sartre wrote a scathing critique of French imperialism in Algeria, or when the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya posed a threat to western hegemony. More than this, it was a time when Fanon wrote *Black Skin, White Masks* and the works of Césaire and Albert Memmi became seminal to the uprisings of nationalist movements, thereby giving impetus to the whole question of rewriting history. Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, with its preface written by none other than Sartre, or the reworking of *The Tempest* by Geroge Lamming further added to the ongoing rush of a deep-seated impulse

to write oneself back into history. Postcolonial writing therefore came to be constituted in counter-discursive practices. The marginalized began to have a voice, minority discourses contended with the over-privileging of western history and literature, leading to rethinking about fossilized curricula in English departments, and multiculturalism. The master narrative of western discourse stood challenged finally in Edward Said's two major works, *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*. Leela Gandhi critically examines these texts with the intention of giving a brief history form Marxist poststructuralism to Nietzschean influence on contemporary theory. She has a rather wide range of reference, from Shakespeare to Seth, and from Homer to Hobbsbawm, taking up all significant issues such as hybridity, activism which have occupied the postcolonial critic in the recent past. This is a formidable grind through extensive scholarship. She is notably and purposively addressing a broad audience. A literary critic, she believes that her purpose of writing this book is to bring the colonial/postcolonial history and its theorising to the illumination of great public questions. But I do wish she had written in an easy and conversational style with which the book begins as then, the student of postcolonial literatures would have had an access to the mass of detailed investigation. But for a more advanced student the book comes through as a lively synthesis and analysis.

We could, therefore, ask if postcolonialism is a true counter-discourse or just another fashionable academic game that involves the migrant academic moving from West to East to West for reasons which seem to be more personal than political or sincerely academic. Undoubtedly they have tried to wage a war on totality and recognized the postmodern notion of difference, but they have not succeeded in evolving an expression or an idiom that emerges from their specific cultural and political circumstances. I am not sure if they have succeeded really in moving from the Fanonian first stage of slavish aping of western forms to the second or third stage of nativism or the intense revolutionary stance of voicing their views from a wholly indigenous cultural location. How then can we really call their discipline "postcolonial" when it refers neither to the 'historical break' signifying the end of colonial rule, nor to an 'ideological orientation' which carries the implication of some form of continuing resistance as well as oppression, though not a complete break from the weight of neo-colonial tendencies. I am quite sceptical of a totally uncontaminated postcolonial theory which

positions itself within the universalist or Eurocentric domain and thereby incapacitates itself to speak from the outside. The long history of colonialism cannot be wished away as it has left its indelible mark on the postcolonial consciousness.

This book is important for it attempts to sketch out the ethical possibilities for postcolonial theory as a model for living with and knowing cultural difference non-violently. Postcolonialism, as Leela Gandhi maintains, 'holds out the possibility of thinking our way through, and therefore, out of the historical unbalancing and the cultural inequalities produced by the colonial encounter. And in its best moments it has supplied the academic world with an ethical paradigm for a systematic critique of institutional suffering.' However, Gandhi refuses to regard postcolonialism as the end of colonialism, or 'for that matter, the onset of utopianism after its demise. Another important critic, Anne McClintock, takes postcolonialism as being obsessed with the linear movement towards progress and perfectibility, 'an enlightened suppression of colonial troubles'. There is a rejection here of any historical break as it is difficult to overlook the glaring divisions in contemporary societies and the persistence of neo-colonialism 'held in place by transnational corporations and the international division of labour, linking first-world capital with third-world labour markets'.

Recent criticism does get co-opted into a Eurocentrism by giving all priority to western thought and language over the non-western. The western idiom prevails in postcolonial writings and gets assimilated into its theory. You cannot argue on the one hand that postcolonial writings are an assertion of the indigenous creative impulse and then go on to assert that they emerge from interaction with imperial cultures and languages. This paradox is at the heart of postcolonial theory in which the past stands only repressed and not surpassed, as Lyotard argues. The ambivalent condition of the colonial aftermath has to be tackled for postcolonialism to become a combative and interrogative force in its own right.

*Shelley Walia teaches Commonwealth Literature and Postcolonial Theory at the Department of English, Panjab University, Chandigarh and is a Visiting Fellow at Wolfson College, Oxford. He is currently working on a book on postmodernism and the writing of history.*

## Refashioning Indian Literature A Colonial Agenda

S. Carlos

LITERARY THEORY, THE INDIAN CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

By Kapil Kapoor

Affiliated East-West Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 210, Rs. 280.00

THE TWAIN SHALL MEET: WEST, EAST, INDIAN CRITICISM AND C.D. NARASIMHAIAH

By Bandana Sharma and L. R. Sharma

Silver Birch, Allahabad, India, 1998, pp. 127, Rs. 150.00

The colonialist legacy is very often understood in binary terms such as merits and demerits of colonialism. This has given way to a more sophisticated approach to understand the role power has played in the relations of our colonial connection particularly after Edward Said published his book *Orientalism*. Ashish Nandy also probed another angle of colonialism to make explicit how the culture of colonial subject is intricately intertwined with that of the colonial rulers. Thus the debate on colonialism has unleashed hitherto unknown dimensions on studies of colonialism.

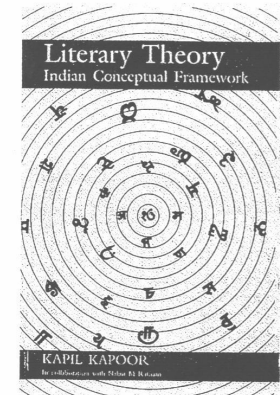
The books, *Literary Theory, Indian Conceptual Framework* and *The Twain Shall Meet: West East, Indian Criticism and C.D. Narasimhaiah* share many things in common in their perspective of how the Indian concept of literature should be formulated. Kapil Kapoor, Professor of English and Dean of the School of Languages, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, who is well-known for explaining Sanskrit ideas of literary theory had written this book on the basis of his lectures to his students. In tune with that the author says that this book is 'offered as a first venture of its kind'. What I, as a practitioner of Tamil Criticism, aim to explore is the perspective of this book. What is new in Kapil Kapoor's book is not the introduction of Sanskrit poetics to the West (as earlier scholars have done) but is the act of 'isolating and defining what is shared and what is different in the paradigms of the two cultural traditions.' The arrangement of different concepts of Sanskrit poetics, be it the relation-meaning has with the word, or the Sanskrit equivalent of the western concept of narration, or Discourse analysis, etc., fashioned on the model of western theory, is particularly our focus here.

The author is candid to admit that

the affinities of the western theories of different schools such as Structuralism, Russian Formalism etc., with Indian poetics is not accidental as these were inspired by Ferdinand de Saussure and his marked preference to linguistic method of understanding of social phenomenon as Saussure's intellectual history started very much from Sanskrit studies. The aim of the author of this book, of course, is to provide an account of native intellectual tradition of poetics and literary theory. Why the author of this book calls his work 'new' is because he finds in Indian poetics, a corresponding pattern of modern literary theory of the West.

Then the question is, how were the earlier books on Indian poetics written. These books took the model of western literary criticisms of F. R. Leavis or of trends of New Criticism of America. The 'new' attempt tries to model itself on the latest available trend of literary studies of the West, that is, the recent phenomena of culture study. As linguistics provides the spring board for such modern culture studies which usually does not distinguish between the methods of study of literature from that of the social science such as history, anthropology etc., Kapil Kapoor resorts to bring out the similarity between the ideas on linguistics of the celebrated linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure and those of Sanskrit poetics.

But this comparison takes recourse only to the apparent similarity between the western ideas of linguistics and that of the eastern; any deeper study of Indian linguistics and their relation to different categories of social reality will show that the eastern understanding of linguistics is entirely different from that of the West. This author, of course, recognises the difference between the world-view of western materialism and eastern idealism. But since this new at-



tempt provides him with facility to re-write the already available material of Sanskrit poetics, he does not question the underlying method of his present book. This perhaps gives him new avenues to extend certain ideas of poetics, to include new discussions of interpretation, narrativity discourse analysis etc. These, anyone today will acknowledge, have come from the West. The author is very clear here. He seems to say that as these new concepts of interpretation, narrativity and discourse analysis are central in modern literary concerns, he is compelled to take them seriously and go in search of similar ideas in Sanskrit. It is actually interesting to know that the narrative grammar introduced to the world of literary studies by the West has parallel in the Mimamsa concept of *Mahavakya*. This newness born out of a comparison of an Indian concept with a western one, forms part of any genuine study. But this kind of attitude of the author, if we refer to the modern debate of colonialism and post colonial theory again, smacks of another example of colonialism, as Indian or eastern ideas of poetics is selected for elucidation on account of its real or apparent similarity to its counterpart, the West.

The second book which may be a controversial one in certain circles, tries to establish Prof. C.D. Narasimhaiah as a crusader-critic of India who could provide an alternative Indian criticism. In the backdrop of the debate found recently in literary circles whether English language writing alone can be dubbed Indian writing, one will tend to ask the authors of this book, can one characterise a critic who has written only in English, that too on western and eastern literary works available only in English, an 'Indian critic.' That apart, no



one will dispute with the authors, Bandana Sharma and L.R. Sharma, that C.D. Narashimhaiah has given a significant turn to Indian English studies particularly in imbibing Indian characteristics to English studies: but the problem is that he equates Sanskrit with Indian culture thinking that Sanskrit is the only vehicle of Indian culture and ethos. Sanskrit is the vehicle of a particular culture of India and not the whole of it. In this respect one can understand the sarcastic remarks made here and there on G.N. Devy, for using 'the method and scholarship of one who resembles a western post-structuralist' and as being a critic of derivative methods. One who reads G.N. Devy's two recent books may easily dismiss these observations as frivolous, and I consider Devy's argument in favour of Indian languages (Bhashas) as against Sanskrit, as an important new direction for any future literary critic who values the Indian character of literary criticism. This dimension of Devy which is completely absent in the arguments of these authors demonstrates that their perspective of

Indian criticism is lopsided and devoid of new focus.

From the angle of the different arguments of these authors of the book, we understand that C.D. Narashimhaiah carried forward the crusade for Indianness in Indian writing. The question is, how does one define Indianness. Is Indianness defined only in the reactions of Indian writers and students to English literature. If Indianness is recognised in the age-old ethos and culture represented by the different layers of the Indian languages (Tamil, Kannada, Hindi, Bengali and Assamese etc.), then shouldn't these Indian language-writings be the yardstick of Indianness. Here again, I come to the reformulation of priorities as recommended by G. N. Devy, to give more importance to Indian languages over Sanskrit. As Sanskrit works in today's Indian situation not only as a language but also as a feeling, ideology and ethos which sometimes go against the interest of the rural folk, tribals, Dalits and backward castes. This is exemplified by the writings of last one hundred and fifty years

of Tamil scholars and critics of different sorts.

C.D. Narashimhaiah's use of different Sanskrit technical terms to replace English critical terms no doubt maps out a new territory of Indo-Anglian criticism. His acumen and single minded endeavour to decolonise the minds of Indian English teachers deserves anyone's appreciation. The brain behind the starting of *Dhvanyolaka* and the many periodical seminars held at this Centre and the publication of a journal, all mark this great professor's originality, honesty and commitment. But in the context of contemporary discourses and their influence on Indian literary activities, particularly after the emergence of backward and dalit caste ideologies like Deravidianism, and Dalitism on the horizon of creative and critical writing, certain questions have to be asked. Sanskrit, which was restructured during the British colonial period is another colonial and high-caste representation to the underprivileged majority of Indians; this language more so was imagined by William Jones and other colonial Eng-

lish rulers as an alternative to the colonial language.

The crusade in favour of Indian English studies nonetheless is another colonial agenda as C.D. Narashimhaiah's project of reshaping, or to use the term used by the two authors 'bending' the English language still does not steer clear of a colonial necessity: but it legitimises the colonial necessity of shaping the colonial subject's languages in tune with the master's language.

But the fact that the book, *The Twain Shall Meet West East*, does not throw any light in this direction perhaps shows that these authors' aim is something different.

S. Carlos who writes under the pen name of *Thamilavan* has been writing in Tamil for the last thirty years and his publications include eight books of criticism in Tamil. He teaches Folklore and Comparative Literature to post-graduate students of Bangalore University. He is also the Director of the Translation Centre of Sahitya Akademi, Bangalore.

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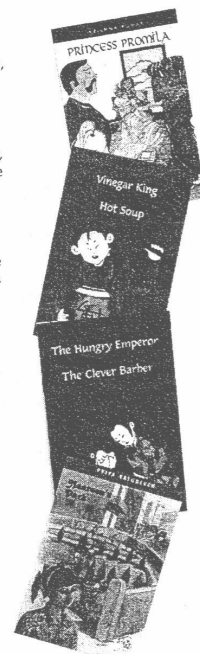
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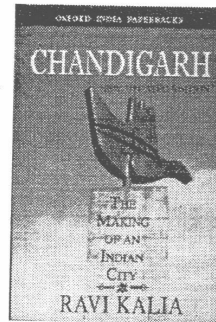
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