

considerations for 'such mobility would depend largely on material circumstances'. What she intends, on the other hand, 'is to account for the shift in the conceptualization of varna categories, as these had to be in harmony with the changing material milieu and emerging social groups which acquired their identity on a regional and occupational basis rather than in terms of varna'. Jaiswal looks upon the present case as an instance of 'the proliferation of jatis within the varna system'. This is very much within her scheme, the precedence of varna over jati, the latter being 'within' the former. And it is this that may not find unanimous acceptance.

Caste and Hinduism

The last chapter, 'Caste and Hinduism: Changing Paradigms of Brahmanical Integration', examines the complex relationship between caste and Hinduism. How far is caste a badge of 'Hinduism'? Jaiswal's definition of it takes an 'integrated view of Hindu beliefs and practices and regards the social system not only as an underpinning providing support to the edifice of Hinduism but as its important constitutive element.' This would make caste an integral part of 'Hindu' doctrine and practice.

There are two difficulties about this. For one thing, it identifies a single Hindu religion subsuming Vedantic metaphysics and the cult of the anthill. Secondly, by taking caste as a 'Hindu' institution, it will fail to explain caste among 'non-Hindu' communities such as Christians and Muslims in south India. What Jaiswal argues, however, about movements which were spearheaded against caste, such as Virasaivism in the medieval period, is true: they ended up as separate castes themselves! This is partly true of modern movements such as the Arya Samaj as well, which Jaiswal takes up for discussion.

Jaiswal's heavily researched book is extremely useful for those who want to make a study of the various problems raised by her. How far the book itself can throw new light on the 'origin, functions and dimensions of change' of this phenomenon, however, is open to question.

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Obituary

MICHAEL ARIS: scholar, writer, gentleman

The death of Michael Aris, fellow at St. Antony's College, Oxford, on his 53rd birthday has left the world of Tibetan scholarship the poorer. Born in Havana, Cuba, where his father served in The British Council, he was educated at Worth School in Sussex and then went on to read modern history at Durham University.

He first met Daw Suu when they were undergraduates and she came to study at Oxford. From 1967 to 1973 he was a private tutor to the royal family of Bhutan and this was how his lifelong interest in the Bhutanese language and culture began. As head of the translation department of the government of Bhutan he was favourably placed for research into Bhutanese history and his studies eventually bore fruit in his book *The Origins of Buddhist Monarchy in Bhutan*.

During this last decade of his life Michael attained a certain poise and tranquillity that no friend could fail to notice. Long years of research on Buddhist thought had left their mark.

He was married to Daw Suu in a Buddhist ceremony in London. After studying for a Ph.D. in Tibetan literature Michael and Suu and their two sons travelled widely in the Himalayas. In 1973 Michael led the University of California expedition to the Kutang and Nubri districts of north Nepal. After his return to Oxford he was elected to a research fellowship first at St. John's College and then Wolfson College. His publications during this period of his life included *Bhutan: The Early History of a Himalayan Kingdom*; *Views of Medieval Bhutan*; *The Diary and Drawings of Samuel Davis, 1883*; and *Sources for the History of Bhutan*. By the time he joined Indian Institute of Advanced Study at Shimla he already had a worldwide reputation as a scholar in Tibetan studies and was most sought after at conferences on various aspects of the culture of the eastern Himalayas in particular.

His gentle manner and modesty in scholarly gatherings endeared him to all who knew him. Very much the man who loved the mountains, he was a familiar figure along the wooded tracks that surrounded the Institute. He so often mentioned to me in later years in Oxford that his stay at the Institute was really the last time the family could be together and he valued those two years, 1985-87, in a very special way. His researches while he was there resulted in *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives* which was published both in India and Britain. What I remember most of all during his stay at Shimla was the enormous help he was in organizing the seminar on the Western Himalayas which we held at the Institute. The breadth of his sympathies and his unflinching devotion to the cause of assisting people of different cultures to understand each other was never more evident than at that time. Suu was at the Institute as a fellow in her own right, with her own programme of research.

I can still remember the day when news of the grave illness of her mother came from Burma and the family made preparation for her to attend on her as soon as possible. It was this event that ushered in Daw Suu's involvement in the political life of her home country and the long years of separation from her family that followed. Michael's support for all that she did marks one of the most extraordinary relationships of this century. The telephone and the scanty messages through various sources were for the most part the only ways in which news of Suu could filter through to the house in Oxford.

After leaving Shimla Michael Aris resumed his scholarly career in Oxford and made a home for his two sons. At the same time he was known as the husband of Burma's national leader and was called upon to receive the honours that came her way but which she was prevented from receiving in person. Visits to Rangoon stopped. During this last decade of his life Michael attained a certain poise and tranquillity that no friend could fail to notice. Long years

of research on Buddhist thought had left their mark.

Michael's career as an academic in Oxford was never interrupted. He was a research fellow and member of the governing body at St. Antony's College, and during 1990-92 a visiting professor at Harvard, but—and this is my personal impression—he felt closer to Suu in Oxford and also wished to keep a home there for his sons, and so decided not to move to America. He continued to maintain links with world leaders in the cause of peace, and embarked on fund-raising in order to eventually set up at Oxford a Centre for Tibetan and Himalayan Studies.

The corpus of scholarly work kept growing. He edited *Lamas, Princes and Brigands*, Joseph Roek's *Photography of the Tibetan Borderlands of China*, and Hugh Richardson's *High Peaks, Pure Earth*. He edited a collection of Daw Suu's speeches and works in the Penguin *Freedom from Fear*. This carried forewords by Vaclav Havel and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. One last meeting with his wife was not to be. His sons were with him when he died on March 27, 1999—scholar, writer, gentleman. The community, past and present, of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study are privileged to number him among their own.

Margaret Chatterjee
Westminster College,
Oxford
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