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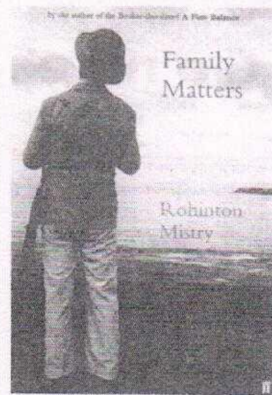
Remembered Time

Shobhana Bhattacharji

FAMILY MATTERS
By Rohinton Mistry
Faber and Faber, London, Distributed by Penguin India, 2002, pp. 487, UK £10.99; India £5.50



"Nariman Vakil is a 79-year-old Parsi widower and the patriarch of a small discordant family. Beset by Parkinson's disease and haunted by memories of the past, he lives in a once-elegant apartment with his two middle-aged step-children — Coomy, bitter and domineering, and her brother, Jal, mild-mannered and acquiescent. When Nariman's illness is compounded by a broken ankle, Coomy plots to turn his round-the-clock care over to Roxana, her sweet-tempered [half-]sister."[1] Thereby hangs Rohinton Mistry's *Family Matters*.

Two preliminary reamrks. 1) There have been many huge, mesmerizing books — *War and Peace, Gone with the Wind, A Suitable Boy, A Fine Balance*. The core of these novels is the documentation of a period. Mistry writes of times we have lived through, thus in his novels, it is a remembered time, not one created purely out of research. This gives the novels a special feel, such as his light, glancing looks at contemporary events, the recreation of which is inevitably more essay-like in strictly historical novels.

2) Writers like Vikram Seth do something new in every book they write. Others repeat successful formulae. Names and places change in Hercule Poirot or Sherlock Holmes stories, for instance, but their action and characters have a TV-serial-like effect of remaining the same and causing exactly the same pleasure each time. In the matter of style, Rushdie is in this category, as is Mistry, though their styles are antipodal.

Mistry documents the Parsis, primarily of Bombay, without falling into the sit-plot trap in which characters are quickly drawn, then put into various situations. He does, on the whole, write of the wearing relentlessness of every day (e.g., Coomy's nagging), but there are transitions and developments in characters. Particularly memorable is the change in Yezad, Roxana's husband, who descends from cheerful rationality into querulous, intolerant religiosity. The family watches and after a time suffers but does little about it. Roxana has disliked her husband's atheism. She is thus pleased when he begins to show interest in the symbols and rituals of religion; religion is good, after all, and anyone who practises it must be headed for goodness. Her initial approval encourages Yezad. From furtive visits to the temple he moves on to marking out a large sacred space in the drawing room which gets in everyone's way. The chief cause of the change in Yezad is that Nariman's medication and food eat into the family budget, but Mistry's attention to seemingly unimportant reasons like Roxana's approval and the more general unexamined assumption behind it, lifts the novel above a slogan illustrated with examples.

The relationship between Nariman and his nine-year-old grandson, Jehangir, Roxana's gentleness towards her father and everyone else, the old pop songs that Nariman sings to Coomy's annoyance, the moment when Yezad feeds him, Jal's "good" plot intended to make everyone happy, and even the bizarre ends of Coomy, Lucy, and Mrs.Nariman Vakeel relieve the oppressiveness of the everyday. Beyond the immediate family are Mr.Kapur, Yezad's employer, and Hussein, the odd job man who saw his family being burnt alive in the 1993 riots, and who is treated with kindness and understanding by Mr.Kapur and Yezad. Together with Vilas, who works down the road from Bombay Sporting Goods Emporium, they represent the tolerant Bombay that Mr.Kapur worships.

To use terms so out of fashion that it's time they were back in style, Mistry once again weaves characters, motifs, real history and fiction into a rich tapestry. But *Family Matters* is about the life of the Vakeel family as well as of their times. As he did in *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*, in *Family Matters*, too, he places the microcosm of individuals' lives within macrocosmic events. This time it is Bombay terrorized by the Shiv Sena. From the Vakeel family's small jokes about it, to its hosting the Michael Jackson concert, to the catastrophe in Yezad's life, the Shiv Sena permeates everything. Mistry never once mitigates the seriousness of its threat to civilized existence. He is conscious, too, of the insidious ways in which it can influence the smallest life (young Jehangir, as homework monitor— an extraordinary concept in itself — accepts bribes for a "good cause," paralleling the protection rackets of the Sena).

A motif in Mistry's tapestry is the many ways in which the Shiv Sena and its lookalikes gain legitimacy. Almost at the book's centre is the sort of set piece one associates with early twentieth century novels like *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*. It is not easy to pull off an essay disguised as dialogue, but here is Mistry's miracle.

Yezad and Vilas meet Gautam and Bhaskar, two young journalists who have hijacked the amateur dramatics group to which Vilas belongs. The Sena has beaten up one of them for criticizing it. Vilas also reads and writes letters for Bombay's illiterate economic refugees from villages all over India. From them he hears of a couple hanged by the girl's family for having married outside their castes. Her father cannot stop the murder, but he is granted this much that he rather than the other men of the village will mutilate his daughter himself before she is killed. Vilas wants to write a play about it.

"Wouldn't work, trust me," said Bhaskar. "We want you to write something about Shiv Sena. They are our greatest urban menace."

"But don't mention them directly," said Gautam. "Or they will burn down the hall where we meet."

"Try an allegorical style," said Bhaskar. "Perhaps write in the form of a fable."

Yezad played with the salt-cellar, sliding it about the table. "What about the boy's parents? They must have gone to the police."

Already irritated by the two journalists, Vilas pounced upon Yezad: "You sound like a foreign tourist talking about law and order, and democracy. You know perfectly well in this country how things—"

"You're right," said Yezad, feeling foolish. "It's just that when you hear such terrible things . . ."

"Yes," said Vilas. "When people feel helpless, they say things to make themselves feel better. Or they deny the injustice."

"Isolated incidents, they call them," said Gautam.

"Exactly," said Bhaskar. "They say that our nation has made much progress—satellite TV, they say, Internet, e-mail, best software designers in the world." . . .

"Let me give you an example," said Vilas. "A while back, I read a novel about the Emergency. A big book, full of horrors, real as life. But also full of life, and the laughter and dignity of ordinary people. One hundred per cent honest—made me laugh and cry as I read it. But some reviewers said no, no, things were not that bad. Especially foreign critics. You know how they come here and become experts. One poor woman whose name I can't remember made such a hash of it,[2] she had to be a bit pagal, defending Indira, defending the Sanjay sterilization scheme, defending the entire Emergency—you felt sorry for her even though she was a big professor at some big university in England. What to do? People are afraid to accept the truth. As T.S.Eliot wrote, 'Human kind cannot bear very much reality.'"

After the journalists leave, Vilas says:

"You see what I mean about these actors? Too pseudo for me. They become blind to real life with their intellectualizing. Stanislavsky-this and Strasberg-that, and Brechtian alienation is all they talk about."

Mr.Kapur, Yezad, Vilas, and Mistry, on the other hand, have no choice "except to speak about [communal riots, caste murders] again, and yet again, and yet again" (p.145).

The novel's minor characters have not gone down well with some reviewers, but I loved them. E.M.Forster would have called them, inaccurately but approvingly, flat characters. Mistry's ear for the way people talk finds delightful scope among them, a valuable and entertaining record of real life that formal histories' don't usually have. His peripheral characters talk about their families, work, loves, and, most interestingly, about being Parsis. Far too many novelists today insert their characters into a social hollowness, but these give the novel a solidity, as if it were full of people going about their work while Mistry stoppeth the reader to tell him that it is an ancient Parsi . . .

Other reviewers have not liked Mistry's subplots. Frankly, I cannot understand why, just as I cannot understand why I have written this review. It is so much natter in a lesser scale.■

Shobhana Bhattacharji is Reader in the Jesus and Mary College, Department of English.

[1] *From the blurb*

[2] *Probably Germaine Greer.*

"In a BBC-TV panel discussion broadcast before the recent award ceremony for the 1996 Booker Prize, Greer accused Mistry of painting an untrue and unreasonably cruel portrait of India in his second novel, A Fine Balance. *Mistry is still fuming.*

"It just sounded stupid, basically, very stupid. Everyone who heard it and reported it to me said it seemed so stupid," he said in a recent interview. . . . When the panel discussion moved to Mistry's novel, Greer pulled no punches.

"I hate this book. I absolutely hate it," she said, grimacing for effect.

Greer explained that she had spent four months teaching at a women's college in Bombay and she had not seen the squalor and misery portrayed in Mistry's novel.

"I just don't recognize this dismal, dreary city.

"It's a Canadian book about India. What could be worse? What could be more terrible?" she asked, laughing.

Mistry is a soft-spoken man, but his eyes shoot fire at the suggestion that he knows less about life in India than Greer.

"She wants to say that those four months teaching the daughters of high society put her in a better position to judge India than I am in, having grown up there and spent 23 years before emigrating?

"When I heard this, I mean, I couldn't believe it. I mean, Germaine Greer I understand is an intelligent woman ... And it was almost heart-breaking that someone of her calibre could stoop to such folly and say something so asinine." . . It's set in 1975, the year Mistry left India for Canada, where he's lived ever since. . . . Whether Greer knew of Mistry's background, she won't say. She refused to be interviewed about her remarks. But Greer had said that during her time in Bombay, she worked with a family planning centre and visited the slums and shanty-towns that are integral to Mistry's story.

"And it was so much less terrible than I had feared."

Mistry's normal eloquence is taxed when he tries to respond to Greer's criticism.

"If she wanted to make the case that she did not like the book there were far better ways to do it than to say something so, so ... I said asinine already? So brainless, really," he said. [from a report, "Mistry calls criticism of his book 1 asinine,'" (www.canoe.ca, Sunday, November 17, 1996)]

Myriad Avatars

Nalini Jain

THE IMPRESSIONIST
By Hari Kunzru
Hamish Hamilton, 2002, pp. 481, Rs. £7.50

Pran Nath's milk-white skin is both the recto and verso on which his life is inscribed. It is, at once, the source of his caste superiority, and his castelessness. Thus it is that the ambivalent hero of Hari Kunzru's novel, *The Impressionist*, struggles through an orphaned childhood, pursued by the sepia-tinted ghost of miscegenation –'you can always tell if someone is an eight-anna. Blood always shows up in the end!'

Pran Nath is ill starred; his mother dies giving him birth. The astrologer predicts that the child would have to endure loss and suffering. When his 'father' lies dying, the wily maid produces a battered photograph of an Englishman. Cast out of the well-to-do Kashmiri Pundit household, Pran Nath's life's journey reduces him many times to 'pieces – to a pile of Pran-rubble, ready for the next chance event to put him back in a new order.' The making and remaking of identity, a kaleidoscopic reassemblage, is of course the trademark theme of contemporary writers of the diaspora. Vassanji's Pippa in *The Book of Secrets* is, like Pran Nath, a mixed-blood orphan. His mother too was 'native', and his father an English civil servant. Like Pran Nath he is haunted/hunted by textual evidence of his tainted blood, the diary of his absent father.

Shyam Selvadurai, a writer of the Sri Lankan diaspora, presents his child-protagonist, Arjie, in *Funny Boy*, cross-dressing, to underscore the vexed and contentious question of sexual identity. Kunzru's Pran Nath, like a snake sloughing its pale skin, emerges, dressed in a blue sari, as Rukhsana, the Nawab of Fatehpur's new hijra. Burka-clad, the painful lesson Pran Nath must learn is that there are not just 'two sexes (sexualities)', as he had fondly believed; but rather, as the Khwaja-sarar instructs him, 'thousands, millions!' For the British Major he must wear schoolboy shorts; the court intrigues of Fatehpur require him to perform for the 'picturewallah', so that the Major may be blackmailed on the question of the Fatehpur succession. After all, the British too, value photographs as evidence.

In his next guise Pran Nath becomes the anonymous 'White Boy'; thus he saves his life in the aftermath of the Jalianwallah Bagh massacre. Transported to Bombay he is Pretty Bobby, the local pimp, and simultaneously, Chandra, the 'third son' of a missionary couple who has lost two boys to the trenches of the War in Europe. As Chandra he applies his inquiring mind to Latin and Logic, unknowingly preparing himself for his future in England. But he also attends the Home Rule meetings of the Theosophists. As Pretty Bobby he becomes rich, if somewhat 'confused by the unusually fluid moral outlook imposed on him by his work'. One night he befriends a lone drunken Englishman. When the man is murdered in a brawl Pretty Bobby pounces on his passport and daringly reinvents himself as Jonathan Bridgeman, 'emptied and reinhabited'. He takes another, longer journey, this time to England, on a steamer nostalgically called the *SS Loch Lomond*.

Life in England for Jonathan Birdgeman is middle-class. White, but always, in his own estimation, 'not quite', he prepares for Oxford entrance at Chopam Hall in Norfolk. On the last day of term he happens to glance at a School photograph of the class of 1893 to see,

gazing back at him, a respected member of the School cricket team, 'F.M.V. Bridgeman. Father of'. He does not notice the humbler picture of one R.A. Forrester, a face startlingly like the one that paradoxically caused both his birth and his exile.

Jonathan Bridgeman makes it to Barabbas College in Oxford to read history; the Classics, the University feels, are not for him. He becomes the typical Oxford undergraduate. Through all his varied activities Jonathan's watchword is convention. In a place where everyone is clamouring to be noticed, he is careful to clamour just enough to fit in. He has a conventional collision with a girl on a bicycle in St. Giles. He ends up besotted by the beautiful Astarte Chapel who plunges him back, through her anthropologist father, Professor Chapel, into the heart of darkness in the jungles of British West Africa! The thought always lingers in Jonathan Bridgeman's mind that he is called to blackness and savagery by his tainted blood.

Displacements and disjunctions mark Pran Nath's life in its various guises and disguises. Not for him the linear and progressive history of the English. The 'Bridgeman' of the diasporic novel replaces the early-renaissance Everyman, but with a difference – 'always, and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and fro, so that they may get to other banks. ... The bridge gathers as a passage that crosses' – to quote Homi Bhabha, our theorist of the marginalized man, quoting Heidegger. Or as Romesh Gunesekera, another fine Sri Lankan writer, says in his beautiful novel *Reef*: 'human history is always a story of someone's diaspora: a struggle between those who expel, repel or curtail – possess, divide and rule – and those who keep the flame alive from night to night'.

In an ironic twist Astarte Chapel marries the new Nawab of Fatehpur whom she meets in Paris.

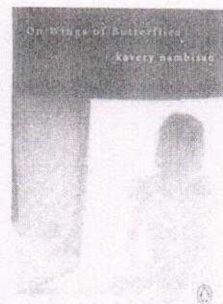
Kunzru's book is self-consciously inter-textual. Like Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* it is predicated on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Chapel, Professor of Anthropology, that arch-Orientalist discipline of Empire, the source of definitive studies of the 'natives' by the white man, feels trapped in Oxford; 'he begins to dream of escaping to a blank place, somewhere to which he was perfectly, blessedly indifferent! Africa! The Fotse! To his excitement Chapel finds, as he pours, Conrad-like, over a map of Africa, that nothing about the Fotse country reminds him of anything at all'. Jonathan decides that anthropology is the highest mark of civilization and joins Chapel's expedition. He believes that it will take him to the end of his journey. So he undertakes a journey upriver in West Africa, on a steamer, like Marlowe's in *Heart of Darkness*, also called the *Nelly*. The water gets shallower and more and more muddy, hour by hour, and soon it is unnavigable. Far from reaching the end of his journey, Pran Nath learns that the 'journey is everything. He has no thoughts of arriving anywhere. Tomorrow he will travel on – trudge up the gentle windward slopes of the dunes with his camel -- finally carrying the white man's burden'.

Kunzru writes a tragic novel, shot through with comic incidents that pull back from the brink of disaster. It is this fine blend, this light'n shade, that pulsates into the rhythms of life, people like Pran Nath, people of the margins, always on the move, forever on the threshold.■

Nalini Jain is Professor of English in Delhi University. The Novel of the Diaspora is one of her special interests.

Creating a Women's Uptopia

Nilanjana S. Roy



ON WINGS OF BUTTERFLIES
By Kavery Nambisan
Penguin India, Delhi, pp. 253, Rs. 200.00

Plenty of writers have tried to create utopias marked 'For Women', with varying degrees of success and discomfort. Amazonia, written about by both Walter Raleigh and John Mandeville, was one of the earliest paradigms. This empire of women did not tolerate free men, enticing gullible males over to fulfil their reproductory roles, after which the men were kept around as eunuchs or slaves, or killed.

Castora, created by Marie Anne de Roumier Robert, tolerates men within its precincts only for 24 hours and male babies not at all. Alali, created by Edgar Rice Burroughs, was the domain of giantesses who keep male babies penned up until they reach the age of 17 and then hunt them for sport. Babilary, which means To the Glory of Women, reverses the gender equation more benignly. In Abbe Desfontaines' imagination, the rulers of Babilary are women; the women are warriors, priests and writers; the men are not educated and their only job is to look good. Women have the right to divorce, though men don't; but men are allowed to serve on the Fashion Tribunal, where dress and hair styles are determined. *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places* (Alberto Manguel), from where this information is gleaned, goes on past the letters A,B and C all the way to Z, but these few instances will suffice to explain why the creation of a woman's utopia is so problematic. One of the few who tackles gender issues with sensitivity, imagination and a grasp of the practical problems involved is the science-fiction writer Ursula K Le Guin.

The task Kavery Nambisan sets herself with this novel—her fourth—is immense. To begin with, she poses a truly big question, a seductive what-if: "What if India's women came together and decided to be truly free to do as they liked, to hold a genuine revolution?" She's determined not to stop there, so the questions begin to pile up. Who are these women? Police officers, society women, politicians' wives, activists, Vrindavan widows, battered women, fashion victims, raped women, Nice Girls...everyone, basically, even a Rani. What are their objectives? That's simple: liberty, equality, sorority—everything, in fact, that fifty years of Independence hasn't delivered. Will they be able to stay united in the face of rumblings from men, internal power struggles, a multiplicity of agendas and the ultimate force of darkness, confe-rence fever? Maybe. What will they accomplish? Not just Nambisan but many of her characters will spend a large part of the book grappling with that one.

It would require the deftness of a Maupa-ssant with character, the ease of a Nabokov with plot, the erudition of a Virginia Woolf and the unsparing eye of a Flannery O'Connor to make this overambitious mish-mash work, and it's no surprise that Nambi-san falls short. Her characters can, by and large, be summed up in one line: Tara the tough cop pining for love; Elvira the idealist with a bad childhood; Megha Dasi, the widow who rebels; Lividia the bitter man-hater; Naveena, the victim of the beauty myth. The movement itself judders through the required stages of idealism, realism and surrealism to a point where the planned conference itself becomes the aim of the

The task Kavery Nambisan sets herself with this novel—her fourth—is immense. To begin with, she poses a truly big question, a seductive what-if: "What if India's women came together and decided to be truly free to do as they liked, to hold a genuine revolution?"

whole thing, instead of the starting point. And oddly enough, for a writer with three reasonably interesting books under her belt, the quality of Nambisan's writing sags, presumably under the weight of all that the book is meant to carry.

A good editor might have called Nambisan's attention to the many minor infelicities that mar this book. On page one, a character is described as having a "smile that was exquisite but sudden, like the snip of scissors"—sudden, perhaps, but what's exquisite about a scissor's snip? Megha Dasi recognizes her granddaughter in a phrase that is a parody of itself: "You are the lightning-touched daughter of my daughter!" If the whole novel was written in this vein, it would be explicable—but Nambisan is capable of setting down fine passages as well. A minor character, Dr. Manorama, is memorable for having programmed her computer to spit out perfect letters to friends and acquaintances by cleverly mixing and splicing the same set of 32 phrases. All we need to know of her is summed up in two smooth statements: "She hugged and clasped hands and lifted bewildered babies...Compassion was her duty." Another character's inability to cope with the constantly changing nature of Indian politics, with its ebb and flow of loyalties, is as neatly summarized: "In the most recent election campaign he had made news by canvassing for the Hand while wearing a Lotus on his khadi coat."

This unevenness carries over from the relatively minor issue of language to the relatively major issue of style.

On the Wings of Butterflies is ambitious and didactic: it requires a less free-flowing form than the usual novel. It never decides what it's going to be—allegory, fantasy, satire, spoof, straight narrative—and this is a fatal flaw. As the reader switches uneasily back and forth between realism with a few touches of magical realism, between humour and drama, between smooth sentences and terminally awkward prose, it's hard to engage with any of the issues this book attempts to address. We're carried, finally, not on the wings of butterflies, but on the far less stable wings of Icarus.■

Nilanjana S. Roy is a frelance critic based in Delhi.

Melding Motifs

Ranjana Kaul

THE COLOUR OF DAWN
By Janaki Murali
Harper Collins, Delhi, 2002, pp. 198, Rs. 195.00

The Colour of Dawn is a novel which attempts to blend history and fiction in its description of an obsessive love bordering on mania.The narrative moves briskly back and forth in time as it delineates the genesis and growth of the terrifyingly possessive though one sided relationship between Sita and her cousin Kunjan and the manner in which this destructive emotion impinges on the lives of the protagonists of the novel. In this tumultuous movement towards a denoument which appears increasingly inevitable though rather simplistic in its lack of complexity the story attempts to blend irony, drama and pathos as it 'deals with the dark morbid obsessions of a man who waits twenty-five years to take his revenge and a young couple, trying to bridge the chasm, who are caught in the vortex of his vengeance'.

The novel begins with the impending return of Sita's daughter from the U.S with her Pakistani husband. Ironically enough the news of Sanjana and Saif's marriage comes just a few days after India has set off its second nuclear explosion. This move in the game of nuclear one-upmanship against its neighbour inevitably leads to a prompt response from the other side making one feel as though 'the Indian and Pakistani teams had tied for the World Cup' The uncertainty and unease of her parents at Sanjana's arrival at this juncture is heightened by the general atmosphere of hostility and warlike posturing and is also in some mysterious way associated with a family feud which has evidently haunted Sita for many years. Her fears are soon realized as the phone rings and she once again confronts the familiar voice from the past which threatens to 'destroy everything that is yours, Sita, You will remember. Someday, you will. You will rue the day you said no to me.'

Having set the scene for a future confrontation the story moves back to the past and describes Sita's birth in her mother's village as well as the relationship between her parents giving a sensitive depiction of the spaces that can exist even in the closest of human relationships. The novel in fact derives its strength from its vivid depiction of the minutae of life in suburban Mumbai and in the Palghat village as well as from its ability to use a sparse and fast paced style to convey a sense of urgency and anticipation However, the author's attempts to place the main narrative strand within the context of contemporary events appears rather forced and unnecessary – the two motifs do not really meld each retaining a separate impetus which makes the references to historical events seem like an intrusion rather than an element integral to the impact of the story. Focusing on the rapid succession of events rather than on the fragile and turbulent inner spaces of Kunjan's mind the narrative conveys the intensity and menace of his obsession only at the cost of losing much of the depth and complexity which could have carried the novel beyond being merely a good read.■

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Editors

In Conversation

Lawrence Venuti, writer and critic, and Professor of English at Temple University, Philadelphia, is one of the most distinguished scholars of Translation Studies in modern times. His book, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995) has received international acclaim, and is on the essential reading list of students and scholars working in the field. His most recent books, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (1998) and *The Translation Studies Reader* (2000) have generated rigorous debate in scholarly circles. A prolific translator from Italian into English, Venuti strikes a delicate balance between theory and praxis in his works. M. Asaduddin talked to Venuti at the British Centre for Literary Translation, University of East Anglia in the first week of May, 2001. Excerpts from their conversation:

Asaduddin: What, according to you, is the role of translation in modern times?

Lawrence Venuti: A great deal of translation has obviously been done to facilitate communication. Yet translation has always done much more than communicate because it is not simply a linguistic practice but a cultural one as well. Translation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures while simultaneously constructing the subjectivities of its receptors. As a result, it can produce a wide range of social effects. It has served cultural, economic and political agendas. It has advanced colonial projects. It has been used for legal, religious, and educational purposes. Today the dominant role of translation may well be commercial. It is used to develop overseas workforces and markets – contracts, instruction manuals, software, advertisements, films, novels are all translated for such reasons. Perhaps the most important thing to realize is that no translation has ever been produced innocently: translation is fundamentally a rewriting of a foreign text according to the intelligibilities and interests of the receiving culture. Every act of translation is thus an appropriation of the foreign, a taking possession. Studying the ways in which the translator enacts and takes responsibility for that appropriation has been the focus of my work.

A: You deplore the current marginality of Translation Studies, that it doesn't have an independent disciplinary status in the academia and is mainly studied as an adjunct to other disciplines – Linguistics and Comparative Literature. Do you consider it a handicap?

LV: Translation has been marginalized in the academy because it is seen as hackwork, not on an equal footing with original composition, and therefore not as worthy of study and reward. This is a questionable attitude, especially in countries that are so dependent on translation because of the unequal relations between languages. I particularly have in mind the United States, where foreign language instruction is also marginal. Despite the debates surrounding so-called multiculturalism in the US, translation is not much taught or studied, even in disciplines that could not survive without it, such as Comparative Literature.

There can be no doubt that translation departments and faculties in countries like Spain and Italy, Turkey and China have been successful in training translators and translation scholars. Still, I am not sure whether complete *disciplinary* independence is entirely beneficial to translation. Effective translation requires such different kinds of knowledge that a confinement to one discipline may cut it off from vital resources in other disciplines. From the 1960s to the 1980s, for example, translation research and training were dominated by linguistics; this is still the case in many countries and in specific programmes. Yet the emphasis on linguistic analysis brought with it a prescriptivism (the entire yield of the analysis, it was too often assumed, should be reproduced in the translated text) while excluding the cultural and political issues raised by translation. Since the 1980s, with the rise of cultural studies, these issues have been increasingly addressed. Ideally, translation research and training should combine forms of linguistics with forms of cultural history and sociology.

A: Linguistics, of course, supplies empirical data to translators and Translation Studies...

LV: Indeed, but data are provided by other disciplines and methodologies as well, and these data may be much more decisive in solving translation problems. We should be most concerned with the extent to which a certain methodology includes or excludes other kinds of evidence. Linguistics-oriented translation scholars tend to prefer the construction of theoretical concepts and analytical tools to the exclusion of social and historical research. And the linguistics that has dominated translation studies, although it is quite diverse and includes not only systemic linguistics but various forms of pragmatics, generally has no contact at all with French discourse analysis or with Continental philosophy. My own work rests on various philosophical and political discourses – notably, Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism – and other forms of theoretical speculation, historical research, and textual analysis that they have stimulated.

A: Can the *skopos* theory propounded by Hans J. Vermeer adequately explain the objectives of translation?

LV: Skopos theory has a close relation to translational practice. It is goal-oriented: it is concerned with the commissioners and users of the translation. However, translation is not simply a professional practice; it is also a socially effective act of representation, and any kind of representation carries with it the notion of ethical responsibility. Vermeer talks about ethics but it is an ethics limited to good business practices, commerce-driven. Translation occupies such a crucial position in the global scheme of things that translators need to develop a more socially conscious ethics that does not stop with satisfying a client. They should know whose interests they serve in a particular social situation, what role their work plays in the global economy, what impact it might have on the environment.

A: Is it fair to assume that a translator can have control over these larger issues?

LV: Fair to whom? The translator, the translator's commissioner, the users of the translation? It is ultimately a question of choice and of basing that choice on critical considerations. We know that lawyers, for example, don't merely practice law but develop a philosophical and historical understanding of it through courses in jurisprudence. And they are bound by codes of professional ethics. Doctors observe codes of medical ethics which are under constant examination as new medical procedures and technologies influence the nature and consequences of their work. Why shouldn't translators, similarly, see their work in ethical terms, developing a critical awareness of its social impact? Of course a commissioner of a translation may not want this sort of approach. But shouldn't translators have a conscience even if their employers don't?

A: You are one of the few scholars who combine the theory and practice of translation, and this makes your work helpful to students and scholars alike. How are you able to maintain this balance?

LV: My work was always informed by a theory, but unconsciously, a set of assumptions uncritically absorbed from teachers. I would call the theory belletristic, impressionistic, focused on the production of fluent renderings that produce literary effects comparable to

those in the foreign text. My mentors included William Weaver, who translates from Italian into English. Italo Calvino's popularity in America was enhanced by Weaver's splendid translations of his fiction. Weaver is not a literary theorist or critic, but he has a refined literary sense.

I translated five books from Italian before I began thinking in explicitly theoretical terms about my work. And this happened when I began to read more widely in literary and cultural theory, in the philosophical and political discourses that underlie my translation research. This reading transformed my translational practice in a significant way, making it not just more self-critical and sophisticated, but more experimental and more writerly. I expanded my stylistic repertoire as a translator and varied dialects and registers according to linguistic differences in the foreign text, but also according to literary effects that I aimed to produce in English. Today I tend to devise projects that stretch my abilities as a translator, and that take me to new realms of speculation in my theoretical research.

A: So one can say that your theory emanates from your practice as a translator?

LV: Theory drives my practice and vice versa. Translation is full of chance discoveries, as every translator comes to learn. A theory provides a set of conceptual parameters within which problems can be formulated and solved.

Linking translation practices to theoretical concepts must not be seen as resulting in elitist translations, or translations that necessarily limit their audiences. I write for professional readers, academics or readers of elite or "high-brow" literature, but also for readers who do not have a theoretical or scholarly background, who read for pleasure, who take a more popular approach to their reading. Data available through on-line booksellers like amazon.com show that my experimental translations are being bought by readers who are also fans of John Grisham and Stephen King – even if none of my translations has ever become a bestseller. Because of the heterogeneous audience I imagine, I find it very important to write introductions to my translations that not only discuss the foreign text and its cultural situation, but that call attention to the act of translation. They aim to supply the literary and cultural context that is always lost in translation, the detachment of the foreign text from the traditions that gave it life. But they also make the translator's work visible by offering an opportunity to describe the discursive strategies applied in the translation.

A: Your book *Translator's Invisibility* (1995) has acquired a canonical status in Translation Studies. It engages critically and incisively with the dominant Anglo-American fluent tradition whereby translations masquerade as originals rendering the translator invisible. "Domestication" and "foreignization" have become the current buzzwords in translation. And the book has generated a lot of debate and criticism.

LV: The debates and criticisms provoked by my book have actually been gratifying to me because they show that it has drawn new attention to translators and their work. And that's precisely what I wanted to do. A reader's particular institutional and cultural site - as always - determines his or her response to the book, and because the readership has been so diverse, truly international, not every reader brings to it the kinds of theoretical assumptions and practical experiences that led me to write it. Inevitably, then, there have been misunderstandings, such as when critics regard the categories of domestication and foreignization as a strict binary opposition, laden with the essentialism associated with all binaries. My book makes it amply clear that these categories are not binary opposites, exclusive of each other, since they involve a slippage of meaning: I argue that all translation enacts a domestication of the foreign text, and translations that are foreignizing, that aim to signal the foreignness of that text, must do so primarily in the terms of the receiving culture and often to advance domestic cultural and political agendas. Thus, there is no necessary connection between fluency and domestication. A fluent translation can be foreignizing, as I show with the translations of Latin American fiction into English: a fluent strategy enabled these experimental narratives to alter the canon of foreign fiction in English, where fiction has always been dominated by realism. The application of such terms as domestication/ foreignization requires that the scholar develop a detailed historical context in which the translation can be analysed; the terms are relative, contingent on the specific historical moment in which the translation was produced and circulated.

A: In talking about Italian literature during your lectures at the BCLT, you mentioned that while some literatures are hospitable to translation, others are not. I may allude to two language-literatures of India like Hindi and Bengali. While Hindi has been very hospitable to translations from Bengali literature, Bengali has been the most parochial in this regard, although it boasts of one of the largest readerships in India, if not the largest.

LV: Interlingual rivalries do exist in multilingual countries where a vernacular nationalism may be brought into play to perpetuate a linguistic hegemony in favour of some literatures to the detriment of others. What happens in India may well be attributable to some kind of chauvinism - regional or linguistic - that is historically determined. A refusal of translation may be motivated by an effort to promote a linguistic purity, since translation always traffics with linguistic and cultural differences, or to encourage native literary production.

A: The writing on the flap of your recent work, *The Scandals of Translation* claims: '*The Scandals of Translation* explores the anxious relationships between translation and the institutions that at once need it and marginalize it.' Could you elaborate on these relationships?

LV: The book demonstrates how translation has frequently been stigmatized as a writing practice when it is nonetheless clear that so many social and cultural institutions depend on it. To examine this contradictory situation, I considered the relationships between translation and a number of key categories and practices: authorship, copyright law, the formation of cultural identities, the pedagogy of literature, the academic disciplines of philosophy and translation studies, the phenomenon of globalization including colonial ventures. I was able to show that translation constituted a blind spot in these areas, exposed contradictions in them, or represented a practice where their agendas were at once advanced and foiled.

Copyright law, for example, was initially designed to foster creative production by assigning control of the text to the author. And in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it also encouraged translations by viewing them as relatively autonomous works that did not infringe the copyright held by the author of the foreign text. Yet today copyright law defines translation unfavourably by giving the foreign author complete control over the translation and thereby removing any incentive for the translator to develop projects without first receiving a commission from a publisher who has purchased translation rights from the foreign author. At the same time, copyright law allows the translator to copyright the translation in his or her name, acknowledging the fact that the translation too can be considered a work of authorship. I was interested in using the contradictory legal status of translation to articulate precisely what kind of derivative or second-order authorship obtains in translation.

A: In your recent works you seem to be drawing quite a bit on Jean-Jacques Lecercle's theory of the 'linguistic remainder'. Could you explain how central the concept is to your reflections on translation?

LV: My work has aimed not only to be polemical and thereby to draw attention to the translator's situation and the practice of translation, but also to formulate theoretical concepts and discursive strategies to study and practice translation. From this standpoint, the

concept of the "remainder" is essential. A central concern in Translation Studies is to examine what distinguishes a translation from the foreign text and from texts originally written in the translating language. A translation has long been defined negatively, as losing features of the foreign text, and so we know much less about what a translation gains. I have adapted the concept of the "remainder" (with Lecercle's approval) in order to investigate the linguistic and cultural gains that always occur in translation. In 1958 the Canadian linguists Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet did some pioneering work in this area by studying French-English translation methods with the help of comparative stylistics. The "remainder" goes much further, however, by revealing how specific lexical and syntactical choices in translation, even when the translator maintains a semantic equivalence, nonetheless exceed the communication of the foreign text and produce effects that work only in the translating culture. The "remainder" is a useful analytical tool, but it is also a means for making translators aware of the subtly transformative power of their writing.

A: Your latest book, *The Translation Studies Reader* (2000) has proved greatly helpful to students of Translation Studies, and your introductory essay to each section provides an excellent context in which the articles written by translation theorists through the century are to be read. Would you like to single out some landmarks in Translation Studies in terms of books, essays, thinkers on the subject?

LV: I can point to three "landmarks" that have not only been widely influential, but crucial for my own work. The first is Friedrich Schleiermacher, an important figure in the German translation tradition from Goethe to Walter Benjamin, whose 1813 lecture on different translation methods theorized the concept of foreignization. The German tradition is especially important because it represents an alternative to the Anglo-American and French traditions which have long favoured assimilation, domestication. The German tradition is philosophical, speculative; it assumes a concept of language as not simply representing reality, but constructing it. This concept establishes the peculiar autonomy of translations – they are not transparent windows onto foreign texts, but partial interpretations – enabling them to be described and judged in their own terms. In this line of thinking I would also put the incisive work of Henri Meschonnic and Antoine Berman who, although French, learned much from the German tradition. Berman revived Schleiermacher in order to theorize an ethics and politics of translation.

The second landmark is the work of the early twentieth-century American poet Ezra Pound. Although Pound was not a philosopher, his translations were undoubtedly written on the basis of sophisticated concepts of language and literature. Pound demonstrates the importance of expanding the translator's stylistic repertoire, the range of linguistic options available, so as to reproduce distinctive effects in the foreign text. Since those options often deviated from the current standard dialect of English, Pound was in effect foreignizing his translations, making them signal a sense of linguistic and cultural difference, even a historical distance.

The third landmark is polysystems theory, developed for translation studies in the 1970s and 1980s by Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury. This theory derives from Czech and Russian Formalism and focuses on the place of the translated text in the literary "system" of the "target" or receiving culture. By shifting the emphasis away from the relationship between the translation and the foreign text, polysystems theory defines the translation as an object of study and seeks to infer the cultural "norms" that figured into its production. It is only by tampering with such norms, whether traditional or contemporary or both, that a translator can hope to foreignize a translation.

A: How important is gender in translation? We are aware of the views of Sherry Simon, Gayatri Spivak, and other feminist theorists of translation.

LV: Translation can be inflected by many different ideological determinations, race and class, ethnicity and nation, sexuality and, yes, gender. I have done some work on the gender identity of the translator in the Pound tradition. In translating the thirteenth-century Italian love poet Guido Cavalcanti, Pound constructed a masculinist identity for himself by working against his Victorian rival, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, supplying the "robustness" that he said Rossetti had missed. So, here we have the spectacle of two men locked in an Oedipal rivalry over the representation of a woman in the Italian texts. Feminists, meanwhile, have developed various strategies to combat patriarchal ideologies through translation. Perhaps the most important consideration here is that gender identity, like all forms of human identity, is constructed in culture and history, not biologically determined, and therefore it can change in different cultural situations and historical moments. The translator motivated by feminist ideologies must assess the gender identities current in specific situations and moments and then devise translation strategies and projects to challenge these identity formations where they seem repressive or exclusionary or opposed to an emancipatory political agenda.

A: How do you look at the phenomenon of translations supplanting their originals? Let me give you two examples from India. In 1940 Ahmad Ali published a novel, *Twilight in Delhi* in a kind of stilted Victorian English. It is about the loss of glory of a feudal Muslim family in Delhi in the early years of the twentieth century. When the writer's wife translated it into Urdu, the language seemed to the Urdu reader much more natural and fluent than the original. For them the Urdu translation took the place of the original. The other example pertains to Vikram Seth's roller-coaster novel, *A Suitable Boy*. When it was translated into Hindi (by Gopal Gandhi, 1997), Harish Trivedi reviewed the translation for *The Book Review*. I remember he gave it the title, 'Translation as Recovery". Trivedi's point was - the Hindi translation scored over the original through reinscription of the cultural details merely glossed over in the English original. So, for the Hindi reader at least, it seems to acquire the status of the original.

LV: This is one of the conundrums of translation. Translation always displaces the foreign text - or comes, in fact, to be that text - for readers who do not have access to it, who cannot read the foreign language. Your examples, however, point in a different direction, since a significant portion of the readerships for the translations know both the foreign and translating languages. In particular, I am struck by the fact that the translations clearly exceeded the foreign texts, or did something to them, as it were, showed where the "stilted Victorian English" was unfamiliar or where the Hindi "cultural details [were] glossed over." The translations, then, were truly interrogative in exposing the limitations - for certain audiences - of the English-language texts, texts in the colonial language. Perhaps we should take these translations as exemplifying possible strategies open to the postcolonial translator. Or perhaps in postcolonial situations translations from the colonial into indigenous languages always result in an interrogative displacement of the colonial-language text.

A: How does one translate the localized dialect of a small group in English? In addition to the large number of dialects and a whole range of colloquialisms, in India we have the emergent literature by the dalits, and tribal literatures that use dialects or a kind of argot spoken by a small group of people. While translating should one nomalize/homogenize it, or endeavour to find a corresponding register in American or British English? None of the alternatives seems satisfactory.

LV: Dialect poses a very difficult translation problem because not all dialects are equal, not only in the sense that they fall into different categories - some are regional, some social, some ethnic or racial - but also in the sense that they carry different cultural and social values. Although it is important to give the

reader some sense of the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, how the translator will do it in such cases depends on his or her knowledge, resourcefulness, and sheer inventive power. In deciding on strategies, genre and audience are essential considerations.

Sometimes a translator will have to invent neologisms to come to grips with a particular dialect. The example of Juan Gabriel Lopez Guix, a Spanish translator based in Barcelona, comes to mind. He has translated two of Tom Wolfe's novels into Spanish, including the latest, *A Man in Full.* This novel is a translator's nightmare: it uses a wide range of American dialects—northeastern, southern, African-American. Guix was translating it into Spanish, so he couldn't have resorted to regional Hispanic languages, using Catalan, for example, for an African-American or Gallician for a northerner. These are different languages, not dialects, and although they are spoken in regions of Spain, they are not understood by every Spanish reader. Moreover, linking them to particular characters would inevitably carry unwanted value judgments that might be offensive to speakers of those languages, especially in the case of a satiric novel like Wolfe's. Guix's solution was brilliantly inventive and very effective: he introduced lexical and syntactical variations into his Spanish in order to signal the dialectal shifts. It's a great achievement, and his translation remains readable: it became a bestseller in Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries.

A: Do we have a standard norm for reviewing translated books? Often reviewers ignore the fact that they are reviewing a translated work.

LV: Yes, they certainly do ignore it, simply because reviewing a work of translation is much more challenging, and reviewers may have no access to the foreign text. In my view, more translators should be reviewing translations. But no standard exists. As a reviewer of translations, I try to provide a context for the reader, not merely by summarizing the plot or describing the theme, but by linking the book to others in the foreign language and giving some sense of its reception in its own culture. Perhaps most importantly, I try to comment as specifically as possible on the translation, on any distinctive strategies used by the translator, on particular problems posed by the foreign text. When I review for a periodical like *The New York Times Book Review*, I am often allowed no more than a brief paragraph at the end to discuss the translation. But this can be enough. I try to pick a few striking examples that will draw attention to the quality of the translator's choices.

Sometimes, when reviewers ignore the fact that they are reviewing a translation, translators take this silence as a compliment: it means that the reviewers discovered no errors or awkward writing, features of translations that usually receive mention in reviews when the translation is noticed at all. Reviewers, however, must get out of the habit of commenting on the language of translation as if they were commenting on the language of the foreign text. Such comments collapse the translator's work into that of the foreign author, and this can serve only to maintain the invisibility and marginality that translators worldwide suffer today.■

M. Asaduddin teaches English Literature and Translation Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi. His latest book of translation from, *Lifting the Veil: Selected Writings of Ismat Chughtai* (Penguin) has been adjudged a bestseller in the surveys conducted by *India Today* (December 3, 2001) and *Financial Express*.

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Economics

Water for Pabolee: Stories about people and development in the Himalayas is the story of a community's struggle for quality of life for themselves and the environment which shelters them.
Orient Longman, 2001, pp. 240, Rs. 450.00

Fiction

Outcast: Four Stories by Mahasweta Devi, translated by Sarmistha Dutta Gupta is the life story of four women from the most marginalized sections of society.
Seagull, 2002, pp. 114, Rs. 275.00

The Book of the Hunter by Mahasweta Devi translated by Sagaree and Mandira Sengupta is a novel set in sixteenth century medieval Bengal draws on the life of the great medieval poet Kabikankan Mukundaram Chakrabarti.
Seagull Books, Calcutta, pp. 138, Rs. 325.00

Gender Studies

Women in Post-Independence Sri Lanka edited by Swarna Jayaweera reviews the different paths Sri Lankan women have taken to achieve political and economic empowerment and control over their lives.
Sage Publications, 2002, pp. 371, Rs. 350.00

Gender, Caste and Religious Identities: Restructuring Class in Colonial Punjab by Anshu Malhotra deals with the problem of women's relationship to the concepts of caste and religiosity in the context of the reformist imagination of the period.
Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 231, Rs. 545.00

De-eroticizing Assault: Essays on Modesty, Honour and Power by Kalpana Kannabiran and Vasanth Kannabiran presents fresh insights on the linkages among gender, culture and politics.
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Roli Books, 2002, pp. 352, Rs. 395.00

Interpreting Islam edited by Hastings Donnan documents the diversity and richness of contemporary knowledge about Islam and Muslim society.
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The Political Language of Islam by Bernard Lewis probes literary and historical sources to trace the development of Islamic political language from the time of the prophet to the present.
Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2002, pp. 168, Rs. 395.00

State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan: Documents and Essays edited by Irfan Habib is a supplement to *Confronting Colonialism: Resistance and Modernization under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan (1999)*.
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Secularisation of Indian Mind by V. Indira Devi seeks to explore what constitutes secularism and how it operates in India.
Rawat, 2002, pp. 314, Rs. 550.00

Human Rights

Human Rights: Theory & Practice edited by Debi Chatterjee, Sucheta Ghosh and Sunita Sen consists of 21 articles on a very topical theme.
South Asian Publishers, 2002, pp. 245, Rs. 450.00

Roberto Calasso: A Brief Profile

Arjun Mahey

Stories never live alone; they are the branches of a family that we have to trace back, and forward.
The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony, 1993

Roberto Calasso, publisher of the Italian Adelphi Edizioni, appeared suddenly on the stage of the English literary establishment like a magician in full command of his repertoire. One moment he was unmentioned in the Dramatis Personae; the next he was onstage with *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* (1993) which displayed a magnificent and original literary strength by animating a sluggish antiquity with dazzling passion. More: he was at centre-stage, not a bit player: the unquestioned maestro. Commentators across the Anglicized globe tripped over each other to exalt his work: *The New York Times Book Review* considered it "brilliant, dazzling", and novelists like John Banville, historians like Simon Schama, even the poet Joseph Brodsky praised it generously. Gore Vidal thought it "A perfect work, like no other." It was, inevitably, a bestseller, an unlikely fate for a work that seemed to correspond to no known genre, and was an erudite commentary upon the classical Greek world. The author, an Italian publisher, a profound autodidact, seemed an equally unlikely author.

As a matter of fact Calasso had published several books already. *Marriage*, for instance, had been published first by his own press in 1988 and his recent fame was merely a consequence of his first appearance in English. His audience grew accordingly. When a translation of a second work, *The Ruin of Kasch*—possibly his finest piece in English thus far—was published a year later by Belknap/ Harvard, and lauded by fellow-writer Italo Calvino in majestic terms, Calasso's eminence was given a foundation: this was no one-trick magician but an authentic wizard who had come to stay. As he has.

The Ruin of Kasch (1994) suggests a series of allegorical points: that antiquity created order through the ritual of sacrifice (best encapsulated in the abhishekha sacrifice of the Rg-Veda); that the modern, state-driven police-apparatus which desires law and order without sacrifice is foreordained to shed blood which the invisible gods will always exact; that we ignore the gods at our own peril. This is nowhere stated, only suggested, but it is a thin wire that hums through all of Calasso's writing: a world without gods is doomed to live by their rules even while it renders them invisible; that the gods are neither dead nor truly invisible, merely ignored, but that they are necessary, even inevitable presences in the world of humans to whom nothing is given without the requisite forfeit. The man who (allegorically) straddles the cusp of antiquity's death and modernity's birth is Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, traitor to the Ancien Régime, distastefully necessary to the New Order, loathed by the one, feared by the other, despised by both. It would be too easy to call him a villain, and too unjust; he was an inevitable marker, an instrument in banishing the gods to the realm of invisibility: the last ancient, the first modern; the prototype of the International Diplomat.

Kasch was followed some years later, in 1998, by *Ka* (the Sanskrit interrogative pronoun ka, Who? The Hindi equivalent would be Kaun?) to a cooler response. It did for ancient India what *Marriage* had done for Greek antiquity, and since most people outside India were unfamiliar with these myths, its only (crucial) eulogy came from the Sanskrit Indologist, Wendy Doniger who teaches Hinduism at the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, who called it the best introductory book on Hindu Mythology ever written by a European; high praise indeed. In India the hard-back edition of the book was devoured off the shelves of bookshops, but the paperback version remained (and remains) unbought, largely because readers were expecting a European Rajagopalachari, only to fall back defeated after the first few pages where ancient India, de-fanged of its modernist vapidity, was rendered as unfamiliar and strange to them as, let's say, the Finnish Kalevala. This was an India they did not know; patently, this was not a bedside book. Calasso's books are invariably estranging; they dismantle the familiar into the oblique.

Two other books have followed since: *Literature and the Gods* (2001), a slender volume of essays based on the Weidenfeld Lectures at Oxford delivered by Calasso a year earlier; and *The Forty-Nine Steps* (also 2001) which refers to the Talmudic prescription that there are forty-nine steps to meaning in every passage in the Torah. Compared to the earlier works both these are slighter in ambition, and are sometimes transparent since they reiterate —via examples from recent modernity—the author's insistence on the presence of the gods, this time in French and German writers. It needs mention, however, that the publication of his books in English give a false sense of their chronology; in the original Italian, for instance, *The Forty-Nine Steps* (1991) predates *Ka* (1996) though it was translated later. And to furnish credit where it is due, it is vital to add that Calasso has been well served by his translators: the novelist Tim Parks; the indefatigable William Weaver (who also gave us *The Name of the Rose*); John Shepley, translator of Pasolini; and Stephen Sartarelli. No doubt there will be others in the future.

What kind of books does Calasso write, if "book" is quite the right word? Emerging from an imagination that encapsulates, for instance, both the *Satapatha Brahmana* and *Theodor Adorno* (both in their original languages) they seems intractable to simple analysis. *Literature and the Gods* for instance is called Literary Criticism by the publishers, which is wholly inadequate to its thematics. Clearly Calasso is not a novelist, and is a historian only in the sense that he picks out certain episodes from the past and uses them as either commentary or quotation. A commentator? Too derisory. An analyst? Too simple. A fabulist? Not enough covert morality. The *TLS* found one book "an inexhaustible mine of episodes": a sign of portentous bewilderment; and the *New Yorker*—more American, less wary—called it a "chaotic...assemblage" "like an explosion carrying sky-high the wreckage of a city." Even Calvino called it "wandering and vagrant", and Pascal Bruckner in *Le Figaro* tried vainly to attempt a categorical move:

> Roberto Calasso has perhaps inaugurated a new literary category: the hybrid book, uniting history and novel, tale and aphorism, fable and reflection...

In brief, everyone seemed trounced.The fact of the matter is that Calasso's books are, in crucial ways, modelled on genres that are no longer with us. His authentic intellectual masters are the philosophe Encyclopedists of the late Enlightenment; Diderot or Voltaire or William Jones: intellectual cartographers of a new world, minds seasoned in Greek and Latin classics, re-fashioned to order thoughts with neo-classical brevity, dominating the new knowledge now within their reach by heaving the past out of its inert pastness and making it a vivid and crucial component of the contemporary. The past, for these men of immense learning and wit, is not dead; it's not even certain that it is past. It seeps into, transforms, even commands the present out of modern chaos. This may explain why Calasso, for all his romantic thematics, is clearly a mannerist writer; a master of the baroque, that is, of a style meticulously and transparently aware of its own stylistic gambits. In the manner of all baroque writers he is witty, epigrammatic, learned, playful, carefully attentive to limitations. It is no accident that his titles carry intimations of social measure (marriages, steps, ruins) or that his books appear (any book, any page) like watchfully contrived collages. No accident, either, that his only two intellectual counterparts in contemporary letters are of similar cast, though dissimilar romanticisms: the philosophic, anecdotal, epigrammatic W.G.Sebald and the fatalist E.B.Cioran. These two— though otherwise dissimilar, like Calasso, the third—are men whose erudition and wit shimmers on the

surface, and whose sensibilities are forged within an Enlightenment furnace which is European rather than English in susceptibility, and whose intellectual dominion is the overwhelming and enriching currency of the past. They are, in short, votaries of that rare literary fellowship: the intellectual visionaries.

Nor is it any past that interests Calasso. If the *Satapatha Brahmana* and *Adorno* need to be clarified there is a really very clean, even simple explanation: Calasso, like his 18th century forbears, is a European with one foot in ancient Greece and another in India (not China): that is to say, the provenance of the past is not Europe but Indo-Europe. The book on India (*Ka*) and its echoes through *Kasch* and *Gods* is by no means a craving for exotica, a littérateur's hippie eccentricity; India, for Calasso, is the apotheosis of divine presence in antiquity (as was Greece); and modern Europe, its negative template, is the apotheosis of the etherization of the gods after the demise of the Ancien Régime. India and Europe are of a piece; a truism that linguists and E.B.Cioran would perceive as simple common sense. This is why Calvino's otherwise shrewd judgement is blighted when he says that *Kasch* is about "everything". It is not. The larger part of the globe has no reckoning in this foundation: Africa, Russia, the fecund Middle, Central and Far Easts, Australia, both the Americas, China, Japan, all these are wholly absent unless as small exemplary offshoots of the Indo-European world.

Stylistically Calasso's precursors are even older: essayists like Montaigne and Bacon, even Erasmus, whose books are not so much presentations of theses as ruminations on the Eternal Verities and their consanguinities with the present: they are—for want of a simpler phrase—meditative essayings. Calasso's natural habitat is learned reflection, the meditation, in its early modern ("Renaissance") sense. His stories (in *Marriage* and *Ka*) are quite as much fodder for essaying out in search of the present in its ancient lineaments as they are about storytelling. This is why *Ka* bewilders most Indian readers; it is the blend of one kind of structure, another kind of style, and a third kind of story, assembled primarily for the sake of musing through the enchanted and solitary world of ideas within stories. It is easy enough to see why the *TLS* and the *New Yorker* and *Le Figaro* were so baffled. They were looking for familiar markers within the stalwart contemporary categories of Fiction/Non-Fiction, both of which stand defeated by earlier, less circumscribed (now extinct) forms of writing. Authentic literary necromancy is unheard of in recent times.

Several consequences follow. For one, Calasso is a demanding writer. His books need vigilance and care because (as becomes apparent) a considerable amount of both has gone into assembling them. Not only is he an un-casual read, but he can come across as tendentious or dull or pretentious or blithe, depending upon your point of view, though his core group of steadfast admirers seem less like readers and more like followers: acolytes of a sacred text in a world maddened by secular illusions. For another, he can be read only in small doses; not only because his writing is dense and allusive, but also because he inflames the reader's thoughts in response, thoughts which are a pleasure to follow and tease out. (Calasso needs to be savoured slowly and repeatedly; he does not reveal himself at a first reading, however scrupulous the reader.) For a third, although often mysterious (when out of context), he is eminently quotable, the bon-mot observer par excellence: "The nobility of the Talleyrand-Périgord is not a nobility of the spirit, nor is it attracted by the spirit. It is a biological nobility, which does not allow itself to be explained or justified."(*Kasch*) "There is a misunderstanding between hero and princess that will go on and on repeating itself in relationships between men and women, at least for as long as the man thinks of himself as the hero and the woman as the princess, which is to say almost always." (*Marriage*) "The beginning: something not to be found in nature." "The obligation not to wound the living (and everything is living), the obligation toward the truth: the two were pronounced together, and ahimsa came before satya, as if getting to the bottom of the one word one discovered the other." (*Ka*). A few minor examples, these, but the books themselves are riddled with and by such observations, dissolved from concrete and fabulous situations.

Such is Roberto Calasso, and such is his English oeuvre. W.G. Sebald and E.B. Cioran are, sadly, neither of them with us any more: the former died a few months ago—prematurely—in a car accident. But Calasso is, fortunately, still among us, and we can expect more from him in the future—perhaps in the same moulds, perhaps in refashioned ones. Even more fortunately, some parts of his Italian works have not yet been translated into English, which will doubtless appear in due course. At any rate, this is not the last we shall get from him, and perhaps—if we are fortunate—he has yet to glimpse his zenith. Certainly he is at the peak of his powers. There is, without doubt, more to come.■

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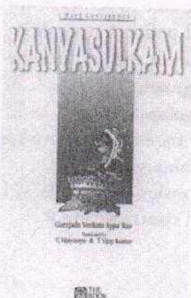

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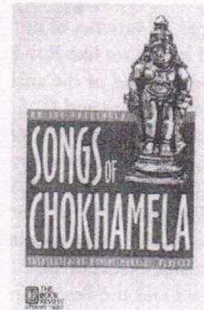

Double-faced Monster

Sarvar V. Sherry Chand

RECLAIMING IDENTITY: REALIST THEORY AND THE PREDICAMENT OF POSTMODERNISM
Edited by Paula M. L. Moya and Michael R. Hames-Garcia
Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 2001, pp. 354, Rs. 240.00

In the aftermath of what has been happening in Gujarat over the past months, it may seem that identity of any kind is best left unreclaimed. For, this blood-bath, like a lot of others, has been propelled by the urge to assert homogeneous identities—even if the underlying motives are economic. And yet, identity, this double-faced monster of a concept will not just go away if, in postmodernist fashion, we bury our heads in the academic sand. Identity, it appears, is something we cannot live with and cannot live without.

The crucial value of this book lies in its attempt to theorize these contradictions on the basis of practice without being either blindly identitarian or throwing the concept of identity overboard. It sets out to clarify when, why, how and which identities become empowering, and to distinguish these from processes that lead identity claims to turn into holocausts.

The contributors to this volume have developed an ongoing dialogue with, and critique of, various forms of postmodernist theorizing which have dealt with the concept of identity by throwing out the ethical baby with the homogenizing bathwater. These essays recover a base of ethical universalism upon which to negotiate identity differences. It is this ethical base that also provides the ground for identity critique as distinct from the postmodern tendency to equate marginality *per se* with value or virtue.

The essays thus, collectively, seek to steer a middle course. On one side lies good old-fashioned foundationalist positivism (which would see identity as an eternally given 'essence' defining a human being). On the other lie postmodernist contentions that because identity is embedded in language and is culturally constructed, it has no reality at all, and that identity politics, therefore, amounts to jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. The collection develops an epistemology deriving from a combination of elements of postpositivism originating in the work of Karl Popper, of varieties of critical realism developed by figures like Roy Bhaskar and Habermas and of the analytical philosophy of Quine, Putnam and C. S. Peirce. It therefore makes for what may be called a critical-postpositivist-realist approach to the concept and problem of identity.

The ground for all the essays is laid out by Satya P. Mohanty's opening piece 'The Epistemic Status of Cultural Identity: On *Beloved* and the Postcolonial Condition' excerpted from Mohanty's book *Literary Theory and the Claims of History*. He highlights the objectivity and epistemic value of experience and social location and uses these along with feminist standpoint theory to develop a cogent theory of identity, its development and change, the compatibility of certain forms of identity politics with moral universalism, and modes of distinguishing between identity claims, He demonstrates his theory with an analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Naomi Scheman's example of Alice, a woman in a consciousness-raising group.

However, it is Paula Moya's essay 'Postmodernism, "Realism" and the Politics of Identity' which states in simple, no-nonsense fashion the characteristics of the stance that postpositivist realism takes. It, therefore, bears extensive quotation at this juncture. "The first claim of a postpositivist realist theory of identity is that the different social categories (such as gender, race...) that together constitute an individual's social location are causally related to the experiences she will have." The second claim is "that an individual's experiences will influence, but not entirely determine, the formation of her cultural identity." Thirdly, "there is a cognitive component to identity that allows for the possibility of error and accuracy in interpreting things that happen to us. It is a feature of theoretically mediated experience that one person's understanding of the same situation may undergo revision over the course of time, thus rendering her subsequent interpretations of that situation more or less accurate." The next claim is that "some identities, because they can more adequately account for the social categories constituting an individual's social location, have greater epistemic value..." Fifthly, "our ability to understand fundamental aspects of our world will depend on our ability to acknowledge and understand the social, political, economic and epistemic consequences of our own social location." Finally, "oppositional struggle is fundamental to our ability to understand the world more accurately ... because the well-being (and sometimes even the survival) of the groups or individuals who engage in oppositional struggle depends on their ability to ... dismantle dominant ideologies and institutions, their vision is usually more critical, their efforts more diligent and their statements more comprehensive than those of individuals or groups whose well-being is predicated on the maintenance of the status quo" (pp. 81-86). The purpose of Moya's essay is to retrieve the career and ideas of the Chicana feminist Cherrie Moraga from the postmodernist appropriations of feminists like Donna Haraway and Judith Butler.

These two essays along with the third, '"Who are Our Own People?"' by Michael R. Hames-Garcia, make up the first block which does a theoretical ground-laying job. This third essay uses realist theory to explore the nature of multiple and group identities to show how it permits an expansive understanding of who one's "own people" are.

The second block of three essays explores the nature of the objectivity available to a postpositivist realist view of identity. Caroline Hau focuses on the role of the intellectual in contributing theoretically to social and political transformation, especially on the problem of 'speaking for' others and the usefulness of error for continuous learning. This is followed by Minh T. Nguyen's piece on the work of the Japanese-Canadian novelist Joy Kogawa. It explores the epistemic causal connections between experience, knowledge and values. The next essay by Amie A. Macdonald demonstrates the value, for people of colour, of self-segregation in programme housing on white American university campuses.

The last block of four essays is structured around concerns of agency and experience. It includes an unusual essay that reads the gay experience of 'coming out' as transformation of identity; and a very timely one on the notion of experience in history writing.

Although the subjects on which the individual essays focus are extremely varied, the volume as a whole embodies, in some sense, the concerns which the individual contributors voice and Paula Moya outlines in her lucid introduction. The contributors form a 'people of color' group manifestly expressing solidarity through mutual acknowledgement of each other's work. This does have the tendency to turn into more of an orchestrated choir than an internal dialogue (as Moya claims). It also makes for some tedium if the volume has to be read at a stretch, since each author resorts to a virtual summary of Satya Mohanty's piece and some version, more or less truncated, of the postpositivist realist stance quoted above.

This, however, is offset by the great general lucidity of style in the presentation of an extremely important and complex epistemological perspective that is able to retrieve the possibility of meaningful political struggle from postmodernist paralysis without becoming programmatic or dogmatic. The shade of Paulo Freire haunts the volume, though he is not mentioned much by name, as the essays in this volume expand the binary nature of Freire's structure of oppression to grapple with multiplicity and internal contradiction.■

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The Globalization of Language and the Language of Globalization

Ashok R. Kelkar

The Globalization of Language:
The recent launching of globalization took place in trade and industry, but the process is gradually spreading to other fields of life. Language is no exception to this. The words *cinema, bank, railway, football, renaissance, glasnost, satyagraha* have gained world currency and so have the concepts underlying words like bureaucracy, brainwashing, freedom of expression, or globalization which often appear in certain languages in a translated form. Not only are certain words like these global, languages too can become global. French, English, Spanish were the earliest world languages; the United Nations added Chinese and Russian to this list. In the course of time one may also see the adition of Arabic, Hindi, or perhaps Japanese. (Limiting oneself to the field of scholarship and research, one may have to add German, Sanskrit, Classical Greek, and Latin.)

It is obvious that among these world languages English has the pride of place. There was a time when, for the convenience of tourists, they used to put up signs saying *Ici on parle Français*, then came signs saying 'English is spoken here', now even the sign has become unnecessary. True, English has had to pay some price for this position. Speakers of other languages may be grateful for the fact that English gets written in an easy to master Roman script or that it is free from the gender confusion of the sort found in French, Spanish, or Russian, but then they also curse English for its spelling whose craziness is matched only by French. At the time of my first visit to the United States in 1956, the lady customs officer heaved a sigh of relief on listening to my English, saying: 'Yes, our language has certainly became global, but we have to reconcile ourselves to hearing it murdered all the time! It was nice to hear your good English'.

Curses and murderous assaults apart, more seriously, English has had to throw its doors open to words and phrases borrowed from other languages. The borrowings may be direct (like *typhoon* from Chinese) or indirect by way of translation (like the Chinese idiom *brain-washing*). (The French have become wise after the event.) Secondly, an English speaker has to bend or adapt the language in dealing with the foreigner: whether it is by accepting his common errors into the language or by oversimplifying his language for the foreigner's benefit or by leaving aside expressions overly tied with English-speaking culture or by respecting the habits and sentiments of the foreigner (thus, billion being 10^9 now rather than 10^{12}, speaking of developing economies rather than underdeveloped economies, substituting Moslem or Muslim for Mahomedan or Mohammedan).

What happens to English also happens to any other language aspiring to the status of a contact language though perhaps less drastically so. Hindi as the all-India contact language or standard Marathi as the all-Maharashtra contact language are no exceptions. As the contact language of scholarship, Sanskrit has been subjected to attempts at 'simplification'. Globalization is something that affects more or less any regional contact language no less than any global language.

Any society calling itself modern needs to offer diversified, plentiful, and good-quality foreign-language-learning facilities. That is the highway to freedom from the confining walls of language. Some years ago there were attempts at Pune, Ujjain and elsewhere at the initiative of Professors Dayakrishna and M.P. Rege to bring about a dialogue with the help of interpreters between traditionally educated Sanskrit Pandits and university-educated scholars. The participants from both sides benefited from this exercise. Both sides expressed satisisfaction at the access to novel areas of knowledge and, what is more, novel modes of thought. Higher language-proficiency may also free us from the excessive and exclusive glorification of the visual image or the tuneful sound by the media. Pictures certainly add value to books and periodicals, but skimming through pictures alone to the exclusion of reading them is getting walled in by pictures.

Adapting one's language to communicate with foreigners or to meet the needs of the mass media is fine, but this is going to narrow the distance between the flow of everyday speech and the graceful elegance of literary writing. Once the importance of disseminating ideas is accepted, the demand for making the language easy to follow cannot be resisted. But then the complicated world of today will often call for complicated thoughts to do justice to it, and so the ordinary person's linguistic capacity in following a thought needs to be enhanced to some extent. (Is any educationist listening?) Simplicity of presentation is by no means an excuse for oversimplification of the ideas. Any plan for beneficial globalization will demand that no society lag behind in the intellectual race. The intellectuals in a society shouldn't be content with thinking complicated thoughts; they owe it to themselves to make these thoughts accessible to the ordinary people to the extent feasible. They cannot shirk the responsibility of acquiring for this purpose the needed competence in handling language.

The process of globalization incorporates two opposed trends. One is the trend of centralization; for example, the world over weights and measures be metric, the rule of the road be right (or left), the keyboard for the Roman script be uniform (the QWERTY arrangement for English, for instance), e-mail addressing be settled at one place, the quality control specifications be fixed by the International Standards Organization (ISO), and so forth. The other is the trend of decentralization, for example, goods be marketed in the world in accordance with local needs and habits, accepting the Roman script need not mean accepting some uniform calligraphic style but, rather, offering a choice between different calligraphic styles. One needs to effect an advantageous combination of the two. Letting either trend dominate to the exclusion of the other can be ruinous.

The globalization of language is also subject to these considerations. Centralizing demands that everybody learn at least some functional English, decentralizing that the English used at the world level open to variation according to the need and the place. But if this flexible variation be excessive, even Keralites and Assamese won't understand each other's English! Hence the need for blending the two forces. Centralizing will demand that the contact language be one and so all-purpose (so Arabic served in the Islamic world not only religion but also learning and governance). Decentralizing will propose different contact languages for different purposes (so the Indian three languages formula: the regional language, Hindi and English). In the competition between contact languages in the course of history, even some small languages gained prominence (as with Portuguese) while others were left behind (as with Basque on the France-Spanish border). Some of those left behind fought for a place in the sun and even won their battle (so with Catalan in Spain, Konkani in Goa, Welsh in Britain; but in a sense they won the battle only to lose the war—running schools or newspapers became difficult, but the Welsh poetry festival Eisteddfod and the Konkani 'teatr' stage flourishes). It is worth noticing that the language schedule of the Sahitya Akademi is more inclusive than the language schedule of the Constitution of India. All these facts add

Adapting one's language to communicate with foreigners or to meet the needs of the mass media is fine, but this is going to narrow the distance between the flow of everyday speech and the graceful elegance of literary writing. Once the importance of disseminating ideas is accepted, the demand for making the language easy to follow cannot be resisted.

up to a crucial insight.

Language is no mere means of communication to convey thoughts, feelings, or wishes to one another in the ordinary business of life, or no mere social symbol of each variably inclusive identity (thus, Maharashtrian identity being inclusive of Indian identity). Language is more : it is the medium for human poetic, spiritual, or intellectual creativity. Anyone seeking to understand the process of globalization of language cannot possibly lose sight of this.

Welshmen may conduct their ordinary business of life in the contact language of English, but at least some Welsh poets would rather compose poetry in Welsh rather than English. A Marathi speaker speaking some rural dialect from childhood may come to use standard Marathi as the contact language, but may wish to express his inner life in his particular dialect. If Catholics adopted Latin as their language of religion, at least some of them, the Protestants, preferred to use their respective languages for the purpose. English or French or German speaking thinkers keep acquainting themselves with one another's thoughts by reading one another in the original or in translation and belong to the same western intellectual tradition: and yet one senses the deep impress of their respective languages on their mode of thinking. English firmly plants the feet on the ground of shared common sense; French nurses its elegant clarity and logic; and German loses itself in complex schemes of abstract concepts. Medieval India accepted a demarcation between classical Sanskrit or Persian for intellectual life and 'vernacular' languages for poetic inspiration, that's true, but then this had a restrictive effect on both the intellectual life and the poetic life and even modern India has not freed itself from this restrictive effect. Modern Indians write their intellectual prose either in English or in vernacular (in reality a translation in the Sanskritized vernacular of some half-formed English version at the back of the writer's mind)—this is certainly no great improvement over the medieval practice.

Language functions as the medium of poetic, spiritual, or intellectual creativity, and the idiom that has kept one company from babyhood is the one in which that creativity often flourishes best. Language is certainly a means of communicating thoughts, feelings, or wishes to one another in a life of mutual harmony or disharmony. But then language is more; it lets one speak to oneself and in the process understand one's thoughts better and shapes one's understanding, being additionally a medium of cognition. One keeps an unending dialogue, smooth or disturbed as the case may be, with oneself. As often, it may remain unspoken, but even so mostly through language.

In the globalization of the language in respect of communication, the centralizing trend or contact languages certainly help. But in the globalization of language in respect of cognition the decentralizing trend comes to the fore. That is why one struggles to express oneself in one's own language but at the same time remains keen to reach out to others through translation. It is again a question of the beneficial combination of the two forces, avoiding ruinous extremes.

The Language of Globalization:

Who, when, where, what for initiated the language of globalization? The English word globalization is one of these global words (with translated counterparts in many languages) and it was first used in the context of trade and industry. The idea of an entrepreneur producing goods, marketing them primarily at home, and exporting just the surplus got firmly implanted in the 19th century because of two reasons. The industrial revolution ensured surplus commodity production and the European countries found dependent countries to import raw materials from and export manufactured goods to. The European countries and Japan, weakened by the Second World War, recovered around 1980 and looked for markets for their surplus goods, ending the temporary American advantage. The means of communication improved and proliferated. A large portion of the globe continued to remain undeveloped or at best developing. In consequence, what was so far only a drive to export one's surplus turned into a drive to trade conceived in global terms. That is to say, one struggled to identify specific local needs and produced in order to meet these..

Even the drive to produce was conceived in global terms. That is to say, one struggled to identify specific local needs and produced in order to meet these. Japan stole a march in this attempt to match local needs and global production over Europe and America, which woke up with a start. The Japanese language coined a word for their drive, namely, *dochakucha*, best translated as global localization. (Incidentally, the craze for management courses also started about this time.) In due course, the reverse process also started: rather than adapting export production to the needs of the importing market, there was the adapting of the needs of the local market to the imported supply of goods. This is beginning to happen not only in undeveloped or underdeveloped countries but also in countries like Japan or the European countries. Local cinema is retreating before the Hollywood onslaught or changing itself. This other trend has spread to other fields. In sum, the language of globalization is no longer limited to economy or technology but acquiring wider political, social, or cultural dimensions.

In the perspective of human history, this is by all means a major shift, but it is not by any means an episode confined to a decade or two. Man has long nursed a quest for globalization; modern trade and industry is only reinforcing it in a major way. Whenever and wherever in human history, industry, trade, polity, social fabric, and culture reached a mature and ambitious phase, human beings raised their sights beyond their own to what pertains to others, whether it is the country, the learning, the way of life, the language, and took recourse to comparison and influence between what is their own and what pertains to others. The earliest empires (China, ancient Persia, Rome), the earliest world-proselytizing religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam), the earliest classical literatures creative or intellectual (Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Chinese, Arabic, Persian), the earliest global languages (French, English, Spanish), the earliest world-scale movements (modern science and technology, modern 'public instruction', labour movement), the earliest world-scale media of transmission (print, mail, wire and wireless transmission), and the very first global art (cinema)—these are all footprints of globalization. To understand this clearly is to truly understand globalization together with its opportunities and dangers.

The Indian subcontinent is no exception to this historical process. One rightly takes pride in the unity of its diversity (or the diversity of its unity, if you so prefer). At the bottom of it is the very Indian language of 'live and let live', which is so favourable to globalization. This facilitated the transition in Indian history from the somewhat monotonous exclusively local or tribal lives to the more inclusive, the more orchestrated lifestyle and cultural heritage of India. In the classical period of ancient India (roughly 600 BC to 600 CE), this subcontinent was in touch with the outside world. There was not only an exchange of goods in trade but also the export (Buddhism, Āyurveda) and import (the zodiac, the Gandhara style of sculpture) in social-cultural realms.

Towards the close of this period, however, a number of factors conspired to put an end to this healthy state of affairs and to lead to the closing of the Indian mind in stupefying dread. Keeping foreign people, countries, learning, religions, languages at well beyond an

learning, religions, languages at well beyond an arm's length and imprisoning oneself within walls became the ruling language of India. Later of course the outer world impacted on India; the Arabs, Afghans, and Turks at one time and the Europeans at a later time refused to leave India alone. How did India face up to this challenge? India didn't face up to it at all in all honesty and courage; it offered reluctant, passive, abject resistance. The post-classical history of India is a history of a 'wounded civilization', to use Naipaul's telling phrase. Foreign people, countries, learning, religions, languages stopped arousing in Indians any natural curiosity or intellectual wonderment; but rather, faced with things foreign Indians have been either abjectly or naively accepting them, or, more commonly, obstinately or blindly rejecting them. Either of these extreme responses are signs of a wounded attitude and feeling of inferiority arising from it. The only difference between one Indian and another may be the overtness or the covertness of this sense of inferiority. In either case, the net result is the same failure to understand and assess what is foreign in objective detachment. Even today both these expressions of the sense of inferiority are widely met with in India. If Indians today have to face the globalizing turn of events, they shouldn't be doing so in stupefying dread. Indians should be ready and prepared for all sorts of imports and exports—economic, political, social, intellectual, or cultural. If they refuse, Indians can be said to be living not in the modern period at all but time-locked in some post-medieval period of history! Indians blindly dreading or blindly admiring the West are both equally caught in this time-warp.

Of course there is nothing wrong with the language of globalization, but we must rewrite the grammar of that language clear-sightedly and confidently. This thing called globalization is neither wholly a boon nor wholly a curse. It is neither a wholly self-propelled and irresistible process nor wholly at the disposal of human choice. If we are going to accept many things from the rest of the world, we are also going to offer a good many things to it in return. (Accepting things to the exclusion of offering any will render the word 'globalization' into a mere euphemism for westernization or, for that matter, Americanization!) Globalization, we have to prove, is a two-way street, it is both centralizing and decentralizing; it is a major shift in human history whose actual direction we have to determine.

As the Marathi poet 'Bee' said, "This courtyard of the universe is a playground gifted to us". We need, to recall Gandhiji's angry words, to simply "refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave".■

Ashok R. Kelkar, a distinguished linguist, is a former Professor of Deccan College, Pune, has written on several aspects of language and politics.

From the Pen of the Elder Naipaul

Sujit Mukherjee

THE ADVENTURES OF GURUDEVA
By Seepersad Naipaul
Buffalo Books, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 174, Rs. 250.00

Now that we have forgiven V.S. Naipaul and clutched him to our Hindu-rashtra breast as an 'Indian writer', we may soon have to extend this privilege to his father whose novel (or inter-lined stories earlier published as such in 1975) has been reproduced in this slim, very elegant paperback I have before me. Also fleetingly before me, a few evenings ago, was a Zee News tail-ender on art and culture wherein Ravi Dayal publisher was seen talking to an uncharacteristically smiling V.S. Naipaul. To my biased view, the camera-angle seemed to suggest that it was Ravi who had won the last literary Nobel Prize and not Vidia. The occasion was a party thrown by Tarun Tejpal prior to the week-long literary feast or fest or fiesta organized by ICCR in Delhi and thereabouts. I puzzled a little over Tejpal's hosting such a sarkari show but, on asking around, was told that this new imprint, Buffalo Books, has something to do with the Tehelka.dot.com television enterprise. I wait with horns lowered to see what it will publish next.

The book cover features the name Naipaul in large white letters and you may buy it under the impression it is a hitherto unknown work by our latest Nobel winner. To compensate you for your mistake, there is a 21-page foreword by Sir Vidia in which he tells us a lot about the book and some about its author. Father Naipaul has appeared several times patriphonically or pseudo-autobiographically in son Naipual's own fiction, thus he is no stranger to the latter's fan club. But this must be the first (only?) occasion when, some twenty-five years ago, Naipaul wrote directly and fondly about his father. Not the least grateful acknowledgement he makes is "with the publication of my father's book, I was given the beginnings of the main character of my own first novel".

This is not quite that book. Born in 1906, Seepersad Naipaul used to write stories occasionally while working for the *Trinidad Guardian*. In 1943, he put together a small collection (no more than 70 pages in print) under the title *Gurudeva and Other Indian Tales* and published it, presumably at his own expense, in Trinidad. A thousand copies of the book were printed and the edition apparently turned out to be a successful venture. For a few years thereafter he worked for the government and wrote reports 'surveying' rural conditions, thus widening his knowledge about his adopted homeland. He also wrote a couple of autobiographical sketches, recalling the hardships his father and the family had undergone in the early days. (It was Sir Vidia's father's father who migrated from eastern Uttar Pradesh sometime in the 1880s.) Much of what he wrote for the *Guardian* had to do with the life of the Hindu Indian community in Trinidad during the first half of the twentieth century. As his son was to comment later: "To write about a community which has not been written about is not easy. To write about this community was especially difficult; it required unusual knowledge and an unusual breadth of sympathy." During the last years of Seepersad's life, the BBC Caribbean Service came into being and it was for the weekly radio programme called "Caribbean Voices" that Seepersad wrote his more memorable stories.

The son left home in 1950 to study at Oxford on a scholarship and the father died three years later. A short while before his death, the father sent a larger (than the 1943 publication) collection of stories to his son, wanting to have these published as a book in England. Vidia was still on the make—his first novel *The Mystic Masseur* would appear only in 1957—and he did nothing about his father's late-life wish. By 1975, with ten books, all published in England, under his belt (or in bookshops all over the world), the son obviously commanded some clout. His father's book, its contents enlarged and suitably arranged, was published under the title *The Adventures of Gurudeva* by Andre Deutsch (Sir Vidia's own publisher), carrying the son's foreword which reappears in the Buffalo Books paperback.

In this more than a quarter-century old foreword, Sir Vidia had said, "I have not attempted to change the idiosycrasies of my father's English; I have corrected only one or two obvious errors." What he does not tell us is who or how the separate stories of *Gurudeva and Other Indian Tales* (1943) became the reasonably connected account presented in *The Adventures of Gurudeva* (1976). The imprint page of the latest incarnation says "Revised edition published in 1995 by William Heinemann Ltd.", but the book gives no indication of who revised it and why or how. Like some currently famous cricket players I am hamstrung by having no access to any of the 1943 or 1976 or 1995 versions. But I hazard the guess that if not the Nobel laureate-to-be himself, his loyal and perceptive editor at Andre Deutsch, Diana Athill, made the discrete *Other Indian Tales* into the interrelated

"To write about a community which has not been written about is not easy. To write about this community was especi-ally difficult; it required unusual knowledge and an unusual breadth of sympathy."

Adventures. Incidentally, the half-title page of the paperback wrongly states *The Adventures* was first published in 1943. That private exercise, which Sir Vidia admits was "my introduction to book-making" was concerned with *Other Indian Tales*.

As the novel opens, Gurudeva (complete with that terminal 'a' but incomplete of why he has this name) is 14 years old when he is taken away from the Mission School in the village and married off to 12-year-old Ratni, daughter of the dhoti and 'koorta' clad Pundit Sookhlal. Like a good Trinidad Hindu husband, Gurudeva beat his wife occasionally and nursed an ambition to become famous. This he achieves by attaining some skill at 'stick-play' (i.e. combative use of lathis) and displaying the same on 'Hosey Day' (local version of Muharram), during the course of which he 'wilfully and feloniously' wounded a drunken old man as well as a police constable. Consequently, he is jailed six months each for these two offences.

The novel or its constituents that were brought together to make a connected story was written in two stages—the first during 1941-42, the second ten years or so later—and the original intention ("He often spoke of doing an autobiographical novel") must have got dissipated during that decade-long gap. The second part is more eventful—Gurudeva begins speaking Hindi, becomes a vegetarian and teetotaller, puts on a dhoti and prepares to practice as a 'pundit', falls in love with another woman and contrives to make his wife Ratni leave him, is ditched by the desireable Daisy and finally "becomes a bachelor" (which is the title of the last chapter)—but the social sweep of the first seven chapters has given place in the following ten to what may be called situational comedy relating to a rather 'mofussil' community in faraway Trinidad.

Faraway, that is, from here—which happens to be Hyderabad at present. Readers around me will ask whether, even if this book was re-published after revision in 1995, it merited another lease of life in 2001. Buffalo Books will have the answer but, quite justifiably, will not share it with those readers or with me. Meanwhile, I speculate on if Father Naipaul were still alive, would he too have been invited to join the neemakhalals of Neemrana who flocked there recently at the bidding of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations?■

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A Rewarding Overview

Sukanto Chaudhuri

SIGNPOSTS: BENGALI POETRY SINCE INDEPENDENCE
Edited by Prabal Kumar Basu
Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 2002, pp. 275, Rs.395.00

A wise old homoeopath once told me how amateurs in his art (to be found in every Indian household) go wrong in their prescriptions. They often hit upon the right drug; where they err is in determining the strength and the dose.

Given the impressive list of editorial advisers, it would be impertinent to call *Signposts* an amateurish effort. But reading the book reminded me of that old doctor's observation. *Signposts* is a well-conceived, well-planned volume. The general level of translating skill is markedly above average, rising to the exceptionally competent. Yet there is a lacuna, a blurring of focus and deficiency of editorial input, which reduces the value of the collection and prompts some nagging questions.

Rabindranath Tagore was himself the first post-Tagorean. But it is customary to commence the story of modern Bengali poetry with the gifted generation that followed him: Jibanananda Das, Sudhindranath Datta, Amiya Chakrabarti, Bishnu Dey, Buddhadeva Bose and their compeers. Even that generation has achieved a somewhat removed, classic status. It now makes sense to do what this collection has done, which is to begin with the next generation after—poets who began writing around Independence, but came into their own in the 1950s and 1960s. We find a refreshing presence of young and recent poets. There are one or two serious omissions as well. If Arun Mitra, why not Samar Sen? And surely Sukanta Bhattacharya deserves a place, if not for his ideology then for his impact. Nor is it clear why some poets should have three, others four or five pieces of roughly the same length.

The token inclusion of poets from North Bengal, Assam or Tripura is well-intentioned, but has little point in view of the exclusion of Bangladeshi work, or indeed that of Bengali poets based elsewhere in India. There is a serious call for one or more anthologies bringing together all Bengali poetry across the world: as Sunil Gangopadhyay reminds us in his Foreword, Bengali is the world's fifth most widely-spoken language. But such a collection is not to be lightly attempted. It involves an exceptional challenge in coordinating two large and distinct bodies of work, besides a number of ancillary foci.

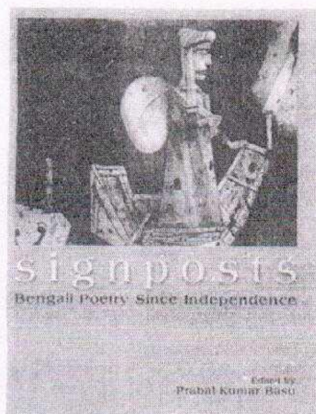
To return to the present volume, the editor must be complimented on having drawn on a large pool of translators. (One wishes they were better introduced: there are notes on the poets and illustrators, but not the translators.) Not one translation in the book is downright bad. That may seem faint praise; but anyone with experience in the field knows how hard it is to achieve even this modest end, and what demands it makes on translator and editor alike.

Many renderings, in fact, are particularly fine: not only by old hands like Samik Bandyopadhyay, Kalyani Ghose or Madhuchhanda Karlekar, but by relatively new or infrequent practitioners like Sriparna Basu, Malabika Sarkar or Sudeshna Banerjee. (This is not meant as a complete list of Alpha scores.) Other successful pieces are scattered through the book: Vijaya Mukhopadhyay's 'All This Play-Acting' as rendered by Sutapa Neogi, Amitava Gupta's 'Arjun: to Karna' by Sunandini Banerjee, or Bhaskar Chakrabarty's 'Death' by Bidisha Basu, for instance. Generally speaking, all the translators are sensitive to the original text, and recognize the need to preserve its values in English instead of churning out a quickie approximation.

What then goes wrong? Nothing at all, some of the time; but all too often, a lack of fine-tuning, maladjustments of idiom or register, or—to out with the sad truth—simple lapses of grammar. The creative translator may deliberately seek freedom in these respects, especially to reflect a freedom taken by the source-poet; but the instances I am talking of match neither the one case nor the other. They serve no conceivable aesthetic point, but are solely due to slipshod revision and editing.

Hence even serious and sensitive translations threaten to go off the rails, or at least lose much of their potential impact. This applies to pieces by such major poets as Sankha Ghosh, Arun Kumar Sarkar, Benoy Majumdar, Sunil Gangopadhyay and Sarat Kumar Mukho-

Rabindranath Tagore was himself the first post-Tagorean. But it is customary to commence the story of modern Bengali poetry with the gifted generation that followed him: Jibanananda Das, Sudhindranath Datta, Amiya Chakrabarti, Bishnu Dey, Buddhadeva Bose and their compeers.



padhyay. The simpler poems by these poets retain their impact: Sunil's 'For Che Guevera' or Benoy's 'Last Evening'. But in more complex pieces, the tangles are never quite sorted out, but rather compounded through syntactical slips. The reader may work out the sense and even deduce something of the original form, but he is left dissatisfied by the total impact of the translation.

This can be said of Santa Bhattacharya's not insensitive version of Manibhusan Bhattacharya's powerful poem, 'The Story of the *(sic)* Martyr's Day'. Elsewhere, the very meaning might be lost. 'Dr' Partha Ghose (why the academic title in such a context?) ends a piece from Subhas Mukhopadhyay thus: 'Pass me the fire.' Ghose may have had some Promethean nuance in mind, but he has obscured the basic sense, 'Give me a light.' The erstwhile Marxist poet wishes to share a smoke with a tractor-driver. And of course Sankha Ghosh did not write about 'cornfields' and 'twelfth night' (used here to mean the twelfth phase of the moon) in a tribal and rural setting.

The embarrassing truth is that the book needed much more editorial care and honest-to-God desk-editing. It is impossible to rule out error in a collection of this sort; but ***Signposts*** doesn't really try. Sunil Gangopadhyay's Foreword focuses too little on Bengali poetry, too much on his current concern with the politics of language. But what really jolts the reader is the unacceptable quality of the language (presumably Englished by someone else from the writer's original Bengali), commencing with two grammatically grotesque sentences. The editor's own 'Prologue' is perfunctory in content and equally slipshod in style.

The notes are unsatisfactory in more than phrasing. The Baul is described as a 'Hindu stoical devotee', 'Espahan Bukhara' *(sic)* as 'two pre-historic places in Iran', and atar *(sic)* as 'Indian perfume generated from the state Uttarpradesh' *(sic)*. Lalgola becomes 'a remote place in Murshidabad'. (Remote from where? Kolkata?) Dhubulia in West Bengal's Nadia District, the site of a notorious camp for East Bengal refugees, is said to be a health resort in Bihar. *Amritabazar (sic)* is described as a Bengali newspaper. (It was indeed once, but so long ago that only its English reincarnation matters here.) 'Sari' is explained but not '25th Baisakh' (Rabindranath's birthday). The bidi becomes 'a local cigarette', and a noolia, incredibly, 'Natives who help the uninitiated to take a bath in the sea'.

The book is beautifully designed and produced, with a set of striking illustrations (but not individually ascribed to the distinguished artists, who are merely gathered in a list at the end). This makes it all the sadder that the text should be so badly proofread: whole lines and stanzas are made mystifying by typos. There is no policy of transliteration: the same Bengali word is spelt differently in the text and the notes. To talk about lapses in punctuation may seem niggling, but they are endemic. It becomes hard to disentangle some pieces as a result. One is left guessing whether essential marks have been omitted simply through carelessness, or designedly for a mock-modern effect. In either case, their absence can seriously impede one's understanding of a poem.

It is depressing to note these pervasive shortcomings in a rich and serious collection. Even as it stands, it will provide readers outside Bengal with a rewarding overview of Bengali poetry since Independence. The pity is that a task so worthwhile should not have been better accomplished, avoiding the numerous and entirely avoidable defects. The publishers should think of a radically revised second edition.■

Sukanto Chaudhuri is Professor of English at Jadavpur Univesity, Kolkata. He has translated widely from Bengali poetry into English, and edited volumes of such translations. He is currently editor of the Oxford Tagore Translations.

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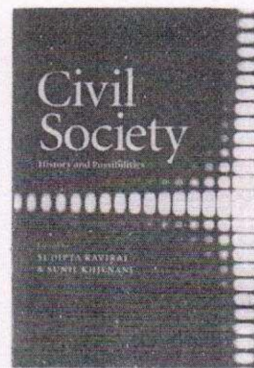
Neera Chandhoke

CIVIL SOCIETY, HISTORY AND POSSIBILITIES
Edited by Sudipto Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, pp.330, Rs 795.00



The collection of essays in this volume represents yet another attempt to spin out the philosophical, the political, and the historical implications of the concept of civil society. I use the phrase 'yet another' advisedly, for if there is one concept that has been theorized, re-theorized and once again theorized with somewhat tiresome frequency in the decade or so following the 1989 events in Eastern Europe, it is civil society. Where does civil society come from? Is it from the western tradition? In that case how do we profitably employ the concept to understand our own worlds (the Third World)? Is it historically appropriate as well as theoretically feasible to apply a concept that arises in the historical experiences of the West to our own societies not completely modern and not completely pre-modern? And so on and so forth. The questions are rather familiar, the answers even more so.

Sudipto Kaviraj's concluding chapter raises precisely these significant questions. The raising of these questions is important, for as he remarks: whereas we cannot understand political modernity in the non-western world without western political theory, it is equally impossible to do so within the terms of that tradition (p.287). True, therefore, in order to understand whether civil society will or will not further democracy in India or not, we have to go through the entire historical trajectory of western theory—Hobbes, Locke, Adam Smith, Hegel, Marx, and Gramsci. In the process, we tend to forget that identities in India's civil society have been forged both by the politics of communal identities and the narratives of memory and victimhood since the mid-nineteen eighties. Where are the resources by which we can explain the incivility of India's civil society (keeping in mind the communal carnage in Gujarat since March 2002) in the otherwise very profound essays outlined in this collection?

Therefore, even as I acknowledge the philosophical depth of the essays (which originated as seminars in a series organized by the two editors in London), I find them incomplete and inadequate. I find them incomplete because they cannot give me any insight into what is happening in my country or in other Third World countries—our neighbours Sri Lanka and Pakistan for instance through political theory. Political theory and political practices in Third World countries, two themes that form separate parts of the book, therefore, remain separate, and even parallel. This is partly because very few of the authors explore the anxieties of classical political theorists with regard to civil society. Stedman Jones for instance competently traces the Hegelian exposition of civil society in the latter's *Philosophy of Right*. Yet there is one simple fact about the Hegelian notion of civil society, which helps us to understand why he gives such power to the state. The Hegelian state is what it is, because Hegel's civil society is what it is—at once ambivalent and precarious.

Certainly Hegel as Stedman Jones points out was deeply influenced by Adam Smith and the classical political economists, whose work he seems to have become familiar with in his Jena days. But there is a crucial issue on which he is different from them. For Hegel unlike the classical political economists, was skeptical of the acclaimed virtues of the market economy or of its ability to balance individual and collective interests. Though he accepted and recognized the phenomenon of the market institution as one of the realities of his time, he refused to believe that the market is self-regulating. More worryingly the market breeds its own oppressions. It leads to the alienation of human beings even as others appropriate the product of their labour. We can further witness the adverse social consequences of the market, suggested Hegel, in the debilitating routine of modern factory work. These inimical consequences are equally visible in the alienation and the resentment of the victims of the market, i.e., the poor, who are deprived of the benefits of the market economy. They are, consequently, prevented from participating in the richness and fullness of ethical life. "The poor" he wrote, "still have the needs common to civil society, and yet since society has withdrawn from them the natural means of acquisition and broken the bonds of the family...their poverty leaves them more or less deprived of all the advantages of society".[1] The market in other words creates problems for the reproduction of civil society and this worried him.

But there is another reason why the market worried Hegel: the ethos of the market permeates social relations in civil society, promoting thereby attitudes where each individual regards others as means to an end, the end being his own gratification. The civility of civil society is not a given. For individualist, egoistic, and selfish, civil society "affords the spectacle of extravagance and want as well as of the physical and ethical degeneration common to both"[2]. Allowing the liberated individual to be guided solely by his will, the sphere consequently becomes the terrain where "everyone's individual private interest meets everyone else's".[3] And this is deeply disquieting, for the unmitigated pursuit of self-interest can after all destroy the sphere of civil society:

> [p]articularity by itself, given free rein in every direction to satisfy its needs, accidental caprices, and subjective desires, destroys itself and its substantive concept in this process of gratification.[4]

We see the problem that Hegel outlines for us here. Civil society presents itself to our gaze as a shaky space, which is unable to secure its own reproduction. Left to itself, Hegel warns us in a Hobbesian vein, civil society will disintegrate. It cannot be left alone, it has to be organized; it has to be controlled by the state in order to secure its own reproduction. For Hegel cannot allow his civil society to disintegrate simply because it is the only space where he can build his ethical community, which, recollect, is his wider political and philosophical project. In sum, though in Hegelian theory civil society, as one of the moments of ethicality, is the precondition of the universal state, ultimately it is the state that becomes the pre-condition of civil society. Hegel's state is what it is, because his civil society is what it is. And he certainly knew how uncivil modern civil society is, for above all Hegel captured his historical moment, that of modernity, in his philosophical writings.

It is precisely the wariness that classical political theory showed towards the concept of civil society, which has not been captured by many of the authors. Take for instance the work of Adam Smith, references to whom are scattered through the volume. Adam Smith as everyone knows contributed a great deal towards valuing the concept of civil society, which he saw as the ***differentia specificia*** of his world. In effect Adam Smith performs one of the greatest inversions in political theory. Recollect that Aristotle had told us that man is the ***zoon politikon***, and the community that is natural to man is the political community or the ***koinonia politike***. Recollect also that

Given the roots of civil society in individualism, the notion of free choice, individual rights, the rule of law, the market, and the abstract 'neutral' state, how do we come to terms with the uncivil manifestations of civil society as in India?

Hobbes had reversed this idea and told us that whereas the political community is an artificial creation, the natural habitat of man is the state of nature. And now witness how Smith inverted both the Aristotlean dictum that political society is man's natural habitat, as well as Hobbes' contention that the state of nature is natural to man. For Adam Smith it is the economy or civil society that is natural to man and, therefore, central to his existence.[5]

But Smith was faced by a problem here, and this is a problem that is peculiar to modernity. For even as persons in civil society are liberated from the bonds imposed by their original community, they become separable and autonomous agents, inexorably bent upon pursuing and promoting their self-interest in civil society. Understandably, self-referential individuality poses a threat not only to the reproduction of society, which demands different kinds of social transactions altogether, but more importantly to the imperatives of capitalist accumulation. After all, our autonomous agent can prove dangerously indifferent to the purpose of the wider social order that is capitalist accumulation. And for the classical political economists, capitalist accumulation lay at the heart of any well-ordered social order; the two just could not be separated. Both had to be secured against any instinct or action that may well wreck them.

One answer to this problem had been provided by Thomas Hobbes—that of the contract, which let me suggest, becomes the prime metaphor of transactions in market societies. Have we resolved the tension that stalks transactions in our civil society? Perhaps not, for the metaphorical contract, apart from the fact that it cannot assure us of any meaningful human interaction but only of cold, hard, and sterile legal obligations that protect the contractee from harm, suffers from a basic drawback[6]—it provides little security for the participants. After all one of the partners may facilely renege on his obligations, and the other may be condemned to spend the rest of his life in the law courts. To put it bluntly, market transactions have to be embedded in non-market relations in order to function with some measure of success.[7] But not any kind of non-market relations, let me hasten to add, will do. Market transactions need disciplined, predictable, and socialized behaviour as a pre-requisite for their successful functioning. This in turn means that any kind of self-seeking behaviour that may wreck the domain of economic and social transactions has to be curbed.

Hobbes recognizing precisely this predicament sets up the Leviathan to enforce compliance. His civil society like that of Hegel later is *tamed* by the state. But not all theorists had a taste for strong governments and constant monitoring by state authorities. Adam Smith's 'looking glass' conception of the self in the TMS was to give us another answer to this predicament. The assumption that underlies the 'looking glass' conception of the self is that both our sense of the self, as well as self-worth are crucially dependent on the approval of others. We, therefore, and perhaps understandably, have a passionate and perhaps a primordial desire for social approval, simply because this validates us in our own eyes and gives to us a sense of self-worth.[8] Consequently we "become anxious to know how far we deserve their censure or applause and whether to them we must necessarily appear those agreeable or disagreeable creatures which they represent us".[9]

At this precise point, Smith's argument takes an interesting albeit rather anticipated turn. Since we intensely desire that other people approve of us, we begin to rigorously and punctiliously examine our own passions and conduct by considering how these must appear to others. Even as the other person becomes our mirror, we begin to monitor and regulate our emotions, and we begin to exercise moderation and restraint. The other person of course undergoes the same experience. What is important is that we, as Foucault was to later put it, become our own overseers.[10]

We get the first glimpse of the taming of the inhabitants of civil society at this point. Since the desire for approbation is inbuilt into the human person, we incessantly and painstakingly take care that our behaviour does not affront the sensibilities of others. Predictably the desire for approval hammers our own instincts, responses, comportment, and conduct into conformity with what others expect of us[11]. Consequently, we, looking at ourselves from the perspective of how we appear to others, divide ourselves into two persons—the 'I', as the examiner and judge, which represents a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged. We become our own supervisor, our own prosecutor, our own judge, our own jury, even as we divide our selves into two: the observer and observed. Witness how the codes of self-censorship have been firmly and neatly put into place and all avenues of exit have been hatched down. Not only our spontaneity, but also our autonomy has been resolutely and relentlessly curbed for the Foucauldian 'gaze' has interiorized only those rules of behaviour that fetch approval.

In sum, civil society is a project for Adam Smith, a project that involves the disciplining of both the inhabitants of this sphere as well as of the dynamics of the sphere itself. And in this, Smith was to perform another inversion for and in political theory. Ordinary men and women, note, no longer needed the Leviathan to regulate and pound them into compliance with the general good. The Hobbesian Leviathan is quite dispensable for each man has become his own Leviathan and civil society has become self-regulating.

In effect I am trying to suggest that the theorists of civil society in classical political theory were also the critics of civil society, because they recognized the greyness of this sphere—violence constantly stalks the inhabitants of civil society. They tried desperately to banish violence from the sphere by concentrating the means of coercion in the state. They tried to do so by inculcating all kinds of virtues in the inhabitants of civil society—sociability, trust, social capital. Consequently, it is more or less assumed by the civil society argument that when people enter the sphere, they put aside their swords, six shooters, and other paraphernalia of violence, which may have governed public transactions in pre-modern times. Any swordplay or duelling, howsoever dramatically appealing and romantically swashbuckling it may appear to us, is not for this sphere. The only arms allowed in the discursive spaces of civil society are those of rhetoric, perorations, declamation, and argument, all of them meant to cajole, exhort, and convince. If all this does not work, the inhabitants of the sphere can engage in peaceful and nonviolent political action such as marches, demonstrations, protests, strikes, and other means of *civil* disobedience. Violence, however, is simply banished, for after all transactions in civil society need to be refined and mannerly, as opposed to rude and barbaric dealings in pre-modern social orders. Such are the vanities of modernity.

However, that the shadow of violence may lurk threateningly over civil society is not unknown; it may in fact be endemic to the sphere. John Keane for instance accepts that violence is not left behind when societies transit from incivility to civility or from pre-modernity to modernity. But at the same time he seems to locate such violence in inter-state affairs, in the auxiliaries of the state, or in armed groups that roam free terrorizing populations. Violence, he seems to suggest, is owned and practised either by the state or by aberrant groups. Therefore, Keane finds it relatively easy to counter such violence by the development of a culture of civility. "I want to emphasize that the cultivation of ***public spheres of controversy***, in which the violent exercise of power is resisted initially by civilian-citizens' efforts to monitor it nonviolently, is a basic condition for reducing or eliminating

incivility… The public spheres of civil society can help to cultivate shared memories of times past when terrible things were done to people".[12]

But that violence can always be thought of only as an alienable *property,* attached to errant groups or to the state is debatable. For it may well be employed generically to *constitute subjects and identities* in civil society. Violence may just manage to institute itself thoroughly and completely in the interstices and the crevices of the sphere. For after all it is the violence of communalism that has overtaken India's civil society since the mid-nineteen eighties. To understand this we will have to re-read the classics and see why they hedged in civil society within the rule of law, constitutional safeguards and individual rights, implicit codes of censorship and explicit banning of arms. The freedom of civil society was never taken for granted, particularly not in John Locke, whose formulations have been discussed insightfully by John Dunn in his chapter.

Antony Black's chapter is interesting; the problem is that he seems to overstretch the concept of civil society by locating it in pre-modern Europe. For recollect that civil society as a peculiarly modern phenomenon, *emerges through the same historical processes that generate both the modern impersonal state as well as the modern market system.* These processes have to do with the separation of the economic and the political, the appropriation of the economy by a private class of proprietors and the concomitant rise of the institution of private property. They have to do with the emergence of the notion of the autonomous individual and self-directed individualism. They have further to do with the dissolution of community as 'face to face' interaction, and with the carving out of a space where individuals meet in the words of Marx as 'bearers of commodities'. Classical theory called this space 'civil society', which peopled by legally autonomous individuals who may well be strangers to each other, was marked by impersonal and contractual relations. Therefore, even though scholars before Adam Smith and Hegel employed the term 'civil society', a rigorous use of the term would locate it in capitalist modernity. Therefore, the problem is as many theorists have pointed out in the second half of the book in applying the concept of civil society to embrace ascriptive identities, which are not based on the idea of the freely choosing individual.

Both Sunil Khilnani in his opening chapter and John Dunn subsequently, explore the Lockean notion of state and civil society. It seems to me that both Thomas Hobbes as well as John Locke made not an explicit but an implicit distinction between civil and political society. Therefore, though the point that civil society emerges as the opposite of the state of nature is well taken, it is equally true that when individuals exit the state of nature they enter, according to Hobbes, and make their way into 'political and civil society'. In Hobbes's theory 'political' and 'civil' society are used synonymously. The distinction between the two is first perceived when Hobbes suggests that subjects in the political order dominated by the Leviathan possess one right that is inde-pendent of the sovereign—the right to self-preservation. Locke expands this right in many ways. We can read back into Hobbes and Locke to argue that when people possess rights independent of the state they inhabit civil society, but to suggest that both of them, or even just Locke, gave us a formulation on civil society will need much more justification.

Let me come back to the question raised above. Given the roots of civil society in individualism, the notion of free choice, individual rights, the rule of law, the market, and the abstract 'neutral' state, how do we come to terms with the uncivil manifestations of civil society as in India? In an ideal world we would include in civil society only those groups that are committed to democratic values and to the idea of reciprocal freedom. But in actually existing civil societies we discover a different scenario: the existence of all kinds of groupings whether social or political. Some groups accept democracy and freedom as paramount values, others are frankly anti-democratic and against reciprocal that civil society is itself a fragmented, divided and hierarchically structured realm. Here we will find organizations of the dominant classes existing alongside with organizations of the dominated who are battling for survival, we find patriarchal structures existing alongside women's groups struggling for a place in the sun, we find caste and race based groups along with democratic movements fighting for dignity. Secular movements challenge religious fundamentalism. And pro-state associations that further and strengthen the dominant project of society exist alongside with those groups that challenge the legitimacy of the state. Some social groups further civic engagement and the production of democracy; others inhibit it.

Civil society emerges in this perspective not as the site of sociability per se, though this may well be an unintended consequence of associational life. It emerges as a site for struggle between the forces that uphold power equations and those that battle these equations in an attempt to further the democratic project. This is not insignificant by any means for civil society provides a space for democratic groups to hegemonize the space itself. But it may so happen that, at historically significant moments, democratic groupings in civil society are marginalized by fascist and communal elements in the body politic.

For instance, it is evident that fundamentalist and openly criminal forces like for instance the Vishwa Hindu Parishad or the Bajrang Dal have used the space of India's civil society to mobilize people along the axis of malevolence and the politics of attrition. Civil society in our country since the mid-nineteen eighties at least has seen the hegemonization of Hindu fundamentalism. We also see somewhat sadly the retreat of democratic forces, who appear to be helpless before the kind of onslaught we witnessed in Gujarat in March 2002. Ideas of civic democracy and civic nationalism have been threatened by the politics of what can be called a 'new tribalism'. Notions of civic belonging have been sidelined by ideas of inclusion and exclusion, which are based on a narrow and unacceptable formulations on religion.

It is this aspect of civil society as a site for struggle, the idea of civil society making and remaking itself that I missed in this otherwise fine collection of essays. For like other domains of collective interaction, civil society too is a contested site. Here unequally endowed agents battle for supremacy. That is why dreams of a democratic civil society are also a project of civil society. But for this we have to accept that it is not enough that there *be* a civil society, or even a civil society that is independent of the state. It is not something that once constructed can be left to fend for itself, nor is it an institution. Civil societies are what their inhabitants make of them. There-democracy, they will have to constantly monitor both the monopoly of the state as well as the monopoly of power within their own home ground.

In the process, civil society constantly reinvents itself, constantly discovers new projects, discerns new enemies, and makes new friends. Democratic groups within civil society may win some battles, they may lose other crucial battles. Civil society may reveal an astonishing tendency to back the state and sideline those groups that challenge power equations. It may also as Gramsci had warned become an ally of the state inasmuch as it becomes the staging ground for hegemonic schemes.

One advantage of this collection is that authors recognize that civil society is constituted by the state and by the kind of politics that are available in that society. Geoffrey Hawthorne's essay for instance argues that "To be clear about the point of 'civil society' is first to be clear about what citizenship can be, about what the state can do, about the point of politics itself" [p. 286]. When the terrain of politics is muddied, there is little that civil society can do. But then how do we go about distinguishing as Partho Chatterjee does, civil from political society?

I have one suggestion: perhaps it is time to go beyond theoretical and political explorations of civil society, and recognize that we will have to problematize civil society even as we

have to problematize civil society even as we take the insights of the expositions seriously[13]. By problematizing civil society I mean that we need to investigate the shadowy peripheries of the sphere that seem to have escaped our explorers of civil society. I on the other hand see civil society as a sphere that has to recognize the frailty of its own claim to democracy. Therefore, an unreconstructed civil society is not an answer to the problem posed by the state and the market economy. It may even be a part of the same problem.

Reference

[1] Georg Wilhelm Fredrik Hegel. (1942). *The Philosophy of Right*. Translated by T.M. Knox (Oxford. Oxford University Press) Hereafter *Ph of Rt.* para 241, pp 148-49.
[2] ibid para 185, pg 123.
[3] ibid para 289, pg 189.
[4] ibid para 185 pg 123.
[5] See my (1995) *State and Civil Society. Explorations in Political Theory.* (Delhi. Sage) chapter 3.
[6] This is why contracts are more often than not cautious and suspicious dotted with ifs and buts, and meant to be read carefully between the lines.
[7] Karl Polanyi has dealt with precisely this aspect in his (1957) *Trade and Market in the Early Empire* (Glencoe. Free Press). The market pattern, he writes, can never be traced to the mere desire of individuals to truck, barter, and exchange.
[8] Hegel was to term this later as 'recognition'. On this theme see Charles Taylor (1993) 'The Politics of Recognition" in Amy Gutman edited *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton. N.J. Princeton University Press); also Axel Honneth (1995) *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge. Polity Press)
[9] Adam Smith (1976) *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759 edition) Edited and with and introduction by D.D Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Oxford Clarendon) p. 112. The origins of TMS that deals with human sensibilities lie in the lectures in ethics that Smith delivered as professor of moral philosophy 1752-1764, after a short stint as professor of logic and rhetoric. The course in moral philosophy had been founded by Gershom Carmichael in the 1690s, and developed by Frances Hutcheson in the 1730s and 40s. The course encompassed natural religion, ethics, and jurisprudence. Smith recast his lectures as a scholarly work to bring out the nature of what he called virtue. The conceptual location of the work becomes clear when we see that the last section of the book contains a historical survey of moral philosophy up to the times of Frances Hutcheson, Smith's own teacher at the university and his main inspiration for the TMS. Hutcheson refuting Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* developed the idea that the creator implants moral sense in human beings. This moral sense, which allows man to take pleasure in benevolence, provides the psychological basis of virtuous behaviour. Challenging egoistic philosophy, Hutcheson defended disinterested judgement and disinterested motives as the springboard of human actions. Our moral sense, he suggested, leads us to approve disinterestedly of disinterested actions that further benevolence, and to disapprove of those motives and actions that lead to the contrary, exactly in the same way as we approve of a beautiful object. But Smith thought otherwise. "Smith" argues his biographer Ian Simpson Ross, "had surely been impressed with Hutcheson's teaching, following on from that of Carmichael, that the principle of our approval of moral acts is not based on self-love, and that 'it could not arise from any operation of reason'... However, he jibes at Hutcheson's solution to the problem of the source of moral approval and disapproval through the theory of a special 'moral sense'. Rather. Smith builds on the new insights of his friend Hume, developed in the *Treatise* and the subsequent E*nquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), and certain suggestions of his patron Kames in *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (1751)". Ian Simpson Ross (1995) *The Life of Adam Smith* (Oxford Clarendon), pg 159.
[10] There is a fourfold transaction that occurs here. p observes say q, while at the same time he also observes himself from the vantage point of q. At the same time q observes and evaluates p, as well as judges himself from the vantage point of p. The net result is the same, the institutionalization of codes of self-discipline.
[11] R.L Heilbroner. (1994) "The Socialization of the Individual in Adam Smith" in John Cunningham Wood edited *Adam Smith.Critical Assessments. Second Series*, vol 5 (London Routledge) pp 122-133.
[12] John Keane (1998) *Civil Society. Old Images. New Visions.* (Cambridge. Polity) p. 156

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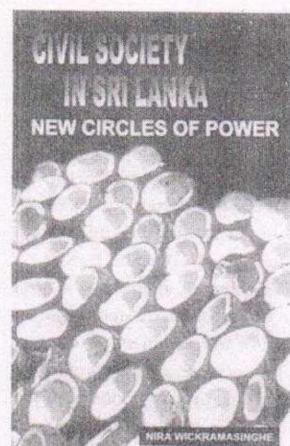
Circles: Old and New, Big and Small

N. Manoharan

CIVIL SOCIETY IN SRI LANKA: NEW CIRCLES OF POWER
By Nira Wickramasinghe
Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 178, Rs. 395.00



If there is a book which can be "opened with expectation, and closed with delight and profit" it could be the book under review.

The purpose of the book, to the author, is to "survey separately into the different forces and processes that have induced interconnectedness of today's world than just to look within the framework of a shibboleth-like term such as globalization". It is a compilation of four essays addressing in different ways some of the new international and transnational forces that are shaping the developmental state in Sri Lanka. Such forces are international financial organizations, humanitarian relief organizations, and northern NGOs, which the author calls as the 'new circles of power'. They are not only reorganizing the political economy of the country, but through the creation of transnational networks, integrating it into a new cultural and ideological world order.

Attempt is made to see the civil society of Sri Lanka and its incorporation into a global network, which, to the author, has "rarely been investigated". The book does not purport to trace the emergence, development and role of a global civil society networking in Sri Lanka but rather to focus on particular occurrences where global civil society impinges on the way security, sovereignty, development, governance are perceived and conceptualized.

The first chapter ("The Many Faces of Security in Sri Lanka") analyses the local NGO network and human rights organizations as forming a new circle of power that challenges and contests the state conception of security in contemporary Sri Lanka which is territorial integrity and political independence. Rather than focusing on the nation-state, these forces emphasize people's security and the security of the community (which is termed as 'human security') from threats that often come from the state apparatus—armed forces, political parties or from 'globalization'. Over a period of time the NGOs have influenced the government's approach and thinking, despite cynical voices from 'nationalist' groups on the "dangers" of such influence on the overall security.

The next essay ("Good Governance and the New Aid Regime"), while recognizing the importance of human rights, questions the recent emergence of 'good governance' as a decisive factor in aid policy and development assistance. But, many a times, ideological, geopolitical and economic considerations have overridden human rights concerns. The chapter also highlights the need for development programmes that are more mindful of the social, cultural and political consequences of the intervention of world institutions through sub-national collectivities. The pressure from aid regimes has indeed improved the quality of governance in the island state.

"Partnership in Development and NGOs: A Critique of Donor Conceptions" addresses

the concept of partnership in development that has, to a large extent, replaced aid in the development discourse in Sri Lanka. The 'partnership' is envisaged between the state, the private sector, and the NGO community who are engaged in developing their society into a liberal democratic one under the watchful eye of the donor. Partnership is no longer a concept linking donor and receiver but rather linking between them all the different components of the society which receives assistance.

Thus, together, the second and third chapters examine the circles of dependence created through an aid and developmental regime. They suggest that the Sri Lankan developing state is not only redefining its course in conceptual terms invented and imposed by the agencies, it also expected to follow, without ushering any protest, the guidance of the international financial bodies and funders in general with regard to what in reality constitutes development.

The fourth chapter ("Sovereignty and Humanitarian Relief Organisations") analyses the relation between humanitarianism in Sri Lanka and state sovereignty reading autobiographies of three relief organizations: International Committee of the Red Cross, United Nations High Commission for Refugees and Medecins sans Frontieres. The chapter argues that the formation of a global civil society founded on an allegiance to human rights, which transcends state sovereignty and claims an ideological and territorial domain for itself, does not actually constitute a denial of sovereignty as a concept. What these post-national formations are moving towards is a share of sovereignty and the constitution of rival sovereignties.

Certain missing links in the 'circle' needs to be highlighted here. The author says that factors of production move freely in this globalised world. But, how freely the labour, as a factor of production, is given access is questionable, especially in the wake of perception of new threats arising due to such access. More and more of restrictions are in place. The 'alien' labour is also facing increasing attacks from the fascist forces of the host countries. An argument is also placed that costs of communications are on the wane due to information revolution. But how far is it equitable? Only less than five per cent of the world population is benefited from this. The corresponding figure for the developing world averages to not more than 0.4 per cent and that too enjoyed only by the higher ups (*Human Development Report*, 1999); the rest continue to suffer from 'communication gap'.

It is also not clear why the author leaves out the vital aspect of relations among the NGOs and how they impinge upon the governance of Sri Lanka. Moreover, at times, is it not true that the NGOs complement rather than challenge some of the state's welfare functions? In fact, before the rise of the nation-states the societal groups were mainly responsible for social services in remote areas where the state was unable to penetrate. Thus, in many countries, social mobilization and self-help groups are rooted in cultural and social traditions. Being a historian it is surprising why the author has failed to peep into the past—to examine whether such tradition exists in Sri Lanka.

Conceptually, it is confusing whether theauthor means 'Humanitarian Relief Organizations' (HROs), Commuity Based Organizations (CBOs) and 'Non-Governmental Organizations' (NGOs) as the same or different. Such confusion arises when all the four essays are read together as a book. Also, the book fails to define categorically what is meant by 'civil society'. It is also surprising that she raises definitional problems of NGOs in the final chapter than to steer clear them in the very beginning (in fact, she defines NGOs in Chapter – III, p. 76). Thus, the problem of incompatibility between the 'parts' and the 'whole' persists. "One of the consequences of NGO interest in financing schemes has been a significant change in the personality and culture of the NGO", is an important and interesting observation, but goes unexplained (p. 103).

Methodologically, sampling technique used by the author seems unscientific not only because of the smaller size of the samples but also in their identification. The chapters (especially the second) are more general in nature than on Sri Lanka.

The author has used certain non-Anglican terms like '*deux ex machina*' (p. 88) and '*ni Ange ni Bote*' (p. 160) leaving the reader to wonder what exactly they mean, though contextual understanding is not denied.

Surprisingly, there will be disappointment if one tries to look for policy inputs in terms of recommendations/suggestions. While the chapter conclusions are summaries of the concerned chapters, the concluding chapter seems mere compilation of all the chapter conclusions.

However, the volume reflects meticulous research and good review of literature by the author. Issues involved are critically looked into with utmost objectiveness. The style of 'narrative' is laconic. No doubt, the book leaves the reader with enrichment on various aspects of the subject. Bibliography is extensive enough to guide for further reading and research for those interested in the area. Printing is error free except one ('miqht' to be read as 'might', p. 32, ln. 27). The book undeniably is a monumental contribution in this area of research. To W.H Auden, "A real book is not one that we read, but one that reads us". Here is a real good book, as it not only reads "us", but "them" as well.■

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So Near, Yet So Far

Subir Gokarn

TRADE, FINANCE AND INVESTMENT IN SOUTH ASIA
Edited by: T. N. Srinivasan
Social Science Press, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 476, Rs. 650.00

By the standards of regional groupings, South Asia, variously represented by the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), the South Asian Preferential Trading Area (SAPTA) and the yet-to-materialize South Asian Free Trading Area (SAFTA), must be seen as one of the most ineffective. With the possible exception of Africa, regional economic cooperation in virtually all parts of the world appears to have allowed the less prosperous members of such groups to improve their economic status. Asia itself is host to successful groups like ASEAN and the broader APEC.

It is relatively easy to find explanations for South Asia's performance in this regard. One is the absence of a dynamic and relatively affluent economy whose weight the grouping is able to leverage on. India obviously should have been playing this role, on the basis of sheer size if not dynamism. Unfortunately, both by accident and design, the internal market itself is too fragmented to allow the basic degree of mobility of goods, services and factors of production that a successful grouping needs. Beyond this, there is the baggage of the conflict between India and Pakistan, which makes it very difficult to separate the issues relating to the region as a whole from the bones of contention between the two.

The unfortunate consequence of these barriers is the relative lack of knowledge and familiarity about each other, particularly amongst the research communities in the various countries in South Asia. This has all the makings of a vicious circle—no interaction, therefore no knowledge and therefore even less possibility of interaction in the future. The dangers in this are obvious and have provoked a number of attempts to build bridges outside the traditional diplomatic channels. One of these, the South Asia Network of Economic Institutes (SANEI), was initiated in 1998, with some financial support from the World Bank and coordinated by the Delhi-based Indian Council for Research in International Economic Relations (ICRIER). The programme funded a number of research studies of the region. Some of these have been compiled in the form of the book under review, which has been edited by Professor T. N. Srinivasan, who was a member of the advisory panel for the programme.

Besides a fairly detailed introductory chapter written by the editor, the book contains eight studies. Five of these (Rajesh Chadha, I. N. Mukherji, Sanjib Pohit and Nisha Taneja, Mustafizur Rahman and A.R. Kemal *et al*) deal with the issue of trade, either from a broader regional perspective or with reference to a specific country or countries. Two chapters (Ashok Guha and Amit Ray and Sisira Jayasuriya and Dushni Weerakoon) examine the issue of foreign direct investment. The last chapter (Ajay Mahal) looks at the issue of health policy in the Indian context, with particular reference to the private provision of health insurance. Of the eight contributions, five are by Indian writers, with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka providing one each.

In his introduction, Professor Srinivasan contrasts the performance of the South Asian region with the other prominent groupings, showing how low the degree of integration has been with respect to trade and investment flows. The fact is that, until fairly recently, all the regional economies were relatively closed, so their mutual interaction mirrored their transactions with the rest of the world. Domestic restrictions, as was mentioned earlier, also played a part in deterring greater integration. While he touches on the various reasons for the relatively weak performance, one would have wished for a more explicit analysis of whether South Asia provides a feasible basis for a successful economic grouping.

For example, it has been argued that countries with essentially similar factor endowments—essentially, abundant labour—will find it difficult to realize significant gains in efficiency from integrating. This argument has to be qualified in a number of ways—most of ASEAN's members also have similar endowments to each other—but it would have been useful to have an assessment of the conceptual merits of SAPTA or SAFTA. Is geography enough to make one conclude that these arrangements are a good idea? Or, are other things necessary? If so, which of these things are amenable to policy interventions and which are simply immutable?

Professor Srinivasan makes an important point, though, in his assessment of the value of SAFTA in the broader context of the evolving world trade regime. He argues, quite correctly in my opinion, that all the South Asian economies have far more to gain from a more liberal and accommodating regime than from a movement towards greater regionalism and the consequent shutting out of countries that are not in any of the major groupings. The least that one could have expected from them, then, was a united platform in favour of a new round. Well, we now know that the new round will take place, but there is clearly no sign of South Asian unity or coordination. The argument in the chapter suggests that all the countries involved will lose as a result. Implicit in this perhaps is the judgement I was looking for: SAFTA does not have much future as a stand-alone regional agreement, but there are always benefits to coordination in the global arena and these should be taken advantage of.

The eight papers are a mixed bag and serve to validate the opinion expressed earlier—South Asian economists know relatively little about their neighbours. Three of them—Chadha, Mahal and Guha and Ray—are interesting and well-articulated papers, but they do little to advance the theme of the project. Chadha's paper, which estimates the welfare gains to India from trade liberalization measures, would have been more relevant to the collection had it attempted an assessment of how Indian liberalization would impact on its trade with its neighbours. Even without a full-scale simulation, some judgements would have enormously informed the debate on the effectiveness of the existing bilateral agreements, with which nobody seems to be happy.

Similarly, Mahal discusses the health insurance systems of several affluent countries, but no perspective is provided on the nature of the systems, or lack of them, in South Asian countries other than India. Guha and Ray do a comparative analysis of foreign direct investment in India and China. They emphasize the relative importance of Overseas Chinese Residents (or Non Resident Chinese in our "exclusive" terminology) in channelling investment flows into China, whereas investment into India is dominated by multinationals. The paper makes the interesting point that it is the Overseas Chinese investment that has been instrumental in fuelling the Chinese export boom. MNC investment in China, like in India, is essentially oriented towards the domestic market. The relative insignificance of NRI investment obviously leads to the "what if" question: could the Indian export scenario have been any different if these flows had materialized? Clearly, the economic profile, not to mention numbers and regional spread,

of Overseas Chinese is very different from the NRIs. Supposing India provided as good an investment climate as China. Would we attract any investment from commercially minded overseas Chinese? If the answer is no, then the analysis of the paper underscores the inherent Chinese advantage in attracting foreign investment and suggests that gross comparisons between the two are not warranted.

Two papers—Pohit and Taneja and Rahman—look at bilateral trade issues in the region. The first paper compares patterns of informal trade between India and Nepal and India and Bangladesh respectively. The factors driving this channel of trade are identified through multivariate analysis of questionnaire responses. The dominant factors on both borders are transactions costs of formal trade, including all the barriers that the respective governments put in the way of trade and the level of education of the traders. The significance of this channel of trade strongly suggests that, from an economic perspective, there is a high degree of integration between border communities, which is unfortunately threatened by the arbitrariness of the borders. Rahman looks specifically at trade in services between India and Bangladesh. He provides a detailed analysis of Bangladeshi imports of health and education services, mainly by movement of the consumers of these services across the border. He points out that this is an overwhelmingly one-sided set of transactions and argues for a strengthening of the service provision capabilities in Bangladesh to counter this. From a more general comparative advantage perspective, though, this conclusion is a bit puzzling. Are these sectors consistent with the economy's competitive strengths?

Three papers—Mukherji, Kemal *et al* and Jayasuriya and Weerakoon—take a pan-regional view. The first two address trade issues and the last, foreign investment. The first two analyse highly disaggregated trade flows to develop their respective blueprints for increasing the degree of regional integration. Their scope precludes their being as pointed in extracting their conclusions as the other papers and, in my view, underscore the great difficulty in looking at the region as a whole through a common analytical framework, uncomplicated as it may be. The third takes a look at FDI patterns in South Asia, both in terms of inflows from the rest of the world and intra-region. The analysis draws on a conventional location argument, based on the tension between proximity to markets and centralized production to exploit economies of scale. The paper argues that intra-regional flows are likely to be largely driven by proximity-driven activities, mainly services, but would need to be facilitated by the nature of the regional agreement.

Overall, this is a good collection of papers, but it is clear that there is some way to go before the objectives of the network are achieved. Looking at the prospects of taking this venture forward, two things come to mind. One, researchers should be required to establish cross-border partnerships for proposals to be considered. My impression is that this was indeed done in the second round of the programme; we shall have to wait and see what this compulsion produces by way of richer research output. Two, it appears that viewing the region as a set of "national" entities tends to distort the picture. Perhaps sub-national comparisons might be more appropriate if one is trying to understand the natural and man-made factors that drive economic performance. For example, the two Punjabs could be compared, or Sind and Gujarat, or Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu or Kerala. "India" aggregates and therefore averages out the distinct features of its several distinct regional economies.

The bottom line is that the divide in the region is so vast that anything that contributes to mutual knowledge helps. By that token, this certainly appears to be a worthwhile programme, which, with some refinement, can achieve the twin objectives of closing the gap and generating research output of reasonable quality.■

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Identity Politics

Fernando Franco

COMMUNITY AND IDENTITIES. CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSES ON CULTURE AND POLITICS IN INDIA
Edited by Surinder S. Jodhka
Sage Publications, New Delhi, in association with The Book Review Literary Trust, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 269, Rs 300.00

The richness of the book lies in the clarity with which the recent debate on community and identity has been presented. It may not be the last word on the matter, but it is a voice that must be listened to attentively if one is to make sense of the present predicament.

It does not seem customary nowadays to start a review with a clear-cut evaluation of the book in question. But custom needs to be thrown to the winds occasionally. The book is a very lucid, coherent and systematic account of the general theme of 'identity politics' in India and is an indispensable tool for sociology students and budding scholars trying to unravel the fuzziness of the term 'community', and to discover the new renaissance of the concept of 'identity'. Born in a workshop dedicated to the theme of community, culture and identity organized by the Department of Sociology, Hyderabad University, and enriched by contributors who prepared special articles for the publication, this book is divided into four parts: the first four articles provide a conceptual framework; the next four deal with the role of community and identity in caste, class and politics; two articles touch the effects of globalization on communities; and the last two consider women and Christians as special types of 'communities'. The intellectual framework of the discussion is set around Partha Chatterjee's well known plea to understand the non-western, non-homogenous and unbound serialities of modernity, and the state. It is not certainly by chance that nine out of the twelve contributors have quoted him.

The conceptual clarification undertaken in the first part traces, on the one hand, the roots of the debate on community to the well-known distinction between *gemeinschaft* (a community of solidarity) and *gesellshaft* (an interest group), and, relates, on the other, the discussion of these two concepts to the evolutionary theories of modernization that overvalued the rationality inherent in the interest group to the detriment of primordial communities (Jodhka). In a tightly constructed piece, Carol Upadhya underlines the tenacity of a substantivist (primordialist) conception of community to reappear even in more constructivist approaches (for example, the one developed by Partha Chatterjee), and to this extent, "it is not clear how Chatterjee's argument offers a way out of the dichotomy trap" (p.46). The effect, adds Upadhya, is that other groupings based on the market or the state are perceived as less authentic because they are not communities. After treading wearily over Sasheej Hegde's post-modern, or perhaps Derridean vagaries, I encountered some difficulties with Ravinder Kaur's definition of 'community' and 'identity'. If we adopt a symbolic approach to understand community we may conveniently avoid the problem of agency, that is, the work of those (to put it somewhat harshly) who construct and reassert the community by generating new symbolic instruments. There is also no need, as she says,

to stick to primordial concepts of identity. Identities shift and evolve, for example from Muslim Bengalis, to Bengali Muslims. The point is well taken, but to state that "communities and ethnic groups become assertive when they realize that their boundary is getting blurred" (p.91), is to fall back into a grotesque postmodern scenario where boundaries appear to get blurred by some strange design of their own. The heuristic power of this model to explain recent events in Gujarat remains woefully inadequate and dangerously vague.

Javed Alam's contribution opens in style the second part of the book. He singles out two crucial characteristics of the changes taking place in the politics of caste. *First*, a number of caste groups (Yadavs, Kurmis, Dalits) have rejected the varna markers of their identity as well as the patron-client relationships of the *jajmani* system, but have made use of caste affiliations to fight for a political place in the democratic polity. In this sense, "they have become a community in any sense of the term" (p.103), but this appeal to caste ought not to be considered 'casteism'. All said and done, and to remain within a more liberal Marxian framework, we must hasten to add that the subjects of these new identitarian caste movements are suffering from 'collective unfreedom'; are engaged in a battle for 'bourgeois equality' (no pejorative sense intended); and they are being led by the newly constituted middle class in each of these jatis. *Second*, there has been a '*decomposition*' of the consciousness of the educated upper-caste elite expressed in the fracture of their long-held illusion that they had transcended caste-barriers. By embracing wholeheartedly the values of Hindutva, they have unabashedly adopted a casteist position. Muslims, according to the same author, have also moved in the same direction as the OBCs and Dalits: they have stopped identifying themselves with the Muslim 'gentry' (upper caste might have been more appropriate), and have been mobilized horizontally either by Mulayams (OBCs) or by Mayawatis (Dalits). These new politicized jatis ought not to claim the unalloyed virtues of nativist or primordial communities. We should not be blind, the author poignantly remarks, to the internal inequalities and injustices existing in them, especially towards women.

The set of empirical 'case studies' of various communities presented in the second part highlights the need for each community-in-the-making to develop a clearly identifiable enemy, and to coax the state to name or define them as a reserved group. In coastal Andhra, the Kapus— a broad caste name comprising many sub-jatis brought together by the shared resentment against the Kammas' domination— fought to obtain the official status of OBCs granted to their counterparts in Telengana (Parthasarathy). A.R. Vasavi recounts the manner in which the Lingayats of Gulbarga and Bidar districts of Karnataka, re-interpreted an inclusivist, and anti-caste religious movement of the 12th century (Virashaivism) into an exclusivist, and caste conscious Rashtriya Basava Dal constituted along the lines of the RSS. The motivation was provided by the establishment of Dalit Sangharsha Samities in most villages. Vasavi also describes the efforts of the enterprising Nadar community of Tamil Nadu, through the Nadar Mahajana Bank Share Investors Forum, to pressurize the Reserve Bank of India into not allowing the Essar group to take over the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank patronized and owned by the Nadars. Sujata Patel describes the mobilization of various communities in Baliapal (Orissa) to oppose the establishment of a missile test range in an area of around 115 sq. km. devoted profitably to the cultivation of *paan*. These case studies highlight the variety of contexts in which groups are interpellated to become communities. These cases, I venture to add, reveal two traits that have not been sufficiently emphasized: the role played by an identifiable leadership, and the importance of purely economic interests in mobilizing people. The boundaries between '*gemeinshaft*' and '*gesellshaft*' have luckily been fudged forever.

The sense of community among Indian Americans appears at the same time as an "expression of nostalgia, symbolizing an act of cultural return" (p.175), as well as a "nostalgia for the present' (p.176). As Aparna Rayaprol skillfully explains, the identity of first-generation immigrants is both a faithful reconstruction of the past (the Sri Venkateswara temple in Pittsburgh) and a consumerist nostalgia of the latest Indian music, spices and food. The second generation, however, are more prone to assert their American identity, but the "burden of being 'Indian' seems to be on the women in the community more than on men" (p.183). It is a misfortune that the author does not equally stress the unfair cultural reconstruction of caste differences among the immigrant communities. Satish Deshpande's attempt to analyse the cultural changes of the Karnatak-Bombay region with the help of a statistical analysis of language data from the census and a study of the migration of three generations of his Brahmin family remains appealing but somewhat inconclusive.

Christians in India, as Rowena Robinson rightly remarks, do not constitute a homogeneous community, and the specificity of each community is the historical result of carefully negotiated boundaries with other social groups inside and outside the 'Christian' fold. My misgivings of an otherwise comprehensive account are based on three grounds. While highlighting rightly the commonality between various religious groups in negotiating 'ghosts and spirits', one might have added that subaltern Christian groups have generally been much more successful in sharing cultural traits with their counterparts than the efforts by elite groups to impose from the top Brahminical patterns of 'inculturation'. The tendency of the popular Pentecostal movements to withdraw from any social and political commitment to the marginalized should have been highlighted. Finally by concentrating on the South and the West, she misses the specific characteristics of the tribal communities in central India, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh.

The last contribution by Anupama Roy problematizes the difficulties of creating possible spaces for women's struggles when the discourse on citizenship has been appropriated by proponents of Hindutva. The 'politics of the possible' advocated by Kumkum Sangari, focusing on expanding the freedoms of women within each of their cultural communities, seems, for the time being, the only meaningful strategy.

The richness of the book lies in the clarity with which the recent debate on community and identity has been presented. It may not be the last word on the matter, but it is a voice that must be listened to attentively if one is to make sense of the present predicament. I cannot resist the temptation of paraphrasing Derrida's answer to a question about his opinion on the importance of community. The significant moment of a community, he says, is when it transcends the boundaries of its created and negotiated boundaries.■

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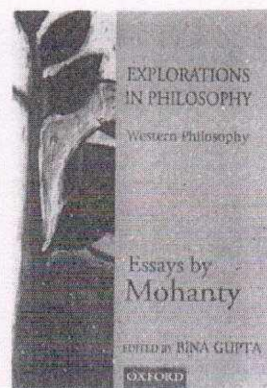
Rationality of Indian Thought

Vijay Tankha

EXPLORATIONS IN PHILOSOPHY: ESSAYS BY J.N. MOHANTY
Edited by Bina Gupta
Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 229, Rs. 495.00



J.N. Mohanty's latest collection of essays and reviews brings together papers, addresses and book reviews of the 80s and 90s. The 19 essays in this book bear on central themes in Indian philosophy and on the nature of Indian philosophy.

The essays are grouped into three sections, the first looking at very general issues about the nature of Indian philosophy, the relation between theory and practice, contemporary attitudes to the study (or practice) of philosophy. The second part consists of six short essays on Vedanta, Buddhist and Nyaya epistemology and theory of language. The last part brings together writings on more recent thinkers including Gandhi and K. C. Bhattacharya as well as reviews of three influential studies of Indian philosophy.

While the essays range over a wide variety of topics, there are at least three principal questions that Mohanty considers about Indian thought: Is it rational? Is it essentially 'spiritual' (and therefore not properly philosophical)? Is it essentially practical (and therefore not really amenable to simply academic study)? The claims are inter-related. Thus it might be claimed that if Indian thought is not rational (in some sense of 'rational' derived from unspecified standards set by 'Western' canons), this is so (the apology goes), because it is (not materialist but) spiritual. The proof of its spirituality is clearly shown in the fact that it is practical (and not at all theoretical). Some version of such an argument is shared by Hindu apologists, spiritualists and 'intellectuals educated in the western tradition'. It consists in a general feeling that Indian thought does not meet the high intellectual standards set by the western philosophical tradition, and finds for it another stance which makes what is 'inferior', superior, what is not 'rational' better than rational etc.This has the effect of freeing teachers and students of Indian philosophy from the rigours of an academic discipline.

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Two studies of the role of *sabda pramana* look at the rationality of Indian thought. While it is admitted that there is nothing in Indian philosophical terminology that quite maps on to the term 'reason', nevertheless, there are very general criteria adhered to by all schools, in which the role of both argument and proof are central. To be rational is not to be dogmatic, to be open to argument and to be able to respond fruitfully to genuine criticism by changing your views. Within the ambit of what is called Indian philosophy one of the sticking points is the tradition's adoption of *sabda* as a *pramana* (means of valid knowledge). This is a category used by some schools, e.g. the Purva Mimamsa, to claim that scripture (principally the Veda), is infallible. *sabda,* which can simply be translated as 'word' is the only means of knowing Shruti. Not only is *sabda* a *pramana,* it is privileged among the others. Is this a way of legislating dogma? Of making room for some class of statements that are not open to critical reflection? If so, there would be some support to the claim that Indian thought is not rational, in some sense of that term.

In his first essay Mohanty locates *sabda* as an integral part of the philosophical tradition. *sabda* emphasizes the role that language plays in shaping our knowledge. But does this nevertheless leave room open for insisting on the truth of some class of utterances which are not open to question, thus leading to the charge of irrationality? Mohanty points out that the criterion of rationality is internal to the theory (of *pramana* in this case) and there is no external concept of reason against which its rationality can be authenticated. In the model of knowledge to which *sabda* is integral, there is no further canon that one can appeal to. Is Mohanty simply begging the question? I think not, but the conclusion demands effort from us. There is a great deal of debate within the tradition about the status of *sabda.* The third essay, "Is there an Irreducible Mode of Word generated knowledge?" adds to that debate, looking at the nature of linguistic understanding in general (without tying it to any incontrovertible body of text) in terms of the doctrine held by Nyaya. Mohanty produces a critique of the Nyaya school by showing that it had no adequate answer to questions like "What does a competent speaker of a language grasp when he hears an utterance which is false?" While diagnosing the defects of the theory, Mohanty also gives us some account of the work that it does: "the main strength of the theory, and perhaps its original purpose, was to make room for a distinctive way of knowing about a domain of objects which cannot be known otherwise: supersensible objects such as God, afterlife, soul, karma.... (and the domain of) ethical duties (*dharma*)." We seem to be back then where we started. But concepts too serve their masters only up to a point. While *sabda* may have been designed to account for the possibility of certain kinds of knowledge (scriptural), it gained a life of its own and became part of the currency of philosophical exchange. It served to anchor the notion of the *apta,* or (moral) authority, without whom moral practices would be reduced to mere conventions. Mohanty's own investigation, critique and understanding of the concept of *sabda,* is part of what he means by the self-renewal or self-interpretation of a tradition.

While considering the dichotomy of practical/theoretical as a false one, if its aim is to show that Indian philosophy is not theoretical because it is practical, Mohanty shows that an interest in practice does not mean that theory (or doctrine) is of no importance. Even where there is an overt soteriology, it does not follow that there are no theoretical advances. Having said this, in an all too short essay, "Practical Rationality in Indian Thought' Mohanty explores the doctrine of the *purusharthas* or aims of life and attempts in his interpretation of it to locate the possibility of altruism, (notoriously absent in the moral tradition espoused by the orthodox schools). He writes, "Each of the three—artha, kama and dharma, begin with desire, but as desire is refined each undergoes a transformation...each point towards it (moksa), artha through the idea of universal utility and general welfare, of maximum altruism, kama through the experience of rasa, and dharma through egoless performance of duty..." Now you will not find any such description in the canonical literature about moksa, but then that is Mohanty's point: a tradition must reinterpret itself or

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become dysfunctional and therefore useless: such a reinterpretation is what may be described as change from within. Indeed anyone familiar with the development of the Indian tradition knows that it's apparent ability to resist change was by changing without seeming to change.

The reinterpretation of tradition is the only means of both rejuvenating it and keeping it alive. Mohanty gives as an example Gandhi's reinterpretation of the term varna, which he intepreted to "mean not a hierarchy of status but a system of family inherited skills, so ordered as to avoid a competitive economic system". As is well known, terms like karma, yajgna and dharma underwent, in course of time, significant shifts of meaning: there is no monolithic Indian tradition, there never was an ideal past.

On the essentially religious or spiritual character of the Indian schools, Mohanty makes some cautionary and sensible remarks in the essay "Advaita Vedanta as philosophy and religion". Distinguishing various senses of the word 'religion' and 'religious', he finds none of them really applies to Advaita. The closest sense, in which religion is regarded as an 'inner experience' and the resultant feeling of sacredness, might give Advaita the overtones of a religion, but, in its experiential aspect (a part of its theoretical and philosophical stance), it is at best a phenomenology of consciousness and not one of religious experience. But as he says, we do not have to be bound down to the contrast between philosophy and religion as two and only two alternatives.

These essays provide informed and stimulating reading, though in their brevity they lack the sustained argument of in depth studies. There is indeed a real need for the kind of overview that follows only after many footnotes have cited the nitty gritty of arguments unravelled. This volume does have the merit of following more general themes, and some of the insights that the author offers the reader are in the nature of that authority of the word, which the tradition itself makes central to its concerns. Merely because a claim is not backed by a footnote does not make it dogmatic, what makes for dogma is unargued repetition. Readers of this book will find little or none of that, and many fine insights and a critical stance that should become an authoritative model in our own academic practice.■

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Whose was the Failure?

K.P. Fabian

GANDHI: A SUBLIME FAILURE
By S.S Gill
Rupa & Company, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 268, Rs 295.00

Born in Lahore, having moved to Delhi as a student at the time of Partition, joining later the Indian Civil Service from which he retired as Secretary to Government of India in 1985, S.S. Gill is eminently qualified to write on the subject he has chosen. His earlier books, *Dynasty—A Political Biography of the Leading Ruling Family of Modern India* and the *Pathology of Corruption* have been well received. Gill writes with ease and warns the reader that there might be "large gaps" in the narrative as it is neither a biography nor a history of the Freedom Movement of India. He is considerate enough to confide in the reader that "writing the book was not an easy task, and reading it may not be a comfortable experience".

A book such as the one under review consists of arguments and supporting narration. We start with one of the principal theses of the author which can be summed up as follows:

> It is wrong to state that Gandhi liberated India; the ground reality is that territorial colonialism, with the end of the Second World War, had ceased to be a "viable enterprise". Sir Stafford Cripps told the British Parliament on March 1947 that Britain had "two alternatives" —either to maintain her hold over India by a "considerable reinforcement of troops" or to transfer power. "The first alternative had been judged impossible...We in Britain had not the power to carry it out". Briefly, the Titan gave up as he was too exhausted.

In support of his main thesis, Gill advances another argument: Apart from the Gandhian method, India had two other options, one of using revolutionary violence and the other waiting for the completion of the "incremental constitutional reform" which commenced in 1861. Referring to the constitutional path, the author argues that Gandhi's noncooperation and civil disobedience movement "retarded this process as they were highly confrontationist and created bad blood from the British point of view". As regards the path of revolutionary violence, "it is quite conceivable that the revolutionary course pursued under an inspiring leadership would have kept communalism under check and, hopefully, averted the country's partition". The author makes the point that the constitutional approach might have prevented the Partition or at least avoided the holocaust. In other words, the author is advancing the thesis that it was Gandhi's method which might have delayed independence and made the horrors of Partition unavoidable.

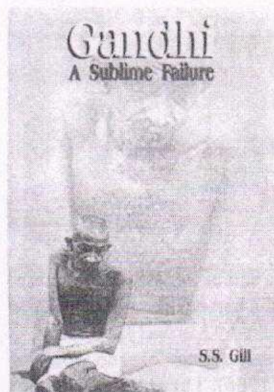
It is important to examine the thesis with cold logic and objectively. The thesis of the exhausted Titan has been advanced earlier too, for example, by Michael Edwards in *The Myth of Mahatma* (Constable and Company, London, 1986). The argument can be easily disposed of. Gill says that territorial colonialism had become a nonviable enterprise and quotes Cripps to the effect that a "a reinforcement of troops" was required to hold India. Gill should have paused to ask why more troops were required and why had territorial colonialism ceased to be viable. The unstated premise is that an awakened India could not have been held without additional troops. Who was responsible for India's awakening? I have talked to people older than Gill and they have told me that there was a time when more people in more parts of India had enthusiastically shouted "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai" than "Bharat Mata ki Jai" for the reason that India as a political entity came into being as a result of the struggle for independence waged under Gandhi. If some of the British officials had their way, India might have disintegrated into a number of independent countries even before Vallabhai Patel had the opportunity to integrate the princely states in the masterly way he did.

While Gill has concluded that colonialism ceased to be viable by the end of the Second World War, the fact remains that many countries got their independence only in the 60s and even later; Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the two Congos, Ivory Coast,Gabon, and Benin gained independence in 1960, followed by Algeria and Burundi (1962), Gambia (1965), Fiji (1970), Bahrain (1971) and Brunei (1984).

The decolonization process took a long time and any attempt to explain it as an inevitable and automatic consequence of the Second World War is historically untenable. Post hoc ergo procter hoc is not an uncommon fallacy.

The author's arguments about the constitutional path and the revolutionary path, remind one of Blaise Pascal who said, "Had Cleopatra's nose been shorter, the whole face of the world would have changed". We start with an attempt to decipher the intentions of the British establishment:

- August 14, 1917, London. The British Cabinet was discussing the declaration to be made by the Secretary of State for India Montague in the House of Commons. Ex-Viceroy Curzon explained his objections to the use of the word "self-government", because Indians would expect it to happen within a generation, *'while the cabinet probably contemplated an intervening period*



which might extend to 500 years'. "Self – government" was missing from the declaration. It is true that some Indians who shared Gill's faith in the goodness of the British and even others mistook the Curzonian expression "responsible government" whereas he only meant "government by responsible men" as explained by his biographer.

- 1929, New Delhi. The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, issued a statement to the effect that 'the natural issue of India's constitutional progress', as contemplated in Montague's declaration of August 1917, was 'the attainment of dominion status'. All the 'experts' on India including former Viceroys and Secretaries of State—Birkenhead, Peel, Winterton, Simon Austen, Chamberlain and Crewe—were scandalized by the specific reference to the dominion status for India. The Labour government was put on the defensive.
- In 1930, the Simon Commission in its report, studiously avoided 'dominion status'.
- Gill is all praise for the federal structure of the 1935 Act. Sir Samuel Hoare who piloted the bill in the Commons confided in his Conservative colleagues, that the federal structure could be a handy instrument to yield '*a semblance of responsible government and yet retain in our hands the realities and verities of British control*'.
- 1939. The Viceroy Linlithgow, (who had been the Chairman of the Joint Select Committee of the British Parliament for constitutional reforms), reminded Zetland, the Secretary of State for India: "After all, we framed the constitution as it stands in the Act of 1935, because we thought that was the best way—given the political position in both countries—of maintaining British influence in India. *It is no part of policy, I take it, to expedite the constitutional changes for their own sake, or gratuitously to hurry the handing over of controls to Indian hands at any faster pace than we regard as best calculated on a long view to hold India to the Empire*"

Compare all the above with our author's confident assertion: "There is every reason to believe that the dynamics of the reform process could not be frozen at the level of the 1935 Act, and the grant of Dominion Status was the next logical step. *And as argued earlier, the grant of full independence in the mid-forties had become inevitable in any case.*" A comment is in order: At least one reader has not been able to locate in the book the argument referred to by the author.

Another major thesis of Gill is that Gandhi signally failed in his endeavour to promote Hindu-Muslim unity. "In 1924, when large-scale riots followed the withdrawal of Non – cooperation, he wrote, 'We shall have to go for *tapasya*, for self-purification, if we want to win the hearts of the Mussalmans.' Here the word 'we' shows that he is speaking as a Hindu, trying to win the hearts of the 'other' party. Also it implies that Hindu hearts are in the right place and only Muslim hearts need to be won over." Gill has not understood the context, Gandhi was addressing himself to Hindus and *not speaking as a Hindu*. Since Gandhi has asked the Hindus to do *tapasya*, it follows that the author's deduction that Gandhi meant that the Hindu hearts were in the right place is unwarranted and the whole sentence is even self-contradictory.

A word about narration. As part of the narration of events leading to the Quit India movement, we are told, "*All of a sudden* Gandhi seemed to have become more agitated and impatient than anybody else. He told Louis Fischer in the beginning of June, 'I have become impatient…I may not be able to convince the Congress…I will go ahead nevertheless and address myself directly to the people'. " It is necessary to recall that after the failure of the Cripps Mission, the Viceroy ordered the local officials in the area facing a possible Japanese attack to carry out a scorched earth policy that would impede any Japanese advance. As an official in Calcutta harbour recalls, "(Scorched earth) orders came through to collect and immobilize all bicycles…Then it was the turn of country boats. Cycles (although counted in thousands) were not numerous in this riverine district, but boats were there by (many) thousands, and they were the lifeblood of the community……". In March 1942, when Rangoon fell, the British evacuated their nationals by air and left the Indians to fend for themselves. There was a distinct possibility that Japan might invade India. It was against this background that the Congress under Gandhi passed the Quit India resolution that called for an immediate end to the British rule *on the understanding that a free India would do everything in its power to support the Allied war effort*. In brief, the author's narration is neither logically complete nor historically adequate.

Our author has used quotations without giving the full context. For example, he has lifted out of context Gandhi's words, "The Muslim as a rule is a bully, and the Hindu as a rule is a coward". Any interested reader might refer to Anand T. Hingorani's book *To the Hindus and Muslims* summarizing Gandhi's writings, available at the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Library at Teen Murti. Briefly, Gandhi was speaking in the context of the Multan riots where in one case Hindu men ran away leaving in the lurch their women and children and Gandhi made the point that the men, if they did not have it in them to practise the nonviolence of the strong, should have defended their family by whatever means at their disposal. Gill finds fault with Gandhi for what he said about the Hindu men and accuses Gandhi as speaking as a Hindu and advocating violence against the Muslims. To put it mildly, this was not expected of the author who had made use of the Nehru Memorial Library as mentioned in his Acknowledgements.

We are living in an age when it is fashionable to be ignorant of history. President Bush seeking support from Moslem countries in his war against terrorism asks them to join in a *crusade*. My niece, 18, born of Indian parents and brought up in the US once told me that she had no idea of history. Ignorance of history is spreading at an alarming rate even among the adults in India, especially among the middle class. As a society, we have not taken the trouble to inculcate in our people curiosity about the past. Lack of historical knowledge can engender pernicious attitudes. Let me give an example: My neighbour's driver told me that Muslims and Christians are "guests" in our country and they are welcome so long as they behave; once they start to misbehave, they should be shown their place. I asked him how long the Muslims had been in India. He did not know and hazarded the guess that they had been in India for one hundred years at the maximum.

Apart from ignorance of history, there is another pernicious tendency, namely, to simplify and to falsify it. It has been said that a historian is even more powerful than the Almighty as the former can change the past which the latter cannot.

Indira Gandhi once said that one's ability and willingness to understand Gandhi is a measure of one's maturity. Gill's book should be read as he has articulated with clarity and put in one place what a growing number of middle class Indians enchanted by globalization have been feeling for some time. To get a balanced picture, it should be read along with at least three other books: B.R.Nanda's *The Making of a Nation;* Ranbir Vohra's *The Making of India;* Raja Rao's *The Great Indian Way: A Life of Mahatma Gandhi.*

How would have Gandhi reacted to Gill's book? The Mahatma, with that famous toothless smile, would have agreed with Gill in toto and recited from the *Gita*:

> He that laboureth rightly for love of me,
> shall finally attain;
> If in this thine faint heart fail, bring me
> thy failure.

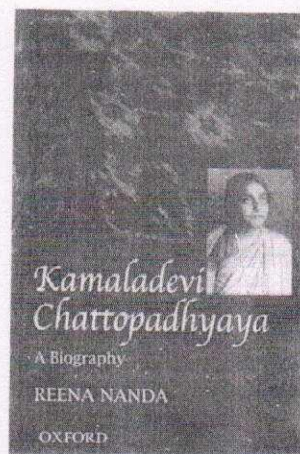
But the question for the people of India to introspect upon is: Whose was the failure? His or ours?

K.P. Fabian is a former member of the Indian Foreign Service.

Inner Recesses, Outer Spaces

Vijaya Ramaswamy

KAMALADEVI CHATTOPADHYAYA: A BIOGRAPHY
By Reena Nanda
Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 168, Rs. 345.00



This is not the first biography of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya nor will it be the last. Her multifacetted personality reflected myriad aspects of Indian political and cultural life making her a compulsive subject of biographies. However, the biography under review will stand out for its crisp readability and perspicacious handling of a difficult, in fact enigmatic, subject.

I hope it will not be seen as an intrusion if I begin this review with a personal reminiscence. In 1976 I registered with the History Centre of Jawaharlal Nehru University on a subject regarded as whimsical at its best and impossible of completion at its worst—'The Weaving Communities of Medieval South India'. Following a method described as 'history in reverse gear' I began by moving from one weaving village to another in the greater part of South India gathering weaver folk songs, oral histories and traditional designs. It was in the context of the revival of Telia, Mashroo, Kalamkari and Pochchampalli that I heard of the Grand Czarina of Indian culture. Twenty years after her I was treading those still poorly chartered areas with fewer resources at my disposal. Kamaladevi had begun by buying rare sarees from the weaving villages she visited. The Kamaladevi collection eventually became the nucleus of the resurrection and revival of traditional textiles. It helped me to weave the textual past of India's textiles into the living present.

Kamaladevi has been called 'the mother of the NGO (Non-Governmental Organizations) sector and is credited with the foundation of the 'All India Womens' Conference'. She was the key figure in founding India's premier cultural institutions—Sangeet Natak Academy, National School of Drama, the Cottage Industries Emporium on New Delhi's Janpath (she even thought of the Bankura horse as its mascot) and the state emporiums selling the authentic crafts of India. For her crastsmanship 'grew from the village community, its joys and burdens, the change of seasons, the memories filled with song and verse, legends, myths and local rofmances, from the core and substance of their daily existence... they wove a rough and forceful art' (Nanda: 126).

I have begun my review from the wrong end of this book taking up the last thirty odd pages first. Consciously so since despite the fact that two thirds of this biography is devoted to her passionate involvement with the freedom struggle, the Socialist cause and women's issues, Kamaladevi today is remembered more for her invaluable contribution to India's traditional handicrafts than anything else.

Kamaladevi was born into a Gaud Saraswat Brahmin family in Mangalore. At the age of eleven she went through marriage and was widowed when she was twelve. But thanks to her mother Girijabai she never suffered the cruel fate of Brahmin widows exemplified in the life of 'Ṛaniyamma'. She moved to Chennai, came into contact with the talented but volatile Chattopadhyaya family and married Harindranath Chattopadhyaya at the age of sixteen. The mercurial Harindranath—poet, actor and intrepid philanderer opted out of marriage soon after. In 1927 when he had moved to England and other 'affairs', he wrote that he had already "outgrown the first madness of early love". They were formally divorced in 1933.

Politics of gender, labour and freedom from imperialism, which had always engaged Kamaladevi's attention, became a life-mission and an obsession replacing all personal preoccupations. Perhaps the only exception was her son Rama who is however only a shadowy presence in the saga of her life.

Reena Nanda situates Kamaladevi against the political background of the 1930s and 1940s. Her association with Dr. N. Hardikar got her involved with Hindustan Seva Dal. The influence of Margaret Cousins caused her to contest elections to the legislative assembly in 1923 from Mangalore which she lost by 600 votes. It was eventually Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy who made it to the Madras Legislature through nomination (Kamaladevi was rejected on grounds of her avowed radicalism). Her first major participation in the Gandhian struggle of satyagraha was the Salt March. She hawked the salt that she had made from door to door even daring to offer it to the judges as 'the salt of freedom'. It was perhaps her involvement with swadeshi that eventually led Kamaladevi into her 'tyrst with destiny'—salvaging Indian handicrafts.

Kamaladevi's entry point into the women's movement was through Margaret Cousin's Women's Indian Association of which she became organizing secretary in 1927. She went on to found the All India Women's Conference of which she became the President in 1944. Health and child care formed major issues at these conferences along with the introduction of vocational training for women in nursing, embroidery and sewing, stenography and cottage industries. The establishment of the Lady Irwin College was one outcome of these early efforts. Feminist historians have severely critiqued women like Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya on the grounds that they were reinforcing and fostering gender stereotypes by focussing on certain areas to the exclusion of others. Kamaladevi's resolution which used phrases like "ideals of motherhood and beautifying the home" have specially come in for flak. The biographer Reena Nanda makes the very pertinent comment that such teleological assessments overlook the tremendous difference that these early women activists made to the quality of life of women by generating employment and ensuring a certain degree of economic independence for them. One can take Nanda's arguments further by saying that for women workers, creches and female health care have to take precedence over other vital labour issues like equal wages. The credit for securing for women maternity leave and other benefits should go to women activists like Kamaladevi, Margaret Cousins, Saraladevi Chaudhurani and many others.

Reena Nanda's chapter dealing with Kamaladevi's intense involvement in the Socialist movement is aptly titled 'The Brain Fever of Socialism'. In company with well known Socialists like Jayaprakash Narayan, Minoo Masani, Achyut Patwardhan, Ram Manohar Lohia, Ashok Mehta and Yusuf Meherally, Kamaladevi perceived the Congress as 'bourgeois oriented' with a tendency to marginalize peasants and workers. Unfortunately the Socialists began as an off-shoot of the Congress—Congress Socialist Party—and never succeeded in casting off its shadows. Kamaladevi was in fact coopted into the Congress Working Committee neutralizing her to a considerable extent.

In the post-independence years Nehru found a useful (and safe?) slot for Kamaladevi as the head of the Handicrafts Board and the rest as they say, is history.

Reaching the end of this highly readable biography one is still left wondering about Kamaladevi, the woman. What was she as a private individual? What was the relationship between her and her only child Rama who figures in this biography as a name and no more. She comes alive when sharing poor prison conditions with economically and socially unprivileged women or when taking up labour issues but these are still public spaces. In this entire biography there is just one place (p. 96) which gives a pen portrait provided by an American friend Hilda Wierbun Boulter "a little woman inclined to be plump who sat quietly, her face so expressionless. Suddenly some remark interested her...her face lighted up...the woman came alive...one brief glimpse and she withdrew into herself...leaving us more bewildered than ever". Reena Nanda points out that this same quality of personal anonymity and public presence characterizes Kamaladevi's autobiography—*Inner Recesses, Outer Spaces*.

To recover the inner person behind the public mask may need yet another biography.■

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Relevance of Theological Education

N.B.E. Bharathi

THE CHRISTIAN CLERGY IN INDIA VOL I: SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL ROLES
By T.K.Oommen & Hunter P. Mabry
Sage Publications, Delhi, 2000, pp. 375, Rs.450.00

The book is an outcome of a research for more than a decade undertaken from various angles in order to understand, improve or make theological education in India more relevant to the context. The method of study is empirical with a conceptual framework for analysis and interpretation. It deals mainly with the Protestant Christians in India. Seven social categories, namely, the teachers in the theological colleges, residential students, external students, theologically trained women, (TTW) heads of churches, pastors and wives of pastors comprises the study under the broader title 'clergy'.

The first part deals with the social structure of the clergy, while the second concentrates on social roles.

The first chapter gives a concise history of Indian Christianity highlighting the main issues that confronted it. Tracing from the origins of the St. Thomas Christians the authors bring out how they were very much autonomous and Indian. Later the influence of the Portuguese and the Protestant missionaries had changed the image of Christianity in India by associating it to the colonial powers and the West. The Indian Christians who were under dual imperialism strove to come out of this image through efforts of Indianisation of Christianity in terms of their identity and ideology. The authors also bring out the diffused identity of Indian Christians, which is highly fractionalized basing on denominational, regional, linguistic and caste identities and how the negative image of Christians in India is far from reality.

While chapter two gives a demographic picture of the clergy, chapter three deals with their background. It is identified that the Indian clergy is predominantly from the peripheral nationalities, namely South Indian and from the subaltern nationalities of the tribes. Though the majority of the Christian population is from rural background, the clergy in general are from urban background and highly educated. The second line support group, i.e. the external students and TTW who cannot take the core responsibilities in the church, also belong to this category. While the percentage of the first born son having at least one more brother are the highest in number among all categories of the clergy, majority of the TTW come from larger households. Christian ministers are predominantly drawn from families engaged in farming, teaching and preaching, who fall under the middle class families.

Dealing with the social status in terms of caste and class, the authors observe that the ethos of family life is of great importance in motivating one to pursue theological teaching and Christian ministry, for mostly they belong to families who have been long standing Christians. While 60% Christians are from the scheduled caste and backward caste background, more than 40% of the heads of churches, 31 % teachers and 36 % TTW are from the 10% Christians of high caste background. Caste divisions still persist among Christians. Economically Christian ministers fall under the lower middle or the middle income group.

The chapter titled 'Occupational career and aspirations" show that, in general be it with the residential students, external students and the TTW, the dominant ethos is to acquire higher qualifications, even though a large number of external students do not want to give up their secular jobs. Theological teachers are involved in a variety of ministries. However, field exposure as a prerequisite for theological teaching is being ignored in the present context. The authors observe that a balanced programme should be evolved where the teachers would be in touch with the present realities of the congregations and the changes that are taking place in that context.

Chapter six 'Women in the Church' brings out how these theologically trained women, even though a miniscule, had to face opposition from their families even to get into the seminaries, in the seminaries and later on in their ministry in the church. Most of these women are self-motivated, self-confident and purpose oriented women. Some of them coming from denominational backgrounds, which do not ordain women, do not find it a discrimination against women. However, the percentage of those who desire to be ordained, increase after joining the seminary. We also find that most of the theologically trained women are not employed according to their qualification even though there is dearth of trained clergy in the church. Pastors' wives are inadequately trained for their expected tasks.

For the purpose of analysis of the Christian clergy working in seminaries and parishes the authors make use of the concept of 'kit of role theory'. For them status refers to the static and role to the dynamic parts of one's position in society, institution, organization and event. The concept of role is dimentionalized as role motivation, role commitment, role preference, role performance, role relations and role conflict. By taking this conceptual framework they note that the place of work, the quality of

The authors fix the role milieu of the Indian clergy in the larger context from which they perform the role, namely the cultural pluralism of India and the place of Christianity in this pluralistic context.

training, the values held, determine the role structure.

In the chapter on 'Role motivation and commitment', the authors observe that the major motivating factors for the study of theology are to enhance one's own knowledge of the Bible, a sense of God's calling and to meet some social obligations. This motivation is seen to have helped sustain them in their career in spite of the low income of the clergy and also developed their commitment to the profession they have chosen. This commitment is also manifested in their positive attitude towards their profession, the desire to continue their studies or increase their knowledge, to continue in the same vocation and even encourage their own offspring for the same career.

The authors fix the role milieu of the Indian clergy in the larger context from which they perform the role, namely the cultural pluralism of India and the place of Christianity in this pluralistic context. Theorizing that the role milieu influences role perception, role performance, role relations and role conflict in the work of the clergy, the authors make various observations. For the teachers, their characteristic professional activities are teaching, administration and research. It is observed that the milieu of the colleges is a hindrance for the teachers in their research and ability to publish. While the obstructing factors are institutional, the facilitating factors are largely personal. Overburden in administrative tasks makes the heads of the churches feel the necessity for more training in administrative skills. The parish, which is the role milieu of the pastors, makes their role performance difficult, for they have to deal with various issues in the parish. Coming to the training, there is need expressed by almost all the respondents to have a better training in religious and secular dialogue and the importance of training for different ministerial roles. While the pastors felt the need for more training in evangelism, counselling, social problems and biblical studies, the heads felt the need of better training in administration and social sciences.

Taking that to be a professional, role image is conformity to prescribed rules, client satisfaction, own work satisfaction, in chapter eleven the authors find that the content of the role images of the pastors is highly professional. Based on the finding that their role images, role satisfaction, and role time correspond to each other considerably, the authors conclude that Indian pastors are integrated professionals. Thus, they observe that the role preference and role satisfaction of the teachers have varied depending on their age group, educational qualifications and background. However, there is a general level of satisfaction expressed by all of them in teaching. Age, social origins and rural and urban background have influenced the heads of the churches in being innovative in their professions. In general pastors have given more of their time to the tasks which gave them more satisfaction.

In the chapter 'Role Performance: Clergy and Citizen', the authors analyse role performance with reference to role situation. Their study reveals that pastors who are performing roles, which are comparatively away from the mainstream like the congregations, are more politically oriented than the pastors who work at the grassroot levels. In general pastors are more church oriented than community oriented.

In terms of relationships and conflicts it was found that overall the teacher-student relationships in the seminaries seem to be about right, though not too cordial nor too strained. Even though friendships among students are to a certain extent cosmopolitan, the preference is more towards language groups. Ideological tensions prevail between the churches and colleges if they are interdenominational colleges.

Dealing with the value-orientation of the Christian Clergy, the authors bring out that an overwhelming majority of the clergy believes in a personal God, which is more conducive for secularization of the society and for peaceful coexistence. It is also observed earlier that non- Christians hold a positive image of the pastors which is seen as 'conducive to facilitate authentic religious pluralism – that is, dignified coexistence of different religious communities.' Moreover, theological education does increase secular orientation. With regard to the practice of gender equality, it is not the ethos of the colleges which has the final say but the attitude of the denominations that determines it.

Even though the data is obsolete, the strength of the book is in the analytical observations. It is an eye opener to the society and specially to the church and clergy at large regarding who, why and what clergy are all about. Interestingly some of the observations which are made, though came out late, are already being rectified or implemented by the theological colleges especially under the Senate of Serampore.

Writing in 2000 the authors could have been cautious of the terminology used in the book, like 'clean castes', 'untouchables' 'respected and respectable high castes', which can always be called into question in the present day context.■

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The In Culture

Partho Datta

CASSETTE CULTURE, POPULAR MUSIC AND TECHNOLOGY IN NORTH INDIA
By Peter Manuel
Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001, pp.302, Rs.595.00

It speaks volumes for the politics of the global publishing business that this topical and extremely relevant book on contemporary mass culture of North India brought out in 1993, should be made available to Indian readers only now. Big publishers and high profile University Presses abroad sustain quality academic publishing at a price, usually in dollars. What it effectively means is that Indian readers are sometimes denied access to the latest publications for years to come. The University of Chicago Press originally published Peter Manuel's book and now that finally there is an OUP edition, it is disappointing to see that it is in hard covers and priced steeply. The author writes rather sheepishly in the Preface that the book has at last made it to its "natural readership" – the English speaking educated classes in India. Peter Manuel is an ethnomusicologist well known for his numerous publications, particularly on Indian classical music. His book length essay on *thumri* is, as far as I know the only treatment of the subject in English. Less accessible but more interesting is his CD anthology *Vintage Music from India* [Rounder Records, USA, 1993] which reproduces 78 rpm discs by vocalists from the early twentieth century. Peter Manuel's perceptive sleeve notes for this CD showcases his enthusiasm for a wide variety of Indian musical forms. Manuel belongs to a small band of distinguished American and European ethnomusicologists which includes Daniel Neumann, Bonnie Wade, Joep Bor and others who have over the years sustained and encouraged scholarly research on Indian music abroad.

Manuel's is an in-depth ethnography and theoretical meditation on the content and impact of the very expansive "cassette culture". He argues that the technological innovations in the new media [video, photocopy machines, fax, satellite, audio cassette etc.] have for the first time made it possible to challenge the one-way control of the old media [cinema, television, radio etc.].

Since the first edition of this book has already been reviewed in academic journals and Indian serials [as the blurbs on the cover show], what follows is a brief summary of some of the main themes. Manuel's is an in-depth ethnography and theoretical meditation on the content and impact of the very expansive "cassette culture". He argues that the technological innovations in the new media [video, photocopy machines, fax, satellite, audio cassette etc.] have for the first time made it possible to challenge the one-way control of the old media [cinema, television, radio etc.]. Cheap duplicating technology in the field of audio recording has significantly empowered local cultures. Folk forms especially music have now been able to step out of the face-to-face community and travel in eminently portable cassettes to working class diasporas in the cities. The revolution in technology has meant that cassette players are now as cheap as transistor radios. Of course Manuel admits that while challenging the monopoly of the established industry including the traditional distribution networks [T-Series began for instance by retailing their cassettes in local *paan* shops], cassette culture has played no small a part in strengthening and propagating patriarchal and communal values.

In a fascinating chapter at the end of the book Manuel briefly looks at the social and political impact of this new culture. The distribution of cassettes has been used to whip up communal frenzy and riots [the Ram Mandir issue in the 1990s] and during elections for capturing votes, as also for recording bawdy songs, the latter a heady mixture of the "filmi" and the folk. On the flip side, but in a limited way, genuinely radical and feminist organizations like Jagori and Manushi in Delhi for instance have produced accessible recordings of songs for raising social consciousness and encouraging activism.

Drawing on media theory and cultural studies, especially that of Marxists like Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, Manuel has posed important questions on issues like homogenization vs. diversity, grassroots expression vs. elite indoctrination and alienation vs. authenticity. Manuel is very good on the political economy of the developing music industry and his observations on India's film culture are also full of insights. He writes that unlike the West, popular music styles in India did not evolve as an expression of alienated youth or class subcultures. Due to the uneven development of capitalism, big corporate houses do not necessarily control Indian music cultures. Thus the new pop-folk genres have developed with little influence from the film industry. Interestingly the spread of cassette culture is more widespread than other consumer demands. In other words while the market has helped circulate a variety of cultural goods, it has at the same time not ensured the full-fledged permeation of market values.

The bulk of Manuel's book is devoted to studying various musical forms like devotional music, *ghazals* and *rasiya*. There is an interesting chapter on what Manuel euphemistically calls "the politics of parody" which in plain terms means plagiarization. Interested readers will even find a short list of such tunes compiled by the author at the end of the book. Manuel hints at the formation of social identity and political community through the mediating role of this new technology. His fine study will add greatly to the debates on nation space and the public sphere – themes that a range of historians and social scientists are busy exploring today.■

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Daring, Fortitude and Hubris

Mohan Rao

COMPLICATIONS: NOTES FROM THE LIFE OF A YOUNG SURGEON
By Atul Gawande
Penguin, New Delhi, 2002, pp.251, Rs.250.00

This is a wonderful book, compassionate, intelligent and gripping, even if at times unforgivably innocent. Atul Gawande, an American surgeon of Indian descent, has put together a marvelous collection of essays – most of which had their debut in the *New Yorker* earlier.

This is a wonderful book, compassionate, intelligent and gripping, even if at times unforgivably innocent. Atul Gawande, an American surgeon of Indian descent, has put together a marvelous collection of essays – most of which had their debut in the *New Yorker* earlier. They cover a wide range of themes: the training of young surgeons, the mind-boggling mysteries of human life, diseases and death, the fallibility of doctors, and above all the ultimately personal stories of unique human beings, stories of daring, fortitude and hubris. The rich case histories are embellished by an impressive reading of the scientific literature and yet written in an eminently accessible language.

We are all agreed that doctors need training, and that the best training can only be provided by sheer experience. Yet when we are ill, we hesitate to be examined by residents and junior doctors, seeking instead the most experienced, the most qualified, super-specialist. The problem is not acute in countries where the government is the major provider of medical care: free wards and non-paying patients provide the rich field for training. But what in countries where people pay for services? Is it not reasonable that they pay for, and thus have the right to expect, the best? In which case how are young doctors to be trained? Starting with such questions, his own initiation into surgery, Gawande asks, is surgery a gift, for the elected? Or is it just blood, sweat and tears? Recalling the mistakes he makes early in his training under the watchful eagle eyes of a senior, he arrives at a point where he is supervising the work of junior residents. Along the way he harvests a rich collection of essays.

An extremely popular, if somewhat misplaced, history of health attributes improvement in human health to the almost miraculous power of science and technology and, concurrently, the enormous improvements in the practice of medical care. Physicians, surgeons, cardiologists (seldom pathologists or practitioners of para-clinical subjects, without which of course clinical medicine is impossible), those infallible God-like men (yes, they are largely men) of grace and power occupy a halloed centre-stage. This perspective has as much to do with shallow hagiographic history writing as with the enormous economic power and PR clout commanded by the medical-industrial complex, one of the largest industries in the world. In the real world of course doctors are merely tiny cogs, albeit well paid ones, in a large and relentlessly profit driven world. More importantly, this positivist history ignores the fact that the last quarter of the twentieth century, which saw spectacular advances in medical technology, has been accompanied by very little improvement in population health in the developed world. Indeed it has been accompanied by increasing health differentials between the rich and the poor. Of what use these technological marvels to the 40 million people in the US — the richest country in the world — with no access to medical care? While it is true that medical technology has the capacity to reduce suffering, even if does not improve health, it is equally true that these advances are not guided by epidemiological considerations, or indeed the concerns of patients and doctors. Are doctors then merely glamorous sales persons of the industry?

While Gawande does not raise these questions, a fascinating essay on why the fashion for autopsies has gone down throws light on some of these issues. Gawande points out that the fact that post-mortems in the USA are not performed as often as say twenty years back may well be a tribute to the greater diagnostic certitude of doctors. "Today we have MRI scans, ultrasound, nuclear medicine, molecular testing and much more. When somebody dies, we already know why. We don't need an autopsy to find out".

But this, Gawande discovers, is hubris How often do autopsies turn up major misdiagnosis in the cause of death? Hazarding a rough guess of one to two per cent, Gawande is astonished to discover that three studies done in the USA in 1998 and 1999 reveal a figure of close to 40 per cent. More surprising is the fact that the rates at which misdiagnosis is reported at autopsies has not improved since 1938. Another study at Harvard, comparing missed diagnosis at autopsies in 1960 and 1970 – before the advent of CT, ultrasound etc. – and in 1980, when they were widely used, found no improvement.

Gawande gives us glimpses of truly fascinating historical facts throughout his essays. In this one, for instance, we are told that the first autopsy in record, in 44 BC, was on Julius Caesar, revealing 23 wounds including the final fatal stab in the chest. The first documented post-mortem in the New World was in 1533 on conjoined female twins, at the behest of religious authorities who wanted to know if the priest baptizing the infants had erred in performing two baptisms. The post-mortem was to distinguish if Siamese twins had one soul or two. (In dexterous dissembling the Church decided there ***must*** have been two souls since these twins had two complete sets of body organs!)

Doctors, like all human beings are fallible. And yet do we have the right to expect them to be otherwise. What happens when medical mistakes occur? How does the system respond? How indeed can these mistakes be reduced to the lowest minimum? Who is to decide this minimum? Does greater specialization help? Does greater computerization and automation help? Gawande appears to believe so, although tentatively, in view of the data he cites above. Exploring these issues, the author notes that at any given time 3 to 5 per cent of practising doctors are unfit to see patients. Yet medical associations the world over are so reluctant to clean their Augean stables.

There are stories of defeat, there are also magnificent stories of courage, fortitude, and yes, life snatched from the gripping jaws of death. There are essays which tease, essays which haunt. One such is the story of Mary Noe, a white middle class Philadelphia housewife whose eight babies died mysteriously between 1949 and 1968. They were attributed to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). A series of extraordinary events saw Mary Noe brought to trial in 1999. An old woman now, she confessed to having killed her babies. Gawande recounting this story goes on to make the case that doctors today are extremely watchful for child abuse, recounting the suspicion that he and his wife met when they took their baby daughter to hospital for a fracture after a fall.

The Mary Noe story, indeed the story of SIDS, is the subject of a riveting documentary shown on BBC's Horizon. Noe's doctor – who went on to win accolades, and awards and head a well endowed SIDS foundation – it turned out, had doctored his data, and she was his star case. The guru of SIDS published his papers in the leading scientific journals of the U.S, including the JAMA. How culpable were the editors? One doctor fabricating data may be a mistake of judgement. But more than

Doctors, like all human beings are fallible. And yet do we have the right to expect them to be otherwise. What happens when medical mistakes occur? How does the system respond? How indeed can these mistakes be reduced to the lowest minimum? Who is to decide this minimum? Does greater specialization help? Does greater computerization and automation help?

1,500 similar articles were apparently published in these journals. Surely not all of the authors doctored their data? How are their findings to be explained? More interesting, a multi-billion dollar child monitoring industry sprung up in the USA and the UK despite a study in the UK finding no relationship between monitoring and infant deaths due to SIDS. Where there links between the medical technology industry and these doctors? Did they sponsor the studies? Their medical conferences? Was Noe, then, an inadvertent beneficiary of larger forces shaping medical care? Gawande raises none of these issues, thus divesting his essay of economics and politics, of a larger "impersonal" environment. While this gives the book immediacy, the relentlessly personalized account can also be misguiding.

A series of essays, brought together under the rubric of Mysteries explores such issues as the nature of pain, of the mind-body relationship, of morbid over eating, of blushing, indeed of ontology and epistemology. The master in this field is of course Oliver Sacks, who goes over these areas in a series of brilliant books: *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat, An Anthropologist on Mars, Awakenings,* and *A Leg to Stand On.* Very surprisingly Gawande's bibliography makes no mention of Sacks or of Antonio Damasio's classic, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain.* But Gawande's work is so eminently readable, so deeply promising, we can no doubt expect rich Sacksian feasts in the future.■

Mohan Rao teaches at the Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Communication

Herewith a review of S.J. Stephen's book on the *Letters of the Portuguese Jesuits* (Institute for Indo-European Studies, Pondicherry, 2001, pp. 390, Rs. 600.00), for publication in *The Book Review.*

I am one of very few persons in a position to see this book for the imposture that it is, since I have had access to the manuscript which S.J. Stephen has falsely appropriated as his own.

I feel that dishonesty of this kind should be exposed.

Pondicherry

Jean Deloche

In this book the author claims to have collected and translated from the original Portuguese into English the documents of the Madurai Mission, after many years of hard work in the Jesuit archives. We are therefore led to expect revelations based on a deep study of the Jesuit Letters. In fact the whole document, (377 pages) representing 96% of the book, is a *verbatim* copy of an existing translation!

The documents of the Madurai Mission pertaining to the years 1666-1701 were first translated from Porguguese, Italian and Latin into French between 1910 and 1919, by Father L. Besse, under the title *Lettres annuelles de la mission du Madure (1666-1701).* These letters were later translated from French to English by Father Augustin Sauliere, under the title *Annual Letters of the Madura Mission for the years 1666-1701*, cyclostyled text, Loyola College, 21 April 1945, pages 552, a few copies of which were made available in India. One of them is preserved at the Archbishop's House Archives in Pondicherry, and it is this last translation which has been shamefully ransacked by the author of the present book.

I carefully read the whole text and found that all the letters published by J.S. Stephen have been copied from Father Sauliere's translation, i.e. 503 pages! He has omitted a letter to Father de Proenza dated 15 August 1665 (pp.1-6), a letter to Father de Britto dated early 1684 (pp. 394-399) and the annual letter of the Mission for the year 1701 (pp. 516-533). He also failed to include the tables and precious notes by Father Sauliere (pp. 534-545).

We are shocked at such impudence. Father Sauliere is mentioned only incidentally by the author when he says that the old Jesuit used the original documents in some research articles! Moreover (and it is his only original contribution), to disguise his theft, the author has mentioned at the beginning of each letter the references of the manuscripts which he claims to have consulted. Example page 1: "This text is from the Original Mss Goa (a) ff 325-352, preserved in Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu, Rome". If he had consulted the manuscript in the Jesuit Archives in Rome, he would have found out that it was written in Italian (and not in Porguguese!) and, with more meticulous research, he would have easily discovered another copy of the same letter in Italian in Goa 54, ff 335r-358v. He has also modernized the spelling of placenames and administrative terms and, thus, we find *Tiruchchirappalli* for Trichinopoly, *Palaiyakkaran* for Poligar. Finally, the (deliberate) omission of three letters, including the first and the last ones, is probably a part of the same stratagem.

Father Sauliere, in his introduction (p.2), writes that "my English translation has all the defects of Besse's, plus those of my own contribution; the reader must therefore be cautious in using it". J.S. Stephen did not have such scruples and has even the audacity to write: "the archaic spirit of the original language has been retained in this translation"!

This is pure plagiarism and an insult to the memory of Father Sauliere. Readers may know of Father Sauliere as the erudite author of *Red Sand*, a fascinating biography of Father de Britto.■

Grain and Chaff

How clever of Rumina Sethi to devote nearly half the space to defending her own book while ostensibly reviewing our book *Literature and Nation* ("Reading against the Grain," *TBR*, March 2002, pp.27-28)! Would any reader of yours be able to infer from her lop-sided account that (a) reference to Sethi fills less than one page in our book of 400 pages, or (b) that the major texts we discuss run not "from Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*" but go further back, to the work of Sir William Jones, Warren Hastings and Edmund Burke, or (c) that they include not only "the usual *Kim, A Passage to India*, and *Kanthapura*" but also, in our context, the not so usual W. B. Yeats, Attia Hosain, John Osborne and V. S. Naipaul?

Nor is the elaborate justification by Sethi of her own "larger concerns" particularly persuasive. Her assertion that "any writing should be read against the grain" is far too facile and dogmatic, and her suggestion that it is not she but Raja Rao who is politically correct raises the discussion to the heights of "You did it! — No, you did it first!" We are all agreed that women in India do have many patriarchal battles still to fight, but surely that is not because *Kanthapura* does not show "any transformation whatsoever in their position." In any case, the novel does show such a transformation, as Sethi would see if only she could be persuaded to read that text at least occasionally with the grain.

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Between Two Worlds
East and West
An Autobiography
J. N. Mohanty

Between Two Worlds: East and West is a fascinating memoir by one of the most distinguished philosophers from India in recent years.

Beginning with wry reminiscences about his childhood years in Cuttack, J.N. Mohanty takes us on an autobiographical journey through India, Germany, and the USA. This is a journey that spans the globe not just literally, but also metaphorically, 'from East to West', as he charts the confluence, and sometimes conflict, of Indian and Western philosophical traditions. While he retrieves his roots in his village in Orissa, he also describes how his time in Calcutta and Göttingen shaped his mind and spirit. An early understanding and absorption of western social and political concepts as well as of Gandhian ideas led Mohanty to examine and evaluate his own culture, making him, in turn, sensitive to the fact that Western European and Indian thoughts correct and complement each other.

In this thoroughly engaging account of his life and work as a philosopher. Mohanty provides glimpses of some of the most well-known figures in Indian and Western philosophy as he recalls them. He reflects on the places he lived in and visited, with insight and affection. Responding to the world at large and taking stock of his life, Mohanty brings together remembrance and interpretation. As he remarks in the Epilogue, 'For myself, living this life has been, if successful, an aesthetic project.' Students and scholars of philosophy as well as general readers interested in Mohanty's life and work will find this profoundly thoughtful yet intensely accessible account, an absorbing read.

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Women in Indian Religions
Arvind Sharma (editor)

The essays in this book discuss the status of women across various Indian religions, keeping in sharp focus the various religious practices that concern them. Nine distinguished women scholars address issues pertaining to the position of women in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Baha'i, and tribal religions. Some of these issues include female foeticide, ordination, salvation, divinity, and acceptance of children of mixed parentage.

The essays — threaded together by an underlying need to dismantle gender stereotypes within a religious framework — also discuss marriage reform laws, exclusion of females from important memberships, and the politics of conversion.

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The Delhi Omnibus
Narayani Gupta/Percival Spear & R.E. Frykenberg

This collection of four books captures the essence of Delhi, India's capital and one of the world's legendary cities. Delhi's importance lies not just in its past glory as the seat of empires and its magnificent monuments, but also in the rich and diverse cultures that have arisen here. Taken together, these four well-researched books provide different yet complementary viewpoints on the history, culture and architecture, and urbanization of Delhi over the centuries.

Of the many visitors to India who have written on aspects of its history Percival Spear was an exceptional historian, explorer and teacher. *Delhi: A Historical Sketch* details the origins of the city while *Twilight of the Mughuls* traces the late medieval history of Delhi up to the end of the Mughal Empire.

Delhi Between Two Empires explores the socio-political history of Delhi from 1803, when it was conquered by the British, to 1931, when New Delhi was formally inaugurated. In this well-researched study Narayani Gupta provides a lively portrait of the city during a crucial phase of its more recent history.

Finally, *Delhi Through the Ages*, a collection of essays edited by R.E. Frykenberg, focuses on the strategic importance of Delhi, its architecture, the schools of philosophy that flourished here, the impact of modern religious movements on the city, as well as its urban growth.

In an introduction written especially for this volume, Narayani Gupta pays tribute to Spear, reiterating, with a sense of nostalgia unique to the older residents of this bustling city, that '"*Dilli dur ast*" will be even truer in the days to come than when Nizamuddin Auliya said it seven hundred years ago'.

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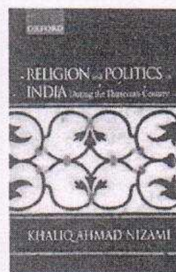

Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century
Khaliq Ahmad Nizami

For four decades *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century* has remained one of the most authoritative introductions to the history of this period. When it first appeared in 1961, it was hailed by scholars as a major intervention in the debate on the causes and consequences of the Turkish conquest of north India.

The book discusses at length the nature of the early Turkish state in India and the significant stages in the evolution of Islam in the subcontinent. It heralded the shift in Indian historical writing from an exclusively political focus to a more comprehensive social, cultural, and political analysis. Using previously untapped sources, it provides a much wider view of the world of both the rulers and the ruled. It places the early Delhi Sultanate within the context of its Central Asian neighbourhood and the wider Islamic world. This comprehensive analysis provides an unparalleled understanding of the nature of the Delhi Sultanate and, more generally, of the Muslim presence in India.

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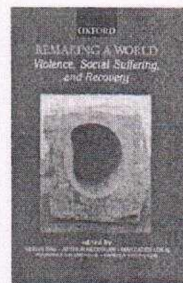

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