

Social scientists and political analysts still seem puzzled by the fact that Assam with its strong socio-cultural and historical links with the rest of the country and its deep involvement in the freedom struggle, should today be in the grip of a secessionist movement led by the United Liberation Front of Assam. It goes to the credit of UlfA that two major army operations and a split in its ranks notwithstanding, it has been able to carve out for itself a niche in the political scenario of the state and overall structure.

In his book Sanjay Hazarika tries to explore the trends in insurgency in India's North-east and relate it to the socio-economic and political developments of the region as well as the attitude of the Indian State towards the demands for greater autonomy by different ethnic groups. Hazarika's book in fact deals with the insurgent movements of virtually every state of the North-east, the focus of this review, however, is limited mainly to those portions which cover the origin and growth of insurgency in Assam. Hazarika, who possesses a sharp sense of history, takes the reader through the culture, society and politics of Assam with a sweep of his lively pen, adding many an interesting anecdote to heighten one's interest.

In the chapter entitled, "The Rise of UlfA", Hazarika traces the origins of the militant outfit and rightly observes that its founding members were largely drawn from the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), an organisation which was actively associated with the Assam Movement (1979-85) on the foreigners issue. Although the author does not see any connection between UlfA's Marxist pretensions and its talk of scientific socialism with the political ideology of the AJYCP, it would be relevant to note that several of the AJYCP leaders had been attracted to Marxism and had talked of a blend of Assamese nationalism with the ideals of an egalitarian society. Formed in 1978, the AJYCP has been active in demanding eviction of encroachers from tribal reserves (belts and blocks), the introduction of dual citizenship and greater control of the state over its natural resources. The more militant sections among the supporters of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) have always been attracted by the nationalist-socialist plank of the

CHARTING THE INSURGENCY IN ASSAM: POTENT CAUSES, UNRESOLVED ISSUES

UDAYON MISRA*

Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's North-East Sanjay Hazarika

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AJYCP. The AJYCP roots of the UlfA could, therefore, be of help in one's understanding better the ideological postures of the secessionist outfit. The author traces the one-time strong links which the ULFA had with both the All Assam Students' Union and the Asom Gana Parishad and shows how at a certain stage the lines dividing these organisations had almost disappeared, particularly during the concluding period of the AGP's rule.

The details about UlfA's links with Pakistan and Bangla Desh make interesting reading. One cannot but marvel at the success of the UlfA youngmen in building up an effective network with these foreign countries and their intelligence outfits within such a short a period of time. Throwing light on UlfA's connection with the Naga underground factions led by Muivah and Khaplang, Hazarika rightly points out the absence of any ideological commonness between the different insurgent groups of the North-eastern region and shows how armed training is given just for a heavy fee by both the Kachin Independent Army (KIA) and the NSCN. The author relates the fund-raising spree of the UlfA in 1989 to the demand for massive sums by the KIA for arms and training.

Unlike many observers who tend to romanticise the UlfA and its fight against the Indian State, Hazarika is quite alive to the middle class weaknesses of the militant organisation. Referring to the lavish life-style of the UlfA cadres, the author comments: "The advent of UlfA

brought a new style to the plethora of guerilla movements in the North-east. The Assamese widened the description of guerilla war in the region: from jungle camps and an uncertain income from the villages in the form of taxes levied by the Nagas and the Mizos the rebel movements soared to the five-star culture". (p.175) As a dominantly middle class-led

organisation, UlfA appealed to the strong sense of alienation of the average Assamese and tried to build up its mass base through certain well co-ordinated social welfare programmes which included the building of roads and embankments in villages. But these programmes were soon given up, although the Robin Hood image of UlfA continued to endure.

Hazarika effectively shows how the State abdicated its responsibility in the face of growing threats by UlfA and how the militant organisation succeeded with unimaginable ease in extorting crores of rupees from the tea sector and virtually ran a parallel government. Despite the extortions, kidnappings and killings by UlfA, a large section of the Assamese intelligentsia still sided with it, not to speak of the rural masses. They even justified the killings as done for a broader national cause. Finally, it was the crisis triggered off by the Unilever Group of tea gardens which led to the dismissal of the AGP government, the imposition of President's rule and the launching of Operation Bajrang in November 1990.

The conflict would surely not be confined only to the areas mentioned here but would also spread over to the question of sharing political power. As things stand today, more than 30 per cent of the members in the Assam Legislative Assembly come from immigrant pockets. Given such a situation, it is inevitable that the struggle for land and political power would assume new dimensions in the years to come, with the mounting Bodo attacks on immigrant pockets serving as an indication.

One wishes, however, that the author had gone into the causes which led to the growing disillusionment of a large section of the Assamese masses with the methods adopted by UlfA and why Operation Rhino succeeded, even if partly, while Operation Bajrang largely failed. When Operation Bajrang was launched, the UlfA's image as a patriotic organisation fighting for Assam's cause was largely intact and its leaders and cadres were given easy shelter by the people. But the discovery of mass graves at UlfA's Lakhpathar camp which the author describes as a "torture and picnic spot", led to the collapse of several popular myths about the organisation. It revealed a completely different face of the militant outfit and sent shock waves throughout the state. Strong doubts came to be raised about the ideological commitment and organisational structure of the outfit. Its cruelty towards its victims and its growing lack of sensitivity towards public opinion was later displayed again in 1991 when the Russian engineer Sergei Gritchenko and the ONGC engineer T. Raju were killed in a most shocking manner, as also in attempts to silence the press as well as in dealing with dissent within the organisation itself.

The author makes a valid point that right from the beginning, it was the military wing which dominated the organisation, thereby virtually marginalising the political wing: "Conventional insurgency places greater value on the political wing and ranks the armed group second. In UlfA, it appears that, apart from a brief time at the beginning, the military wing has always held sway, as it continues to do in the group that remains out of the talks" (p.234). This is a significant observation and could be applied to the functioning of most of the insurgent organisations of the North-east. Interestingly, during the initial phases of the Naga struggle led by the Naga National Council, the political and armed wings were clearly demarcated, with the former always in control. But, as the struggle progressed, the armed wing gained ascendancy and by the time the NSCN came into being the Naga underground had turned fully militaristic.

However, unlike the NNC, the UlfA has, all along been a militaristic outfit, rarely accountable to the

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people whom it seeks to liberate. The organisation had at no stage evolved any mechanism to test the will of the masses. This stands in sharp contrast to the initial stages of the Naga struggle when the NNC carried out an election boycott (1952) and organised a "plebiscite" to ascertain the wishes of the Naga people vis-a-vis their relationship with India. Given the authoritarian structure and militaristic functioning of UlfA, it was but inevitable that the organisation gradually got alienated from the people, with its initial support-base shrinking. This was perhaps best revealed in UlfA's Bangla Desh connection. In this, it seemed to be unaware of the pulse of the large majority of the Assamese people who viewed the liaison with Bangla Desh as an anti-national act. Therefore, it was only a matter of time for the UlfA to split, with one section of the leadership opting out of the path of armed struggle. Though the author credits the Assam Chief Minister, Hiteswar Saikia, for having brought about the split, it was actually the change in the ground realities and the people's perceptions which eventually led to this. It may be recalled that it was this same person who, despite the full backing of the Centre, had to give up his office following the Assam Accord of 1985. Therefore, it appears a bit simplistic when the author says that the Chief Minister and the Army General Ajay Singh have carved out the necessary "political and military space" for Assam and India. Given the intransigence of that section of the UlfA which still swears by independence and the growing complexities in the socio-economic scenario in the state, it is doubtful as to how long they will be able to hold on to such a space. For, the author himself says: "UlfA has a significant stake in the future of the Northeast. Its development of this role does not depend on merely the pro-talk group but also on how active the pro-war group, based in Bangladesh, continues to be" (p.235).

One of the major issues raised by UlfA has been that of the colonial exploitation of Assam and the Northeast by the Centre. It goes to its credit that despite all its ideological shortcomings, the UlfA is the first organisation committed to armed struggle against the State in the Northeast which talked of a

common programme for the different militant outfits to put an end to the "colonial exploitation" by New Delhi. Till the UlfA came up with the colonial thesis, all the other rebel groups, the NSCN included, were fighting for a rather limited goal, that of securing independence for their own "lands" and were enmeshed in their tribal utopias. Sanjay Hazarika rightly points out that the issues raised by organisations like UlfA are yet to be resolved while the Centre continues with its policy of insensitivity and exploitation towards Assam and the Northeast. He recalls the efforts of Assam's Premier, Gopinath Bordoloi, to secure the maximum autonomy for the state as far back as 1948, and how, each time, the Centre shot down Assam's just demands (p.81). In later years when the Centre cited defence reasons to deny a refinery to Assam and set up one in Barauni instead to refine crude from Assam, the then Chief Minister, Bishnuram Medhi, wrote to the Centre saying that "if Defence cannot undertake to protect the refinery in Assam, how will they protect the oil fields and the transport system in the Eastern region... we do not understand how the Defence will be able to protect the pipeline to Barauni, 140 miles of which will necessarily have to pass along the Pakistan border" (p.250).

Hazarika points out that ever since the first mass movement for a refinery in Assam, the people of the state have had to struggle with the Centre for the most legitimate of economic demands, whether it was for a refinery or a bridge over the Brahmaputra. Referring to the growing sense of alienation among the Assamese people, the author recalls Nehru's tearful farewell even as the Chinese forces were advancing following the fall of Bomdila. This event reminded the people of the region of the All India Congress's role regarding the Grouping Scheme which had almost handed over Assam and the Northeast to Pakistan and which was prevented, thanks to the efforts of Gopinath Bordoloi and the unstinted support from Gandhiji who asked the Assam Congress leaders to revolt and fight for Assam's autonomy and independence. The author points out that much of the state's grievances are genuine and have not received the attention they deserve from New Delhi. Thus, the causes

which have led to the rise of insurgency in the region are still very much there. The Centre, says Hazarika, continues to be the stepmother in Delhi.

Though the author does not draw any direct links between the issue of infiltration and the rise of insurgency, it is evident from his chapters dealing with migration from Bangla Desh that mounting pressure on land and the imbalance in the demographic pattern of the region have contributed largely to the rise of militancy. But Hazarika is sceptical of either deportation of illegal immigrants or anti-infiltration measures commonly mooted. He, however, suggests a set of long-term solutions which he feels will work: measures by the Indian Government to speed up the economic progress of Bangla Desh which in turn will encourage the poor Bangla Deshis to remain in their homeland; steps to control the flow of water from the upper reaches during the monsoon months by setting up small dams in the catchment areas; settling groups of people opposed to aliens on the Indo-Bangla border, and announcing a general amnesty to all immigrants in Assam. He also calls for a more healthy approach on the part of India towards border trade stressing that the partition of the country created grave problems for the people living on the border areas. He builds a case for the re-opening of river navigation which would greatly boost the economy of both Bangla Desh and the North-eastern region.

While all this may sound very convincing and right, the central obstacle to improved Indo-Bangla relations still remains the question of illegal immigration into Assam and the North-east from Bangla Desh and which upsets the delicate ethnic balance of the region. Hazarika himself says in an earlier part of the book that India cannot afford any more additional numbers from Bangla Desh (p.9): "... the 'Bangladeshisation' of eastern India is an accomplished fact... They (the immigrants from East Pakistan and then Bangla Desh) have voted with their feet and rejected Pakistan. It is an affirmation of their stake in the area. This means they are unlikely to go much beyond occasional low-level conflicts with other local communities, for they will not want to jeopardise their stay" (p.327). On this point the author seems to be

rather unduly optimistic and unaware of the tension being still released by the changes in the demographic pattern. The fear of the indigenous people or the autochthones of being reduced to a minority in their own homeland is a real one, however much analysts might juggle with census figures. The example of Tripura has been cited by the author himself. While in 1947 the tribals in Tripura made up some 93 per cent of the population, by 1981 they had been reduced by the immigrants to a mere 28.5 per cent. Therefore, it is but natural that the idea of active co-operation with Dhaka would be accompanied by fears of further immigration in the North-east. Moreover, would Bangla Desh give up its commitment to the idea of "labensraum" or more living space for its over-spilling population? Sanjay Hazarika, while discussing this concept, says: "It is the new Bangladeshi attitude to migration that has added an edge to the political and social problems that flow from it. A former diplomat in Dhaka spoke of the need for an International Demographic Order with the people of his country having the right to find a "labensraum", a haven.... Clearly, the "labensraum" is to be the North-east of India and other eastern states, setting up areas of potential conflict over natural resources, such as water, food, land and competition for jobs in government programmes and private enterprise" (p.29). The conflict would surely not be confined only to the areas mentioned here but would also spread over to the question of sharing political power. As things stand today, more than 30 per cent of the members in the Assam Legislative Assembly come from immigrant pockets. Given such a situation, it is inevitable that the struggle for land and political power would assume new dimensions in the years to come, with the mounting Bodo attacks on immigrant pockets serving as an indication. Therefore, it would be unrealistic to suggest that the immigrants would limit themselves to "low level conflict", whatever that may mean. Whether they want it or not, they would be drawn into the vortex of ethnic conflict and its resultant socio-political fall-out.

*Udayon Misra is a Fellow of Indian Institute of Advanced Study.

Erudite and ambitious, Sundara Rajan's *Transformations of Transcendental Philosophy* develops an extended argument about the fortunes of transcendental philosophy after Kant. Kant's metaphor of the Copernican revolution runs through the entire book—while the *Critique of Pure Reason* can be seen as effecting such a revolution in philosophy, turning the attention of philosophical investigation from the object of knowledge to the subject and to the limits of knowing, Sundara Rajan argues that the subsequent history of transcendental philosophy shows a second Copernican turn. The moments of this turn are (a) a phenomenological orientation in transcendental inquiry, and (b) a hermeneutic orientation within phenomenology. The latter involves what Sundara Rajan calls a process of "detranscendentalization". However, the author's scenario for the fortunes of transcendental thinking is optimistic: he sees in these moves a deepening of transcendental philosophy, and reconfigures them as seeds of a future retranscendentalization of philosophy.

There are two aspects to Sundara Rajan's narrative. One of them depicts transcendental philosophy moving towards a thematization of consciousness, towards a recognition of the constitutive role of consciousness, and then later on consciousness relocating itself as already in a world. The second aspect of the narrative traces the linguistic turn that informs these moves.

Sundara Rajan's argument begins with a discussion of Kant and some of his early critics—Reinhold, Shulze and Maimon. These thinkers are seen as adumbrating some of the themes that later come to occupy the centre-stage of Post-Kantian thinking on Kant's legacy. Reinhold's insistence on a metacritique that addressed the conditions of possibility of the critique itself, Shulze's sceptical reception of Kant and the orientation of this scepticism towards psychology, and Maimon's treatment of the thing-in-itself as a counterfactual ideal for knowledge—these are presented in the book as presaging the phenomenological orientation of transcendental philosophy in Husserl's work. Sundara Rajan does not address Hegel's work in detail at this moment in his argument—Hegel figures later in the narrative as

Philosophy's Transcendental Vocations

UDAY KUMAR*

Transformations of Transcendental Philosophy

R. Sundara Rajan

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embodying another transformation in transcendental thinking. The book contains a wide-ranging and scholarly discussion of the impact of Husserl's phenomenology on transcendental philosophy. Tracing the itinerary of Husserl's work, Sundara Rajan contrasts the Kantian and Husserlian conceptions of the subject and of history.

Merleau-Ponty, Ernst Cassirer, Paul Ricoeur, Karl Otto Apel and Richard Rorty figure in the narrative of *Transformations* as major actors. Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* is seen as a major moment in the linguistic turn in its addressing the Kantian question of conditions of possibility to the phenomenon of language and to symbolic forms in general. In his concept of natural symbolism of the human spirit and in his characterization of the sign/meaning relation in terms of the body and the mind, Cassirer is seen as anticipating the work of

Merleau-Ponty. Sundara Rajan sees in the work of Merleau-Ponty an affirmation of the primacy of the world, and a move towards a philosophy that assigns a participative rather than a constitutive role to consciousness. The primary focus of Sundara Rajan's work is the contribution of Paul Ricoeur in reinscribing the themes of rationality and communication in a hermeneutic framework. Sundara Rajan's sympathies are largely with Ricoeur, and in his own way of considering debates in philosophical thinking as moments that complement each other, Sundara Rajan's own work can be seen as of a Ricoeurian inspiration. Ricoeur's hermeneutics is seen as returning to the Hegelian theme of considering consciousness as accessible only through its works.

In the last chapter of the book, Sundara Rajan examines the movement of transcendental philosophy towards questions of community. The chapter begins with a recapitulation of Hegel's critique of Kant, and the consideration of self-consciousness in relation to the other. The work of Royce, Apel and Rorty are seen as further moments in this path that connects critique and community. Though a rehearsal of Apel's reading of Peirce, focusing on the primacy that Peirce assigns to language and the importance of the interpreter in his notion of the sign, the book points to a fusion of

the questions of language and community. In other words, the linguistic turn, in Sundara Rajan's narrative, functions as prelude to the notion of community. Even Rorty's anti-foundationalist conception of the function of philosophy as "to keep the conversation going" is seen as

an affirmation of community.

Sundara Rajan's astute philosophical skills are abundantly in evidence in the connections he establishes between philosophical debates and in the subtlety of the continuous narrative he extracts from them. Indeed, *Transformations* successfully preserves its dual character of being "a set of studies unified by a common thematic principle" and presenting an argument on the history of transformations in transcendental philosophy. Nonetheless, the narrative presented in the book, optimistic as it is, raises a number of issues. One may feel uncomfortable with the ease of the Ricoeurian complementarities, for example in the mediations effected between the structuralist and

pragmaticist notions of language, and may feel that they do not do justice to the contending notions of meaning and of the speaking subject. Reliant on a hermeneutics of trust, and trustful of a continuous tradition of transcendental thinking and perhaps of a coherent rational community, the scenario presented in *Transformations* has a somewhat uneasy relationship to the thought of Nietzsche, Freud and Wittgenstein. Freud appears in Sundara Rajan's text several times, and is seen as the prime example of a hermeneutics of suspicion. The lesson that phenomenology learns from Freud is that of the indirectness of understanding. However, Freud's threat is surpassed in the reaffirmation of a non-naive hermeneutics of trust. Some readers may find this move dissatisfyingly elliptical in that it does not address adequately the concept of the subject or of language that emerges from Freud's notions of the unconscious and of psychoanalytic interpretation. The questions raised by the relations between desire and representation, which Kant acknowledges in the third Critique, and their later formulations in Nietzsche and Freud, may make the task of a non-naive hermeneutics of trust complex and difficult. Wittgenstein's notion of language games is presented as an affirmation of the primacy of the intersubjective, but he is seen as in need of mediation by transcendental philosophy so that the pluralistic consequences of his thought can be avoided. Nietzsche too is seen as an "edifying thinker" who thought outside philosophical systems, but his relations to Kantian and Hegelian legacies may be much more intimate and complex. In his work, some may discern an orientation of the critique towards reason itself. This critique arguably involves a recognition of the violence that is implied in the activity of judgement and an insistence on the need for acknowledging this. It is this uneasy problematic of the darker side of reason that Sundara Rajan's narrative does not fully engage with. A debate with the philosophical critiques of modernity could be the next moment in the argument that Sundara Rajan begins in the *Transformations*.

*Udaya Kumar is a Fellow of Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

No new English biography of Rabindranath Tagore has been published since his Centenary in 1961. Therefore this book, jointly authored by a British and a Bengali writer, is to be welcomed. It compares favourably with the biography by Krishna Kripalani, written almost 35 years ago, in both style and content. Kripalani's somewhat arcane and cumbersome English is replaced by a crisp and readable text divided into 36 short, manageable chapters. The considerable volume of scholarship which has developed around Tagore in the last three decades has been faithfully incorporated, especially the large number of accounts of Tagore's impact in Western countries. The spade work done by Prasanta Paul for the production of an "ultimate biography", if such a biography can ever be written, has been fully utilised; Paul has so far published six voluminous tomes of his Bengali *Rabindra-jibani*. The collaboration of an authoress whose mother-tongue is Bengali and who has imbibed Tagore from her childhood, with an experienced journalist and writer who knows how to present facts, narrate a story intelligently, and, besides, has gathered experience with his biography of Satyajit Ray, may too be considered felicitous.

Andrew Robinson, presently the book editor of the *Times Higher Education Supplement* at London, has been going in and out of India for the last twenty years and has edited several volumes of Tagoreana. Krishna Dutta, a London school teacher, has translated widely from Bengali to English, including one volume of Tagore's short stories.

Soon after this new biography was published in the United Kingdom, it created a stir in the Indian media, particularly in Calcutta. This was due to a regrettable misunderstanding. The London correspondent of a Bengali daily had dispatched a one-sided report on some reviews which had appeared in the British press. The Bengali dispatch insinuated that the British reviews were not only dissatisfied with the quality of the book, but also passed derogatory remarks about Gurudev. It created an uproar with letters to the editor, commentaries and editorials pouring on to the pages of the vernacular and English press of West Bengal.

The simple truth is that Dutta/Robinson do not indulge in Tagore-bashing at all. Their judgments are

Rabindranath Tagore's New English Biography

Martin Kampchen*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE: THE MYRIAD-MINDED MAN

Krishna Dutta & Andrew Robinson

Bloomsbury, London 1995, 25.00

guarded, detailed, and backed by a great deal of documentation. Neither are they, however, afraid of revealing the facts when they seem to present Tagore in an unfavourable light. Further, only one of the British reviews I have perused, is altogether negative. Others contain phrases of unequivocal praise. Unfortunately, the reports which had set this controversy in motion, had selected the sensational parts which show Tagore being slighted and derided by British personalities such as Shaw, Russell and Larkin. These silly and unbecoming comments on Tagore tell us nothing about the poet, nor indeed about the general reaction of the British public to him. But the reviewers in England predictably pounced on them, and the Calcutta papers picked them up with a show of hurt pride.

All this was unfortunate and unnecessary. It is common knowledge among scholars that Tagore did not only receive respect and praise in Europe and America, but he was also misunderstood and made fun of. It is important to emphasise that these quotations do not dominate the tone of the book, but they merely illustrate these negative reactions. On the contrary, I discover in Dutta/Robinson's biography a general desire to write with sympathy, although they are keen to look behind the facade of solemnity and gravity which imprisoned the "myriad-minded man".

Soon after this controversy died down, the book became embroiled in a polemic of another, more serious, kind. The two British translators of Tagore's poetry from Bengali to English, William Radice and Ketaki Kushari Dyson, asserted that the biography made use of their translations without acknowledge-

ment. Did the authors plagiarise or not? For several months the two parties concerned traded charges and counter-charges in the newspapers. While this public debate has, mercifully, come to an end, the issue itself is far from resolved and is at present pursued by the three

respective British publishers. Here, not merely the questions relating to intellectual property must be faced; the discourse is a wider one, namely, how the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore will be projected to a Western readership in future.

My own—short—biography of Tagore in German language has made me aware of how enormously difficult it is to mould the vast amount of biographical material available in several languages and in three continents into an authentic shape. Dutta/Robinson's book is so highly documented from historical, political, social and literary sources that it is always in danger of being cluttered. This is especially true of the Introduction which loses its direction with the barrage of quotations and documentary facts. In the rest of the book, however, the facts are not merely heaped upon each other, but for the most part arranged so as to build up a perspective and provide an environment in which their judgements and insights appear sensible.

I still often wonder whether the authors are justified in making certain general statements about Tagore. Subsequent Tagore scholarship will have to rectify and balance some of them. This is a normal process in research. Besides, each general statement about a life is a risk, as it is bound to ignore the complexities and contradictions inherent especially within artistic personalities.

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I have discovered a number of factual errors, others will discover more. This is unavoidable with such a broadly based work, and many can be corrected in a revised edition. What is more important is that the authors have unearthed a great deal of new, hitherto unpublished material. This, along with the entire corpus of known and published sources, they have been able to weave together into a narrative which is convincing in its richness, delicate intricateness and searching honesty. At no stage the authors seem to lose control of the quantity of facts and the inner logic of the biographical narrative. This is an achievement requiring not only an excellent memory, good research skills, but also a large amount of psychological insight. The facts are interlinked plausibly. Summaries and evaluations of certain problems and issues are succinct and sometimes even quite moving. The uninitiated reader is never left guessing as to the meaning of certain actions and developments. Each of the chapters focuses on a period or an external event in Rabindranath's life. This enhances the readability of the book.

Some readers may suspect an anti-Bengal or anti-Santiniketan bias in the book. The author's general practice of spelling out the facts, as they perceive them, clearly and without undue reverence, could be construed as such a bias, because Bengal and Santiniketan are often the object of critical comments. Their validity has to be considered individually and then either accepted or rejected. I have myself read many essays authored and published in Bengal which contain less cautious criticism. Tagore himself was known to find a great deal of fault in his countrymen.

The famous British translator of Tagore's poem and short stories, William Radice, had (in a review for *The Statesman*) voiced one major objection to this biography, namely that Tagore emerges as a family man, social reformer, an educator, traveller and orator—but not as a poet. This is indeed the crucial weakness of this book. Dutta/Robinson do refer at some length to Tagore's short stories, novels, and, much less so, plays and essays, but make do with a description of content possibly adding some quotations about these works. They are primarily interested in the biographical angle of each work—less

contd. on page 10

Dr. Y.S. Bains has by now established himself as a scholar whose contributions to the textual criticism of Shakespeare have been published in some of the leading journals like *Notes and Queries* and *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*. Although research on Shakespeare is not as popular in India as in post-colonial or Indo-English literature, there are some reputable journals in India which still publish papers on Shakespeare. Still it has to be admitted that no Indian scholar, known to the present reviewer, has ventured to express any views on the vexed question of the authenticity of the Quartos.

Editorial work on almost every other writer consists of comparing different manuscripts of the same work either in the writer's own hand or in that of one of the scribes (as in the case of Chaucer). But so far as Shakespeare is concerned, "No letter or other writing in Shakespeare's hand can be proved to exist." While he got his narrative poems and sonnets published in his life time, he left his plays in the hands of his fellow actors. In 1623, two of them published thirty six plays known as the First Folios. In addition eighteen of these plays had already appeared in one or more separate editions, known as the Quartos.

The authenticity of the Quartos varies. The great Shakespeare editors have classified some like the First Quarto of *Henry V* as "bad" and others such as the Second Quarto of *Hamlet* as "good."

We have the authority of Sir Edmund Chambers for the view that the First Quartos of *Romeo and Juliet*,

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE FIRST QUARTOS

R.K. Kaul*

Making Sense of the First Quartos of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Hamlet*

Y.S. Bains

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1995, pp. x+138, Rs.150/-

Henry V, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Hamlet*:

seem to mainly be based, not upon written texts of the plays, but upon versions largely made up out of shorthand notes taken at the theater by the agents of a piratical bookseller.

This is also the view of the Cambridge editor J. Dover Wilson.

According to Leo Kirschbaum "a bad quarto was created by a reporter's memorizing from a theatrical Ms."

Bains himself furnishes us with a formidable list of the editors who support this view of how the Quartos were "created."

They include the editors of the Arden Shakespeare (old and new)¹ and of almost all the prestigious editors including the *New Complete Shakespeare* (1985) published by the

¹That should add up to approximately 7 of the most outstanding scholars of Shakespeare.

Bains has made a valuable contribution to Shakespeare studies. It should help to rid us of numerous "unproven premises" which have been handed down from editor to editor over the generations.

Oxford University Press. The dissenting voices are relatively few and less authoritative. They include the poet Pope, the Victorian editor Charles Knight and a contemporary scholar Eric Sams.

Bains's thesis is challenging. He claims that the theory of "The bad Quartos" rests upon several unwarranted assumptions. In other

words the views of Chambers and others quoted above are untenable. Bains holds, on the contrary, that "Shakespeare composed the First and Second Quartos (of *Romeo and Juliet*) as two

versions for the stage, and the second is superior to the first because he revised it."

The present reviewer is not qualified to adjudicate in such a specialized area. Whether memorial construction was possible or not we cannot say. It seems on the face of it improbable that Shakespeare for some mystical reason was different

from almost every other writer known to us. Why Shakespeare, unlike Wordsworth or Keats, could not have revised his writings or tidied up loose ends, remove inconsistencies and improve the phrasing is incomprehensible to me, even though eminent scholars such as Harold Jenkins and Helen Gardner (pp.7-8) make these assumptions.

Again the alleged incoherence, inconsistency and general inferiority of the First Quartos is by no means apparent to an unbiased reader. If we consider Mercutio's dying speech in Q1 which Bains quotes, the quality of the wit strikes at least one reader as unmistakably Shakespearean:

I am pepperd for this world, I am
Aped yfaith, he (i.e. Tybalt)
hath made wormes meate of
me, & ye aske for to morrow
you shall funde me a
grave-man. A poxe of your houses,
I shall be fairly mounted upon
four mens shoulders... (p.26).

If this is not Shakespeare's own writing then it must have been written by someone whose style was indistinguishable from Shakespeare's.

Bains refutes the charge of the alleged spuriousness of the First Quartos of *Henry V* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* equally effectively. About *Henry V* he asserts that the differences between the two versions are so numerous that they can be treated as two independent works by the same author (rather like the two versions of Keats's *Hyperion*).

contd. from page 9
Rabindranath Tagore

in its literary value. Style and mood, the special characteristics of the literary greatness of Tagore's prose are rarely discussed.

As to Tagore's poetry, it is passed over all too swiftly, except for the names of titles, and a few quotations from poems which are biographically significant. For example, not one line is devoted to the Bengali *Gitanjali*. Its themes, its language, its particular devotional mood—nothing of this is put before the reader.

The biographers, it is true, make it clear in the beginning that their focus is on the personality, not the literary work. This division, however, gives rise to a variety of difficult questions. Is this a practicable division which can be maintained without compromising the

authenticity of the book? Can Rabindranath's mind be gauged without understanding his poetic intuitions, passions, moods? I especially point to the tensions between Tagore's active life among men and his contemplative life of lonely creativity. Has not one influenced the other? A writer's entire method of communication with the outside world is bound to be different from that of an ordinary man of action.

To this neglect of Tagore's literary work is added a peculiar ambivalence in using Bengali source material. The poems which are quoted in part or fully have been translated by different persons; some translations are by the authors themselves, others are culled from published books or journals. A number of prose texts have been

quoted from existing translations, other translations have been "amended" by the authors, again others have been entirely translated by the authors. Why were all Bengali sources not resolutely translated by the authors themselves to achieve uniformity?

I have already referred to the rather heavy-handed Introduction in which the authors juggle with too many quotations. Instead, the non-Indian reader would have preferred a brief introduction to British rule in India, to the history of Bengal and Bengali literature, a short description of Hindu social values in order to understand into what kind of society and at what point of India's historical development Tagore was born.

Krishna Dutta/Andrew Robinson have a tendency to use big

names to authenticate their own work. This is quite unnecessary. They especially reveal an obsession with Satyajit Ray and Nirad Chaudhuri. They are quoted so excessively that the reader is naturally led to doubt whether the authors, by indulging in a personal predilection, compromise the integrity of their presentation.

These weaknesses must, however, not detract the reader from the qualities of this new and important biography of Tagore. I hope it will be discussed widely in India by experts and Tagore lovers. This is not the "ultimate biography" of Tagore in English. But it is indeed an important improvement upon the biographies available to date.

* Dr. Martin Kampchen is a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

There is a tendency to talk of "African Literature" as if it were some kind of monolith that could easily be encompassed under a single rubric. Even the critics who persist in writing under such an assumption find little impetus to challenge this point of view. However, the more one reads of the postcolonial literatures of Africa in the European languages, the more one becomes aware not only of the differences among 'national' literatures but also of the regional and ethnic differences within them. Furthermore, not only does one have to recognise the rich, variegated, and complex plurality of "African Literature", one must also say the same about the criticism on and theorising about postcolonial literatures in general and African literatures in particular. The glaring flaw in Roopali Sircar's *The Twice Colonised: Women in African Literature* is that it endeavours to postulate a single feminist theory and approach for the enormous diversity of practices that constitute the postcolonial feminist literature, a position that becomes even more impossible if one extends the concerns of the book beyond its strict Anglophone focus.

Barring this flaw, this first full-length study of women in African literature by an Indian scholar is a welcome addition to the fascinating African Studies. Through her painstaking research, Sircar has closely analysed the significant fictional and critical writings of about half a dozen foremost male and female writers of Africa in a very wide context using the feminist configurations in which house, family, patriarchy, childbirth, motherhood, and female identity acquire multidimensional symbolic connotations. The book provides an insightful debate on these issues against the socio-historical and politico-economic backdrop, thus establishing convincingly that contemporary African women in literary texts (studied by Sircar) refuse to accept the secondary status introduced by the white coloniser and perpetrated by the black native. Resistance offered by African women to political and cultural subjugation by colonial and neo-colonial forces, thus, becomes the central focus of *The Twice Colonised*.

The Introductory chapter gives an instructive outline of the genesis of feminist aesthetics. Roopali's

INDIAN RESPONSE TO AFRICAN FICTION

Shyam Asnani*

THE TWICE COLONIZED: WOMEN IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

Roopali Sircar

Creative Books, New Delhi, 1995, Rs. 300/-.

warning for blindly applying the western feminist aesthetics to African literature is appropriate in that the issues before black women are quite different from those of their white European counterparts. For African feminists, the double allegiance to women's emancipation and African liberation is inextricably entwined. Colonial intervention, she argues, is one single factor which has made all the difference in the lives of African women by transplanting western concepts about the place of women in society and introducing distortions in the concept of women's status. Wilfully neglecting to deal with the specific issues that directly affect the black woman, western feminism fails to recognise the active part played by the white woman in the oppression of the black woman. For most African women and their counterparts in other 'Third World' countries, feminism means a recognition of inequities in their societies and a political consciousness of their subjugation as a race. The reason why racism is a feminist issue in the 'Third World' context is explained in their inherent rejection of the role categories such as girl friends, mistresses, and prostitutes, their need and commitment to free all women from all modes of oppression, political, economic and cultural, their urge to restore them their freedom and dignity, and their legitimate claims to portray African woman as prophets, decision-makers, heroines, and strong role-models in literature.

Placing the African woman within the contexts of her society and history as a colonial victim, chapter I conducts an in-depth study of variegated aspects of her existence, her role and status in the family, her relentless and undaunted

struggle for economic emancipation, her personal and political resistance, and the disastrous consequences of her second colonisation. Subsequent four chapters analyse in detail individual texts clearly focusing on the representation of women characters within the prescribed milieu.

Chapter II scrutinises Sembene Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood* (1970) highlighting its significance as a fictionalised version of a historical incident—The Dakar Niger railroad strike. Situated in the colonial period of Senegal's history, it dramatises the rising political consciousness of ordinary women who were forced to perform extraordinary feats. The book clearly glimpses the anger which lies dormant when men and women live under oppressive politico-economic servitude and which explodes as repression becomes intolerable. Chapter III

examines Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* (1981), a woman-authored text with a 'masculine' subject—war. Its locale is post-colonial civil war-torn Nigeria, and its protagonist a woman military officer. It narrates not only the terrible

tale of one woman, Debbie Ogedembe's indomitable courage in the face of rape and death, it is also a saga of courage and titanic spirit of ordinary rural African women who brave starvation and annihilation to protect their children and other hapless women in the absence of men.

Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* (1966) forms the core of the analysis in chapter IV with a view to exposing the sexist bias concealed in the language of a literary text which specifically portrays women. Narrating the story of a prostitute in the city of Lagos in post-independent Nigeria, Ekwensi treats the

problem of prostitution to explain away a host of obscurantist ideas about female nature and its propensity for sin, and to symbolise corruption and decay. In the glamorous and sexually powerful portrayal of Jagua, Ekwensi creates a stereotypical image of the black woman as lascivious and promiscuous. In his overzealous attempt to epitomise Jagua as a modern, sexually liberated, strong, assertive woman by using mythical and folklorist mode, like Elechi Amadi (in *Concubine*), Ekwensi falls prey to the temptation of

contd. from page 13

contd. from page 10
Shakespeare

Bains sums up the characteristic differences between the two versions of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*:

The action in Q moves fast, the scenes are short, the dialogue is brisk and uncomplicated, the characters are subordinated to the requirements of the plot, and the style is unelevated and ordinary (p.96).

The First and Second Quartos of *Hamlet*, however, present us with a problem which is not so easy to solve. The differences between the two versions are so substantial that they cannot, in my view, be ascribed to the same author.

In Q1 Hamlet's parting words to Horatio conclude with:

O my heart *sinckes* Horatio,
Mine eyes have lost their sight,
my tongue his use:
Farewell Horatio, heaven receive
my soule.

This pedestrian speech was not composed by the poet who turned out the magical lines beginning with "Absent thee from felicity a while" (pp: 132-33).

Bains has made a valuable contribution to Shakespeare studies. It should help to rid us of numerous "unproven premises" which have been handed down from editor to editor over the generations. Since it is likely to be useful to Shakespeareans in India, it is desirable that in its second edition the printing errors should be corrected, and a bibliography and an index be supplied. (Note for example the date 1699 at the top of pages 51-77).

*R.K. Kaul taught English at the University of Jaipur.

Ever since the pioneering work of Emeneau (1956) in which he advanced the idea of India as a linguistic area, there has been considerable scholarly activity focused on different aspects of areal studies. The last forty years or so have witnessed a studied departure from the 'common pursuit' of historical and comparative linguists and dialectologists. Whereas the first group was primarily interested in the evolution of languages across time and sought to establish formalities or genetic relations between languages, using standardized techniques of 'comparative method' and 'internal reconstruction', the latter sought to study languages across space to demarcate language boundaries on the basis of differential spread of linguistic features.

While areal studies share some of the concerns of the above-mentioned groups, they diverge significantly in that they focus on structural similarities between languages which may or may not belong to the same language family (i.e. they may or may not be genetically related), and which may or may not belong to the same typological category. The thrust of these studies is to study how prolonged contact, due to spatial contiguity, leads to the emergence of similar features in genetically and typologically diverse languages. When such similarities are sufficiently large in number to discount chance resemblances, and when the languages displaying such similarities happen to belong to different genetic stocks and different typological categories, the notion of 'areal features' emerging as a result of contact and convergence gains considerable credence.

The present volume represents another scholarly foray into the area of contact studies. The author sets herself the task of identifying and defining the 'Indianness' of Indian languages which otherwise belong to different language families. The 'Introduction'

AREAL STUDIES APPROACH IN INDIAN LINGUISTICS

R.S. Gupta*

SEMANTIC UNIVERSALS IN INDIAN LANGUAGES

Anvita Abbi

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1993
pp.ix+113, Rs.100/-.

provides a rapid overview of the traditional concerns of historical and comparative linguistics and also makes a categorical statement on the purpose of this volume. The author clearly takes the position that the basic premise of historical linguistics that there was some single, uniform, monolithic protolanguage was unnatural. As against this, the author seems to favour typological classifications (such as are represented by the work of Schmidt who distinguished between family resemblances and typological resemblances). Whether one owes allegiance to the historical linguists or to the votaries of typological classification, India indubitably provides a rich data

base for any researcher interested in studying 'similar features' or what the author of the present volume calls 'structural cognates' because here we have languages that belong to five different families—Andamanese, Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian, Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman—as well as typologically diverse languages. The interesting thing, therefore, is to take a synchronic look at the structural similarities between these languages and seek explanations for these similarities in contiguity, contact and convergence. And so the author undertakes to show how unrelated

languages develop several structural cognates as a result of long contact and a tradition of bilingualism. She goes a step further and states that structural similarities are indicative of similarity of semantemes, and that "if a linguistic feature with its corresponding semanteme is found in various typologically and genetically diverse languages of a

contiguous area then that particular feature is an *areal* universal". Hence the title of the book "Semantic Universals in Indian Languages".

The book goes on to examine in considerable detail and with copious examples three structural features expressives and reduplicatives, explicator compound verbs, and dative subject constructions—across several Indian languages representing all the five language families. While it is not possible to go into a detailed discussion of all the three features within the narrow confines of this review, the following points are worth noting. First, the volume presents a systematic and concerted effort at studying and explicating structural cognates and relating them to certain semantic universals. Methodologically this is a very sound attempt. While there may be a detail here or there with which one might disagree, the whole exposition of the subject

is sound. Secondly, the chapter on dative subject construction provides, perhaps, the most thought provoking and animated discussion in the whole volume. After due syntactic and semantic considerations the author proposes that dative subject constructions should be called 'Non-Agentive Subject Constructions'. Many will perhaps disagree with this proposal and suggest more valid alternative names or labels but, as said earlier, this part of the book provides much 'food for thought'. Thirdly, and most significantly, this volume takes a genuine step in the direction of a more meaningful study of India as a sociolinguistic area, a notion which was first proposed by Pandit (1972), but which has not received much scholarly attention. The present volume does not claim to study India as a sociolinguistic area, but the whole notion of semantic universals is grounded in socio-cultural affinities, as well as, shared perceptions that mark India as an 'area'. That being so, it needs only one step forward, and one would be able to correlate linguistic features with semantemes and semantemes with perceptual categories which, after all, reflect similar or shared socio-psychological and cultural realities. To conclude, here we have a volume which is methodologically sound, rich in data and well argued, but which stops just one step short of what perhaps was or ought to have been its real goal. One hopes that this volume will serve the purpose of enthusing and providing direction to other researches in this field. One also hopes that the author herself will take this study a bit further and work on more structural cognates, so that a more comprehensive picture of the Indianness of Indian languages emerges.

*R.S. Gupta teaches in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

This review seeks to look at two books with very different virtues. The first would make a good refresher cum text book while the second is essentially an analytical work.

Swaswati's book might have been considered a significant contribution to Indian social history had it been written in the 1930's or the 1940's. Coming out, as it does, in 1994, this book has all the characteristics of a run of the mill book on ancient Indian history.

The book is a painstaking attempt to reconstruct the various aspects of culture and social life in ancient India for the period from the post-Vedic to the Mouryan age. Traditional texts constitute the major data base of the study and both epigraphy and numismatics have been used in a somewhat weak manner to bolster the evidence of the high literary texts.

The format adopted in describing the ancient social milieu is in the style of the 'forties' 'Householder'; 'Education'; 'Food and Drinks'; 'Costumes and Cosmetics'; 'Past-times and Recreations' etc. The thesis format has been preserved so faithfully that on page xvii of the introduction, after concluding the section on sources the author goes on to say that she has discussed family life in chapter II while in the present book format this chapter had become chapter I.

The author betrays a lamentable ignorance of recent 'feminist' studies

contd. from page 11
African Literature

stereotyping, giving gloss to an otherwise male chauvinistic imagination and pondering to the perceptions of a Eurocentric white male readership.

In Ngugi Wa Thing'o *Some Say Matigari is a Woman* (1977), discussed in the next chapter, Roopali draws our attention to the stark horror of neo-colonialism and the degrading position of women ruthlessly exploited by their own men. Subsuming all categories and genders to make Matigari both man and woman, the novel acquires prophetic overtones, for Matigari, in the final analysis, is a revolutionary figure, and the call for revolt to avenge the wrongs of exploitation and oppression in the postcolonial Africa is answered by a woman—Guthera.

Literary texts revealing the insidious use of outdated customs

STUDIES IN CONTRAST

Vijaya Ramaswamy*

SOCIAL LIFE IN ANCIENT INDIA 800 B.C. TO 183 B.C.

Swaswati Das

B.R. Publishing House, Delhi, 1994.

INTERACTIONS OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS IN INDIA: AN ANTHROPO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

R.N. Sahay

U.G.C. Centre of Advanced Study, Ranchi, 1994.

on Buddhism and Jainism when she talks of the great space provided for women within these two movements. Studies by Padmanabha Jaini (*Gender and Salvation*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1991) and Uma Charavarthy (*Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, OUP, 1987) provide conclusive evidence of patriarchal attitudes within these two so-called heterodox movements. Here the author's own bias is evident in the section on women which has the following sub-headings: 'Wife'; 'Mother'; 'Widow'; 'Sati' and 'Courtesan'. The woman in ancient India, in the eyes of this writer,

seems then to have existed only vis a vis men. The only woman worth mentioning in the public domain is the courtesan. Swaswati's text is wholly silent on artisanal women like spinners and weavers of whom

these two books are a study in contrast but each is valuable in its own fashion—Swaswati Das has written an acceptable text book while Sahay's monograph would be well worth a 'dekko' for any serious research scholar.

there is some evidence in the same high texts which she has used to reconstruct patriarchal role models of women (pp13 to 21).

Swaswati's sketch of castes and professions in the period under study is grossly inadequate despite its

scholarliness. The description of the Brhamins and Kshathriyas for instance is a static one since the author does not take into account the

processes from lineage to state and the gradual emergence of monarchical and state power. Meaningful studies of this kind have been produced by Romila Thapar (*From Lineage to State*, OUP, Bombay, 1984) and Kukum Roy (*Emergence of Monarchy in North India*, OUP, 1994).

The emergence of various Jatis in ancient India reflects the proliferation of new professions which came to form specialised castes or jatis. While in this book there are copious references to the *Dharmashastras*, *Brahmanas* and Buddhist texts on the status of the artisans or merchants, these textual evidences are not located in historical space or time nor is their inter-textuality established. The fourth *varna* of Sudras is discussed or rather dismissed in three and a half pages without reference to the complex stratification of the Sudra *varna* on the basis of economic and ritual differentiation indicated by the term 'Sat Sudra' which occurs in early inscriptions.

The chapter on food and drinks forms a historically cogent and well researched chapter. There is an effort to highlight the different types of staple foods and spices that came into use in different historical ages.

The second half of the book replicates the format of the first half, taking up the post-Mouryan period. Historical linkages between these two blocks are conspicuous by their

contd. on page 14

and traditions which subjugate women within the domestic confines are taken up for consideration in Chapter VI. Motherhood, marriage, infertility, desertion, polygamy, female genital mutilation, extra-marital affairs and a host of other claustrophobic nightmarish experiences of the African women in urban contexts become the *leitmotifs* of the fictions discussed incisively in this section. Bessie Head's Dikeledi in the *Collector of Treasures and Other Botswana Stories* (1977) and Tayeb Salih's Bint in *Seasons of Migration to the North* (1969) castrate the men who oppress them and prefer death and 'dishonour' to putting up with sexual harassment and assault. Similarly, Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966) and Assare Konadu's Pokuwa in *A Woman in her Prime* (1967) prefer to live life on their own terms rather than be passive victims of male monstrosities, Emecheta's Nnu

Ego in *Joys of Motherhood* (1979) articulates her nagging fear of infertility and the disappointment of producing a female child, thus questioning the futile purpose of a woman's life completely devoted to bearing and rearing children through the most agonising trials and tribulations only to be abandoned by the very same children in their mothers' old, decrepit, and critical age. Ngugi's *The River Between* (1965) and Nurridn Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* (1970) highlight the ambivalent problem of female circumcision. The chapter concludes with an expose of Nadine Gordimer's *Son's Story* (1990) in which women break the political and domestic shackles, shed the roles of wife and mother, and become mainstream revolutionaries in their own right. Thus completing the total picture of the twice colonised yet indefatigable African Woman, Roopali concludes

her study with a brief but very incisive and insightful chapter entitled "Phoenix: The Awakening of the Self", focusing on the resurrective powers of women who can delve deep into their traditional reserves and cultural resources to take on the demonic oppressions of the male dragons. The common thread that runs through these literary texts is the ability of the African women to survive, and to transcend. They articulate the anxieties and aspirations not only of women, but also of the society in general. In putting up resistance and struggle, they make themselves visible and audible, and in defining their own freedom, they seek to emancipate themselves from the yoke of double colonization—historical and cultural.

* Professor Shyam Asnani is a Professor of English in Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla.

Bhupinder Brar's *Explaining Communist Crises* is a fascinating and intellectually exciting *tour de force*, which, in the ultimate analysis, leaves the reader curiously dissatisfied. The title of this review offers one clue as to why this is so. Though Brar himself is not explicit, at least not as explicit as one wishes he were, the highly structured work plays with two themes—the misfortunes of Western academic scholarship in its explanatory enterprise of explaining Communist crisis and the author's own explanation claiming a superior theoretical purchase—and the real problem, never addressed head-on by the author, is the relationship between the two themes, whether epistemological or political. Sometimes, the work seems to offer the uneasy suggestion that clarifying the first theme would automatically yield insight into the second theme.

Let me first summarise briefly the essence of the central argument and the thesis of the author. In essence, his argument is that western specialist scholarship and expertise has relied on two theoretical strategies in its efforts to understand and explain communism and its crises, the author's own focus being on three specific situations—the Sino-Soviet dispute, the fragmentation of the Indian Communist

EXPLAINING EXPLANATIONS!

K.Raghavendra Rao*

EXPLAINING COMMUNIST CRISES

Bhupinder Brar

Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1994, pp. xii + 231.

movement and the collapse of the Soviet system. These strategies are the power-centric explanation and the ideological explanation, often overlapping.

The author tries to show what is wrong with these explanations, and offers his own explanation that all these crises stem from a common root—the hegemonic nature of the Communist universe as it has been historically articulated. He introduces a dazzling array of subsidiary concepts such as ideologism and partial emancipation to round off his explanatory picture. But his central

and crucial notion of hegemony rests on an over-simplification of a Gramscian category. As far as I can follow, not a very easy phenomenon

to grasp, Gramsci's concept of hegemony is a complex fusion of power in its ideological and non-ideological manifestations. It leaves open the theoretical issue of their relationship.

By analysing mostly secondary data but with a razor-sharp analytical mind, Brar is able to demonstrate how

Western scholarship was forced to perform all sorts of theoretical somersaults, dictated by a reality it

The failure of Western scholarship to read correctly the developments in the Communist world was a failure to grasp the hegemonic nature of the communist universe and the fact that the crises were generated when one of the actors/participants managed to achieve a partial emancipation from the hegemonic authority.

couldn't really theorise, by making a fraudulent use of its hindsight. When the power-centric explanations failed to help them grasp the nature of the Communist crises, the scholars did not hesitate to resort to ideologicistic ruses, not the very different and legitimate ideological tool. When every scholarly gambit failed, they even suppressed their own earlier views and went to the extent of claiming to have held views they had not held, in the light of an elusive reality. Brar's explanation of the situation is that these scholars did not grasp the truth that the Communist universe was a hegemonic universe in which "objective" reality was defined authoritatively by the hegemonic centre which was the Soviet Communist party.

To the question why the other parties accepted unquestioningly the Soviet doctored picture of reality, Brar's neat, perhaps a little too neat, answer is that they had internalised the Soviet views and positions and that they needed no external coercion to tow the Soviet line. However, in the cases of Mao and Gorbachev, the hegemonic black-out was not total and they had managed to gain a partial emancipation from the hegemonic control. The Sino-

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Studies in Contrast*

absence (in the book).

Swaswati Das has worked hard and provided a great deal of information on social life in ancient India. As a text book it would be most valuable to undergraduate students. As a piece of advanced research, it leaves much to be desired.

K.N. Sahay's book on an Anthro-Historical perspective on interactions of cultural traditions in India, is a wonderful study in contrast. A slim volume of hundred pages, it is an original piece of research throwing up thought provoking historical linkages and possibilities. The author writes that he cogitated on this theme in the delightful ambience of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

The author studies four types of cultural interaction set in four different historical blocks. For this study Sahay has developed his own model of ten basic cultural processes: Cultural Oscillation, Cultural Scrutinization, Cultural

Combination, Indigenization and Cultural Retroversion etc. The paradigm includes conflict as well as harmony and fusion. The plethora of *varna sankarna* marriages in the *Atharva Veda* is held forth as one manifestation of the Dravidianization of the Aryan culture. To quote the author "... reflected in *Atharva Veda*, belief in spells and magic, demonology and the non-Aryan (Dravidian) idea of shapeless ghosts, spirit of death, the dreaded dark power of the under world along with a 'a fear complex' were combined in the Aryan pantheon" (p.22). The author also points to the very significant presence of matronymic surnames in the Sanskrit *Brahmana* tradition.

The next section of the book deals with the interaction of Hindu and Buddhist traditions. The author clarifies that the term 'Hindu' was used in a broad sense to define the culture and way of life that existed in the Sutra-epic period as a result of constant pressures and fusions within and between communities and societies. Buddhism which was

a product of an iron age culture giving rise to a distinct ideology is treated as culturally and spiritually 'different' from Hinduism.

The chapter on 'Hindu and Muslim Traditions' refers to the 'Islamization of the indigenous religion (the Satya Pir tradition) as well as the indigenisation of Islam (caste hierarchy among UP Muslims). Imtiaz Ahmad, in an early paper, had analysed the Ashraf-Ajlaf categories among the UP Muslims and the quest for upward mobility among them (Ashraf Ajlaf Dichotomy in Muslim Social Structure in India', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. III, No.3, 1966, pp.268-278). Satish C. Misra took up this line of argument further ('Indigenisation and Islamisation in India', *Secular Democracy*, Annual number, 1974, pp.59-65). Sahay's own theorisation points in the same direction. The reviewer has the impression that these arguments might have been sharper if the focus had been on the nature of the devotional movements in medieval India. These move-

ments have been underplayed by the author.

The final chapter carries the same model of interaction into the Christian-Indian encounter. Disappointingly the peculiarities of the colonial structure and its distinctiveness from the previous social formations have not been highlighted by the author. The case of Fr. Roberto de Nobili and Sadhu Sundar Singh have been taken up to demonstrate indigenisation of Christianity. The author seems to say in a crisper and more effective fashion what Susan Bailey attempts in her book: *Saints, Goddesses and Kings—Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society*, OUP, 1992.

As I stated at the outset these two books are a study in contrast but each is valuable in its own fashion—Swaswati Das has written an acceptable text book while Sahay's monograph would be well worth a 'dekkko' for any serious research scholar.

* Vijaya Ramaswamy teaches history in Gargi College, New Delhi

This book addresses the burning issues of the last decades of the twentieth century, namely the upsurge of religious, ethnic, cultural and regional movements over a large part of the globe which adopted a wide range of modes of articulation from nonviolent, peaceful to violent ones. The latter has assumed preponderance over other modes, and has often been dubbed as terrorist (movements?) which misuses religion. The secular and not so secular nation-states view these activities as separatist and disintegrationist that are out to sever the 'unity and integrity' of the parent nation-state.

Interestingly, and perhaps daringly, Juergensmeyer strikes a definitely distinctive chord contrary to the prevalent models. He labels these movements as religious nationalist which are as significant as secular nationalist. Both of these as 'ideologies of order' have become rivals in the present day world. He writes: 'The religious nationalists are not just fanatics. For the most part, these political activists are seriously attempting to reformulate the modern language of politics and provide a new basis for the nation-state. In many cases they are waging what they regard as neo-colonialist struggles against Western culture and its political ideology, and they aim at infusing public life with indigenous cultural symbols and moral values' (p xiii). In this sense, they are revolutionaries. He prefers to characterise them as anti-modernists rather than funda-

contd. from page 14
Communist Crises

Soviet dispute and the Gorbachev debacle in bringing about the collapse of the Soviet system as well as the fragmentation of the Indian Communist movement into three pieces—the CPI, the CPM and the CPML—could all be explained as the consequence of a partial emancipation from Soviet hegemony. The failure of Western scholarship to read correctly the developments in the Communist world was a failure to grasp the hegemonic nature of the communist universe and the fact that the crises were generated when one of the actors/participants managed to achieve a partial emancipation from the hegemonic authority.

All this is presented with great cogency and lucidity by Brar and so

TWO COMPETING IDEOLOGIES OF ORDER

Birinder Pal Singh*

RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM CONFRONTS THE SECULAR STATE

Mark Juergensmeyer

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, pp.xiv+292, Rs.300/-

mentalists, because fundamentalism is an imprecise, pejorative concept which does not carry any political meaning (pp. 4-5).

Juergensmeyer situates the rise of religious nationalism in the context of secular nationalism and highlights the elements of similarity and dissimilarity between them. He collects data from

the Middle East, South Asia and erstwhile Marxist states of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. He discusses the rise of Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Sikh religious nationalist movements in three

large chapters. Given the large canvas, the reader can only gauge the broader socio-political issues over a sweeping historical period. Any deeper insights could not be provided in the given space. The author has tried to address such important aspects in his discussion as loss of faith in secular

powerful intellectually is his analysis that it prevents the reader from looking for anything beyond it. Now, a whole lot of important and intractable issues crop up in the terrain just around the theoretical enclosure enforced by Brar on history and reality. For instance, as a starter, what was there in the theoretical traditions of the West, which blinded Western scholarship to the hegemonic nature of the Communist universe? On the question of hegemony, two crucial questions come immediately to mind. Why did Marxist historical project take a hegemonic turn, in the first place? Was it inherent in the original Marxist theory? If hegemony requires that the hegemonised internalised the hegemonic values and assumptions, what is this internalisation process? What are the psychological or biological roots

nationalism, its failure to accommodate religion, relation between religion and the nation-state, competition between rival 'ideologies of order', relation between violence and religion/religious nationalism and issues concerning democracy and human rights in a modern religious state. In

the last two chapters he writes about the problems which a secular state has to face in the wake of religious nationalism and vice versa.

The author deserves credit for grappling with such complex a problem as this

one by simplifying issues quite clearly both for a specialist and a general reader. The complexity of wide-ranging issues under diverse socio-cultural, economic and political contexts relate the book to the specialist study of politics, religion and society. The absence of jargon and high-brow theorizing on

the other hand make it a comfortable and easy text accessible to a generalist. This precisely is the forte of his book.

The subject matter is complex in the sense that the two 'ideologies of order' are rivals in establishing their hegemony in the present day world. These make two camps, in fact polar opposites, whose adherents have clearly defined positions with respect to both the perception of the self and the other. If the secular nationalists characterise their counterpart as obscurantist, fundamentalist, traditionalist, dogmatic and above all fanatic terrorists, the religious nationalists in turn label their rivals as immoralist, materialist, modernist, colonialist and individualist. Juergensmeyer undertakes the gigantic task of mediating the two rival ideologies, which he thinks is inevitable since the religious nationalism has 'now come to stay' with the modern state. This is a hard reality which we must accept. The reference is to the establishment of Islamic Republic of Iran. It is a pioneering example of synthesis of tradition and modernity, of religion and modern state system. It has inspired not only Islamic people across the globe but other marginal minority communities as well since its inception.

Juergensmeyer dispels doubts about the viability of such a model. He suggests: 'The course of events in Iran indicates that a state shaped

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of this process or is it a socio-cultural process of history?

These questions are raised not to take away from the solid and indisputable merits of Brar's work but they should be seen as a tribute to the theoretical and analytical strength of Brar's paradigmatic presentation. In fact, it is the virtue of his presentation that it forces us to raise such fundamental questions of history and theory. His work also raises the very large epistemological issue of the nature and limits of any theory, and its problematic relationship to "reality". One wonders whether Brar has moved perilously close to either a theoreticist or an empiricist trap.

Moreover, one also wonders about Brar's own politics. Where does he locate himself in the historical and theoretical terrain he has created as a scholarly

production? This volume is a must for anyone interested in understanding the Communist universe and its dynamics, even if one is inclined to raise critical questions about his explanations or the epistemological ground of his explanations. One small and minor query. It is odd that in his analysis of the fragmentation of Indian communist movement, Brar does not mention one published work of Indian scholarship directly addressing the issue while he makes reference to Kaviraj's unpublished doctoral dissertation. It is all the more odd because this work, K.S. Subramaniam's *Parliamentary Democracy in India*, is also an Ajanta publication.

*K.Raghavendra Rao is a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study

Since culture defines a society as well as its individual members, it is through culture alone that communities seek the affirmation of their identities. It is because of this that assertion of cultural identity became a powerful weapon in the hands of colonised nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America during their struggles for political independence. Again, it is because of this that minority communities in the United States of America, the African, the Chinese, the Korean, the Mexican, the Puerto Rican, the Indian and scores of others launched quests for their lost identities in the face of pressures from the majority community to subsume their cultural identities in the so-called 'mainstream' culture.

African-Americans or Afro-

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Religious Nationalism

by religious nationalism can accommodate a variety of political points of view, and it can change' (p.199). He argues: 'The constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran is also, to a remarkable extent, similar to the constitutions of most Western countries. It contains guarantees of civil rights and minority rights and prescribes three branches of government and the balances of power among them' (p.176). Its constitution has provided the country with an Islamic version of Plato's philosopher-king, but placed its leader (Ayatollah Khomeini and his successors) within a modern parliamentary system.

On the basis of his global study Juergensmeyer suggests that most religious nationalist movements not only *eschew a theocracy* (emphasis added) but they also envision a new political and economic order born out of religious revolution which has elements of socialism and democracy of the West (p.149) with due importance given to the electoral process. These religious nationalists are modern but not modernist. They are against secular nationalism because it is not only Western but also a form of neo-colonialism. Hence a useful viable alternative is a modern nation-state run on the principles of one's religion. The author has also suggested ways to come to terms with religious nationalism in the secular states (pp.195-6).

But, Juergensmeyer is also apprehensive, at times fearful, of such experiments in synthesizing

AFFIRMATION THROUGH CULTURE

Harish Narang*

DEPROGRAMMING THROUGH CULTURAL NATIONALISM

Prem Kumari Dheram

B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1994, p.158, Rs.150/-.

Americans as they have begun to call themselves, have asserted their ethnic separateness more aggressively than any other community or group. Prema Kumari Dheram's book *Deprogramming Through Cultural Nationalism*, is an attempt to analyse the paradigms of

...a significant contribution to the field of comparative studies between African and African-American writers ...

such an assertion through a close academic scrutiny of the writings of two major modern novelists, Chinua Achebe and Ralph Ellison. Although both of them are black and of African origin, they represent two different continents Achebe is an African while Ellison

ideology of religious nationalism and the structure of nation-state. He says: 'There can be no true convergence between religion and secular political ideologies. On the level of ideologies, the new cold war will persist' (p.197). It is unlikely, therefore, that religious nationalism will ever fully support a libertarian version of individual rights (p.189). Such fearfulness is also reflected in the first part of his book: 'Even if it is possible, radical accommodation of religion to nationalism may not necessarily be a good thing. A merger of the absolutism of nationalism with the absolutism of religion might create a rule so vaunted and potent that it could destroy itself and its neighbours as well' (p.41).

Yet towards the end he writes: 'Barring this apocalyptic vision of a worldwide conflict between religious and secular nationalism, we have *reason to be hopeful* (emphasis added). It is equally as likely that religious nationalisms are incapable of uniting with one another, and that they will greatly desire an economic and political reconciliation with the secular world' (p.201). But, towards the end of the same para he admonishes that a synthesis between religion and the secular state, a merger between the cultural identity and legitimacy of old religiously sanctioned monarchies and the democratic spirit and organizational unity of modern industrial society can be incendiary (p.202).

Such ambivalence on the part of the author tends to confuse the reader. What is his message? Is he for religious nationalism? Or secular

nationalism? Or a strange and difficult blending of the two? This lack of sure-footedness on his part may be attributed to the multifaceted complexity of the problem. But, a reading between the lines makes it clear that even if Juergensmeyer has built a case for religious nationalism he finds its accommodation in the secular state highly problematic. He is certainly in favour of the latter if it does away with its negative elements like immorality, alienation, materialism, cultural uprootedness and individualism.

Juergensmeyer has rightly devoted a chapter to explaining the association of religious nationalism with violence. His explanation is valid on other counts but for Girard's application to religious wars. As far as I understand, the latter's formulations pertain more to the ritualistic and symbolic components of religion than war. A sacrificial ritual is different from a religious war. It may be performed both before and after the war. Any overlap between the two processes may be fraught with conceptual problems. The author however makes a passing reference to this effect (p.155) without clarifying the argument which has been developed by him elsewhere.

Despite many positive features of this work one finds certain holes whose plugging would have added to the strength of this volume. The author refers to the religious nationalists' perception of secular state but does not highlight the lapses in the theory and practice of such states which are largely responsible for the rise of religious

is a North American, and two different nations—Achebe is a Nigerian while Ellison is an American, and two different literary traditions. And yet, as Dheram states in her Introduction to the book, "Though in different continents, the African-American and the Nigerian have confronted not very dissimilar experiences. If one has to find roots in the country that is yet to become his, the other is uprooted in his own country" (p.1). Again, Dheram finds much in common in the strategies of the West to malign both by referring to them as 'primitive' and 'savage' and distorting the image of the African as well as the African-American.

One of the counter-strategies

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nationalism. What are the institutional limitations and structural constraints of the secular state? Why could the organic solidarity of modern industrial society not evolve the much needed moral individualism a la Durkheim? Why did the capitalist and socialist states deviate grossly from their framed policies and programmes? What is the role of neo-colonial powers in the so-called developing societies? What is the influence of growing economic crises in the developed capitalist states on these societies? How has the collapse of Soviet Union influenced these states in turmoil? Juergensmeyer however, sets these issues aside in mere two lines (p.194).

In an otherwise easy and lucid text, Juergensmeyer sometimes uses concepts ambiguously. For instance, he writes: 'Religious death squads are all engaged in violence in direct and nonsymbolic way' (p.154). In the following paragraph he says: 'Some of these real cases of violence do seem to fit the pattern after all because the violence is committed in an almost symbolic way'. And, later in the following sentence: 'All acts of killing are violent in part because they have a symbolic impact'. What is to be noted is the relation between violence and its symbolic character. As a matter of fact all acts of violence are extremely symbolic, howsoever erratic these may appear.

Finally, a small dig at the Oxford University Press. In their otherwise flawless publications, certain spelling mistakes do crop up.

*Dr. Birinder Pal Singh teaches sociology in Panjabi University, Patiala.

The phenomenon of migration of labour has come to be associated with the development process of modern economies. Modern (capitalist) growth is known to generate unevenness leading to shift of population from rural to urban areas and from agricultural to industrial and tertiary sectors. The transition of economies has meant mobility and migration of a very large proportion of population. For instance, in North America and Western Europe the proportion of population left in agriculture and in the rural areas ranges between 5-10 per cent. These economies have become highly urbanised and dependent on non-agricultural activities with very high per capita income. These economies are great attractions for populations from the rest of the world leading to international migration flows towards them. When developing countries like India attempted the path of modern transition after their (political) decolonisation, their effort was to emulate the Western pattern of growth. This led to regional (provincial) unevenness and within the regions unevenness among the various activities. Consequently this created the objective situation for a spatial occupation mobility of population. Migration literature has produced vast evidence, and several theorists have attempted to analyse the causes and consequences of this phenomenon.

Manjit Singh's book is an attempt to understand the phenomenon of migration of Bihari rural labour to rural Punjab. The author tries to explain this within the framework of Marxian political economy. He has traced this to the pattern of uneven capitalist development in Indian agriculture in which Punjab has achieved the top position and Bihar has remained at the bottom. Using the historical method the author explains the backwardness of Bihar agriculture from the colonial phase when Zamindari system was introduced by the British to the post-colonial period due to non-implementation of land reforms. In spite of the early development of Kisan movement the hold of non-cultivating Zamindars in Bihar continues to be strong on land. To counter this the British introduced to Mahalwari system of land tenure in Punjab, resulting in the hold of Jat peasantry on land. Subsequently the policy of development of canal irrigation in the state and the settlement of *bars* by allocation of land to cultivating peasants strengthened the tendency of self-cultivation which laid the foundations for the development of land relations favourable to the fast growth of agriculture. In the post-

Towards Understanding Migration Flows of Bihari Rural Labour in Panjab Agriculture

S.S. Gill*

UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND LABOUR MIGRATION

Manjit Singh

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1995, pp. 1x+219, Rs.350/-.

colonial period the passing of land legislation and its half-hearted implementation by the provincial government dominated by landed interests in face of a weak peasant movement further created a congenial base for the fast growth of agriculture in Punjab when new technology associated with green revolution became available. The near-stagnant agriculture of Bihar coupled with the heavy demographic pressure created a pauperised class of agricultural labourers and poor peasants, who found little employment opportunities with wages pushed to unimaginably low levels. The fast growth of agriculture in Punjab with increased cropping intensity along with the withdrawal of family labour of peasants, created an acute seasonal scarcity of labour, particularly during the peak agricultural periods. The wide-ranging differences in wage-rates attracted several lakhs of Bihari rural labourers to Punjab. The author has drawn a graphic account of the way the labourers travel by trains from Bihar to Punjab, the process of their recruitment and the exploitation in the distant villages of Punjab. On the basis of a comparison of wages, conditions and hours of work between the local and the migratory labourers, the author reaches the conclusion that unending reservoir of migratory labour has been a great boon to Punjab's agricultural development.

To capture the objective reality of Punjab agriculture the author has collected detailed data relating to the labour process from the two villages from Ludhiana district. In this task the researcher has succeeded in capturing some of the important changes in Punjab agriculture which took place between 1980-81 and 1990-91. He observes that the system of *Siri* (share cropper) has been completely eliminated, tenancy has become capitalist in nature with medium and large landholders indulging in leasing in of land; attached labour and permanent (contract) labour is being replaced by casual labour and family labour, and the labour of local labourers is being replaced by hired migrant labour. The author further observes that the local labourers are shifting to diverse jobs such as

rearing of milch animals, *palledari* in the grain markets, vegetable selling, petty-trading etc. These observations point to a process of far-reaching changes in agriculture which have implications for policy-makers and organisers of agricultural labour.

While analysing the process of agricultural development the author completely rejects the thesis of semi-feudalism in Bihar agriculture, and asserts that agriculture both in Punjab and Bihar is capitalist in nature. Bihar and Punjab show two different paths of capitalist exploitation. Punjab followed *kulak* path of capitalist development and Bihar adopted the *junker* path, far more painful than the *kulak* one. To reach this conclusion the author makes a long review of literature relating to the theme and makes a long digression on the Indian debate on 'mode of production' in agriculture. The author is aware of the various theories of migration on which he makes many critical and useful comments. He terms various theories on migration as neo-classical which are considered by him inadequate for an analysis of the phenomenon of migration. The author attempts to save the scientific sociological method from the sway of empiricism and functionalism. He expresses his faith in the scientific sociological theory based on an abstract understanding of the totality of the social structure rooted in history, which in his opinion can yield a meaningful typology of human migration. One would like to agree with this stance of the author but is disappointed at the failure of the author to stick to this position in practice. Though the author attempts to link the migration flow of labour from Bihar to Punjab with the uneven pattern of capitalist development yet, he mainly confines himself to development in agriculture and talks about rural-rural migration. Much larger migration flows from rural to urban, both inter-state and intra-state, and migration of sections other than labour find no place in his analysis. Our own enquiries in this area reveal that a large section of population from rural areas of Punjab is shifting to urban centres both within and outside the state. In fact, the capitalist development process

has generated so much mobility in the state that all the sections of the society seem to be on the move. In the same way Bihar economy is also experiencing several migration flows other than rural-rural inter-state migration. A holistic perspective demands that inter-state rural-rural labour migration be located not only in the overall social structure but also be related to other migration flows. For reasons best known to him, the author has neglected two very important sources of data relating to migration flows. One very well-known source is the census figures which help to capture a macro-view. Another is a comprehensive report prepared by the study group on Migrant Labour set up by National Commission on Rural Labour. This is available in the second volume of the Commission's detailed report. The author's effort to link every detail of the migrant labour to social structure makes his analysis mechanical at some places. The author has related the phenomenon of bonded labour of migrants, particularly in the Hoshiarpur district of Punjab, to such agrarian conditions as scarcity of local labour due to outmigration to other countries and non-agricultural occupations, rise of consciousness among of Scheduled Castes and the relatively backward agriculture of the district (Chapter VI). But this phenomenon (which existed in 1980-81) disappeared by 1990-91. The two factors according to the author which changed it were: (i) intensification of the market operations and (ii) the role of voluntary organisations and a widespread publicity given to author's earlier study. Thus the change was not brought by changes in the specific conditions of agriculture of Hoshiarpur district. In fact the phenomenon of bonded labour has no objective base in the present phase of agriculture of the state. It was an aberration attempted by the farmers of a small region in the state. This aberration could not survive the pressure of the stray press reports and (weak) voluntary organisations. The author himself has observed that even the *Siri* system (share cropping) and attached labour are on the verge of elimination by the process of casualisation of labour as the latter is more suited to the needs of production.

On the whole the book is well-written and researched. It advances our understanding of Bihari migrant labour in Punjab agriculture. Scholars working in the area of migration and activists engaged in organisation of rural labour will find this book useful.

*S.S. Gill teaches in the Department of Economics of Panjabi University, Patiala.

POETRY OF ELOQUENT SILENCES

Usha Bande*

AFTER THE RAIN

Kumkum Yadav

Sahitya Sahakar, Delhi, 1994, pp.56, Rs.50/-

It is convenient to label a woman writer (a poet, at that), as *lucus naturae*, a freak nature; to find "cracks and fissures" in her personal relationships; and to classify her as a feminist. But, when a woman writes, she may not necessarily write as a woman. She becomes a "carver" who chisels beautiful forms out of a shapeless mass of material; she thus transcends the narrow confines of gender. That does not, however, go on to prove that a woman artist becomes a "not-woman". One cannot dispense with the location of the 'self' in time, place, race and sex, which give meaning to the creative activity and determine the relationship between experience and art. A woman writer today need not suffer Philomela's fate, nor that of the Lady of Shalott's to live in shadows and weave devious patterns and motifs into the fabric of her art to give expression to her intense personal feelings. Rather, her experience as a woman helps her to understand the questions and problems of existence. This is what one finds when one picks up Kumkum Yadav's slender volume of poems. Wading surely yet steadily through the silences that pervade the persona's relationship, she tries to grapple with the higher problems of life.

Life, she says, is like a "thriller", which you cannot let go once you start with the first page. There is

Suspense, intrigue, and horror,
and that inevitable touch
of humour
it's all so binding,
engrossing. ('Life - Thriller', p.37)

In the end you realise that the hero was none else but you. Though you are the "prophet of justice," you cannot deal out any punishment because "the innocent, hunted

victim/to be the hardened crook,/ ditto my presumption" (p.37). Such simple yet pregnant statements compel attention. Once you start reading the poems you can hardly put down the book.

Though the poetess seems to have made her point through the 47 poems, in the 48th piece, the last one, 'Resume', she still has a foreboding that the curse may become eloquent someday:

Enough has been said,
about all, may be till
the curse becomes eloquent
on another day, at
another wedding, with
another guest (p.65)

The allusion to Coleridge's mariner is unmistakable. It retains the suspense and one likes to turn again to the first poem where supernatural imagery is employed evocatively to express the persona's disgust with lust and lack of communication in man-woman relationship. "Unannounced an eclipse swallows me," (Reclamation), and the moon, no longer the soft, silvery moon of the lovers, becomes a "ghost", watching her defeat "like a lost kitten. In fear and pain and silence" (p.5). The persona has no conflict with her male counterpart, only a sense of loss and a vast void full of silences.

In almost all the poems, Ms. Yadav seems to be troubled by "silences". Here I am reminded of the epigraph to Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* "If I were a man

(p.12-26) which sets the tone for writers like Achebe and Ellison to bring out the blackman and his culture from the closets and make him more 'visible'. While discussing the background, Dheram takes up particularly the works of Richard Wright, Ann Petry, James Baldwin and Chester Himes, thereby placing the writings of Ellison in a tradition rather than discussing them in isolation. Similarly, references have been made to the writings of Gabriel Okara, T.M. Aluko and Clement Agunwa, thereby showing Achebe too as a part of a tradition rather than a solitary swallow.

Separate chapters have been devoted to Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Achebe's novels, placing them

and cared to know the world I lived in, I almost think it would make me a shade uneasy the weight of that long silence of one-half the world" (Elizabeth Rubins). This silence suffered by women is not synonymous with tranquility. It is unwholesome. It eloquently expresses the boredom, the distance and the inability to pave the gap.

Silence cannot protect the persona and the poetess shares with it a compulsive urge to reach out to the far beyond. A discerning reader cannot miss the existential concerns, voiced with the sparkling wit of a Haiku poet. Poems like 'Like', 'Sunlight', 'An Investigation', are short but full of meaning.

The poetess's inclination to express inexplicable things through nature imagery is clearly revealed. Nature, for Kumkum Yadav, is not an inert phenomenon. It is a vital living force, interacting with the human world. In 'Monsoon Fixation' the rain comes with all its bounty to quench her "thirst" but the poetess is unhappy that her "begging bowl" is small. In 'After the Rain', the title poem, a beautiful picture of tranquility is matched with "the gentle monotony of a mother's hands/stroking/unmindful of a reason" (p.21). The poem ends with a charming epigram,

Here, do not question,
for simple things
are unanswerable (p.21).

Nature imagery abounds in the poems and despite the occasional

disgust, silences, distances and existential *angst*, we have the graphic picture of "mustard flowers", "the loneliness of the sea", "the monsoon sky" and "meditative snow peaks". This creative kinship with nature and other associative images serve to highlight the hiatus between the life of the interior and the world of the exterior.

So much for the theme! As for form, the poems are written in free verse and are characterised by formlessness. This aspect of free verse is used by the Indian English poetry with full advantage. The stanza patterns are irregular and the poems vary in length, the shortest has but 8 words. (See 'Life', p.25). Such poems serve to carry the poetess's intimate experience with the intuitive perceptions well enough. The paradoxes of life, love and hate, loss and gain, pain and pleasure, life and death, speech and silence, distance and nearness are juxtaposed delightfully to give depth to the poem.

A couple of poems suffer with obscurity. It takes long to figure out what the poem purports. Influence of Robert Browning, particularly in 'Deciphering' is too obvious in the burden "you would understand", to be ignored. The poetess also seems to be under the spell of Yeats and Eliot. These small quarrels apart, Ms. Yadav is intense, witty and clear when she is *herself*. One of the poems which impressed this reviewer is 'Childhood'. The longing to go back to that state of pure innocence is eternal and Kumkum has marvellously encapsulated it in her pithy poem. Kudos to her!

* Dr. Usha Bande is a Reader in Rajkanya Mahavidyalaya, Shimla

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Affirmation Through Culture

employed by both Africans and African-Americans to set the record of their development straight and to rebut the charges of primitivism and savagery has been to 'de-educate' and 'de-programme' themselves from this 'received' perception of their culture. Dheram studies this strategy as it is employed by Chinua Achebe, the most well-known Nigerian novelist, poet and social thinker and Ralph Ellison, a renowned African-American novelist in their fictional writings. However, before focussing on the texts of these two writers, Dheram discusses the 'Quest for Identity in Black Fiction between 1945-1955'

in the historical and cultural contexts of their respective societies and then focussing on the portrayal of cultural aspects of Africans in the writings of these writers. It is through this foregrounding of their respective cultures and by bringing out their significance for the African-American and Nigerian societies respectively that Ellison and Achebe seek to succeed in their objectives of 'de-programming!'

Dheram's book makes an interesting reading and is a significant contribution to the field of comparative studies between African and African-American writers although one could join issues with her on some of her formulations. For instance, when

she states that "therefore, after acquiring political freedom, it becomes essential for the native to rebuild his own psyche and the nation both, on the foundations of culture and nationalism" (p.5), she refuses to take cognizance of the important fact that such rebuilding of the psyche was needed much more and was actually done too by most African nations during their struggles for political freedom and the writers played a significant role in it. After all, Achebe's magnum opus *Things Fall Apart* was published in 1958, two years before Nigeria gained its independence.

* Dr. Harish Narang teaches in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Ethnicity, ethnonationalism, regionalism and sub-regionalism as concepts and processes have been gaining prominence in the wake of their growth all over the world, particularly in view of the fact that these have resulted in the disintegration of quite a few nations and are threatening various others with similar fate. The political dilemma of plural societies, now coming to the fore, is how to reconcile the common or shared interests of the society as a whole with apparently or actually conflicting particular interests of its various minority groups. Thus ethnic questions have not only become a matter of great concern in the contemporary socio-political life but have also engaged social scientists.

The uprising of ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s generally took social scientists by surprise. Earlier assimilationist, primordial and developmental models had failed to predict ethnic mobilization. In fact, these models foretold of a decline in cultural, linguistic or religious assertions among the population in the face of industrial development and the expansion and consolidation of state power. There was amazing agreement among modernization, integration and nation-building theorists and classical Marxist writers that ethnicity and ethnic conflict will be transcended by "new forms of community and new forms of conflicts". There was a kind of consensus among sociological theorists of modernization and Marxists that "ethnic competition belongs to the premodern era; in so far as it persists, it is an irrational form of behaviour or a form of "false consciousness".

To an extent this thinking still prevails in many respects. In countries like India the so-called regional movements are generally viewed as aberrations in democratic nation-building efforts or as consequences of developmental and modernization processes. The ethnicity factor in these movements is hardly explained both in Marxian framework and developmental models of analysis. Sajal Basu departs from this. He, on the basis of the study of Jharkhand movement, tries to show that, contrary to developmental model analysis and classical Marxian framework, ethnicity and symbols

QUESTIONS OF NATION, CULTURE AND ETHNICITY

A.S. Narang*

JHARKHAND MOVEMENT: ETHNICITY AND CULTURE OF SILENCE

Sajal Basu

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1994. pp. XII + 159, Rs.175/-

of identity assertions may be active at various stages of development and such assertions could transcend economic factors and become effective in mobilising mass sentiment.

Basu's assumption is not that mere human nature and human psychology provide the necessary conditions for ethnocentric and nationalist behaviour. His hypothesis is that ethnicity, subnationality or ethnic nationalism, as one may term it, is mere expression against the excesses of modern nation-state system involving repression and subjugation of the socio-cultural identities. In the specific Indian plural situation Basu points out that though the social reformers and intellectual activists always stood for upholding the unique pluralistic base of Indian culture and the accommodative character of various nationalities and groups, the post-independence politics of nation-building leading to coercion and over-reaction to regional expressions has been disruptive of this accommodative base. The repression and subjugation of diverse identities by the over-centralised oppressive nation-state gave rise to ethnicity or ethnic nationalism.

Jharkhand question, therefore, Basu points out, is not a development question, nor is it demand of the Santals or *adivasis* alone; it is rather a nationality question in essence. The main issues behind the movement are alienation of the indigenous communities from their land and forest, influx of outsiders resulting in deprivation of job and training and submergence of

culture.

To establish his point Basu delineates the historical back-drop of the origin of Jharkhand movement, scrutinises its common tenets, continuity and their changes, locates the means and strategies of mobilisation, its changing composition and character, and reviews its positive achievements and negative aspects, locates its internal divisions, splits, factions and their impact

on the support base of the movement, and finally analyses the leadership patterns as well as the elite and state response.

However, he does not analyse the real nature of the social basis of leadership in terms of its socio-political goals and manoeuvrings. This is important in view of the fact that the government's policy of appeasing the tribal leadership seems to have been successful most of the time.

Of course, several leaders have lost their mass-base by accepting the governmental concessions. Even the original organisation—the Jharkhand Party—has become redundant and its place has been taken by various other parties and groups. Yet the leadership continues to be prone to accommodation in order to share or control power. In fact, the problem of identifying *Dikus* and non-*dikus* also seems to have been manipulated by leaders who often enter into strange alliances. Another interesting feature of this process is that among the leaders there has been a tendency to bring about alliances, mergers, etc., after every debacle in the assembly elections. Does not it suggest that the

The main issues behind the movement are alienation of the indigenous communities from their land and forest, influx of outsiders resulting in deprivation of job and training and submergence of culture.

movement is initiated by the ambitious members of the middle class to gain a greater share in the political and economic field for themselves?

Here it is also pertinent to mention that, contrary to the general notion, even the traditional tribal society was stratified in which some people were privileged and enjoyed better life than others. Therefore the demand for revival of the old system indirectly means the revival of the domination of the tribal elites who had lost their position to the outsider elite categorised as "*Dikus*". In other words there is a possibility that the leaders are exploiting the problem faced by the tribals rather than trying to solve them. Basu does not deal with these questions at length.

No doubt, he convincingly shows that the movement has had a big positive impact. The struggle has raised tribal identity to a position of prestige. It has created pride and self-confidence among the tribals. Their consciousness-level has been rising fast and many of them are no longer dumb followers of the populist leadership. In other words, the appeasement of the leaders can no longer keep them silent.

Another issue which Basu does not scrutinise is whether the creation of a new state will solve the identity problem. Inter-tribal, linguistic and regional differences, particularly in an economy of scarcity, may bring out new kinds of ethnic tension in the new state. In other words the question remains whether we can understand and solve ethnic or regional issues without talking of the overall issue of developmental model. Basu does refer to them but these are not his main concerns.

Sajal Basu's real contribution is to focus on the ethnic perspective of the movement as its major component. In his concern as an activist intellectual, he has tried to overcome the restrictions of Marxist or liberal paradigms and has used a construct dictated by the requirement of his thesis. Thus it is a useful addition to the literature on one movement in particular as well as on regionalism/sub-regionalism in general.

* A.S. Narang, teaches Political Science in Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi.