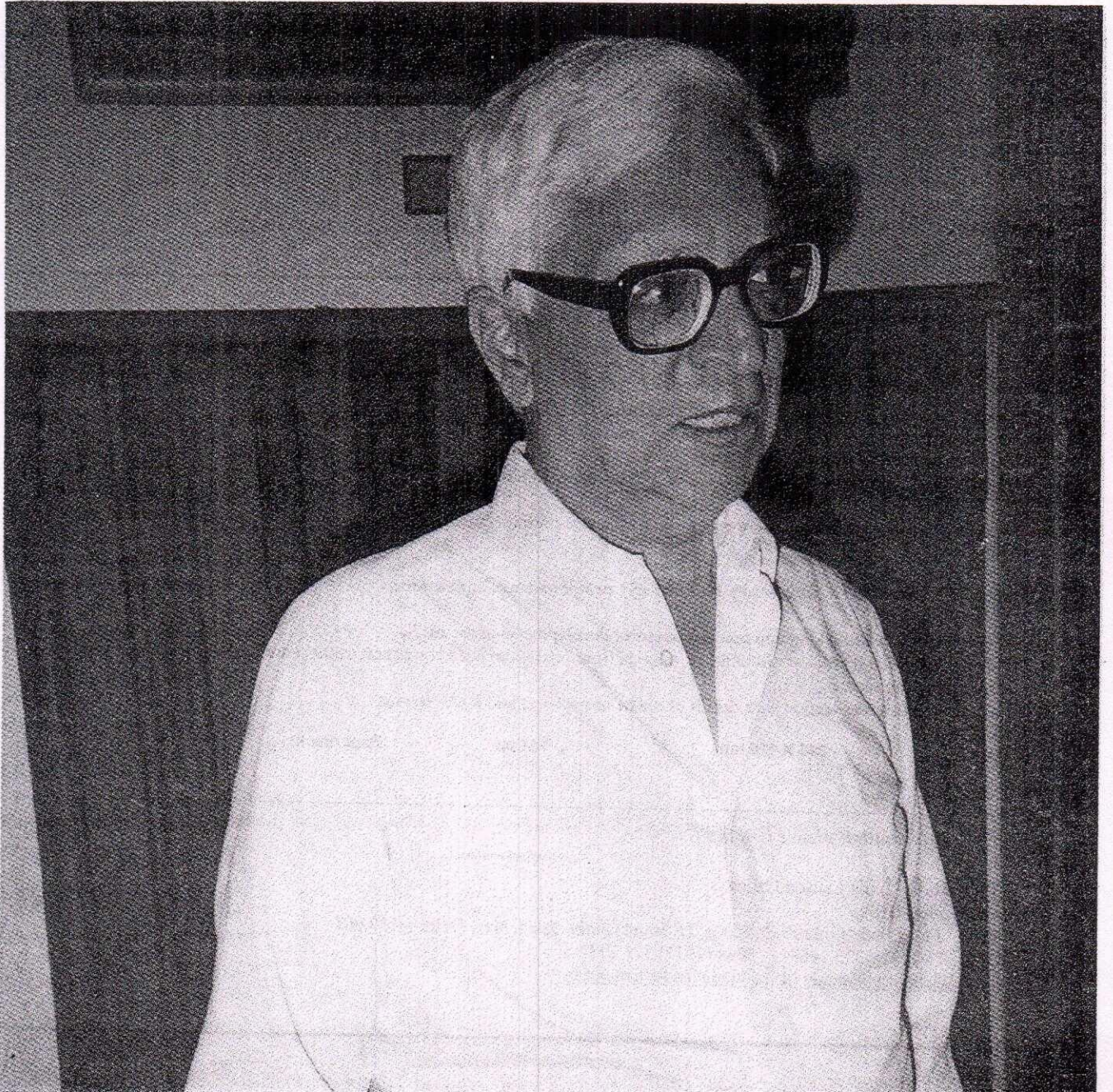


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Sarvepalli Gopal

23 April 1923—20 April 2002



Sarvepalli Gopal died on 20 April 2002. With his passing away something that has always been an integral part of The Book Review has come to an end. To us, the eminent historian and loved and respected teacher had an additional role. As Chief Editor of The Selected Works Project we had to seek his permission to start The Book Review. He not only encouraged us to start the journal but also actively participated in developing the character of the content.

The day the first issue of The Book Review made its appearance on a cold blustery January day at the bi-annual World Book Fair in 1976 the three founder editors had the proud privilege of walking the length of the Fair with no less a personage than the Chairman of the National Book Trust—Dr. S. Gopal, acquainting the book world with the fact that a new journal had been started. His pride in the journal—whose editorial board he adorned for twenty-six years—was matched by his keenly unemotional critical faculty with which he judged its excellence and a stubborn refusal to settle for anything less in the pages of the journal. Even when his much-acclaimed biography of Dr. Radhakrishnan received a more than sharply critical review by Gopal Gandhi in the pages of The Book Review, and his friends protested, his reply was that it only added to the credibility of the journal!

We carry below tributes by Shri K.R. Narayanan, President of India, Drs. Neeladri Bhattacharya and Vijaya Ramaswamy, both students of Professor S. Gopal, and the reviews written by him over the years for The Book Review, which were sharp and precise and more often than not carried a punch backed by scholarship.

— Editors

An eminent historian and a celebrated scholar, Professor S. Gopal has contributed immensely to the understanding of modern Indian history and significantly enriched the tradition of writing and teaching history in India and abroad. Author of several landmark books, Professor Gopal had taught in the reputed universities in the world and was internationally acclaimed for his scholarship, vision and depth of understanding of the discipline of history. In recognition of his talent and professionalism and his adherence to objectivity, the Government of India had appointed him as the Historical Advisor and he discharged those responsibilities with great competence and distinction. At a time when correct interpretation of history is being subjected to controversy, the traditions set by the historians of the stature of Professor Gopal need to be evoked for scientific understanding of our history so that future generations remain free from prejudice and passion while pursuing study and research in the field.

The centrality of his writings and ideas revolved around the seminal issues of secularism, humanism, tolerance and democratic ethos of our country. He understood nationalism, as it evolved in our country through the freedom struggle, as an expression and articulation of the abiding values of secularism and the values in coexistence in society. Towards the closing phase of his life he was in fact deeply agonized and pained to see the emergence of a counter revolution which mobilized people on the basis of religion and tried to accord superiority of one identity over another and thereby bring about polarization in society on the basis of religious fundamentalism. In his edited book *The Anatomy of A Confrontation*, he contributed a preface in which he described secularism as "...more than laws, concessions and special considerations" and described the upsurge of communal forces in our country as the "corroding disease". He powerfully asserted that "Only by not living in a world of self-created myth but facing the past with honesty, can we move beyond the tragedies which the corroding disease of communalism brings and face the future with confidence". His research papers, numerous writings on Indian history and his brilliant talks and speeches on India's past and its contemporary developments constitute a vast reservoir of powerful ideas which can be harnessed to sustain and energize the fight against bigotry, communalism and motivated and biased interpretation of history calculated to poison the minds of our future generations and endangering the unity and integrity of our country. It is well known that he was the founder Chairman of the Centre for Historical Studies in the Jawaharlal Nehru University and provided stewardship to build up the Centre as one of the excellent academic fora for historical research not only in India but also in the

world. Through his academic leadership and through his rigorous research and marvellous insights, the Centre emerged to illuminate the path of historical research and also uphold the independence and academic understanding of the intellectuals and historians of our country. In this sense he was not only a great historian but also a builder of an institution to deepen and enrich the study of history in our country for the benefit of academics, scholars and the ordinary people. These lasting contributions of this eminent historian are indeed of immense significance for our own time, which is grappling with serious challenges posed by fundamentalist forces.

Apart from his eminence as a great historian he was a fine and splendid human being. I had the pleasure of being a colleague of his in the Ministry of External Affairs when he was Historical Advisor in the Ministry and above all a close personal friend whose friendship and counsel I have valued very much. In the passing away of Professor S. Gopal, the country has lost a renowned and admirable historian whose path-breaking research on modern Indian history will be long remembered.

K.R. Narayanan
President of India

In February 1977, the monthly journal *Seminar* published an essay by Sarvepalli Gopal entitled 'Fear and Freedom'. I remember a thrill passing through my veins as I read the essay. Emergency had just been lifted, and the Janata regime that had swept to power had declared its intention to withdraw the NCERT history textbooks. The texts, we were told, were prejudiced since they had been written by Marxists. Protest meetings followed, petitions were signed, and rallies organized. Gopal's essay appeared at this time. Written in his usual lucid and crystalline prose, it was a powerful critique of the Government policy and a fervent defence of Marxist contribution to history. The categorical and unambiguous language of his defence, and the passion and conviction behind it, surprised me. As his student, I had known Gopal as a good liberal, always recognizing the creative potential of differing intellectual traditions, always encouraging us to question accepted orthodoxies. But I had not expected him to take such a forthright public stand on the generative power of Marxist history and the mistake of fearing this history. I had always felt that liberals, despite their commitment to freedom, were uneasy with Marxism. In the years to come, as I came to know Gopal more closely, I realized that all liberals were not the same.

Gopal belongs to the generation that grew up during the last decades of the national movement, lived through the tragedy of Partition and the euphoria of Independence, and matured as historians in the early years after Independence. He shared with many historians of this generation a confidence in the truth of the nationalist vision. Over the years, however, the focus of his writings changed. In the first phase of his career he wrote on colonial policies. There was a book on Ripon, one on Irwin, and finally, in 1965, a major work *British Policies in India: 1858–1905*. Subsequently Gopal's interests shifted. Through the 1970s and early 80s he worked on his grand biography of Jawaharlal Nehru, published in three volumes. Nehru allowed him to explore both the logic of nationalist politics and the trajectory of post-colonial developments. Then he moved on, in what is possibly his most mature work, to a study of cultural confrontation in a colonial context. This he did through a biography of his father. In all these works, in different ways, Gopal looked at history through the lives of individuals, exploring the complex dialectic between the personal and the social. Densely researched and beautifully written, his books on Nehru and Radhakrishnan initiated in India a new tradition of scholarly historical biographies.

Nehru clearly was Gopal's hero. He embodied a vision that Gopal valued—a vision that fused the ideals of liberal democracy with socialist humanism. Nehru grows in the biography from his most unremarkable childhood, into a magnetic leader of the national movement, and then a head of state who consolidated the nation, trained it for democracy, constructed a model for economic development and set the country on the path of growth. Gopal undoubtedly identifies with his hero, but he writes a historical biography that both celebrates and critiques, empathizes with the subject and marks its distance from him. Nehru does not emerge only with his greatness but also his contradictions and inner tensions, weaknesses and frailties.

In Gopal's presentation, Nehru in his early nationalist years appears as a man of emotion rather than intellect. Before he met Gandhi, he had increasingly felt the impulse to do something for the country, but he knew not what to do. After he learnt from Gandhi the importance of self-sacrifice, he was driven by a persistent desire to make sacrifices. He longed to go to jail, was unhappy if he was not arrested when he expected to be, or was released before he had felt the satisfaction of suffering. He itched for action, without always the capacity to think concretely about the goal. Nor was his enthusiasm for action in a nobler cause matched by a capacity for organization. In a remarkable passage in the biography Gopal sums up his assessment of Nehru in the early 1920s: 'There is, in all his letters of this time, the glow of virginal sufferings and a complacent absence of reflection. Jawaharlal was so excited by the situation in which he found himself, so much in love with sacrifice and hardship, so self-conscious about the immediate context that he gave no thought to the way or the goal. He had made a cradle of emotional nationalism, and rocked himself in it.'

A second theme that Gopal traces through the biography is the tension between Nehru's rhetoric and action, his vision and its implementation. After his return from Europe in the twenties, inspired by the ideals of socialism, a radicalized Nehru argued for the need for full independence. The very idea of dominion status, he said, 'suffocates and strangles me'. Yet he was forced to accept the idea for a very long time. He opposed the Delhi Manifesto of November 1929, but ended up signing it. Subsequently at the Lahore Congress in December a fiery Nehru led a rebellion within the Congress, expressed his full blooded eagerness for complete freedom, declared himself to be a socialist and a republican but said that he never expected a middle-class dominated Congress to accept his ideals. He preserved his radicalism by transforming it into a personal credo. Gopal shows how Nehru continued to be a romantic, how his radicalism was steeped in emotion, and did not 'carry with it an intensity of purpose and method'. In assessing Nehru's Primeministership, Gopal again acknowledges the gap between his vision and its realization. While Nehru achieved a lot, his hopes remained unfulfilled. And this, according to Gopal, was because 'the political will was not strong enough'; and execution was not adequate to the schemes. Nehru dithered, delayed decisions, endlessly discussed is-

sues, and was continuously restrained by self-doubt.

Nehru, in Gopal's biography, appears as an intensely lonely figure. He was lonely at school in England, lonely when he was back in India, lonely within the jail and outside it. It was the loneliness of bourgeois—Nehru was embarrassed by his rich family background—amongst middle class Congressmen, the loneliness of an atheist amongst deeply religious people, the loneliness of a romantic radical amongst moderates and conservatives. It is this loneliness that nurtured his emotional dependence on Motilal and Gandhi. When in 1932 Gandhi went on a fast protesting against the communal award, Nehru was terrorized by the thought of losing the anchor of his life. 'My little world in which he has occupied such a big place,' Nehru wrote, 'shatters and totters, and there seems to be darkness and emptiness everywhere... shall I not see him again and whom shall I go to when I am in doubt and require wise counsel.' Next year when Gandhi undertook a purificatory fast, Nehru wrote to Gandhi: 'I feel lost in a strange country where you are the only familiar landmark and I try to grope my way in dark but I stumble.'

The third volume on Nehru was published in 1984. Five years later followed Gopal's last major work—*Radhakrishnan: A Biography*. This book looks at the politics of cultural resistance within the context of colonialization. Faced with the cultural violence of colonialism, its repressive onslaught, how could Indians salvage their selves, reclaim their dignity, the authenticity of their identity? How could they react to the processes of cultural domination, to the efforts to represent everything Indian as invariably inferior: its culture impoverished, its religion irrational, its people uncivilized and barbaric, its tradition steeped in ignorance? Indians, writes Gopal, needed to exist in their own eyes, to have some idea of who they were. But cultural resistance, argues Gopal, was not expressed in unambiguous forms. Profoundly implicated in politics, it was not always explicitly political; deeply subversive, it could be 'seemingly conformist'; while critiquing western culture it could accept many of the ideals of modernity. Most Indians, writes Gopal, were 'caught in the ambivalent interplay of rejection and acceptance'; they tread on roads that did not directly lead to either collaboration or resistance.

Gopal shows how Radhakrishnan expressed one form of reaction to colonialism's culture. He sought at the same time to return to the past—to the Vedantas and the Upanishads—as well as to open out to the West, to critique Christianity as well as Indian tradition. He was critical of radicals who forgot the past, as well as the conservatives who were convinced of its glory. 'Those who condemn Indian culture as useless are ignorant of it,' he said, 'while those who commend it as perfect are ignorant of any other.' India should absorb other cultures and fuse them with the best in her own. If the love for the old were combined with the thirst for the new only then would Indian philosophy flourish. Each culture and each religion, in fact, should help others to realize their inner potential, and revitalize itself through creative dialogues. What humanity needed was not conversion to a single faith or a pale syncretism, but an intelligent understanding of the deeper unity of principle among all religions. All religious misunderstanding was due to a false sense of a monopoly of truth. If religion was interpreted as spiritual experience, and if windows were opened to the world, then the barriers that separated the religions would not be so impervious. Radhakrishnan, in fact said: 'The world would be a much more religious place if all religions were removed from it.'

The biography of Radhakrishnan, Gopal tells us, is a son's book—a son who was personally close, very close, to his father. At one level this is certainly true. In this biography, Gopal is undoubtedly less critical of his subject, than he is in his biography of Nehru. We see Nehru with all his weakness—the contradiction between his rhetoric and action, his overpowering loneliness, his strong dependence on the guiding impulse of a powerful figure, and his persistent submission to the will of Motilal and Gandhi. In contrast, the portrayal of Radhakrishnan is less problematized. In writing about Nehru's life and thoughts, Gopal traces a series of ruptures and shifts. But in Radhakrishna's life Gopal can see 'an unbroken career of smooth ascendancy, progressing straight and upwards seemingly without strain.' His thoughts appear to unfold in a continuous time: 'the last of his

writings is implicit in the first and his final public actions in tune with the beginnings.'

Yet at another level *Radhakrishnan* is not a son's book. It is a book of a radical liberal living in communal times, a book of a troubled secularist feeling under siege, exploring the meaning of religion at a time when secularism is under attack, when the politics of religion has become associated with blood and violence. Through an exploration of Radhakrishnan's writings, Gopal seeks to rethink the idea of secularism and tolerance, and emphasizes the significance of cultural understanding and dialogues. The book is a powerful plea for open-ended and creative dialogues between cultures; it is an argument against religious sectarianism, absolutism, and dogmatism, against the tyranny of those who claim a monopoly over religious truth and force others to believe in the validity of this claim. But at the same time it underlines to the secularists the need to engage with issues of tradition and religion with greater sensitivity and seriousness.

After writing the biography of his father, Gopal's notion of secularism itself undergoes a change. He now distinguishes two levels at which secularism ought to be seen. At the level of state practice it meant 'the removal of religion from public affairs, the separation of the state from all faiths, the insistence on religion as a private matter for the individual... and freedom for the profession of diverse forms of religious worship provided they did not come into conflict with each other.' Beyond state practice, at another level, secularism was a way of living, a way of relating to each other, a culture of openness and tolerance. 'It is a state of mind,' writes Gopal, 'almost an instinctive feeling, such as existed, by and large for many centuries in India, when Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsis and followers of other faiths lived side by side in general harmony, whatever the religion of the rulers, adhering to their own practices but influencing each other in architecture, dress, music, food and even in their religions evolution'.

Through a separation of these levels, Gopal moved towards several conclusions. First: secularism of the state is a modern phenomenon, but secularism at a popular level has a longer history. Second: secularism is not an alien implant in India; it draws upon the cultural resources of Indian tradition. Third: secularization of the state does not imply the secularization of the society. By looking only at the state we cannot grasp what was going on at lower levels, we cannot understand the popular state of mind. Fourth: the politics of the state becomes particularly dangerous when it seeks to destroy the every day culture of tolerance and nurtures a politics of hatred.

These are ideas that have a particular resonance in our blood-soaked present.

Neeladri Bhattacharya
Centre for Historical Studies, JNU

Sarvepalli Gopal the 'liberal historian' and erudite scholar is a widely known and respected figure. He brought the biographical mode back centre-stage in Indian historical methodology. His writings on the British administrators and his account of the Nehruvian saga established him as a historian par excellence. As head of the Nehru Memorial Fund he spearheaded many of its publications resulting in invaluable documentation of the freedom struggle and post-independence India. Gopal despite his liberalism was not without vehement critics. His candid biography of his father and the former President of India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, came in for flak because while giving credit where it was due it also revealed feet of clay. Many critics felt that such candour regarding the private life of a political icon was tantamount to ingratitude and unbecoming behaviour on the part of his only son. It is perhaps most revealing of S.Gopal's character that not once in the entire book does he refer to himself (the biographer) as the son. It was this ability to write with absolute integrity about his subjects without letting sentiments cloud his vision that has firmly established Gopal's reputation as a biographer/historian.

Gopal's ability to distance himself from maudlin sentimentality has also given rise to the impression that as a man he was unapproachable and reserved, perhaps even cold. As students we were somewhat in awe of him. This is when I was eighteen and my teachers in Jawaharlal Nehru Univer-

sity (JNU) were eight feet tall. I continued in JNU for the next eight years doing my M.A, M.Phil and Ph.D from the Centre. I learnt to detect the twinkle behind the air of standoffishness and the tone of gentle mockery with which he received my impassioned and wholly immature views on life in general and history in particular. This piece is intended as a tribute to the person who was not only my beloved teacher and role model but became a father figure for me. I left the University in 1981 after the completion of my Ph.D but kept in touch with Professor Gopal over twenty years, meeting him ever so often (whenever his time permitted), corresponding with him once he left Delhi and visiting him in Chennai almost every year right up to January 2002, little realizing that this would be my last visit.

Our morning class would quite often start of with Professor Gopal. At two minutes to nine one could hear him outside the door and the lecture would begin sharp at nine. He would be crisp, clear and precise. In the middle of a lecture on historical method focussing on causation while we were deep into determinism or structuralism we would suddenly find that he had been working his way towards a suitable note on which to conclude for the day. 9.50 and Professor Gopal would be out through the door. His punctuality and professionalism is a quality that I have tried to imbibe in my twenty-five years of teaching with some measure of success.

Professionalism did not mean that his lectures were dry. On the contrary they were punctuated with a wry sense of humour. He became Chairman of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla when I was a Fellow there. As his student I had the privilege of introducing him to my colleagues. When it came to Professor Jaidev (who used to teach English in Himachal Pradesh University and recently died tragically of cancer) I mentioned that he was working on the culture of pastiche. 'I must seem to you a perfect example of pastiche' Professor Gopal commented with a flash of humour while Jaidev coloured in embarrassment.

A few years after I had finished my post graduation I received an offer to join the History Centre from Professor Gopal who was then the Chairman. Unfortunately my head was filled with romantic notions of teaching in some village (or at least in a Municipal School) and not an 'elite' institution like JNU. I wrote back accordingly to the Chairman that I felt honoured but could not avail myself of the offer. A few weeks later I met him in the corridors of JNU and blabbered about my letter. 'Yes. I got it', he said shortly and looking at me quizzically commented 'You are difficult'. He never made any further reference to my quixotic act but I have had to wait more than twenty years before I joined the JNU faculty!

Professor Gopal became a friend of the family and wrote the foreword for my father's book *New Delhi and Sri Lanka*. I will never forget the fact that he undertook a difficult climb in Shimla when he had already fallen ill in order to offer his condolences to my mother after the passing away of my father.

I enjoyed his guided tour of his ancestral home 'Girija'. He had shown me his father's collection of books remarking that it was becoming difficult even to get someone to dust them and keep them tidy. My annual visits to Chennai were never complete without spending a precious half an hour in his company when he would discuss with me in all seriousness the state of academics in our country, the political situation and the progress of my own research. I was in Madras this January and called up to ask his wife if I could make my usual visit. She answered doubtfully that his dialysis sessions had increased. However when she told him that I had come with my ten month old baby, he wanted to meet me. While I chatted he admonished mock seriously my son who was pulling at his *veshti*. When leaving him I touched his feet and was rebuked by his wife for doing something he did not like. I will treasure his response to that: 'It is alright. She is my student.'

It was at Professor Gopal's instance that I met Chandra and Uma and began writing for *The Book Review* twenty years ago for which I continue to write. It seems appropriate that this personal tribute to my teacher should be published by those who brought out my first book review.

Vijaya Ramaswamy
Centre for Historical Studies, JNU

Anglo-Saxon Attitudes

THE EROSION OF A RELATIONSHIP

By M. Lipton and J. Firm

Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 427, £14

With stabbings and race riots, the relationship between India and Britain is today much in the news. To most of us, especially those in and across middle age, that relationship is overlaid with a large number of historical hang-ups. We have known the best and the worst of this contact; and in 1947 and immediately after, we elected to forget the worst. This can, of course, and has often been much simplified and overstated. If the leaders of the Congress, despite all their earlier theorizing and commitments, preferred Dominion Status to immediate severance of the British link, it was not a result of sentiment but because this seemed the easiest way of arranging the transit from empire to freedom. Later, if Nehru opted to find a way of keeping the Indian Republic in the new Commonwealth, his motivation was not a blend of nostalgia and the overpowering influence of Mountbatten. India was not charmed into remaining in an association which was presided over by Britain. Beneath the outer softness of Nehru there was a hard core of realism and a clear recognition of India's intererests. He kept India in the Commonwealth because it suited her at the time. The international world of 1947 was a new and a harsh place; Pakistan was ferociously hostile and assiduously cultivating her relationship with Britain; and the economic and military muscle of India was still weak. By one stroke Nehru turned Pakistan's flank at this level. But he did not at this time believe that the *tour de force* of India's membership of the Commonwealth would last for long. It had its use for the moment but it would have to be tested by its performance. It was a functional association that would be judged by its result.

In fact, the Commonwealth, that is primarily, in its present phase, built round the relationship between India and Britain, has lasted. This is one of the surprises of the modern world system and is basically the achievement of Nehru. By all the norms of international affairs it should have broken over Suez. Britain's sordid aggression in Egypt carried with it the violation of every canon of Commonwealth understanding. Naturally both the action of Britain as well as the way in which she had led up to it evoked outright condemnation from every section of Indian opinion. Even a conservative like Rajagopalachari demanded that in retaliation India should leave the Commonwealth. But Nehru stood firm. He minced no words in stating what he thought of Eden's policy and behaviour. But such untrammelled reaction was consoling with membership of the Commonwealth; Britain was but one of the group and the association should not be condemned because of her conduct; and India would not act in a huff. So the Commonwealth weathered the storm and the relations between India and Britain could be slowly put together again. Nehru was not only the creator of the new Commonwealth and of the new type of relationship between India and Britain round which the Commonwealth was formed; he was also their saviour.

However, if the relationship did not break in 1956, it has thereafter, in the sixties, been gradually eroded, say our authors. There has been no deep bilateral crisis, but each country has learnt to look away from the other in all matters that count—political and diplomatic links, trade, educational exchanges, and purchase of military equipment. Britain is more and more concerned with the Common Market and India's policy in every sphere hinges on her dealings with the super powers. In a sense this was always to be expected. World trends cannot be arrested for long, and the Indo-British association is a tangential departure from the general current.

Even granting this, Lipton and Firm argue that it was not historically necessary for the association between India and Britain to fade slowly out of existence, and they believe that given the required act of will on both sides this process can still be reversed. The authors are professional economists and, with a massive dosage of statistics—there are over a hundred pages of tables—they set out to show that the two countries have common economic interests which have been allowed to diminish but which should be fostered. Britain and India are both 'middle powers' with mixed econo-

mies, and could in the sixties have developed a rich-poor developmental partnership. The major complementarities between British output, skill-intensive and capital-using, and India's labour-intensive output have not been fully used. The real value of all British aid declined by one-fifth from 1964 to 1970, and by that year Britain was supplying less aid to India than was West Germany. Of the 22 countries receiving over £1 million in annual gross aid from Britain, only the Sudan gets less per head than India, and even the Sudan more net aid per head. In technical assistance, it is India that is the net donor (mainly in the form of doctors) to Britain. Some causes for this general decline in economic relations are beyond the control of either country, but such part of it as is due to default can obviously be set right.

This is basically a book for economists but its general conclusions merit a wider audience. The economic relationship between two countries is obviously not all. The development of India's role in the world along certain lines is clearly a major influence on the Commonwealth and India's association with Britain. The steep fall in sterling balance has influenced this association; but so, and perhaps even more, has the increasing rapport between India and the Soviet Union. The willingness of the Soviet Government to back up India's foreign policy has opened up larger avenues in trade and aid and this in turn has truncated the British share in these fields. Yet one does not have to be a whole-hogging Marxist to stress the primary role of the economic factor in the relations between states; and many of us not out of Anglophobia but because we see strength for India in healthy links outside the orbits of the super powers, recognize the need for a continuing association with Britain. This is possible on an independent economic basis and without infringing on any aspect of our foreign or domestic policy. Any promotion of such an added dimension to our activity will benefit much from the quantitative detail and thoughtful analysis in this work.

Vol. I No. 3 July 1976

British Policy

THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND THE RAJ

By B.R. Tomlinson

Macmillan, India, 1976, pp. 200, Rs. 55.00

This is a study of British and Indian policy-makers in the penultimate years of the raj. The British, both in London and Delhi, could not see that the days of British rule were numbered and planned on the basis of staying on in India indefinitely by utilizing the Princes and the Muslim communal elements against the national movement and keeping a firm grip on the core of central authority. When Jawaharlal Nehru met the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, in London in the summer of 1938, he asserted that the British could not stay in India for more than ten years. The Viceroy wrote off Nehru as lacking in realism; but, in the event, Nehru was not so far out.

Dr. Tomlinson gives a clear account of British policy in these years. He tells us little that is new; but it is to his credit that he does not seek to muffle the trends. He recognizes that it was advantageous for the British to stay in India and they did so in their own interest. He pushes aside the platitudes in which the British concealed their self-seeking and discloses how they exploited various forces in Indian politics to entrench their own position.

The substantive section of the book, however, is a study of the Indian Congress in these years. This was the time when the Indian national movement, having gained wide influence, was riven by differences of opinion on policy as well as clashes of personality. Civil disobedience was petering out, and there was a growing feeling within the party that there should again be a resort to parliamentary methods. In-fighting at the highest level, brought to a head by an accumulation of personal, regional and ideological causes, also distracted the Congress from its major objectives. Faction and ideology coexisted. By studying the records of the party, particularly in six of the regions, Dr. Tomlinson tells us much about the local dissen-

sions and the way in which these rivalries were reflected at higher levels of decision-making. There is always the danger in this kind of study of overstating the role played by such factional elements. There was, for example, in the 1936 elections, a considerable element of idealism; and, especially with limited electorates, many voted for the Congress because it was the party which stood for riddance of the British. Organization and local influence could not, of course, be ignored, but on this basis to compare the 1936 elections with the general elections in Independent India is to stretch analogies too far. The setting of freedom and the introduction of adult franchise render any comparison with elections before 1947 too tenuous to be profitable.

Still, Dr. Tomlinson's work is worth having. He has amassed much information which is of value even apart from the conclusions which he seeks to force on it.

Vol. II No. 1, Jan/Feb 1977

A Pot-Pourri

LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH ASIA

Edited by B.N. Pandey

Vikas, New Delhi, 1977, pp. 731, Rs. 125.00

This fat book is really a rag-bag. It consists of the papers presented to a series of seminars held over two years, from 1972 to 1974, by the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London. The theme was leadership, but the word has been interpreted so widely as to mean almost anything—individual charisma, social process, bureaucratic machinery, tribal organization and anything else that anyone wished to talk or write about. We have here papers by not only historians but political scientists, social anthropologists and even a former chief minister of a state. Inter-disciplinary studies are now the fashion; but no scholars have ever before understood it in this manner, of picking disciplines at random and throwing them into one basket. One is surprised at the moderation of the organizers in not bringing in the physical and natural sciences as well, and telling us of the leadership of Bhabha and Bhatnagar; but perhaps it was not moderation but lack of persons who could hold forth on such subjects. For we have two papers on law which seem far-fetched enough. Indian readers will be surprised to learn that Shri P.B. Gajendragadkar has been exercising leadership in this country.

In fact, these seminars show a lack of planning. It does not appear that themes within the general subject were selected after consideration and specialists who could present them were sought; rather, on the basis of the speakers who were available themes seem to have been handed out. The curious result is that, despite the seminars plunging widely in all directions, there are glaring omissions. The title of the book itself, to start with, is a misnomer. These are not studies in leadership in South Asia. There is but one article on bureaucratic politics in Nepal which is adequate by itself; but what one would have liked in addition is an analysis of monarchical rule. There is one article on parliamentary parties in Sri Lanka. But there is nothing at all about Pakistan. Apart from the functioning of political parties in the first twelve years of that country's history, there have been three instances of military dictatorship as well as the idiosyncratic rule of Bhutto. All these clearly merit examination. In particular, as no other country in South Asia has had the experience of government by soldiers, the experience of Pakistan cries out for analysis. But the organizers of these seminars silently pass Pakistan by, without a word of explanation. One wonders why. It cannot be that the School of Oriental Studies (to which funds seem no problem) could not find anyone to deal with the objectives and inadequacies of Ayub and Yahya Khan. Or perhaps Dr. Pandey and his colleagues prefer to steer clear of Pakistan, while India is everybody's game.

Basically this book is about India, of the last two hundred years as well as today. Even this in itself could have resulted in a worthwhile collection if the subject had been rigorously defined and the topics carefully planned and allotted to specialists. Leadership is not just a matter of individuals

who spring from nowhere and, in Mussolini's phrase, claw the face of history. The achievements of a country or society cannot be epitomized in single persons. The study of the past is not a game of personalities but an analysis of the interaction of economic forces, social relations and thrusting as well as hegemonic ideas. In the evolution of these trends and patterns, representative and symbolic individuals may emerge, and a study of their leadership may cast some light on the whole. This is not ruled out by even an acceptance of general laws of social and economic change, and some of the best work on individual figures in history has been done in recent years by Marxist historians—for example, E.H. Carr on Bakunin, Christopher Hill on Cromwell, Edward Thompson on William Morris and, above all, Isaac Deutscher on Trotsky, Stalin and alas, the unfinished book on Lenin. Beyond these impersonal studies of personalities, of course, there are the fruitful possibilities of scrutinies of party and group leadership.

There is little suggestion of all this in the book under review. There are two papers each on Gandhi and Nehru and one on Jinnah—but none on Patel or Subhas Bose. There is an elegantly written paper on British administration by Percival Spear. There are a number of papers on politics and government in Andhra Pradesh which, taken together, add to our knowledge. Many papers have been overtaken by later research. In particular, the books published by Brown, Baker, Washbrook and Robinson render their papers somewhat redundant. The book as a whole misses the target; indeed, it is doubtful if the organizers of the seminar know what the target is. It is a good opportunity thrown away.

Vol. II No. 6, Nov/Dec 1977

Survey of Rural Turbulence

PEASANT STRUGGLES IN INDIA

Edited by A.R. Desai

Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 765, Rs. 140.00

A volume such as this has been needed for a long time. It is true that the peasantry did not play such a crucial and spectacular role in modern Indian history as it has done in other parts of the world, and it is not surprising that India finds no mention in a book like Eric Wolf's *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*. On the other hand, given the size and spread of the Indian peasantry it would be surprising if that sector of society was of hardly any relevance. It has been known, of course, for some time that the ocean of the *kisan* masses was not without turbulence in various parts of India at some period or other of British rule, and that such restlessness and disturbances had had social, economic and political consequences. Indeed, the great achievement of Gandhi had been to harness peasant activity to the national movement. But the assessments of these various struggles in the Indian countryside had been scattered in odd books and articles. An effort has now been made to bring these together, thereby enabling both a continuous survey and an overall view; and to round off the picture a few articles have been written specially for this book. The selection and arrangement have been done by a scholar who is the obvious person for this purpose. Professor Desai has spent many years in the study of the sociology of Indian nationalism and is clearly unsurpassed in his knowledge of the work that has been, and is being, done in this field of peasant movements in modern India. There are two articles by him in the book, which reflect on the general problems raised by the role of the peasantry in social change.

Many of the other articles in the volume are also worth having. The editor has done well to include the pieces by Kathleen Gough and Mauza Abir on peasants and revolution with special reference to India and to secure from K.N. Panikkar a comprehensive survey of peasant agitation in Malabar during the last two hundred years. If Professor Desai tends to rely rather heavily on a few books like Natarajan, Sunil Sen and Sudarayya this can be justified by the paucity of literature on the subject, though it must be said that Natarajan is no longer the last word on the Deccan riots of 1875. But the major gap in this volume is the failure to provide ad-

equate coverage for Gandhi's work among the peasantry and the movement that occurred under his general leadership. Professor Desai indicates that his selection for these years is intended to rectify the error of belittling the role of the Congress and particularly Gandhi in this regard. But it cannot be said that his selection is satisfactory. One would have liked to have seen, for example, extracts from the writings of Girish Mitter on Champaran, Majid Siddiqi on the United Provinces in the early twenties, and Ganshyam Seth on Bardoli. But the hazard of such compilation is that every reader has his own preferences; and this is not to underrate the general value of this volume.

Vol. IV No. 2 Sept/Oct 1979

Nationalism in Indian Cities

BUSINESSMEN AND POLITICS: RISING NATIONALISM AND A MODERNIZING ECONOMY IN BOMBAY—1918-1933

By A. D. D. Gordon
Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 316, Rs. 50.00

URBAN ROOTS OF INDIAN NATIONALISM: PRESSURE GROUPS AND CONFLICT OF INTERESTS IN CALCUTTA CITY POLITICS—1875-1935

By Rajat Ray
Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 233, Rs. 60.00

A national movement requires organization, funds, leadership and popular support. If one or the other is lacking or weak, the movement becomes not only top-sided but ineffective. It was Gandhi's great achievement in India that he ensured all four basic elements, even though he left to others the reconciling of the contradiction in the manner in which he provided these essential ingredients. The two well-researched studies of politics in Bombay and Calcutta during the years of the freedom movement throw light on both the spread of nationalism as well as on the contradictions of the Gandhian phase.

It is worth taking these two books together, so as to draw attention to the similarities as well as the contrasts between Bombay and Calcutta. They were the key cities of the raj, with vast economic and communal interests. But then the differences start. In Calcutta the European businessmen was predominant and the non-official British communities exercised a powerful influence. While the permanent settlement gave the Indian landlords a position in society, there was no Indian commercial class carrying much weight for a long time, and it was the educated Bengali who made his voice heard. The situation was further complicated by the Muslim section of the population, which was numerically strong but whose leadership, especially in business, was drawn to a large extent from outside the state. In Bombay on the other hand, the mills were owned by Indians and the non-official British community enjoyed far less influence than in Bengal. So, while there were differences between the mill-owners, the merchants who worked the markets and whom Gordon terms "marketeters", the agents, the city landlords, the nationalists and the government and the relations between these various elements were constantly overlapping and fluctuating yet the atmosphere was healthier in Bombay than in Calcutta. The commercial tension was less marked and Indian opinion was more homogeneous. Ray tells us a little more than Gordon about the industrial worker and growth of trade unionism; but in both books these remain on the margin. Gordon places developments in Bombay in the wider context of Indian nationalism than Ray, who concentrates on conflicts in the municipal arena. But this is part of the pattern: the businessmen of Bombay had broader horizons than the politicians of Calcutta. For Ray to argue that the politics of Calcutta Corporation is central to the explanation of the emergence and growth of Indian nationalism is to claim too much. Gordon deals with a period of 15 years whereas Ray's span is over half a century; but, in a sense it is really the years after the First World War which are crucial. After 1918, the mill-owners of Bombay sided with the Government while the marketeters were in sympathy with the Congress. A change occurred in 1922 and the industrialists affected by the slump and the economic policy of the government, looked to the Congress for support.

port. The Swaraj Party needed funds and this the mill-owners were willing to provide in return for the Swarajists speaking for them in the assemblies. Their links with Gandhi also were close, and the Mahatma's eleven points presented to the Viceroy in February 1930 embodied the demands of the Bombay capitalists. They played a role, too, as S. Bhattacharya and Sumit Sarkar have shown, in the settlement of March 1931. Gordon's book fills in the details of the part played by 'big business' of Bombay in nationalist politics at both the provincial and all-India levels.

Ray too tells us much about Calcutta politics. It is despite its grandiose title a limited study, a by-product, as the author states, of a larger work. The government aided the non-official English in maintaining control of the Corporation; but we see also how Indians fell out among themselves, and the rulers took advantage of communal groups. Separate electorates, with all the poison they carried were introduced at the municipal level as well. For many years the Congress controlled the corporation, and outstanding leaders like Das, Bose, Sen Gupta and Roy gave much attention to Municipal affairs. But the result was not a higher level of city administration but factional politics and miasma of corruption. Even the augmentation of Congress funds by the businessmen of Bombay seems respectable in comparison with clandestine transfers given as recompense for acceptance of tenders submitted by shady contractors.

These two books, with much in common but yet different, should lead to more studies in urban politics of the nationalist period.

Vol. IV No. 4 Jan/Feb 1980

Science in India: New Vistas

ALTERNATIVE SCIENCES
By Ashis Nandy
Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 151, Rs. 40.00

The problem of scientists functioning in a non-rational culture, with consequences to their own personalities and to their work, is not a new one. Newton studied trigonometry and geometry to help him solve riddles of alchemy and astrology and Hally, the first secretary of the Royal Society, admitting a calico shirt imported from India, thought that it explained the reference in the New Testament to the Saviour's seamless coat. The problem has since been raised in the West by the decline of credulous belief and superstition but it has not ceased to exist; and no doubt the scientists who are, for example, practising Roman Catholics either become schizophrenics or evade the contradictions by living in compartments. Everywhere the autonomy of science is a myth. But the dilemma is most acute in countries like India and Dr Nandy has examined it through two case-studies. He has gathered much new information and provides quite a few perceptive remarks, and it is worth perceiving through this short but not easily read book, weighed down by a jargon which conceals rather than reveals insight and weakened by an irritating streak of facetiousness.

The choice of the scientists for study, Jagdish Bose and Ramanujan, is apt, if only because they were so wholly different. Bose lived long, was trained in western techniques and reacted to his settings both in India and Europe. Ramanujan died young, was handicapped by the necessity of self-education and was happy in the unbroken cocoon of his Indian values. Nandy draws some parallels from their personal lives—the dominant mother image, the crucial role of the wife—but it is really the differences which seem to matter.

Bose was a typical Bengali gentleman of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, influenced by Brahmoism and nationalism and the efforts to demonstrate that plant life was a shadow of human life and that plants eat, grow and face poverty, sorrow and suffering were significant at many levels. The acceptance of his results in Europe fostered the self-esteem of Indians living in a colonial society. The seeming demonstration of the all-pervading unity that binds together all forms of life gave sustenance to the Hindu philosophy of vitalistic monism. His experiments gave a special Indian perspective to world science and, by suggesting that modern science was consonant with Indian thought, provided not a divergent but

an alternative world science. So Bose erected compatible personal, scientific, and national identities not only within himself but also for the Indian intellectual generally. All this Nandy shows. Where he fails is in trying to establish that Bose recognized even in his lifetime that his work was becoming outdated and that he compensated for this by an increasingly short temper, authoritarian ways and a larger-than-life pose. There is an element of truth in this thesis that Bose in his later years could not suppress feelings of inadequacy. But Nandy presses the idea too hard, for even today the basic truths of Bose's research have not been invalidated and rejected as counterfactual by the West.

In dealing with his other example, Nandy shows a surer touch. The story of Ramanujan is one of the romances of modern science. Born in poverty, unable to cope with the rigours of a conventional education, employed as a clerk on a pitance and yet, in Nehru's words, "bubbling over with some irrepressible quality of instinctive genius", and dying at the age of thirty-two, Ramanujan has caught the imagination of the world far beyond the reach of his own discipline. He has been variously described as the greatest mathematician of this century and the greatest pure mathematician since Newton. Everyone knows how he taught himself and how he secured the attention of a group of mathematicians at Cambridge who gave him his opportunities for recognition. Nandy has done a worthwhile job by finding out much more about this Tamil Brahmin with the dark, burning eyes, and helping to explain a little the secret as well as the circumstances of his genius.

Ramanujan was not free from mental and emotional worries, had a few attacks of semi-amnesia and once even tried to kill himself by jumping on the tracks of the London underground. But these problems did not afflict his work, for he moved in a realm where the mathematical and philosophical worlds were one, and his thought and his belief flowed into each other. Like Newton he saw no conflict between astrology and pure mathematics. Depending little on known knowledge, uninterested in logic, confident of his intuitive powers, he played with figures with the certainty that he was unravelling the mysteries of the Vedantic universe. The zero equation, as he put it, had no meaning for him unless it expressed a thought of God. So his study of mathematics was integrated with the philosophy of life which he had inherited; and he had no need to seek, like Bose, of Indianize science. He was interested in politics but did not allow it to influence his work. He almost took for granted and as his due the support of Englishmen like Hardy, for he had developed no complexes born of the colonial situation. Nandy is perceptive on the side issue of why Hardy became so involved with Ramanujan; but of interest to us is the supreme, inborn confidence of the latter. For example, as a commitment to nonviolence was an aspect of his inherent outlook, he declined, even at the request of his English sponsors, to undertake any work related to the First World War.

The studies of these two unique yet representative men, standing poles apart from each other, open fresh vistas on the history of science in India during the last hundred years. All but the most routine characters have untidy minds, and scientists are no exception. Looking forward and adapting ourselves to the future, most of us yet are incapable of turning our backs on accepted traditions, with the result that we are caught in the unsettling cross-currents between the medieval and the modern outlook. So robust minds accept fuzzy faiths; and if a transcendent harmony be not achieved the personality is rent apart. Nandy's biographical approach has opened up a fascinating subject in which we can now move on to impersonal analysis.

Vol. V No. 5 March/April 1981

Passing the Buck

THE FALL OF TOWANG 1962

By Maj. Gen. Niranjan Prasad
Pallit and Pallit, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 168, Rs. 48.00

They sell their lives as dearly in peace as they should do in war—so the

plaint of one reviewer in the years after the Second World War, when the

generals on the allied side flooded the market with memoirs written by or for them, proving how each of them had outwitted all others and would, if permitted, have won the war single-handed. Even at the time one had taken such claims with much salt and realized how blinkered and distorted were their views; only now do we know how much these victorious heroes had suppressed. None of them mentioned, for example, the considerable advantage they had secured from the information provided by the breakers of the opponent's codes, and how in many cases this silent, unassuming effort of men and women working far in the rear of the battle-fronts had made the vital difference between defeat and success.

In India too, we have our generals, anxious to put pen to paper or have it put for them; but here the case is sadder, for our authors from the parade ground are mostly the defeated warriors of 1962, seeking desperately to pass on the responsibility to others. The latest in the long line is Niranjan Prasad, who took command of the famed Fourth Infantry Division in the Towang area in May 1962. He starts, in comparison with others like Davi and Kaul, with the disadvantage that he alone had two chances and muffed both: he had been outmanoeuvred and defeated by Chinese forces in 1962 and by Pakistani troops in 1965. But this book should be read because it supplies information in places the informant we get from the writings of other soldiers involved. As each tends to forget what does not suit his argument, we have to piece together as full a picture as possible by collating the scattered—and frequently conflicting—evidence. It may be added that only such a picture is so far available, for the official review carried out in Army Headquarters of the 1962 operations has not been released to the public and only shown clandestinely to a British journalist, Neville Maxwell, who utilized such portions torn out of context as fitted in with his preconceived purpose of denigrating Nehru.

In common with Davi and Kaul, Prasad alleges political interference in military matters and stresses that Indian troops were ill-trained, poorly equipped and lacking in arms appropriate for mountain warfare. He also gives importance to personal rivalries and bickerings among the generals; and the villain of his story is L. P. Sen, who was in charge of the Eastern Command during this period. There is nothing new in these allegations, which have to be seen in perspective. It was for the civil authorities to decide whether the Chinese should be thrown out or not; but Nehru advisers made clear that the timing and methods of implementing such orders were for the army commanders to decide. Again, if the army had stuck to the earlier plan of giving battle only on the plains, the Fourth Division would not have been exposed to humiliation on the Towang front; nor would such personal differences as existed among the generals have gained significance.

It is on matters of detail that Prasad's book is of interest, though much of what he has to say has to be taken with caution. Twenty years after the events he reports such a phenomenal, tape-recorded memory. But parts of his account are revealing. He reports a visit by Kaul, then Chief of the General Staff, to Tezpur in June 1962 when Kaul, according to Prasad, was willing to consider the return of the Fourth Division to the Punjab—a journey and a discussion not mentioned by Kaul in his book. Prasad also gives an unbelievable account that, some time after 8 September, when the Chinese had moved into Indian territory in this area, he and Davi concocred what he terms a 'tongue-in-cheek plan' for sweeping the Chinese off at a point West of the Indian post at Dholia. There is no reason to doubt this account of a plan which was apparently not meant to be taken seriously, for Prasad certainly would not have fabricated a story which does so much damage to his reputation. This amazing act of criminal irresponsibility, which is not mentioned by Davi or anyone else, was to cost the Indian Army dear.

There is no contradiction in Prasad's book of the statement by Davi that on 13 September, at Sen's goading, he ordered Davi to move forward to confront the Chinese interference with the actions of local commanders to which Davi attributes much of the responsibility for the later setbacks. Indeed, Prasad makes no reference to any orders given by him on that date. He also says that on 4 October he ordered Davi to send forward only his reconnaissance parties; but Davi has recorded no such restric-

tions and states that Prasad ordered him to advance immediately, whatever the consequences, for political reasons. The accounts of these soldiers are so much in conflict, and each account is so manifestly intended in self-justification, that the reader is forced to conclude that each one of them has a share of responsibility for what happened.

On 6 October Kaul according to Prasad, spoke in favour of the Prasad-Dalvi plan for an offensive from a point west of Dhola, and was not convinced by the argument that this was an impractical pseudo-plan, drawn up as a joke. One cannot blame Kaul for being unable to conceive of facetious conduct by senior officers at a critical moment in a border area. The fact, too, that Dalvi does not mention this plan robs his account of considerable credibility and dilutes his effort to pass on all the blame to others in the army and in the government.

The rest of Prasad's book, covering the day till his removal from command on 24 October, recites the usual tale of woe, of how his sensible advice had been rejected by his superiors, and how he was made the scapegoat for failures against which he had warned. But he does not really meet and counter the scathing indictment of him made by Dalvi, that he had never commanded the Division, had never had the freedom to take a single decision and had merely served as a post office, passing on to those above him the views of his subordinates and conveying to those below the orders of his superiors. While Niranjana Prasad is free with his charges against almost everyone else concerned with the loss of Towang in October 1962, he does not, in the process, succeed in exonerating himself.

Vol. VI No. 5 March/April 1982

A Labour of Love

ERIC STOKES: THE PEASANT ARMED—THE INDIAN REVOLT OF 1857

Edited by C.L. Bayly

Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986, pp. 261, Rs. 150.00

Five years after the death of Eric Stokes, he is still greatly missed. A generous friend with an attractive sense of humour, he was also a scholar of unusual gifts. As this posthumous and sadly incomplete book shows his work fell out of the common rut, nor could he be labelled as belonging to any particular school.

Stokes made his reputation by his work on utilitarian ideas in the Indian setting; but he shifted, during what turned out to be the last two decades of his life, to a study of Indian agrarian society and the extent to which it was altered by colonial rule. It was fascinating to watch, in the articles which were published at frequent intervals, the progress of his mind as it put new questions and pushed back the horizons of investigation. Some of these articles he collected in *The Peasant and the Raj* (1978); and it was clear that his interest was narrowing down to a study of the peasantry of the upper Ganga plain in the particular circumstances of the revolt of 1857. He had already, in addition to assessments of traditional elites and resistance movements, analysed developments in three districts; and obviously the task he had set for himself was to erect, on the basis of comprehensive district studies, a composite view of the revolt. That task was not finished; but Christopher Bayly, the most outstanding of the new generation of Cambridge historians, has accomplished more than a duty of affection in preparing the draft chapters of Stokes for the press. Even the incomplete torso in this book, taken with the earlier work, is an impressive pioneering effort. After a straightforward narrative of the military aspects of the revolt as seen from the viewpoints of the British as well as the mutineers, Stokes focuses on those areas which witnessed both the defiance of the soldiers and civil rebellion. He insists that there can be no mono-causal, oversimplified explanation of this tide-mark in nineteenth century India. Local differences in the rural areas have to be taken into account, for "historical truth marches only briefly to tunes of sounding generality". The role of the peasantry is crucial, for it forms the link between mutiny and rural turbulence; but peasantry is plural and no single explanation can cover its role. The elements were many and confused. British land tenure policy was influential but not always in the same way; caste was important but the category should not be used too broadly: there was a new group of

commercial magnates who threw their weight on the side of the British; material deprivation was a relative term; and the ecological factor cannot be ignored.

Reading this book widens the outlook of the interested student. But it does more; it stirs up, among us of an older generation, memories of a warm personality with a questing mind, stylistic distinction and a love of India.

Vol. XI No.1 Jan/Feb 1987

Fantasies Unlimited

HUNGARY AND SUEZ 1956: A VIEW FROM NEW DELHI

By Escott Reid

Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1987, pp. 157, Rs. 65.00

Escott Reid was High Commissioner of Canada in India from 1952 to 1957. These were the years when, with conservative governments in Britain and Dulles making policy in Washington, Nehru found a more sympathetic hearing in Ottawa and formed a cordial personal relationship with St. Laurent, the Canadian Prime Minister. In such a favourable setting Reid, indefatigable, taking an interest in everything round him, willing even to be comically exhibitionist if it promised to improve his standing, did all he could to promote Canadian interests in Delhi. Unfortunately for him his enthusiasm was not shared by the Canadian Government. St. Laurent might like Nehru, but the Foreign Minister, Lester Pearson, the most influential figure in formulating Canadian policy, gave priority to relations with the United States and Britain. Replies to Reid's numerous despatches and cables were often long in coming and the High Commissioner was frequently told not to push too much. Reid is honest enough to cite some of these reprimands. "We must", he was warned on one occasion, "keep our heads cool even if we are tempted to reason with our hearts".

Unable to influence Canada's outlook, Reid decided to go one better and revise India's policies. He gave an account of these efforts in *Envoy to Nehru* (reviewed in *The Book Review* July-August 1981) and now, in his latest book, he has added detail, without changing the analysis, to one chapter in the earlier publication. He himself was severely critical of Anglo-French aggression in Suez and, believing that Canada's refusal to go along with the other 'White' dominions in positive support of Britain and France gave him added influence in Delhi, tried to utilize this to convert the Government of India to his own views on various problems confronting the world. When Bulganin informed Nehru that the Soviet Union was willing to use rockets to bring Britain and France to their senses on Suez, Nehru required no prompting to deplore such proposals; but because Reid was of the same opinion he believes that Nehru could have been influenced by him. A tall claim; for no Reid was required to persuade Nehru to protest against any suggestion of widening the Suez war. But it was the Hungarian crisis on which Reid, voluntarily and without instructions from his Government, assumed, in his own words, "special responsibility" to transform Nehru's attitude. It is true that Nehru was late off the mark in reacting to events in Hungary.

The aggression in Egypt was clear and he expressed his feelings immediately and forcibly; Soviet action in Hungary was certainly deplorable but full information was not available and it would be unwise to depend solely on western press agencies. So Nehru asked his representatives in Moscow and Eastern Europe to ascertain and report.

At this point Escott Reid stepped in. The book is dedicated to N.R. Pillai, the gentle and high-minded Secretary-General of the Ministry of External Affairs during these years. Reid describe Pillai as a staunch patriot, but depicts him as guilty of little short of treachery. He calls Pillai to his house late in the night and Pillai comes, asks Reid not to let the Prime Minister know of this visit, advises Reid regularly on how to deal with Nehru and shows Reid top secret material because Nehru is said to have given oral instructions to "show Canada everything". All those who knew Pillai and worked with him in those years will reject these suggestions of dissimulation and disloyalty. Reid's account has clearly to be taken with large doses of salt.

Reid pressed Nehru directly as well as through the senior officials of the Ministry of External Affairs to express his views on Hungary more categorically. Reid does not realize that his own hands were weakened by Canada's refusal to condemn publicly the aggression of Britain and France in Egypt; and Nehru's statements on Hungary were determined by his own reading of the situation and not by Reid's persistent importunities. On 5 November Nehru criticized both the western powers and the Soviet Union but thereafter the situation was complicated by the reference of the Hungarian issue to the United Nations. As the resolution on Suez did not condemn Britain and France for aggression, it is understandable that India refused to vote for a condemnation of the Soviet Union; and as Canada had abstained even on the mildly worded resolution on Suez, she could hardly criticize India for her attitude on the Hungarian resolution. The second resolution on Hungary, of which Pakistan was one of the sponsors, advocated elections under the auspices of the United Nations; and again the opposition of India is not surprising, for Kashmir and not Hungary was what Pakistan was thinking about.

While the Governments of the United States and Canada did not mind the attitude of Nehru, Reid criticizes him for not helping to organize world opinion against Soviet actions in Hungary and for not strengthening the more liberal group in the Kremlin. This may be to exaggerate Indian influence. The determinants of Soviet action were Anglo-French aggression in Suez and the knowledge that the United States, for all its loud rhetoric about the liberation of Eastern Europe, would not intervene in Hungary. The reference of the Hungarian issue to the United Nations was an acknowledgement of this reluctance. The Eisenhower administration had no intention of risking war with the Soviet Union over Hungary and therefore promoted a charade in the Security Council. If Reid wishes to censure anybody, he should turn his attention to Washington.

Years ago Danny Kaye starred in a film based on a short story by James Thurber, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, where an ordinary man has fantasies of being a conquering hero in a number of different situations. One is sorry to say this, but this book of Escott Reid puts him in the Walter Mitty category.

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The Two Lalls

AKSAICHIN AND SINO-INDIAN CONFLICT

By John Lall

Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1989, pp. 337, Rs. 150.00

John Lall has written two books and had them bound together in one volume. Of the six long chapters the last one of about sixty pages stands by itself. It is a clear account of relations between free India and People's China from the start till the large-scale aggression of China in 1962, written by one who, first as dewan of Sikkim and then as a senior official in the defence ministry, had an insider's view. With a trained, sensitive and well-equipped mind, Lall writes with feeling of the errors committed at various levels on the Indian side during these years, making certain the slide to national humiliation. He tells us that Panikkar's 'mistake' in speaking of Chinese sovereignty rather than suzerainty of Tibet was deliberate. He draws attention to India's supply of rice to Chinese troops in Tibet in 1951 without even trying to secure anything in return. In Lall's story Panikkar is the villain in the early years, and his place is taken later by Krishna Menon. Lall adds from his first-hand knowledge to the already long catalogue of testimony to Menon's mismanagement of the country's defences.

Lall is also critical of Nehru's handling of policy and thinks poorly, for example, of the consistent advocacy of China's place in the United Nations. Not all will agree with Lall on his many assertions. He thus quotes Zhou's interpreter at the talks in Delhi in 1960 as saying, many years later, that Zhou had come to Delhi ready and anxious to reach an agreement but Nehru's mind was made up. Lall seems to believe this; but there is no truth in it. Yet it is good to have Lall's fresh narrative. Nor should it be thought that he gives undue emphasis to personalities. While recounting

what seem to him lapses in high places parallel with the steady deterioration in relations between the two countries, Lall recognizes that much more was involved than disputed areas, competition between the two Asian giants and a personality clash between Nehru and Zhou. Both rebellion in Tibet and problems with the Soviet Union sharpened China's hostility to India and persuaded her to go to war.

So the last chapter in this book is worth having; but the first chapters, which are a wholly different effort, are a disappointment. Basing himself heavily on the records in the India Office Library in London, Lall provides a detailed survey of British policy in the northern boundary areas in the 19th and 20th centuries. This is virtually a rehash of the writings of British Sinophiles and the author here is not Lall the committed and knowledgeable Indian official, but Lall of the earlier avatar, of the Indian Civil Service. He fails, as most British writers do, to see both that India has a history that goes far back, way beyond the raj, and that the British, fearing Tsarist Russia more than a weak China, were willing to make compromise arrangements with Beijing. To cite the records of the raj, therefore, as precedents for possible "mutual accommodation" between present-day India and China is like referring in a baseball game to decisions of umpires in a cricket match.

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Nehru as Father

FREEDOM'S DAUGHTER: LETTERS BETWEEN INDIRA GANDHI AND JAWAHARLAL NEHRU—1922-1939

Edited by Sonia Gandhi

Arnold Publishers, Delhi, 1989, pp. 483, Rs. 450.00

This is a deeply absorbing book, but not perhaps as intended. The correspondence is between two persons both of whom evoke much interest in this country. Attention is sought to be focused on Indira Gandhi, to show the influences which moulded her in her youth and how by the age of 22 she is said to have come into her own. But there is nothing in these letters to hint even faintly at the splitter of Pakistan and the imposer of the Emergency. Indira Gandhi emerges as a lonely girl heavily dependent on her parents, an average student who took little advantage of an education which provided her with the best of all possible worlds, an in-drawn person reticent about her emotions. There is no inkling in her letters of the known tension between her and her father in 1938-39. The only letter written by her in this collection which is of any real significance is that of 29 August 1934 which, for once, pulls aside the curtain of effusive Anglo-Saxon endearments and throws open the window on Kamala Nehru's unhappiness in Anand Bhawan during Nehru's frequent absences.

"Do you know anything about what happens at home when you are absent? Do you know that when Mummie was in a very bad condition the house was full of people, but not one of them even went to see her or sit a while with her, that when she was in agony there was no one to help her?... with your release everything was changed—people flocked from all directions, came to ask about her; sat with her. ...As soon as Mummie is strong enough she should be removed to any place outside Allahabad and she is sure to improve rapidly."

These words cast a flood of light on the Nehru menage and Indira's attitude to her close relatives. The letter as a whole stands out if only because it is the sole one of its kind.

On the other hand, Nehru's letters, most of them published for the first time because they were located too late for inclusion in the appropriate volumes of the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, add a great deal to our understanding of the mind and character of an already much-studied personality. Nehru regarded letter-writing as a genre in itself and devoted much care and time to it.

"What indeed are letters? Not surely just budgets of news, although they contain news. Not a record of illness and birth and marriage and death and hundred domestic happenings such as are most of the letters that people write. They are something far more; they are, or ought to be, bits of the personality of the writer, quivering shadows of the real self.

They are also, or they at least endeavour to represent and to mirror, something of the personality of the person written to, for the writer is full of the person writing to."

Over his letters to his growing daughter, especially after she lost her mother, Nehru took trouble and appears to have enjoyed writing them, as it gave him relief from other care and work. With simplicity and sincerity, he wrote of himself, his problems and his moods, of what he wished for Indira and how he would like her to shape her life but without imposing himself on her in any way. In difficult circumstances, he proved a sensitive father, trying to bring up his only child as neither spoilt nor neglected. The fact that he was perforce away in prison for long periods did not in itself worry him and he hoped that it would help her to be more self-reliant. That the pressures of home life were telling on her in his absence he knew and he gently advised her not to get hot and bothered over minor matters or to create conflict or imagine it where there was none. "To mope and nurse a grievance secretly is a sign of weakness and folly. It is most undignified. Discuss the matter, have it out, try to understand the other party's viewpoint and tell him or her your own."

Even when Indira was hardly fifteen, Nehru asked her to start thinking as to what she would like to do when she grew up. One could not merely loll through life; if one wanted to do anything it was worth doing it well and for this training was required. Indira had during these adolescent years no clear ideas on this subject; at one time she spoke of wishing to be a teacher, but there was no serious intention. So Nehru thought in terms of an education fitted to no specific purpose but planned for a future full of life and intelligence and activity so that she could distinguish herself in whichever sphere she functioned. Nehru was always careful not to thrust his own ideals on her and insisted that she should decide for herself on what would be her life-philosophy. While she had the advantage of a good hereditary background, the foreground had to be her own creation. But he did advise her that it was not good enough just to earn money, although some money had to be earned; it was far more important to do something that was worthwhile and did good to society. For this the right education was not examinations and the like but an all-round development of the human being, a harmonizing of internal conflicts and a capacity to cooperate with others, the strength to be true to what one considers to be right and the absence of fear.

In the two books of mostly impersonal letters published even at the time Nehru concentrated on the history of man, as he wanted his daughter to have the right perspective of the past and also because this topic was at that time of primary interest to him. But in the letters in this book Nehru draws Indira's attention to many other topics for he was keen that she should develop into a cultured and interesting person, with some knowledge of the world and its problems and the capacity to fit in with any environment. She should be able to catch the attention of worthwhile people on an equal footing. For all this she should, whatever her particular bent, have some training in science, not only to understand the world she lived in but to secure a scientific outlook and apply the methods of reason and experiment in all her work. He urged her to learn a few languages without dabbling in too many of them. He sent her first to Pune and then to Shantiniketan so that she could get to know the people in various parts of India and thought of sending her thereafter to some universities in Europe, to Oxford, and even for a while to the Soviet Union.

Even so, Nehru did not forget that education was more than intellectual training and reminded Indira that holidays were not meant for hard mental work and physical life was not to be ignored. Nehru's concern with health becomes more pronounced as Indira became increasingly prone to illness. He believed, on the basis of his own experience, that one could be aggressively fit by following some basic rules—exercise, good sleep, simple food, thereafter one should forget the body. Not to be physically fit was to him a major sin. It was rather silly to fall ill, but it was more likely if one thought too much about it. Illness only came as a rule when invited to do so. Regular mental occupation and companionship, healthy habits and surroundings were more important than doctors and tonics. With a normal, regular life and a proper state of mind, good health would come unasked.

Nehru also set out to encourage in his daughter the reading habit. Apart from his own educative letters, he chose books for her. Shaw's *St. Joan*, for example, was sent to her when she was just over fifteen. Worried that she was inclined to read too fast, he suggested that she follow his own practice of summarizing worthwhile books in a notebook and writing whatever might strike or please her. "There is a strange magic about good literature which is wonderfully refreshing and soothing. This magic comes to us solely as we make friends with good books, and when we have begun to feel it, we have found the key to the wonder land of books. They never fail us, these friends that neither age nor change. They have been dear companions to me, especially in prison, and I have got more pleasure from books than from almost anything. There is only one other thing which is, in its own way, more magical, more wonderful, and that is music. I have always regretted my ignorance of it. How much I have missed because of this! Literature, art, music, science—all make our life rich and deep and varied. They make us live."

Even when he had no time to read them, he liked to have books around him, for the mere sight of them gave him pleasure, standing there row after row, with the wisdom of ages locked up in them, serene and untroubled in a changing and distracted world, looking down silently on the mortals that come and go. In pure literature he normally avoided books less than fifty years old, but in other subjects he read whatever was necessary to understand the world. For the purpose of reading was to understand life with its thousand facets and to learn how to live life. Books lift us out of our narrow ruts, bring fresh vistas into view, extend our vision and bring a sense of proportion. He was particularly keen that his daughter should read widely, for he had high hopes for her; and those who cherish the thought of rising above the common head of unthinking humanity and playing a brave part in life's journey needed the vision and sense of proportion which would keep them on the right path and steady them when storms and heavy winds bore down on them.

To all this advice Nehru expected some response. He urged Indira to write to him from time to time as to what she was thinking. He wanted her to talk to him through her letters as he was doing to her. They should be friends and not just a father and dearly loved daughter. "Of course you should write to me whenever you are troubled about anything. What am I for?" But gradually he was driven to accept that there was little communication between them even when they were together. "For over five months" he wrote to her in September 1937, "we were together—a long enough time—and no doubt we influenced each other as we were bound to do. And yet, is it not curious that during all these months we hardly had a proper conversation, apart from our brief talks about our day-to-day activities. I felt the gulf between two generations and I could not bridge it. No doubt you must have felt this way also." Clearly this precipitated the melancholy and weariness which peep out of the letters written between 1937 and 1939. "One part of me pushes out, the other tries to hide itself from the world. A Jekyll and Hyde existence". Public life does not excite him while the idea of sanyasa appeals. He felt that he had lost the vivid desire to live and the keen incentive that drove him to action. "Probably I am not a big enough man for the job that fate has thrust on me."

Despite the one-sidedness of these letters which Nehru found so depressing, and although, unlike the *Letters from a Father to His Daughter* and those collected in *Glimpses of World History*, the letters in this volume have an informal intimacy which suggest that they were not intended for publication, it is good to have them. They contain little about politics probably because Nehru knew that they were being read by the censor. There is also curiously nothing about religion, and the omission would seem to be deliberate. Nehru was in these days a determined agnostic but his wife was not; and in the circumstances he let his daughter decide for herself with not a word from him. But otherwise his letters range widely, with many splashes of brilliance, such as the account of his response at his first sight of the Trimurti at Elephanta. These letters of Nehru are of incomparable richness.

An Irrepressible Optimist

GANDHI: PRISONER OF HOPE

By Judith M. Brown

Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 441, Rs. 275.00

As the world staggers into the last decade of the twentieth century, it becomes increasingly clear that Gandhi was the greatest personality of these hundred years. He took an interest in almost every aspect of human activity and all his efforts were for the good of humanity. During the freedom movement, he puzzled and exasperated many of his British adversaries. It was not only Winston Churchill who denounced him; Linlithgow, the heavy-handed Viceroy of the war years, described him as "the world's most successful humbug", an opinion shared by Willingdon before and Wavell after. To the military mind of Chetwode, Commander-in-Chief in the early thirties, baffled by Gandhi's nonviolent methods of warfare, he was "as cunning as a cartload of monkeys". But even at that time to those outside the fray between India and Britain the message of Gandhi to all men and women everywhere could not be hidden. Contemporaneous with the vituperation of British proconsuls came the ultimate accolade of jazz; and Cole Porter immortalized him in one of his best known lyrics:

*You are the top; you are Mahatma Gandhi,
You are the top; you are Napoleon brandy.*

Nor has the glaring light of hindsight since his death in 1948 harmed Gandhi's reputation; indeed with the passage of time his fame has increased and his name has become a household word in every part of the world. The white American singer, Joan Baez, in her autobiography published in 1966, reports a dialogue between her husband and their daughter aged eleven:

"Did Gandhi have a penis?" she asked.

"Yes", he answered.

"Did he have a vagina too?"

"No," said Ira. "He was a man, and men just have a penis."

"Well", she said, pausing in the doorway, "it's just that he was so nice... I thought he might have had both".

In the United States, Gandhi inspired the blacks in their struggle for civil rights, and in the Soviet Union today Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the champion of Georgian independence, who has spent the past thirty years in and out of gaol, advocates day-to-day rebellion in terms of civil disobedience. His elaboration of his approach echoes the voice of Gandhi: "I don't see the point of fighting Gorbachev on Gorbachev's terms. I don't see why we should respect his constitution or his laws. They are the laws of empire and empire is dead". Clearly, outside India at least, Gandhi is still very much of a live influence, and all for the good. As George Orwell observed soon after Gandhi died, which other world leader of this century has left such a clean smell?

It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that Gandhi is now an industry. Hundreds of popular writers, biographers, scholars, and graduate students have written about him. Research, shallow or in depth, of some aspect, major or minor, of Gandhi's life and work goes on incessantly in institutions round the globe. A man of wide interests and multiple achievements, of extraordinary energy and contradictory opinions, he provided, with his dislike of privacy, more material in his 79 years for scrutiny than any other person of his time. The fertile ground of his life has been gone over, ploughed, mined, dug up and assessed in detail and yet there seems no end to what can be discovered, retold and recast. If the Gandhi factories are ever closed down, it will certainly not be in our time.

A biography of Gandhi in a single volume, if it is to be more than a chronological account, would seem then to be a superhuman task, beyond the powers of a syndicate of historians, let alone a single individual. To have read everything written and spoken by Gandhi or about him, to have taken into account all research and analyses concerning him and his variegated efforts and then to provide a comprehensive and rounded interpretation by modern standards of biographical writing—even to state the re-

quirements boggles the mind. Judith Brown handles the problem by making her own way through the thickets. A professional historian who is aware of all the writings about Gandhi and herself the author of two earlier studies which examined in detail Gandhi's success in building up a political following in India, she sticks to Gandhi's writings, large enough in themselves, and her own knowledge, supplemented by consultation of the relevant official records and private paper collections. The book has no bibliography; the suggestions for further reading are very general; the notes provide a little more information but by no means give an idea of the vast literature centred round Gandhi. This is a blinkered book, but the approach enables the author to keep the task manageable and pushes us much further in our understanding of the subject.

For this method ensures the strength of the book, which is an analysis, on parallel lines, of the emergence and achievement of Gandhi as a public figure and the evolution of his inner life, which in Gandhi's case is so integral a part of his personality. The well-known facts of the early years are stated just enough to establish the growth in self-knowledge and identity and the pages on South Africa delineate the beginnings of commitment to public service, with the corollary of steady distancing from family life as normally understood. Brown stresses how the experience in South Africa contributed to the making of both the public and the inner life of Gandhi in ways which were to reach their full flowering in India. He organized the Indian community to resist unfair laws, worked to unify it and launched a programme for raising its social consciousness. He developed what we would today call a keen sense of public relations, started journals for giving steady expression to his views, and appealed to as wide a public as possible across the world. He cultivated what he later termed the 'art of begging' and gained a reputation as an honest trustee of public funds. Above all, of course, he perfected the technique of satyagraha; nonviolent resistance to injustice combined with a willingness to compromise provided basic principles were not damaged.

Alongside was the progress of the pilgrim spirit. Working within the Hindu tradition but open to outside influences, Gandhi came to the position that true religion, as against specific doctrines, was all-encompassing. The truth-seeker must strive for self-purification and find his God in compassion for fellow human beings. This necessarily presumed nonviolence for this alone could safeguard the integrity of all involved. Brown rightly puts in this context *Hind Swaraj*, written in 1909. Noting the inadequacy of materialism and of modern civilization which was its product, Gandhi concluded that the ancient civilization of India was the best the world had even seen. This was not xenophobia, a way of bolstering India's wounded self-esteem. Gandhi deplored that Indians also had lost their way and would have to recover these values and transform themselves before they could attain swaraj. Nor were these values solely spiritual; Gandhi laid emphasis on swadeshi, the right type of education, and the importance of good health and a proper diet.

On his return to the wider context of India, the three strands of Gandhi's life continue: the growing involvement in public affairs, the incessant effort to change Indian men and women and the interest in his own self and conduct. Brown keeps hold of all three and follows how they weave together. Champaran and Kaira had this in common, that the encounter with the raj was at the level of legitimacy, raising the whole issue of government by consent; and this was to be the base of all later dealings of Gandhi with the British. He mobilized the peasantry by teaching them to cast off fear and to exercise their rights as citizens and from 1920, when Gandhi concluded that British rule in India was Satanic, noncooperation became a civic duty. Most Indian readers will be familiar with the details of Gandhi's political leadership which Brown narrates with summary clarity, and will be more engrossed in the battle within on which depended the battle without. Spinning as a way of reaching out to the poorest Indians and work for Hindu-Muslim unity and the removal of untouchability were the means of generating the strength to acquire swaraj. But all these were also part of his effort to see God face to face; and now Gandhi was asserting not that God was Truth but that Truth was God, and such Truth was best found in the service of humanity.

That Brown does not fall victim to the obvious peril of losing sight of Gandhi's personal evolution in the crowded complex of events is demon-

strated by the fact that she deals with the clash with Subhas Bose in about six lines, but devotes much attention to the individual civil disobedience of 1940, to which most students of political history attach little importance. For this was a carefully circumscribed campaign with limited objectives and planned and controlled by Gandhi from start to finish. Even if of little significance in the national movement—the *Statesman* of Calcutta reported it daily under the caption 'Cranks Corner'—it was a test-tube experiment in Gandhism and therefore earns careful analysis in a biography. But with the failure of the Cripps Mission and the Japanese advance Gandhi had to take more urgent decisions. The Quit India resolution was the decision of a leader with unflinching faith in nonviolence accepting the risk of violence in order to end the calamity of slavery. The remainder of Gandhi's life has been gone over repeatedly by many and the tracks are well-worn.

Judith Brown is a charitable writer and deflates criticism even when it is unavoidable. Of the inequities of imperialism she is well aware, but of the deliberate efforts, for instance, by the British to foster and take advantage of differences between Hindus and Muslims all that she says are two passing references to the British tendency to see Indian groups in terms of community and to their understanding of Indian society as a plural one of different peoples who needed special outlets in political life. On Gandhi too, while she steers clear of uncritical adulation, she does not consider seriously the various criticisms made of his leadership. Of the suggestion that Gandhi's style and idiom and his support of the Khilafat movement on the basis of Hindu-Muslim partnership rather than an overall Indian identity strengthened communal tendencies, she mentions the view but does not rebut or analyse it. She writes of Gandhi's "moral economics" and states that the industrialists saw in it the promise of harmony and productivity rather than conflict. Surely it should be added that they also saw in it a way of strengthening their own position against that of the workers. It is true that Gandhi was far more concerned with changing people rather than reforming the economic order; but his philosophy assisted the landlords and the capitalists in maintaining their vested interests. Brown does not mention that in 1921 and again in 1931, in terms of peasant unrest in what was then the United Provinces, Gandhi, while prepared to consider at some stage suspension of payment of taxes to the Government, refused to approve non-payment of all rents to the landlords.

This was in tune with his lofty notion that no section of society should benefit at the expense of any other, but the immediate effect was to assist the rich against the poor.

What lifts this book above the ordinary level is the author's empathy with her subject. She clearly has in mind the non-Indian reader and, touching on every aspect of Gandhi's multiple activities and meshing closely the public and the personal themes, she seeks to establish that his efforts in so many directions make him a person for all times and places. The sub-title of the book is taken from a passage in the Old Testament, "turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope" and the quotation is apt, for what sustained Gandhi through all the ups and downs of a long life was his hope grounded in religious conviction. To us in India, looking round us, Gandhi's plan to construct a new Indian polity and society infused with nonviolence and godliness by transforming the nature of the human being seems very remote indeed. But Gandhi himself, however dark the horizon, was convinced of the ultimate success of truth. He was, as he often said, an irrepressible optimist; and it is that optimism that we now need most. Whether, without the sense of promise of the Nehru years and without, for many of us, Gandhi's religious faith, such optimism is possible, is the question.

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The Indo-British Love Affair

FORSTER AND FURTHER: THE TRADITION OF ANGLO-INDIAN FICTION

By Sujit Mukherjee

Orient Longman, Bombay, 1993, pp. 296, Rs. 175.00

Fiction written in English by non-Indians about India is the subject of Sujit Mukherjee's latest book. He deals in an appendix with American

novelists and there are passing references in the text to European authors; but basically he is concerned with British writers. This has engaged Mukherjee's interest for many years. He has sat in the dusty stacks of libraries in various parts of the world, has read many thousands of pages and has spent long hours brooding over his wide erudition. The final result of this long-drawn and varied effort is a balanced work, with considered judgements cleverly concealed beneath a lightness of touch and a wry sense of humour.

The British liked to regard India as more than a colony ruled and exploited by them and which contributed to their prosperity. It was, in Paul Scott's words, every English person's home, even of those who had never visited it, and was mysteriously in their blood. But British novels about India cannot be regarded as an important genre of English literature. It is spread out over two hundred years and is of massive bulk; but much of it is pulp fiction. Kipling received the Nobel Prize for Literature, created an undying character in Kim and wrote some short stories which will live; but his work is too enveloped in imperial ideology and pride of race for him to retain the primacy which he enjoyed in his lifetime. Paul Scott's sustained writings, without touching the heights, raise key questions about the penultimate years of British rule and convey the slackening of tension for the British in free India. There are other stray instances of novels of some literary quality, such as Christine Weston's *Indigo*; and one of the pleasures of reading Sujit Mukherjee is, he brings these forgotten memories back to mind. But, on the whole, Anglo-Indian fiction is an arid zone.

In fact, the sole Anglo-Indian novel which can even today stand on its literary worth alone is E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. Mukherjee is justified in incorporating Forster in his title and, though his main purpose is to cast a forward glance from that vantage point, he looks both before and after. There is also reason for this. Forster is not in the main tradition which makes the case for British rule or delineates British presence and influence in independent India—a tradition which is petering out in the sands. But there were others before him, like William Arnold and Edmund Candler, who engaged in the more rewarding search of trying to find out what went wrong with the Indo-British encounter. If the historian has the advantage of hindsight, these novelists, as Mukherjee points out, had the rarer qualities of prescience and insight. Indeed, the works of Forster, Thompson, Orwell and the others with a similar approach are of great value to the historian in recreating the intellectual climate of those years.

Forster was not concerned with the Indian national movement, which had taken off under Gandhi by the early twenties when Forster was writing his novel. Nor does he denounce in forthright terms, as Orwell was to do much later, the humbug of the white man's burden and the corruption which lying about exploitation involved. Forster was impatient with Indians, who he thought did not seem to move towards anything important except in matters of religion; and he did not claim to understand or to be influenced by India. In his letters to his friends he speaks of India's "incomparable fatuity" and describes her as an "unexplainable muddle". He is concerned not so much with Indians as with the British in India, the clash between liberalism and empire and with the British failure to build with Indians personal relations which to Forster were the most important aspects of life. For this he blames the British lack of imagination and their undeveloped hearts. They might act correctly and be competent administrators, but their stiffness and insensitivity rendered their results barren. Love and Truth were constantly at war. British officials in India, says Forster in a magnificent sentence in *The Hill of Devi*, were impeccably right and absolutely wrong—a contrast which his friend Auden unknowingly echoed a few years later in his line, "How wrong they are in being always right".

A lesser novelist but as concerned with relations between the British and Indians and with a sharper sensitivity to Indian public opinion was Edward Thompson. His novels, stories and plays deserve reprinting by some enterprising publisher. Confronting the same problem which worried Forster, Thompson also gave up hope. "The job has got beyond us" says one of the characters in *A Farewell to India*. Gandhi heard of this title and remarked to Thompson a few years later that there was no question of a farewell, for he would always be a prisoner of India. But Thompson could not shake off a sense of personal failure and in his case a sourness

takes the place of the puzzlement which was Forster's. Nehru could not understand this dejection, for to him Thompson was a real peace-maker between nations and peoples. He wrote to Thompson in the summer of 1946, when Thompson was on his death-bed, that he had been one of the very few persons who had made India understood by a number of English people and England understood by many Indians. This was no hollow platitude. Thompson belied in his life what he wrote in his novels. It would seem that he recognized that Nehru was expressing no empty sentiments, for his son, the well-known historian, E.P. Thompson, has told us that after reading Nehru's letter his father let it drop with the words, "Oh Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace".

Mukherjee imposes order on his voluminous subject by disentangling the various strands which surface in Anglo-Indian novels. British rule was supported, from the time the Crown took over the administration in 1958, by the prop of the Princes. With their wealth, love of sport and proneness to loose living, the Princes are tailor-made for the romantic novel; but surprisingly they hardly figure in such a setting at British hands. But perhaps reality leaves little room for the imagination. Vivid accounts of maharajas are to be found in J.R. Ackerley's *Hindoo Holiday*, which, as Mukherjee says is based largely on fact, and in Forster's diary with letters, *The Hill of Devi*. Forster had a poor opinion of the Princes as a whole but this does not come through because he liked his maharaja as a human being. Opposite is the comment in Paul Scott's early novel, *The Birds of Paradise*, that what gave these birds of gorgeous plumage their special power was the fact that they were dead; their deadness was more disturbing than the restlessness of a cage full of living birds.

Alongside the Princes, the British sought to line up the Muslims. Soon shaking off their suspicions after the revolt of 1857, the British encouraged the Muslims to regard themselves as a separate entity and to shy away from the growing spirit of Indian nationalism. They appear in the British novel as mutineers, hardy Pathans (the Lochinvars of the East) and loyalists. The hero of *A Passage* is a Muslim; but this was because most of Forster's friends happened to be Muslims. Probably because the British found it easier to understand Islam than the bewildering pantheism of Hinduism, one finds that most Muslim characters in novels written by the British emphasize their commitment to their religion rather than to any wider secular ideal. Even Christine Weston, who is by no means a diehard imperialist, comments on her Hindu and Muslim characters that, much as they learned to understand each other psychologically, they remained unreconciled and, like cloth which has been deeply dyed, their separate traditions clung to them. So it is no surprise that we find hardly any depiction—with one exception—of a nationalist who happens to be a Muslim. But that exception goes far to redress the balance. The stance of Mohammed Kasim in Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet*, and his dealings with his two sons, bring into focus all the problems of a sensitive Indian of Islamic faith on the eve of Partition.

Little attention is also given in novels by British writers to attachments between British and Indians and to the products of such relations, the Eurasian community. That the Indian woman was always at hand, especially to British soldiers and planters, that the British woman was sexually threatened, and that for her to be voluntarily attracted to the Indian male was demeaning not only for her but for the British rulers as a whole—these were stereotypes of colonial thinking which lasted well into the 20th century. The British soldier's contempt for Indian prostitutes is stated explicitly in *Five Finger Exercise*, the novel of Brian Aldiss written during the Second World War. But the other two stereotypes have become blurred. There has emerged a new category of the Indian spiritual perceptor who does not close the door on physicality, while Paul Scott deals with both rape and mutual attraction. Parvati Manners is the better type of Eurasian who will have no difficulty in feeling at home in India. But in *The Alien Sky*, Scott portrays also the more usual Eurasian who faces the predicament of belonging neither here nor there. Better known (thanks to the film) is a similar character in *Bhowani Junction* by John Masters; and worthy of mention in this connection, if only because of the literary skill of the author, is Francis King's *An Act of Darkness*, where a Eurasian governess gets entangled in the passions of an English family and finally migrates, as many Eurasians in reality did, to Australia.

Given the Englishman's love of cricket and the hold the game has taken in India, it is odd that these are not more widely reflected in Anglo-Indian fiction. I know of only one such novel, Marcusee's *Slow Turn*, published recently by Michael Joseph. It deals with a test match at Chepauk in Madras and the murky politics of international cricket. But Mukherjee, though himself an accomplished cricketer, does not mention this book or draw our attention to any other. The only aspect of sport in British fiction about India which interests him is tiger-shooting, perhaps because he sees in it deeper meanings. He believes that the lure of the jungle was part of the British search for privacy; the experience of India was at times so overwhelming that the Englishman tried to get away from it all and be by himself. Mukherjee also suggests that the tiger represented some enduring spirit of India which the British felt they had failed to subjugate; no matter how thoroughly they had conquered the country and imposed their authority and administration, some basic fear of India continued to haunt them and, to exercise their fear, the tiger had to be shot again and again. However this be, the result was that, by the time British left India, the tiger had been nearly exterminated. But tiger-shooting has certainly added to the volume of British fiction-writing, particularly if, as Mukherjee thinks possible, much of Jim Corbett's hair-raising accounts is drawn more from the imagination than from memory. However, tales about shooting tigers are not the monopoly of British authors. One of the best of them is written by an Indian. David Davidar's *Mist* is a splendid product of the Indo-British encounter.

What of the future? The unique love affair between the two countries is over. The British no longer think of India as their home, even though there will always be some persons of British origin staying on or, as Paul Scott would prefer to have it, hanging on in this country, with no imperial overtones clouding their vision or limiting personal relations. The world of Forster and Thompson has gone, and Mukherjee has provided it with a noble epitaph: India will doubtless continue to figure in the British novel, but in no way different from any other part of the world. Anglo-Indian fiction will belong, at its best, to the historical novel, such as Myers' *The Near and the Far*—and to Inspector Ghote.

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The Spell of Cricket

AN INDIAN CRICKET OMNIBUS

Edited by R. Guha and T.G. Vaidyanathan

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, Rs. 195.00

This is, as far as I know, the first anthology of cricket in India. It is too short for an omnibus and is really a miscellany; accounts by writers, Indian and English, of twenty distinguished Indian cricketers and descriptions of some outstanding matches played by India, rounded off with some varied pieces on such themes as Bombay club cricket, the Indian crowd and cricketing terms in Indian languages. There are even an extract from a novel of R.K. Narayan and a short story. The assortment, as a whole, makes good reading.

The editors of this book had in mind three objectives. They looked for well-written and evocative essays which might help to turn Indian cricketers into legendary figures and "humanize them in literary terms"; they sought to pay tribute to the greatest of Indian cricketers; and they tried to track down choice items hidden away in old journals and newspapers. The result succeeds, better than any video, in providing a panorama of Indian cricket history to the eve of our own times and will bring back to life some memory or other to almost every reader.

The book appropriately starts with Ranji, the first of the illustrious and, if even a part of what we are told is true, perhaps the greatest of all Indian cricketers. The Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, who, in the heyday of the raj in the Victorian years, fawned on Viceroys and on Englishmen generally, is well forgotten; but history remembers the cricketer of genius, the inventor of the leg glance, the batsman who scored in one day two centuries against Yorkshire, the fielder of quicksilver brilliance. There is no one alive today who has seen him play; but Neville Cardus, no lavish dispenser

of superlatives, has written that Ranji brought a light with him that never before was seen in cricket and never will be seen again. Ranji's nephew, Duleep, was more of this world and trained himself to be an accomplished batsman. He did not dazzle the crowds with his instinctive wizardry. But we of the older generation do not need to grieve too much at our misfortune in not having seen Ranji. For, as Cardus hints, there was a shade of Ranji in Mushtaq Ali. He too was a primitive genius. Those of us who have seen Mushtaq bat can comprehend what Cardus had in mind when he wrote of Mushtaq's shooting stars of strokes. A short innings of 39 runs at Chepauk shines in the memory of all those who were privileged to watch it long after the double hundreds of others in more recent times have paled. One of the glories of Indian cricket is the partnership of Merchant and Mushtaq in the second innings of the Test at Old Trafford in 1946, vividly recounted here by Ray Robinson.

Merchant himself, though he was the anchor of this combination and indeed for long of the Indian team, has tended to be forgotten. That is the unfair fate of solidity. The scoreboard, said Cardus, is an ass; so too, in many ways, is history. But John Arlott makes some amends. Merchant's eye, wrist and footwork were better than those of many others more spectacular at the crease. Like all superior batsmen, Merchant played the ball late. He did not take chances with his readings of the bowler's action and decided on his stroke after the ball had pitched. A characteristic incident was in a match in England, also on the tour of 1946. Being ill and knowing that the match was petering out into a draw, Merchant went in to bat on the third day and intended to be out quickly. But such was his ingrained skill that he found himself unable to sacrifice his wicket despite all his efforts.

The captain of Merchant and Mushtaq Ali on this tour was the senior Nawab of Pataudi. A.A. Thomson speaks of him as being only a rung lower than Duleep, who himself stood lower than Ranji. But the senior Pataudi was no more than a well-trained batsman. His century for England against Australia in 1933 was one of the slowest on record. In fact, his son, to whom only incidental references are made in this book, is more gifted. I recall the Oxford coach, who had watched over both father and son, remarking in the late sixties that while the senior Nawab was assiduous in placing bat to ball, his son had an inborn flair for batting. But the father deserves recognition if, as is believed, he ruined his English Test career after scoring his century by defying his captain and refusing to be a party to bodyline bowling.

Merchant and after him Hazare got runs when they were most needed by India and held the side together; but they could never capture the imagination of the crowds. That was left in the thirties to the more glamorous figures, apart from Mushtaq, of Nayudu and Amarnath. Ranji once remarked that no one is so soon forgotten as a successful cricketer. This year we are celebrating the centenary of Nayudu; but he is now no more than a distant memory to a few. Nayudu who? The description in this book of Nayudu's hurricane performance at Bombay against Gilligan's team in 1926 suggests that he was only a great hitter. But surely Nayudu was more than that. His late cuts off fast bowlers bore testimony to a wonderful eye and superb grace; his cover drives demonstrated the power of his wrists; he moved on the field like a panther; and he was the first of India's noteworthy captains. Amarnath is more fortunate in this collection. A short analysis written after his retirement brings him to life and touches on all his varied contributions to the game in India.

And so the roll call goes on. Sujit Mukherjee, as knowledgeable about cricket as about literature, does justice to Vinoo Mankad, one of India's great all-rounders, whom Cardus has described as having honoured the art and nature of cricket in all that he did. Mukherjee is precise about the details of Mankad's craftsmanship with bat and ball. Then follow chapters on other stalwarts, the stout-hearted batsmen 'with the welfare state of mind', the bowlers Phadkar and Gupte, and the spin Quartet. The essay on Gavaskar does not tell us much of his batting skills, and it is difficult from this book to compare him with the other master Visvanath, of whom there is a glowing account.

The book, as it is, is a joy, with the second, lighter half establishing how widely cast is the spell of cricket in our country. But it leaves us wanting more. What of the pioneering bowlers, Nissar and Amar Singh? What of

the great players of our own times, Kapil Dev, Azaruddin and Tendulkar? One awaits a thicker, revised edition.

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An Encyclopaedic Work

LEGACY OF A DIVIDED NATION: INDIA'S MUSLIMS SINCE INDEPENDENCE

By Mushirul Hasan

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp. 329, Rs. 495.00

Professor Mushirul Hasan has lately been so much in the newspapers as a political activist that it is likely that one tends to overlook that he is also an excellent, thorough and exhaustive historian. This encyclopaedic work on India's Muslims since 1947, replete with statistics, covers sources in English and Urdu and takes in archives in India, Pakistan, Britain and the United States. It is a story worth telling, for it is that of the Muslims who, after Partition, preferred to stay in India. These were Muslims who, for ideological reasons, wished to remain in a multi-religious, secular India; but there were also those who had struggled for Pakistan and now unable for various reasons, domestic and geographical, to leave India, some of whom were suspected of being a fifth column within the country.

The Indian Muslims formed a large minority. There were many more of them in India than there were in Pakistan and were second in number only to those in Indonesia. In the early years they were down and out and Nehru, with his secular instincts, was concerned about their welfare. For the time being he relied on the resolution on fundamental rights adopted by the Congress in March 1931, asserting that every citizen of India should enjoy freedom of conscience, and the right to freely profess and practise any religion subject to public order and morality, that all citizens were equal before the law, that no disability attached to them in regard to public employment and in the exercise of any trade or calling and that the state should be neutral in regard to all religions. This is the essence of secularism; but the commitment of the Congress to it did not eliminate communalism, which in fact grew stronger in the penultimate years of the Raj, while Nehru himself, from being a proclaimed atheist, became sensitive to the higher values of religion. His long years and wide reading in Ahmednagar jail made him more sympathetic to the monism of the Advaita Vedanta.

Coming out of prison in June 1945, Nehru and Patel recognized during the next two years that communal feeling had become so inflamed in India that Partition of the country was inevitable. They accepted the creation of Pakistan as a political necessity and not as recognition of the validity of the two-nation theory on the basis of religion. Secularism had become a matter of faith. "We are building", said Nehru in a broadcast in October 1948, "a free secular state, where every religion and belief has full freedom and equal honour, where every citizen has equal liberty and equal opportunity". With a large minority of Muslims, the categories of secularism as defined in the Karachi resolution of 1931 formed the only possible basis of a democratic, multi-religious society. As Mushirul Hasan shows in detail, however, this assumes a certain mind-set on the part of both Hindus and Muslims. It was difficult to find this among the general public, especially in northern India, which was seared by the division caused by Partition. The mass migration and the communal conflicts that came in its wake could not be easily forgotten by a people who were influenced by religion too deeply in their lives to be able to adopt a secular attitude. Senior Congressmen, including cabinet ministers, chief ministers, and even for a time the Deputy Prime Minister, were swayed by Right reaction. The *Tablighi Jamaat*, the *Jamaat-I-Islam Hind* and *Jamiyat-al-Islam-e-Hind*, to all three of which Professor Hasan devotes some attention, have not won much support. Nor have the 'secular modernists', to quote Professor Hasan's phrase, on whom he looks to the future. Given the all-encompassing religion of Islam, and the attachment of the Muslims to their civil personal laws, can it be expected that the 'secular modernists' will soon gain a majority in their own community?

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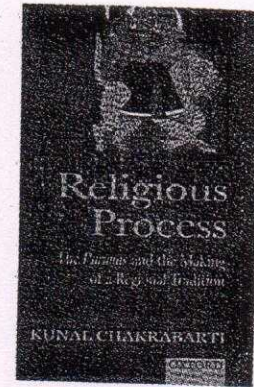
In Search of Inclusivist Options

Julius J. Lipner

RELIGIOUS PROCESS: THE PURĀNAS AND THE MAKING OF A REGIONAL TRADITION

By Kunal Chakrabarti

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2001, pp. 368, Rs. 645.00



It is a commonplace that that complex totality of symbols and signifiers we are pleased to call "Hinduism" has shown, notwithstanding definitional elusiveness, great tenaciousness through the vicissitudes of history, among the religious traditions of the world. Scholars and other careful observers, both Hindus and non-Hindus, have laboured hard to pin this phenomenon down. One standard attempt has been to essentialize, not least for ideological ends. Thus, as part of the colonial project for instance, Hinduism has been explained axially in terms of caste, or the "great tradition" superimposing itself on the little (or a host of little traditions), or some other construct, e.g. the "chaotic imagination" in contrast to a world-ordering rationality characteristic of western civilization (Hegel). Others have attempted to reify by reference to some "core experience". Both Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan, for example, sought to define Hinduism in terms of Advaita or the experience of non-duality: all other forms of Hinduism were hierarchized, starting with the most pluralistic at the bottom and ascending towards the Advaitic summit, the non-dual "essence" of each higher form manifesting more and more clearly as one progressed upwards. But all such attempts fail because they seek to reify what by common consent (here even the essentializers often unwittingly agree) is a dense nexus of relationships in continual flux. In other words, Hinduism, at least for most of its history, is not monoaxial, monolithic, homogenizable.

In the last couple of generations a new methodology in the disciplines studying Hinduism at macro and micro levels has been at work. This has been a *methodology of process* according to which what I have called "the index of polarities", viz. the oppositions between "great" and "little" traditions, orthodox and heterodox, elite and popular and so on, which in the past and in different cultural contexts have proved so durable, are sought increasingly to be collapsed or superseded. The conviction is growing that this procedure is more or less adequate for the task, simply because it seems to give us a more effective understanding of the way Hinduism works at various levels.

Chakrabarti's book is a fine example of the implementation of this method. It is an elegantly written, informative, sophisticated, and (to this reviewer at least) convincing historical study of the way the region we may call greater Bengal (so-called West Bengal and

its environs today) developed a distinctive identity in terms of the interaction between local and Brahminical paradigms. But this description hardly does justice to Chakrabarti's wideranging expertise. He writes not only as a historian, but also as a scholar who draws upon textual (Sanskritic), sociological, anthropological, and epigraphic material to shape an impressively coherent and insightful argument.

Chakrabarti's thesis is that from post-Gupta times, that is, from about 6th century onwards, greater Bengal, which had till then been more or less outside the pale of Vedic influence, underwent a particular process of "Brahminisation", viz. assimilation under Brahminic hegemony. What is interesting and instructive is Chakrabarti's description of this process.

Particular agencies came into play. First of all, there was a gradual dispersal of Brahmins, themselves a heterogeneous group, in the region under scrutiny. Irrespective of the religious complexion of the rulers concerned, the Brahmins received state patronage not only to settle, but also to establish their code of conduct. This was, in the main, *Varna-dharma*, in effect the practice of a caste-hierarchy with themselves at the summit, bolstered by deference to the Vedas as revealed scripture, which was complemented by various features of the Vedic world view (e.g. a reverence for Sanskrit as a symbol of authority, though the enabling apparatus here was flexible). The prime signifiers for the deployment of their assimilative technique Chakrabarti calls the Bengal *Purānas*. These were a body of texts composed in Sanskrit ranging from about 7th century to 17th century C.E. They were called *Purānas* because they mimicked the style and intent (if not always the content) of the familiar *mahāpurānas*. Indeed, as a body if not individually, the so-called Bengal *Purānas* are well-known to most scholars of Hinduism; these comprise such texts as the *Kālikāpurāna*, *Devīpurāna*, *Brahmdharmapurāna*, *Brahmavaivartapurāna* and so on.

But it was not the case, as Chakrabarti points out, that these texts came pre-prepared, ready to cast a Brahminic mantle on the non- and un-aryan activities of the Bengal region. They arose, in fact, as the *mahāpurānas* did in their own way, as a result of religio-cultural engagement with widespread practices of the people encountered. On the one hand, they had to counter if not dissolve rival claimants for influence (these were primarily Buddhist), on the other hand, they had to negotiate

with already defining, deep-set cultural biases: these were mainly the goddess cult and the performance of *vrata*, viz. the observance of vows for specific purposes.

In pursuit of their hegemonic goal, the Bengal Brahmins implemented a policy not of violent extirpation, but of insinuation. On the negative side, so to speak, they had to see off Buddhism, which had become well-established by the sixth century in the area. This they did by a combination of threats (the invoking of dire calamities in this life and a hellish state in the next for consorting with the (Buddhist) *pāśaṇḍa* or reprobate) and, perhaps more effectively, stealing the religious thunder of their rivals. For the Buddhism of the time was heavily Tantrified by means of local goddess cults. No doubt Tantra is the bearer of various kinds of philosophy, but, as Chakrabarti points out, in Bengal it had reduced largely to a set of bodily techniques coupled with a particular mindset. The philosophies had become too subtle to affect the majority of the population. The situation was ripe then for the Brahmins to appropriate the practice but reject the Buddhist philosophical and other veneer by legitimating their own version of goddess worship. We see this project unfold in the multilayered, negotiated compositions of the Bengal *Purānas*.

This brings us to the other side of the equation—the conditioned, viz. Brahminized, acceptance of the worship of the goddess and the performance of *vrata* or the enacted vow. As Chakrabarti notes, neither of these practices is particularly Vedic (though his scholarship rightly extends to adverting that there is some precedent for affirming a female side (devi) to the Divine in the Vedas). But in their *Purānas* the Bengal Brahmins endorsed the prevalent *devi* worship and *vrata* practice of the region by Vedicizing them, that is, by incorporating them socially into a flexible *varna* framework over which the Brahmins had control, and by injecting into them a judicious, none-too-unsettling dose of Vedic culture (e.g. endorsing the primacy of Sanskrit, uttering or reading certain Vedic texts etc.).

If one gets the impression from this way of putting things that there was an element of long-term scheming on the part of the Brahmins, that is, a

Chakrabarti's thesis is that from post-Gupta times, that is, from about 6th century onwards, greater Bengal, which had till then been more or less outside the pale of Vedic influence, underwent a particular process of "Brahminisation", viz. assimilation under Brahminic hegemony.

mins, then this does reflect aspects of Chakrabarti's style. He writes on occasion as if the Brahmins came to Bengal as an elite corps determined to implement a cunning plan. There may be more than a salute to some Marxist flag here. If so, Chakrabarti keeps his sympathies well under control and does not allow them to impair the overall professionalism of his work. He is at pains to point out that the process of Brahminization he depicts was one of contextualized negotiation so long as the basic Brahminical paradigms noted earlier were not overly compromised. Indeed, it is his argument that the Bengal *Purāṇas* were not primarily the active agents of Brahminic hegemony (after all, they endorsed the controlling mystique of Sanskrit as an inaccessible language), they were its signifiers, the reflectors

of the protracted and delicate interactions of conditioned enfoldment of the region's defining practices. Whilst this is admittedly an ambivalent process, perhaps Chakrabarti could have been more generous in acknowledging its positive features: its adaptive ingenuity, its creation of a sense of solidarity among a hitherto diverse people, its legitimation of continuing differentiation amidst a growing sense of identity. Chakrabarti gives cogent examples, which he describes in nuanced detail, of the way the goddess cult and the observance of *vrata* were Brahminized, with special reference, as one would expect, to the role of women. In this process, as the author's study shows, the index of polarities mentioned earlier was increasingly subverted.

What impresses further is the roundedness of the argument. There are careful discussions of the heuristic tools he discerningly employs, e.g. such devices as "Sanskritization", "great" and "little" tradition, "region", and so on; a wealth of primary and secondary material drawn from a range of sources; and Sanskritic and other documentation. Infelicities are relatively few: Sanskrit text is not always separated in accordance with international convention and on occasion contains a number of typographical errors or inaccuracies; and certain specialized terms and concepts (*nyāsa*, *vāmācāra*, *apsarā* etc.) are not clarified or adequately explained. But none of this

impairs the cogency of the whole.

I remarked at the beginning of this review that Hinduism has demonstrated a remarkable and, in the eyes of many, bewildering tenacity for survival throughout history. Simplistic references by way of explanation to the absorptive qualities of a "feminized sponge", as one commentator has described it, will not do. Rather, it is textured work in the deployment of the methodology of process, such as Chakrabarti's, that is more adequately beginning to clarify the hows and the whys.

As we all know, in recent history religious-political forces of a homogenizing, monoaxial nature have begun to assert themselves in creating unfamiliar paradigms of exclusivity for Hinduism. How these will act on the age-old tendencies that characterize traditional Hinduism and which Chakrabarti analyses, remains unclear. But the more discernment we can acquire from work of this calibre, the better we will be able to grasp the inclusivist options available. This is a very important study of an under-researched subject, with deceptively far-reaching implications: highly recommended. ■

Julius J. Lipner grew up in India and started teaching in the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Cambridge in 1975 where he is Reader in Hinduism and the comparative study of religion. He visits India regularly to see family and friends, and to undertake research.

Critiquing Dominant Moods in Historiography

Amiya P. Sen

IMPERIAL ENCOUNTERS : RELIGION AND MODERNITY IN INDIA AND BRITAIN

By Peter Van Der Veer

Permanent Black by arrangement with Princeton University Press, Delhi, 2001, pp.178, Rs.495.00

In recent years, there has been an extremely enlivening debate among philosophers both in India and abroad over whether or not the term 'Darshana' was the paradigmatic equivalent of 'philosophy'. Some critics, however, faulted the very comparison, calling it a specious search for cultural analogues across time and traditions or an undue anxiety to understand indigenous concepts in terms of Western categories of thought. In the work under review, Peter Van Der Veer applies very similar criticism to hitherto dominant moods in historiography. His avowed aim is to 'disturb both the complacency of national histories and that of an imperial history centred on the primacy of and priority of Western history' (p.11). The author is unsparing in his criticism of various methodological and ideological assumptions, ranging from the culturalist, essentializing discourse of Weber and Dumont to the economic determinism of Marxists like Raymond Williams who fail to engage with the cultural analysis of colonial-

ism. Certain positions within recent historical writings are also critiqued, especially when they tend to posit dichotomies between cultural production in the metropole and the colony or take the colonized to be capable of only a derivative discourse. A less explicit but relevant criticism is also directed at the 'sociological reductionism' of Partha Chatterjee and the 'psychological reductionism' of Jeffrey J. Kripal (p.71), especially in their understanding of important and enigmatic Hindu religious figures of the nineteenth century like Sri Ramakrishna.

Van Der Veer's arguments are spread over six short but finely crafted essays, combining useful information and critical insight. Readers are likely to find his analysis of intellectual debates in nineteenth century Britain particularly useful. The analysis of contemporary India, by comparison, is a trifle simplistic and treads familiar ground. Also, for a book that claims to re-evaluate the interrelationship between religion and modernity, Van Der

For the specialist reader, Van Der Veer's work may not appear very original and perhaps the author slightly overstates his case even in claiming an 'alternative' viewpoint.

Veer's work leans far too much on the side of neo-Hinduism. The defining role of religion, the problem of formulating 'reformed' identities and carving new community-boundaries are rarely, if ever, discussed in respect of Indian Islam.

In very broad terms, the book seeks to establish :

- that the national cultures of modern India and Britain were built on historically shared experiences which is to say that the metropole was not always the centre of cultural production;
- that contrary to Orientalist [and later Indian nationalist] assumptions about a 'materialist-secular' West and 'spiritual-traditionalist' India, religion and secularity were complexly joined in both cultures and equally contributed to the imagining of the nation at both places;
- that in order to understand this complicity

across boundaries, one needs to engage with contemporary notions of science, gender, race and language.

For the specialist reader, Van Der Veer's work may not appear very original and perhaps the author slightly overstates his case even in claiming an 'alternative' viewpoint (p.3). The problems posed look much too familiar and the challenges thrown to received narratives on colonialism, religion, modernity, nationalism and secularism are not altogether new. It is difficult to see how any one would, in principle, differ with the view that social and cultural theories born in modern Britain and India were decisively shaped by the colonial context. In their own ways, this framework has been used by all the major schools of Indian historiography. Effectively therefore, what the author gains in pursuit of this old problematic is not so much a path-breaking, counter-thesis as a better perspective on the subject and greater analytical sophistication.

Some of Van Der Veer's major conclusions are anticipated in earlier works. Thus, the critique of the 'derivative discourse' thesis as also of Partha Chatterjee's somewhat romanticized dichotomies of 'inner-outer'/'spiritual-material' etc. occur in Sumit Sarkar's *Writing Social History* (1997). Similarly, connections between spirituality, anti-colonialism and new theories about race and hierarchy (Chapters 3 and 4 of this book) are explored in two earlier essays (published in 2000) by Carla Risseuw and Mark Bevir. On the other hand, it does not appear as though the author's departure from dominant historiography is always quite as pronounced. His argument that the 'real effect' of the Age of Consent Act (1891) was the 'reassertion of Hindu patriarchal control over the domestic sphere as a nationalist cause' (p.96) is disconcertingly close to Chatterjee's thesis (*The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question*) that Hindu nationalism 'resolved

the Woman's question without having to advance the cause of reform. The real strength of Van Der Veer's work lies in its brilliantly synoptic view of several and complexly related matters, a fuller critique of existing certitudes and in educating its readers in recent and representative historical and anthropological writings on the subject. It is also extremely lucid and reader-friendly and the crisp concluding remarks occurring at the end of each essay are likely to considerably enhance its usefulness and readability.

My own worries about the possible implications of Van Der Veer's approach can be narrowed down to two specific issues. My first concern is with the way in which broad generalizations gloss over the recurring need for empirical qualifications. While in a work of this kind, archival work or detailed textual criticism is justly avoided, a valid distinction may nevertheless be made between general theory and nuanced generalization. Not to make this distinction seems to be an operational hazard with this work. One wonders if the hermeneutical methods of Rammohun Roy led to a 'laicization of Hinduism' (p.44). This would be belied by the opposition, continuing down to the 1890s, to non-brahmans attempting either exegetical reinterpretation or public representation of Hinduism. In any case, Dayanand, not Rammohan, could be more reasonably credited with this feat. By calling Shaktism 'antinomian' and anti-brahmanical (p.71) the author collapses the possible distinction between Shaktism and Shakta-Tantra. Most perplexing was the argument (p.72) that Tantra enabled Ramakrishna to 'enact his homosexuality'. Even as a far-from-radical, middle class and middle aged Bengali, it does not offend me in the least that Ramakrishna should be a homosexual. What I failed to comprehend entirely is how the distinctly heterosexual ontology and metaphysics of Tantra should also accommodate

homosexuality. His alleged homosexuality (which, incidentally, the author finds 'outrageous', p. 72) would explain Ramakrishna's aversion to the esoteric rite of *maibhuna* (ritual copulation) but this, I trust, would be true of many male Tantrics who were by no means homosexual.

In the course of reading this work, I also felt that the author did not tell us enough about how the 'interactional' and 'shared' cultural experiences of India and Britain were also built on certain inherent inequities. This interactional history, rather than be dialogic in nature, was clearly founded on power relationships. It is one thing to say that the concerns of Empire fashioned the national culture of Britain and quite another to claim that India influenced British intellectual thinking even outside the framework of Empire. Also, whereas Van Der Veer claims that modern Indian historiography was too 'fascinated by India to be interested by the impact of the colony on the metropole' (p.8), such interests may have been obscured by false expectations about the progressive social transformation of India under British rule. Barring those affected by extreme conservatism or xenophobia, nineteenth century Indians never denied the unique intellectual and societal changes brought about by India's contacts with the West. And contrary to what the author seems to claim, some of them may have indeed wondered why India itself was not making a comparable effect on the West either by way of creating greater self-reflexivity or in thinking afresh about the nature of its ties with India. ■

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Vestiges of the Past

Tapati Guha-Thakurta

ARCHITECTURE IN MEDIEVAL INDIA: FORMS, CONTEXTS, HISTORIES

Edited by Monica Juneja

Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 640, Rs. 1095.00

There are many questions one could ask of the subject of architecture in medieval India. How, for instance, is a time period designated as the 'medieval' invoked in the context of certain traditions of building in India? Does this chronological marker change as one moves between different genres of buildings (say between temples and mosques or tombs) or between different dynastic

empires and regions in India? Or, it may be asked, when and in what ways do certain bodies of monumental remains in India acquire a new value as specimens of 'architecture'—a new scientific and aesthetic discipline that came to seek its distinct objects and histories in colonial India? This becomes a particularly crucial issue. For, it is through the filters of this new discipline that we find

certain structures from the period vying for attention as examples of architectural form and securing a place within a history of architectural styles in the Indian subcontinent. Building styles from the 'medieval' period—defined variously as the synthesis of indigenous and Islamic traditions or the creation of a distinctive 'Indian Saracenic' idiom—find their pride of place within a sequential architectural history of the nation. And, we find architecture itself demanding the scrutiny of historians of medieval India as the most powerful political and social 'document' of the times. To be read as integral to the histories of power and patronage, conquest and state formation, built structures and spaces can also be seen to play a crucial role in the processes of the exclusion and assimilation of a region's diverse communities and religious groups. These are among the many historical



queries raised in this pioneering compendium of writings on architectural monuments and complexes in medieval India, edited by Monica Juneja. The volume is the first of a series titled *South Asian History: Readings and Interpretations*, taken over from Oxford University Press by the new publishing firm, Permanent Black. Like its earlier counterpart, which focussed on selections of already-published articles on relevant themes and debates in Indian history, the Permanent Black series too is designed to serve as handy readers for researchers and teachers in new historical areas. Monica Juneja's book is novel in that it handles for the first time a theme in the field of the visual arts under the rubric of this historical series. By her own declaration, her approach is "that of an art historian anchored within the discipline of history". Her prime concern is to open out the study of medieval Indian architecture within a larger field of political, social and cultural histories, to allow detailed analyses of architectural form and function to become meaningful subjects for the historian.

Few other periods in Indian history offer such a wealth, diversity and regional spread of architectural remains as this 'medieval' era—a time-span which historians have stretched back as far as the 7th century (coinciding with the rise of the successor states to the Gupta empire) and forward into the 18th century (ending with the gradual disintegration of the Mughal polity). One may assume that it is the magnitude of the field which makes for the great volume of this book: the twenty-six articles (large and small) that have gone into it, and the formidable length of the editor's introductory essay. Yet, a point that is surprisingly eluded in this compilation is a definition of what the editor has conceived of as her working unit of a 'medieval' period in Indian architectural history. Nor, in her long introduction does she explain the logic of her coverage only of certain prime genres and traditions of medieval architecture to the exclusion of others—something one would reasonably expect in an essay which is otherwise so finely attuned to the historiographical and methodological frameworks of the writings it collates and presents. The 'medieval' as it is encapsulated by the essays selected here stands mainly for a body of Islamic architectural traditions and monuments, beginning

with the earliest examples of mosques from the inceptionary years of Sultanate rule and spreading over other genres of Sultanate and Mughal architecture of the imperial heartland and the regions. The territorial belt of the buildings addressed here remains confined by and large to northern India, and its western and eastern wings. The furthest south one travels here is to the kingdom of Vijayanagara and the Chalukyan kingdom of the Deccan; and the only glimpse one gets of the workings of parallel non-Islamic practices of architectural patronage and appropriations is in George Michell's masterly analysis of the royal stylistic idioms in Vijayanagar's courtly monuments or in Richard Davis' compelling account of the wartime looting and relocation of architectural objects by Rashtrakuta, Chalukya and Chola monarchs in the course of the 8th to the 11th centuries.

What one immediately misses are a few writings, for instance, which would probe into the rich contemporary traditions of medieval temple architecture and patronage, which reached a high point in these years across a number of complexes in southern, central and eastern India. This appears as a strange and unexplained omission, given the way a growing interest in the innovations and opulence of these medieval regional forms came to overhaul the existing historiography of Indian temple architecture and sculpture—given also the on-running interest of the editor and many of the authors selected here in the close exchange of architectural vocabulary between early mosques and Hindu and Jain temples, between the imported styles of ruling patrons and the resource pool of indigenous artisanal skills and ornamental patterns.

Leaving aside its exclusions, what Monica Juneja's book presents nonetheless is an impressive package of essays—dating from the mid 19th century to the present—mainly on the broad area of the Islamic architecture of upper India. The editor's chief intention has been to track "the development of the discipline of the architectural history of medieval India"—to plot the changing styles, concerns and methods of scholarly writings on the subject and the particular intellectual milieu from which they emerged. Despite her own or strong moorings in social and cultural history, it is a comment of the state of writing in the field that the articles bunched here belong more to the genre of technical 'architectural' analyses than to the 'socio-historical'. An intricate study of particular monumental sites (the most vivid of these being the description of the Qutb architectural complex of Delhi) or of particular forms and iconographies (such as the dome, the arch, the baluster column in Mughal forts or the recurring *mihrabs* [decorative niches] on the walls of Bengal mosques) extend occasionally into a reading of the Arabic and Persian inscriptions on monuments, or into a few recent incursions into the dynamics of imperial and sub-imperial

architectural patronage (as in Catherine Asher's study of the buildings of Raja Man Singh in central India, Bihar and Bengal, or in George Michell's analyses of the imperial architectural idiom of Vijayanagar).

Monica Juneja's attempts in the introduction to foreground the perspective of the social and everyday use of architectural spaces in the construction of alternative meanings and community relations is also not borne out in the writings presented here, not even in the few which address what the editor terms "the architecture of everyday life". Jutta Jain-Neubauer's discussion of the characteristics of Gujarati step-wells or Wayne Begley's handling of some little-known Mughal *caravanserais* remain grounded primarily in textual, inscriptional and stylistic evidence. Like the wish for the 'historical', the editor's search for social use and meanings of medieval structures remains limited to her own intellectual engagement with the promise and possibilities of a new architectural history for India.

One must note the careful attempt in this selection of writings to juxtapose historical and recent approaches, to compare and contrast European and Indian scholarship. The choice of western writing takes us from the foundational work of James Fergusson, E.B.Havell, Ananda Coomaraswamy or Percy Brown in the colonial period to a range of new European specialized studies in the field, introducing a set of authors and studied objects that would be largely unknown to Indian historians. We move through this selection from Fergusson or Havell's broad-ranging categorization of the medieval heritage of Indian architecture or Percy Brown's grand invocation of the spectrum of Mughal monuments to the modes of the detailed 'Archaeological Memoirs' of particular buildings, as with J.A.Page's survey of the Qutb complex. Later, we are also taken from the detailed iconological analyses of architectural forms and motifs (by scholars like Michael Meister, Ebba Koch or Wayne Begley) to the multiple concerns with patronage and power relationships in architecture to other divergent scholarly interests in urban architecture, princely capitals and gardens, *caravanserais* or step-wells of the past two decades. In the process, our sense of the canonical core of Sultanate and Mughal period monuments also gets embellished with a range of newer regional and lesser-known sites—as with the late Mughal site of Qudsia Bagh at Delhi (introduced to us by Herman Goetz in 1952) or the mosques and *idgahs* built by a general of Muhammad of Ghor, Malik Baha al-din Tughrul, at Bayana in Rajasthan (studied in the 1980s by Mehrdad and Natalie Shokoohy as part of the project of documenting the unreported monuments of the Sultanate period in India).

The writings of the few local scholars handpicked here also make for a sharp and pointed selection. Under the heading of 'Indigenous Initiatives...Nationalist Views',

we encounter a world of Persian and Urdu scholarship of the 19th and early 20th century, beginning with the earliest tract of Sayyid Ahmad Khan on the monuments of Delhi, called the *Asar-as-Sanadid* (Vestiges of the Past), two versions of which were published in 1847 and 1854. Locating these editions of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's tract at the interstices of earlier Persian genres of topographical surveys and historical panegyrics and the new evolving archaeological consciousness of the Indian elite, Juneja also introduces us to later strands of detailed textual scholarship within the Archaeological Survey—as exemplified by Maulavi Zafar Hasan's studies of the tomb of Nizamuddin and the mosque of Shaikh Abdun Nabi in Delhi (written as Survey Memoirs in the early 20th century) or by Abdullah Chaghatai's rare genealogy of a family of local architects, builders, poets and calligraphers. The section ends with Muhammad Mujeeb's classic 'secular-nationalist' evocation of a harmonious synthesis of Hindu and Muslim architectural talents of the 1970s. Even as its rhetoric and flourish appears dated, Mujeeb's piece still stands out as a brilliant argument about the coming together of the Hindu 'sculptural' and the Islamic 'architectural' aesthetic in an analysis of 'the Qutub Complex as a Social Document'.

In the book's subsequent exploration of newer studies of architectural patronage, symbolism of styles and motifs, or regional building traditions, there is a marked dwindling of 'local representation'. We find here only the stray instances of Iqtidar Alam Khan's inscriptional study of some early Mughal monuments of Bayana (as an example of the archaeological work of the 'Aligarh School'), the Bangladeshi scholar, Perween Hasan's study of the patterns of *mihribs* on Bengal mosques (as an example of the school of 'iconological' scholarship), or Ram Nath's study of the architectural scheme of Akbar's Fatehpur Sikri (as a clear sample of the workings of political ideology in architecture). As a recent reviewer pointed out, there was clearly a lot of other Indian writing that the editor could have included, both by way of early nationalist reactions to colonial architectural theories in 19th century Bengal, or by way of regional surveys of new sites and monuments. In a book that already contains twenty-six articles, such inclusions could only have been made by leaving out a range of other writings. Juneja's decision to veer more heavily towards a body of technical European architectural studies on India stands as an indication of her belief in the greater historiographical and methodological relevance of such pieces in the disciplinary evolution of medieval Indian architectural history.

Let me finally come to the centre-piece of the book: the editor's eighty-four page introduction, annotated with over three hundred end-notes. The nature of this article is such that one could well build one's review of

the book primarily around it. That I have chosen not to do so is because I feel that the weight and value of such a reader should lie more in the selection of articles, old and new, the canonical and the lesser-known, that it brings together—and in the kinds of narrative it constructs through their grouping. Monica Juneja's essay, in its elaborate meanderings into art historical methodology, architectural theories, historiographical survey of scholarship, and current discourses on power, knowledge and representation, has a tendency to take off in several directions. At least some sectional headings and sub-titles here would have helped to streamline the bulky essay and signpost the main themes and arguments at work. In its aim to stand as a piece in itself, it often digresses into longish discussions of authors and texts which will not feature among the readings. This is the case for instance with her presentation of Wayne Begley's study of the Taj Mahal (as "a masterly example of the use of iconographic analysis to unravel historical meanings of architectural works"), a writing not reproduced here, or with her discussion of the works of Richard Eaton on Islam in Bengal and Sunil Kumar on the *Masjid-i-Jami* (the Qutb mosque) of the Delhi Sultans, two authors who do not feature at all in the readings.

Like the selection of articles, Juneja's essay too has its patches of inspired thought alongside patches of imbalance and unevenness. A long analysis of James Fergusson's place as the first historian and theorist of Indian architecture does not find a matching follow-up in the case of any other author or interpretative trend—and hangs somewhat uncomfortably *vis-à-vis* the more cursory treatment of writers like Havell, Coomaraswamy or Percy Brown, and the almost non-existent profiles of the bulk of the more recent writers in the field. The locations of these authors have to be painstakingly dug out of the editor's periodic forays into the complex maze of cultural theories of Foucault, Bakhtin, Roger Chartier, Pierre Bourdieu or Louis Marin. Then, in the final section of the essay, we have Juneja's detailed and insightful exploration of the architectural evidence of the Qutb mosque complex (a site that stands out as the *leitmotif* of the entire book) as a way of arriving at a new social and cultural perspective for the study of historical monuments. This segment well deserves to find a place in a separate work by the author—its importance here inevitably gets muffled as it is thrown into the heterogeneous mix of issues she discusses. Notwithstanding the ambitious range and erudition of Juneja's essay, in the end, one is left wishing for a tighter and more precise guide to the theme—something which would stick more closely to its job of just 'introducing' and leading the reader into the writings that follow. ■

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Awakening Social Consciousness

Amar Farooqui

SITUATING SOCIAL HISTORY: ORISSA (1800–1997)
By Biswamoy Pati
Orient Longman, Delhi, 2001, pp. 182, Rs 380.00

Biswamoy Pati has researched and written extensively on colonial as well as contemporary Orissa. This volume confirms his position as one of our leading authorities on the social history of the region. The seven essays which comprise the book focus, to quote from the preface, 'on the shaping of popular culture [in Orissa] over the last two hundred years or so'. Pati documents the plight of the poor and the dispossessed, the ways in which they view their own miserable existence and how their condition is generally reflected in the cultural consciousness of Orissa.

Chapter 3 of the book, 'The Murder of Banamali: Collective Action and Popular Culture', is in a sense representative of the entire collection. In this essay Pati revisits an incident which occurred at the Balanga zamindari of Puri in 1928. Banamali Pati, the naib or representative of the zamindar was brutally killed in order to put an end to the authoritarian regime which he had set up in the area. The author scrutinizes the background to this murder and provides us with a vivid picture of early twentieth century rural Orissa based on diverse sources, including oral accounts. The zamindari was a legacy of the Permanent Settlement with its absentee (Bengali) zamindar residing in faraway Calcutta, interested only in extracting a large income from his holding, hardly bothering to personally supervise the estate (not that this would have made much of a difference to the peasants), and leaving Banamali to ruthlessly exploit the dependants. We learn of the precarious control which the peasants had over their means of livelihood, how easily they could be divested of their meagre earnings, and Banamali's devices for extorting surpluses. The upper caste status of the naib helped to reinforce his authority. The tension which marked Balanga would be typical of most zamindaris. Nevertheless Banamali seems to have been particularly tyrannical and his actions eventually provoked a violent reaction. He was killed not surreptitiously but in public view, his body paraded in the village, his intestines worn as garlands, and for a very brief moment the world of Balanga was turned upside down. Although this incident was not the result of collective action, it did involve collective acquiescence on the part of a sizeable section of the people.

That Balanga was certainly no exception in

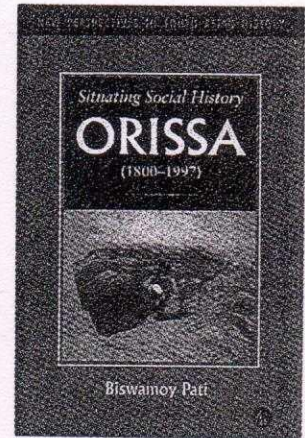
Pati documents the plight of the poor and the dispossessed, the ways in which they view their own miserable existence and how their condition is generally reflected in the cultural consciousness of Orissa.

terms of levels of exploitation in nineteenth and twentieth century Orissa is underscored by the essay 'Between "Then" and "Now": Popular Memory in Orissa', which looks at how historical experience gets translated into popular memory. Class, caste and/or gender bias as well as religious prejudice distort events, often underplaying exploitation and trivializing protest. Events acquire new meanings through the printed word. Thus the movement of the Bhuyan tribals of Keonjhar (1891-2) is remembered not as a moment in the struggle against oppression but becomes, in its colonial/upper-caste retelling, the story of how the 'stupid' *adivasis* were out-manoeuvred. Similarly the subversion of Brahminical domination by some followers of the plebeian Mahima cult who in 1881 tried to get hold of the idols of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra in order to liberate them from the upper castes has over the years been deliberately forgotten. 'Perhaps', Pati comments, 'this illustrates how Brahminical Hinduism has integrated and hierarchised the cult, erasing its interrogative and contestory elements'. Then there is the persisting stereotype of the 'Bengali absentee landlord as the exploiter' to whom Orissa's backwardness is attributed. What such stereotyping ignores is that 'all the princely states and the bigger zamindaris were held by those who were technically Oriyas'.

Colonial Orissa—with its twenty-four princely states, its zamindaris, and a sharp distinction between the coastal area and the tribal dominated western interior—was something of a backwater, leading a relatively isolated existence. Yet it is difficult to comprehend what was so very specific about the deprivation which its people suffered under British rule and after. This question is especially pertinent in the context of starvation deaths in Kalahandi. These starvation deaths, which hit the headlines in the 1980s, have become a chronic feature of the area so that Kalahandi has 'emerged as a metaphor for famine'. Pati devotes a lengthy chapter to this problem ('Tracing the Social History of a Famine—Kalahandi: 1800-1992') during the course of which he examines the economy, agrarian structure, ecology, society and politics

of Kalahandi during the last two centuries. The dispossession of tribal agriculturists, as for instance the Kandhas, in the mid-nineteenth century and their being pushed into forest areas played havoc with their subsistence strategies. This phenomenon was intertwined with the Hinduization of the region and the emergence of a Brahmin-Kshatriya-Kulta alliance. The Kultas were cultivators from the Raipur-Sambalpur belt who were encouraged to settle down in Kalahandi displacing the Kandhas and other local tribal communities. The Kandhas put up a stiff resistance but this was effectively crushed in the 1880s. By the end of the century agricultural land was more or less monopolized by the Brahmins and the Kultas while the tribals were forced to migrate to hills and forests. Having abandoned their non-agricultural lifestyle for a couple of generations they now found it difficult to adapt (or readapt) to conditions in hill and forest areas. These developments coincided with the large-scale destruction of forests due to railway construction in the 1880s. The tribal and non-tribal poor had to increasingly rely on shifting cultivation and/or loans. Debt-bondage and forced labour had become widespread by the beginning of the twentieth century. This situation persisted after 1947 since there was no serious attempt to carry out land reforms. Pati notes that Kalahandi has had a regular history of famines. However, it was already a food surplus district (frequent crop failures notwithstanding) in the 1980s when starvation deaths became endemic. This contradiction is both the cumulative result of a long historical process and of current policies pursued by a deformed and insensitive Third World capitalist state.

There are two separate chapters on trends in Oriya literature. One of these deals with Fakirmohana Senapati's novel *Chamana Athaguntha* (Six Acres and Eight Decimals) and the other with Oriya literary works of the 1930s. Pati discusses the evolution of literature from the point of view of the place of peasants and the exploited in them. Fakirmohana (1843-1918), one of the earliest and most outstanding literary figures of Orissa—whose oeuvre 'contributed to the invention of a "standard" Oriya'—was a careful chronicler of contemporary reality. His *Chamana* is a moving account of the travails of a poor weaver who falls victim to the villainous machinations of a ruthlessly exploitative estate owner. The novel provided Fakirmohana an opportunity to offer his readers a glimpse of life in the Cuttack countryside and at the same time to depict the various levels at which the colonial/feudal power structure operated, combining to humiliate and damn the poor. But hardly any signs of protest are visible in the novel. There is at best 'a muted anti-colonial discourse in *Chamana*'. This may have been due to Fakirmohana's own position



within the colonial system. He served as an official in Keonjhar and is supposed to have played a leading role in putting down the Bhuyan rebellion already referred to. It was with the rise of the Progressive Writers' Movement in the 1930s that the Oriya peasantry came into its own and found a place for its protest in the writings of Bhagwati Charan Panigrahi (one of the founders of the Communist Party of India in Orissa), Ramprasad Singh, and Sachidananda Routray.

There is one essay on colonial health and medicine which explores, among other issues, indigenous practices of small-pox inoculation and the (largely hostile) reaction to early vaccination programmes. The final chapter is a field note which is essentially a report on Koraput based on the author's visit to the area in 1980-82.

This book needs to be read by all those who are interested in understanding the historical roots of Orissa's backwardness. It also goes a long way towards helping us interpret the disturbing images which have emanated from the state in recent years: Kalahandi; Dara Singh; the killing of Staines. ■

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Sacred-Profane Polarity

Jaya S. Tyagi

PŪJĀ & SAMSKĀRA

By Musashi Tachikawa, Shoun Hino and Lalita Deodhar

Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 2001, pp. 171, Rs. 495.00

This work should have been divided into two separate books—one devoted to puja rites in particular temples in Maharashtra and the other to the *samskāras* that a person has to follow from birth to death during his lifetime, if born a Chitpavan Brahmana. Hubert and Maus in late nineteenth century had stated that in 'Hindu' texts sacrifices can be divided into two types—the occasional *samskāras* that accompany solemn moments and are a part of domestic ritual and the regular, *nityani*. In these sacrifices the sacrificer became a religious agent by passing from the world of men to the world of gods with the help of an intermediary or a guide who stood on the threshold of the sacred and profane. The authors of *Pūjā & Samskāra* deliberate on this sacred-profane polarity.

Samskara rites are differentiated from puja rites by stating that the former are for the purpose of enabling the group or the society to operate smoothly while the latter came to be performed for the purpose of a person's individual spiritual well being. Then their own statement is contradicted when they claim that 'individual religious activity is frequently performed by individuals but it is not limited to activities performed alone' and 'similarly group religious activity is supported by the group but it is common for individual religious activity to be included'. Such sweeping statements that beg to be contradicted could have been avoided.

In the first part of the book the authors lead us through the sixteen steps of worship, *ṣoḍaśa-upcāra pūjā*, held at the *Catubhāringī* Temple, in Pune. There are appendices with similar pujas held in the *Nāgēśvar* Temple and *Parvati Nandana* Temple. Details of the manner in which the puja is performed with accompanying hymns are given with elaborate photographs ranging from the coconut seller outside the temple to the rites inside the sanctum sanctorum, all of which would be relevant to an interested researcher. However, the book actually raises more questions than it answers. The 'histories' of how worship of particular deities evolves and how temple precincts develop around them is as interesting as the step by step puja rites venerating them. The whole question of creation of a 'sacred space' by performing puja rites is not taken up. The local myths around Goddess *Catubhāringī* could have been discussed especially as she is projected as a wife of Śiva. One wonders if this a process of 'spousification' because there are instances when a larger, overarching cult is popularized in an area by projecting one of the local goddesses as the wife of the god, in this case Śiva. Similarly, Vittal is the chief deity in

Pūjā & Samskāra



Musashi Tachikawa
Shoun Hino & Lalita Deodhar

the second temple and this local version of Visnu gained much popularity in Maharashtra. A third temple devoted to Ganapati, worshipped fervently in Maharashtra; the text however, chooses to focus on the rites of *pūjā* rather than trace the phenomenon of worship.

The second part of the book deals with the sixteen *samskāras* and is based on ethnological data from a particular family of Pune, the Natus. The discussion on the *samskāras* is related to documentation of material that was made available by the Chitpavan Brahmana family and relating it to the early *Hiranyakesigryhasūtra* and the Medieval *Hiranyakesibrahmakarmasamuccaya*. The study is an interesting documentation of the customs that are still being followed and where variations have crept in. The table on Vedic rites, post Vedic rites and rites peculiar to Maharashtra is extremely helpful as it details rites that are not only mentioned in the texts but are seen in actual performance in Maharashtra (p. 112). However, for understanding these customs and their historicity one would still have to refer back to deal with the rationale behind these customs and the social impact of their performance.

It is interesting to note that the one area where early 'Vedic' rites are still being performed is in the rituals that were preserved in the *Gryhasūtras*. The reason why these particular rituals known as *samskāras* are still practised widely, though with some variations, is the manner in which the *gr̥ha* or the household was projected as an arena for sacred activity in the Brahmanical texts and was used as a unit for propagation of Brahmanical rituals. The interplay of the householder, his wife and children is what comes out clearly in the photographs of *Pūjā & Samskāra* with the householder, the *yajamana* as the pivot of ritual activity. It is he who is the focus of all *samskāras*—be it the ones for conception, birth or upanayana when he would be initiated into his future role as a householder. The pivotal role played by women in these rites, as seen in some of these photographs, is interesting. These however, are in the rites that are peculiar to the region and not mentioned in the 'Vedic' texts—the *ghāṇā*, *batupujana*, welcoming of the *batu* (initiate) and his mother in the upanayana rite. This shows that although women do not figure prominently in the traditional patriarchal texts, they do play a role when the rites are actually performed. ■

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Guhan on Guhan

Seetha Prabhu

INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE:
SELECTED WRITINGS OF S. GUHAN
Edited by S. Subramanian
Oxford University Press, New Delhi,
2001, pp.368, Rs.625.00

This book compiling select writings of S. Guhan provides a view of the writings of a very rare individual—a scholar, a social activist, an able administrator and an unrelenting critic of contemporary Indian writing on development issues. To do justice to such a personality's output is not easy and going by the exacting standards that Guhan set for himself, this is indeed a daunting task. It is to Subramanian's credit that he has brought out an impressive collection of papers by Guhan and on Guhan. By not restricting the selection to Guhan's writings on economics and developmental issues alone and including pieces on his other varied interests, we get rare glimpses of Guhan's personality. Equally valuable are the short reminiscences of Guhan by a range of eminent personalities.

The essays in the first section of the book entitled 'Economy, Society and Polity' reflect the characteristic features of Guhan, his intolerance of social inequalities and his search for feasible solutions to ensure such equity. The special advantage of having been an able administrator compels the academician in him to go beyond theoretical analysis to devise solutions for implementation. Nowhere is this dual ability more visible than in his much acclaimed essay 'Social Security for the Poor in the Unorganized Sector'. Here Guhan demolishes the myth that public provision of protective social security is not feasible in situations of pervasive poverty when the number of people that need such security is too large to be afforded by the state. He demonstrated that it is possible to implement a minimum, affordable and sustainable programme of social security within the budgetary resources of state governments with the union government guiding, supporting and supplementing such efforts. It is a tribute to Guhan's sagacity that the provision of social security has currently been receiving greater policy attention than ever before with the Government of India recognizing that it constitutes a welfare state's fundamental responsibility towards the poor.

Guhan's penchant for expressing dissatisfaction with standard prescriptions and extending the realm of what is feasible is also evident in the Supplementary Note to the Expert Committee on Poverty wherein he argued in favour of estimation of poverty lines on the basis of state specific consumption baskets and state level price indices and deflators. This is

once again a practice that is now being adopted widely.

Guhan considered health to be a fundamental right of citizens and emphasized the need for the government to promote a medical insurance scheme that is oriented towards the poor as also the role of decentralization and participatory health care systems in ensuring that minimal health requirements of people are met. He was however practical enough to recognize that this is not an easy task as there is no national political constituency for health and in fact, the suppliers of medical services can be expected to resist reform.

Guhan's writings on social sector expenditures and the respective roles of the centre and the states reflect his concern for adhering to the principles of cooperative federalism and for the centre according state governments requisite support, particularly during the period of economic reforms. The need for the Centre to ease the economic and political burdens of reforms on state governments, the need to strengthen consultative mechanisms and practices and achieving a better mix between autonomy and accountability in centre-state fiscal relations were his clear prescriptions for ensuring a just federal polity. These prescriptions reveal the thinking of an administrator academician who was closer to the ground realities than most academicians and better anchored in theoretical reasoning than most administrators of his time.

Guhan's sharp intellect did not rest with the analysis of the measures that state governments may take when confronted with adjustment but went into the very rationale and content of the adjustment measures. After a clear diagnosis of the problem confronting developing countries, Guhan highlights the insensitive nature of the measures designed by developed countries. Guhan goes on to suggest 'automatic transfers' as a way of financing the development needs of low-income countries. This is a suggestion originally made in the Brandt Commission that is revived and recommended with customary force and conviction. The renewed debate on Financing for Development in the international discussions once again demonstrates his foresight and vision.

The remaining papers in this section deal with problems such as social discrimination, corruption and governance—themes that are of vital importance not only for society but also for development administration. The issues are once posed cogently and probable solutions offered with a rare understanding of the ground realities. As Guhan says while one cannot expect to obtain definitive answers to these questions it would be irresponsible to refuse to explore them 'from practical and operational perspectives' (p.277). This is what

marks these contributions as being distinct from several other writings on the subject. The only regret is that two areas of Guhan's academic interest, viz., village studies and state finances of Tamil Nadu have not found a place in this collection.

The essays in section two provide glimpses of Guhan's wide range of interests and his delightful sense of humour—the latter is on display in his parody on policy that is written as a conversation between Yajnavalkya and Nachiketa after the famous dialogue in *Mandukya Upanishad* illustrates his range of scholarship and the ability to juxtapose the idiosyncrasies of economic analysts whose particular speciality seems to be to offer a variety of 'explanations' for problems confronting the economy, while the practical need is to find solutions.

The last section is in the nature of tributes to Guhan by eminent scholars. The selection of such reminiscences once again serves to highlight the multifaceted personality that Guhan was. Robert Cassen dwells on the contribution that Guhan made to the drafting of the Brandt Commission Report and also points out the contradictions in Guhan's personality. He could be kind as well as harsh and there was always uncertainty as to which side of his personality one would confront at any given moment. The staunch beliefs that Guhan had and the extent to which he would go in order to uphold his conviction is reflected in his resignation from the civil service. Cassen believes that one of the reasons for this uncommon step was perhaps 'his inability to get the bureaucracy to approve the release of food stocks in a bumper harvest year' (p.331). Barbara Harris-White reflects on the personalities that Guhan admired most; Willy Brandt for his conviction in the principles of social democracy, distributive justice and his practical idealism and Balasaraswati for her capacity to 'lose herself in a passion of artistic creation' (p.346). She also talks of his spiritual leanings towards the teachings of Ramana Maharshi. Others who provide nuggets of little known facts about Guhan are Jonathan Moore, B.K. Nehru, I.G. Patel, Manu Shroff, Gopal Krishna Gandhi, Asoke Chatterjee and Granville Austin—an impressive list of eminent thinkers!

The book is a must read for not only admirers of Guhan but also for those interested in seeking solutions to some of the development issues confronting the nation. Subramanian's delightful introduction portrays sensitively Guhan's personality and writings—surely this is a labour of love and not a mere academic exercise. This is a book Guhan would have approved—and anyone who can claim even a fleeting acquaintance with Guhan knows that such approval was not given lightly by him!

Seetha Prabhu is Head, Human Development Resource Centre, UNDP, New Delhi.

South Asian Nuclear Discourse

V.R. Raghavan

THE ROOTS OF RHETORIC: POLITICS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

By Haider K. Nizamani

India Research Press, New Delhi, 2001, pp.160, Rs 495.00

OUT OF THE NUCLEAR SHADOW

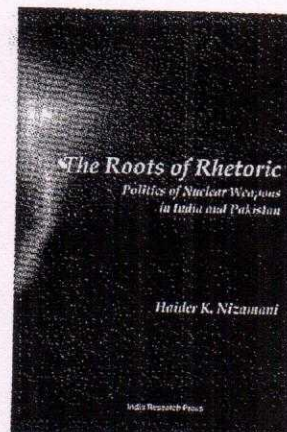
Edited by Smitu Kothari and Zia Mian

Lokayan and Rainbow Publishers, Delhi, 2001, pp.525, Rs 275.00

THE NUCLEARIZATION OF SOUTH ASIA

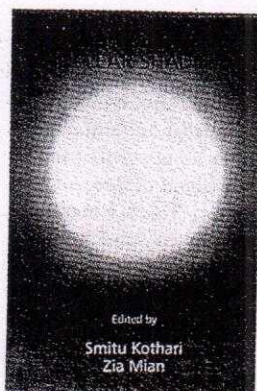
By Lt Gen (Retd) Kamal Matinuddin

Oxford University Press, Pakistan, 2002, pp.356, Pak Rs. 495.00



Is there anything new emerging from India and Pakistan in the discourse on the merits and demerits of their becoming nuclear weapons states? It is to the credit of both nuclear wannabes and anti-nuclear groups that they are keeping alive the debate. It is to the credit of the leadership of both countries that they have attempted to put the nuclear issue on the back burner and have in fact taken it off the radar screens of major powers. Even the sole super power no longer emphasizes South Asia as a nuclear flash point. The massive military deployment by India and Pakistan since December 2001 raised some fears of a war. It did not however raise fears of an imminent nuclear exchange on the subcontinent. So much so that talk of India and Pakistan fighting a limited war, while nuclear weapons are available with them, has evoked at best a lukewarm reaction. Is the nuclear discourse in the subcontinent petering out, or, has it lost its zing?

The nuclear reality in South Asia is one of *déjà vu*, after the big bangs of May 1998. India has done no more than raise a few Prithvi Regiments for the Army and Air Force. The Agni tests have evoked hardly a ripple in and outside the country. It is unclear if and when it would be inducted into the defence forces and integrated in the nuclear strategic force. The Nuclear Doctrine of the nation hangs in



limbo, with neither its authors nor the government claiming it to be legitimate or authoritative. There is no known nuclear command authority and the chain of nuclear command is unclear both to friends and adversaries. There is no nuclear dialogue between the two governments. The nuclear issue has been allowed to be subsumed by the 'core' issue of J&K. The Chief of Defence Staff who is expected to put some order into the loose and ambiguous nuclear command and doctrine system in India is nowhere in sight. Nuclear weapons have thus become part of the general drift and doubt in national governance. The "resurgence of India" proclaimed after the 1998 tests has been disproved by the misgovernance, demonstrated in managing the economic and societal security of the citizen in daily life.

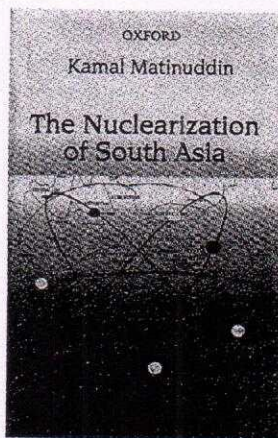
In Pakistan, the doubtful advantage of the nuclear weapons remaining in the hands of the military has been seen to be a chimera. The safety of the nuclear warheads from threats of getting into extremist hands has increased. Testimony by US intelligence agencies have confirmed this risk. General Musharraf's speech on 12 January 2002 confirmed that his nuclear weapons made him hostage rather than giving him any room for manoeuvre against US demands to comply with its Afghan policy. He explained his U-turn in Afghanistan, by admitting that his nuclear assets would be taken out, if he did not adhere to US demands. Pakistan has announced a nuclear command authority which includes civilians, i.e., Prime Minister etc. Everyone of course knows who has the finger on Pakistan's nuclear trigger. Now and then Pakistan feels impelled to refer to a nuclear response if India crosses the undefined Rubicon.

The nuclear discourse in South Asia is marked by three main strands. None of them take into account the fact that nuclear weapons will not disappear from the scene. This inevitability of the permanent presence of nuclear weapons is rarely, if ever, a defining element of the South Asian nuclear discourse. The first strand is represented by the anti-

nuclear camp which hopes and wants that India and Pakistan would give up nuclear weapons. The second still believes that nuclear weapons by themselves confer international respect and stature. This camp in India argues that since India aims to be a major power, it must have a nuclear deterrent, even if it is one of doubtful credibility. In Pakistan, this camp believes that if India is to have nuclear weapons, Pakistan must have it too. The third is of the anti-nuclearists in other South Asian states, who claim their security is at risk by the nukes in India and Pakistan. As for the anti-nuclear banner wavers in other South Asian states, their voice is muted for lack of government support, in criticizing either India or Pakistan.

The nuclear discourse in South Asia has yet to come to terms with the first principle of nuclear weapons management. That principle rests on the proven belief that if nuclear weapons are here to stay, the first and immediate requirement is to create conditions which would preclude the use of such weapons. In other words, not going to war is the first post nuclear condition. Its absence is a measure of the strategic thinking amongst nuclear and anti-nuclear camps. Abolition of nuclear weapons and every other measure related to that dream is a laudable mission which however is not going to be accomplished in the foreseeable future. On the other hand, nuclear weapons impose great responsibility on India and Pakistan to refrain from stoking the fires which would lead to war and greatly enhance the possibility of a nuclear exchange. There should be pressure on the leadership of the two countries to work towards instrumentalities which would prevent a military conflict breaking out. South Asia's nuclear discourse has missed this argument. It has therefore lost direction and remains chained to the abolitionist vs. nuclearist pillars.

The three books being reviewed here typify the limits of the South Asian nuclear discourse. *The Roots of Rhetoric: Politics of Nuclear Weapons in India and Pakistan*, is perhaps the boldest in attempting to break free from the old and well worn arguments of the realist and



idealist schools of international relations. The attempt to establish a relationship between discourse marked by knowledge and state policy as influenced by power is a new attempt in South Asia. The author's argument that nuclear weapons take on ideological and symbolic values is not new. That such symbols drive policy through the rhetoric of pride and national chauvinism is also not a new thought. That developing states and their leadership emulate the opinions and values of developed societies to the detriment of national interests is a new dimension which the author brings to bear on his work. That "the voices of nukespeakers in the subcontinent to date remain conceptually colonized ..." and therefore swallow and re-gurgitate neo-realist theories of international relations and strategic studies, is a telling comment on the state of nuclear discourse. The author believes that the "methodology of discourse analysis demystifies thedominant security discourse in India and Pakistan." The author bemoans the monopoly of the discourse by a select number of individuals. He posits that a dominant discourse does not necessarily imply a correct or successful discourse. The author characterizes the nuclear discourse in the two countries as one of love-hate relationship between the nuclear hawks of the two countries. That remains the main channel of communication between the two states. Consequently, as the author puts it, "it is only K. Subrahmanyams and Mushahid Hussains of the sub-continent who get regular opportunities to talk to each other." Those with other opinions and convictions are ostracized or portrayed as unpatriotic. The book offers some straightforward ideas on the state of international relations theory and known views of nuclearists and anti-nuclear thinkers in the two countries. Its commendable portions are confined to analysing the dynamics behind the nuclear discourse. In that the author makes a strong attempt but succeeds to only a limited extent.

The second book, *Out of the Nuclear Shadow*, is an edited volume which brings together all the anti-nuclear writings from

before and after the 1998 tests. It also brings together in one place the many statements condemning the Indian and Pakistani tests, issued from time to time in different parts of the world. The writers in this compendium—which is what the volume is—range from the visceral Arundhati Roy, to the idealist Amartya Sen and the intellectual rapier wielder Ashish Nandy, through to the indomitable Bidwai-Vanaik duo, to the much respected Eqbal Ahmed, and brave anti-nuclear flag bearers like Pervez Hoodbhoy and Zia Mian from Pakistan. This volume does service by compiling the anti-nuclear writings and making it possible to get a consolidated view of this strand of the nuclear discourse. In the process, the perspective it creates is one of a discourse speaking more from the heart. Governments and states unfortunately, do not and cannot, base their actions on sentiments of peace and harmony. The reality of political economy, international power play and not infrequently the need for riding the populist policy tiger, make leaders and governments prisoners of irrational dynamics. To quote just one example, it was the compulsions of political economy and not strategic logic, which led a series of US Presidents to build up nuclear arsenals of tens of thousands of warheads. Today's US leaders have announced large cuts and some respected military leaders have stated that a few hundred warheads are adequate to maintain peace. The conclusion that, "Nothing has graver consequences for the people of the two countries than the nuclear tests of May 1998," is therefore clearly an overstated emphasis of the anti-nuclear discourse. What is really of the gravest consequence to India and Pakistan is indifferent economic growth, incompetent governance, communal obscurantism and the denial of fundamental rights through default to the multitudes in India and Pakistan. A war with or without nuclear weapons between the two countries is what needs to be prevented.

In contrast to the two books referred above, the third book under review, *The Nuclearization of South Asia*, comes from the realist nuclear strand. General Matinuddin, a respected military voice from Pakistan, approaches the nuclear reality from a practical point view. The book's value lies in the realistic assessment of the risks and opportunities that flow from the nuclearization of India and Pakistan. Most of the book covers familiar ground about the decades' long nuclear weapons acquisition by the two countries. In a book on nuclearization of South Asia, considerable time is spent on establishing the rationale for Muslim animosities against Hindus. A case is attempted to be made out of the Hindu majority's determination to deny the Muslims their rights, which led to the creation of India. This thinking overlooks the untenability of the two-nation theory that led to the emergence of Bangladesh. There is a

The nuclear discourse in South Asia has yet to come to terms with the first principle of nuclear weapons management. That principle rests on the proven belief that if nuclear weapons are here to stay, the first and immediate requirement is to create conditions which would preclude the use of such weapons. In other words, not going to war is the first post nuclear condition.

long and laboured analysis of why India and Pakistan went nuclear. The argument that but for Indian hegemonism and obduracy, there would have been no need for an India-Pakistan standoff, or, a nuclear weapons acquisition programme, forms a continuous refrain. Having said that, General Matinuddin makes eminently sensible and practical recommendations about managing the risks of nuclear weapons inherent on the subcontinent.

The book emphasizes the need for India and Pakistan to come to grips with the many measures left uncompleted after the test of 1998. There is an absence of clear nuclear doctrine, of command and control and intelligence systems, of the need to extend the short time lines, of the need to avoid war with a view to avoid nuclear exchange. The author takes stock of the many initiatives underway on nuclear risk reduction measures. He makes particular reference to the dialogue on the subject initiated between the Islamabad Policy Research Institute and the Delhi Policy Group, and commends its continuation. The book makes a serious attempt at defining a possible nuclear policy for Pakistan. The sword of Damocles, which the author believes the two countries have hanging over both their heads, demands a nuclear dialogue to put into place measures by which nuclear weapons are never used. The issue of J&K intrudes into these sensible recommendations, by the insistence that while a nuclear dialogue is essential, Kashmir cannot be 'sidetracked'. Notwithstanding the expected Pakistani assertions on India Pakistan relations, the book breaks new ground by listing out specific scenarios in which nuclear war might take place. The value of the book is enhanced by the measures recommended to control the nuclear stand-off getting out of hand. That relations between the two countries are at the time of writing this at one of the lowest levels in their history, makes it even more worthwhile to give serious consideration to its recommendations. ■

Lt. Gen. (Retd.) V.R. Raghavan is Director, Delhi Policy Group, and a former Director General of Military Operations, India.

Redefining National Security!

S. Kalyanaraman

SECURITY IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM: VIEWS FROM SOUTH ASIA

Edited by Rajesh Basrur

Regional Centre for Strategic Studies/India Research Press, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 249, Rs. 495.00

GLOBALIZATION AND NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY IN SOUTH ASIA

Edited by Abdur Rob Khan

Academic Press/Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Dhaka, 2001, pp. 291, \$25

INTRA AND INTER-STATE CONFLICTS IN SOUTH ASIA

Edited by Sudhir Jacob George

South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 2001, pp.310, Rs. 450.00

A new perspective in the study of International Relations (IR) was generated in the decade-plus interregnum between the end of the Cold War and the catastrophic events of September 11. Intellectual trends in this field, we all know, are fashioned in modern-day Rome, from where they are propagated around the world. Strategic Studies, with its exclusive focus on military aspects, had occupied pride of place during the years of the Cold War. It suddenly seemed to have lost relevance after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the absence of any immediate and viable threat to the United States. As a result, many practitioners of IR studies — whom critics have long since dismissed as merely providing “an academic gloss on current affairs” — turned towards other issues that had begun to dominate the headlines. Some of these were: ethnic conflicts; the possibility of Third World conflicts arising from disputes over the sharing of water and other resources; environmental consequences of economic development; the poor state of health, literacy, and governance in developing countries; the globalization process and its impact on state structures; etc. All of these were brought under the rubric of a new term ‘Security Studies’, which included, apart from military issues, a range of political, social, economic and environmental aspects. As Professor Richard Betts has pointed out, such expansive definitions of security makes the concept so elastic that it no longer has any useful meaning.

This new intellectual fashion has wound its way to South Asia as well. The three books

under review fit into this new category of IR studies. Two of the three books are, in fact, products of the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS), Colombo, which is largely funded by western institutions. The third is the outcome of a seminar organized by the Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad. All three are edited volumes, and contain a collection of disparate essays on topics relating to the new expanded conception of ‘security’. These include topics like political representation, fishing policy, federal arrangements, information flows, equitable economic growth, etc. Many of these topics are best handled from the viewpoint of public policy, instead of stretching to fit them into the ‘security’ discourse.

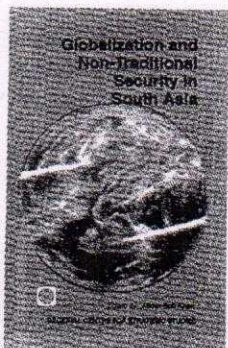
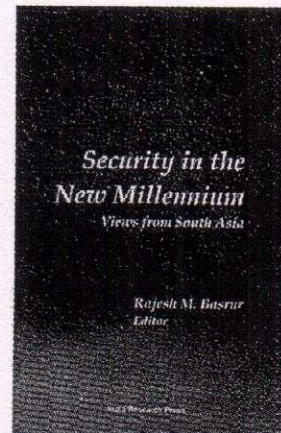
The two books from the RCSS stable are well-produced, and their introductory essays attempt to place the subsequent chapters in context. But this cannot be said about the book edited by Sudhir Jacob George. He does not even so much as make an attempt at contextualizing the issues addressed in the various contributions. His introductory essay offers nothing more than brief summaries of the subsequent chapters. The editor has also not ensured uniformity in the manner in which the contributors attribute their sources. Some have used footnotes in the ‘History’ tradition, while others have adopted the ‘Sociology’ style of references. The most astounding part of this book is the essay by Dr. Mohammad Moazzam Ali, which contains 270 ‘Notes’ running into 31 pages. Dr. Ali’s contribution amounts to a chronological narration — based on a survey of newspapers and news magazines — and could have been more appropriately placed as a ‘Chronology’ at Appendix.

Intra and Inter-State Conflicts in South Asia is not, however, without its plus points. Mahendra Lama provides a comprehensive treatment to the various types of intra- and inter-state conflicts over the sharing of water resources. Debbarma offers a concise and well-written essay on how the influx of illegal migrants into Tripura and their subsequent usurpation of control over the state economy, politics and administration has been the cause

behind uprisings organized by the indigenous people of the state. Sahadevan has written a good account of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka from the perspective of how it attained transnational dimensions. Cross-border ethnic linkages with Tamilnadu, financial and moral support of the immigrant Sri Lankan Tamil population in the West, and India’s interest in maintaining South Asia as its *cordon sanitaire* were the main factors in this respect.

Some of the more enlightening essays in the other two books include: Amena Mohsin’s case for a non-hegemonic state structure that would give more space for ethnic and religious minorities as well as for women in politics; S. K. Shrestha’s convincing demonstration of the inequity engendered by economic liberalization in India and Nepal; Jennifer Bennett’s portrayal of how economic liberalization has reduced the Indian and Pakistani governments’ social expenditures; and the contribution by Sonam Kinga *et al.* on how information flow is transforming Bhutanese society.

Especially noteworthy are the two essays of Jayadeva Uyangoda, one each in the RCSS books, and Shibashis Chatterjee’s contribution in *Intra- and Inter-State Conflicts in South Asia*. The latter provides an analytical orientation to the issue of ethnic identity assertion in South Asia. Chatterjee points out that South Asian ethnic problems are a direct result of territorial demarcations that are not coterminous with the distribution of population groups. The problem is exacerbated by the following inter-related factors: the tendency among groups to define themselves exclusively and the conflict that this engenders with the homogenizing tendency displayed by the territorial nationalism of the state. In Chatterjee’s view, territorial nationalism denies legitimacy to the right of peoples and communities to define themselves differently and makes them dependent on the state for sustenance, resources and development. He, however, does not offer any solution whereby meaningful security could be achieved by both the state and the minority groups within them. In this connection, one wonders how viable would be the late Professor Ravinder Kumar’s advocacy: that the Indian state be conceived of as a civilizational



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Education and the Disprivileged: Nineteenth and Twentieth Century India Rs. 550.00
Sabyasachi Bhattacharaya (Ed.)
 This book addresses the familiar issue of unequal access to education in a new perspective. In this regard, whether one looks at gender or caste or 'tribes' or class differences, the gap between the privileged and the disprivileged is a matter of everyday experience. In what manner and form are these asymmetries reflected in the domain of education is the question at the core of this collection of essays.



Space, Territory and the State: New Readings in International Politics Rs. 450.00
Ranabr Samadhar (Ed.)
 This collection of essays addresses the neglected issues of space, border and statelessness in international politics and contributes a much-needed 'view from the South'. Importantly, it asserts that chasms created by borders (including those between India and Pakistan) can be bridged by dialogue, a little-analysed tool in international relations.



Competing Nationalisms in South Asia: Essays for Asghar Ali Engineer Rs. 525.00
Paul R. Brass and Achin Vanak (Eds.)
 The essays in this volume bring together a rich and scholarly collection of thought and new work linked by a commitment to the preservation and promotion of secularism and democracy in South Asia. The contributors to this volume come from different disciplines and ideological persuasions—political scientists, sociologists, historians, literary critics and the area specialist.



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overarching framework of cohesion. Drawing on Newton Gunasingh's work, Yngodas' other essay in *Globalization and Non-traditional Security* highlights how economic liberalization policies pursued by Sri Lanka since 1977 contributed to the growing ethnic divide on the island. The earlier policy of state-led economic development through import substitution industrialization led to the emergence of a Sinhala entrepreneurial class as well as of blue and white collar masses. When economic reforms began to be implemented in 1977, both these groups lost state patronage and protection. The worst sufferers were the middle level entrepreneurial stratum largely comprising Sinhala groups—mainly Tamils—time, non-Sinhala groups—mainly Tamil—benefited from the new economic policy, as job opportunities grew in the private sector. This led to the frequent ethnic hostilities and anti-minority riots in the 1977-1983 period. Thus, overall, the three books make many good contributions to our understanding of various issues that dominate our times. But as stated earlier, many of these are better located within the ambit of public policy, instead of endlessly stretching the definition of security. ■

5. Kalyanaraman is Associate Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

tant component of which has been the withdrawal of the state from its previously dominant role in the economy. These reforms are also dissolving the patron-client linkages earlier established between the state and various social classes, which found expression in public policy arenas like social welfare, rural development, poverty alleviation, etc. One result of this has been the reluctance of governments to forge domestic policy consensus on economic growth and development issues. The removal of the state from its earlier role of shaping and managing social change—a task that is being assigned to the market now—is likely to shake the ground on which social groups have been standing. In Sri Lanka, for example, economic policy making has become centralized in the hands of the President and a handful of bureaucrats working closely with Colombo and Washington-based officials of the World Bank and the IMF. Local pressure groups on economic policy have been marginalized and dismissed as not being in tune with the times. This demonstrates "the relative isolation of the state from domestic political consensual politics in defining economic policy agendas and priorities." With states no longer willing to be the link between society and economy, their legitimacy is under attack, which does not augur well for the future. For, it is states that keep societies together as "human associations of common interest" by providing an

entity instead of a nation-state? But it needs to be pointed out that such a recasting of the 'ideal' of India would simultaneously question the individual identities of the other states in the subcontinent all of which fall within the Indian civilizational space. Yngodas' essays focus on how the globalization process has adversely impacted on the politics of, and on the relationship between ethnic groups in South Asian countries. In his essay in *Security in the New Millennium*, Yngodas expresses the fear that South Asia as a whole is hurtling towards political anomie, caused by the weakening and delegitimation of state structures and the reconstruction of social structures in response to the capital-led and market-governed economy. The latter flows directly from the policies of economic liberalization, an impor-



Asia's Future-Jehad or Partnership

Eric Gonsalves

WAR AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD

By Eric S. Margolis

Roli Books, Delhi, 2001, pp. 250, Rs. 395.00

Asia has seen more conflicts and tensions during the last half century than any other part of the world. Bitter disputes erupted between newly independent neighbours. Cold war involvement often made them worse. Trends towards increasing stabilization of the state system are now emerging with greater maturity, and as realization grows that interstate problems are often blown up out of proportion. Against that regional cooperation brings considerable benefits. Ethnic and communal rivalries have been ruthlessly exploited by domestic political groups and international alliances in pursuit of their narrow interests. They have thus strengthened fundamentalist groups. Provision of the latest weapons and communication technologies, and learning resource mobilization using narcotics, drugs, arms, refugees and money laundering from their mentor intelligence agencies has often enabled terrorist groups to become autonomous. Belatedly after September 11, the international community now recognizes the need for joint action to remove this scourge. It is doubtful whether they fully accept that the underlying causes which provide the recruits must be removed.

Eric Margolis in this book *War at the top of the World* shows how a competent reporter and analyst can fail to understand current reality partly because of a romantic involvement with a freedom movement and partly because it serves the then perceived national interest of his country and its allies. Enamoured perhaps by similar tales from 19th century counterparts involving the drama of the "great game" played by the British and Russian Empires, he makes a fairly confident prediction that the future of Asia could be decided by a confrontation between India and China in the 21st century. The unwritten assumption seems to be that military dictatorships under selfless Islamic generals might really be the best outcome.

No one can dispute the commitment and bravery of the Afghan mujahideen who took on the might of the Soviet Union. But it is another matter to accept their leaders' commitment to jihad in Afghanistan and even more so in Kashmir. The romantic in Margolis ignores the mercenary element and jockeying for power between warlords. The roles of Pakistan's ISI and the CIA are minimized. His notion that the Taliban was just a return to the "good old tribal ways" is belied by their speedy fall once Pakistani Government support was withdrawn, and the subsequent relief all over Afghanistan. That jihad must then focus on Kashmir was not the inevitable outcome. More appropriate would be a parallel with the bands of European mercenaries in Africa and the need to eliminate them and their depredations once they become redundant to their original masters.

Arab fighters are given pride of place in his accounts of actual combat in Afghanistan and Kashmir. That US and Israeli policy played a major role in their creation is passed over. Margolis sees little to fear from Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaida. Margolis' book was published before September 11 which changed all that. Now that America rather than India or the Soviet Union is the main target, the "bravest men on earth" might no longer deserve that title.

Alongside the Afghanis and jihadis, Margolis reserves high praise for Pakistani generals. He credits President Zia—a selfless, dedicated and enlightened leader—with planning the break up of the Soviet Union. All ISI Directors are eulogized. The only non-Muslim to get some measure of praise is K.P.S. Gill—presumably because Margolis sees him as coming from the same mould. It is not clear how much interaction he has had with the civilian and political leadership in India, Pakistan or

China as they are almost invariably dismissed as pompous, vainglorious or corrupt. Margolis' admiration for Zia extends to the extent of attributing his aircraft accident to a KGB plot with CIA connivance. Surely the latter would have made sure the American Ambassador was not a passenger in the same aircraft.

The book has such an anti-Indian slant that it could have been written by a Pakistani public relations agent. Indian history and society, Hinduism, India's relations with her neighbours are all projected through this distorting prism. The 1965 and 1971 conflicts are discussed in brief paragraphs as Indian provocations. Kargil is barely mentioned during a lengthy chapter on a visit to Pakistani posts in Siachen. Punjab and Kashmir come in for much longer treatment. There is something to ponder over here. Pakistani public relations has always been far superior to that of India. But among geopolitical experts is there an automatic bias towards allies and has the end of the Cold War and September 11 changed that?

A more fundamental question that has been raised is whether Hindu-Muslim enmity and the Indo-Pak confrontation can ever be ended. Margolis concludes that history shows that there need be no permanent divides or confrontation. This is a view that the majority in India and Pakistan would share in normal circumstances. It is however important that sections of the political and religious leaderships in both countries and of the military leadership in Pakistan come to accept that this is the vital national interest of both countries. Pursuing narrow vested interests by espousing sectarian causes has to be subordinated to the larger interest. Musharraf's speech of January 12 points in this direction. Even if his sincerity is in doubt, there is every reason for India and the international community to ensure that he and Pakistan live up to his promises—the more so after recent events in Gujarat and Ayodhya.

The major proposition of the book is that there will be an almost inevitable confrontation between India and China in the 21st century that will determine the future of Asia. This thesis finds favour with some western experts and a few analysts in India and China. Many of them have taken more effort than Margolis to understand the internal dynamics of India and China, and the interaction between them. However this

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proposition has become less and less tenable over the last decade. Increasingly the leaderships in both countries have accepted that the other will survive and develop into a major economic power—India somewhat later than China. To do this, stabilizing their immediate environment in Asia is essential. Further they are finding the need to work together in handling multilateral institutions and globalization. The advantages of increasing bilateral economic cooperation are more and more accepted and acted upon. China has already taken some initiative to open up cross border trade and regional cooperation in the Kunming initiative. India needs to be far more active and responsive. A series of increasingly constructive statements during high level bilateral visits in the last year have not been given their due importance because they coincided with other events. The territorial problem over the boundaries is being actively addressed by drawing up an agreed "Line of Actual Control" on the ground. Although unlikely, the acceptance by China of the "one nation two systems" for Tibet would remove another irritant.

Some dissonance in their strategic outlooks needs to be reduced by more intensive dialogue. The tacit acceptance of India as a nuclear power by the West and the presence of an American garrison in Pakistan after September 11 should make it easier for the two countries to do this. India and China can and should become the poles for stabilizing any future Asian system.

The world is still full of tensions and potential confrontation. Most of us are less than objective in making judgements and too easily take "we versus they" attitudes. Reporters and commentators like Margolis who visit remote battlefields and analyse conflict situations as outsiders can provide valuable inputs. But their judgements have to be objective and inconvenient facts must not be dismissed to ensure tidy conclusions. ■

Eric Gonsalves is a former Indian Ambassador and Secretary, External Affairs Ministry, Government of India.

Kargil: One More View

Maj. Gen. Ashok Krishna

BLOOD ON THE SNOW

By Maj. Gen. A.K. Verma (Retd.)

Manohar Publishers, Delhi, 2002, pp. 227, Rs. 475.00

This interesting book is divided into three parts. The first part (82 pages) deals with the 'Great Game' (British moves to check Russia's southward expansion), 'Genesis of the Partition', and the Kashmir issue. It is a story of the British establishment's intrigue, conspiracy and partiality to Pakistan. Thereafter, the ongoing happenings in Kashmir are discussed till the year 1998. Much of the information given in Part I is known, but the author holds the attention of the reader by highlighting important aspects. If we look at the past, then it is necessary to read C. Dasgupta's recent book *War and Diplomacy in Kashmir 1947-48* (for a review see *The Book Review*, Vol. XVI No. 4) which also speaks of India's laxity in learning appropriate lessons from those days with regard to firmly dealing with Pakistan to secure our national security and strategic interests.

In discussing military aspects, the author rightly points out that undue emphasis in the Indian Army was given to warfare in the plains and the deserts, and mountain warfare was relegated to the second place. However, after the Sumdorong Chu incident of 1986 in the Eastern sector, and the consequent adoption of the Forward Posture, mountain warfare did get back its pride of place and infantry units of the Army were well trained in mountain warfare since 1987. Units are rotated from East to West and vice versa, hence, before Kargil happened, we had enough units with good expertise in mountain warfare. Kargil occurred not only because of glaring omissions regarding intelligence and equipment deficiencies, but also due to the failings of higher commanders who did not have a good enough feel of the ground situation. In the period 1988-1999, the Northern Command was led by two army commanders from the armoured corps, one from the engineers and one from the artillery. Whilst they all had good career profiles, they did not have an in-depth grasp of the ground realities of mountain warfare, which is born out of years of experience in operating and undergoing hardship in mountainous terrain, at the lower levels.

In Part II of the book, General Verma deals with the Kargil engagement. He relies heavily on after action reports, particularly the one of 121 (Independent) Infantry Brigade Group, as also some interviews. These reports are a useful aid but they can also be self serving. Back-



ground events and deployments on our own side are covered in detail but not the events of actual battle between the two sides. Coverage of these events could have been more comprehensive.

The author writes that Pakistan should have gone for deeper objectives and then held them which would have made matters worse for the Indian side (p.100). It needs to be mentioned that the Pakistani plan, though brilliant in conception, was a failure from the administrative point of view. Therefore, had they gone for deeper objectives, their deployment would have become even more unbalanced. Since Pakistan had the initiative, her plans should have been discussed first before covering its operations, rather than subsequently. The lessons highlighted by the author in this part are mainly tactical.

Part III deals with hindsight and future issues and also an analysis of Pakistani plans. The author painstakingly covers the use of offensive air support in operations and highlights the need for assured support for ground operations in the future. However, he does not dwell on the specifics of the air operations carried out during the Kargil war. The points brought out in the chapter on 'Leaders and Generals' are well covered. Though the author calls the Kargil war a tactical victory but a strategic failure, he does not adequately substantiate this thesis. Furthermore, the Kargil war was not only fought under the glare of the media but also in a nuclear backdrop and close international attention. The United States and the G-8 countries played a part and there were important political and diplomatic responses, both from India and Pakistan. These aspects cannot be ignored in a modern war and ought to have been highlighted, even if briefly.

Some chapters are a mere two to three pages in length; this could have been avoided. ■

Maj. Gen. Ashok Krishna is Deputy Director, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi.

The Real and the Representative

Shohini Ghosh

RETAKE OF AMRITA: DIGITAL PHOTOMONTAGES
By Vivan Sundaram
Tulika, 2001, pp. 56, Rs. 400.00

Retake of Amrita comprises 37 digital photomontages by Vivan Sundaram based on the "photographs of Umrao Singh Sher-Gil (1870-1954)" and those "from the Sher Gil family archive". The primary protagonist of the series is the exceptionally talented painter Amrita Sher-Gil (1913-1941) born to Hungarian mother Marie Antoinette and Indian father Umrao Singh. Vivan Sundaram is the son of Amrita's sister Indira who, along with her parents and sister, is one of the major protagonists in the photomontage series. The "contrived ensembles", as Vivan describes them, are a reconfiguring of his own family photographs. The re-ordering, disruption and layering re-tells family and personal history in a fashion that are simultaneously interpretative and endlessly open-ended. The photo-texts are accompanied by fairly detailed annotations providing information of the different visual sources as well as insights into the digital manoeuvrings.

Digital photomontages are re-stagings of photographs. In his introduction Vivan Sundaram describes Umrao Singh as "the essential photographer" whose work he has orchestrated with a "digital wand" some half a century later. This "wand" he writes, allows the artist to "slip between and behind the paintings" while the "painted figure can be seen to be real, as real as the artist or the model." Digital imaging allows for new insertions and juxtapositions resolutely destroying the possibility of absolute closure. All visual texts defy foreclosing because readings can be as diverse and plural as the readers themselves. But digital intervention makes the text itself endlessly transformative. Post-photography and the emergence of digital imaging has been extremely effective in significantly changing the ways we perceive our relationship between the world of the images and that of lived experience.

Vivan Sundaram's photomontages are constitutive of multi-layered intersections of different space, time, cultures and geographical territory. The photographer and his subject, the artist and her paintings coexist simultaneously with real and representational characters. The disruption of space, time and chronology displace familiar practices of image production and exchange. Take the photomontage on page 16. Amrita lies languorously against a haystack waiting possibly for a romantic tryst. Her nephew waves his "digital wand" to materialize Amrita's parents and sister in the backdrop. They seem immersed in their own interaction while at the same time

waiting to witness the culmination of Amrita's tryst. Amrita's husband Victor Egan took her photograph against the haystack somewhere in Southern Hungary in 1938 while the photographs of her parents and Indira were taken by a professional photographer in Budapest in 1932. The family archive is therefore not one of visible "documentary" evidence, but a fantasmatic reimagining of people embedded in unexpected space-time juxtapositions.

The photomontage on page 17 shows Marie Antoinette holding her cat as Umrao Singh, his hand pulling the string of the camera shutter, looks on. Their daughters, appearing somewhat apparitional, stand behind their parents and watch. The annotation reveals that when the photograph was taken "Amrita was dead and Indira married."



This was a "visit" that would have made the elderly couple happy, as at the time, the family had been estranged. Chronology and mortality are reversed in order to create a wish-fulfilling family portrait. Similarly, page 49 depicts a self-portrait of Umrao Singh in his bedroom-cum-study in Shimla where Marie Antoinette had shot herself. His wife's liminal presence is marked behind him on the wardrobe through which the bullet had gone. Here, death and time are reversed to re-stage a haunting and hallucinatory vision.

The photomontages therefore seem to evoke a dream-state bringing to mind the cinematic experiments of the 'psychodramatic trance mode' of the 1940's American avant-garde and in particular the dreamscape of Maya Deren films. Like Deren, Vivan Sundaram is invested in exploring the confrontation of multiple selves through the deployment of mirrors, paintings, reflections, duplications and the masquerade of staging and performance. These thematics appear most powerfully in the photomontage on pages 36-37. A continuous relay of mirrors and reflections show Amrita, Indira, Marie Antoinette, Umrao Singh and Vivan himself in a complex web of relationships. It is as though the family were gathered in a mirrored backstage costuming themselves in order to stage an elaborate performance. Vivan the

child is seated on his grandfather's lap holding a twin-lens reflex camera. Indira is seated with her back to us and we see her face reflected in the same mirror whose corner captures her father and son. (Indira's photograph was shot in Paris in 1933.) Marie Antoinette stands in the middle dressed in an "oriental robe in Lahore 1912" studying her own reflection in a mirror that reflects yet another mirror with a woman looking into it. (The mirror within the mirror is a painting by George Hendrik Breitner titled *Small Earring* made in 1893.) The mirror in the extreme right shows Amrita posing in a saree while her digital clone stands next to her in European clothes. The elaborate multiplication of mirrors and the self-reflection of the players become an iconic representation of the entire project. Perhaps for this reason, Vivan begins his introduction with a discussion of this photograph.

The photomontages are not just re-stagings of the body but also of interlocking and diverging gazes. The labyrinthine relay of 'gazes' within and across frames inaugurates various erotic possibilities. On pages 28-27, an Umrao Singh self-portrait incorporates Amrita in a party dress while her lover, painter Boris Taslitzky overlooks the tableau from a painting on the wall. (The portrait of Taslitzky was made by Amrita in 1930). Several times in the book father and daughter appear in sensual juxtaposition. They are inextricably bound by their respective preoccupations with performing the body. Their shared impulse converge through a new visual experience "presented" by the nephew/grandson who has inherited the legacy of both painter and photographer.

The homoeroticism of Sher-Gil's paintings is heightened in the montages through both the "look" and intratextual layering. In one montage Amrita, in a photograph taken in Budapest in the early 1930's, poses against the backdrop of one of her most sensual studies of the female body, *The Reclining Nude* (1933). On page 12 she merges partially with another of her nudes, posing thereby as a couple. Similarly, on page 26, she poses "pin-up poster style" with her *Self-Portrait as Tahitian*. Vivan writes, "in her reference to Gauguin's painting of erotic women there is an ironic reclamation of lost ground: the desire in women." The irony intensifies in the light of Amrita's desire for women. While the written text elides any explicit reference to her bisexuality, a queer reading of the photomontages are inescapable.

Umrao Singh, as Vivan points out, is one of the pioneers of modern Indian photography. His technical and aesthetic photographic experimentations along with his desire to stage, perform and preserve his own family archive are now transferred to his grandson. With the help of newer technology, the family archives are re-staged yet again. This time for stunning insights and revelations. ■

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Breaking Norms

Rita Kothari

MAGANBHAI'S GLUE, PAGES FROM A DIARY, VADKI, PHOREN SOAP AND MAUJILA MANILAL
By Bhupen Khakhar. Translated by Ganesh Devy, Naushil Mehta and Bina Srinivasan
Katha, 2001, pp. 203, Rs. 200.00

It seems odd and unreal to talk about literature from Gujarat at the moment. The violent onslaughts that followed 27th February 2002 simply do not allow the leisure or luxury of discussing literature. The Gujarati middle class has played no insignificant role in the month-long violence. However Khakhar's middle class, the chief focus of his selected writing published elegantly by Katha, has little relation with the class that took to the streets to loot and burn. This lack of relation can itself provide interesting insights into the evolution of what is loosely termed as the middle class. There is a refreshing absence of holy cows in Khakhar's middle class; strongly religious and ethical sentiments do not play an important role in the lives of people. Although some of Khakhar's recent paintings do address the communal side to men and women in Gujarat, his selected writings in this volume are peopled by absurd albeit well meaning common men and women. Jamna and Jamnadas (of *Vadki* fame); Savita and Sharmistha (Manilal's die-hard admirers in the play *Maujila Manilal*) or even Manilal himself for that matter—his playboy tendencies notwithstanding. They all seem rather silly, and exaggerated but one can easily imagine them living next door or at times, within us. Sunderlal from the first entry in *Pages from a Diary* is a perfectly unspectacular character. It is a different matter that he carries more weight than his boss, the owner of Ambika mill. Added to this, the boss's wife Arundhatiben considers him very good looking. These small triumphs makes Sunderlal's day and Khakhar's stories. Jitubhai of another entry in the same series is equally unspectacular, but the narrator's painterly eyes makes him come alive through words, "He caught my hand. Involvements, allurements, attraction had disappeared from the heart. I was thinking of paintings. A complete canvas full of the white vest, the white dhoti and the slight transparency that revealed the phallus" (*Pages from a Diary*, p.37). These are not larger-than-life, forbidding characters of the tragedy, but perfectly harmless, pretentious characters of the comedy. Of course they make much ado about nothing. Jamna of *Vadki* (meaning *katori* in Hindi) brings the whole chawl down when one of her *vadki*s is found missing. The first repercussions of the *vadki* are felt in her own marital life which till its disappearance was sorted out in the best possible manner:

Jamna and Jamnadas entered into an agreement on their wedding night. The contractual document was on stamp paper, duly signed by both parties. Its contents covered every possible eventuality of their married life (p. 41).

The contract included their resolution not to have a child under Section 9, Sub Section (a). Any amendment in the contract was done with mutual consensus and this included the number of days they could have sex. Life went on smoothly and contractually for both till the disappearance of the *vadki*. Jamna lay forlorn on the bed recalling events connected with the *vadki*, the number of hands and kitchens it changed, while Jamnadas sat smoking and wondering what had gone wrong with their marital peace. She does not tell him, "When you wear goggles and smoke cigarettes, you look just like Ashok Kumar". The rest of the story is a hilarious mock-epic account of Jamna's investigations for the *vadki*. She hires Jaglo the little boy as a detective to carry out a secret search in Vimla and Savita's kitchens and also to report on any incidental information that might throw light upon the *vadki* trail. Note this spicy piece of conversation ably translated by Naushil Mehta:

Savita: What does she think? Am I a *vadki*-thief? Just three days back I returned her *vadki*—why does she come swinging her big bum to ask questions every now and again? Are all of us thieves and is she the only honest person?

Vimla: You know her nature.

Savita: I don't have to take this from her in this birth!

Vimla: She is suspicious of everyone. If anyone so much as talks to Jamnadas she comes and stands between them like a shield.

Savita: *Don't know your doings?* Twice already she's snooped around my kitchen, and yet this morning at eight she again dropped in to coo like a koel!

The first story, *Maganbhai's Glue* also has a quick succession of events as Maganbhai the entrepreneur par excellence ventures into every new business now and then. Maganbhai's factory serves as a site for his path breaking experiments ranging from a glue that could make parts of a human body stick to the US bound mango pickles. Emerging out of nowhere, Maganbhai sits as a pillion on the narrator's scooter with his 'khadi dhoti fluttered like a flag in the wind'. With the same lack of ceremony and glamour he enters the narrator's life as a friend and lover. This semi-literate, dhoti-wearing, chivda-eating character is a far cry from the Bombay or Bangalore dwelling, English-speaking bohemian image of a homosexual we carry with us most of the time. Maganbhai words, "These days I am reading Dharmamanthan and from time to time I go to Khandwala Baba for enlightenment. Tell me, do you want to love me?" point to a different idiom for sexual



interactions enacted as they are in middling, dusty towns of India.

The story *Phoren Soap* does not sustain Khakhar's sardonic humour with as much brevity as *vadki*. However, through Jeevanlal's obsession with the "phoren soap" Khakhar captures the pre-globalization Gujju fixation for things American, and reminds us of a common phrase, "Phoren nun chhe" or more elliptically, "Tyan nun chhe!" Moreover, the Gujarati linguistic and cultural echoes escape from the prison-house of English and become audible (at least to this reviewer from Gujarat) adding to the value of this elegantly produced book.

The collection ends with Khakhar's well-known play *Maujila Manilal* translated extremely well by Bina Srinivasan. Manilal is a philanderer who introduces a note of excitement in the drab and dull lives of Savita and Sharmistha. Savita's husband has a nonchalant attitude towards this affair because he is too religious to bother. Despite his overly pious life, he is not a fit candidate for heaven. In a gesture of theological radicalism, Vishnu chooses Manilal for the joys of heaven. After all, Manilal has been instrumental in providing a trifle more happiness to the two women who look up to him for roses, mogras and passionate lovemaking. Khakhar strikes a brilliant note by making Manilal woo the women in English. No ordinary Indian English, these are original nursery rhymes that send tremors of desire through Savita and Sharmistha! Fidelity or marriage is thrown to the winds and the entire chawl hums with life.

By and large, the complete abandonment of prudish values runs as a thread common to all the stories and conveys Khakhar's stand on sexual politics. From a purely literary point of view, the sexual trysts between men and women appear overdone at times, and carry echoes of the Restoration Comedy. However, the author's insights on sexual and cultural fantasies of the middle class are irritatingly real. It is not surprising that the Gujarati literary canon does not include Bhupen Khakhar. Khakhar's sardonic vision defies the norms of "good taste" prevalent among the Gujarati literati. By way of final and entirely personal assessment, it must be said that Khakhar does not represent Gujarati writings at its best or worst. At the same time, he often provides a refreshing change after a hefty dose of bourgeois and over-pleasant Gujarati writing. ■

Rita Kothari teaches English in the Department of English, St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad.

A Festival Offering

Uma Das Gupta

MY BROKEN LOVE : GÜNTER GRASS IN INDIA AND BANGLADESH

Compiled and edited by Martin Kämpchen

Viking Penguin Books, India, 2001, pp. I-xiv+303, Rs. 395.00

This is a volume of essays and interviews on Günter Grass reflecting on his relationship with India and Bangladesh. As compiler and editor Martin Kämpchen has done his job thoughtfully and thoroughly. In his introduction he gives an overview of Grass's perceptions and responses to these two countries as he visited and revisited them. He has backed it up by two contributions by Grass himself, his lecture at the India International Centre in Delhi during his first visit to India in 1975, and a short piece by him called "The Vexing Cheerfulness of Bombay's Poor". The bulk of the essays and interviews are by the people who came close to Grass and his wife Ute during his visits to India and Bangladesh. There is a note on the contributors which give details of the relationships. The book ends with a useful bibliography of the writings of Günter Grass related to India, in one section, followed by a second section of writings on him which include reviews of Grass's books in Indian periodicals. It should be mentioned that the volume is an offering of the German Festival of India 2000-2001.

The essays give us a clear sense of the excitement in Calcutta and Dhaka round Grass's visits. He and his wife were made welcome by a variety of people, with writers and journalists and artists among them, who enthusiastically chaperoned them to places and communed with the couple in homely ways. His play *Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising* was translated into Bengali and staged by a large cast of Bengali trainee actors belonging to a voluntary group called the Theatre Arts Workshop. Grass codirected the play with Amitava Roy, Professor Roy has written extensively in this volume about that landmark experience. His writing brings us fairly close to the way Grass was interacting with an extended circle in Calcutta. It seems that Grass valued these interfaces for he was clearly very willing to sit in for days and hours at these rehearsals in Bengali even if he did not understand a word of it. That is a nice legacy left behind by Günter Grass.

It is not easy to put one's finger on what Grass actually made of his visit and stay of six months in Calcutta. There one can understand the question Khushwant Singh has raised in his essay, "What has India done to Günter Grass?", or even S.V. Raman's question in the title of his essay, "He came, he saw—but did he conquer?", without being able to find an

easy answer to the question. Here is one instance why the answer is not easy to find. When Grass came to stay for a year in Calcutta, but left after six months, he lived in a semi-rural location outside of Calcutta and struggled their way, he and his wife Ute, in suburban trains to come to Calcutta on a daily basis. After some weeks, understandably, they moved to a residence in Calcutta. By then they had made enough good friends who were willing to do whatever was possible to make their stay in Calcutta more comfortable and less erratic. But their choice of a suburban setting, in the first place, and it was their choice, hardly makes any sense when one sees from the accounts of their stay that they made no attempt to explore their locale.

It is reasonable to assume from the accounts of their travels in India what Khushwant Singh perceptively deduces in his essay "All said and done" that wherever Günter Grass went in India "he did much the same thing". "Fortunately", Singh writes, "he did much the same thing whether he was in Calcutta, Madras, Hyderabad, Bombay or Delhi. Every morning he went out with his sketch book, and made rough drawings. In his large-sized diary, he made copious notes of what he had seen and heard. He did not bother with historical buildings like mosques, mausolea, forts or temples... He did not spend time in gardens or on broad tree-lined avenues but went into the dirtiest slums and talked to the people through an interpreter. Then he spent several hours putting his impressions down on paper. The last thing he did before going to bed was to exchange views with his friends over glasses of red wine. He never indulged in small talk".

The last two pieces in the volume are autobiographical writings of Grass. These are by far the most gripping parts of the volume, specially the longer Nobel lecture. They give us some idea of something that was central to the shaping of Grass as a writer and as a person. Auschwitz was one, and the other his overriding position on the place of a writer in politics and society. Both these in a way have led Grass to look at other societies and to compare problems and mentalities for his own sake. To that extent one can guess why he wanted to come and spend time in India, and specially in Calcutta where writers abound and feel good about being a writer. That gives us something of an answer about Grass and Ute's



movements, their way of life while living in our part of the world. They did not try to do anything remarkable. They lived seriously but ordinarily, observing things and thinking about it all, leaving no other legacy but their actual visits, during which they made friends and reacted among them, then moved on with their own lives. Martin Kämpchen's straightforward and well-researched presentation of Günter Grass's visits to India and Bangladesh is a valuable record for the future. ■

Uma Das Gupta is Professor in the Social Sciences Division, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkatta.

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Biography of a Tireless Crusader

Partho Datta

SHRIKRISHNA NARAYAN RATANJANKAR 'SUJAN', A MANY SPLENDOURED GENIUS

By Sumati Mutatkar
Roli Books, New Delhi, 2001, pp.192, Rs.295.00

There is a very striking image of S.N.Ratanjankar in this little centenary biography penned by his devoted disciple Dr.Sumati Mutatkar. Ratanjankar is setting off on one of his innumerable train journeys which took him throughout India as a teacher, examiner and spokesperson for Hindustani classical music. Even before the journey has begun Ratanjankar has taken out his type-writer and his famous pen with its trademark green ink and is all set to work. There are letters to be answered, reports to be authored and of course new compositions to be notated for friends and disciples. Ratanjankar was no believer in squandering time. His tireless crusade for North India's rich classical heritage took up all his life, yet he remained at work cheerfully, winning the respect of other music maestros and the adulation of students. There is another wonderful anecdote recounted by Kumar Mukherjee in this book which is about a concert in Calcutta that he gave at the end of his life. On being complimented on his fine performance, the unusually modest Ratanjankar is said to have replied with a touch of pride that this was only to be expected of a student who had learnt from two of twentieth-century India's greatest music stalwarts – the scholar-musicologist V.N.Bhatkhande and the Agra vocalist Faiyyaz Khan!

Indeed S.N.Ratanjankar's training in music was truly enviable. Although he received early guidance from the Gwalior maestro Anantbua Joshi, he really blossomed under Bhatkhande who was attracted to this educated middle class youth from Bombay with infinite capacity for hard work. Bhatkhande was a nationalist and for him regenerating the arts and building the nation went hand in hand. Like most nationalists, Bhatkhande began his career as a lawyer and having accumulated substantial savings, he devoted the rest of his life to collecting, collating and theorizing Hindustani classical music. His multi-volume publications (mostly in Marathi) are encyclopaedic in scope and perhaps the most important repository of notated classical music in existence. Ratanjankar inherited his guru's pedagogic zeal and also his love of the Sanskrit language, a penchant for rescuing old and forgotten texts, of consensually resolving the spiky problems relating to the many interpretations of the same raga. In his own time Ratanjankar's scholarship was unrivalled and

he was seen as an authority on raga structure. Even famous ustads referred students to him for resolving contentious matters relating to musical grammar. Interestingly it was at Bhatkhande's encouragement that Ratanjankar went to learn more about "gayaki" (performative style) from Ustad Faiyyaz Khan. Luckily Bhatkhande and Faiyyaz Khan had great mutual respect and regard for each other. One was a textualizer, the other the most venerable example of the power of the oral tradition. Both understood that the need for these parallel traditions to come to terms with each other had arrived. The widespread use of the print medium and the arrival of audio recording had added a new urgency to such a task in the early decades of the twentieth century. As it turned out Ratanjankar became one of Faiyyaz Khan's most famous students, whose remarkable abilities the great ustad never failed to praise in public on numerous occasions.

Bhatkhande died in the 1930s, Faiyyaz Khan in 1950. But to carry on his work Bhatkhande had set up in the 1920s in Lucknow the famous Marris [later re-named Bhatkhande] School of Music with courtly and government backing. The idea was to institutionalize classical music on modern grounds complete with its own syllabus, teaching faculty and examinations and to encourage the shift of patronage from the decadent feudal courts to the more "progressive" middle classes. Behind it worked the old nationalist sentiment of rejuvenation, of "saving" the arts from the lower classes (*nats*, *baijis*, street performers) and "illiterate" ustads. Reformist in scope, it had all the problems associated with such a pedagogic project. Contested on many grounds, it did have some notable successes—chief among which was the way the Hindu middle classes came to relate to the higher arts, namely the new social respectability conferred on classical music. Many women from middle class educated homes came to learn at this school. Dr.Mutatkar was one of them. In a fine autobiographical essay in this volume she recounts her own spiritual struggle and the encouragement received from her husband and her father, when she decided to enrol in this school after her marriage, leaving her little daughter to the care of relatives. Ratanjankar had been appointed principal earlier on by Bhatkhande and it speaks volumes for his commitment that he stuck to this responsibil-

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ity in spite of the many vicissitudes that this institution faced including declining patronage and severe financial trouble. Susheela Mishra, another contemporary student, has written elsewhere that for years Principal Ratanjankar survived on a measly salary of Rs.100 a month and sometimes not even that.

But somehow the school survived and attracted students from all over India. The most eagerly awaited occasions were the times when famous musicians arrived as examiners. Rajabhaiya Poonchwale, Mushtaq Hussain Khan and Allauddin Khan were some of the eminent personalities who graced the board of examiners. Such occasions doubtless became opportunities for the maestros to exchange notes on musical matters. Ratanjankar's own compositions and interests were widely appreciated. Many music critics have commented that sitar maestro Ravi Shankar's interpretations of ragas like Nat Bhairav and Jhinjhoti owe much to influence of discussions held in the conducive atmosphere of Lucknow. Ratanjankar created many ragas like Salagwarali (Todi), Rajani Kalyan etc. which his faithful disciples (K.G.Ginde, S.C.R.Bhat, Dinkar Kainkini) have sung, propagated and recorded throughout their active singing careers. Kumar Gandharva too was a prominent acolyte. Ratanjankar also adapted many Carnatic ragas to the Hindustani system of which Ragas Basant Mukhari and Charukeshi are prominent examples.

As a prolific composer Ratanjankar always emphasized the importance of *sahitya* in lyrics. His own interest in Sanskrit led to some inspired compositions in that language. Not all his experiments in this sphere however met with approval. Vocalists for instance have often grumbled that the overt stress on language made his compositions too wordy. But his real genius can be seen in the way he met the intellectual challenge of extending the scope, and devising new matching compositions to the ones that already existed in the traditional repertoire, especially in the more rare ragas (Malavi, Pancham, Rewa, Triveni and the unusual Pilu ki Manjh, a combination of Pilu and Tilak Kamod). Even to this day his beautiful *bandishes* in Jhinjhoti, Hemnat, Khat

etc. have wide currency. So popular have been these compositions that they have even managed to gain acceptance across gharana boundaries. Dr.Mutatkar in a separate and very valuable section has listed her own favourite Ratanjankar compositions noting carefully the lyrics and giving the background to each raga. A real bonus is the anecdotal history behind each composition which makes for delightful reading. My personal favourite is the Raga Narayani which as the name suggests, is akin to the Raga Durga. Dr.Mutatkar tells us that this Carnatic raga had found a place in Bhatkhande's list, but few had the secret to its elaboration. Ratanjankar's two compositions showed the way beautifully. It was as the late Sheila Dhar once wittily commented in a different context, the magical ability to turn a butterfly into an elephant. Only the most learned and intellectually aware musician with a supreme sense of aesthetics could mould the pathway of a raga. Ratanjankar was one such person.

Dr. Mutatkar has written in detail about the multifaceted personality of her guru in this book. Ratanjankar's grasp of languages was well known. Other than Marathi and Sanskrit he was also fluent in English and Hindi. He was heaped with honours throughout his life. The Government of India awarded him the Padmabhushan. He was made the vice-chancellor of the first music university of independent India at Khairagarh (M.P.). Later in life he composed and staged successfully dance-dramas like *Geet Sarita*, a panoramic history of Indian music through the ages. He was a prolific writer and authored one of the first biographies in English of Bhatkhande when NBT inaugurated its biography series. Long before the easy availability of cassettes and CD's, Ratanjankar had in an innovative set of 78 rpm discs recorded an introduction to raga music with a commentary. His public career had its share of ups and downs. On being appointed to the newly created board for grading musicians at AIR, he received his share of criticism.

But his influence on musicians was wide as can be gauged from the tributes that have been reproduced in the second half of the book. Dr.Mutatkar's judicious and well-timed biography is a must for every music lover's library. As a senior disciple of Ratanjankar her contribution as a musician, thinker and teacher, together with contemporaries like Balasaheb Poonchwale has been enormous. There is no doubt that the towering figure of Ratanjankar played a big role in shaping the musical careers of his illustrious students. Born in 1900, S.N.Ratanjankar died in 1974, on the same day that snatched away Ustad Amir Khan, another luminary from the music world. ■

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Rich Resonances

T.N. Madan

THE COOKING OF MUSIC AND OTHER ESSAYS
By Sheila Dhar
Permanent Black, Delhi, 2001, pp.114, Rs.
195.00

All but one of the eleven chapters in this book are occasional essays about Hindustani *raga* ('classical') music. All lovers of this music will find here something to interest them. For the uninitiated there are accessible descriptions about different kinds of music (*dhrupad, khayal, thumri*, etc.) and different *gharanas* or styles of singing (*gayaki*) (Kirana, Agra, Patiala, etc.). Sheila Dhar herself belonged to the Kirana gharana, which was called to eminence (although not established) by the greatly gifted Abdul Karim Khan and his nephew Abdul Wahid Khan, who both could indeed be called musical geniuses. For the knowledgeable, the author offers sophisticated and insightful commentary. Thus, she points out that an outstanding feature of the Kirana *gayaki* was 'the refined sculpting of the melodic line': 'each *jagah* or "place" in the scale of a raga is not a point but a musical area that must be explored anew each time and brought to life in the living moment' (p.22).

Writing about the two great Khans, she emphasizes their devotion to *swara* as compared to presentational aspects, notably *tala*. In a succinct summing up, she writes: 'while the uncle's forte was emotional appeal and delicate lyricism, the nephew's music was celebrated for its intellectual vigour, purity of raga and relentless sense of structure' (p.24). Observations such as the foregoing bear testimony to Sheila Dhar's highly refined capacity for nuanced musical judgement. As she has pointed out in this book and the earlier set of essays, *Here's Someone I'd like You to Meet* (OUP, 1995), her musical talents as singer and (no less important) listener were cultivated under the exacting guidance of teachers such as the brothers Niaz Ahmad and Faiyyaz Ahmad (of the Kirana gharana) and the unique Pandit Pran Nath of Delhi.

Steady application, deliberate cultivation, and critical appraisal are of course the ingredients of good raga music, also known as '*pakka*' or 'cooked', or perfected, music. Sheila Dhar insightfully draws attention to the similarity, from the 'maker's' as well as the 'enjoyer's' points of view, between cooking and eating a meal and singing and listening at a concert. She quotes an old proverb, '*rag, rasoi, pagree, kabhi, kabhi ban jaye*' (music, food, and the turban turn out right only rarely), and the maestro Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, '*Ai khana, te ai gana*' (as comes the food, so comes the



music). And for Pran Nath, 'real music was only for those who could replicate the aroma of kababs in every note! One must not press the comparison too far, however, and Sheila Dhar knew this better than anyone else, for *pakka* is not quite derived from *pakaana*.

Throughout this small book there are many insightful observations about the performance and appreciation of music. Thus, she draws attention to the age-old and controversial tension between the verbal meaning and the purely musical nature of an utterance. Discussing Begum Akhtar's style of singing ghazals, she says that this great artist often opted for light-weight ghazals (e.g., *ai muhabbat tere anjam peh rona ayaa*) so that the

meaningful word did not become the foe of the 'sound' of music. (Incidentally, Sheila Dhar once told me how, foolishly, many music critics hesitated to use the word 'artist' without a final 'e' to refer to a musician!) Another very thoughtful observation is about the incompatibility between performing Hindustani classical music, particularly of the vocal variety, and the techniques of recording. Most pointedly she comments, and very rightly: 'In the case of a Western composer, a recording celebrates the perfection and competence of a scored work... This is not true of Indian classical music where the most valuable element to be celebrated is the fluidity, and the genuinely unpremeditated nature of the musician's utterance' (pp. 44-5).

If there is something here for the beginner and much more for the (shall we say?) sophisticated lover of music, there are also anecdotes in this book for those with a sense of fun, for what great musician ever lived, who did not on occasion cause much mirth among his listeners? And who could excel Sheila Dhar as a raconteur and a mimic? One would have to listen to her hilarious account of the 'taming' of the exuberant raga Adana by the irrepressible Vinayakrao Patwardhan, resident in his turban and medalled *achkan*, in the presence of the viceroy, Lady Linlithgow, to get the full flavour (*maza*) of the story in chapter 8. As the notes rise up and up the scale to the climax of the sung line (*sam*), Patwardhan's composition for the occasion screams 'Lay-dee (Linlithgow) go, go,

go!' (p.73), with the august lady wondering about the gentleman's insistence on her departure when the couple were already due to leave! Those who may have heard her tell and sing it all out to them amidst peals of laughter will feel nostalgic and sad that Sheila Dhar is no more to charm them by her sonorous singing voice, or to instruct them by insightful observations, or simply to regale them with funny stories. And let us not forget the rich fare at her dining table.

Sheila Dhar's love of music made her care for all those who also loved music in their own, not always refined, ways, like the Pakistani aircraft leader in New York who owned a 'many splendoured' harmonium (quite by accident), but did not know how to play a single note on it (chapter 10)! I remember many occasions when she asked me to hear a particular musician's rendering of a raga that I told her did not appeal to me. She wanted me to be a better listener. And I remember the day I told her that my wife and I had found a particular concert by a musical duo disappointing. 'But why did you go to listen to them at all in the first place?', she demanded to know!

The Cooking of Music is a precious little gift to possess and a memento to cherish. As I read it, I thought I could hear Sheila Dhar's *hazar dastan* voice, full and rich and resonant. ■

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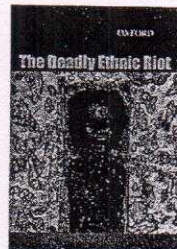
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