

EDITORIAL

This issue comprising miscellaneous articles and reviews is able nonetheless to address a few common concerns and questions, complex as they are, across disciplines and genres. Together, they present a kaleidoscopic view of the real or imagined political entity called India, its rich and complex cultural past and present. A few articles which deal with caste, language and communal identities have been included in this number. There is a distinct preoccupation with minoritarian discourses such as the ones over caste and language issues; but within these there are certain thematic overlaps too. True to the character of the journal, an attempt has been made to ensure that none of the articles is limited to the specialised discipline of the authors. That is, it is hard to point to articles which can be labelled strictly literary, sociological or purely philosophical in their orientation. Their main thematic or methodological provenance may or can be identified as characteristically within the limits of a given discipline, but then as the arguments proceed more often than not they trespass these boundaries.

The first article, drawing on multiple interlocutions with Sobho Gianchandani conducted in Urdu, has been cleverly interwoven and rendered into English by Asim Siddiqui. Entitled, the “Progressive Writers’ Movement in Sindhi Language and Literature,” the piece not only puts in interface the two languages, Urdu and Sindhi, it also tells the complex story of a major Sindhi playwright and short story writer and a member of the Communist Party of Pakistan that was banned in 1956. Continuing with the subject of language, and using a polemical tone, Lalit Kumar’s essay, “A Language without a State: Early Histories of Maithili Literature” dissects Jayakanta Mishra’s well-known *History* in an interface with Grierson’s *Chrestomathy*. It argues that the first history of Maithili literature was the culmination of the process of exploration of literary specimens initiated by Grierson, with the stated objective of establishing the identity of Maithili as an independent modern Indian language. Lalit Kumar contends that any proper examination of Maithili literary history is inseparable from the study of language. Devender Kumar in the third essay of the issue showcases, but does not limit himself to, yet another

neglected language, Haryanvi as manifested in its folk form. He takes up a particular genre of Haryanvi folk song, the titular “Jakari,” and uses it as the primary archive to study a woman’s “inner world.” He maintains that folk narratives of women “destabilize and deconstruct the dominant ideology of a society while using the popular modes and motifs of the folk tradition.”

Among the articles which address the issue of caste as it was used in political praxis, we find Alok Prasad attempting to correct the popular misconception regarding Nehru’s vision of caste, in his essay “Jawaharlal Nehru’s View On Caste-Based Social Exclusion,” He argues that the perception of many scholars and writers is stereotypical as well as ahistorical. Prasad tries to suggest that Nehru was neither blind towards caste-based social exclusion, nor did he “underplay its dysfunctional impact on India’s modernization project.”

Three essays included here focus on many complex consequences of the vivisection of the subcontinent both in the east and west. Koushiki Dasgupta in the article, “Muslim Businessmen and the Partition of Bengal,” shows that the Memon businessmen were mobilized and how the notion of a “home” has been codified by other criteria. It also shows, whether or not one agrees, that both east and west wings of Pakistan had their own structural problems.... but it was Calcutta which suffered the most. Not only it lost its pre-eminence as the major commercial and manufacturing centre in the eastern part of India, it went into decline rapidly. Neither Calcutta nor Dhaka could ever become a commercially promising city thereafter as history witnessed the death of what once had been a magnificent economy.” In his article, “Stigma to Freedom: Reflection of Caste and Identity in Poems of Vaibhav Chhaya,” Chandrasheel Tambe reflects on the problematic of political identity among the Scheduled Caste youths in Mumbai. He analyses a few selected poems by Vaibhav Chhaya to show the way they strive towards freedom de-casting Dalit identity, as identity issues of the “scheduled caste” youths are now to be situated in the context of globalization. He argues that Vaibhav’s poems “exhibit consciousness to rise against all forms of exploitation in present civilization.” Further, he says that “this inclusive identity is positive in the sense that it is not perturbed by the stigma and hence instead of emphasizing escape, it envisages movement towards freedom.”

Moving to another facet of marginalisation, Vinny Jain deals with early British responses to the condition of women in India, which were built around a selective reading of Indian epics and religious

texts. Through the examples of the selective British readings of Draupadi, she shows how nationalists got agitated, and how Bankim through his essay on Draupadi debunks these “misconceptions.”

Migration generates its own kind of marginality which is the subject of another article in this issue: “Filling the Gap: Distance between Heart and Feet,” in which Sapna Pandit analyses Rohinton Mistry’s iconic novel, *Such a Long Journey* and “re-reads “the Immigrant Experience.” Though the article confines itself to the domain of literary studies, the author also looks at the socio-psychological dimension of the experience of the immigrants. In her own words, her article “deals with the problematic of negotiating an identity.”

Kashmir has been caught, both literally and figuratively, in the crossfire between the two sides of the partitioned North-West sector of the subcontinent. Thus, towards the end of this issue of the journal, two articles focus on the conflict zone through literary texts set in the Kashmir context. These are Simran Chaddha’s “Cleansing the Valley: Salman Rushdie’s *Shalimar the Clown* and Mirza Wahid’s *The Collaborator*” and Manisha Gangahar’s “Manufacturing The Self and the Collective: Memory Politics In Life Narratives From A Conflict Zone.” Though they take up literary texts as their archive, they are by no means “literary” studies. In her piece Chaddha tries to explore one “dimension of ethnic assertion and the claim it stakes over land and territory, namely, the ethnic cleansing enacted in the valley of Kashmir against the Pandit community at a time when global geo-politics focussed on the intervention of communism in the region of Afghanistan.” Continuing with the theme of identity and displacement, Manisha Gangahar shows in her article how when much of the social and political life has turned into questions of recognition, the concept of identity poses a quandary.” She also asks, “[W]hen identity is comprehended as something that comes from the outside rather than something discovered as having existed within, narratives play a central role in providing a sense of identity.” Her paper, through a reading of life narratives from the conflict zone of Kashmir, shows “how memory is not merely a shadow or something out of control, but it is rather an alluring sanctuary.”

Finally, in his paper, “Global, National and Local Frames on Ecology and Sustainability,” which is somewhat of an outlier, Amarendra Kumar Dash “interrogates the rhetoric of denial and disengagement” in the discourse of environment? Following the method of critical discourse analysis, the brief study “expands our understanding of ecology and sustainability in a number of ways.”

The issue ends with reviews of two major publishing events:

Venkat Mani's *Recoding World Literature: Print Culture, Libraries, and Germany's Pact with Books* which aims to present a genealogy of 'world literature' and Mohammad Asaduddin's *Premchand in World Languages: Translation, Reception and Cinematic Representations*.

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