

Bengali Culture Over A Thousand Years.

Translated from the original Bengali by Sarbari Sinha.

Gulam Murshid

New Delhi. Niyogi Books. 2018. pp. 614+Preface and Acknowledgements, Selected Bibliography and Index.
INR 995/-

AMIYA P. SEN*

The book under review is an English translation of *Hazar Bochorer Bangla Sanskriti*, published from Dhaka in 2006, and which has been, by all accounts, a well-received and an extremely popular work. Its continuing popularity in part explains this translation; apparently, both the author and the translator decided that this entertaining and instructive work ought also to be made available to non-Bengali readers in a free and lucid translation. As a reviewer, I can only joyously uphold that decision.

The problem, however, with reviewing such books is that the translator's contribution is either somewhat understated or not judged at all, especially when there is no scope for comparing the original with the translated version. In such cases, a reviewer is never sure if a particular error of conception or articulation lay with the translator or the author. On the whole though, I would allow the translator the benefit of doubt for two related reasons. Assuming that a translator is not also an expert in the relevant field, factual errors are likely to go unnoticed. As far as conceptual problems go, the translator's job would have been met if only he or she was really to remain as faithful as possible to the original text, notwithstanding any suspected shortcomings.

Murshid's work comprises 14 chapters in all, covering a wide variety of subjects ranging from history, politics, social anthropology, the arts and architecture, women, music, sartorial manners and even food habits. Much of the material is derived from the author's previous works particularly on the development of Bengali language

* Amiya P. Sen is a retired professor of Modern Indian History and primarily interested in the intellectual and cultural history of colonial India.

and literature and woman-related reforms. As can only be expected, Murshid is at his best when it comes to useful and insightful surveys of social, linguistic and literary developments in colonial Bengal. The work concludes with a chapter that claims to bring out the 'distinctiveness', somewhat simplistically I fear, of Bengali culture. I shall return to this question presently. As an overview of Bengal's history and culture between roughly the tenth and twentieth centuries, this book is breathtakingly comprehensive in its scope, copiously informative, engaging in its arguments and lucidly direct in its approach and articulation. This is a book that I would happily recommend to an informed and inquisitive college student and the interested general reader.

An underlying problem with this work, as I progressively discovered, was the ambivalence with regard to defining the concepts of 'Bengal' and 'Bengali' themselves. Now, if Bengal is taken to be a homogenized geo-cultural region one would have to say that such a formation exists no more. A once palpable linguistic and cultural unity has now been decisively overridden by the emergence of new political frontiers. W. Bengal and Bangladesh are now two distinct political entities, one a province within a federal formation and the other, a sovereign state in its own right. Each has its own political compulsions as the ongoing controversy over the National Registry in India clearly reveals. To me what also undermines this acclaimed unity is the term 'Bangladesh' itself, representing an appropriation of sorts, a category claiming to exclusively represent the Bengali habitat and 'authentic' Bengali culture. Here, it would be pertinent to recall that the term 'Bangladesh' was coined by President Zia ur Rehman, in lieu of 'Bengali' only so

that the Bengali-speaking population of W. Bengal may be excluded. Arguably, to call this territory East Bengal or else 'Purva Bangla' would have been more apt and innocent.

It is no less problematic to define Bengal or Bengali on the basis of a commonly spoken language. The problems here are manifold. First, I am not sure if the sheer multiplicity of dialects in the region allows for an undifferentiated 'Bengali' linguistic or cultural unity. Notwithstanding my roots in erstwhile east Bengal, I cannot understand a word of the Bengali spoken in Sylhet or Chittagong. In the Muslim dominated areas of W. Bengal, one way to distinguish the Bengali Muslim from the Hindu is still the former's preference for words like *pani* (for water), *phoophi* (aunt) or *apa* (older sister). Second, Bengali language spills over both geographical and political boundaries. There is an active Bengali diaspora now at work, both within the subcontinent and outside. I am given to understand that the Delhi-NCR region, with its significant Bengali presence, organizes Durga puja celebrations on a scale, visibly larger than any city or town in W. Bengal other than Kolkata. The *Probasi Bangali* (diasporic Bengali) has contributed no less to Bengali culture, of which the author himself is but a fine example. In the colonial period, the Western educated Bengali Babu was virtually the second colonizer and almost everywhere he went, there sprang up either a unit of the Brahma Samaj or else a Kali Bari (Kali temple). Third, throughout the work, the author treats Bengali culture as falling exclusively within the domain of two religious communities, the Hindus and the Muslims. On the other hand, if 'Bengal' and 'Bengali' were to be treated as more composite categories, it would have been only apt to also mention, however briefly, the several other communities that have made ethnic Bengal their home: Odiyas, Biharis, Armenians, Jews, Nepalis, Bhutias, Sikhs, Marwaris, Oswal Jains and the Chinese. Each of these communities, I imagine, has contributed towards a Bengali social and cultural world, tied as this is in a complex relationship with the politics, religion, trade or finance of the region. The Armenians, as I know, were once a significantly conspicuous community both in Dhaka and Kolkata and who in Kolkata had not heard of the fancy Chinese shoe-maker, the dentist and of the numerous, hugely popular kitchens offering Chinese cuisine? I hear there is even a Chinese Kali temple in central Kolkata which only speaks for the historical process of acculturation.

The author rightly complains of the relative neglect that Muslim contribution to Bengali culture has suffered in the hands of Hindu scholars and scribes (p.220). To an extent, surely, this was a legacy of Mill and Macaulay who instilled in the Hindu the fear and distrust of the 'tyrannical' Muslim. And, admittedly, there was also

the self-ascribed arrogance in Hindu literary icons who did not condescend to seriously consider the worth of his Muslim compatriot. On another level though, this appears to be largely a matter of preferences born in deep cultural familiarity. After all, who among Bengali Muslim scholars has undertaken serious studies on Hindu ritual or social institutions and customs? For a work that claims to be essentially a cultural history, Murshid's work on occasions deals excessively with the political (see in particular pp. 184-203). Also dubious are his sweeping generalizations as when he claims (p.243) that Bengali society was not very conducive for romantic love or that making a secret of romantic love was 'a typically Bengali trait' (p.245). In a culture deeply permeated by both Sanskrit erotic sensibility and the folk, this would be hard to defend, even for pre-modern times. However, the feature that worried me the most was the author's rather simplistic and far from nuanced treatment of history itself. For instance, in the context of changing Hindu-Muslim relations in colonial Bengal as manipulated by the British, it would have been only apt to point out how official policy towards Indian Muslims underwent three distinct phases: first, the phase ending with 1857 in which the British ruling class remained suspicious of the Muslim community but not unduly alarmed, the second, immediately following the uprising of 1857 when the Muslims were unjustly blamed for the uprising, forcing leaders like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan to issue apologetic pamphlets and finally, the post-1885 phase when the burgeoning success of the Hindu dominated Congress forced a radical revision in the British policy towards the Hindu-Muslim question.

Murshid's work abounds in errors of historical fact and inattention to detail, some of these quite surprising. On page 272, we hear of a split in the Brahma Samaj in the year 1872 whereas the Samaj split twice, in 1866 and 1878 respectively. On page 362, we are given to understand that the first Bengali novel was *Alaler Ghore Dulal* by Tekchand Thakur (Peary Chand Mitra); on page 364, however, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay is shown to be the 'first' novelist. This is bound to be confusing for an average non-Bengali reader. On page 170, the author claims that since the coming to power of the Sena dynasty, Bengalis were ruled for about a thousand years by 'outsiders'. Now the Senas, as far as I know, were migrants from Karnataka and certainly distinct from the Abyssinian, Turkish, Pathan or Afgan rulers in Bengal who arrived from outside India. On page 92, in what constitutes a naïve generalization, Murshid compares the cultural message of the Vaishnava mystic, Chaitanya, to that of Martin Luther in Germany. Such a tendentious reading did indeed emerge in the days of Hindu nationalism; today it stands disavowed and disgraced. *Brahma Sangit*, such

as composed by Rammohun or his spiritual successors, was not in praise of (the Puranic deity) Brahma (p.159) but the metaphysical Absolute, Brahman. Also, contrary to the claims made by the author, Rammohun could not have attempted to establish a monotheistic religion based on the Vedas (p.155) since the Vedas themselves allowed reverence to multiple deities. In truth, Rammohun knew very little of the Vedic Samhitas and more often than not, by the 'Vedas', he meant the Upanishads. There is an equally misleading assertion made in respect of Vidyasagar (p.163) to the effect that this reformer modelled his widow marriage campaign on the lines anticipated by Rammohun himself. In truth, while Rammohun did set a precedent for hunting up scriptural sanctions, he never considered marriage to be an option for upper caste Hindu widows. His preference, clearly, was for a life of ascetic widowhood. In the 1850s, ironically enough, the Hindu orthodoxy often cited Rammohun's preference to denounce Vidyasagar's justification of widow marriages. Finally, to Murshid's point about how the Western educated Bengali progressively imbibed a secular worldview, I would offer the counter example of Bankimchandra who, when writing his *magnum opus*, the *Krishnarittra*, argued that it was his Western education that had made possible a belief in avatars! Arguably, there as very little that was truly secular within nineteenth century Indian culture and it would be no exaggeration

to say that given the pervasive and hegemonic effects of colonialism on the Indian mind, religious hermeneutics became an important tool of self-reflexivity and self-expression.

Specifically in the context of Indian Bengal with which I am far more familiar, I can think of three critical questions that may be said to constitute the said 'distinctiveness' of Bengali culture. First, together with the largely Bengali speaking state of Tripura, W. Bengal has had the experience of long years of Left Rule. There is a political sociology at work here which calls for an explanation. Second, why is it that caste friction or violence in ethnic Bengal has been relatively lower than that historically experienced in the states of the south or Maharashtra? Notably, there have never been Bengali equivalents of Phule, Periyar and Ambedkar. Third, why is it that in W. Bengal, there is at least a functional acknowledgement of male civility vis-a-vis the female? In cities like Delhi, men nonchalantly grab seats reserved for women in public transport and are prepared to assault anybody, young or old, male or female, whoever dared point to their unreasonableness and incivility. In Kolkata, as I have been noticing over the years, male passengers might wistfully eye an empty 'ladies seat' in an overcrowded bus and yet refrain from occupying it. Could we think of a cultural explanation for this?

A History of the Dasnami Naga Sannyasis

Edited with an Introduction by Ananada Bhattacharya.

Jadunath Sarkar
Delhi. Manohar. 2018. pp. 251+Index. Price: INR 1095

AMIYA P. SEN*

Ananda Bhattacharya can justly be credited with running a very useful scheme under which several rare texts from the colonial and pre-colonial periods are being reprinted with a contemporary introduction. For the colonial period itself, these include ethnographic and survey reports and several other monographs which remain invaluable as sources of historical information on select events and episodes from our history. The present work speaks of Dasnami Sannyasis, (the word "Dasnami" denoting 10 titles which later turned into different sub-orders) constituting the largest and most powerful monastic order in India who not only contributed to the anti-colonial resistance in the late eighteenth century but played an important part in the internal politics of the sub-continent going back by at least two centuries. The interesting quality about these Sannyasis is that they were able to reconcile two apparently contradictory pursuits: a pietistic religious life and a violent recourse to arms. The Dasnami Order, founded by Adi Sankaracharya, subsequently came to be divided between *shaastradhari*s, those specializing in scriptural knowledge and *astradhari*s, those who served as a militia and were regularly employed as mercenaries by warring states in late medieval India. Interestingly however, much less is known about the religious life of the Dasnamis, barring their sectarian identity as Saivites.

Jadunath Sarkar's classic study does not appear to carry a date of publication though the present edition puts this down as 1958. If accepted, this would place Sarkar in a long line of scholars who have critically

commented upon Sannyasi militias, starting perhaps with Jaminimohan Ghosh (1923, 1930), followed by Farquhar (1925) and Orr (1940). Major contributions to this line of work to succeed Sarkar are those by anthropologist G.S. Churye, in 1964, and historians Lorenzen and Pinch in 1978 and 1998 respectively.

Sarkar's work has 19 chapters in all. The first three chapters are devoted to the life and teachings of Adi Sankaracharya; chapters 4 to 8 are on the organization of the Dasnamis, the operative rules of conduct pertaining to the domesticated and sedentary *Gossains* and the warring Naga (literally, naked) militia who were recruited by *akharas* (literally, wrestling rings).¹ Chapters 10 to 17 are on prominent Naga leaders like Rajendra Giri and Anup Giri (alias Himmat Bahadur) and their successors. Chapter 18 is a useful account of the involvement of the Dasnami Gossains in trade, banking and civil administration while the concluding chapter, the work of an anonymous contributor, is a detailed description of one of the principal centres of Dasnami power and presence, the *Mahanirvani Akhara* near Allahabad.

I am not sure if the world of scholarship has taken adequate note of Bhattacharya's own researches in the field, beginning apparently in 2004-05. In 2014, he produced a full-length monograph on the subject (*Dasnami Sannyasis in Worldly and Soldierly Activities*) which does not appear to have received the attention that it deserved. In the work under review, Bhattacharya's lengthy introduction (backed by field-work) is not meticulously detailed but also clears certain commonplace misconceptions. First, he disabuses us of the notion that the well-known Sannyasi rebels of the eighteenth century Bengal were Bengalis in origin. In truth, as Bhattacharya alerts us, most of them

* Amiya P. Sen is a retired professor of Modern Indian History and primarily interested in the intellectual and cultural history of colonial India.

were migrants from upper and central India. Their major field of activity too appears to be centred in the area now corresponding to Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Maharashtra. Only two districts in colonial Bengal reveal any significant presence of the Dasnami Sannyasis: Bagura and Mymensing and this presence too appears to have been dictated by trade, money-lending and revenue farming rather than military involvement, which relatively speaking, was far greater in north and central India (pp. 30-35). Bhattacharya also disagrees with the view originally expressed since the 1960s that in fighting the early colonial state, the Sannyasis had the backing of the peasants (p. 69). On the contrary, if Bhattacharya is to be believed, the Sannyasis, as revenue farmers are known to have mercilessly extorted the peasants (p. 54).

Bhattacharya's introduction also serves as a useful corrective on certain questions regarding historiography. For one, he reveals the methodological limitations in David Lorenzen who, allegedly, relies far too much on secondary sources and in Pinch, who excludes Marathi and Persian sources as sources of study. Sarkar himself is accused of doing just the opposite: focusing far too much on the Persian and Marathi sources to the exclusion of the British East Indian Company records. More importantly, Bhattacharya accuses Sarkar of deliberately playing an aggressive 'Hindutva' card by emphasizing their martial valour of the Naga Sannyasis and neglecting to pay adequate attention to their other secular activities (Preface).

I also noted, however, certain instances of oversight and carelessness on the part of the editor. On page 10, for instance, he puts Adi Shankaracharya as a tenth century figure, only to change it to the seventh century on page 25. He also needs to be reminded that contrary to his claim (p. 27), the *Dabistan* is no longer considered a work by Mohsin Fani. Moreover, on page 30, Dasnami Gossains are identified with settled and domesticated householders and on the next page with celibate ascetics. Finally, I was intrigued by his use of the expression "married sannyasis" (p. 10), which to me appeared as a contradiction in terms. On page 76, he calls *sannyasi* a 'socio-religious entity'. However, on one level, all historical existence is social and yet I was reminded of the fact that in the Hindu tradition, *sanyas* begins by acknowledging that one is dead to society.

I am happy to recommend this work to all students and scholars, interested in the rich, multi-dimensional and complexly ordered spiritual lineages of India. I have enjoyed reading this work and so, I trust, will many others.

Note

1. We are reliably informed by Bhattacharya that there are now 13 extant *akharas* in South Asia, seven of which are identifiable with the Saivite Dasnamis and three with the Vaishnava Ramanandis.

New Postcolonial Dialects: An Intercultural Comparison of Indian and Nigerian English Plays

Vengadasalam, Sarbani Sen

Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019. 243 pages.

AMARA KHAN*

Sarbani Sen Vengadasalam's *New Postcolonial Dialects: An Intercultural Comparison of Indian and Nigerian English Plays* is an engaging chronicle of the British rule in India and Nigeria. Whilst few other historians have trodden this ground before, Vengadasalam's ingenuity lies in the breadth of her visualization, which extends to the investigation of how Indian and Nigerian English plays while being situated in national traditions reframed their own cultural environment in transnational terms. Such a range allows her to draw comparisons and contrasts across theatres and nations in a unique manner. Any serious learner of the issue will require reading this book.

Vengadasalam presents an intercultural context to the literary inquiry in the Indian and Nigerian culture before and after the struggle for Independence. Vengadasalam argues that the intercultural use of dramatic forms by both Indian and Nigerian dramatists is not unintentional but depicts a tenacity to introduce an innovative form for modern Indian and Nigerian theatre. Vengadasalam substantiates her argument by giving examples from the plays by two Indian dramatists, Rabindranath Tagore and Badal Sircar and one Nigerian dramatist, Wole Soyinka. Vengadasalam reveals how the dramatists make the traditional folk forms of Indian and Nigerian drama modern in their presentation so that the local and traditional themes become appropriate and effective for a contemporary audience. She indicates that for the Indian plays, both Tagore and Sircar made use of stories from Indian mythology whereas Soyinka relied more on Yoruba mythology. She reveals in her book that traditional and mythological stories were employed by the Indian and

Nigerian dramatists to raise current issues such as that of postcolonial identity for their contemporary audience.

Vengadasalam takes a challenge to decide why theories of the continent cannot be applied to intercultural literature and, instead, frames her book across the world of possibilities released by this interrogation and supports her arguments by bringing in various major critical approaches such as postmodernism, post-structuralism, and Orientalism. She discusses various experiences grouped under the Commonwealth canopy and how as a result, different critical patterns emerged. Vengadasalam shows how the issue of interculturalism gains momentum when the play is tested in relation to the respective indigenous culture. She further discusses the role of aesthetic as a support for her argument on the significance of postcoloniality as a literary construct. She further highlights that just as the West's attempt to 'subsume the personality and uniqueness of the "colonized subject" to Western master-narratives in an attempt to homogenize cultural production was wrong, so was its attempt to exoticize the other in an attempt to push away what it felt threatened by'.

Vengadasalam develops an intercultural approach drawn from critical theory. She evaluates the texts of the plays focusing on the binary model of the 'orient' and the 'other' introduced by Edward Said. In keeping with her argument, she sees the child whose experiences are being narrated and the adult narrating as a child as a metaphor for the cultural gap and the play of power between the colonizer and the colonized. Throughout her analysis, Vengadasalam studies the shift of 'English' as the language of Britain and her royalty to 'english', a native dialect and a carrier of authentic intercultural experiences of the ex-colonies. In this framework, her analysis of the text becomes thought provoking as she highlights the

* Assistant Professor, Department of English, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan

usefulness of interculturalism as a literary tool because it expands itself in order to highlight a work's particularities and significances even while studying it against another. Vengadasalam suggests that the characters perceived in the select Indian and Nigerian plays as alienated, subjugated, oppressed, and deprived are representatives of a colonized nation that is struggling to either attain or regain its identity, and the textual references become the strength of her book. On the other hand, she discusses two Indian dramatists, Tagore and Sircar, but only one Nigerian dramatist, Wole Soyinka, to address the issue of interculturalism but the imbalance in the choice and presentation of dramatists leave the exploration undeveloped. Although Vengadasalam explores the plays in detail but the reader, being unfamiliar with the texts, finds it difficult to understand the discussion, as she does not provide short synopsis or introduction to the plays as an evidence for how she justifies her critique on the select plays.

Vengadasalam presents many reasons for considering interculturalism an authentic approach to studying Indian and Nigerian theatre. She quotes many critics not as a starting point for critical debate but to support her arguments that arts, specifically drama, does not obey the laws of political boundaries and it is the rapport with audience that is considered important. For this she endorses the Indian and Nigerian dramatists' approach of using any theatrical device they considered appropriate

whether indigenous or colonial. Her choice of quotations is, therefore, selective as it revolves around her central argument.

Vengadasalam's focus is helpful in emphasizing one of the main issues of a postcolonial study in terms of struggle of the dramatists to present the colonized concerns to the world by incorporating colonial theatrical and cultural practices with their mythological and folk forms. Yet she does not deliver sufficient evidence for how these traditional forms in relation to the modern ones are used by the dramatists to treat modern themes suited to their urban audience, therefore, implications of the issue merit further analysis. The book's weakness is the perplexing absence of any of British rule's constructive cultural impacts and no allusion to any key British advocate of Indian and Nigerian art, if there was any. While we know that Soyinka and Tagore had deep reverence and regard for many aspects of British influence on Nigeria and India, it however stays unnoted by Vengadasalam.

Reading the book expands knowledge of how biculturalism in the make-up and rearing of Tagore and Soyinka empowered them both to evolve a style of intercultural theatre that acted as an interface for the cultural interactions that colonialism engendered in their nations. The book is a significant, highly readable description of the Indian and Nigerian colonial and postcolonial experiences, which is a lesson in how literary and historical studies can enhance each other.

Kipling and Yeats at 150: Retrospective and Perspective

ed. Promodini Varma and Anubhav Pradhan

Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. 2019. pp. 274. ISBN: 978-0-367-37658, Rs. 995/-

CHETAN*

PhD student at Department of English, University of Delhi.

Despite their valiant attempt at drawing parallels between Kipling and Yeats, the two stalwarts of British literature, in terms of their politics, ideology, and literary output, Promodini Varma and Anubhav Pradhan, the editors of *Kipling and Yeats at 150: Retrospectives/Perspectives*, have only partially succeeded in their endeavour. The need to study the two authors together arises in their ability to raise pertinent and contemporary concerns around ideas of nationalism, tolerance, infiltration, independence, foreignness, communal hatred, hybridity and ethnic distinctions.

The book has 17 articles in all, grouped under four sub-sections focusing on specificities like literary influence, authors' social identification, and political affiliation. The first sub-section is titled "Influences and Legacies" and has four articles covering a wide range of themes. R.W. Desai's article, "Yeats and Kipling: parallels, divergences, and convergences", explains how the two authors were similar yet different on issues like aesthetic appreciation, imperialism, and spiritualism. Exploring their commonalities, Desai contends that Kipling and Yeats shared a common interest in Indian philosophy though holding contradictory positions on political philosophy. The second article, "Mowgli, the Law of the Jungle, and the *Panchatantra*" by Mythili Kaul, underscores the hybridity of the Mowgli stories and argues that they could have been inspired from the *Jataka Tales*. Kaul believes that Kipling was familiar with the *Panchatantra* through his father John Lockwood Kipling. The last article of this sub-section, "Songs of the Wandering Aengus: echoes of the political Yeats in Dorothy Salisbury Davis's *The Habit of Fear*" by Peter Schulman examines Yeats's legacy in contemporary literature. Schulman has studied the inclusion of Yeats by the American crime writer Dorothy Salisbury Davis in her book *The Habit of Fear*

(2014), a historical fiction. Ruth Vanita operates within the framework of Indian Philosophy to evaluate Yeats's poem "A Prayer for My Daughter", but her reading offers relatively limited scope.

The second sub-section, "Self and Society", has four articles reflecting on Kipling's and Yeats's construction of self and their reception and contribution to the Indian and British societies. Malabika Sarkar's essay "Yeats, Kipling, and The Haven-Finding Art" equates sea journeys with creative and artistic abilities. Sarkar argues that voyages have always been given tremendous importance in literature: from Classical Greek literature to British Romantic poets, voyaging symbolizes creative skills and Yeats seems to have taken it to new heights in his poetry. Madhu Grover explicates this in her essay "Transgressed Margins: Reading the 'Other' Kipling". She shows how Kipling's journalistic articles turned him into an outsider enabling him to capture the mysterious aspects of Indian society. Grover defines such acts of transgression as a threat to British ethnicity and culture. K.B.S. Krishna comments on the relevance of hybridity through the character of Kim, whose closeness with natives and his modern education makes him a better candidate to train for espionage than boys educated in British public schools. Krishna suggests that Kipling advocated a hybrid form of education at a time when England was introducing reforms in its education system.

The third sub-section, titled "Craft, Medium, Politics", has five articles by Robert S. White, John Lee, Prashant K. Sinha, Indrani Das Gupta, and Dominic Davies, focusing on themes like the influence of Shakespeare on Kipling's and Yeats's writing, journalism and poetry; Yeats's political vision; censorship, and networks of empire. Robert S. White has used the adjective 'chameleon' to describe Kipling owing to his ability to maintain differences and

diversities within continuity and consistency in his books. John Lee's article "The writer is indebted to *the Pioneer* and *Civil and Military Gazette*': Kipling, newspaper and poetry" delves into the role played by the two newspapers in the early phase of Kipling's literary career and the use he made of them to reach out to the public. Prashant K. Sinha has attempted to explain Yeats's political vision in his four plays, *The Countess Cathleen*, *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, *The Dreaming of Bones*, and *Purgatory*. Indrani Das Gupta elucidates different kinds of censorships imposed by the British government in India following the 1857 Rebellion. Das Gupta has studied the literary representation of censorship in Kipling's work with specific reference to the poem 'The Ballad of East and West' that initiated new imperial discourses on boundaries. Dominic Davies's article is a close analysis of the development of infrastructure like the railways, telegraph, and marine ships in Kipling's two early works, *The Light that Failed* and *Captains Courageous*. He explores the reformulation of literature in integrating improvements in imperial networks in the backdrop of developing transport and communication infrastructure.

The fourth sub-section, "Masculinity and/as Empire", has four articles primarily concentrating on the themes of heroism and masculinity. Alexander Bubb, Usha Mudiganti, Nanditha Rajaram Shastry, and Anubhav

Pradhan's articles have found place in this sub-section. Bubb examines how Kipling and Yeats endorsed activism and heroism through their writings in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Contesting the pervasive notion of masculinity, Mudiganti in her essay, "I am not a Sahib: Boys and Masculinity in Kipling's Indian Fiction", propounds that Kipling's children stories formulate a hybrid heroism. Drawing parallels between Hinduism's yogic concept 'Karma' and muscular Christianity, Shastry claims that Kipling collated the two concepts in his stories. The last article "Chaps: Kipling, Yeats and the empire of men" by Pradhan is an attempt to show youth as a common category between the two authors. Kipling and Yeats defined the category of youth within their operating spheres. Pradhan argues that Kipling expresses his faith in characters like Stalky to defend the empire, while Yeats redefines nationalism to accommodate the Irish freedom struggle and the Irish literary identity.

The book encourages academicians, scholars, and teachers to rethink and reimagine these two proponents of British literature. It not only provides an insight into the personal and professional lives of both the authors but also delves into histories, cultures, politics and societies of the Indian subcontinent and Britain. Notwithstanding the use of different approaches of interrogation, the book opens up new avenues and areas for further research.

The Routledge Companion of Pakistani Anglophone Writing

ed. Kanwal, Aroosa, and Saiyma Aslam

Routledge, 2019. PP.XV+399. ISBN: 978-1-138-74552-0 (Hard Cover). ISBN: 978-1-315-18061-8 (E-book).

ABHISEK GHOSAL

PhD Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT-Kharagpur

The editors of *The Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing*—Aroosa Kanwal and Saiyma Aslam—are scholars who have made important contributions to the gamut of Pakistani Anglophone literature. Whereas Kanwal has recently authored *Rethinking Identities in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction: Beyond 9/11* (2015) to bring out varied formations of identity in the context of 9/11, Aslam has written *From Stasis to Mobility: Arab Muslim Feminists and Travelling Theory* (2017) to probe the interactions between Islamic feminism and travelling theory.

This critical compendium consists of 32 articles on diverse themes that pertain to Pakistani Anglophone literature. It is divided into eight broad sections with each section comprising well-informed articles contributed by distinguished scholars hailing from different disciplines. In an engaging 'Introduction' the editors have encapsulated the objectives and central arguments of this book. They rightly claim that the articles featured in different sections are meant to establish Pakistani Anglophone literature "... in historical awareness and history's continued impact on contemporary realities". In the paragraphs to follow a few representative articles are briefly analysed to lay bare the multiple dimensions of this anthology.

For instance, in the opening section, Cara Cilano ("*All These Angularities': Spatialising Non-Muslim Pakistani Identities*") has persuasively contended that as far as the spatialization of Islam in Pakistan is concerned, movements of non-Muslim minorities have to be taken into consideration along with that of Muslim majorities with specific fictional references. Her intention was to "... examine the fictive portrayals of non-Muslim characters' abilities to occupy and move through space with specific reference to significant events and dynamics in Pakistani

history. . ." Apart from Cilano, Muneeza Shamsie and Daniela Vitolo have made significant contributions to the opening section of the book.

The second section of the book is titled as "*9/11 and Beyond: Contexts, Forms, and Perspectives*" which is indicative of the fact that the articles included in this section explore varied manifestations and representations of 9/11 in different fictional narratives. In "*Global Pakistan in the Wake of 9/11*", Ulka Anjaria contends that the pejorative portrayals of Pakistan in different fictional works need to be contested with the references to select post-9/11 Pakistani fiction on the ground that Pakistan's position in the context of 'global' imaginary has been shifting since 9/11.

In the third section entitled "*The Dialectics of Human Rights: Politics, Positionality and Controversies*", there are five articles which deal with different interconnected issues concerning human rights. For instance, Shazia Sadaf has explored cases of human rights violations in Pakistani Anglophone literature in "*Divergent Discourses: Human Rights and Contemporary Pakistani Anglophone Literature*". Sadaf observes that contemporary Pakistani Anglophone literature gives room to human rights violations in different contexts, thereby underlining the new turn in this domain of study.

"*Identities in Question: Shifting Perspectives on Gender*", the fourth section in this anthology, consists of three perceptive articles which deal with the questioning of identities relating to gender. Among them, the striking one is "*Doing History Right: Challenging Masculinist Postcolonialism in Pakistani Anglophone Literature*" in which Fawzia Afzal-Khan questions the ways in which historical events in select novels written by male Pakistani writers are represented.

In the fifth section titled "*Spaces of Female Subjectivity: Identity, Difference, Agency*", both editors have included those articles which are detailed explorations of changing perspectives on gender. Aqeel Abdulla is one particular scholar who produces an insightful article on plural implications within sexuality, marriage and domestic violence in "British-Pakistani Female Playwrights: Feminist Perspectives on Sexuality, Marriage and Domestic Violence". Abdulla deals with the following British-Pakistani playwrights—Alia Bano, Nadia Manzoor and Emteaz Hussain—to substantiate her critical arguments on the proximity between gender and society.

In the sixth section, contributors have focused on the shifting perspectives on identity, space and mobility. For instance, in "Homes and Belonging(s): The Interconnectedness of Space, Movement, and Identity in British-Pakistani Novels", Eva Pataki analyses multiple layers of significance of both 'home' and 'belongings' conditioned by the overlapping of space, movement and identity. She critically examines a few Pakistani Anglophone fictional narratives to contextualize her investigations.

'*Unsettling Narratives*' is the title of the seventh section which consists of divergent articles. For instance, in "Post-Postcolonial Experiments with Perspectives", Hanji Lee divulges varied narratological techniques employed by Pakistani novelists to shed light on cultural, political and economic realities in Pakistan. Unlike others, Lee has theorized "post-postcolonial" to explore the new theoretical turns in post-postcolonial time.

In the eighth section titled "*New horizons: Towards a Pakistani Idiom*", there are five outstanding articles which deal with the complex constructions of national identity with references to culture, politics and globalization. In "Brand Pakistan: The Case for a Pakistani Anglophone Literary Canon", Aroosa Knwal and Saiyma Aslam have put forward convincing arguments to "... canonise Pakistani anglophone literature, not only in reaction to its (current) production and consumption but also in terms of its dialogical dynamics, operating in four frames of reference: the individual, the national, the regional and the global".

On the whole, this critical anthology is unquestionably a remarkable contribution stuffed with fresh critical insights. Articles included in this anthology not only reflect on various aspects relating to Pakistani Anglophone literature but also inspire enthusiastic scholars to take up several issues hinted in different articles. Indexing in the end of this critical anthology is suggestive of the fact that both the editors have spared no effort to produce a scholarly book. Selection of articles in this critical anthology also indicates that both the editors have chosen to include those articles which bear imprints of the contributors' originality, intellect, and expertise. That apart, the structure adopted for sectionizing diverse articles deserves critical acclaim inasmuch as it facilitates readers to be acquainted with several emerging ideas in the domain of Pakistani Anglophone literature.