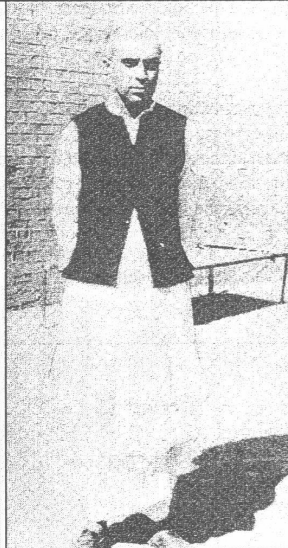
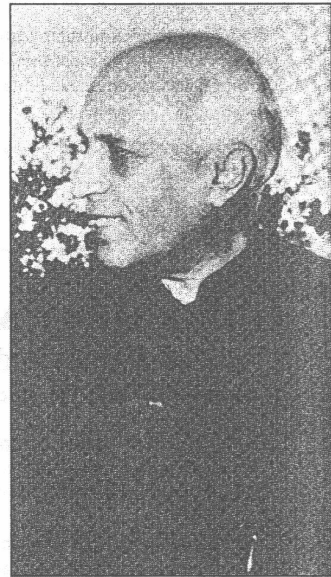
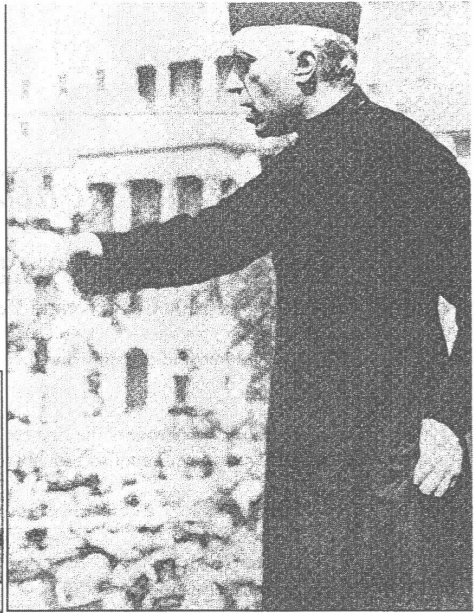


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Subscription Rates 2003

Single Issue: Rs. 40.00

Annual Subscription (12 issues)

Individual: Rs. 400.00 / \$50.00 / £35.00

Institutional: Rs 500.00 / \$75.00 / £50.00

(Inclusive of bank charges and postage)

Life Donors: Rs 10,000.00 and above

Computer inputs, design and layout :
Geeta Parameswaran

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"Agency of the Visual"

Malavika Karlekar

BEYOND APPEARANCES? VISUAL PRACTICES AND IDEOLOGIES IN MODERN INDIA

Edited by Sumathi Ramaswamy

Sage Publications, New Delhi, Contribution to Indian Sociology Occasional Studies 10,

pp. i-xxix +412, Rs. 780.00

The other day, in one of the many shops specializing in scanning and computer printing at Nehru Place, New Delhi's amazing hotch potch of competing techno worlds, *dhabas* and wholesale cloth stores, a young man keyed in a Sanskrit mantra deftly; he was adept at mentally converting the Devnagari 'equivalents' of the English alphabet. As his fingers flew, he was overseen by a young lad with several *tikas* on his forehead and an elderly man with a shaven head—except for an impressive cauliflower-shaped tuft (*choti*) of a true believer at the crown.

Ancient wisdom was transformed through a modern machine into a page to be distributed to the faithful, a visual reminder. That the computer technician did not understand what he was typing and that the clients knew little or nothing about this process of visualization was irrelevant to the entire exercise.

It is just this bridge between modernity and tradition, between the new and the old and the role of the visual that the twelve essays in *Beyond Appearances?* seeks to explore. Based on contributions to a conference in 2000 that appeared in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* in 2002, art historians, social anthropologists as well as historians look at what editor Sumathi Ramaswamy calls "the agency of the visual" (p. xv). A wide-ranging (if not somewhat daunting) menu comprising "the critical ingredients of a hermeneutic of the visible in modern India" range around the contemporary buzzwords of "agency, publicity, reproducibility, interocularity, hybridity, mobility" (p. xxvii). The volume provides a rich, densely argued fare spread over 400-odd pages with several black and white reproductions as well as ten colour plates—a brave attempt at text-cum-visual production by an academic publishing house. A noteworthy contribution to the somewhat meagre pickings in the area of visual anthropology/social and cultural history in this country, *Beyond Appearances?*, as the title suggests, consolidates what Ramaswamy calls the "the visual turn" in modern Indian studies" (p. xiii).

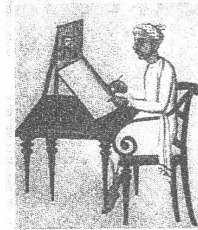
Reproducibility and hybridity are what Partha Mitter looks at in his fascinating discussion of print culture in late 19th century India. Outstanding examples of the meld between western print technology, Indian iconography as well as European art were Ramananda Chatterjee's *Modern Review* and *Prabasi* in Bengali. If Chatterjee was able to "establish Ravi Varma as

a national hero, even as he persuaded his readers to enjoy Victorian art as the epitome of artistic achievement" (p. 9), the lanes of Bombay, Poona and Calcutta were soon churning out mechanically reproduced prints for a more broad-based clientele. Even if, as Walter Benjamin argued, mechanical reproduction threatened a work of art and its claims to originality, he nevertheless lauded its role in ushering in modernity. And this, Mitter feels, is most important in Benjamin's prescient views on replicability. In India of course it helped the cause of nationalism—whether through the black and white lithographs titled 'Hindu Sacred Pictures' of the Calcutta Art Studio or those originating in Bombay and Poona. Hagiographic prints from the Poona Chitrashala Press of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* hit the market at a time when Bal Gangadhar Tilak was leading the influential Hindu nationalist movement in Maharashtra. Mitter draws attention to the fact that the two centres for mechanically-produced chromolithographs—Bengal and Maharashtra—were also the areas of "early revolutionary Hindu nationalism". A product of the age of science, this 'gift' of the Raj was used very effectively by the colonized to undermine the authority of Empire as well as to promote an aggressive religiosity. This new visual culture travelled widely with improved transportation, conferring "an unprecedented mobility to sacred images" (p. 29).

Partha Mitter's view that the "new iconic society affecting both the elite and the people had come to stay" (p. 30) sets the stage for a number of the essays that follow. Kajri Jain looks at the circulation of 'bazaar art' from hotels, kitchens, prayer rooms to "a tree in a vegetable market" (p. 37) . . . the list is endless, the takers varied and innumerable. She convincingly questions the binary between 'Eastern spirituality' vs. 'Western materialism': for as Mitter had shown, the 'collaboration' between different cultures had early beginnings, the 19th century prints being a case in point. And when commerce and the market enter the arena, bazaar art in the form of the ubiquitous calendar keeps networks lubricated, the circle of business associates expanding. Tracing the history of religious almanacs of the early 1800s that were first introduced by missionaries and became the site for religious iconography, Jain suggests that "the local calendar industry slotted into an existing niche

Beyond Appearances?

Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India



SUMATHI RAMASWAMY

Contributor to Indian Sociology • Occasional Studies 10

by providing a proforma for religious observance alongside the marking of secular time" (p. 48). The body, its representation and location of power within the selected space, becomes the locus of tension, particularly in respect of a religious figure. Appropriate representation is of the essence, as otherwise the reputation not only of the artist and printer but also of the trader/shopkeeper who advertises himself on the calendar is at stake. Jain moves on to a discussion of the notion of the fetish, of moral economies in the context of the bourgeois public sphere; a heavy overload for an essay and would perhaps be more appropriate in a book that allows more elbow room for arguments to be fleshed out.

Continuing the discussion on calendar art, Patricia Uberoi, a social anthropologist who is now a well-known specialist in visual popular culture, chooses to look at popular print culture in the Nehruvian period that focuses not only on Hindu iconography but also on its manifestation in Sikh calendars. She picks up from historian Shahid Amin's response to a calendar with four young boys—Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Sikh at the four corners and Mother India/Durga (albeit with only two arms and a benign-looking elderly lion in attendance) in the centre, holding the national flag—that such an image is "drained of meaning . . . a dead metaphor" (p. 192). The central image is *the* reality, the Hindu polity—the boys mere embellishments. It is not only the quotidian-ness of the Mother India image but also that of a muscular Ram, that has invaded the public sphere of popular representations of a Hindu India. In another essay, Philip Lutgendorf studies the emergence of the hairless, muscled, humanized simian, the much-loved Hanuman, in popular art. Such imagery seems to tie in with endless discussions on who the *vanaras* really were.

The domestication of Ram and of Hanuman (muscles instead of halos, looks of grim determination rather than beatific smiles) leads logically to Hinduism as everyday practice, where ordinary mortals are spurred on by comforting visuals of gods that welcome believers into their space rather than keep them at a distance. There is a difference though—a

It is just this bridge between modernity and tradition, between the new and the old and the role of the visual that the twelve essays in *Beyond Appearances?* seeks to explore.

militancy undergirds the new iconography that comes through even when visualizing Mother India. Uberoi argues convincingly that in the early post-Independence years, as calendar art was deployed to spread the 'we are one' message of secular India, anxiety over religious differences sought to be submerged. The nation state was to be built, unity out of diversity being the slogan of the times. Women and children were fruitfully deployed in calendar images as also the cow. In a particularly imaginative composition, *Gau-mata* is Kamadhenu, the wish-fulfilling cow from whose udders milk gushes on to a *Shivalingam-yoni*. Next to her is a cow image within whose body is encapsulated all the deities of the Hindu pantheon. These two are presided over by the trinity of Uma/Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. This calendar celebrates the Hindu mother/preserver/nurturer. Over the years, images of the cow "as universal nourisher" appeared, often with members of other religious groups—and in one, streams of milk feed into the mouths of four adult males from the four main religious groups. *Gau-mata* defines membership—all are equally entitled to milk, but from the Hindu cow. Religious hegemony is scarcely concealed in such popular renderings of country, identity and belonging.

The map is a contemporary icon signifying official renderings of boundaries and exclusion, satisfying the "national longing for cartographic form" (Ramaswamy, p.151). Rather than concentrate on official mapping economies, Sumathi Ramaswamy looks at "popular cartographic endeavours" (p.152) thereby moving the discourse on popular culture into the interface between the official and the 'private'. Examining some examples of this form of visualization she finds that the human body, in particular that of Mother India/Bharat Mata, has been used effectively. But long before such representations of India, geography and the globe in classrooms in colonial India contested prevailing notions of origins and existences. Earlier, the globe had found its way into Mughal art and much later into that of Ravi Varma. From 1907, Bharat Mata enters the frame, with or without other national leaders. She appears with hair and apparel flowing, fracturing established notions of national boundaries. This visual license that conflates "the map and the mother's body" argues Ramaswamy, leads to the inference that

the nation should also be treated "as the respectable Indian woman, with paternalistic care and protection" (pp. 178-180). And when Mahasweta Devi's Douloti dies, spreadeagled on a map of India, does she, the woman's body, reject nationhood? The subject for another project, perhaps—rather than a postscript to the present, well-argued essay.

The nation, its creation and re-creation finds expression in Christopher Pinney's discussion on what he calls 'colonial perspectivalism' introduced by the Government Art Schools; however, "despite the great colonial euphoria about the transformative power of observational rigour, combined with the inculcation of linear perspective, popular Indian art (re) translated these concerns into new 'magical realist' hybrid forms" (p. 118). Appropriated European styles were transformed into the 'xeno-real'—and pervaded the theatre as well as photography. As different visual realms engaged in 'interocularity' (Appadurai and Breckenridge), themes repeated themselves on the stage and in chromolithographs—and though Pinney does not mention it, in the phantasmic backdrops provided by the mushrooming photo studios, prized props unfurled for an eager bourgeois clientele.

It was not long before the nationalist agenda appropriated these forms of expression—a case in point being the *dhoti* sold in Calcutta with a song in praise of the executed Khudi Ram printed on it. Was it to be treated as a document under the Indian Press Act, wondered a bemused government? In his interesting analysis, Pinney sees this "most striking anti-colonial artefact" as a part of the continuum of a nationalism pushing at the margins of legal/illegal, acceptable/to be proscribed behaviour by a subject people intent on challenging the rulers in new and innovative ways.

The creative use of the visual in documentaries, cinema and now videos is discussed in three essays; Srirupa Roy charts new territory through her informed discussion of non-commercial cinema, primarily documentaries churned out by the Films Division of India (FDI) that has produced more than 8,000 films in the post-independence era. The idea of feeding these films to a captive audience prior to the screening of a commercial film was soon belied. As one who has on occasion joined those who thronged out, intent on avoiding the compulsory diet of unity in diversity messages, I contested the belief of these documentary film-makers that "an ethically incomplete audience" needed to be made aware of its country and people. Roy points out that the FDI's *raison d'être* was to etch the relationship between a "transcendent, authoritative state and diverse, infantile nation" (p. 247). Films ranged from anything to the dams of India, weaving in Arunachal as well as the ubiquitous dose of wild life. With globalization, the video and multi-channel TV revolution such films have been increasingly replaced by shorts made

by the Directorate of Audiovisual Publicity. Little docketts of information on polio vaccination and the small family norm vie with ads for tyres and soap—symbolic perhaps of life in India today.

In his discussion of popular Indian cinema, Woodman Taylor argues, following Martin Jay, that "cinema has been both a symptom" and a "major propagator of a visually centred modernity" (p. 305). A modernity that uses the Persianate notion of the gaze (*nazar*) to convey sexual desire—so evocative when the kiss was banned from the screen. In mythological films, it is *drishti*, the gaze of the deity that is invoked, and these "two distinct notions of South Asian visuality" define the contemporary Indian commercial cinema. Taylor draws attention to the vital importance of the song, where the gaze of lovers is heightened by the lyrics; his skillful analysis shows how the gaze and the aural blend together to create the unique world of unreal fantasy (sylvan surroundings in India and abroad too are used as effective backdrops)—the hallmark of Bollywood and its regional clones.

Reappearing once more, this time in a video entitled *God Manifests Himself*, the deity Ram is "the ideal national man" (Brosius: 267) in a production by J.K. Jain, doctor-cum-BJP hardliner. The calendar print—from S. S. Brijhasi, one of the oldest and best-known distributor of this genre—dominates, its usage "consciously invokes practices of *bhakti* devotion" (p. 272). Apart from the glorification of a mythical Golden Age—fractured of course by the Muslims—the secular state too is viewed as "a prison from which the people have to be liberated" (p. 274). In the post-Ramjanmabhoomi days, it does not take much to figure out who the liberators are to be. In her analysis, Christiane Brosius stresses the intervisuality aspect, where the visual message is laced with text, songs and solemn chants. It is truly a *darshan*-like experience, geared to the tastes and subterranean nationalism of a discerning middle class in a globalizing economy. As Lutgendorf's insightful discussion on the changing Hanuman showed, here too, masculinity is a reigning trope.

On a slightly different trajectory—but well-argued nevertheless, is Anne Hardgrove's interesting essay on ancestral homes of the Marwaris of Shekhawati (eastern Rajasthan) and the Chettiars of Tamil Nadu. The author rather cryptically points out, ancestors never lived in these homes embellished with elaborate, painted walls, a hybridized pastiche of West and East, opulent symbols of affluent diasporic communities. The houses become the central motifs around which the author reconstructs the history of these two important business communities of India.

The volume concludes with Sandria B. Freitag's essay on agency and acts of seeing which "become acts of knowing as viewers/consumers impute new meanings to familiar

images" (p. 366). She rightfully brings closure by privileging the audience "not [as] passive recipients but active shapers of what they view" (p. 371). As Susan Sontag had argued in the 1970s (*On Photography*, 1973), the photograph involves a three-way relationship between the photographer, the object of the photograph and the viewer. In the present discussion, the photographic backdrop allows for interocularity as the agent chooses what the visual is to represent. For instance, in a photograph (p. 376) taken at New Delhi's Birla Mandir, two adult males and three little boys stare fixedly at the camera with the temple in the backdrop and an image of Lord Shiva "tilted in".

The visual draws together much of what has been discussed in *Beyond Appearances?* Backdrop, client and audience are juxtaposed through a clever use of contemporary technologies, at once modern and yet purveying the age-old relationship between believer and temple. The volume leaves one with a feeling of satisfaction at a job well done; it goes to the credit of the editor as well as all the contributors that the back room synergy, elbow grease and mutual understanding required for such a collective work has resulted in a significant contribution to the as yet small corpus of academic work on the visual in India. It could, however, have done with a more scholarly index. ■

Malavika Karlekar is Editor of the *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, and has worked on 19th century photography in Bengal.

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Engaging with Feminine Motifs

Tapati Guha-Thakurta

FEMININE FABLES: IMAGING THE INDIAN WOMAN IN PAINTING, PHOTOGRAPHY AND CINEMA

By Geeti Sen

Mapin Publishing, Ahmedabad, 2002, pp.207, Rs. 2000.00

In many ways, this is a book that has been waiting to be written—a book that engages with the complex history of feminine imagery in 20th century India, exploring its ramifications across the three most compelling visual genres of the century: painting, photography and cinema. Given the huge investment in the imaging of women in both high and popular art forms, and given the way the category 'women' continues to assert its presence primarily as ideal and metaphor, there was been surprisingly little critical research and writing on the theme. Geeti Sen's book thus enters a field that is as rich in material as in academic potential. There is clearly need for a book which is so beautifully produced and lavishly illustrated in colour, which has all the appearance of a coffee-table volume, but also promises serious analysis and adapts the discursive format of a scholarly work.

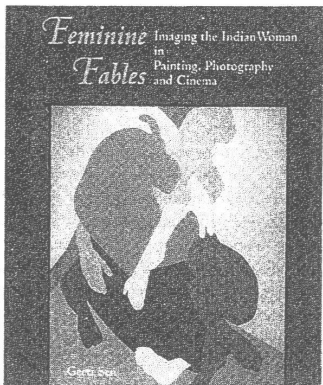
Yet, this has been a difficult combination to negotiate. Its strains show across a host of other uneasy alliances that the book seeks to forge—for instance, between the logic and languages of images and the social histories they signify, between the transforming worlds of modern Indian painting or cinema and the changing lives of the women who form the subject and themes of these productions, most of all, between the power and resonance of artistic imagery and their implications for the 'real-life' aspirations and identities of Indian women over this period. Images (whether, a painting, a popular poster, a still photograph or a sequence in a moving film) need to be located within the specific social histories of these genres and their available pool of motifs and concepts. There are crucial questions to be asked—how images come into being, how they acquire a certain historical gravity and aura, and how they circulate and reproduce over time. But there is no direct way in which images can be dissolved into the social world they encode, and pictures can become the index of identities of real women in the past and the present. This becomes one of the main traps to which this book periodically succumbs, even as it takes the reader on a riveting visual journey through a selection of pictorial, photographic and cinematic icons of modern Indian women. The author states in her Introduction that,

This is not a book on art history and connoisseurship. It addresses wider social issues which concern every woman and her identity, and engages everyone concerned about women. My writing is grounded in

readings in political and social analyses, psychology and film criticism, semiotics and theories of art...Equally my observations rely upon dialogues with 'image-makers': the artists, photographers and film makers who conceived the images, and who have articulated their views in statements as well as in graphic images. The vitality of these images has in turn persuaded, cajoled and transformed my personal definition—of what it means to be an Indian woman! (p.10)

One has to give this art historian credit for a wide self-education in the writings of the best historians, social scientists and cultural analysts on modern India, even as she deploys her main professional skills in the analyses of images, their artistic intentions and effects. It is obvious that the author's real métier is that of an art historian, who is convinced of the unique stature and significance of individual works of art and their creators. The notion of the 'art-work' here is stretched from modern Indian painting, print-making and installations to address a parallel body of photographic and film imagery, where a photographed portrait, a film still or even a film poster is subjected to the same kind of visual scrutiny and close reading. One of the key interests of this book lies in the way it integrates moments and products from the overlapping histories of modern Indian painting, cinema and art photography, occasionally juxtaposing these also with the emerging iconography of women

One of the key interests of this book lies in the way it integrates moments and products from the overlapping histories of modern Indian painting, cinema and art photography, occasionally juxtaposing these also with the emerging iconography of women in early 20th century popular mythological prints, nationalist political posters and even the contemporary pantheon of Hindutva.



in early 20th century popular mythological prints, nationalist political posters and even the contemporary pantheon of Hindutva. We see the way images and themes travel and circulate, the way they speak to each other across genres and periods, and the way new meanings accrue around this permeating body of feminine motifs.

However, what is the strength of the book also contains the source of many of its weaknesses. As each chapter spans a large corpus of images or jumps across a large time period, what is achieved in range is often lost in depth and consistency. There is a tendency—as for instance, in the discussions on the theme of the motherland as a map and a goddess, or on the feminist reclaiming of the sexual woman's body in art, or on the much discussed home-world dichotomy in the imaging of women in the classics of modern Indian literature and film—to suggest much, but end up saying tantalizingly little. There are rich snippets of social and cultural history which Geeti Sen adeptly weaves into sections of the book—some of its best examples are in the profiling of Amrita Sher-Gil vis-à-vis her self portraits and her feminine subjects, or in the presentation of the life-stories of the spiritual leader, Anandamayee Ma and the silver screen tragedienne, Meena Kumari, as a foil to their iconicized photographs or celluloid roles. Yet, once again, the problem arises in the book's tall claim to speak for all of that abstracted entity called modern Indian womanhood, and to map through this selection of images from painting, photography and cinema a history that can encapsulate the actual changes in the lives and identities of women in India, across time and across the social spectrum. Such an agenda is not only unrealizable but flawed in its very conception.

The book's firm grounding in modern and contemporary Indian art history is borne out by the way each chapter takes its title from a key art-work and imaginatively builds its story around it. The book's overall title, *Feminine Fables* draws on a water-colour painting by Arpita Singh, and uses the instance of this exceptional woman artist and her painted

female figures as exemplary of the phenomenon of the "new woman" in today's India. Chapter I, called 'Bharat Mata: Woman or Goddess', is in my view the most interesting essay in the book. It takes as its leitmotif, Abanindranath Tagore's famous painting of the Swadeshi years, contextualizes it within the period's exuberant nationalist invocations of the nation as mother, then draws out the changing life of this nation-goddess icon through the 20th century—through popular mythological prints, prohibited revolutionary political posters of the 20s and 30s and cartographic representations, into its apotheosis in the figure of Nargis as Mother India in Mehboob's classic film of 1957. It also looks at the way the icon comes to be enshrined in her own temple, first as sacred territory in the Bharat Mata Mandir in Benaras in the 1930s, and much later as an anthropomorphic goddess in the temple constructed by the VHP at Hardwar in 1983.

Chapter 2 takes its cue from Amrita Sher-Gil's painting, 'Women Resting on a Charpoy', subtitled, 'The Semiotics of Desire', it explores the motif of the sexual and desiring feminine subject in Sher-Gil's paintings, following which it takes up the manner in which the entrenched motif of the female nude is wrested from the domain of male art and radically reworked by three contemporary women artists, Gogi Saroj Pal, Kanchan Chander and Arpita Singh. Even as there is a marked reluctance by today's male artists to paint a naked woman, the nude, Geeti Sen pointedly argues, finds her new alter-identity in the works of these femininist artists. Titled, 'The Home and the World: Inner and Outer Spaces', Chapter 3 however only tangentially refers to Rabindranath Tagore's novel and Satyajit's Ray's film of that name. Instead it locates different female characters within the spatial register of the home, marking its boundaries, bondages and transgressions, through a reading of four significant film texts, produced between 1963 and 1995—Ray's *Charulata*, Guru Dutt's *Saheb, Bibi aur Ghulam*, Shyam Benegal's *Bhumika* and Deepa Mehta's *Fire*. Vis-à-vis the much discussed portrayal of Charu in Ray's classic and the recent senseless furore over the depiction of lesbianism in *Fire*, it is the author's sensitive excavation of the role of Meena Kumari as the Chhoti Bahurani of *Saheb, Bibi aur Ghulam* and of Smita Patil as the rebellious unconventional actress Hamsa Wadkar in *Bhumika* which makes for the novelty of this essay. A series of etchings by Anupam Sud, called 'The Ceremony of Unmasking' are made the centerpiece of Chapter 5, where the author uses the motif of the mask to study the making of the public visual persona of three remarkable Indian women in recent history. Once again, it is the unusual choice of women from completely different vocations—a spiritual guru, a political leader, and a movie star—which

makes for powerfully contrasting case studies. And it is the lesser-known corpus of photographs of Anandamayee Ma by Richard Lannoy, set off against the more famous images of Indira Gandhi by Raghu Rai and Sheba Chachi's photographic installation on the tragedy-queen Meena Kumari, which becomes a central point of interest of this chapter.

After this build-up, the last chapter of the book comes as a real let-down. Following a thread of thinking that briefly surfaces in the Introduction, it gives full rein to the author's view that it is the resurgent spirit of the *Devi* as *Shakti* incarnate which is energizing the new Indian woman of today, that it is the "goddess within" which is propelling her passage from strength to strength. Called 'Hatyogini Shakti' after a set of mythic women-beast paintings by Gogi Saroj Paul, the chapter follows the artist's mythologized obsession with what she calls "the eternal feminine spirit" to present its own dangerously essentialist arguments about the powers of divinity latent in all of Indian womanhood. Not only are a series of images ranging from an illustrated 16th century manuscript of the *Devi-Mahatmya* to the modern Kali and Durga paintings of Tyeb Mehta or the 'Maa' series of etchings of Devayani Krishna all interpreted along this vein. Worse still, everyone, from the dancer Chandralekha to the environmental activist Medha Patkar, the dalit politician Mayavati and the women of Telengana, are seen to draw their power from this divine legacy of the *Devi*. This is where the quaint and archaic in the author's argument often verge on the preposterous. "Relying on myths and ancient belief in India", she writes,

...the woman today chooses to enact the privilege conferred upon her, She resumes the role to represent *adyashakti*, primal energy activating all of life... Citing the cases of women activists in the Narmada Bachao Andolan, in the anti-liquor agitation in Andhra or in the campaign for Uttarakhand, it is explained that their demonstration of power had been rehearsed already in legends of the *Devi*, the great goddess. As narrated in the *Devi Mahatmaya*, she too had been invoked in the time of need to avert a cosmic crisis, to wage battle against the demon, and then returned to her origins. Curious affinities can be found in relating the sacred texts of the goddess with these recent movements of women's strength. (p. 175, 180)

Most involved in meaningful gender studies and politics in India today will, I think, stand by me when I say I could not disagree more. Such a position is what ends up doing this book its greatest disservice. ■

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A Framework of Binary Opposition

Bharati Jagannathan

INVOKING GODDESSES: GENDER POLITICS IN INDIAN RELIGION

Edited by Nilima Chitgopekar

Shakti Books, Delhi, 2002, pp.208, Rs.295.00

The introductory essay in *Invoking Goddesses* attempts to sketch an outline picture of goddesses in the Indian tradition, and to situate studies of the Indian goddess in the context of the historiography on goddess worship. Thirty-three crore gods and goddesses inhabit the celestial realm in the religious complex termed, for reasons of convenience, Hinduism. The author's suggestion, while tracing the history of goddess worship in India to the prehistoric terracotta female figurines, that this would make the Indian goddess the oldest continuously worshipped deity in any religious tradition needs to be contested. She has herself noted at another place that to reduce all the different goddesses to manifestations of an essential great mother/ mother goddess is unwarranted. While many of these goddesses may seem homologous, their origins may be very diverse, and unconnected with one another. There is no more reason to posit a continuous history for the *lan* Indian goddess than tracing the cult of the Virgin Mary to prehistoric European goddesses.

An interesting aspect of the goddess traditions (and here the reviewer is consciously using the plural in contrast to the essay which uses the singular, in order to avoid falling into the same trap) that is touched upon is the way in which binary oppositions constitute the framework of the representations. A favourite binary polarity is between the benevolent "mothers" and the fiendish, malignant goddesses who are invariably unmarried. Marriage seems to domesticate these latter who are often associated with disease, barrenness etc.

That female divinities are unproblematically called mother goddesses while the numerous male divinities are rarely referred to as 'father gods' has been questioned by some recent scholarship. Emphasizing this point, Chitgopekar asks if the appellation of "mother" signified such privileging of motherhood that goddesses could be acceptable only thus, and if this privileging took real power away from women. Western feminists initially believed that religious traditions as the Judaeo-Christian which focus on an omnipotent male god necessarily marginalize women in society, and that women in goddess worshipping communities might share in her status. Indian reality does not fit the concept: besides, the fact that women are often not the ritual specialists in goddess worship reinforces

the suspicion that goddess worship is a weak argument for empowerment of women. Nor does it seem likely, given the current historical conjuncture, that goddesses may be used as enabling models by modern Indian feminists.

Errors of grammar and syntax in the introductory essay not only make reading tedious, the reader is sometimes even left puzzled as to the import of some statements.

In the second chapter, Kumkum Roy looks at the imaging of goddesses in the family books, i.e., the earliest sections, of the *Rgveda*. Eschewing the familiar and simplistic equation of the celestial realm as mirror of the human one which has led earlier scholars to speak of Vedic society as patriarchal because of the rarer presence of, and lesser importance of goddesses therein, she undertakes a detailed analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative descriptions of goddesses in the hymns not as an undifferentiated whole, but according to whom they are addressed to. This leads her to certain interesting observations and suggestions as we shall presently see.

The arrangement of hymns in each mandala follows a specific pattern wherein hymns to Agni come first, followed by those to Indra, and then to various other deities, the Visvedevas. In the hymns to Agni, goddesses are conceptualized in various relational terms which are not necessarily hierarchical. Occasionally, Agni is even endowed with feminine attributes though he is more often described as a bull (a signifier of virility). The hymns to Indra present a more androcentric view, with his relations with goddesses, with a few significant exceptions, being conceptualized in conflictual terms. Even the mythology of his birth denies any role to a mother. A variety of goddesses find mention in, and are invoked for diverse purposes in the third category of hymns. Agni's characterization as priestly and Indra's identification as a valorous warrior may point to their association with similar functional groups and ritual practices in human society. While both priesthood and prowess are seen as attributes of male deities, the hymns of the former category, despite being gendered, allow a certain fluidity in the characterization of female deities. On the other hand, masculinity is carefully projected in the concerns of the chieftains/ warriors. The author asks if it is possible to envisage a society wherein the priesthood aspiring to the greatest possible social acceptance tried to create as broad a consensus as possible, whereas the concerns of a warrior group were likely to be more exclusively

male. Roy proposes that the relatively equal importance of the minor gods and goddesses in the third category, of deities who are relatively simply delineated and essentially marginal to the corpus, may suggest an accommodation of popular beliefs and practices.

Shalini Shah's examination of the mother goddess in the *Mahabharata* is preambled by a short historiography of the issues of patriarchy/ matriarchy and theorisations upon the mother goddess. The essay suggests that despite the awareness of less project-oriented discourses, Shah herself apparently follows Merlin Stone whom she quotes as elucidating the feminist rationale behind studying mother goddesses as a means of countering modern patriarchies. The *Rgvedic* culture is seen as an essentially theocentric society in contrast with the Harappan civilization where mother goddesses were central. This trend towards the dethronement and marginalization of once autonomous goddesses was intensified in the succeeding period. Shah illustrates this process with relevant examples from the Vedic texts and the *Mahabharata*. From being worshipped in their own right, they came increasingly to be mentioned as consorts, sisters, or benevolent mothers, and as dependant on their male relatives. Prthivi, (the earth personified) conceptualized as immensely capable in the Vedas is in the epic said to be sinking helplessly under the weight of mountains, and is reduced to seeking help from Visnu.

Another interesting development was the incorporation of mythic ogresses and demonesses as benevolent mother goddesses, verify, as givers of children. This rendered these divinities of probably primitive peoples relatively safe, and acceptable in the patriarchal formulation. Shah's reading of a particular illustration seems curious from the limited information available in the essay at least. This is in the context of the enumeration of tirthas or sacred sites dedicated to goddesses in the Vana Parva of the *Mahabharata*. Apparently, in the text, Rsi Pulastya responds to Bhishma's expressing distrust and doubt about the usefulness of these pilgrimages saying that these were more economical than Vedic sacrifices and perhaps even more efficacious. Shah interprets this as a reassertion of brahmanism which frowned upon and even dismissed the old mother goddess cults. To this reviewer, it appears that this example actually illustrates the process whereby mother goddess worship was establishing itself in mainstream religious discourse despite opposition from Brahmanic orthodoxy. That some Dharmasastra authors also treat these tirthas dismissively suggests feeble, dying attempts by the orthodoxy to keep out the powerful new currents from popular religious practices. However, the author would perhaps be able to substantiate her argument in the light of other evidence that is not available to this reviewer.

Shah illustrates how patriarchal cultures

regulate and control female sexuality through the examples of Sri Lakshmi, and the apsaras. The mythology of Sri suggests a pre Aryan fertility goddess who was, even in the epic, first linked polyandrously to a number of gods but was finally "tamed" by being reduced to a consort of Visnu/ Krsna. The transformation of the apsaras is even more dramatic. Divinities who were explicitly sexually autonomous in the Vedic literature, they could not very well be spousified. They were instead, commodified; the sexually desiring woman of the Vedas became celestial prostitute in the epic. Shah asserts that the earliest origin myths of all cultures privileged the female principle while the later advance of patriarchy appropriated even this role (as in the *Mahabharata* legend wherein the act of creation is attributed to a Svayambhu, male, and that of the king Yuvanasha who gives birth to a son etc). Besides, such patriarchal societies also associate women with evil, and see them as impediments to spiritual advancement. However, her belief that in non brahmanical belief systems women were venerated and considered vehicles of critical knowledge (despite the example of Tantrism) seems rather naive. The basic formulation on which the essay rests is besides, one of an unhindered "forward march" of patriarchy which unproblematically swallows or renders sterile, goddess worshipping traditions. Surely, the interactions between the greater, brahmanic and the lesser, folk traditions were more nuanced as were the ways in which goddesses became part of the theogony.

Nilima Chitgopekar's essay on the Yoginis is essentially a summary of extant literature. Though these sexually autonomous, semi divine entities are essentially placed outside the mainstream religious tradition, in what is termed as the heterodox Tantric complex, they do find expression in the non Tantric Hindu tradition as well, challenging the dominant, normative world view.

Ranjeeta Dutta's examination of the conception of goddess as a component in the formation of a specifically sectarian identity, that of the Srivaisnavas, avoids such easy and imprecise equations as brahmanical= patriarchal or folk= goddess privileging. Between the 10th and the 16th centuries, a distinct identity was coalescing around Visnu as the supreme universal god. The antecedents for the Srivaisnava sect formation may be traced to the Bhakti movement which began around the 5th century. Royal patronage in the first phase was heavily weighted towards Saiva shrines, and marginalized the development of Vaisnavism. This balance was sought to be redressed by Yamunacarya who articulated a major ideological shift from an exclusive metaphysical approach to a more ritualistic, incorporative one. This was the process that introduced Lakshmi into the theological framework. A preeminent deity in the Pancaratra doctrine, Lakshmi was however subordinated in the canon

as consort of the supreme god. The delineation of a subordinate position to Sri/ Lakshmi reflects the concerns of structuring an integrative, uniform community. No single universal, divine consort could however be finalized; rather, the tradition evinces a process of interaction with and assimilation of numerous autochthonous goddesses. By the 13th century, the delineation of Sri had expanded from a passive consort to a benevolent, divine mother who intercedes with the lord on behalf of the devotee. This notional transformation is linked to the socio political changes of the age: the decline of the Colas, the emergence of the Vijayanagara empire, the consequent migration of new groups to the fertile Tamil plains, and the emergence of a new social formation dominated by non brahmana landed elites. It was these new classes that emerged as the patrons of temples and mathas. This flux called for new integrative patterns to be established besides opening new ritual spaces for the emergent social classes. A composite identity comprising both Tamil and Sanskrit elements needed to be constructed. This was achieved through the concept of multiple consorts. The normative tradition did not represent these multiple goddesses, instead it was left to the temple texts and hagiographies to articulate the multiplicity and resolve it by subordinating these goddesses to the universal Sri. The notion of an independent goddess was sought to be diluted as is seen in the lack of textual references to Nappinnai, who was evidently an old, popular goddess. This was a process in which the distinct regional and local cultic identities were never entirely subsumed even as it allowed for the expansion of a larger Srivaisnava identity. The philosophical elaboration of the dual nature of god, ie, transcendental and accessible (in the iconic form within the temple), provided the context in which the various goddesses could be brought into association with the supreme god. Temple texts and hagiographies elaborate on the theme of marriage of the god with the saint Andal, or a local, tribal goddess, while the theological texts are silent on this score. This spousification could be ritually enacted and engage the wider community while at the same time, the espoused goddess found a separate shrine within the temple complex. Dutta makes the significant point that in all marriage myths, the goddess was attached to the centre, and was thus instrumental in the presence of the god in the temple: clear evidence of coalescence of Puranic and folk elements, assertion of the local tradition, and of the success of the integrative paradigm.

'Mata, Land and line' by Nancy Auer Falk presents a different, and equally fascinating perspective on the process of creation of community identity. She first outlines two ways in which religious communities can be categorized: the natural, wherein the members of the community are linked through lineage or

territory, and "specifically religious groups", which are called into being by religious affinity alone. She takes four examples of the former type, from different regions of India, to proceed to the second possibility. The first is based on recent field surveys of a Rajput community in Rajasthan. At one level are deities specifically associated with particular families/ households, at another, (ancestral) satimatas with the power to protect their descendants. The second example from the Tamil country illustrates how certain myths serve to forge links between different caste groups that reside in proximity, and constitute one integrated community. The third case is also from Tamil Nadu: the village festival of a local, non Brahmanic goddess, which, in some of its departure from older traditions, exemplifies more widespread Sanskritization. The myth behind the festival entails problematic mixing of castes. The enactment of the nine-day ritual transmits two complementary messages: that caste violation is dangerous, but with each group performing its assigned role, life can proceed productively. The fourth example is of a long and complex Durga Puja from Bengal, what is replayed is a myth of regathering the shaktis of the Devi dispersed in the land in favour of her people before its ritual expulsion. The encoded significance is the power inherent in the people as a collective to defeat the demonic threat.

Through these examples of "unity in diversity", Falk shows how Devis not only symbolize collective yoking, but actually have the potential to generate this same yoking ritually. Some interesting questions are raised; interesting hypotheses forwarded. Are female deities chosen to articulate these unities because of their connection with land? It is not to be wondered at that this tradition in its ultimate expression should lead to the emergence of Bharat Mata: devi as a national emblem. Is this problematic only (and that is not to undermine the importance of the argument) in that this implies the imposition of the religious symbols of one community on others? Falk points out something far more fundamental: analysis of the devi myths and festivals shows that the unity is achieved invariably by positing an "other" who has somehow to be expelled/ destroyed/ conquered. The implications for those who could be "othered" in such nation building symbolism need not be elaborated.

Janet Chawla's study is based as much on ethnographic research as on textual sources. Menstruation, childbirth and the post parturition period are all considered ritually polluting by normative, Brahmanic literature. Similarly, the placenta, considered the ultimate polluting substance by caste Hindus, is referred to reverently as "another mother" by dais, traditional, lower caste midwives. These ethno medical and ritual specialists call the period narak ka samay, (hellish period?) which, on the

face of it, seems to reinforce patriarchal attitudes. Closer examination of the complex ways in which they image the same however shows that their use of the term is without moral judgement. Bemata, the patron goddess of *dais*, has no temples, rituals, texts, or icons; she is not even aniconically represented. At best, described as a representation of female reproductive physiology, she dwells in *narak*: a fertile, underground terrain from which all life forms spring. It becomes in this understanding, the site or energy of the unseen world. In the *dais'* world, the blood of childbirth is bad not because it is polluting as in male perspectives, but because, unexpelled, it threatens the well being of the mother. Bemata is fruitful, benevolent, but she must also leave via post

partum bleeding when her work is done, or she is potentially dangerous. Her demonic/ divine valence is hence entirely contextual and time dependant.

Chawla's belief that the *dais'* reference to the cutting of the umbilical cord as a great *paap* (sin) does not bear out upper caste values simply because they did not express any guilt about the act does not seem to carry weight however. It is true that they are performing a critical function, and that patriarchal, caste society shuns them for its polluting implications—as it does much of what is crucial work in society. This however does not prevent the “low caste” individual/ group from internalizing this ideology, however unfavourable its implications to its own identity. Examples may

certainly be found where the low caste group counters the dominant ideology by means of its own myths, and/ or counter ideologies, but this does not seem to be one of them.

Chawla's conclusions however point to some interesting departures from accepted notions of polarities. Bemata though nurturing and life affirming, is not in conflict with disease and death. Death is intrinsic to life, and does not require conflict, battle or heroism. “Narak is the source of unseen forces of life, and provides space for intuition, imagination, other epistemologies and other theories”.

Some of these essays could take us to *narak*. ■

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Bollywood Hollywood

Veena Hariharan

MY PASSAGE FROM INDIA: A FILMMAKER'S JOURNEY FROM BOMBAY TO HOLLYWOOD AND BEYOND

By Ismail Merchant

Roli Books, New Delhi, 2002, pp.149, Rs.695.00

Ismail Merchant's dream journey began in the fantastic world of Bollywood which he entered in a green Cadillac convertible with Nimmi, the superstar of the forties, amid a shower of marigolds... 'It seemed so magical—like the movies themselves—that I can remember thinking, “If this is what the film world is, I want to be a part of it.”'

Yet the 'Merchant-Ivory adjective' has come to stand not for Bollywood kitsch but for an ideologically suspect project associated with the Thatcherite era—the 'heritage cinema'. Merchant's memoirs throw light on the lesser known, early films of their 'Indian period' (*Mahatma and the Mad Boy*, *Courtesans of Bombay*) as well as his independent filmmaking ventures (*In Custody*, *The Mystic Masseur* and, most recently, *Cotton Mary*). This helps us place the Merchant-Ivory oeuvre in perspective, correcting the bias of nineties' film criticism based on their 'glossies' of canonical literary works.

Interspersed with sepias from the family album, photographs of work-in-progress, exotic locations and sets, film stills and celebrities, the memoirs reveal some interesting details about Merchant's childhood as the son of a middle class trader Noor Mohammad. Merchant's mother believed that he was particularly blessed by the saint, Khwaja Mohinuddin Chisti and wanted him to be a khadim, a dedicated server of the saint, a wish that he fulfills to this day. Skip a few pages about his college days as a budding impresario and you get to his filmi journey to America and a temporary job at the UN where he, with the help of the Brazilian secretary, posed as a delegate, and hustled all kinds of people—

diplomats, bankers, businessmen—trying to raise finances for his film. He finally managed to put together some money for *Creation of a Woman*, a film on the mythological story of Brahma, which won an Oscar nomination in the short film category. This was the beginning of a long career in movie-making marked throughout by a simple philosophy: 'quality material, the finest actors, authentic locations, and lots of hard work.'

A self-confessed charmer, Merchant used liberal portions of guile 'to part people from their money' in order to achieve his own ends. He used his notorious charm to persuade the impermeable Sir Vidia to part with filming rights of *The Mystic Masseur* after being cut short by Naipaul's famously 'wily literary agent', Andrew Wiley, and to obtain permission to shoot in King's College, Cambridge, for the short film on Nirad Chaudhuri. Merchant's unbridled enthusiasm made an improbable journey from Bombay to Hollywood a reality. 'A real hep visitor from India' is how he described himself in a promo he had inserted in the Californian dailies to announce his arrival in LA from New York: 'Mr Merchant is what we Americans greatly admire, and possibly do not expect an Indian to be: a cracker-barrel fireball, whose personality and ability epitomize all that is purposeful, vigorous and energetic in new India.'

My Passage from India is a star-studded memoir... Paul Newman, Vanessa Redgrave, Goldie Hawn, Greta Saatchi..., and others like Subrata Mitra, Ray's 'perfectionist' camera man, who worked on several Merchant-Ivory productions, and Nirad Chaudhuri typically having a ball playing himself in *Adventures of a*

Brown Man in Search of Civilization... fleeting glimpses of celebrities are revealed through dramatic and some not-so-dramatic anecdotes. Merchant also describes his fateful meetings with the Merchant-Ivory groupies—James Ivory: 'A plaque on the wall of the Right Bank will mark the historic occasion', Ruth Praver Jhabwala, Saeed and Madhur Jaffrey, Shashi Kapoor and Jeniffer Kendall, an ever widening circle of friends and other core members of the team. However, it is for Satyajit Ray that Merchant reserves a special place of honor. He wanted to make films like Ray's and there is a touching candour in the way he describes his meetings with Ray: 'Normally I blabber away in my usual extroverted, excitable way, but in the presence of Ray I was struck dumb with awe.'

As memoirs, *My Passage from India* disappoint on two counts: Merchant offers no insights into the creative processes of filmmaking, even in films that he directed himself. There are detailed recordings of the trials and tribulations of working within tightrope budgets and the gastronomic successes of the now famous feature of the Merchant-Ivory productions—the end-of-the-week-curry parties. His inside-outside position vis-à-vis Hollywood gives Merchant a unique vantage point to reflect on what it means to be an independent producer and an Indian in a Hollywood-dominated industry. Yet this is not dealt with anything more than apolitical, superficial detail. This is certainly not a definitive biography of Merchant or Merchant-Ivory Productions; perhaps John Pym's Channel 4 film *The Wandering Company* may be more insightful. However, this is not meant to be one. And, at the end of these memoirs, Merchant emerges neither as the inveterate and compromised charmer like the nawab of *Heat and Dust* nor as the taciturn and repressive butler of *Remains of the Day*... the truth may be somewhere in between, as he remains throughout the memoirs effusive about his public life but reticent about his private one. ■

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A Legend of Yesteryears

Narendra Panjwani

LIFE AND FILMS OF DILIP KUMAR

By Urmila Lanba

Vision Books, New Delhi, 2002, pp.160, Rs. 325.00

This is not a critical biography of Yusuf Khan (better known as Dilip Kumar), but it is a well-written biography, filled with interesting tidbits about the 80 year-old star MP, who was the Amitabh Bachchan of the 1945-65 era. We Indians are usually too 'nice' to be critical of each other when face-to-face, especially in public. Behind the subject's back? Hmmm yes...but that's another matter, best swept under the carpet.

Published biographies by contrast, have to be upfront eye-openers that revise your whole understanding of the person, and there is the rub. It is not nice to do this. The niceness imperative is even more compelling if the subject happens to be alive, and even more so if he/she happens to be a film star—as Dilip Kumar is—and the author a devoted fan—as Urmila Lanba is.

Now that we know what to expect, let Ms Lanba unveil the bust and cut the ribbon without any further ado: *It is said Dilip Kumar has more charm in his little finger than anyone else from the Indian film industry has in his entire person. It is said Dilip Kumar has enslaved Yusuf Khan and that Yusuf is never allowed to come out of his prison...*

What makes the book readable is that Lanba goes about her work with the air of one unravelling a deeply absorbing mystery. Her private curiosity about the star far exceeded the information available in newspapers and magazines about him, which was mostly second-hand, anyway. Dilip Kumar has long been very selective, both about granting personal interviews, and about the films he will act in. As Lanba puts it: *...[W]hile so much has been written about Dilip Kumar in the media over the years, there remains an aura of mystery about him. He guards his personal life very zealously and only once was he taken by surprise when his second marriage to Asma got reported in great detail in the weekly magazine Current. Never before had the circulation of Current reached such dizzy heights as it did then...*

All this happens on the book's very first page. In the three years it took Lanba to research and put together this 160-page biography, Dilip Kumar gave her only four opportunities to meet and talk to him. So, in addition to the difficulties of maintaining a critical distance from someone you care enough to write a book about, there is the

problem of the star's wish to keep his life story to himself. Reliable rumour has it that some of these stars of the golden age of Hindi cinema are planning to write autobiographies. The likelihood of them actually completing these is dim, however, for a variety of reasons—one among which is that film acting is one thing, book-writing quite another...

Yusuf Khan was born on 11 December, 1922 in Peshawar, the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan. He was the fourth child of Mohammed Sarwar Khan and Ayesha Begum, a Pathan couple who had six daughters and six sons. In 1926, this Pathan family migrated to Bombay, where his father set up shop as a wholesale fruit merchant in the city's famous Crawford Market.

Yusuf's metamorphosis into the actor Dilip Kumar began in 1944 when he was employed to play the lead role in the Bombay Talkies film *Jwar Bhata*, at the then princely salary of Rs.1,000 per month. His father's fruit business had run up huge losses, and Yusuf had to leave his final year B.A. studies in Bombay's Khalsa College, to look for work, any kind of work (including film, which his father loathed). Yusuf's skills consisted of a proficiency in Urdu and English. He met Devika Rani, the film star and owner-director of Bombay Talkies, hoping she might consider employing him as a writer in her office or her scripts department. Devika Rani, writes Lanba, *was impressed by Yusuf's magnetic good looks and instantly offered him a job as an actor instead; in fact as the male lead in her next film! His salary was fixed at Rs.1,000/- per month, plus Rs.200/- as war allowance. Yusuf was thrilled. The money was well beyond his expectations. He rushed home and confided in his brother Ayub. Incredulous, Ayub asked Yusuf if he had heard correctly; perhaps they had meant Rs.1,000 per year? Raj Kapoor, son of the famous actor Prithviraj, was then earning only Rs.140 per month as an assistant director...*

Confused by such questions, Yusuf did not report for work the next day. He tried assisting his eldest brother Nur Mohammed in the family's fruit business for the next two months, and this meant being out of town much of the time. Upon returning home, he went back to Bombay Talkies, just to double-check whether he had heard right. They assured him he had, and that the job was still his for the asking. Says the biographer: *Thus, a career that was to be momentous started with such casual ease.*

What makes the book readable is that Lanba goes about her work with the air of one unravelling a deeply absorbing mystery. Her private curiosity about the star far exceeded the information available in newspapers and magazines about him, which was mostly second-hand, anyway.

Equally, had Yusuf not gone back to [Bombay Talkies]... there would have been no Dilip Kumar.

How Yusuf got his Hindu screen name makes interesting reading. Ashok Kumar had recently left Bombay Talkies to set up Filmistan, another studio with his brother-in-law S. Mukherji. Given the number of box office hits Ashok Kumar had starred in for Bombay Talkies, his departure was a real loss; they were looking desperately for another 'Kumar' to revive their fortunes. Enter 22 year-old Yusuf at this juncture, who is given a choice of three screen names by Devika Rani – Dilip Kumar, Jehangir and Vasudev.

Yusuf chose the first one because, says Lanba, *he felt that the chances of his film career being discovered by his father would be less if he acted under a different name (!)* His father, as noted above, loathed film as a profession, and presumably did not feel to ever see them. Yusuf still did not feel safe.

To further keep his father in the dark, he let it be known (to all except his brother Ayub), that he was working with the Glaxo company. The world war was still on, food was rationed, and often insufficient for his large family. So Yusuf's father asked him to get Glaxo biscuits in large pathan quantities for the family on a regular basis. Yusuf was now in a real fix. Lanba tells us that Ved Puri, a college friend, came to his rescue. *Ved would hunt all over town for Glaxo biscuits, and Yusuf would return home from the studio with a box of biscuits pretending to have come straight from the factory. Clearly, he had the makings of a good actor right from the start of his film career...* (p. 34)

Reading this in 2003 sounds strange, to say the least. Parents today would fall over themselves if their son/daughter landed even a small TV role, let alone the lead role in a Bombay Talkies film. With the dominance of the Page Three culture in our lives today, we have certainly come a long way...■

Narendra Panjwani is a sociologist turned film archivist, working with Osian's C.A. Ltd., Mumbai.

A Pastiche

Abhik Mazumdar

MUSICAL HERITAGE OF INDIA

By Lalita Ramakrishna

Shubhi Publication, New Delhi, 2003, pp.291+xvi, Rs. 2950.00

India's musical heritage is as vast, as diverse, and as old as the nation itself. Presenting such an extensive topic within the space of one book is thus surely a daunting task. The present book, appropriately titled *Musical Heritage of India*, seeks to meet an even tougher remit; the blurb describes it as "a pleasing work that will satisfy the general reader as well as the serious student."

Wisely, the author has chosen to confine herself to our classical traditions. Covering all our folk and other non-classical forms as well would have definitely been beyond the scope of a single volume. The present book is divided into three broad parts, covering respectively the ancient classical traditions, and the Hindustani and Karnatak forms.

The book opens with a lengthy description of the importance of music in ancient times. A detailed account is given of its theological function, as an essential aspect of Vedic chanting, as well as its temporal relevance, as a source of courtly entertainment. It explains ancient concepts such as Grama and Murchhana, and also how these concepts can be understood in terms of the Hindustani and Karnatak forms prevalent today. It then moves on to the notions of Nada, Shruti, Swara and so on.

Somewhat perplexingly, this is followed by an analysis of Raga and Alapa in general. Important ideas no doubt, but not strictly relevant in a discussion on ancient music. Similarly, the next chapter deals with Tala and Laya; though some emphasis is given to these notions in their age-old form, much of the discussion is too general to merit a place in the intended theme of the section. The following chapter discusses musical instruments used in ancient times. The section ends with a description of the Prabandha compositional form in vogue then.

The section on Hindustani music begins with a chapter on its evolution and expansion. In one sweep it covers the lives and contributions of the important figures, right from Amir Khusro and Gopal Nayak, to Swami Haridas and Tansen, down to Bhimsen Joshi and Shobha Gurtu of the present day. The biographical sketches have been arranged in a roughly chronological but still rather haphazard manner; the four Dagar brothers of the 20th century are placed before Ramakrishnabua Vaze, and Prabha Atre preceded Omkarnath Thakur. Curiously, this chapter features no instrumentalist of the present era.

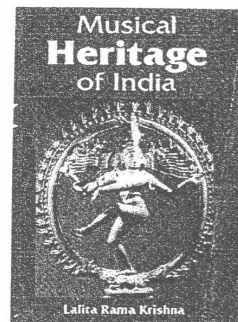
The author moves on to a discussion on

Ragas and the Thaat system of Raga classification. Once again, considerable emphasis is laid on comparing the Hindustani and Karnatak systems. The next chapter deals with musical instruments. It is here, rather than in the chapter on evolution and expansion, that contemporary instrumentalists find a place. Each instrument is discussed separately together with its important exponents. Following this is an analysis of the percussive aspects of Hindustani music, entailing both instruments and rhythmic principles. The subsequent chapter is devoted to musical forms, a crucial aspect of Hindustani music. Once again, only forms of vocal music find place here; instrumental forms such as different kinds of Gats are discussed in the chapter on instruments. Finally, the author discusses Ragamala paintings.

The Karnatak music section is comparatively livelier. For one, the author seems to be much more at home here than in the preceding section. In the opening chapter, entitled 'Emerging Identity of Indian Music', she covers important figures of this style, from Purandaradasa to contemporary vocalists, also briefly touching upon topics as diverse as the courtesan culture and instrumental accompaniment to vocal music. The next chapter is devoted to instrumental music. As in the Hindustani music section, each instrument is described separately along with brief sketches of its major performers.

The chapter on Mela and Sahitya is brief, for the most part merely a setting down of bare theoretical principles. At the same time, it does have interesting insights on offer, such as the manner in which Ragas transform over time. The portion on Sahitya and its bearing on music is also brought out well. Tala and percussion have been dealt with very cursorily in the next chapter. That one of the most complex and highly developed aspects of Karnatak music is covered in only nine pages is certainly peculiar. On top of this, five are set aside for instruments and performers. Predictably, the four pages left for the theory of percussion is woefully inadequate. Compositional forms such as Varnam, Kriti, Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi and so on are discussed in the next chapter. The final chapter in the section, entitled 'Characteristics of Karnatak Music', attempts a broad overview of the discipline and its performative aspects.

By way of an epilogue, the last chapter of the book discusses recent innovations in music. Particular emphasis is placed on the advent of



electronic instrumentation, such as digital tablas and tanpuras, and experimentation in fusion music.

The author's grasp over the subject is clearly thorough. Yet, the book fails to satisfy. For one, a haphazardness in presentation and arrangement of contents pervades throughout. Blunders abound in profusion. The Sarod and the Chitra Veena are described as very similar since both are fretless. Moreover, in both, apparently sliding a plectrum (sic) on a polished metal fingerboard modulates the sound. (For the record, the Sarod is played with the fingertips or nails of the left hand and, to the best of the reviewer's knowledge, the Chitra Veena does not feature a polished metal fingerboard.) To complete the confusion, the similarity between the two is ascribed to their being derived from the ancient Rudra Veena.

The Karnatak music section reads much better, but it features its own set of problems. Often the author presumes a certain familiarity with the subject on the part of the reader. Brevity of exposition, usually a 'virtue', places discussions on theory beyond the comprehension of the layperson.

Production is shoddy, especially given the price of the book. Many photographs seem to have been cut from magazines; very often they retain accompanying captions. At times, these captions conflict with those added by the author. A picture of L. Subramaniam and Kavita Krishnamurthy, with the original label still legible, is captioned "Shakti ensemble". Indeed, the photographs and illustrations are often misleading, and frequently mislabelled as well.

But the book's most serious drawback is that it does not display any identity of its own. For the most part it is merely a hurriedly collated pastiche of available information. It does not treat the subject in any depth, nor does it present existing knowledge in a novel and accessible manner. Hence, we are forced to conclude, rather harshly, that it fails to meet the needs of either the serious student or the lay reader. ■

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Cartographing History

Lucy Peck

SHAHJAHANABAD / OLD DELHI : TRADITION AND COLONIAL CHANGE
Edited by Eckart Ehlers and Thomas Krafft
Manohar Books, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 134, Rs. 600.00

For anyone with an interest in Shahjahanabad in particular, or old cities in general, this will be an essential purchase. Although it was first published (in Germany) ten years ago, its price has put it out of reach of many people, so this new Indian edition is very welcome. Its chief interest lies in the wonderful folded map found in a pocket at the back. This is a 'transliterated' version of a nineteenth century map of the walled city of Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi), held in the Oriental and India Office Records in the British Library.

The map is reckoned to date from about 1850. It is not known who commissioned or executed the work, but we can be sure, from its detail and accuracy, that a considerable number of surveyors must have been involved. At some point rather uneven annotations were added in difficult-to-read Urdu. The emphasis for both the mapmakers and the annotators seems to have been on Islamic institutions, even though some important ones are missing. Also missing are virtually all the Hindu and Jain temples that existed at that time, and probably some prominent *havelis*. This might give us a clue to the makers, who could have had better access to some places than others. Interestingly, the map seems to have been unknown to later mapmakers, who have failed to produce anything as good again.

This version of the map is reproduced at the same scale (approx 1 : 2,700) as the original, and is extremely easy to read. The modern cartographer (Gerd Storbeck of the University of Bonn) deserves special praise for managing to show all the details from the original map but with much greater clarity. People who like maps will gaze and gaze at this one. Adding to the interest is that, if you take it into the walled city of Shahjahanabad, you will find that the street pattern is remarkably accurate in those quite extensive areas where the old street pattern still remains. This should give enormous confidence to urban historians in interpreting it.

This brings us to the added bonus, the book that comes with the map. This consists of a set of six essays on the theme of Tradition and Colonial Change in Shahjahanabad. These are all extremely interesting in their disparate ways but, disappointingly, they only throw an indirect light on aspects of the map, rather than attempting to use the map to illuminate what is known of the history.

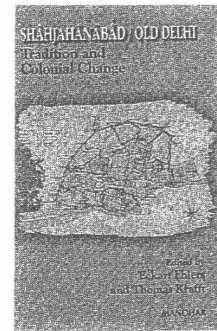
Eckart and Krafft begin with a discussion of

Shahjahanabad as an "Islamic City". In this context they say that it was a planned city. A glance at the map will show that this is true only to a very limited extent. Most of the city streets, except the two main thoroughfares and the garden, have the appearance of organic rather than planned origins. The same applies to the different neighbourhoods, which are self-contained, as in other Islamic cities, but also quite irregular in their internal layout, although often confined within the regular outlines of erstwhile *havelis*. It is interesting to discover on the ground how persistent these neighbourhood boundaries have been; ward borders, for instance, are still a real barrier between local areas of the city.

The second essay is a lively account of the history of the city by Narayani Gupta, and the map helps in understanding much of what she says. However, it has to be remembered that the map is a snapshot of Delhi in 1850 and some drawing of breath at that stage of the story, with a reference to what is seen on the map, would have been fun.

The next essay, by Anisha Shekhar Mukherji, is an addition since the first edition. It is a discussion of the Red Fort and the original palace buildings. The map gives us a marvellous idea of what the palace was like at around 1850. It is even possible to make an educated guess at the changes that took place during the two hundred years of its previous existence (for instance the in-filling of many of the peripheral spaces), so the description and analysis provided in this essay is illuminating.

The fourth paper is the most impenetrable because, although it is the only one that concentrates on the period close to when the map was made, it blithely ignores the contents of the map. The subject matter of the essay is Islamic institutions and their influence on the social and cultural life of the city and there is a great deal of dense history about various Naqshbandiya orders. At first it appears that a lot of facts have been extracted from the map, but in fact very few of the lists of *mohallas*, mosques etc. come from it at all; instead they come from some other detailed (but un-cited) sources. However, it does not sustain its argument for the very strong influence of Islamic institutions on the physical location of particular communities (or vice versa). Many of the *mohalla* names refer to the dominant occupations of the inhabitants or the great *havelis* in which they have come up. Of course,



urban segregation based on profession or occupation could be found in many parts of the world and has nothing to do with Islam, a point that is half-made at the end of the essay. Incidentally, a valuable addition in this new edition would have been an index, covering both the text and a gridded key map on which all the annotated place names could have been located. This essay, in particular, would thereby have been made more accessible.

Thomas Krafft explains the history of modern Shahjahanabad, from the very end of colonial days. The story is explained well and, obviously, the map helps to explain the severity of the urban problem, but the paper is only tangentially connected with either the map or the theme. Not surprisingly, the author's conclusion is that the present problems of overcrowding, traffic congestion and the deterioration of the traditional residential areas will continue.

The last essay is a discussion of Indian maps by Susan Gole, referring mainly to illustrations in her 1989 book, *Indian Maps and Plans*. Rather surprisingly, although the map is mentioned in the book, this essay does not examine it in any detail.

It is to be hoped that the reissue of this map will spur on a great deal of new work on Shahjahanabad. It would be fascinating to read an analysis of the map as it related to conditions in the city in the 1840s. For instance, there seem to have been about ten large old *havelis* still existing when the map was made, another fourteen that were in the process of redevelopment, and others that existed in name only. In addition to these there were a large number of much smaller *havelis*, some of which exist today. We can also make out, among other things, numerous wells, *mohalla* gates and burial grounds and can easily recognize the early European buildings inside the city. It would appear that all this information is fairly untapped and could be a valuable tool in interpreting written sources. ■

Lucy Peck is a UK architect, with an M Phil in Town Planning. She is currently living in Delhi and working on a book about the Architecture of Delhi.

Fascinating Vitality

Meena Bhargava

THE MAGNIFICENT MUGHALS

Edited by Zeenut Ziad

Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2002, pp. xxii+317, Rs. 1295.00

What I found magnificent and fascinating about this anthology is not only its meticulous production but also the fact that a scholar who obtained a degree in Mathematics has edited it. Nonetheless, Zeenut Ziad's passion stayed with South Asian history and in particular the Mughal period. Pursuing her interest she organized a lecture series on the Mughal Empire at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., USA. This volume is the result of the lecture series.

The book has been enriched by the diversity of issues that it raises – economy, religion, art and architecture, literature, gender – relating to the Mughal Empire. The authors have offered a range of interpretations that arouse new interest in Mughal history. The volume, in fact, represents a number of inter-relationships that the Mughal Empire engendered and within which it existed.

The foreword by Milo Cleveland Beach is significant for several apt observations that would consolidate the understanding of the Mughal Empire and help remove umpteen misconceptions about its nature. Commenting on Mughal culture, Beach observes that it was “immensely cosmopolitan”. Creative arts, architecture and music were brought to the Mughal court “where experimentation was encouraged” contributing to the “evolution of the new and uniquely Mughal style as were the specific enthusiasms of the individual emperors”. The Mughal sensibility, Zeenut Ziad argues, was exceptional in the way “it conjoined the cerebral and conceptual with the perpetual and sensual”. The Mughal emperors stimulated and promoted local traditions, making Hindustan their home. The fact that they were willing to respect and incorporate aspects of the source traditions distinguishes their culture and attests their political astuteness.

Outlining the character of the volume in the Introduction, Zeenut Ziad argues for the need to recognize continuities and not only differences in policy between Akbar and Aurangzeb and highlight the creativity and activities of the period after Aurangzeb. Describing the Mughal period as one of “fascinating vitality” Ziad insists that it is necessary to focus on its paradoxes and contradictions rather than indulge in simplistic arguments. Accordingly the essays in the volume represent different and sometimes

divergent views and interpretations.

John F. Richards in the chapter ‘The Mughal Empire’ gives an exhaustive account of the political and economic systems of the Mughal emperors. He argues that the “impressive stability” of the Mughal empire was due to the monarchy that had evolved itself into a powerful, centralizing institution. However, there is not much consensus on the issue of centralization i.e. to the extent it was achieved or whether it was achieved at all. Richards then suggests that the imperial attitude had changed under Aurangzeb – becoming orthodox and following the diktats of the Ulema. Arguments such as these need to be analysed and explained clearly before reaching any conclusion. Aurangzeb's religiosity and orthodoxy in state matters is a complex, debatable issue. He was, no doubt, orthodox in person but in politics, he emulated his predecessors in which pragmatism and expediency reigned supreme. Like in medieval times, if Aurangzeb used religion, it was to fulfil a political purpose and assert political paramountcy rather than to enforce orthodoxy. The Rathor rebellion following the death of Raja Jaswant Singh occurred in 1678 and not 1578 as it has been mentioned in the chapter. It may be a typing error.

Aurangzeb has again been presented as a “fundamentalist” who wanted “India to be a truly Muslim country” by Annemarie Schimmel in the chapter on ‘Religion’. But there are no evidences from Aurangzeb's reign to substantiate the statement. To the contrary, as I have said earlier, for Aurangzeb too like his predecessors, political expediency and the Emperor's paramountcy were predominant concerns. Had he really wanted to change the character of the Mughal rule in India, then why would he have wasted the first 20 years of his reign and delayed the imposition of *jaziya* till 1679. If he did so, it is clear that his motivation was purely political rather than religious. Aurangzeb, in my opinion, is perhaps the most misunderstood of all Mughal emperors. It appears as if religious orthodoxy was the only forte of Aurangzeb. His several traits and achievements are completely subordinated and negated. Aurangzeb, as Schimmel also observes, did much for the “diffusion of education, supported fine scholars and poets and himself wrote beautiful Persian prose”.

Shifting away from the politico-religious aspects of the Mughal empire, Irfan Habib

The Mughal emperors stimulated and promoted local traditions, making Hindustan their home. The fact that they were willing to respect and incorporate aspects of the source traditions distinguishes their culture and attests their political astuteness.

discusses the main trends in the Mughal economy—agrarian, trade and commerce—and its impact on the peasants. Although he mentions the scholars who have studied the eighteenth century as a period of growth, continuity and change, he rejects these theories and stipulates that the impact of the East India Company on the Indian economy was indeed destructive.

Expanding the discussion on the economy, Aman ur Rahman and Waleed Ziad focus on the coinage and the monetary system under the Mughals. Like in any aspect of Mughal administrative system, the monetary system too reflected the “unifying, overarching yet flexible nature of their imperial state”. To the Mughals, coins were not merely a means of exchange but also propaganda: a symbol of imperial grandeur and an evidence of their unchallenged sovereignty and an expanding domain. The patterns in the monetary system set by Akbar remained the same not only under his successors but also in the regional states in the eighteenth century. Even though the regional states and the East India Company issued coins locally, they imprinted on them the name of the Mughal sovereign. Assessing the nature and impact of the coinage and monetary system under the Mughals, Rahman and Waleed Ziad argue that like the Mughal revenue and administrative system and the Mughal symbols of power and other aspects of Mughal rule, the Mughal classification of copper and silver coins was also borrowed by the British. In fact, the terminology of Mughal coinage is still in use today.

The chapters on literature, painting, architecture and music and dance illustrate the cultural richness of the Mughal period. Wheeler M. Thackston discusses the imperial Mughal traditions of writing, biographies, *tazkiras*, lexicography, calligraphy and also trends and patterns in regional literature. More interesting is his exhaustive analysis of three forms of Persian poetry – *qasida* (ode), *ghazal* (lyrics) and *masnavi* (narrative) that flourished under the Mughals. In his chapter on ‘Urdu Literature’, Shamsur Rahman Faruqi argues that the eighteenth century was the most “exciting, vibrant and productive century” in more than 500 years of literary production in Urdu. Countering that the eighteenth century

was a period of decay and disintegration, he observes that Delhi even in the middle of the eighteenth century boasted of Persian as the *zaban-e-urdu-e-mua'lla-e-Shahjahanabad* (the language of the exalted city of Shahjahanabad).

Tracing the history of music and dance, Bonnie C. Wade describes the characteristic features as they evolved from the time of Akbar. Wade argues that both music and dance were a synthesis of South Asian with Central and West Asian musical traditions on one hand and the indigenization of Mughal court music and dance on the other. Describing the patterns in Akbar's period, Wade says "it was a very cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic atmosphere, conducive to cultural synthesis". Such patterns of synthesis and mutual adaptations continued under the other Mughal emperors with new instruments and music traditions emerging in the eighteenth century. This demonstrates that the cultural richness continued in the eighteenth century despite the political disruptions in the Mughal empire.

Joseph M. Dye III gives interesting details on the style of Imperial Mughal painting. His emphasis is not only on the aesthetics and tastes of the Mughal emperors but the talent, training and expertise of the artists as well. The moods and expectations and the sensitivity and technique in the paintings is a reflection of both the emperor and the painter. The value of the chapter has been enhanced by the colourful reproductions with a commentary on them. The reader can therefore relate the painting and the style to the imperial political ideology and the aesthetics and the trend towards cultural synthesis. Similarly, Catherine Asher's chapter on 'Architecture' is not a dull, monotonous description of buildings. Her explanation of the architectural styles is embodied in the historical perspective i.e. how each building under different emperors reflects their political and cultural ideology, the magnificence and opulence, pragmatism and above all the spirit of synthesis. The Mughal legacy, she suggests, comprises magnificent palaces, tombs, mosques and gardens but also temples. Akbar had

invested in the construction of Govind Deva temple at Vrindavan, which Raja Mansingh had built in 1570. The sponsorship to the temple at Vrindavan had continued under Jahangir and Shahjahan while the new temples were also constructed. This more than adequately should speak for the Mughal state and Mughal rule in India. A point of interest to many would be that the Babri masjid commonly believed to have been constructed by Babar was in fact built by one of his nobles, Mir Baiq Beg in 1528-29. The vast literature on the mosque establishes that there is no rational reason to believe that there was any association of the mosque with the birthplace of Rama. These associations have been created and nurtured for obvious political reasons since the nineteenth century.

A chapter of significant importance and value is 'The Lives and Contributions of Mughal Women' by Ellison B. Findly. Mughal documents, she observes, are "fulsome in terms of gender". While family was the definitive institution in Mughal life, Mughal women were at the centre of the familial nexus. Mughal life, in fact, "centred in its day to day regularity around the doings of women". The profiles of some Mughal women in the chapter provide interesting details and speak of their role and contributions to the Mughal polity. There are however some obvious mistakes in the chapter, probably typographical, for instance, Jean Baptiste Tavernier has been mentioned as a French jeweller, when he actually was a French traveller. Nonetheless, works like that of Findly should encourage research on gender, which for the Mughal period is extremely scarce and limited.

The volume should interest not only the practitioners of history but also anyone keen on understanding the history and culture of India. The book brings together several aspects of the Mughal period. Most of the essays reinforce the theory that the eighteenth century was not dark, decadent and stagnant and that despite the political disruptions and the weakening of the Mughal empire, the Indian economy and culture continued to flourish. The value of the book is enhanced by the colourful plates and diagrams, which are reproduced with flawless intricacy.

There are many that tend to pass hasty judgements on the Mughal emperors and their rule. The denials and distortions have resulted in reductive communalism and an alienation from such a remarkable heritage. This volume demonstrates the inescapable reality and truth i.e. without the Mughals, the culture of India and the entire subcontinent would be inexplicable. ■

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Charting the Terrain

A.R. Vasavi

INDIA'S SILENT REVOLUTION: THE RISE OF THE LOW CASTES IN NORTH INDIAN POLITICS

By Christophe Jaffrelot

Permanent Black, 2003, New Delhi, pp. 505, Rs. 795.00

Breaking away from ruling theories of political science and refreshingly free of the new jargon and style of dominant political theorists, Jaffrelot's new book places much of what is now the public's newspaper-based commonsense of India's political complexity into a large framework that draws on the social context and the personalities of different political personae and parties. Drawing on Ambedkar's observation that India's political democracy was not based on social and economic democracy, Jaffrelot culls out historical and contemporary details to indicate the basis for this. From indicating the impact of Gandhi's reformist but conservative perspectives which were contradictory to Ambedkar's emphasis on educating and politically organizing the 'depressed classes' to that of the recent trends which seek to co-opt the low-ranked, Jaffrelot provides a parade of personalities (Nehru, Malviya, Charan Singh, J. Phule, M.C. Rajah, P. Deshmukh, Narendra Deva, Lohia, Swami Achutanand, Kanshi Ram et al) who marked the varied trajectories of mobilizing the low-caste groups.

Though Jaffrelot contextualizes the rise of the low-ranked caste groups in terms of populism, he does not adequately detail the nature of populism in India nor does he provide a comparative perspective which would have helped explain the contradiction of the caste system being the basis for the new political democracy in India. Reiterating M.N. Srinivas's view that caste mobilization led to only a positional change and not a structural change in the system, Jaffrelot considers how economic and social factors and trends such as the green revolution, land distribution and patterns of social change impacted on the trends in the political mobilization of low-caste groups.

While the contributions of relatively unstudied and unrepresented persons such as Swami Achutanand are detailed, Jaffrelot relegates the contributions and characteristics of Kerala's SNDP to a footnote (number 112 in page 210). Yet an analysis of the SNDP would indicate that the Ezhavas followed both a sanskritization and empowerment model, thereby making Jaffrelot's neat schema, of the sanskritization model of the north being different from the 'ethnization and empowerment' (p.166) model of the south and western states, problematic. Jaffrelot deftly and accurately indicates and details the way in which

Hindu ideology dogged most reformers, resulting in pronouncements which challenged only the immediate disadvantages that the low-caste suffered from and not the caste system itself. Similarly, he details the ways in which even the Communist Party failed to recognize the importance of caste until the introduction of land reforms in Bengal. More interestingly, he details the context in which "kisan politics" emerged as "an ideology of social transformations which mobilized the rural poor by emphasizing their common interests and separate identity as peasants" (p. 271). Merging with the 'quota politics', 'kisan politics' formed the base on which intermediate castes, many of whom did not suffer from the economic and social indignities of the caste system, became contenders with the scheduled castes for the economic and political space in the nation. In an excellent analysis and deconstruction of the Mandal Committee report, Jaffrelot notes the extent to which quota politics was not primarily to provide jobs to the Other Backward Classes but to enable them to access power. The result, Jaffrelot summarizes, meant that in northern India, "quota and kisan politics crystallized in the 1960s as two distinct methods of promoting social transformation" (p. 333), which in turn has led to the ironic situation and process in which "constitutional categories have become social categories" (p. 355). While Jaffrelot does not note this, it is pertinent to link such developments to the fact that the combination of political legitimization of caste categories with cultural and social sanskritization has led to the reproduction of caste structures and mentalities in both the public and private domains. Jaffrelot also details the fact that the Mandal report recommended 27 percent reservation for OBC to generate only 1800 jobs out of the listed 9000 jobs (a fact often forgotten) but affected 40 percent of the upper castes, which led to the widespread and violent protests against the committee's recommendations. Though Jaffrelot documents the increase of OBCs in the northern states and in national political positions, he does not indicate or mention the process of domestication and subordination of these persons, noting only the problem to be linked to the internal divisions in these parties and the states.

Continuing to document contemporary trends, Jaffrelot documents the rise of the Samajwadi and Bahujan Samaj parties which

For the details and the interlinkages it provides, Jaffrelot's book on the not quite 'silent revolution' in India may become a classic and will, one hopes, chart the terrain for more works that engage with the conditions in the field and the actors and the ideologies that go into making a complex nation.

focus primarily on strategizing political gains and displacing upper castes from their dominant political positions. Considering Kanshi Ram to be able to complete Ambedkar's agenda for the oppressed, Jaffrelot details the ways in which the rights of the low-caste are being championed. However, Jaffrelot is not explicit about the extent to which such strategies have bypassed development and social welfare measures and which largely account for the lag in the social and economic conditions of the northern states from that of the southern states. Jaffrelot concludes with an understanding of the current trends in which the BJP seeks to form a 'coalition of extremes' and now seeks the support of the low-castes while retaining its 'logic of sanskritization' (p. 459) with which it also seeks to counter the rise of dalit consciousness and politicization.

For the details and the interlinkages it provides, Jaffrelot's book on the not quite 'silent revolution' in India may become a classic and will, one hopes, chart the terrain for more works that engage with the conditions in the field and the actors and the ideologies that go into making a complex nation. ■

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Roadmaps for the Future

Eric Gonsalves

INDIA AND THE UNITED STATES IN A CHANGING WORLD

Edited by Ashok Kapur, Y.K. Malik, Harold A. Gould and Arthur G. Rubinoff
Sage, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 560, Rs. 795.00

INDIA-US RELATIONS: PROMOTING SYNERGY

Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 80, price not stated.

The current unipolar world means that every nation must give priority to its relations with the United States. For India this coincided with fundamental reordering of external attitudes required by the end of the Cold War. *India and the United States in a Changing World* edited by Kapur, Malik, Gould and Rubinoff is a comprehensive effort to analyse the past and project possible future scenarios. The Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) in Delhi has followed in the footsteps of several US think tanks and put out a report *India-US Relations: Promoting Synergy* which outlines a road map for the future.

Gould's contribution in the first book provides a valuable background. The dual US policy for keeping communism out of the subcontinent from the 50s provided military pacts for Pakistan, and economic aid and support for democracy for India. Over time, preventing nuclear proliferation took precedence over containing communism. Gould's view that Chester Bowles was right and John Foster Dulles wrong is bringing the Cold War to the subcontinent will be shared by many. In James Spierling's words idealism was trumped by self-interest.

Coming to the present, Gould and Spierling feel that the geostrategic convergence of interests could bring India and US closer together. Steven Hoffman also feels that disagreement over worldviews can be minimized. The present BJP government in Delhi and the second Clinton and current Bush Administrations have moved in this direction. The contributions on strategies and political issues largely fall within the above framework.

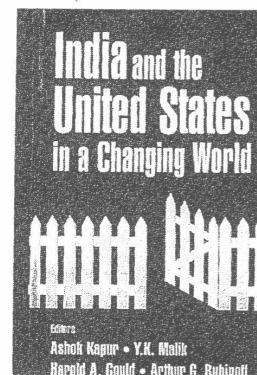
Rubinoff and Robert M. Hathaway draw particular attention to a political reality not always appreciated in India. The US Congress plays a much more important role in making policy than does the Indian Parliament. Policies result from the interaction not only between the Administration and Congress, but also between their constituent parts. The nexus between Congressional Committees, major government departments and lobbies is complex and yet vital to understand in dealing with the US. India is learning to work this network but not as quickly and effectively as it should. The Indian community is being mobilized to gain leverage through votes and

donations. Media, academics and business have also to be factored into selling policies in America.

R.S. Khare has contributed a useful commentary on the evolution of attitudes in the Indian elite since Independence. Comparing them with the value system in American society, he sees little in common to build upon. However, public awareness even about distant parts of their own country is quite limited both in India and America. It would be sufficient if the excellent work done in Indian studies in US institutions outlined by N. Gerald Barrier is expanded and not reduced. They already impact on US policy makers. Universities and think tanks in India need to replicate this exercise for the benefit of the Indian political elite that remains woefully ignorant of geo political and geo economic issues. The interaction in other disciplines such as science and technology catalogued by Aqueel Ahmad is also of importance as understanding grows out of such network. Hurdles set up by the Indian Government to intellectual exchanges do not really benefit India. A nation proud of its civilization and culture must be self-confident enough to deal with foreigners without intelligence or security nursemaids. The mismanagement of higher education in India by bureaucracies and politicians have deprived her of an enormous source of goodwill and income. I.T. professionals making good abroad are only the tip of a potential iceberg. Centers of excellence supported by a good school system would attract droves of foreign students and keep our own migrants at home.

The economic chapters correctly suggest that India must be far more active in liberalization and reform and in developing infrastructure etc. These issues are not dealt with in adequate depth. Concrete and precise recommendations for joint action by governments, industry associations and entrepreneurs must replace the standard catalogue of complaints by prospective US partners and conceptual contributions by Indians. Both economic and security specialists agree that sanctions are no longer very effective.

The success story of China rightly held up as an example for India to emulate has one interesting extra dimension. Market leverage has been used for political influence in the US.

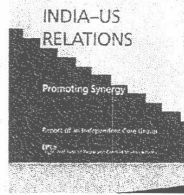


The IPCS report is more concise on background. It goes much further in making specific recommendations. The executive summary gives twenty-seven of these.

The central suggestion that India-US relations be configured around such temporary identity of interests as may exist is unexceptionable. Any strategic partnership today would have to be built on that premise. Further different relationships i.e. economic, social and geopolitical though inter-related will operate in different timeframes and sometimes in different directions. This will be more so as ideological straitjackets become less rigid and economic entities become more transnational.

Denis Kux rightly states in his seminal work *Estranged Democracies* that the fundamental problems between India and US arose from disagreement on national security policies. However this never impeded the flow of young Indians going to study and settle in America. Knee-jerk anti-Americanism might have been the norm in the Indian official establishment, but anti-American demonstrations here rarely matched the fervour of those in the cities of American allies. After the Clinton visit, there was a brief period of euphoria during which many aspects of the relationship seemed set to go into orbit. However 9/11 and Afghanistan have dispelled that.

This reviewer must be permitted the indulgence of mentioning that in some fifty years of professional dealing with Americans the overall impression remains one of ruthless pursuit of objectives allied to pragmatism in finding solutions speedily. If one took the same stance, hard and difficult negotiations never undermined professional relations of respect. Two examples may be cited. One was the write off of the enormous PL 480 debts—within a couple of years of Kissinger's visit to China, the liberation of Bangladesh and the *Enterprise* incident. An alternative source of nuclear fuel for the Tarapur Atomic Power Station was agreed despite growing disagreement over nuclear proliferation, Afghanistan and military



aid to Pakistan.

From the days of John Foster Dulles, US policy directives have always opposed the emergence of India as a regional power. This appears to be undergoing change. The report indicates that this will depend largely on India's internal capacity and its role in South Asia. Should it become a benevolent major power in a prosperous region evolving into a free trade area and a community, its global stature will become a fact to reckon with.

Pakistan and Kashmir cannot be ignored. It is perhaps time that both India and Pakistan abandoned their wishful thinking that the international community i.e. the USA can or will put sufficient pressure on the other to concede anything on Kashmir or to rein in the jihad mentality in Pakistan. American spokesmen have repeated over the years that they abhor cross border terrorism and that force should not be used to alter the Line of Control (LoC). India should take it from there. The LoC is a *de facto* international border. It needs to be made a *de jure* one. Whatever technical inputs and intelligence the Americans can provide towards this end should be welcomed. But India must recognize that the onus lies upon itself. Enhanced security, effective intelligence and a viable political process must succeed in bonding Kashmir to India whatever Pakistan does. Putting pressure and coercing Pakistan while also making deals with any willing elements of the Pakistani establishment should be twin elements of a bilateral policy. Periodic successes must be obtained or at least claimed. Over-involvement of the US could have unforeseen consequences. US support ensured the rise of Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden and the Taliban until they became sworn enemies. To stay in the driving seat India requires will and capacity as well as flexibility.

An Asian system is struggling to establish itself. China and Russia are working together through the Shanghai Organization and other institutions. The US has become more active in South and Central Asia after 9/11. They were always an important player in APEC and the Gulf regions. India is beginning to look East to South East and East Asia and also North to Iran and Central Asia—but the interest is still

too limited and generated largely by players outside India. Increasing and improving relations with all the major players i.e. US, China, Russia, Japan and Iran as well as the regional systems that surround South Asia would help India gain a role in any systems or systems emerging in Asia especially as the Iraq war plays out.

Combating terrorism and fundamentalism are among the proclaimed objectives of almost every government. To modernize and democratize societies so that they accept pluralism and place development and governance above sectarianism is the best way to meet this challenge. Neither India nor the US always practise what they preach. In any event current attitudes preclude much joint action now. The value of the Pakistan military establishment in attaining US objectives will create their own priority. Hence cooperation in expertise and intelligence at the operational level should be institutionalized and expanded. If and when there is political will for greater burden sharing it will manifest itself.

The report suggests that while the US has not changed its policy on nuclear proliferation, the Bush Administration may be willing to let sleeping dogs lie, India must be accepted as a *de jure* nuclear weapons power some day and is willing to behave like one now. Till then whatever new technologies in the nuclear and missile fields India wishes to acquire it would seem best to develop them at home, or seek them out discreetly abroad.

It may seem somewhat surprising that two of the world's largest professional military establishments operating totally under civilian control have remained so aloof from each other. Earlier suspicions can now be set aside. Cooperation in training, joint exercises and joint action such as peacekeeping policing, the Indian Ocean etc. must be encouraged. Access to American military technology is very valuable and no effort should be spared to obtain it. The US has always been an unreliable weapons supplier. That needs to be taken into account. Bilateral military relations can and should provide a major component for synergy. The report makes detailed recommendations which deserve attention.

That India would benefit by moving to a fast track in improving governance, public finance developing infrastructure, easing its bureaucratic and legal hurdles to trade and investment is axiomatic. The US does not always play fair. An India US Free Trade Area would provide a better mechanism for both sides. Initial data seems to indicate that accession to WTO regime has benefited Indian consumers, producers and exporters. To make oneself strong enough, efficient enough and confident enough to deal with globalization is the only way as the report suggests.

The Indian community in the USA is coming into its own. It has had increasing clout

with the Indian establishment because of its wealth. Recently its donations and its votes carry weight in some US constituencies. This leverage has been useful to support Indian objectives. But this support should not be taken for granted and continuing efforts will be necessary as with other prominent players in American politics.

Does democracy bring countries closer together? Not if their national interests clash. America's objectives will continue to be accommodated as a priority. The concert of democracies is likely to prove more rhetoric than substance.

A major continuing uncertainty is America's use of its enormous power. This Bush Administration started with an unilateral agenda that was almost imperial. America and world reaction to 9/11 and the success in Afghanistan gave them further impetus. Success in Kosovo had provided an aura of invincibility. However, 9/11 brought a sense of insecurity directly into America's homeland which persists. A policy of preemptive strikes such as Iraq has divided the UN, the EU and NATO because of its doubtful legitimacy. It belongs to earlier eras. The debate within America is still low key. Domestic rather than multilateral constraints could prove to be more important. Economic costs or casualties more than moral questions could swing domestic public opinion. Non state actors such as increased militancy and terrorism in the Islamic world could challenge pax Americana more than the permanent members of the Security Council. The eventual outcome in Iraq would provide some indications of how a unipolar 21st century will work out.

The potential for convergence between India and America does exist and it should be deepened as the IPCS report concludes. Kapur and Malik say, "These new developments have created a pattern of engagement that appears to be durable, and which is not ad hoc and reversible". Both books provide us with a good starting point for exploring that further pattern of engagement. It must be reiterated that a stronger and richer India confidently building a cooperative neighbourhood in South Asia and beyond will make itself a more valuable partner. Gaining respect for what one is and also one stands for is better in the long term than to seek support by acquiescing too easily with US objectives which themselves change rapidly. Despite lesser failures, the USA must be highly rated for turning two defeated enemies Germany and Japan into long term allies and economic powerhouses. A US centric world that operates within a global consensus is the best global construct one could hope for today. ■

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

More on the Taliban, et al.

I.P. Khosla

BAMIYAN; CHALLENGE TO WORLD HERITAGE

Edited by K. Warikoo

Bhavana Books, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 313, Rs. 795.00

THE ANATOMY OF A CONFLICT: AFGHANISTAN AND 9/11

By Anand Giridharadas, Ajai Shukla and others

Roli Books, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 256, Rs. 350.00

Only one judgement seems possible on the causes, consequences and morality of the March 2001 destruction of the Buddha colossi at Bamiyan: that its causes derived from an intolerant and obscurantist religious fanaticism, added perhaps to a near universal boycott of the Taliban regime including the imposition of fresh sanctions by the UN in February 2001; its consequences the irreplaceable erasure of this magnificent cultural heritage of the Afghans, of Buddhism and of mankind; and its morality an unacceptable interpretation of Islam which deserves general condemnation.

However, if we widen the perspective by including intentionality, the acts of perceiving, valuing and desiring an outcome, a supplementary judgement emerges, for it is difficult to see what rational outcome the Taliban regime could have envisaged, and the single judgement leaves us with the somewhat unsatisfactory conclusion that the destruction was the mindless act of crazed fanatics, even more unsatisfactory for the smear it leaves, however much we separate the Taliban from other Islamic regimes, on a great world religion.

The volume on Bamiyan edited by K. Warikoo is the outcome of an international seminar he organized in September 2001 on the theme of the title. It brings together a wide range of viewpoints on the history of the colossi, the story of the Taliban, Islam and their destruction, and what can now be done.

Warikoo himself, in the preface, emphasizes the civilizational links between Afghanistan and India, of which Bamiyan was the foremost symbol. Eight articles after that foray into language and history and art forms representing intercultural linkages.

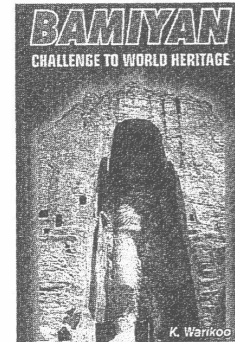
Lokesh Chandra delves into the linguistic origins of the word 'Bamiyan', then goes on to discuss the significance of colossi from Greece to China and Japan as the unifying factor, proclaiming the power and authority of the ruler. Others focus more sharply on the intercultural aspect: S.S. Toshkhani on the links between ancient Kashmir and Afghanistan; O.C. Handa on the somewhat broader subject of those between Afghanistan and the western Himalaya; while Subhashini Aryan goes deeper into the stylistic components of the colossi in an art historical perspective to show how Greek, Roman and Indian influences can be detected. Lalit Gupta's short article looks at one

large Buddhist complex unearthed recently at Ambara, near Jammu.

While this historical part largely concentrates on the links between India and Afghanistan, there are also articles that encompass a wider geography. Valentina Goryacheva describes the research into the Buddhist heritage of Central Asia and its findings; while Shashibala recounts the way Buddhist art forms travelled from India to Japan through China and Korea. And there is one dissenting note: Deborah Klimburg-Salter excludes India and Indian influences altogether, saying the colossi were initiated by the Confederation of Western Turks who ruled Northern and Central Afghanistan till the middle of the 7th century.

The remaining eleven articles are a mixed bag. Four are on the connection between Islam, the Taliban and the Bamiyan destruction. Kalim Bahadur writes that while Muslims are not allowed to build or worship idols, there is nothing in the over 6000 verses of the Quran or other texts which enjoins that they be destroyed. Richard MacPhail blames globalization, the imposition of uniformity and the destruction of diversity which is sought by MNC's as much as by regimes like the Taliban. M. Darrol Bryant blames ignorance; inter-religious dialogue might have addressed the problem and prevented the tragedy; while Smruti S. Pattanaik covers the Taliban origins and ideology.

Seven more are on current international aspects: R. Sengupta on what the Archaeological Survey of India had done to preserve and restore the colossi; D.S. Uchida's appeal to reconstruct what was destroyed; and Suman Siri's short expression of personal anguish at the destruction. Christian Mannhart of UNESCO describes what that organization did to try to stop the Taliban and V.S. Mani surveys the state of international law on the preservation and protection of cultural heritage. The concluding article by Juliette van Krieken-Pieters asks whether this destruction could have been prevented and faces a dilemma: Afghans themselves were pleading that their art objects be sent out of the country to save them; this is illegal, but arguably would preserve this valuable heritage from a regime like the Taliban. Paul Bucherer Dietschi found another solution by establishing an Afghanistan museum in exile in Switzerland which came up



against the same problem, since the law would require permission to export art objects from the Afghan government which, of course, would never be given.

At the end of the volume there is an extremely useful set of 11 appendices: documents including the recommendations of the seminar on which the articles are based; the Taliban edict on the destruction; the most important texts including treaties and conventions concerning the protection and preservation of the world cultural heritage.

Reading these articles we get an occasional glimpse of the darker side of the international trade in art, and here certain facts need to be seen in juxtaposition. The smaller colossus was actually destroyed in 1998; this was known, but no publicity was given to it. This is puzzling since the enchantment of the West with the Taliban ended in late 1997, when stories about how they treated women appeared. But then, in 1999, Mullah Omar issued an edict that the colossi must be protected; even more puzzling, given that it was his edict again, presumably continuing the oft proclaimed establishment of the Khilafat-e-Islamia, that later caused them to be destroyed. Meanwhile despite, or perhaps because of the firm control of the Taliban over ninety per cent of Afghanistan, the smuggling of art objects and artifacts, notably from the Kabul museum to Peshawar, had started expanding in scale, this with the undoubted help of the Taliban. By the year 2000 that frontier town was a hive of art trading, with buyers from the world vying with each other to pick the best pieces, and when some of these started in art auctions the matter assumed the proportions of a scandal. The March 2001 destruction, carried out with a great deal of pre- and post-publicity, diverted attention totally away from this, and we see in the present volume only incidental mention of the problem of international art theft.

It is difficult, of course, to assign intentionality of this juxtaposition of facts, though the Taliban connection to the darker side in other areas—drugs and arms smuggling and crime—are well documented. There may, however, be place here for a supplementary judgement.

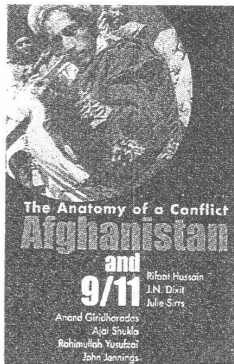
The seven articles by different authors in

The Anatomy of a Conflict comprise two journalistic pieces and five political assessments of Afghanistan before, during and after the Taliban.

Anand Giridharadas writes of what Mohammed Atta and some of his fellow terrorists did on September 10 and 11, the experiences of a few of those who were in the Towers on that day, and the responses to the attack by President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Mayor of New York, Giuliani and others, including the many who, often unasked and unbid, offered sympathy or helped in other ways to soften the blow of the tragedy. He cites the Bush doctrine, that no distinction would be made between those who commit terrorist acts and those who harbour them, which meant Afghanistan, and the way Pakistan therefore became the most crucial ally of the international coalition against terrorism.

Ajai Shukla recounts the experiences of a journey from Dushanbe to the outskirts of Kabul and then into the Afghan capital with the first of the United Front soldiers. It is a fascinating tale, though we do not discover where he was on a particular date. There are stories about the Afghan way of war, Afghan pride, Afghan tea drinking and (not, certainly a comment on Hamid Karzai) that no Afghan regime which captures power with foreign backing can claim legitimacy.

The five political assessments offer a balanced view, two sides of the accepted story of the Taliban, a story which has been edited carefully, but so extensively that it amounts to a rewriting of history. So there are two sides of an edited story plus (not included in this volume) an unedited one. Rahimullah Yusufzai is a Pakistani journalist with many years of experience covering Afghanistan; he was the first to interview the 'reclusive' Mullah Omar, and one of the few who has interviewed Osama bin Laden. He says the mujahidin governments that came to Kabul from 1992 to 1996 were unpopular; the Afghans wanted to be rid of their cruelties and corruption. So this 'rag tag group of resourceless Taliban'—this is straight from a Taliban press release which is not cited—scored miraculous victories against formidable foes. He is not, therefore, and this he has in common with many other Pakistanis,



sympathetic to the US which conducted a 'onesided' war on terrorism.

Rifaat Hussain is more objective, though his Taliban are also the product of the *madrasas* of Afghanistan and Pakistan whose success moved Islamabad to encourage this alternative to a troublesome Rabbani regime. Then came 9/11 and Musharraf's stark choice: abandon the Taliban or face the wrath of the US. The paradigm shift is well described; we get a broad picture of the problems Musharraf faced in making the shift, concluding with the post-13 December 2001 tension between India and Pakistan.

The other side of the story is given by Johan Jennings pointing to the fiction in the story of a chaotic situation into which the Taliban brought order and were welcomed. In fact, as he says, the areas they conquered were more peaceful and better administered before than after they came. The Matrix, a virtual reality promoted by western journalists, diplomats, and humanitarian workers in describing the Afghan governments before the Taliban, is what pervaded international thinking.

J.N. Dixit covers the Afghan story from 1973, the overthrow of Zahir Shah by his cousin Mohammed Daud, moving to the Saur revolution and the subsequent Soviet invasion, to the fall of Najibullah. There is brief coverage of the Taliban and much more which is to the point and analytically sound, on India's interests in, relations with, and difficulties in helping Afghanistan. Unlike most others, he concludes with a recommendation of continued external interest in 'stabilizing', read supporting, the Hamid Karzai government.

More refreshingly blunt than any of the others, Julie Sirs accuses the Taliban regime of outdoing all its predecessors in terms of mass murder, rape, kidnapping, looting and destruction. Her bluntness is as refreshing when it comes to Pakistan, a reluctant ally in the war against terrorism whose complicity with the Taliban and duplicity in pursuing the war make it necessary for the US, if it is to win the war, to admit that Pakistan has become Al Qaeda's latest base with assistance from Pakistani officials, including Musharraf.

The unedited version would tell us how the US encouraged Pakistan to create the Taliban, which really consisted largely of Pakistani armed forces, officers and men posing as *madrasa* students, how they were financed and guided as they took control of one city after another. Equally important, on the presumption that while there was no Pakistani complicity in the 9/11 attack while the Taliban knew about it, it would tell us why, despite the Taliban intelligence agencies and ministries being full of Pakistani personnel, none of them had any inkling of it.

But this one may never be written. ■

I.P. Khosla, a former Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, has served as Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

Nepal's Maoist Revolution

Rita Manchanda

THE PEOPLE'S WAR IN NEPAL: LEFT PERSPECTIVES
Edited by Arjun Karki and David Seddon
Adroit Publishers, Delhi, 2003, NRS 960.00

This April more than 50,000 people massed at the Tundikhel open air theatre in Kathmandu for the first public meeting of the top Maoist leaders, over ground after seven years of armed struggle to sit at the peace table as the representative of a parallel state in Nepal. Now in its eighth year, "The Peoples War" launched by the Communist party of Nepal (Maoist) on February 13, 1996 in two remote mid western districts has expanded into a civil war in which the Maoists hold sway in 45 of Nepal's 75 districts and with a substantive presence everywhere.

The Maoist insurgency has radicalized the Nepal polity with its revolutionary agenda of political, social and economic justice especially for the 'janjatis' (tribals), oppressed nationalities, women and the lower castes. The Maoist alternative comes after Nepal's 12 year experience with constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy has failed to resolve the contradictions over who is sovereign—the people or the King. More important, the whiteligion of democratic governments in Kathmandu has failed to make any impact on the lives of the vast majority.

Moreover, the challenge of Nepal's ultra left politics has sucked the Himalayan Kingdom into the vortex of strategic power interests of the US, the UK and India, which is particularly alarmed by fears of a domino effect in its 'Naxalite' dominated corridor from Bihar to Andhra Pradesh. As the top Maoist leader Babu Ram Bhattarai explaining their new found flexibility said, 'if the foreign powers had remained neutral, the Maoists would not have come to talk peace without achieving through armed struggle their goal of revolutionary transformation.' King Gyanendra's 'constitutional coup' of October '4, has rendered defunct the compromise Constitution and crippled multi party democracy. Nepal's polity is starkly posed between the two states, the one represented by the *ancien* regime and the other by the Maoists.

Clearly developments in Nepal merit much more serious attention by the intellectual community than the 'keep on hold' policy of leading publishing houses. It was therefore with considerable anticipation and consequently growing disappointment that I read Arjun Karki and David Seddon's edited collection *The Peoples War in Nepal: Left Perspectives*. It has neither the lure of a well written, racy 'quickie' book that delivers an easy to digest menu on a

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hot subject, nor an in depth structured analysis of the complexities of the Maoist movement. Its editors announce that the collection is situated in the long tradition of Marxist analysis, i.e. not only to produce better understanding but to contribute positively to the process of change. Coming from David Seddon with his long term academic and developmental engagement with Nepal, it is a claim that led to great expectations, sadly unmet.

The 'Maoist Perspectives' section usefully collects some of the more influential writings, interviews and statements of the top Maoist leaders and saves you searching the Net for the Maoist website. Juxtaposed is its critique in 'Left Perspectives' comprising contributions by leading political thinkers associated with Nepal's splintered left. Except for a couple of noteworthy essays, the analysis often degenerates into shrill polemics in the competition over who is on the correct side of history.

There is the essay by Maoist women leader alias Comrade Parvati of the All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary) on 'Women's Perspectives in the Maoist Movement'. The left counter discourse is developed by Sujita Shakya of the dominant parliamentary left party UML's women's wing, All Nepal Women's Association. The overwhelming presence of women in 'The People's War' is one of the most striking aspects of Nepal's Maoist struggle. Comrade Parvati roots it in the abysmal status of women in Nepal which has one of the highest maternal mortality rates, 875 in 100,000 births. Mothers stoically endure one in every 10 children dying before five. "Structural violence" is not a framework favoured by tradition in the book but there is a rich wealth of detail to be mined here in this regard. Parvati's analysis recognizes that there is no 'Nepali Woman' but women differentiated by class and ethnicity and shows that it is the more emancipated *janjati* (tribal) women who make up nearly 30 % of the fighting cadres in the Maoist strongholds. "They fight at night and do propaganda work and production during the day".

In a unit of 9-11 cadres there are two women, though there are some all women units which have been noteworthy for meting out summary justice to offenders against sexual

oppression, wife beating, usurpation of property, polygamy and dowry. Mapping the activities of women, Comrade Parvati describes their role in mobilizing masses in the new areas because as they are associated with household work, when they go to the new areas they are readily accepted at the household level. They take more time to join but once in stick with it.

Parvati's analysis lacks the self criticism evident in the interview of CPN-Maoist, Chairman Prachanda in the volume. Prachanda expresses the surprise of the party leadership at the masses of women coming forward to join and the difficulties of grooming illiterate women into leadership positions. Parvati skirts the central question of the tension between the emancipatory opportunity for women to be 'equal' in the fighting ranks and the 'instrumental use of women' in these hierarchical-patriarchal armed movements. The Maoist revolutionary agenda is pro-women and clearly at the grassroots level the massive presence of women has given priority to campaigns against alcohol, dowry, polygamy and espoused property rights for women. But where are they in driving the programmatic agenda of the party? There are no women in the five member Maoist negotiating team. Parvati acknowledges the tension between the feminist agenda and the revolutionary agenda. However, this could be an one armed struggle in which the women are arguing that the women's question cannot be postponed till after the revolution.

She claims that the phenomenon of Maoist women has effectively shifted the locus of Nepal's women's movement from the urban centres to the rural areas, from middle class women to *janjati* and lower caste women. However, the claimed solidarity between the two, is more chimera than real Nepal has not witnessed mass mobilization of a women's front on the issue of sexual violence against the Maoist women. This writer was one of the women journalists whom Parvati refers to as visiting the Maoist affected areas out of concern for the situation of women and children in consequence of police repression. Subsequently, some of the Nepali journalists were professionally victimized as Maoist sympathizers. Parvati claims the Maoist women have radicalized the agenda of the women's

The overwhelming presence of women in 'The People's War' is one of the most striking aspects of Nepal's Maoist struggle. Comrade Parvati roots it in the abysmal status of women in Nepal which has one of the highest maternal mortality rates, 875 in 100,000 births. Mothers stoically endure one in every 10 children dying before five.

movement but Sujita Shakya trivializes it—'...injustice, tyranny, exploitation and oppression faced by women cannot be overcome just by beating someone with 500-1000-bamboo sticks and breaking a pot of wine', she writes. Sujita's essay maps the history of Nepal's women's movement but is marred by the partisan objective of discrediting the Maoists which leads her to credit propaganda about sexual license among the Maoist cadres.

Mohan Bikram Singh, the veteran theoretician associated with the far left Mashal party, attacks the allegedly 'pro-King line of the Maoists who espouse a republican Nepal. It is impressive in its detailed analysis of the pro-king proclivities of the Maoist leadership but the rigour of his argument is sadly compromised by the competitive political frame of proving that he was right all along and the Maoists wrong.

Govind Neupane styled as a 'fellow traveler' contributes a substantive analysis of the contradictions in Nepal's transitional capitalist economy and the chapter is complementary to Maoist leader Babu Ram Bhattari's path-breaking essay on Nepal's political economy. He highlights the necessity of a revolutionary strategy based on a United Front encompassing class, caste, nationalities, women and other progressive forces. Writing as it were from the inside, he describes the 'peculiarities in the "Peoples War" guerrilla tactics which brought disarray to the enemy. '... it appears at one moment barely to exist but at another bursts into action'. Moreover, all through their armed struggle, they kept alive the option of talks and engaged in democratic protest action of bandhs. The Maoist strategy, Neupane writes, "through talk and dialogue provided opportunities for those who were uncommitted and through action it rendered passive those who were marginally opposed". It created the conditions for confusion, debate and delay in deploying the army which made for their establishing themselves as a parallel state.

In any edited collection, much hangs on the overview chapter to insightfully frame the analysis. But Karki's and Seddon's essay, 'The Peoples War in Historical Context' is merely a genealogical mapping of Nepal's left movement culminating in the Maoist Peoples War. It is derived from secondary sources in English and is overly dependent on 'conflict resolution' experts like Liz Philipson study for DFID.

Finally, the question—who is this book for. The uninitiated will be most confused as it presumes a great deal of familiarity, and the initiated will fail to find a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of the Maoists establishing a parallel state in Nepal. That story has still to be written. ■

Rita Manchanda is co-author of *Where there are no Men: Women in the Maoist Movement in Nepal in Women War and Peace in South Asia*, Sage 2002.

Resonances Across Time

27 May 2003 is the thirty-ninth death anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of Independent India. The words, written and spoken during the long decades that his life was inextricably intertwined with the history of the nation, have a powerful resonance across time. We are publishing excerpts from *The Essential Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru* edited by S. Gopal and Uma Iyengar (OUP, 2003).

CC

Jawaharlal Nehru was an eloquent and prolific communicator. He wrote extensively, and spoke even more, for over fifty years, spanning the birth of a nation. He is reputed to have averaged twenty-five speeches a month apart from those that he gave in Parliament, which were at times gargantuan...

The selections in these volumes are chosen to reflect Jawaharlal Nehru's thought as his intellect expressed itself on a diversity of topics, from the drafting of the Constitution to horse breeding, from patriarchy to the size and shape of brooms. The excerpts chosen are an attempt to present a composite picture of this public figure through his writings and speeches...

Whatever the contrast between Nehru ante and post 1947, many of the themes that were to dominate his thinking as Prime Minister, were evident in the early stages of his political career. He began conceptualizing the form of a free India in the 1920s, nearly thirty years before Independence. He believed the exercise was fundamental to the struggle that Indians had undertaken...

If Nehru as a nation-builder was evident in the early political writings, the passion of his heart and mind lent a living cadence to his musings on two great themes: Gandhi, and the 'idea of India'.

Both ideas - for Gandhi was as much an idea, as a personality - moved Nehru profoundly, without his feelings ever descending to sentimentality. Gandhi was:

[the] quintessence of the conscious and subconscious will of the [peasant masses] of India...the idealized personification of those vast millions...a man of the keenest intellect, of fine feeling and good taste, wide vision...the ascetic...and yet withal he is the great peasant.

Jawaharlal Nehru's legacy to India and the world continues to be a matter of controversy. That debate is, perhaps, a necessary consequence of the man's impact, but it is not the essence of the man. He was, by his own admission, a "practising politician" who loved "mountains and glaciers, running water in the hills, lettuce salad and good conversation, animals and flowers, swimming and riding". Who along with "bats and centipedes disliked the person who in the name of God, truth and public good is always feathering his nest".

Anyone—detractor or Boswellian—who seeks to examine Nehru's impact must, at the very least, understand Nehru as he understood himself. This is a challenging, but pleasurable task, for that understanding is of a "lover of words and phrases", who stated his opinions elegantly, and sought the voice of reason.

Uma Iyengar

We praise people in well-chosen words and we have some kind of a measure for greatness. How shall we praise him and how shall we measure him, because he was not of the common clay that all of us are made of? He came, lived a fairly long span of life, and has passed away. No words of praise of ours in this House are needed, for he has had greater praise in his life than any living man in history. And during these two or three days since his death he has had the homage of the world; what can we add to that? How can we praise him, how can we who have been children of his, and perhaps more intimately his children than the children of his body, for we have all been in some greater or smaller measure the children of his spirit, unworthy as we were?

A glory has departed and the sun that warmed and brightened our lives has set and we shiver in the cold and dark. Yet, he would not have us feel this way. After all, that glory that we saw for all these years, that man with the divine fire, changed us also—and such as we are, we have been moulded by him during these years; and out of that divine fire many of us also took a small spark which strengthened and made us work to some extent on the lines that he fashioned. And so if we praise him, our words seem

rather small, and if we praise him, to some extent we also praise ourselves. Great men and eminent men have monuments in bronze and marble set up for them, but this man of divine fire managed in his life-time to become enshrined in millions and millions of hearts so that all of us became somewhat of the stuff that he was made of, though to an infinitely lesser degree.

Speech in the Constituent Assembly (Legislative), 2 February 1948.

Two weeks have passed since India and the world learnt of that tragedy which will shame India for ages to come. Two weeks of sorrow and searching of heart, and strong and dormant emotions rising in a flood of tears from millions of eyes. Would that those tears had washed away our weakness and littleness and made us a little worthy of the Master for whom we sorrow? Two weeks of homage and tribute from every corner of the globe, from kings and potentates and those in high authority to the common man everywhere, who instinctively looked to him as a friend, a comrade and a champion. The flood of emotion will tone down gradually as all such emotions do, though none of us can ever be the same as we were before, for he has entered in the very texture of our lives and minds. People talk of memorials to him, in statues of bronze or marble or pillars of stone, and thus they mock him and belie his message. What tribute shall we pay to him that he would have appreciated? He has shown us the way to live and the way to die and if we have not understood that lesson, it would be better that we raised no memorial to him, for the only fitting memorial is to follow reverently the path he showed us, and to do our duty in life and in death.

He was a Hindu and an Indian, the greatest in many generations, and he was proud of being a Hindu and an Indian. To him India was dear, because she had represented throughout the ages certain immutable truths. But though he was intensely religious and came to be called the Father of the Nation which he had liberated, yet no narrow religious or national bonds confined his spirit. And so he became the great internationalist, believing in the essential unity of men, the underlying unity of all religions, and the needs of humanity, and more specially devoting himself to the service of the poor, the distressed and the oppressed millions everywhere. His death brought more tributes than have been paid at the passing away of any other human being in history.

Broadcast from New Delhi, 14 February 1948.

Most of us unhappily are too much engrossed in the business of politics to pay much attention to the finer and more important aspects of life. That is natural perhaps in a nation which struggles for national freedom and to rid itself of the bonds that prevent normal growth. Like a person in the grip of a disease it can think only of how to gain health again, and this obsession is a barrier to the growth of culture and science. We are entangled in our innumerable problems; we are oppressed by the appalling poverty of our people. But if we had a true standard of values we would realize that the silver jubilee of the Indian Science Congress this year is an event of outstanding importance. For that Congress represents science, and science is the spirit of the age and the dominating factor of the modern world. Even more than the present, the future belongs to science and to those who make friends with science and seek its help for the advancement of humanity...

Though I have long been a slave driven in the chariot of Indian politics, with little leisure for other thoughts, my mind has often wandered to the

days when, as a student, I haunted the laboratories of that home of science, Cambridge. And though circumstances made me part company with science, my thoughts turned to it with longing. In later years, through devious processes, I arrived again at science, when I realized that science was not only a pleasant diversion and abstraction, but was of the very texture of life, without which our modern world would vanish away. Politics led me to economics and this led me inevitably to science and the scientific approach to all our problems and to life itself. It was science alone that could solve these problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening custom and tradition, of vast resources running to waste, of a rich country inhabited by starving people....

If science is the dominating factor in modern life, then the social system and economic structure must fit in with science or it is doomed.

Message on the occasion of the silver jubilee of the Indian Science Congress, Calcutta, 3-9 January 1938.

India must break with much of her past and not allow it to dominate the present. Our lives are encumbered with the dead wood of the past; all that is dead and has served its purpose has to go. But that does not mean a break with, or a forgetting of, the vital and life-giving in that past. We can never forget the ideals that have moved our race, the dreams of the Indian people through the ages, the wisdom of the ancients, the buoyant energy and love of life and nature of our forefathers, their spirit of curiosity and mental adventure, the daring of their thought, their splendid achievements in literature, art and culture, their love of truth and beauty and freedom, the basic values that they set up, their understanding of life's mysterious ways, their toleration of other ways than theirs, their capacity to absorb other peoples and their cultural accomplishments, to synthesize them and develop a varied and mixed culture; nor can we forget the myriad experiences which have built up our ancient race and lie embedded in our sub-conscious minds. We will never forget them or cease to take pride in that noble heritage of ours. If India forgets them she will no longer remain India and much that has made her our joy and pride will cease to be.

It is not this that we have to break with, but all the dust and dirt of ages that have covered her up and hidden her inner beauty and significance, the excrescences and abortions that have twisted and petrified her spirit, set it in rigid frames, and stunted her growth. We have to cut away these excrescences and remember afresh the core of that ancient wisdom and adapt it to our present circumstances. We have to get out of traditional ways of thought and living which, for all the good they may have done in a past age, and there was much good in them, have ceased to have significance today. We have to make our own all the achievements of the human race and join up with others in the exciting adventure of man, more exciting today perhaps than in earlier ages, realizing that this has ceased to be governed by national boundaries or old divisions and is common to the race of man everywhere. We have to revive the passion for truth and beauty and freedom which gives meaning to life, and develop afresh that dynamic outlook and spirit of adventure which distinguished those of our race who, in ages past, built our house on these strong and enduring foundations. Old as we are, with memories stretching back to the early dawns of human history and endeavour, we have to grow young again, in tune with our present time, with the irrepressible spirit and joy of youth in the present and its faith in the future.

The Discovery of India

Ever since my return from Europe eleven weeks ago I have seen and felt a new awakening in the youth of India. After long suppression the spirit of youth is up in arms against all forms of authoritarianism and is seeking an outlet in many ways and in many directions. Youth leagues have sprung up in all parts of the country and individual young men and young women, weary of the continual and barren strife of many of their elders, are groping for a path which might lead them to a fuller realization of themselves, a better and more prosperous India and a happier world. They are beginning to realize that communalism is the very negation of what we should strive for and the attempts that are made to remove this canker from our body politic, well meant as they are and sometimes productive of good

results, seldom touch the roots of the problem.

It is felt by many that religion, as preached and practised in India, has become a grave danger to the state and octopus-like it spreads its tentacles into every department of life whether it is political, economic or social. The rules and regulations laid down in a bygone age and for an entirely different society are sought to be applied now in all their rigidity to modern life and conditions, with the inevitable result that there is a hiatus, and friction and unhappiness are the common lot of life in India. Like the old man of the sea, religion has mounted our backs and effectively prevented all progress and advancement. Religion was not meant to be this and if it continues to encroach on other departments of life, the reaction may engulf it utterly.

Letter to the Editor, *The Leader* 24 March 1938

It may sound very nice to some people to hear it said that we will create a Hindu rashtra, etc. I cannot understand what it means. Hindus are in a majority in this country and whatever they wish will be done. But the moment you talk of a Hindu rashtra you speak in a language which no other country except one can comprehend and that country is Pakistan because they are familiar with this concept. They can immediately justify their creation of an Islamic nation by pointing out to the world that we are doing something similar. Hindu rashtra can only mean one thing and that is you leave the modern way and get into a narrow, old-fashioned way of thinking and fragment India into pieces. Those who are not Hindus will be reduced in status. You may say patronisingly that you will look after the Muslims or Christians or others, as in Pakistan they say that they will look after the Hindus. Do you think any race or individual will accept for long the claim that they are looked after while we sit high above them? Is this what your Constitution guarantees? We have proclaimed to the world that every citizen of this country has equal rights whatever religion or caste or creed he may belong to and everyone is an equal shareholder in India's freedom. You believe in this, then what these communal organizations say is wrong, fundamentally wrong, useless and harmful and ought to be suppressed.

Address at a public meeting organized by the Delhi State Congress Committee, 6 September 1951.

The disturbances in Delhi have brought the wider issue before us in all its grimness. The secession of certain parts of India and the formation of Pakistan has left India very predominantly non-Muslim, though it has still a considerable Muslim population. We have guaranteed in the constitution we are making the fullest rights to all minorities. That is common ground. It is clear, however, that the part that Muslims have played in India has been very greatly reduced by the establishment of Pakistan. Such part as they can play can only be a cooperative part, and not one by compulsion which the great majority will never tolerate. There has been this element of compulsion in the past or threats, and this has led to the present unhappy situation and anger between the various communities.

Are we to aim at or to encourage trends which will lead to the progressive elimination of the Muslim population from India, or are we to consolidate, make secure and absorb as full citizens the Muslims who remain in India? That, again, involves our conception of India; is it going to be, as it has been in a large measure, a kind of composite state where there is complete cultural freedom for various groups, but at the same time a strong political unity, or do we wish to make it, as certain elements appear to desire, definitely a Hindu or a non-Muslim state? If the Hindus think in terms of any domination, cultural or otherwise, over others, this would not only be against our own repeated professions, but would naturally displease other and smaller minorities in India. The Hindu mind has felt during the past many years that it has been obstructed by Muslim activities, political and cultural, and, therefore, not allowed full play. Now it is obvious that there can be no such obstruction in future, both because of the numerical preponderance of the Hindus as well as many other reasons. The point is whether the same free play and open opportunities should be given to other groups and communities, who may in the past have misbehaved politically or otherwise, but who are not now in a position to obstruct effectively or make a vital difference to the general trend in India.

The whole history of India has been one of assimilation and synthesis.

That has been both the strength and weakness of India. The Muslim League movement of separatism was a throwback and a contradiction of India's history. The establishment of Pakistan is a further contradiction and, perhaps, many of the troubles we are facing today are due essentially to this attempt to go against the main trends of India's history. What this will lead to ultimately it is difficult to prophesy. Already the results have been disastrous. It is a dynamic situation and can either move to further conflict, including even war between India and Pakistan, or real peace between them and an adjustment. The latter may lead to a closer union, though this seems hardly conceivable in the present temper of the people both in India and Pakistan. A middle static way hardly seems possible.

Note to Cabinet Ministers, 12 September 1947.

Pakistan came into existence on the basis of hatred and intolerance. We must not allow ourselves to react to this in the same way. That surely will be a defeat for us. We have to live up to our immemorial culture and try to win over those who are opposed to us. To compete with each other in hatred and barbarity is to sink below the human level and tarnish the name of our country and our people. One evil deed leads to another. Thus evil grows. That is not the way to stop these inhuman deeds. If we can behave with tolerance and friendship to each other, that surely will have its effect elsewhere. If not, this vicious circle will go on bringing sorrow and disaster to all of us and others.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we should realise our duty to all our countrymen, whoever they might be. We must always remember that every Indian, to whatever religion he might belong, is a brother and must be treated as such.

I earnestly trust that our efforts will be directed towards creating communal harmony and that all our people, and especially our newspapers, will appreciate the grave dangers that are caused by communal conflict and disharmony. Let us all be careful in what we say or write which might create fear and conflict. Let us pull ourselves together and create an atmosphere of cooperation and work for the advancement of India and of all who live here as her sons. Thus only can we serve our motherland and help in making her great, united and strong. *Jai Hind*.

Broadcast to the Nation, 26 March 1964.

Human nature is notoriously perverse. One has but to forbid a thing or taboo it to make it attractive. And out of the fear of taboo and its fascination arise the eternal conflict in man, the age-long struggle to escape from the wiles of the evil one. But, alas, escape is difficult for Satan peeps in at every corner and beckons to the unwary, and perhaps even more so to those who have been forewarned. Even saints are not beyond his reach for legend tells us that the holy *rishis* were sorely tempted by the *apsaras* of Indra's court, and all the great ones of the earth have had to go through the slippery valley of temptation. On this conflict the scientists of the modern age have built up the structure of psychoanalysis and we are told that all the ills that flesh is heir to arise from this conflict and repressed desire.

What then is to be done? Is evil to be allowed to flourish unchecked lest the very checking of it increase its fascination? For undoubtedly the sins of this world would lose half their flavour if they were not forbidden to us...

The papers have recently announced that the Viceroy or the Home Member or the Governor-General and his whole Council put together have proscribed a recent addition to the "Today and Tomorrow" series. I have a soft corner for this series and have read and enjoyed a goodly number of its little books, and I am afraid I am a little prejudiced against the Viceregal crowd. My sympathies were therefore entirely with the book without knowing in the least what it contained. With the perversity of human nature to which was added the perversity of the Indian politician I determined to read the book in case chance threw it in my way. Subsequent researches however led me to the discovery that the book was largely a record of the adventures of the author in the brothels of Calcutta and from his ripe experience garnered in these surroundings he had judged India and prophesied about her future. He informs us that he encountered honourable members of Council in these haunts of his. Perhaps his experiences were

confined to the pre-reform days, otherwise he might have encountered even bigger fry. For, may we whisper it? Those whom Viceroy and Governors delight to honour are seldom known for anything except ignorance and incompetence.

Presumably the government has banned the book to protect the good name of India. There was I believe a cry for the banning of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* also. But I must confess that I see no logic or sense in this suppression of books. From the larger point of view I do not believe in the official censoring or proscription of books in any country, much less in India where the official happens to be a foreigner. But even apart from this, if India is to be protected from the evil effects of the book it should be proscribed in other countries. No one in India is likely to be misled by a journalist's account of Calcutta brothels and his deductions therefrom.

It is a dangerous power in the hands of a government: the right to determine what shall be read and what shall not. And it almost always fails to achieve its object. Those who wish to do so can usually get hold of the proscribed book. In India the power is likely to be misused and has been misused a hundred times. We have to be careful therefore lest one right use of the power is held to justify its misuse on scores of occasions.

This article dated 6 March appears to have been written in 1929.

What strange and mysterious things are words! The spoken word is powerful enough but even more so is the written word, for it has more of permanence. Image of thoughts and impresses, of the treasures of memory and stored fancies, the prelude and foundation of action, an idol with clear outlines or shapeless, and yet full of the breath of life! As with so many things to which we grow accustomed—the stars in the heavens, and flowers and green grass, and mountains, and the gentle rippling flow of water, murmuring as it goes—and growing accustomed to them, our senses are dulled to their astonishing beauty, so also with words. But when, in the morning of the world, words and language first burst upon the mind of man, how great must have been the joy of this discovery, with what reverence he must have looked upon this mighty thing, coming to him out of the unknown! Inevitably, he praised the Gods he worshipped and called this new power of expression the language of the Gods. Carefully he treasured it in his memory and handed it on from generation to generation, and out of that arose the books he called sacred, the scriptures of various lands and religions.

Sacred they were, as every word of power is sacred, as every attempt of man to understand the mystery of life and of his own nature, as the unfolding of his mind and intelligence, as his ceaseless challenge and struggle against the powers and principalities that would ignore him and suppress him. But words have become too common coin today, debased and often counterfeit, fit emblems of many of the human beings who use them.

To Indira Gandhi, 22 February 1944.

Your letter raises fascinating questions—fascinating and yet rather terrible. For your argument leads to the inevitable conclusion that all life is futile and all human endeavour worse than useless. You have done me the honour of putting these questions to me, but I feel my utter incompetence to answer them. Even if I had the time and leisure, which unhappily I have not at present, I would find it difficult enough to deal with the problems you have raised.

Indians are supposed to find pleasure in metaphysics but I have deliberately kept aloof from them, as I found long ago that they only confused me, and brought me no solace or guidance for future action. Religion in its limited sense did not appeal to me. I dabbled a little in the various sciences, as a dilettante might, and found some pleasure in them and my horizon seemed to widen. But still I drifted and doubted and was somewhat cynical. Vague ideals possessed me, socialistic and nationalistic, and gradually they seemed to combine and I grew to desire the freedom of India passionately, and the freedom of India signified to me not national freedom only but the relief of the millions of her men and women from suffering and exploitation. And India became a symbol of the suffering of all the exploited in the world and I sought to make of my intense national-

ism an internationalism which included in its fold all the nations and peoples that were being exploited.

I was troubled by these feelings and felt my helplessness. There seemed to be no obvious way of realising my heart's desire. Then came Mr. Gandhi and pointed a way which seemed to promise results, or at any rate which was a way worth trying and afforded an outlet for my pent up feelings. I plunged in, and I discovered that I had at last found what I had long sought. It was in action that I found this—action on behalf of a great cause which I held dear. Ever since then I have used all my strength in battling for this cause and the recompense I have had has strengthened me, for the reward has been a fuller life with a new meaning and a purpose to it.

This is hardly an answer to your question. But not being a philosopher, but just a man who feels at home in action, I cannot give you a very logical or scientific answer.

To Will Durant, 20 August 1931.

In prison or outside, Kashmir haunted me, and, though many years had passed since I had set eyes on its valleys and mountains, I carried the impress of them on the tablets of my mind...

Like some supremely beautiful woman, whose beauty is almost impersonal and above human desire, such was Kashmir in all its feminine beauty of river and valley and lake and graceful trees. And then another aspect of this magic beauty would come to view, a masculine one, of hard mountains and precipices, and snow-capped peaks and glaciers, and cruel and fierce torrents rushing down to the valleys below. It had a hundred faces and innumerable aspects, ever-changing, sometimes smiling, sometimes sad and full of sorrow. The mist would creep up from the Dal Lake and, like a transparent veil, give glimpses of what was behind. The clouds would throw out their arms to embrace a mountain top, or creep down stealthily like children at play. I watched this ever-changing spectacle, and sometimes the sheer loveliness of it was over-powering and I felt almost faint. As I gazed at it, it seemed to me dream-like and unreal, like the hopes and desires that fill us and so seldom find fulfilment. It was like the face of the beloved that one sees in a dream and that fades away on awakening...

National Herald, 24-31 July 1940.

Life and death matter little, or should matter little. The only thing that matters is the cause that one works for, and if one could be sure that the best service to it is to die for it, then death would seem simpler. I have loved life—the mountains and the sea, the sun and rain and storm and snow, and animals, and books and art, and even human beings—and life has been good to me. But the idea of death has never frightened me; from a distance it seems fitting enough as the crown of one's endeavour. Yet, at close quarters, it is not pleasant to contemplate.

To Mahatma Gandhi, 5 May 1933.

But I must protest against the apology for an envelope in which your letter came. If Vallabhbai is responsible for it, much as I love him, I must make it clear that envelope-making is not his strong line. Or perhaps the fault is not entirely his when the raw material he is supplied with comes from the waste-paper basket.

Forgive me for my superficiality. I like my diamonds smooth and polished. You have shown us the art and style of living life in the grand manner. That is the real thing, but why should we ignore style and art in the little things of life? Most of us cannot reach the snowy heights. Would you deprive us of the flowers in the valleys?

To Mahatma Gandhi, 7 March 1933.

My conception of marriage and sex may strike you as odd; they certainly differ from yours. In my own married life there was this unusual fact (I think it is definitely unusual in sedate and long-married people) that while I might be irritated with Kamala or quarrel with her, her touch would always thrill me. I was the worst possible husband for any woman owing to my intense public activities, preoccupations, absences and jail. Yet always

there was a certain magic in our relationship. She was a mystery to me and I was a mystery to her and something of the initial novelty and surprise never wore off, and though we grew older in years, we remained very young in our outlook. It is rather odd that I should make this confession to anyone, and more especially to you, whose ideas of the relationship between man and woman seem very extraordinary to me. I am a pagan at heart, not a moralist like you, and I love the rich pagan culture and outlook on life of our ancients, their joy in beauty of all kinds, in richness of life and a wise understanding of human nature with all its virtues and frailties.

To Mahatma Gandhi, 24 July 1941.

The clouds are my favourite companions here and I watch them daily. Sometimes they pay me a visit in the shape of mist and they fill my barrack with a damp and sticky feeling, but it is not so bad. Usually they are high up assuming the most fantastic shapes. I fancy I see shapes of animals in them, elephants and camels and lions, and even little pigs. Or they resemble the porpoises that hop about in the sea, or fish lying side by side, almost like sardines in a tin. And then they would change suddenly and coalesce and look like a mighty ocean, and at other times like a beach. The wind rustling through the deodars helps the illusion for it sounds like the tide coming in and the waves breaking on a distant sea-front. It is a great game, this watching of the clouds. Once I saw some whiffs of them floating about and I was immediately reminded of Sir Prabhashankar Pattani's peroxide beard. It was really a remarkable likeness and I was highly amused and laughed to myself for a long time. Have you seen this famous beard? It is worth seeing.

To Indira Nehru, 4 February 1935

You and I, in our respective abodes, are on the verge of Garhwal. I can see the Garhwal foothills from here and a longish walk will take you to the district boundary. The knowledge of this surpassing beauty so near us and yet so far from this warring world, so peaceful and unperturbed by human folly, excites me. Those strange people who were our ancestors in the long ago felt the wonder of these mountains and valleys and, with the unerring instinct of genius, yoked this sense of awe and wonder to man's old yearning for something higher than what life's daily toil and conflicts offered, something with the impress of the eternal upon it. And so for two thousand years or more, innumerable pilgrim souls have marched through these valleys and mountains to Badrinath and Kedarnath and Gangotri, from where the baby Ganga emerges, so tiny and frolicsome, but to grow and grow in her long wandering till she becomes the noble river that sweeps by Prayag and Kashi and beyond.

Shall I ever go wandering again in these mountains, and pierce the forest and climb the snows and feel the thrill of the precipice and the deep gorge? And then lie in deep content on a thick carpet of mountain flowers and gaze on the fiery splendour of the peaks as they catch the rays of the setting sun? Shall I sit by the side of the youthful and turbulent Ganga in her mountain home and watch her throw her head in a swirl of icy spray in pride and defiance, or creep round lovingly some favoured rock and take it into her embrace? And then rush down joyously over the boulders and hurl herself with a mighty shout over some great precipice? I have known her so long as a sedate lady, seemingly calm, but for all that, the fire is in her veins even then, the fiery vitality of youth and the spirit of adventure, and this breaks out from time to time when her peaceful waters seem angry and tumble over each other and spread out over vast areas.

I love the rivers of India and I should like to explore them from end to end, and to go back deep into the dawn of history and watch the processions of men and women, of cultures and civilisations, going down the broad streams of these rivers. The Indus, the Brahmaputra, the Ganga, and also that very lovable river of ours—the Jamuna.

To Indira Nehru, 28 July 1941.

In Conversation

Frances W. Pitchett with Rakshanda Jalil

Frances W. Pitchett is Professor of Modern Indic Languages, Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures at Columbia University. Her major publications include: *Ab-e-Hayat: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*; *An Evening of Caged Beasts: Seven Post-Modernists Urdu Poets*; *Basti (a novel by Intezar Husain)*; *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics*; *The Romance Tradition in Urdu: Adventures from the Dastan of Amir Hamza*; *A Listening Game: Poems by Sagi Farooqi*; *Urdu Meter: A Practical Handbook*; *Marvelous Encounters: Folk Romance in Urdu and Hindi*; and *Urdu Literature: A Bibliography of English Language Sources*. On a recent visit to India she spoke to Rakshanda Jalil on how she came to be "seduced by Urdu".

Rakshanda Jalil: What drew you, in the first instance, to the pursuit of the Hindi and Urdu languages and their respective literatures?

Frances Pitchett: I am part of the Vietnam generation. I had spent a lot of time during my college years in anti-war protests. So I was rather "alienated", and applied for the Rockefeller fellowship while at Harvard (having majored in Philosophy and English). I had read *Kim* and I had these 'notions' about India, that it was a big country of great philosophical interest and one could travel around freely. So I chose India. I hired a tutor since Harvard didn't teach Hindi. I was good at languages and really motivated, so I learnt pretty fast. Hindi is, in any case, a very easy language. By the time I came to India in 1969 I had a pretty good basic knowledge of Hindi. I could say simple things and get around and read and write. I learnt the Urdu script while I was doing my Hindi course at Berkeley.

RJ: Tell us a little about your introduction to Urdu poetry. Did the highly stylized form of the *ghazal*, which comprises the bulk of traditional Urdu poetry seem dense, opaque, may be even artificial in comparison to English poetic traditions?

FP: That is funny. Ralph Russell [eminent Urdu scholar and translator] has written a long essay on this... on his difficulty in learning to love the Urdu *ghazal*. My experience has been exactly the opposite. Long ago at Berkeley, when I was just learning to read the Urdu script, my teacher, Moazzam Siddiqui, introduced the class to the poetry of Ghalib. We would spend a whole hour grappling with a single two-line verse, but then, as a reward he would play a tape of Begum Akhtar singing Ghalib. And I was hooked.

RJ: So the two went together in your mind at that point?

FP: Yes and somehow or the other for reasons I cannot possibly fathom, I immediately understood the *ghazal*. Though I didn't understand enough Urdu to be good at it, I understood the kind of poetry it was, I understood the concentration it had, I understood something about the kind of stylization it had and the romantic/mystical intentions it expressed. I don't know why. Here I was — a provincial kid from Little

Rock, Arkansas with a minimal exposure to anything that was sophisticated, and yet there was never a time that I felt I was all at sea reading Ghalib. For me, the rest of the *ghazal* was really an extension of Ghalib; he was always at the core of the *ghazals* I read. I could sense that this was the way poetry ought to be. These little verses were dense, tight, intricate structures made of beauty and energy held in perfect balance. They resonated so well with my own inner life and my own sense of poetry that I loved them even before I understood them fully. I knew I wanted more.

RJ: You have done substantive work on the writings of Azad and Alraf Husain Hali, two of the most important Urdu poets and critics of the 19th century. What prompted your interest in the cultural and literary history of late 19th century North India?

FP: I started off working on *Dastans* and *Qissas*. Although I loved Ghalib very much, I knew my Urdu wasn't good enough and I didn't want to do something where I would have to go running to a teacher all the time. I wanted to work on something I could do by myself. These little *qissas* were lovely and they were the foundation for a lot of other things. Moreover, this whole genre had never been looked at by anybody in a scholarly way. So for my dissertation I chose these little fairy tales and folk tales, published in both Hindi and Urdu. While I was chasing these little pamphlets in the same bookshops I found these huge, gigantic volumes of *dastans*. I started collecting them and the eventual result was my next book, *The Romance Tradition*... At that point, almost by happenstance, I read the most important canon-forming literary history in Urdu, Azad's *Aab-e-Hayat* [meaning Water of Life, the title perhaps implying that poetry is the water of life to the spirit]. Azad's attempt both to kill the classical *ghazal*, and to deeply mourn its death was irresistibly fascinating.

Reading Azad led me to reading Hali because the two together define the domain of Urdu criticism over the last century. This led, in turn, to my book, *Nets of Awareness*, an attempt to unravel how the Urdu *ghazal* came to be dethroned by its own critics. As I investigated the lives of Azad and Hali, I came to understand how and why they chose to condemn large portions of classical poetry in order to shore up and renovate the rest. *Nets of*

Awareness was a new look at how the classical *ghazal*, which for centuries had been the pride and joy of Indo-Muslim culture, was abruptly dethroned and devalued within its own milieu, and by its theorists. I believe that the cause of this abrupt "paradigm shift" was not so much literary as political. The violent Mutiny of 1857 and the vengeful British reaction to it destroyed the old world of the Muslim elite. The victorious British superimposed their own notions of culture, civilization, even poetry. In a world where the Wordsworthian ideal of "naturalness" became the touchstone, the *ghazal* and the whole Indo-Muslim poetic tradition suddenly became "unnatural" — not just literarily decadent, artificial and false, but morally suspect as well. Urdu critics, under the influence of English writers, began to suspect that if poetry was a mirror of society then inevitably the cultural rot must go deeper. The result was a sweeping, internally generated indictment with which Urdu speakers have been struggling ever since. I feel it is wrong to look at the *ghazal* through this Victorian lens because the *ghazal* obviously cherishes artifice; it needs its patterns of imagery, its stylization. It is not about the real world in any immediate sense, so it is futile to look at the classical *ghazal* through the lens of realism or naturalism or social uplift.

RJ: Do you think the "theories" of translation—as taught in classrooms—are equally applicable to all languages? Do they work in the case of languages as disparate as Urdu and English? The two have, for instance, markedly contrasting notions of literary style. What may seem splendid in one language may sometimes appear baffling, even clumsy in another. Also, there is no overlapping cultural context, no frame of reference that is common between the two languages — unlike, for example, between certain European languages.

FP: Translation theories don't offer much help to the practical translator. Like literary theories, translation theories tend to be largely independent of the very act of translation. Frankly, they aren't at the heart of my own interest. Most of it seems to be cultural politics, like who translates what and for what purpose, so it really comes down to patronage and cultural imperialism and such. There can be as many translations as there are translators and audiences. You can't expect to translate the same

text identically as you would for a group of scholars as you would for a general audience. Both would be equally legitimate. 'Truth in labeling' is the one rule you can really stick to. Ideally you should have better knowledge of the target language rather than the source language. Unfortunately, it isn't always so!

RJ: There are many of us now engaged in translating Urdu literature – especially Urdu poetry. What do you think we can, realistically speaking, expect to achieve: melody, fidelity, readability, transference of imagery, re-creating something as elusive as the *kaifiyat* or "mood" evoked by the original? Are there, in your experience as a translator, any features of a poem that are more "translatable" than others?

FP: First of all, a lot would depend on what the poet had in mind when he originally wrote the poem. Some of the postmodern poets use imagery that is instantly translatable; they use none of the complex features of classical ghazal; the loss is minimal. One feature that is immensely translatable is repetition. Other things are very chancey; the devil is in the details. Idiom, for example, can be most difficult to capture. The *jigar* [literally, liver, but used in Urdu poetry to mean variously heart, capability] can be most problematic – how do you make the liver sound romantic in English!

RJ: Tell us about your current project – the commentary on the *Diwan-e-Ghalib* that is available online*?

FP: It was born of failure – of a lifelong

inability to translate Ghalib. When I first started reading Ghalib, I discovered that literary historians didn't like the classical ghazal and when they attempted to translate it, their attempts were pathetic. I spent my whole academic career trying to translate the ghazal, and my failure was so systematic that I eventually accepted that failure was inevitable when it came to translating Ghalib. But teaching my classes taught me that it was possible to teach Ghalib and get the poetry across to my students. Through this project, I have made available online a commentary accompanied by several different translated versions of the same *shi'r*. Of course, by now I can better appreciate Ghalib's literary genius and understand why he is so difficult to translate. The site has all the academic features that a book usually has, such as a glossary, bibliography, list of technical terms. There are 234 ghazals in the *Diwan-e-Ghalib* and I am at the one-third mark. I realize that it will eventually be a testimony to the untranslatability of Ghalib; at best it can only whet the appetite where Ghalib is concerned. The real pleasure is that this site allows me to speak to the world as I speak to my students while I teach them Ghalib.

RJ: Lastly, what do you make of the "clash of civilizations" that is being talked about these days?

FP: Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* is basically a political generalization about Islam and the West. I have grave doubts about that but since I am not a political scientist, I have no expert commentary to offer. On a

literary level, I don't see any clash. I think there is plenty of common ground for people to appreciate each other's literature and poetry and culture. When Najeeb Mahfouz, the Egyptian novelist, is translated we have no trouble understanding and appreciating his people. We recognize some unusual customs, architecture that is different from ours. But human nature, wit and humour, interpersonal relations and conflicts are the same the world over. I don't think the clash of cultures is literally very meaningful. In fact, if anything, we see the theory contradicted all around us now. We are all hybrids. The fact that you and I are having this conversation shows that our civilizations are comfortable with each other – whatever civilizations we belong to. I see lots of things that are clashing here in India but I see similar clashes in my own country. There are so many things in the United States that I don't agree with but I don't see it as a civilizational clash. There are simply different notions of sense and sensibility.

* url - www.columbia.edu/~fp7

Rakhshanda Jalil is a Delhi-based freelance writer, book-editor and translator. She has translated a collection of Premchand's short stories entitled *The Temple and the Mosque* (Harper Collins, 1992), an anthology of Urdu Short stories, called *Urdu Stories* (Srishti, 2002) and *Lies: Half Told* (Srishti, 2002), a collection of satirical writing in Hindi by Asghar Wajahat. She is currently working on two books of translations, both for Rupa & Co. – *Black Borders*, a collection of 32 cameos by Saadat Hasan Manto and *Through the Closed Doorway*, a selection of *nazms* by the Urdu poet, Shahryar.

PAST CONTINUOUS

The Book Review Literary Trust Launches its Translation Project: Critical Editions of Three Texts from Another Age

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A Translation, an Introduction and an Afterword

M. Sridhar and Alladi Uma

TWENTIETH CENTURY TELUGU POETRY: AN ANTHOLOGY
Edited and translated by Velcheru Narayana Rao
Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2002, pp. 345, Rs. 595.00

You can literally count the number of anthologies of Telugu Poetry in English translation—Chaya Devi's edited collection in 1956, Mohan Prasad's in 1981, Prabhakar Rao's in 1993, Seelavi and Satya Murty's edited anthology in 1994 and V. V. B. Rama Rao's in 2000 and 2002. As for the presence of Telugu in anthologies of Indian poetry in English translation, it is practically nil. Therefore, when Mohan Prasad, talking about Adil Jussawala's *New Writing in India* (1974) published by Penguin, gives vent to his displeasure, "It did not contain even a single Telugu poet. His [Jussawala's] introduction almost angered me. There wasn't a word about even our best poet, Sri Sri" (Prasad *This Tense Time* xi). We wish there were many more angry outbursts resulting in adequate representation of Telugu poetry. Or does the Telugu scene suggest that they have nothing much of poetry of quality in them to share with the rest of the country and the world? Velcheru Narayana Rao's anthology would respond with an emphatic no!

Velcheru Narayana Rao's is much more than an anthology in that it contains detailed notes, a long 'Afterword' on the history of twentieth century Telugu poetry and a ready reference to the sources. The book is a valuable source for it contains several personal details about the poets, their poetic and political affiliations, a history of the various aesthetic and literary movements that have spurred the rich poetic output as also the inevitable tensions and squabbles within. There are translations done of poems recalled from memory of their oral versions different from the published ones (like 'The Wish' by Devulapalli Krishna Sastri), of fragments of poems "survived from lost manuscripts" (such as 'A Longing' by Abburi Rama Krishna Rao) and of poets ignored even in histories of Telugu literature and criticism (of a "provocatively original" male voice like that of Kavikondala Venkata Rao or a "gentle yet disturbing" early woman's voice of Chavali Bangaramma)—evidence of strenuous archival work undertaken. The translations themselves are extremely readable, revealing a quality achieved by the translator's special attention to the auditory imagination of the receptor language. There are frank admissions too of the rich "oral" strength of the Telugu poems,

which had either restricted his choice of poems, or of substituting other expressions for some "untranslatable" phrases.

This anthology also provides a wonderful opportunity to discuss issues of re/presentation. The act of re-writing (to use a relatively recent term for the act of translation) not only opens up the subject-position of the individual translator as also the figure of the imagined reader. Let us examine this in the light of Narayana Rao's translation of 'The State, Gaddar, and Us', a poem he has singled out for some special treatment. Yes. It is a powerful poem, a poem that has "captivated" him despite its unattractive and cheap production, for it "connected me [him] to a remembered past and its urgency bound me [him] to the immediate present" (p.284). This intensely political poem (notwithstanding the translator's aversion to overtly political poems) written by Prasen, Vamsikrishna and Gaurisankar, three young poets (a feature unique in itself for the multiple voices it brings together in a single poem) appeals to him with its evocation of "a creation myth" with its theme of an everlasting existence of the political state and the non-existence of the people in the context of attempts to silence the voice of the spokesman of the people (in this case, of Gaddar, a revolutionary poet singer who survived an attempted murder allegedly supported by the state police) as well as of "images of premodern Telugu poets who censured kings" (p.285). Reading this poem in translation, we are very likely to agree with him that it is truly a disturbing poem. But it is disturbing to us in more sense than one. And these concern the act of re-writing. This is what Narayana Rao says about it:

Translating this poem has not been easy because of the large number of lines with intertextual resonance, language-locked suggestions, and local references. Also, there are minor structural problems, occasional extravagances, unrestrained layers of imagery, and inappropriate repetition—*nothing that mars the power of the poem in the original, but will certainly ruin the poem if faithfully translated. Then there are familiar pitfalls, common with Telugu poems—political rhetoric, phrases of revolutionary routine, and lack of attention*

The book is a valuable source for it contains several personal details about the poets, their poetic and political affiliations, a history of the various aesthetic and literary movements that have spurred the rich poetic output as also the inevitable tensions and squabbles within.

to detail. But there are rewards which rejuvenate the poem with unprecedented verve and energy.... This is certainly not a well-wrought poem, the poets did not care to work on it; it seems like a deliberate choice....

As I translated the poem into English, I had to take liberties. I changed a few words, omitted two small sections, relocated a few lines, abridged some, and reworked a couple of images. I kept close to the tone, the general organization, mode, and meaning. What is lost in the translation is the poem's disregard for Telugu literary culture, its irreverence to authority (p.284; italics ours).

The reasons for the choice of this poem with all its problems have been clearly enunciated. It is a poem with resonances of the creation myth, of images that evoke a remembered past, and with flashes of "unprecedented" energy, qualities that had "captivated" him. What is shocking though is his belief that the long list of its negative characteristics does not "mar" the poem in Telugu, but would "ruin" the same "if faithfully translated". This is followed by a more damaging list of other "familiar pitfalls, common with Telugu poems." True, these problems, along with the extravagances, the repetitions, the recklessness are all too familiar, coming as they do from those who look at creative writing in Telugu with expectations they cultivate through their familiarity with English texts. It may therefore be quite natural for someone who is translating them into English to feel that such problems "will certainly ruin the poem if faithfully translated" though there are translation practices that would welcome source oriented translations. What is most crucial in the lines quoted above is the translator's admission that the lack of care in the poets is "a deliberate choice." If so, can a translator make the deliberate choice of turning the poem into "a well-wrought poem"? Also, why should a "disregard for Telugu literary culture" and "irreverence to authority" meet with such major "re-writing"? This kind of target reader-friendly translation arrived at through abridgement, deletions, changes etc., is what we encounter in the translation of some other

poems like Revati Devi's 'Distance' and 'God', Satish Chandar's 'The Fifth Note' and Machiraju Savitri's 'Black and White' as well.

Another way of approaching the disturbance the poem on Gaddar created in the translator is to see it in the context of the stated aesthetic credo in his preface:

If this anthology shows anything, it shows that literary value is entirely independent of any conscious purpose and is not controlled by, or pigeonholed into ideas, arguments and political practices. Poetry seeks its own argument and literary practice finds its own world, while at the same time it is deeply influenced by the political, social and ideological contexts that surround it (p.x).

It is this enduring literary quality which seems to have prompted the selection of this text (with all its other problems) as well as other poems in the anthology.

A word about the selection of the poems now. It takes into consideration every literary movement without leaving out individual voices who may have refused to be part of any literary or ideological movements. Of course the choice has been governed by Narayana Rao's own biases of which he makes no secret in the preface. But the strength of this anthology lies not so much on the choice of individual poems represented here nor on their actual translation. The book acquires its unique strength when the selection of the poems and their translations are read in the context of the whole book, i.e., when they are read along with the translator's preface, extensive notes and afterword. Despite Narayana Rao's disclaimer in the preface, the anthology not only covers literary ideologies and movements, but also allows us a peep into literary controversies and conflicts including some personal idiosyncrasies of the poets and offers an overview of the course Telugu poetry has taken over a period of a century. The

anthology is significant for its recording of the changes consequent on the introduction of English education in Andhra and for its addressing the issue of modernity and its impact on Telugu culture, language and literature. It makes specific mention of the Telugu contribution to literary theory such as Rayaprolu Subbarao's concept of *amalina srngara* expounded in *Ramyalokamu* written in the verse form or of the various Telugu re-workings of the eleventh century Sanskrit poem attributed to Bilhana. What is noteworthy is Narayana Rao's discussion that these re-workings become the means for Viresalingam and C.R. Reddy to "work out their arguments" (p.292). With the enormous strength thus achieved, the anthology offers compelling reading. The book is a must for everyone, from the lay reader to the scholar-academic. ■

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EARLY TAMIL EPIGRAPHY

From the Earliest Times to the Sixth Century A.D.

by

IRAVATHAM MAHADEVAN

(Co-published by Cre-A., India & Harvard University, U.S.A.)

- provides the earliest evidence of the origin of the Tamil script
- documents the earliest presence of Jainism in the Tamil country
- the first publication in the Harvard Oriental Series on a Dravidian language

EARLY TAMIL EPIGRAPHY is the first definitive edition of the earliest Tamil inscriptions in the Tamil-Brahmi and Early Vatteluttu scripts dating from ca. second century B.C. to sixth century A.D. It is based on the author's extensive fieldwork carried out in two spells between 1962-66 and 1991-1996.

The study deals comprehensively with the epigraphy, language and contents of the inscriptions. The texts are given in transliteration with translation and extensive word by word commentary. The inscriptions are illustrated with tracings made directly from the stone, estampages and direct photographs. Palaeography of Tamil-Brahmi and Early Vatteluttu scripts is described in detail with the help of letter charts. The special orthographic and grammatical features of the earliest Tamil inscriptions are described in this work for the first time. A glossary of inscriptional words and several classified word lists have been added to aid further research.

The work provides a detailed account of the discovery and decipherment of the inscriptions and relates their language and contents to early Tamil literature and society. The recently discovered Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions on pottery and objects like coins, seals, rings, etc., have also been utilised to present a more complete picture of early Tamil epigraphy.

IRAVATHAM MAHADEVAN (b. 1930) is a specialist in Indian epigraphy, especially in the fields of Indus and Brahmi scripts. He was awarded the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship in 1970 for his research on the Indus script and the National Fellowship of the Indian Council of Historical Research in 1992 for his work on the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions.

His book, *The Indus Script: Texts, Concordance and Tables* (1977) is recognised internationally as a major source book for research in the Indus script. He has also published *Corpus of the Tamil-Brahmi Inscriptions 1966* (1968) besides numerous papers on several aspects of the Indus and Tamil-Brahmi scripts.

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Old Wine in a Fresh Cask

Sukrita Paul Kumar

THE GIFT OF A COW (*Godaan*)

By Premchand. Translated by Gordon C. Roadarmel with a new introduction by Vasudha Dalmia
Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 442, Rs. 395.00

On receiving *Godaan* for review, I found myself wondering: Why should I be reviewing a novel published way back in 1936 in the original Hindi and translated into English as long back as thirty-five years ago (1968)? Because it has been reprinted and has a new introduction? Precisely so. I discovered that the question became redundant as I read through the two introductions and the novel so vibrant in its appeal and so relevant as a classic all over again. Vasudha Dalmia's Introduction provides a contemporary critical lens to re-examine Premchand's classic Hindi novel *Godaan* translated by Gordon C. Roadarmel as *The Gift of a Cow*.

I realized why I did not at once react to the English translation of the title of the novel. Even though the cover of the book carries the English title, what catches one's eye so powerfully is the word *Godaan* in large lettering, nearly three times the size. The dominating shadow of the original concept looms over the English. The Hindi word, or rather the concept, *Godaan*, is so culture specific that there is really no English equivalent to it: *daan* is not just charity, nor donation. Neither can it be translated merely as "gift". The English title passes off because the original Hindi title immediately registers with the reader. But then, why would a reader who knows Hindi go to this translated text? Hopefully, the original title on the cover may intrigue even a non-Hindi reader who would then wish to comprehend the concept!

Both Vasudha Dalmia and Roadarmel present the literary and the social context of the novel in their introductions. Dalmia offers a critique of what she calls the two major narrative frames of the novel, the economic and social codes of Awadh on the one hand and the colonial and the nationalist politics on the other, through which different characters live the story of unremitting suffering. While Dalmia perceives the novel as "eminently political" and progressive, Roadarmel discusses Premchand's depiction of "changes of heart" as the most potent force for change in society. Quoting Premchand himself, Roadarmel pinpoints the interface of the didactic intentions with the author's literary sensibility: "Idealism has to be there", says Premchand in 1934 "even though it should not militate against realism and naturalness."

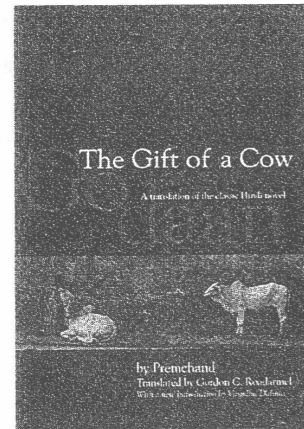
With the protagonist Hori in the centre, the

novel *Godaan* tells the epic story of a wide range of characters situated in a complex social reality, both rural as well as urban, filtered through a progressive consciousness and yet committed to an authentic portrayal. It is rightly said that a classic literary work gains in meanings and relevance as time passes.

This is amply demonstrated by the new Introduction to the novel. Vasudha Dalmia makes a very pertinent point when she discerns how Premchand presented in his fiction an understanding of the social reality decades before academic scholarship could "squarely face it". She suggests the use of some essays from the volumes of *Subaltern Studies* published in the early eighties for a greater comprehension of *Godaan* through a political and social history of Awadh. Similarly, the Bakhtinian term "parodic stylization" applied to some of Premchand's masterly strokes in the novel give added meaning to the double-edged tone of the author in describing the so-called authority figures in the society, such as Pandit Nokharam, Jhinguri Singh or Brahmin Datadin.

The 2002 Introduction indicates the complexity of thematic issues emerging through the narrative of *Godaan*, thanks perhaps to the sophisticated and advanced critical tools and knowledge accessible to the contemporary reader. Dalmia identifies the immense tension between the *dharma* of Hori and the social and political pulls away from it, and describes the rebellion (*vidroh*) of Gobar and Dhania as progressive strains within the novel. She shows how the novel unravels both helplessness of major characters in the face of social practice and notions of piety upheld by most people around.

Roadarmel's Introduction of 1968 addresses the readers of the West in establishing the significance of the novel in Hindi literature. "Novels in English dealing with India" he says "usually spell out the unfamiliar cultural details for the western reader. This statement can indeed be contested today in the light of any significant Indian novel written in English after Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. But Roadarmel demonstrates extraordinary postcolonial sensitivity when he says, "One of the attractions of novels written first in an Indian language is that one can explore the situation from within the local context, not feeling that the author is catering to the



English readers, that he is dealing not with the curious or the exotic but with matters of concern to those within the culture. To the translator of *Godaan* then, thankfully, the distinct cultural specificity of the text is important. He does not give any explanatory notes in the text, nor does he give any footnotes. He does all this consciously and deliberately, so that he may not intrude or disturb. Exercising his choices as translator, he works out his own strategies and does well in involving the reader in the reasons for the choices he makes.

Roadarmel has done some fiction editing in the process of translating the novel if only, as he declares, to take care of the "chronological and other inconsistencies" in the novel. Since the objective of the translation is to make the same joy available to the English reader as that of the Hindi reader, generally Roadarmel has attempted to remain as close to the original text as he could. But he does point out the cause for deviations and the problems of idiom and style in having to move from Hindi to English. Dalmia speaks of the languages of heteroglossia intersecting each other in *Godaan* which is what makes the novel difficult to translate. In fact she gives examples of how Roadarmel could not escape some of the pitfalls created thus for the translators, even though there is no denying the durability of his translation of the novel.

The acid test for the success of a translated text is its readability which, I believe, depends on how autonomous it is. It has to become another original without compromising the spirit. *The Gift of a Cow* is not parasitic on *Godaan*, nor is it merely its shadow; the spirit of *Godaan* vibrates in the form of *The Gift of a Cow*. ■

Sukrita Paul Kumar, translator, critic and writer, teaches in the Delhi University.

Remembering Shivani



The house we lived in Nainital in the late fifties, Priory Lodge, was burnt down in an accidental fire a few years back. The photographs in the family album are fading fast and it is becoming increasingly difficult to revive memories of an idyllic childhood. It was at the Priory Lodge, I discovered that the persona we knew and loved as *Diddi* and Gaura *Mausi* was Shivani to the rest of the world. It is a little over month since she passed away but it is still difficult to believe that she is gone forever.

It seems like yesterday when 'Ameen' was published in *Dharmyug*—her first story based on the real life case of a young woman stricken with leprosy living in the mission hospital on the outskirts of Almora. 'Ameen' was followed by a steady stream of stories. Shivani became a household name in the entire Hindi belt in a short span of time. Her popularity was phenomenal.

Decades before the advent of the TV soaps the serialization of her novels had hooked the mass as well as the class audience. The fan mail she received during this period was extraordinary. Only a few letters praised or criticized the writing, most pleaded for a life to be spared, a marriage to be made. The readers were intensely involved with the cast.

As an adolescent it was difficult for me to comprehend how these imaginary creatures could wield such power over the audience. Only much later could one see how the magic worked. She was not just a gifted storyteller but also an alchemist working with words blurring the borders between life and fiction.

Characters brought to mind persons in flesh and blood living next door. More than once the publication of a story threatened a breach of peace in the genteel Kumaoni society—was not the vamp based on Pandaji's wayward daughter? Of course, the wastrel vagabond was Joshiji's son-in-law. How can she be so recklessly libellous! There were only a few who could appreciate what she was doing—showing her people a mirror that dazzled and shocked at the same time. What her *Mayadarpan* reflected ruthlessly was fascinating—sensitive individuals fettered by fossilized tradition, pauperized scions of once illustrious families desperately trying to preserve their self respect by pompously pretending that nothing had changed and never will, youngsters revolting, bending or breaking when meeting resistance, ambition propelling others to tragic self destruction. Be it *Chaudah Phere*, *Mayapuri*, *Krishna Kali*, *Bhairabi* or *Rathya* their names change but her 'creations' keep fighting the same demons. The readers readily identified with the strong and the weak, became addicted to her offerings. This was not because she dished out escapist fare or provided entertainment with exciting possibility of leading many lives vicariously. She was irresistible because she constantly exerted to engage them in a dialogue—inviting them to take charge, confront the reality of their own lives.

The person the world recognized as the famous writer Shivani was also a loving mother, a wonderful cook, an exceptionally talented singer, a marvelous teacher and a brilliant conversationalist. When she picked up her fountain pen all these different persons sneaked in from time to time and took charge floating with effortless elegance from Hindi, Bangla, Gujarati, Sanskrit and Kumaoni dialect.

The writer's life could not have been easy coupled with raising six children—four of her own and two of us—spoilt nephews. Fortunately for us she never faltered. She took her writing seriously but the husband and the kids were not forgotten. We were well looked after, fed and helped with our homework and treated to previews of 'work in progress' (if we were good). At times even allowed to comment on 'developments'. Her discipline was super human—she wrote furiously fast and the draft of a story or the installment of the serialized novel was usually finished between lunch and tea. Another afternoon was all that was needed to polish and dispatch it.

The packaging is so perfect that it is easy to overlook that her writing comprises much more than evocative storytelling. The smells and sounds in the background are seductive and the reader cannot escape the 'powerful current of fiction'—as action unfolds dramatically.

She valued integrity as a writer more than anything else. She did not belong to any ideological stream, literary faction or followed any literary fashion. It never bothered her that professional critics failed to notice her work. She was perfectly content with the 'readers response'. For almost half a century no one could match her popularity.

Her stories continue to cast their spell alike over grandmothers and granddaughters cutting across barriers of generation, class and caste. Books first published decades ago remain in print. What is more, most of her loyal readers remember in minute detail the happenings in the lives of the fictional characters that dwell therein. Diddi has had the last laugh—the professional critics can eat crow. She will continue to be read and missed long after their names are forgotten.

How can it be otherwise? What sustained her was an extraordinary compassion. She never claimed to be a feminist but all her writing shows exceptional sensitivity to women's concerns. Her heroines are fiercely independent and refuse to walk the prescribed 'path of virtue'. They challenge convention and lead their own lives. It is the men who seem helpless and afraid of social disapproval.

She has penned superb travelogues, memoirs and essays that have suffered from inexplicable neglect—just because the stories are so powerful. It is time her work is reclaimed from the paperback mass market and is made available in a collected works edition.

Towards the end she had begun to resemble one of her own characters, a matriarch at peace with herself waiting patiently for her departure. She missed reading and had to give writing a rest as cramps bothered her. But the embers continued to glow brightly. She hummed lines of long forgotten *thumaris* and often took us back down memory lane.

Shivani the writer will live forever but I shall always miss Diddi.

Pushpesh Pant

Northeast Travel with Bhattacharji

B.G. Verghese

LANDS OF EARLY DAWN: NORTHEAST OF INDIA
By Romesh Bhattacharji
Rupa and Co, 2002, pp. 350, Rs. 395.00

The Northeast is still relatively unknown to most Indians though not quite the terra incognita it was 50 or even 25 years ago. Romesh Bhattacharji has therefore rendered a service by writing an unpretentious, straightforward introduction to this distant border region, not as a polemicist or academic but as one who loves the people, forests, mountains and unspoiled romance of these Lands of Early Dawn. It is a handy guidebook, anecdotal and replete with little gems of folklore and history and interesting nuggets of information that arouse curiosity and invites exploration or further reading.

The object of the book is to dispel prejudice and indifference and promote understanding. The result is worth a division of the Army and security forces. It has been well said that a stranger is a friend that one had never met before. Hopefully, many, who pick up Bhattacharji's book as strangers to the North-east will close it as friends.

Bhattacharji is a blunt and unconventional bureaucrat whose punishment postings, to what to many others are forbidding and forsaken places, are for him a true delight. Family separation is a problem for a working wife. So he takes her along for Northeastern holiday that results in a chapter in his book.

In the 20 or so years from the 1980s that he has been visiting the Northeast, Bhattacharji notes many changes that he laments: deforestation (saved by a Supreme Court order), the change of dress from traditional brightly coloured attires to salwar-kameez and jeans, and the transition from communitarian to material living. Yet modernization and awakening has its benefits. Women are protesting customary laws to seek gender

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justice, and in some areas, unsustainable jhum (slash-and-burn) farming is yielding to slow terracing.

As an excise office, Bhattacharji has spent time fighting the menace of opium and cannabis, long cultivated and used for medicinal purposes among the Mishmis and others and in parts of Manipur, but now a source of addiction and commerce. The spread of HIV-AIDS from shared syringes is something the nation must guard against.

Among the vignettes Bhattacharji paints are about Tawang, the impact of population growth and development on the Kaziranga rhino park and Nambor elephant forest, the wild red horses stranded on Chapori, a river island in Upper Assam, the decline and erosion of Majuli Island in the embrace of the mighty Brahmaputra, and the old trade route from beyond Walong (on the Luhit) to Rima in Tibet right up to 1950.

A chapter is devoted to revisiting the battlefields of World War II. The story of the siege of Kohima and the battle of Imphal are retold. It was here that the Japanese were turned back. Further north, in the Tirap division of Arunachal, the gentle Pangsau pass marks the entry point of the Stillwell Road or Ledo Road through Burma to Kunming in Yunnan that was built to reinforce and resupply Chiang Kai Shek's armies. The war cemeteries at Imphal and Kohima, the Japanese monument to their fallen and the Indian National Army Memorial in Manipur all recall poignant fragments of history.

Bhattacharji quotes the epitaph for a 19 year old soldier on Garrison Hill, Kohima: "To the world, our Tom was just a soldier, To us he was the whole world"—Mum and Dad. That can be said of so many young people who have died with their boots on in the Northeast's many tragic insurgencies. These are, hopefully, on their way to ending.

There are many amusing anecdotes. One is the story of incredulous villagers feeding grass to the first iron bird (an aircraft) that landed in Ziro on the Apa Tani plateau. Another is of delightful Khasi names. Try these: Mighty Sword Sieym, Yonder Lyngdoh, Innocence Khongmen and a Shillong firm called M/s Blah Blah. Bhattacharji says he rests his case with Comfortable Laloo!

There is an introduction to the megaliths,

sacred groves and caves of Meghalaya, the longest of these being in the Jaintia Hills, 6381 metres long and going down 110 metres and a chapter on Arunachal's bamboo/cane bridges. And through the book, at a sudden turn of a page or chapter, there is a flower or fern or tree or birds that leaps out of the author's pen and flits across a paragraph to grip your attention. Travel with and to the Northeast with Bhattacharji. ■

B.G. Verghese is a dormant journalist who continues to erupt in print and has for some time been with the Centre for Policy Research in Delhi. He has authored several books, among them *India's Northeast Resurgent and Reorienting India: The New Geo-Politics of Asia*.

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Patterns and Parallels

Nalini Jain

THE BRAINFEVER BIRD

By Allan Sealy

Picador, London, 2003, pp. 358, Rs. 425.00

Maya, the central character of Alan Sealy's *The Brainfever Bird*, inhabits the novel like the hum of the wineglass that she rubs with her fingers—the sound comes from everywhere and fills the room. And when she cups her hand over the glass the sound returns to light. Her lover, Lev, prefers the colour to the sound; it is like the glow at the bottom of a microscope.

Maya is earth, she is nature; she is the free spirit that roams the lanes of the old city of Delhi—the Red City; she is beauty, she is love. And as she is everything, she is also the final illusion. As Sealy puts it, she encompasses her lover with a “a tissuelike thinness— already the city, the flat, this room, has the feel of a stage. Her certainty he sees, the certainty that he fell in love with, enables the illusion. It has made the pretended more real than reality itself. Whatever that is.” Befittingly Maya is a puppeteer by vocation, invoking through her creations the earlier history of Delhi. Characters like Begum Razia speak through her ventriloquism. She brings back to life the *kathpuchli*, and its tradition of historical drama, in which kings fought unto death in an eternal turning and hurling of oneself at the other—“every terrible thump turned to flesh and bone the cottony wadding you knew was inside”. She is the puppet-maker and the puppet-master. Her puppets are also her mentors, especially Babaji, whom she consults, and whose blessings she seeks, at every critical moment in her life.

The quietude at the end of the book is hard won—it reaffirms hope in the form of the newly born baby girl. Allan Sealy's spare and delicate prose knits into a poetic unity the many levels on which the narrative functions. There is a kind of magic in the interweaving of the real with the illusory, in the interpenetration between the world of puppets and the world of humans, between St. Petersburg and Delhi.

Lev, the microbiologist from St. Petersburg—the White City, reduced to a mere chauffeur in post Soviet Union Russia, comes to India to trade his technical expertise. His mission is not a particularly noble one. He is robbed and assaulted; he loses his scientific papers and the various addresses in the Ministry of Defence that he is carrying. Shaved and massaged by the barber Laiq, he takes up in Old Delhi and falls in love with Maya.

The broader outline of the plot holds no surprises—it is not meant to. It is in the nature of things that the love affair must end. But the trajectory of the narrative is fascinating. The details of the story are worked out in a fine interpenetration between a relentless destiny and a human understanding of its ironic twists. Maya falls ill with an unknown plague virus. Love is life's chief dis-ease. Lev is suspected to be the international carrier of the virus; he is probably a saboteur. He, in his turn, is mangled and defaced by an acid attack. Lev is hospitalized with a burnt face and a molten eye. He just about makes it back to Russia, where he is helped by a plastic surgeon, but at a cost. The cost is his wife Alla.

Maya returns to the comfort of her old friend Morgan, who happens to be a student of Russian studies. Life cannot permit such easy transitions, the plot continues to weave itself into the minds and hearts of the characters. Morgan visits Russia, also on a sinister biological-weapons mission, only to be caught in a drunken brawl and thrown into a dark canal. The freezing temperature of the water simply stops his heart. One of the rioters is Lev's teenage son Alex.

Brainfever Bird is, of course, also a tale of two cities, Delhi and St. Petersburg. “I sing two cities, red and white. Behind me is a backdrop of both, not especially convincing. It is done on the flat, with walls, towers and windows ... the master puppeteers of the north stipulate that that the two sides of the stage shall not be of the same colour ... In the present story the colours are red and white.” Thus it is that the story is set on the puppeteer's stage in an alley in Old Delhi, “under the dark night sky, which is a black marquee, sequined with dusty city stars.” Sealy evokes the aroma of Karims, the warm glow of the sandstone monuments, the odour of the much-molested Yamuna, and the congested alleys of the old city. A balance and a contrast



are maintained with the philistine, brazen world of New Delhi. It's plush Zen cars of golden hue that the sodium streetlights alchemize to dross. But, the old city and the new one, collapse into the person of Maya—she is Delhi, this woman; she blots out the real city ... she is sky and cloud and wall and gate’.

The novel concludes with two reflective letters between Lev and Maya, letters of reckoning and acceptance. Lev accepts that theirs was an impossible relationship, that it is better that she has resumed her heart ... “what you gave was precious and it is still alive. We will continue I know to value one another. We have a saying of Indian summer (*babye leze*). Just before the winter there are a few days of clear warm weather. So when I was young I had my summer and then again came this season, short, short, short. This you were to me. I do not know still what I was to you.”

Maya replies announcing the birth of her baby girl, Masha, and sharing with Lev her love for Morgan—“Morgan is here in many ways, not just his books. He was my steadiest friend and still is; though Babaji is still my counsellor. What were you? A visitation? You came and disappeared like an angel. ... What will happen to Masha? She was my gift to Morgan. One day at a time. What else.”

The quietude at the end of the book is hard won—it reaffirms hope in the form of the newly born baby girl. Allan Sealy's spare and delicate prose knits into a poetic unity the many levels on which the narrative functions. There is a kind of magic in the interweaving of the real with the illusory, in the interpenetration between the world of puppets and the world of humans, between St. Petersburg and Delhi. Sealy's achievement is a painstaking fidelity in realistic detail, laid out in patterns and parallels. The focussing symbol is the *teetar*, or as the Russian saw it, the partridge, in a cage. ■

Nalini Jain is a Professor in the English Department of Delhi University. Contemporary fiction, particularly diaspora writing, is one of her interests.

Of Grief and Loss

Gayatri Rangachari

THE LOVELY BONES

By Alice Sebold

Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 2002, pp.328, price not stated.

Since its publication last June, Alice Sebold's debut novel, *The Lovely Bones*, has become a mega-hit in the US. It spent 35 weeks on the Barnes and Nobles Weekly Top 10 list and a remarkable 10 weeks at the Number 1 spot. Anna Quindlen, the former *New York Times* op-ed columnist, said it was "destined to be a classic along the lines of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and it's one of the best books I've read in years." Judging by book sales, and the number of copies printed—more than 2 million—readers tended to agree. By the end of 2002, *The Lovely Bones* was declared the novel of the year.

This is essentially a novel about grief and loss. Sebold narrates the story through a dead fourteen year-old girl, Susie Salmon. The opening chapter grips the reader immediately; "I was fourteen when I was murdered on December 6, 1973." Susie has been raped and killed by a neighbor, Mr. Harvey. "My mother liked his border flowers, and my father talked to him once about fertilizer." Once she's dead, Susie watches from heaven as the horror unfolds on her family—her parents, her thirteen year-old sister Lindsey and her four year-old brother Buckley. How the Salmons, and some of Susie's other friends and family cope with the murder's aftermath, is the focus of the book.

Although it's an engrossing read, *The Lovely Bones* is a little too neat; its depiction of the sorrow somehow rings hollow. One never quite engages with the family to really feel their pain. As Daniel Mendelsohn wrote earlier this year in the *New York Review of Books*, "...it is hard to read what follows in *The Lovely Bones* without thinking of cinema—or, perhaps better, of those TV "movies of the week," with their predictable arcs of crisis, healing, and "closure," the latter inevitably evoked by an obvious symbolism." I could not agree more. Witness this scene, which Mendelsohn too uses to describe what reads like bad TV dialogue; Lindsey, Susie's younger sister, has just learned that only one body part has been found and wants to know what it is.

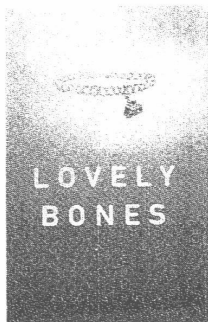
Lindsey sat down at the kitchen table.

"I'm going to be sick," she said.

"Honey?"

"Dad, I want you to tell me what it was. Which body part, and then I'm going to need to throw up."

My father got down a large metal mixing bowl. He brought it to the table and placed it near Lindsey before sitting down.



"Okay," she said. "Tell me."

"It was an elbow. The Gilberts' dog found it."

He held her hand and then she threw up, as she had promised, into the shiny silver bowl.

Moments like these are everywhere in the story. The only parts where the reader feels truly engaged in the character's feelings, are in the opening chapter—when Susie describes her rape. It is rather telling, given that Sebold was raped in 1981 while in college and wrote an account of that trauma subsequently.

The narrative's momentum is maintained through the parallel storytelling of Mr. Harvey's activities and those of the Salmons. As a reader, one can't help but wonder what has happened to this vile and evil man. Is he indeed to get his just rewards? Considering Susie's body is never found (Mr. Harvey chops it up, puts it in an old safe and dumps it into a landfill), save an elbow, how will the family ever have closure? It is no wonder this book was such a success in America last year—after September 11th, there were thousands of families with no bodies to reclaim.

In the end, the reader does feel somewhat cheated at what happens to Mr. Harvey—oh he dies alright, but is not the kind of death he deserves—it should have been more violent. Again, the death is a little too neat—a joke on a summer camp activity, where Lindsey and her friends win a contest on how to stage the perfect murder.

Sebold's strength lies in her depiction of adolescence, of Susie's heaven, of the placid world of American suburbia in the seventies, of mal-adjusted high school students, of a murderer's cunning. But one does not get a textured sense of grief, which, I think, is supposed to be the point of the novel. What *The Lovely Bones* does do is make one feel better about what happens to the dead. Heaven is a nice place! Susie has friends! She meets her grandfather! You get the picture. In that sense, it's a good read. Whether it turns into a classic remains to be seen. I wouldn't bet on it. ■

Gayatri Rangachari is Leading Policy Analyst in the British Royal Treasury and holds a Masters Degree in Journalism from Columbia University.

The Inside Story

John Elliott

YADAV - A ROADSIDE LOVE STORY

By Jill Lowe

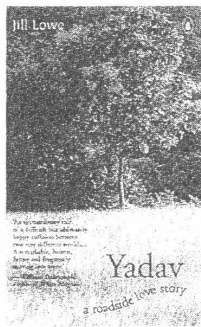
Penguin Books, Delhi, 2003, pp. 279, Rs. 250.00

To go abroad to an unknown country on holiday, fall for your taxi driver, and then marry him and live part of your life with his poor village family, is brave enough for a lady bred in the middle-upper class seclusion of British society. To then write a book about your experiences, good and bad, would seem foolhardy. Yet Jill Yadav has carried it off with aplomb, producing a narrative of her life and experiences with Lal Singh Yadav, a Haryana taxi driver, that is both easy to read and amusing—and informative about Indian life and areas of the country that foreigners rarely reach.

"He drove her to marriage" said an *Indian Express* headline on one of the many articles that have appeared on this unlikely couple in recent weeks. "Love in a hot climate" said *The (Calcutta) Telegraph* in a piece written from London adding, in a style that sounded more like its colonially conscious *Daily Telegraph* namesake in the UK, "when an English woman decides to go native with a Delhi taxi driver, there has to be an inside story".

The inside story is simple—Jill Yadav, now 65, has found more reliable companionship and affection from her impetuous and charming 50-something Indian husband than from the insincere Brits of her past. Born into a well-off family and feted as a debutante in London, she married an impoverished law student when she was only 20. Sixteen years and five children later, he had spent her not inconsiderable wealth and gone bankrupt. The marriage ended and the next 15 years were spent earning an income as a tour guide (which probably helped to equip her for her Indian experiences). Jill sought solace by taking, as she puts it, "lodgers as lovers and lovers as lodgers"—men who were unkindly described by one of her daughters as her "afternoon delights". Finally, when she was 52, she decided to come to India—all her children had finished their education and she had just lost her latest lover. She came more to prove to her "ex" that she could "cope with life on the subcontinent" than for any more positive reason.

That history takes up just six pages of succinct evocative prose and sets the scene for hilarious stories while she travels round southern India with a dreadful woman companion (found through an advertisement in *The Times*). The women go their separate ways and Yadav joins the story to drive Jill to Rajasthan. Despite his limited English, a bond develops quickly between the two—Jill writes almost immediately about feeling the tug of a



“magical inexorable cord that draws two people together”—and Yadav takes her to meet his family in their village on the road to Mandawa. It also doesn't take long for the two to start squabbling like an old married couple, with Jill clearly being drawn by Yadav's contrariness as much as by his good humour and old-fashioned courtesy, even if she continues to this day to wish he wouldn't drown quarter bottles of whisky as though he was drinking water.

The main part of the book traces, with a mixture of transparent honesty and humour, their growing life together in Yadav's Haryana village and (later) in a small south Delhi flat. The transition, from a superficially comfortable but unhappy life in England to the uncomfortable hazards but contentment of a life in India, is not easy. Jill frequently thinks of walking out, or of not returning when she goes to London in the summer. Not surprisingly the pair are cheated by people who sell them a decrepit jeep, by police who falsify records of a car crash, and by lawyers and officials who deal in marriage licences. They are shunned by hotel receptionists and, even in Yadav's village, Jill seems to be tolerated rather than cared for by the extended family. Eventually they do manage to get married and life seems basically good—good enough in fact for her to write that one of the most difficult things to accept in Haryana is simply the “lack of a loo”.

This is not of course the first such book to be written about a foreign woman settling down in India with what would generally be regarded as an unlikely partner. In the early 1980s, Sarah Lloyd wrote *An Indian Attachment* about her relationship with an opium-addicted Sikh whom she met in a Calcutta gurdwara and then lived with in a remote Punjabi village. Her young dreams evaporated when they moved to a dubious guru's community and she returned to a comfortable cottage in the English Shires.

Because of their strong first person narrative, both these books often read more like a novel than non-fiction. They thus sound very much like *Seasons*, a novel on the same theme written thirteen years ago by Jacquelin Singh about a young Californian woman who falls for a Sikh student in America and comes home

with him to his Punjab village. There she discovers he is already married, so she will be the number-two wife in the joint family hierarchy—but she stays the course.

Of the three, *Seasons* has the most colour and “feel” and *An Indian Attachment* has vivid emotion. But, unlike these two much younger women, Jill Lowe, as she was when she arrived, is not on some emotional voyage of discovery. She came looking for a better life and is sure she has found it. She tells the story of their experiences in graphic and perceptive detail—right down to the final observation that “together we have almost everything”. ■

John Elliott is a former *Financial Times* journalist who has reported on Asia for the past 20 years and now lives in India.

Myriad Dilemmas

P.A. Krishnan

CLIVE AVENUE

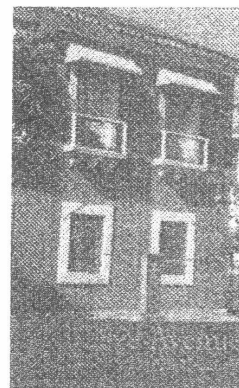
By T.S. Tirumurti
Penguin, Delhi, 2002, pp.259, Rs. 275.00

Chennai always evokes a tingling sense of expectancy in me. I have been arriving in Chennai countless times but I become tense every time the plane is about to land or the train crosses Basin Bridge. I hate the city's stink, its heat and the perennial thirst, its pitted roads and the auto-rickshaws that blot them, its impossible Tamil and its wily, ever-complaining people. But the food, the music, the beaches, the friends, and the city's very earth soon overwhelm the hate. And there is a knot in my stomach when I leave this wretched place. I long to come back. I thought Tirumurti's *Clive Avenue* would whet this longing. It didn't, unfortunately.

The storyline reads like a script for a TV serial. An Iyer boy, of the Vadama pedigree, comes from the God's land armed with a Wharron MBA. He makes routine noises about taking six months off before taking up a job in Chennai. If you read his lips you would know that he is NOT GOING BACK. The father of the boy, a conservative Tamil doctor, wants him to get a job immediately but since the son is not willing, he does the next best thing. He hunts for a suitable bride for him. He does find a fine Iyer girl. When the boy meets the girl he finds to his surprise that the girl unabashedly eats chicken curry, smokes a few cigarettes a day and, what is more, is unafraid—when they are in disco—of showing her tits to whoever cares to see them. Though she assures him that parading herself in a transparent blouse does

not mean that she has lost her virginity he still feels a bit queasy. The girl on her part is nonplussed that this Wharton boy is a vegetarian and that he takes a rather dim view of girls wanting to make statements. The boy's problem is solved by a corrupt income-tax officer who sends some goons to stab the boy because the doctor has betrayed him, the income tax officer, to the anti-corruption squad. This incident convinces the parents of the boy and of the girl that the stars are firmly against the proposed marriage and they call it off after making necessary astrological consultations. The boy, in the meanwhile, bribes a minister ten lakhs to bring the income-tax officer to book and is so disgusted with the happenings in Chennai that he packs off to the Promised Land. As a bonus, a French girl, who is a good neighbour of the boy and who has just discovered that the man who was her fiancé is a bisexual and that she is in love with the boy, also gets an assignment in New York.

There are a score of other characters who pop in and out of this book—the film actor, the wife beater, the Sardar, the milkman, the IAS officer, the astrologer, the Shastrigal, and the drunken Communist. In spite of the author's sincere efforts to integrate them into the book, they look mere templates that would fit into any formulaic novel. The villain of the piece, the income tax officer, appears to be a complete idiot. He goes about collecting his bribes from Clive Avenue residents like a chowkidar would collect his monthly dues. No self-respecting bribe taker would like to be portrayed like this. It is also improbable that a minister would do a job for a mere ten lakhs. A real minister may even be offended by this slur. He is surely much pricier than that. Only the parents of the boy and his grandmother belong to the book. The grandmother, especially, is really grand though even her dialogues sound stilted at places. The French girl, Dominique, too comes alive and her encounters with the boy and the gentle humour of the first few



pages are among the redeeming features of the book.

The ethnic idiosyncrasies of the Tamil Vadama Brahmin are all listed in the novel. Some of their rites of passage too find their place. They stand out like a tuft on an otherwise shaven head. The author has probably not realized that a novel becomes a source of ethnographic information only incidentally and not intentionally. But then, this is how most ethnic novels get written. I may be wrong, but it is harder to find a disciple of Kanchi mutt among the Tirunelveli Vadamas than to locate a genuine supporter of Saddam Hussein in the Kurd regions. The Tirunelveli Vadamas are all disciples of the Shringeri mutt. The other faux-pas in the book is that a Communist participates in the Quit India movement and is made a mascot by the party for this act. That the communists did not participate in the Quit India movement is known even to an ordinary reader of our recent history and it is surprising that the author is not aware of this fact.

The myriad dilemmas of rootless Tamil Brahmins—their innate love for the Tamil country where they feel that they are not wanted, their amazing adherence to the mind-boggling rituals which their forefathers had bequeathed to them and which they generally don't understand, their unsaid aversion to anything contaminated by a Tamil non-Brahmin, their pristine arrogance clothed with believable humility, their scintillating intellect dimmed by wanton prejudices—are all classic themes for a fine book. Tirumurti has tried very hard to write a fine book taking up these themes. That the book hasn't turned out to be one is certainly not a cause for despondency. It is not that a masterpiece gets written everyday. ■

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Seetha

THE UNCOUPLING

By Cauvery Madhavan
Penguin, Delhi, 2003, pp 239, Rs. 250.00

What does it take for a 33-year-old marriage to unravel? A tragedy? An extra-marital affair? The surfacing of a well-kept secret? In the case of Balu and Janaki Shankar it is just a whirlwind 16-day bus tour of Europe.

It is this focus on the mundane that sets *The Uncoupling*, Cauvery Madhavan's second novel after *Paddy Indian*, apart from other tales of marriages coming apart. Like *Paddy Indian*, this story too has a foreign setting but it isn't about the clash of cultures or about people trying to 'fit in'. This story is about the interaction of two individuals in a different environment from their normal one.

Balu and Janaki—the protagonists—are a typical middle-aged Indian (well, Tamilian) couple. Balu is the archetypal fastidious, opinionated Tamil gentleman. If his *parippu* (dal) remained in the pressure cooker for over five whistles it had to be discarded. It is Balu who decides what his wife would like to listen to when he came back from office. The Saturday afternoon routine of a movie (selected by him) would be followed by lectures where he pontificates on the various characters. He lays down the rules, she follows them, without argument. He won't let her leave home without kaja in her eyes but won't let her use lipstick because he thinks it is unnatural. "After all these years I myself can't imagine using it," Janaki confides to Romi Singh, one of the motley bunch of passengers on the bus tour. Their life runs smoothly, following a set routine. There are no cracks, no discord whatsoever.

The reexamination comes during the bus trip, arranged by their son in London. Interacting with a motley bunch of people from different countries exposes Janaki to new perspectives and ideas. She starts thinking about her life till now but still doesn't question it. A visit to the red light area of Amsterdam, leaves Balu a bit shaken, assailed by both lasciviousness and guilt. His mind is crowded with sexual fantasias, which he later tries out on Janaki who is in an inebriated stupor, having had a drink by mistake. His new found sexual appetite finally does him in when towards the tail end of the trip, he loses his passport while in a disoriented state after browsing through a shop full of kinky cuckoo clocks!

The denouement comes during a boat trip down the Rhine when the other passengers ask Janaki why she is throwing coins into the river and she finds herself explaining Indian customs confidently. Later, she is asked to sing. Hesitant, at first, she promptly agrees when Balu makes light of her abilities. Not only does she sing a



bhajan but gives a short, impromptu lecture and then fields questions. She is as much surprised as Balu is and the incident brings to the fore all her suppressed desires, sacrificed at the altar of matrimony by a stubborn father. That sets off a complete re-examination of her life as it has been till then. Her interactions with the other passengers on the bus—notably the Singhs who have settled in England, Sister Bernadette, and four divorcees from Chicago—give her a new determination to re-order her life. But she has suppressed her own personality for so long that when her new-found friend Romi asks her to do something new, something she enjoys, she can't think of anything. That only prompts Balu to taunt her about her new ambitions.

Madhavan uses her eye for detail to good effect in this book as well as she did in *Paddy Indian*. Her detailed descriptions of Balu going bride hunting through the matrimonial columns in his youth and supervising the packing for their trip to England are laced with droll humour. Also interesting is the account of Janaki saving bits of hair and then getting the wandering false hair seller to make a switch for her. But the depiction of priggish Balu's reactions in the Amsterdam's red light district is the best part of the book. None of these seem forced into the book for the sake of a western audience, something that came through in *Paddy Indian*.

The cameo of Inder and Romi Singh, Indian immigrants settled in England, also comes across well. Beneath the veneer of liberal attitudes, Inder is the typical chauvinistic husband who doesn't mind his wife having a drink or two, but is furious that his daughters want her to continue her education (interrupted in class 8) and rues the fact that they are too modern.

Madhavan likes to keep the pace of her books leisurely. It worked in *Paddy Indian*, but in *The Uncoupling*, it only makes the book a bit of a tedious read. *Paddy Indian* had its dramatic moments. This one doesn't. And that's probably why there are times when the reader gets impatient. Indeed, this one isn't as absorbing as the earlier was.

Just one word about the cover. When the couple is so obviously Tamilian, why are the legs draped in a pyjama and a salwar kameez?

Seetha is a freelance writer.

A Humanist Vision Recalled

Ratna Raman

E.M. FORSTER: A TRIBUTE

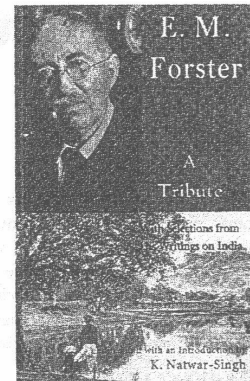
Edited and with an introduction by K. Natwar Singh
Rupa, Delhi, 2002, pp.169, Rs. 150.00

This is a reproduction of an earlier tribute to Edward Morgan Forster from the Indian subcontinent. First brought out by Forster's American publishers Harcourt Brace and Co. in 1964, an exclusively Indian edition was subsequently issued in 1979 by Clarion Books, on the occasion of Forster's hundredth birth anniversary. The new additions to the current version are Natwar Singh's preface and an appendix containing replies by E.M. Forster to Natwar Singh's letters. E.M. Forster was born in the year 1879, at the high point of the Victorian era, around the time that Poet Laureate Alfred Tennyson valorized colonial enterprise in poems like 'The Defence of Lucknow', thereby strengthening official discourse and popular mythology pertaining to the cultural and racial authority of the English. Forster's exposure to cultures outside of the English as evinced by his travels to Greece, Italy, India and Egypt mark the beginnings of a new phase; one in which notions of the invincibility and arrogance of empire are replaced with an attempt to negotiate alternate cultures and systems of belief alien to the perspectives provided by the colonizing gaze. Forster's first visit to India in 1913 and his subsequent visits in 1922 and 1945 provided further opportunities for more mediations in this light. Two significant and major books that ensued from Forster's Indian encounters were *A Passage to India* (1924) and *The Hill of Devi* (1953). Short accounts of his travels to different parts of India and his engagement with historical and contemporary Indian figures can also be found in *Abinger Harvest* (1912) and *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1946). Forster's work on the Indian subcontinent reveals to us the best of a pacific and deeply felt commitment, distilled perhaps from the Bloomsbury group of which he was a distinguished, albeit occasional member.

Part One of the book comprises recollections of Forster by Indian literary figures like Raja Rao, Mulkraj Anand, Santha Rama Rau and personal friends like Ahmed Ali, a cousin of the nephew of Forster's cherished friend Syed Ross Masood and Narayana Menon who knew him more intimately than those of us who have engaged primarily with Forster's fictional and non-fictional writing. The first section provides us with insights into the liberal, cultural and literary tradition that held sway in the years following the Indian subcontinent's protest against British rule and

its strident assertions of nationalism. All six writers in this section while identifying very strongly with their own cultural roots record their admiration for Forster, the author, whose humane vision transcended political and cultural chasms. The exchange of ideas and the rapport that each one of them shared with Forster was considerable and their anecdotal account of Forster's generosity, breadth of vision, and his disinterested concern about the subcontinent's future is communicated to the reader. All essays highlight the extraordinary circumstances in which Forster forged and maintained excellent personal relations with individuals separated from him by vast political and geographical distances. Santha Rama Rau, who adapted *A Passage to India* for the stage, describes the interaction with Forster in this connection and Raja Rao traces in Forster's work strains of Gide, Dostoevsky and Hamlet while rediscovering Forster's India in Maryland, Virginia. Narayana Menon speaks glowingly of Forster's inimitable narrative skill, and emphasizes the pleasure of reading Forster's novels which is likened to the savouring of "good wine". Ahmed Ali speaks of the personal friendship and succour that Forster provided while Mulkraj Anand's tribute is in the form of an open letter to Forster and provides many insightful glimpses into Forster's work. The first section which concludes with Natwar Singh's tribute to Forster, documents the long association he shared with Forster while drawing attention to Forster's significance as a writer who enabled the British to "disengage from their imperial burdens, emotionally, intellectually, and practically."

Part Two of the book has twelve excerpts from Forster's published work, fictional and non-fictional and all the essays collated here provide a glimpse into Forster's engagement with history, art, architecture and festivals in the Indian subcontinent. His sensitivity to an ancient heritage enriched by both Hindu and Moslem contributions, his engagement with contemporary Indian figures like Iqbal, Tagore, Jagdish Chandra Bose, and Ravi Shankar and his alertness to the complexity of political processes in a subcontinent on its way towards embracing modernity can be gleaned through these excerpts. His engagement with Mahatma Gandhi and his recognition in 1948 that Gandhiji was "likely to be the greatest of our century" speaks volumes for the spaces that Forster himself identified with.



Forster's letters which form the Appendix of this section are not the most exceptional examples of his writing but they do represent Forster, the private individual, perceptive and alert and responsive to the changes taking place in his times; yet maintaining a critical distance from them, and standing his own ground. Forster's letters allow us to peek into his years at Cambridge, the books he read, the people who visited him and the enthusiasm that attended both his forays into different parts of Europe and his continued engagement with the abundant multicultural experience of art, literature, painting, Russian Ballet and Indian Music that living in Cambridge allowed him access. Two very poor examples of editing surface in the Appendix: one on page 153 where we are given a summary of a letter that is self-explanatory and another on page 162 which reproduces two disconnected statements made by Forster in two different contexts. This is unfortunate, particularly as the previously unpublished material in the book does not exceed twenty-five pages. Such glitches notwithstanding, *A Tribute*, as an introduction to Forster's life, with excerpts from his fiction and non-fiction, is immensely readable and should provide considerable pleasure to Forster fans and neophytes.

Living as we do, in a post-Forsterian world, (*A Passage to India*, is unfortunately no longer taught to undergraduate students of English Literature at Delhi University) where the very fact of being different threatens to engulf the fabric of the entire nation, Forster's plea for good-humored tolerance, peace and a sensitivity to cultural difference are issues of utmost concern to us today and remain important reasons for engaging with his work. In the context of the increasingly narrow and partisan views that we encounter, in these times of siege, if this book manages to nudge more readers in the direction of Forster's fiction and essays, it would make for a timely contribution. ■

Ratna Raman is a Reader in the Department of English, Sri Venkateswara College, Delhi University.

Activism and Aesthetics*

Dedicated to the late Professor Jaidev, the seminar focused on some issues central to contemporary academic debate and had a direct bearing on Jaidev's critical practice which reflected profound and discriminating scholarship on the one hand, and the agony, anger and passionate conviction of a political activist on the other.

Introducing the theme Pankaj K. Singh said that literature has always been a site for contest for both dominant and resistant voices. Jaidev, too, valued literature for its larger relevance to the socio-cultural construct. 'Pure intellect' had no meaning for him, be it in critical theory or creative writing. It had to be located historically, in its time, in its socio-cultural context, in its people. He saw literature as "one of the few conscience keepers we are left with" in these irrational and dark times. Pankaj Singh added that the evolution of Jaidev from a conventional teacher of English literature to a leading literary and cultural critic in the country is also broadly indicative of the gradual shift in the location of English studies in India with increasing emphasis on non-Eurocentric literature and translations. In translation Jaidev saw the demonstration of true "post-colonial condition".

Professor Ramakant, in his Inaugural Address stated that it is the responsibility of a literary person to get connected with people and their culture. Each word has the potential to explode a system and give birth to several awakened consciousnesses. In his presidential remarks, Professor B.S. Dahiya spoke about the perennial problematic relationship of politics and aesthetics and the role of a writer in society and then moved on to the issue of the formation of the canon in English studies.

In the first session chaired by Sukrita Paul Kumar Kumkum Yadav in her paper, 'Say Yes to Ethics', referred to Shani's Hindi novel *An Island of Saar*. She discussed the problematics involved in writing a novel on the tribals, the ethics of writing such a work and the predicament faced by a writer who more often than not is an outsider. The writer has to consciously strive to break at every step of his/her work

* A Report by Pankaj K. Singh and Diamond Oberoi on a national seminar held by the Department of English, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla, 26-27 March, 2003.

the stereotypical romanticization that our system has constructed about the indigenous people.

Professor Ramakant in his paper 'Activism and Aesthetics in the Context of Sanskrit Literature', spoke about the creation of an exploitative mentality and how such a mentality effaces the culture of people. This was followed by a session chaired by Prem Singh.

Sukrita Paul Kumar's presentation, 'From Praxis to Poetics' embodied the spirit of the seminar. She read out some of her recent poems which have emerged from her experience with the homeless of Delhi in recent months at *Aashray* in her college, supported by two NGOs *Prayas* and *Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan*. Zakir Hussain college is the only college in Delhi which has offered a part of its premises to provide a home to nearly 470 homeless in Delhi. Highlighting her insights of what she called this "Fourth World", the world of the homeless Sukrita's poems capture some of their existential anguish as also, surprisingly, their moments of joy, freedom and the dignity of being.

In her paper, 'The Vanquished as Victor: Protagonists in Mahasweta Devi's 'Draupadi' and Vaidhei's 'Akku', Girija Sharma brought to the surface the non-western ideal of female empowerment. The paper analysed Mahasweta Devi's 'Draupadi' as a double-edged narrative that on the one hand depicts the oppression and struggle of the tribals and on the other questions and demystifies the *Mahabharata*. Vaidhei's 'Akku' too raises questions central to women.

Sudhir kumar's paper on the 'Aesthetics of Swaraj: Towards Gandhian Cultural Studies' reworked the notion of aesthetics from the Gandhian point of view. Gandhi translated the concept of aestheticism into the actions of people by emphasizing that whatever serves humanity and whatever can be useful to the starving millions is beautiful.

In the creative writers' session reading of Professor Jaidev's story 'Conception' was followed by several participants reading their poems.

The next day, with Professor Dahiya in the chair, Prem Singh speaking on 'Dalit Aesthetics as Activism' said that the discourse of dalit literature can be extended to the discourse of other marginalized groups such as the blacks or women. He expressed the need to review ideologies vis-a-vis dalit discourse and said that as long as we continue to analyse it through

western or Brahminical paradigms which believe in a culture of exclusion we will fail to understand it. The paper also brought to the fore the debate between Gandhi and Ambedkar on the one hand and the Marxists, socialists and the dalits on the other. Form is not the main concern of this literature, it is only a means to express the anguish and the plight of the people.

K.K. Kathuria's paper 'Literary Theory: A Crisis of Methods' stated that literary theory is essentially subversive and iconoclastic in its nature traced the journey of literary theory from New Criticism to Deconstruction.

Professor V.P. Sharma spoke on the Post-colonial Interrogation of Colonial Paradigms in the Context of Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*. Primarily, he focused on the politics involved in creating history which always belongs to the rulers who fabricate it to perpetuate their system of dominance. Shashi Tharoor uses the discourse of post-colonialism in post-modernist techniques and retells the entire story twice to depict how history is only provisional and operates on the basis of elimination.

In the session chaired by K. K. Kathuria, Neelima Sharma presented a paper on 'Interrogating the Myth of Assimilation: Beatrice Culleton's *April Raintree*' which raised issues regarding the myth of assimilation, the myth of acceptance and the divided consciousness that the Native Canadians undergo because of living in a 'No Man's Land'.

Meenakshi F. Paul's paper on 'The Need to Negotiate Space—The Near-Possibility of Indian English becoming Bhasha' raised several issues regarding English and its role and status in India. On the one hand English is the language of colonization and on the other it also gives us the power to express. The predicament of Indian English writers is that their literature is neither respected by their own counterparts writing in regional languages nor by the established canon of English studies. Only a sustained expression of Indian English literature will determine its relevance for India.

A volume dedicated to Jaidev entitled *The Politics of Literary Theory and Representation: Writings on Activism and Aesthetics* (Manohar, 2003) edited by Pankaj K. Singh was also released on the occasion which includes writings by such eminent writers and critics as Mahasweta Devi, Bhisham Sahni, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Ayyappa Paniker. ■

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A Traveller and the Road: The Journey of an Indian Communist by Mohit Sen is a striving account of the life and work of a veteran communist. Rupa, 2003, pp.524, Rs.395.00

ECONOMICS

The Empire of Capital by Ellen Meiksins Wood brings into sharp relief the nature of today's new capitalist empire in which the political reach of imperial power cannot match its economic hegemony. Leftword, 2003, pp. 153, Rs. 275.00

The Dollar Crisis: Causes, Consequences, Cures by Richard Duncan, a must read for generalists and specialists alike, argues that the global economy has been destabilized by the enormous US trade deficit. John Wiley & Sons, 2003, pp. 269, price not stated.

FICTION

One Day by Ardashir Vakil, a twenty-four hour journey into the lives and minds of Ben Tennyson, his wife, Priya Patnaik and their small son, paints an unforgettable picture of the fin de siècle in one of the great cities of the world. Viking, Penguin India, 2003, pp. 292, Rs. 395.00

A Chronicle of the Peacocks: Stories of Partition, Exile and Lost Memories by Intizar Husain translated from Urdu by Alok Bhalla and Vishwamitter Adil highlights the author's unique understanding of Muslim identity in the Indian subcontinent. Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 257, Rs. 395.00

The Legend of Nandan (Nandan Kathai) by Indira Parthasarathy translated from Tamil by C.T. Indira is a contemporary drama about a 7th century hero in a clash between high-caste Hindus and the suppressed people of a typical Tamil village. Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 82, Rs. 195.00

I am Radha by Rita Dutta Gupta is the story of Nishta's journey into the centre of her being the healing power of sacred love when confronted with terminal illness. Indialog Publications, 2003, pp. 173, Rs. 195.00

Master of the Ring by A.P. Maheshwari is a collection of tales and fables which contribute to making the world a happier and richer place to live in. Indiana Books, 2003, pp. 145, Rs. 150.00

Postmodern Bangla Short Stories 2002 Vol. I edited

by Samir Roychowdhury and Rabiul Karim covers the entire spectrum of contemporary Bangla fiction not exposed to readers outside West Bengal. Haowa 49, Kolkata, 2002, pp. 432, Rs. 280.00

GENDER STUDIES

Feminism in search of an Identity: The Indian Context edited by Meena Kelkar and Deepti Gangavane is a collection of articles which seeks to identify the theoretical possibilities within the Indian tradition for creating a new sensibility to understanding feminism. Rawat Publications, 2003, pp. 254, Rs. 500.00

HISTORICAL STUDIES

The Khalsa & The Punjab: Studies in Sikh History to the 19th Century edited by Himadri Banerjee is the third in the series of volumes published to mark the tercentenary of the Khalsa and comprises some of the papers presented at the panel on the Khalsa at the 60th session of the Indian History Congress. Tulika & Indian History Congress, 2002, pp. 192, Rs. 375.00

Relocating Gender in Sikh History: Transformation, Meaning and Identity by Doris R. Jakobh charts the history of gender construction in Sikhism, and analyses the development of gender ideals under the Sikh gurus and their adaption and in some cases transformation by the new intellectual elite. Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 296, Rs. 625.00

On Becoming an Indian Muslim: French Essays on Aspects of Syncretism translated and edited by M. Waseem, a selection of fifteen essays relies on literary and other texts as well as field studies by well-known French scholars who trace the various ways in which Islam found popular support at the grass-roots level in India. Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 355, Rs. 650.00

Communal Identity in India: Its Construction and Articulation in the Twentieth Century edited by Bidyut Chakrabarty is a collection of essays which addresses the issue of community identities which evolved historically on the course of the twentieth century in India. Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 327, Rs. 545.00

The Jungle Kings: Ethnohistorical Aspects of Politics and Ritual in Orissa by Burkhard Schnepel deals with the remote hinterland of South Orissa and kingship in the state. Manohar, 2002, pp. 350, Rs. 800.00

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Mongolia-Russia Relations Kiakhta to Vladivostok by Sharad K. Soni analyses the historical roots these interstate relations and the pattern of the whole gamut of their relations during the Tsarist Russian and the Soviet period. Shipra & Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, 2002, pp. 272, Rs. 550.00

LITERATURE

Hali's Musaddas: A Story in Verse of the Ebb and Tide of Islam translated from the Urdu by Syeda Saiidain Hameed is a collection of poems written to infuse new life in a 'dead' quam. HarperCollins & The India Today, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 241, Rs. 500.00

Sallies of Mind by Maulana Azad Kalam Azad is the English translation of *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, the last of the Maulana's writings and has been translated by D.R. Goyal. Shipra & M.A. Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, 2003, pp. 323, Rs. 494.00

POLITICAL STUDIES

The Forging of Nationhood edited by Gyanendra Pandey and Peter Fescheire is the product of a conversation begun among historians of the 'South' about the need to question the concept of the essential, cultural nation and perhaps therefore the idea of the nation itself. Manohar, 2003, pp. 303, Rs. 500.00

Press and Foreign Policy in India by Partha Pratim Basu seeks to explore the performance of India's newspaper press in relation to its foreign policy. Lancer's Books, 2003, pp. 299, Rs. 580.00

Social Welfare in Pakistan by Shireen Rehmatullah gives a detailed account of old and new concepts in the development of social welfare programmes and will serve as a good textbook as well as act as an inspiration for new workers to develop indigenous methods of solving social problems. Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2002, pp. 595, PK Rs. 595.00

Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy by C. Raja Mohan narrates the story of India's successful experimentation since the mid-1980s. Viking, Penguin Books India, 2003, pp. 321, Rs. 450.00

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The SEWA Movement and Rural Development. The Banakantha and Kutch Experience by Daniel W. Crowell. Sage, 2003, pp. 236, Rs. 280.00

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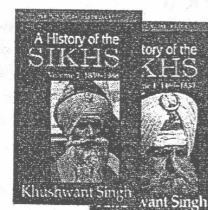
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ISBN-019562003

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Registered DL-11443/2003