

Book Reviews

Mithilesh Kumar Jha, *Language Politics and Public Sphere in North India: Making of the Maithili Movement*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. xix + 34, Rs. 1195/- (hardbound), ISBN: 9780199479344.

Language Politics and Public Sphere in North India: Making of the Maithili Movement by Mithilesh Kumar Jha is a timely work on Maithili language movement, given the meagre number of books on language movements in India, especially since the last one decade. Most works on language conflicts in India focus solely on the Hindi-Urdu controversy which in turn gets translated as 'communal', given the identification of Urdu as the language of the Muslim community. Jha's work brings a fresh air to the somewhat stale arguments of Hindi-Urdu conflicts focusing on Maithili, which was considered a dialect of Hindi, thereby establishing the heterogeneous languages clubbed as dialects and enumerated under the category of Hindi in the Census of India (2001 Census of Indiagroups 49 languages under Hindi). The work problematizes this overarching image of Hindi as a single language by throwing light on the dialect-language distinctions used largely by scholars debating language movements. For example, Catalanian and Castilian, Bengali and Assamese and further Assamese and Bodo in the Spanish and Indian cases, respectively.

The book is divided into four chapters along with a detailed introduction but somewhat short conclusion. While the first chapter focuses on language enumeration during the British rule and its fallout on construction of communities in India. The second chapter again is a theoretical one titled *Language, History, Nation and the Imaginary of Maithili Identity*, argues that the relationship of nation and language in India have been less explored in India (p. 66), a proposition which is correct if compared to caste, culture and religion but works on language and nation such as Sumathi Ramaswamy's *Passions of the Tongue* (1997) linking Tamil language to the notion of nation, Lisa Mitchell's *Language, Emotion and Politics in South India* (2009) elaborating Telugu and its impact on politics in South India, Chitrlekha Zutshi's *Language of Belonging*

(2003) focuses on Kashmir's language connects language's role in the conceptualization of 'nation'. Some of these are works, which Jha reports as an endnote in chapter two but does not discuss these relevant works in a comparative perspective with his work on Maithili, which could have contributed to understanding the nuances of various language movements in India.

The next two chapters are specifically on the Maithili movement and its different phases. Jha unravels the intricate relationship between cultural associations, print-media and journalistic writings in constructing and developing a 'Maithili-reading public' (p.113) which leads to the rise of a class of 'intellectual elites' responsible for initiating the movement for recognition of Maithili as a language and its inclusion in the Eighth Schedule (also known as the language schedule) of the Indian Constitution. This is not new, considering that in most language movements, it is the middle-class elites who become the forerunners for such movements demanding recognition and at times representation but where Jha's work really contributes is in his analysis of the 'internal contradictions' of the Maithili movement. This scrutiny of contradictions-within, is beautifully and comprehensively pronounced in these chapters. He further illustrates how the politicization of the movement led to the declaration of Maithili as a subject in the examination of the State Service Commission, through judicial intervention and the support of Bhartiya Janata Party to the ongoing Maithili movement. Such arguments may not seem original i.e. language and its role in employability has been debated again and again, but nonetheless integral in any discussion of language movements as the underlying factor of political economy is critical to understanding such movements, and Jha presents this lucidly. In his conclusion, Jha takes up language as a 'conceptual category', he puts forth the two major internal issues of the Maithili movement first, "where one speaks of the Maithili movement and the other for statehood" (p. 257).

Even though, Jha's book is timely it suffers from some shortcomings which deserves mention. First, in

the introduction, Jha claims that the Maithili movement should be studied through the utilization of a theoretical framework of James Scott “weapons of the weak”, criticizing Paul Brass who compares the movement with the Tamil and Telugu language movement necessarily culminating into a territorial recognition of a language. This intrinsic relation between language, identity and territoriality is pivotal in discussions on language movements and the reader expects Jha to elucidate this criticism of Brass’s approach in the conclusion but Jha does not refer to it at all in the end.

Second, Jha does not elaborate how the Maithili movement which he himself claims to have failed to have a mass-base can be seen through the conceptual gaze of ‘weapon of the weak’. Because if we take his initial objective of following Scott’s framework, he should have presented why one should consider the movement as ‘weapon of the weak’ wherein, weak is synonymous to the middle-class intellectuals, suffering from caste hierarchy, failing to arouse mass support for the movement (p. 256). Another aspect which, if had Jha discussed, could have added more value, is on the uniqueness of Maithili movement which succeeded in the inclusion in the Eighth Schedule in 2003 without having been recognised as an official language in any state of India. A trait which is rare as only three languages have been included in the Eighth Schedule without having a separate state are Sanskrit, Sindhi and Maithili, rest all have official language status in one or the other state. Bodo and Manipuri, both of which were also included in the Eighth schedule in 2003 have territorial recognition in Bodoland and Manipur.

But apart from these shortcomings, this book is an essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the Maithili language movement and how language, even in the time of globalization, has the capacity to unite people for a collective cause i.e. recognition of one’s identity by the State and the ‘others’.

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Vivek Sachdeva, *Fiction to Film: Ruth Praver Jhabvala’s The Householder and Heat and Dust*, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, pp. li + 244, ISBN: 9789386689030

“They slaughtered the novel in that film.”- A Reader

An apple isn’t an orange – it is, ipso facto, an apple. Similarly, no matter how vehemently public opinion – or even critical perspectives – (seek to) blur the boundaries between fiction

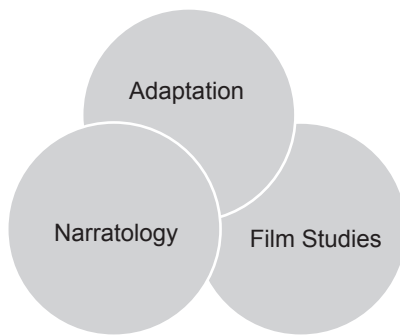
and film, a novel simply cannot *be* a film, and a film cannot *be* a novel. From what they (inherently) are and how they are perceived/received, these two art forms cannot be regarded as same; they may, however, be viewed as co-planar, and speaking mathematically, even similar (though certainly not congruent). After all, both these kinds of storytelling have their distinct individual styles, modes and epistemologies of narrative(s) that are inbuilt in their structural schematics. Thus, despite the oft-quoted complaint that “the directors ruined the novel”, fundamental differences ensure a direct comparison of fiction and film is a false analogy, and creates more problems than it solves (since it is akin to comparing apples and oranges).

How a text is read/seen/decoded, and how the processes of meaning generation operate within fiction and film, have been fecund grounds for contemporary critical enquiries and scholarly exploration. Vivek Sachdeva’s *Fiction to Film* is predicated on the idea that both fiction and film are different mediums of creative expression – though both tell stories in accordance with their specific governing conventions – and operate in the realm of the literary. Sachdeva reiterates that while fiction banks upon verbal/linguistic signs to communicate an idea to its readers, the film relies on a Gestalten interplay of linguistic, pictorial and other sign-systems to get its meaning(s) across to the audience. What words ‘describe’ in a novel, a movie ‘shows’ (using *mise en scène*, *typage*, etc).

Fiction to Film, a comprehensive, encompassing, and well-researched gaze on the changes that a narrative undergoes when a novel is adapted into a film, is one of the first of its kind, especially vis-à-vis the primary texts and research methodology adopted. This cogent and informative book brings to bear a spotlight on Ruth Praver Jhabvala’s *The Householder* and *Heat and Dust* – and their film adaptations by Merchant Ivory Productions. Divided into four chapters and a treasure-trove of an introduction, the study analyses the narrative techniques in Ruth Praver Jhabvala’s novels, and engages in a rigorous comparative study of her fiction and films. The writer delves into the epistemology of the transformations that a novel has to go through (when becoming a film) and locates, identifies and interrogates – rather deftly – the disruptions, deflections and dislocations of texts in the space-time continuum.

Sachdeva’s in-depth study – which theorizes the interface between literature and films – emanates from the vantage point of post-structuralist narrative theory, and is conscious of how each medium depends on a complex lattice of sign-systems to generate, constitute and shape meaning. To represent the thrust areas of this book using Venn diagrams: it focuses on the intersection of adaptation, narratology and film studies.

By operating at the cusp of these three paradigms, *Fiction*



to Film furnishes a critical introduction to the theory of narrative analysis in fiction and films, and introduces the nuances of adaptation. It then discusses novels and films in the light of adaptation studies, tackles dimensions of narrative theory (in relation to fiction and film) and also shows application of narrative theory in these two different mediums of creative expression. Interestingly, Sachdeva deals with Ruth Praver Jhabvala not only as a novelist, but as a screenplay writer too. Moreover, since the novelist and screenplay writer behind the four texts under scrutiny is the same (Jhabvala), Sachdeva's *Fiction to Film* follows a deliberate, scientific methodology that gives the writer further scope for an even more incisive conceptual study as the 'human' factor in the adaptation-narratology-novel/script equation has been resolved: by keeping it constant.

With self-explanatory sub-headings such as "Pride (in Literature) and Prejudice (against Adaptation)", "Challenges of Adaptation" and "Novel, Theatre and Cinema" (to cite just three), *Fiction to Film* boasts of an enlightening introduction which investigates the multifarious dimensions of adaptation, and examines the differences between the verbal and the cinematic narratives. It also brings to bear the historicity and current developments in/of adaptation in the light of intertextuality and translation studies, and lays a comprehensive, eclectic groundwork which would benefit a vast variety of readers, academic or otherwise. This introduction (and some other parts of this text) gets a bit dense in certain areas, but that could be attributed to how complex concepts are being compressed and rearranged in a new syntax for a newer – and perhaps, quite often better – semantic free play.

The first chapter ("Narratology: Fiction and Film") introduces narratology, retraces its trajectory and theorizes narration in fiction and film by deploying ideas of Gerard Genette, Michael Toolan, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Seymour Chatman, Mieke Bal and Edward Branigan. Using reader-friendly divisions such as "An Introduction to Narratology", "Story", "Narration" and "Fabula", it further ideates on, inter alia, analepsis and prolepsis, kinds of Focalization, levels of narration, the kinds of narrators (and their functions) etc, thereby reading literary and cinematic

spaces/narratives/structures vis-à-vis culture. Borrowing – and later reworking – Genette's conceptualization of narratology, the scholar regards narrative (and its comprehension) as being understood by the reader (and not as a pre-existing order imposed on a set of events).

The second chapter ("Ruth Praver Jhabvala") gives a brief biographical introduction to the author and reads her as a novelist and a screen writer. Ruth Praver Jhabvala (1927-2013) was Booker Prize winner and Academy Award winning screenplay writer. While Jhabvala has been lauded by critics outside India for her objective portrayal of Indian middle-class, Sachdeva problematizes this perception by foregrounding how Indian critics are able to discern a rather stereotypical oriental image of India in her creations. The last section of the chapter gives detailed informative account of all the screenplays she wrote for Merchant Ivory Productions.

The next two eponymous chapters focus on the four primary texts: first in their novel avatars, and then as screenplays, keeping the fiction-film-adaptation question in mind. The third Chapter ("The Householder") scrutinizes the novel as the 'narrative of character' as well as 'narrative of space'; whereas the films stands closer to the category of 'narrative of space' than the 'narrative of character'. The novel is about a young man – struggling to find his feet in his personal as well as professional life – journeying towards graduating as a householder, growing in confidence, and becoming comfortable with his sexuality in the process. Through Prem's character, Ruth Praver Jhabvala gives a critique of the institution of marriage in India. The film version, on the other hand, begins where the novel ends. Narrated from the subjective position of Prem in a flashback, it focuses on outer space. It looks at the economic challenges in front of a middle-class newly married man and manifests mother-in-law syndrome in Indian marriages. *Fiction to Film* analyses, among other things, the arrangement of events, the contained 'anachronies' in space-time, and the function of the narrator. As mentioned earlier, Sachdeva also points out that Jhabvala has always viewed and understood Indian society primarily as a European, and her portrayal of Indian society can be regarded as being biased and prejudiced.

Sachdeva's fourth chapter borrows its title from *Heat and Dust*, which won the Booker Prize in 1975, and is known for its twin narrative structure. It engages in an elaborate analysis of both the novel and the film, and discusses the modes of narrations, kinds of narrators, and types of an alepsis present in the texts. *Heat and Dust* the novel is narrated by a woman working on the life of Olivia – her grandfather's first wife in India – and how she also undergoes a similar series of events in her own life. It compares the inter-racial relationship in colonial and post-colonial India. Sachdeva, reading the novel as a spatial

narrative, looks at the arrangement of events in time and space, and argues that the thread of time in *Heat and Dust* is broken and space becomes the take off point for movement from one time-frame to another. The analysis of the film deals with narratology and excavates the changes that have taken place in the narrative structure during the process of adaptation, and also ideates on the representation of the Empire in the film.

One can argue that adaptation, like translation, is also an act of interpretation. Sachdeva propounds that films based on literature deserve to be seen as independent texts, and not as being subservient to their 'original' sources, thereby problematising the idea of what is original. His research concludes with drawing attention to the codes and conventions, strengths and weaknesses, scope and limitation of both novels and films since each art form communicates according to its own creative conventions. *Fiction to Film*, instead of looking at cinematic adaptation in terms of fidelity, looks at them in terms of inter-textuality. Also, since the writer critiques the relationship between the novel and the film as being contoured and driven by intertextuality, rather reductive, not to mention obfuscating, questions of hierarchy, arche, origins, and the contentious 'which text is better?' do not arise in the first place. Such a perspective and conclusion destabilise structures while simultaneously utilizing them: it is, one can say, a manifestation of the post-structuralist streak in Sachdeva.

Fiction to Film is highly recommended not just to those working on Ruth Praver Jhabvala, but to any student or scholar working on film studies, adaptation studies, and narratology – especially if they are interested how culture, reader, and the medium shape the semantics and semiotics of the film-fiction dialectic in contemporary times.

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Saloni Mathur and Kavita Singh (eds), *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2017 (reprint), pp. xiv+269, Rs. 795/-, ISBN: 9781138084636.

No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia, edited by Saloni Mathur and Kavita Singh, brings together an important body of works on museums in India. Though well-established globally, heritage and museums studies are still at a nascent stage in India. Studies on museums in India have traditionally focussed on the technical aspects of

display and logistics, and the politics of museums have only been recently commented upon. This book includes essays that would be on the reading list of anyone interested in the history and politics of museums in India. The volume argues for examining the museum in India, on its own merit—noting its particular formative conditions and its contemporary usage—rather than thinking of it as a variant of the type established in the West. The interesting variety of museum forms discussed here offer much potential for developing theories of museums and heritage. This is a field which is dominated by studies on Western societies and this collection offers an opportunity to develop the field from the point of view of non-Western societies.

The book is divided into four sections, the first three following the chronological trajectory of India's history. The first titled, *Inaugural Formations*, is about the emergence of the museum in colonial India. The second, *National Reorientations*, explores the museum's new role as an institution responsible for preserving and showcasing the national culture in a newly independent India. The third, *Contemporary Engagements*, covers the new museum forms emerging in the last three decades. Each of these three sections includes three essays. The fourth section, *Museum Watching: An Introduction*, has short field notes on thirteen museums from different parts of India (and one from Pakistan).

Part one, *Inaugural Formations*, looks at the history of the museum in colonial India. It begins with Bernard Cohn's well-known work which discusses knowledge production in colonial India, through the processes of collection, classification and preservation of India's material remains. The ambitious surveys covering large regions of the subcontinent were conducted both by individuals and the English East India Company. Loot, following warfare was an additional source of material goods. Both these formed the basis of important collections in colonial India. The second and third essays in this section, by Tapati Guha-Thakurta and Gyan Prakash respectively, emphasize on the inability of the museum to meet the expected pedagogical role set by the British rulers, and see this gap as the zone where the agency of the colonised Indian visitors is activated. Both also discuss the reception of the museum as a 'wonder house' or *ajab ghar* or *jadoo ghar* by the locals. Guha-Thakurta writes on the close relationship between the history of archaeology and the history of the museum in colonial India. Prakash's essay focuses on the museums and exhibitions on natural history and sciences.

Part two, *National Re-Orientations*, looks at the life of the museum in the newly independent Indian nation. The three essays in this section cover two most important museums of India: the National Museum and the National Gallery of Modern Art, both in New Delhi. Kavita Singh's article is

a study of the National Museum at New Delhi. It discusses the idea of a 'national' museum in the newly independent India, and how this idea is manifested in the display. Singh argues that in the National Museum, 'national' is in name only and the museum is, in fact, a combination of the archaeological and industrial collections of the colonial period with very little attempt to reconfigure the idea of the 'national'. Another article on the National Museum shares the lesser known history of the making of the museum: the role of the American curator, Grace McCann Morley. This essay by Kristy Phillips, discusses the pioneering initiatives by Morley and her lasting impact in the field of museum work in India. The final essay in this section, by Vidya Shivadas, examines the history of the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi and a newly independent India's experiments with modernity both at the local and the global level. Shivadas explores this theme through a discussion of the formation of important collections at the museum, such as that of Amrita Sher-Gil's works.

Part three, *Contemporary Engagements*, discusses the dynamics of the museum in a globalised world and its relationship with political economy of heritage, consumption, and identity politics. Appadurai and Breckenridge's essay, *Museums are Good to Think*, is the first one in this section. The authors argue for reconsidering the museum in the India as a vibrant part of society's public culture and its informal learning space, especially the spheres of leisure, festivals and exhibitions which are heavily influenced by media. For Appadurai and Breckenridge, the interocularity of these spheres affect the Indian public's interaction with the institution of the museum. Mary Hancock's study of Dakshina Chitra, a cultural centre in Chennai, demonstrates the contradictions of heritage industry in a neoliberal context. On the one hand, institutions like Dakshina Chitra are created to save traditions and heritage against the modernising drive of neoliberal economies. On the other hand, these institutions draw upon the entrepreneurial model and produce tradition for consumption, within a neoliberal logic. Mathur and Singh's essay in this section, discusses three ambitious museum projects in India: the Akshardham Cultural Complex in Delhi, the Khalsa Heritage Complex in Anandpur Sahib (Punjab), and the Maitreya Buddha in Kusinagar (Uttar Pradesh). These are grand, multi-media projects, which the authors note, have blurred the boundaries between a shrine, a theme-park and a museum. Mathur and Singh argue that these institutions are a result of rise of identity politics in a globalised world where non-state groups have the resources and the influence to present their cultural claims.

The final section titled, *Museum Watching: An Introduction*, is a collection of short write-ups extracted from a research

project on museums led by the editors. These field notes are produced by research scholars who visited museums across India between the years 2005 and 2009. This section introduces us to thirteen museums in all: twelve from the north, east, south and west of India, and one from Pakistan. It is successful in portraying the diversity of museum practices in India and includes museum projects by different patrons, including the state, non-state actors and individuals. Some of the museums covered in this section include, the Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra in Guwahati, the Lahore Museum in Pakistan, the Hanuman Sangrahalaya, Lucknow, the archaeological museum at the Mahabodhi Complex, Bodhgaya, the Padmanabhapuram Palace Museum in Tamil Nadu and the Stok Palace museum in Ladakh.

This section introduces the readers to the relatively lesser known institutions, which would ordinarily be overlooked in most discussions on museums in India. The research shared in this section also follows a different methodology from the essays in the first three sections: it is an ethnographical study of the museum. The field notes offer insights into the profile of the visitors to a museum, their interaction with the display and the museum space, and what value they ascribe to the museum. This is an important, and, in the Indian context, the least examined aspect of museum studies. Readers of this collection will no doubt want to know more and one hopes that more of this research is published. Many case studies in this section highlight the dynamic interactions between the visitors, the display and the museums space which modify our understanding of the secular and the sacred in the context of museums. They demonstrate that these seemingly distinct spheres (which were the hallmark of the museum in the West) engage in diverse ways in the Indian context. As the editors argue (in the preface), "it is now for art history to recast its frameworks and practices" in light of the museum's varied forms. Indeed, one could push the argument further to say that, museums—because they are a meeting point of local, national and global forces, as shown by this collection—can be the vantage point for studying some of the most important questions of contemporary Indian society.

Put together, the essays in this collection highlight the museum's characteristic as a popular space where *touching*, *spitting* and *praying* were and are carried out irrespective of the museum makers' objectives and desires. The visitors see the museums with wonder (the *ajajib ghar* in the Guha-Thakurta and Prakash); with devotion (Mathur and Singh on Akshardham and the Maitreya Buddha, Mukherjee on the archaeological museum at Bodhgaya, Puri on dioramas in Haridwar); and at leisure (Appadurai and Breckenridge on museum as part of the media spectacle, Jeychandran on Government Museum, Chennai). Accordingly, the

editors' comment that the history of the museum in South Asia shows its distance from the popular sphere appears inconsistent with the overall emphasis of the book. Further, this collection is dominated by Indian case-studies. More studies from other South Asian countries, which share so much in common, yet have diverse histories and societies, would have been a valuable and welcome addition to this book.

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Sumit Sarkar, *Modern Times: India 1880s-1950s*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2014, pp. xiv + 464, Rs. 535 (paperback), ISBN: 9788178243825.

Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, New Delhi: Macmillan, 1983 (reprint 2007), pp. xvi + 486 (paperback), ISBN: 9780333904251.

In the early 1980s', historians were divided into three schools of historiography- the 'Nationalist', the 'Cambridge', and the 'Marxist'. Most historians were proud of their affiliation to and identification with a particular school. The Marxist and the Cambridge school were often in bitter ideological conflict with each other. In this belligerent environment, for a newcomer, history-writing was not only about learning how well you understand the past, it was also figuring out to which school you belonged. Since the last three decades, however, this era of history-writing is coming to an end. Though a number of historians still cling to the above mentioned simplistic but worn-out world view, a majority does not subscribe to it. The era of 'schools' is over.

This broad change in the Indian history-writing may be situated in the intellectual journey of Sumit Sarkar, a renowned historian of modern India. His two books— *Modern India* (1983) and *Modern Times* (2014)— which are situated thirty years apart, are representative of this broad trend in history-writing.

Since 1983, *Modern India* (*MI*) has remained a very well-known textbook on the theme through a Marxist perspective. Sarkar himself had no hesitation in acknowledging this. In his introduction to *MI*, he wrote, 'No historian can be free of bias, and unstated or unconscious bias is most dangerous of all; it is best therefore to baldly state at this point my principal assumptions' (pp.10-11). He stated four assumptions, which suggest influence of an admixture of Nationalism and Marxism in his work.

In contrast, his introduction to *Modern Times* (*MT*) does not make any such claims. Instead he argued,

Much has changed in the world of South Asian history-writing over the last three decades since I wrote a book entitled *Modern India* (1983). The passage of thirty years having rendered that work thoroughly dated, the futility of any attempt to revise it became increasingly clear to me, especially as over this period my own historical perspectives took new and unexpected directions. (p. xi)

In the following section, through examples, I have shown how Sarkar's approach to history-writing has changed from *MI* to *MT*. In *MI*, the first hundred pages offered a rich commentary on the historiography of modern India. While remaining chapters dealt with political history, these pages discussed social and economic history. *MT*, despite Sarkar's calling it a new work, appears to be an extended, revised, and re-worded version of this section of *MI*, with addition of a few new chapters. In both books, the themes discussed are conspicuously similar, only the interpretation and approach has changed. The discussion on 'deindustrialisation' in both the books is one such example. In *MI*, Sarkar had criticised Morris D. On Morris's article which called deindustrialisation a myth, he had called the arguments of Morris 'more conjectural' and 'dubious'. Against the arguments of Morris, he had cited the findings of Amiya Bagchi, who had then provided new data on deindustrialisation, which seemed very convincing. Sarkar also concluded that one has to be mindful of the 'sufferings of artisans', which he believed was caused by deindustrialisation.

In *MT*, on the contrary, a different understanding of deindustrialisation emerges. The confidence with which he wrote on deindustrialisation in *MI* seems to have waned. He finds this subject 'controversial', 'indeed peculiarly difficult to clinch in either direction'. Whether it took place or not is difficult to establish now. In *MT*, Sarkar writes,

[T]here is still sufficient room for debate, for such a large country, about the overall macro-economic trends...it was also indisputable that artisanal occupations, most notably handlooms, had far from vanished, and were in some cases even expanding. (p.207)

On this theme, his evaluation of the worth of some of the studies has also changed. In *MI*, he had dismissed the arguments of Daniel and Alice Thorner, but in *MT* he agrees with them and states that the statistics would not 'bear the burden that had been imposed on them'. On the contrary, Amiya Bagchi's arguments, which were given significant importance in *MI*, appear unimportant in the light of a subsequent critique by Marika Vicziány. In *MI*, Sarkar had unequivocally written in favour of the nationalist understanding of deindustrialisation, but in *MT* he seems to be indecisive. Though he has stated various positions on the deindustrialisation debate, he has kept a critical distance

from scholarship. In his verdict, Sarkar writes, 'in the end the controversy [has] generated more heat than light' (p. 209). In sum, after three decades, when Sarkar has revisited the debate, his approach is more flexible and open-ended.

But not everything has changed in *MT*. For instance, on the question of railways, Sarkar has maintained the core of his arguments. In *MI*, he had argued that the Indian tax-payers bore the burden of the railway construction, as the government had guaranteed to the British capital 'a minimum dividend even if profits were non-existent' (p. 37). In *MT* also he has argued so but there is a lot more. He has raised new questions which do not fit into the debate whether railways were harbingers of growth or tools of colonial exploitation, a debate which the early nationalists had begun. Sarkar's analysis shows, there are other ways of looking at railways. He recognised the ways in which railways might have benefitted the Indian economy. For instance, he mentions the arguments of John Hurd, from a book which had earlier received short shrift from the Marxist historians. Sarkar writes,

Hurd has estimated that the fall in transport costs through railways, as compared with the available data regarding the expenses incurred in transporting goods by pack bullocks, bullock carts, or boats, meant a saving of about 9 per cent of the national income in 1900. (p.182)

In absence of any study which has contradicted Hurd's analysis, Sarkar seems to be in agreement with Hurd. Also, the introduction of railways had unforeseen consequences. Railways, for instance, Sarkar notes were 'indispensable for the development of anti-colonial nationalism'. Gandhi, who had condemned railways as 'one of the worst features of modern civilisation', when he came back to India, travelled third class for a year to experience the woes of ordinary Indians (p.184). Railways also consolidated 'brahmanical and Islamic orthodoxies of rituals and beliefs, notably by making pilgrimages much easier as well as enabling their commercialisation' (p.185). This discussion goes beyond the earlier nationalist debate on railways. One may cite more such examples to show a shift in Sarkar's perspective.

In *MT*, there are also new themes. These include chapter 2 on environmental history, which shows how this subject has become important in the last three decades. The environmental history has not escaped from the influence of nationalism. Sarkar in *MT* has showed that the subject is complex, and the nationalist interpretation has its limitations. For instance, Ramachandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil, in an influential work (*The Fissured Land*, 1992), had argued that during the British rule, India witnessed destruction of its forests, as a massive demand of sleepers to lay down railways had led to deforestation. Against

this Sarkar poses a sober 'counterfactual': 'some of the diverse and contradictory implications would have become manifest even had the railways been built in an India not conquered by the British' (p.179). Another important aspect which was missing in the *MI* was 'culture'. In *MT*, in a chapter called 'society and culture', Sarkar has discussed such important themes as 'language and literature', and 'The Visual and Performing Arts'. This again shows a shift in his perspective. In the 1980s, economic history, as per the classical Marxist orthodoxy, had dominated the research; culture seemed unimportant. On the contrary since 1980s, economic history has lost its charm, and historians have turned to the study of culture—literature, theatre, cinema, and paintings.

Since 1983, several 'isms' and the schools associated with them have lost their stranglehold on history-writing. History-writing is no more guided by politics in the manner in which it used to be. In 1983 when Sumit Sarkar wrote *MI*, nationalism had dominated history-writing. The history of India, the nationalist historians believed, had to be salvaged from imperialism. Historians, it was assumed, had an important role in the nation-building; they would narrate the past in ways that would strengthen the nation. A part of their duty was to discredit the neo-imperialist historiography what came to be called the Cambridge school, which denied the existence of the nation and the Indian nationalism during the late British rule.

However, since the 1980s historians have been rethinking their relationship with nationalism. One work which had immense influence on historians was Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983). Before Anderson's book appeared, 'nationalism' had acquired an ethereal quality. It effortlessly appeared in the writings of historians. Anderson showed that nationalism was a modern shared imagination, a product of history. Historians became aware of 'nationalism' in their writings; it became a subject of enquiry. Though one could differ with Anderson in his interpretation of the history of nationalism, but one could not escape from its impact. Anderson's work and the subsequent scholarship on nationalism dislodged nationalism from its exalted status and reduced it to a 'subject'. Historians began to suppress their nationalist feelings in their writings. In the years which followed, nationalism, to a great extent, disappeared from history-writing. The demise of Marxist influence in history-writing was even more extraordinary.

In the 1980s, the Marxist school had dominated history-writing in India. It was distinguished by its emphasis on 'class-analysis' and material forces. To a Marxist historian, history appeared to be a struggle between classes. Historians uncritically used terms like 'feudalism', 'mode of production', and 'class consciousness' in their writings.

Since the 1980s, however, most historians reinterpreted Marxist paradigm of history-writing. This has happened primarily because of the massive research which appeared in the subsequent decades; in the light of which it became difficult to sustain the simplistic Marxist interpretation of history.

From the early 1980s, when Sarkar wrote *MI*, history-writing has undergone a paradigm shift in India. In the early 1980s, history was a slogan, a revolutionary programme of action, or a narrative filled with excessive pride. With some element of nationalism in it, *MI* was, and has been, called an exercise in the 'Marxist' historiography; no other description will suit it. On the contrary, *MT* will defy any reductionist label; it cannot be identified with any school. The old rivalries between schools and historians have become redundant. History-writing in India has entered into a new phase, whose nature is yet beyond our understanding.

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Vikas Pathak, *Contesting Nationalism: Hinduism, Secularism and Untouchability in Colonial Punjab 1880-1930*, Delhi: PRIMUS BOOKS, 2018, pp. xx + 266, Rs. 1,495/-, ISBN: 9789386552792 (hardbound).

The book seeks to elaborate on the multiple and contending discourse of Indian nationalism, specifically regarding four issues in the context of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Punjab; covering roughly the period up to 1930. These are: (a) Composite Nationalism (b) Religious Nationalism specifically Hindu Nationalism (c) Secular, Citizenship-based Nationalism and (d) Dalit Nationalism. However, as a caution the writer argues: 'these visions present themselves not as watertight compartments, but as fluid entities engaged in constant dialogue with one another for appropriating the nationalist space in favour of their respective brands of nationalism' (p.2). Perhaps this overlapping nature of the discourses makes him comment: 'This rule of thumb makes me argue that the four visions discussed in this work are nationalist and not merely subnational, communitarian ideas. For all were engaged in a battle for hegemony over the cultural cast of the Indian nation'. (Preface, p. xi)

The book is divided into seven chapters: (1) 'Introduction: Exploring Multiple Discourses on Nationalism in India', (2) 'Cultural Contents and Syncretism in Colonial Punjab' (3) 'Composite Moorings of the Nation' (4) 'Regimenting

the Community: Mapping Initial Glimmers of Hindu Nationalism' (5) 'Hindu Nationalism, The Community as Nation' (6) 'Beyond the Community, Towards a Secular Nationalism' (7) 'Glimmers of a 'Dalit' Vision of Nationalism' and (8) Conclusion. While the overall thrust is to conceptualise and clarify the content and emergence of Indian Nationalism, the author tries to keep a keen eye on the consequences of this very significant socio-political articulation given that it played a significant role in enthusing and sustaining the national independence movement.

In the introduction chapter 'Exploring Multiple Discourses on Nationalism in India', the author explains the four discourses in general. Here he makes a distinction between 'Nationalism' and 'Freedom Struggle', defines 'What is Communalism' and finally reviews the existing literature regarding the four conceptions of Nationalism. The second chapter is a discussion on cultural contests and syncretism in colonial Punjab. The reconciliation of different principles, practices of religions, cultures, or schools of thought in a specific socio-political milieu can be a difficult task. The coalescing of Punjab and India could possibly tend to suggest generalisations which could come with limitations and handicaps; to illustrate, while Lajpat Rai is unencumbered to conjecture both for Punjab and India, Gandhi is restricted to India.

In the third chapter titled 'Composite Moorings of the Nation', the author places both Gandhi as well as Lajpat Rai within the notion of composite nationalism albeit with a difference; while Gandhi for the author is supposed to imagine composite nationalism in religious ways, Rai apparently remains in favour of 'secular governance' derived from 'Enlightenment modernity'. However, by 'religion' Gandhi did not mean Hinduism, Islam or the Zoroastrian religion, but 'that religion which underlies all religions.' What remains unclear is that if religion is vast enough to incorporate every opinion then 'how does it differ from being composite?' The author argues that there were two 'parallel discourses' of nationalism as constructed by the Punjab Press in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: (a) composite nationalism and the other (b) religious nationalism. The former stressed on Hindu-Muslim unity not only in the contemporary period but also constructed the theme of Hindu-Muslim harmony in pre-colonial times. The later discourse highlighted the Hindu-Muslim hostility and traced this even in the Indian past thus echoing the colonial historiography. The author in this regard critiques scholars like Kenneth Jones and J.T.F. Jordens who he feels mainly focussed on the discourse of 'community strife' (p. 48). Perhaps the author's focus on the discourse of composite nationalism as constructed in the Punjab Press, restricts his appreciation of the potential

of emerging cleavages such as ‘communal strife’, and so on. This becomes clear when while placing Lajpat Rai within the composite nationalism, he makes a distinction between the younger Lajpat Rai and later leader; with the former being closer to Hindu nationalism and the later a composite one. Discussing Lajpat Rai’s idea of history as it is represented in his works: *Shivaji the Great Patriot* (1896), *A Study of Hindu Nationalism*, (1902), *Young India* (1917), *The Teaching of Patriotism* (1919), ‘The Indian Problem’ (1924), and *The Hindu-Muslim Problem* (1924), the author argues that the last three works clearly show that Lajpat Rai provides a ‘composite alternative to the colonialist reading of Indian history’ (p.60). In this respect Lajpat Rai had argued that the Hindu-Muslim communities were not in strife in the past but it is the colonial state that had created, fostered and nourished ‘a communal consciousness’ and therefore there is tension among these communities in contemporary Punjab. Perhaps he overlooks the past hegemonic position of the Muslim rulers and the hegemonic repercussion of such hegemony. This comes out clearly when the author argues that though Lajpat Rai played an active role in Hindu Mahasabha, he believed that the Sabha’s role must only be confined to ‘balancing of community interests for the construction of a composite nation’ (p.68). His espousal of ‘secular governance’ was based on ‘upholding the principle of fairness as bedrock of community negotiations’ (pp.68-69). Though Lajpat Rai acknowledged the ‘legitimacy of communitarian interests’ but he believed that ‘such interests should be balanced and harmonized’ in the broader interests of national unity. Here he differed from other important leaders of Hindu Mahasabha like Bhai Parmanand who ‘wished to make the Mahasabha a platform for Hindu-centric politics’, while Lajpat Rai stood for confining the role of Sabha to the ‘balancing of community interests’. This temporal polemic can leave conceptual detritus which can surface later; we can see some of this today. The next chapter illustrates this particularly when one is governed by the press for analysis.

The fourth chapter titled ‘Regimenting the Community: Mapping Initial Glimmers of Hindu Nationalism’ the author examines how the discourse of Hindu community identity was constructed by the Punjab Press and the writings of Lal Chand, leading thereby to the process of development of Hindu Nationalism. The questions of riots, access to government jobs, Hindu-Muslim strife in the past as well as in contemporary period, cow-slaughter, Hindi-Urdu controversy, Lekh Ram’s murder, fear of Islam, were raised by the Punjab Press to generate a discourse of community power and it played a significant role in creating a not only local or regional but also pan-Indian Hindu community. Lal Chand’s *Self-Abnegation in Politics* further created an ideology of Hindu Nationalism. In this text Lal

Chand raises various questions: ‘preferential treatment’ to Muslims on the part of the Congress at the cost of Hindu interests; the discourse of unjust and unfair treatment of the Hindu in terms of representation, critique of separate electorates, Land Alienation Act, the language controversy, etc. Lal Chand uses ‘Hindu’ as a synonym for ‘national’. All these issues fostered a Hindu-centric vision of nationalism.

The fifth chapter titled ‘Hindu Nationalism, The Community as Nation’ deals with the views of three ideologues of Hindu nationalism: Bhai Parmanand, Swami Shradhdhanand, and Lala Har Dayal. According to the writer, Shradhdhanand envisioned nationalism, ‘not on political activity, but on a reconstruction of society by drawing upon what he saw as the cultural and spiritual reserves of the nation’ (p.139). Towards this he envisioned the ‘Gurukul’ system as ideal for imparting education; the aim of which is to build the character of students on Vedic ideals and engender ‘Aryan’ greatness. Shradhdhanand was opposed to the Congress till 1919 since he imagined that Congress was following the policy of Muslim appeasement. Although he joined the anti-colonial struggle during the Rowlatt Satyagraha and the non-cooperation movement, his approach to politics remained premised on ‘Hindu’ religio-cultural ethos (p.141). He reverted, according to Pathak, to Hindu nationalism because he perceived ‘pan-Islamist tendencies’ in the Khilafat movement (p.142).

Shradhdhanand’s *Hindu Sangathan: Saviour of the Dying Race* published in 1926 provides us an insight into his conception of Hindu nationalism. He believed that the ‘Hindu nation’ has fallen from the golden age of Vedas as a result of the onslaught of Islam and Christianity. Therefore, he envisioned a national education policy based on Vedas as the only retrieval system for Hindus. His stress was on ‘Shuddhi and consolidation of all Hindus regardless of differences of sect and creed’ (p.146). He therefore proposed setting up of a ‘Hindu Rashtra Mandir’ as the first step towards Hindu reorganization (p.147). The author argues that, ‘Shradhdhanand’s proposed ‘Hindu Rashtra Mandir’ is, thus, a broad platform for the articulation of Hindu nationalism. It has all the characteristics of Hindu nationalism: the metaphor of the temple, aggression in the form of akharas, the cow as a symbol of Hindu consolidation, and the nation imagined as a goddess’ (p.148).

Bhai Parmanand was another ideologue of Hindu nationalism in Punjab. According to Pathak, Bhai Parmanand’s view that Hindus and Muslims were of ‘two divergent races’ and incapable of evolving into an Indian nation, provides us with a ‘hint of two-nation theory’ (p. 150). For him, Hindu consolidation, reconversion, cow protection and masculinity were crucial issues.

The last intellectual that the author takes up in this chapter is Har Dayal. Though the author admits that Har

Dayal was the most complex personality and it is not easy to put him into any category, yet he tries to club him into the category of 'Hindu nationalist'. But at the same time the author argues that after 1909 'Har Dayal's view began to change' (p.167). But the argument provided by the author regarding pre-1909 views of Har Dayal which puts him into the category of Hindu nationalist, does not seem to be convincing. Perhaps this is the reason why he continues to discuss Har Dayal in his next chapter titled 'Beyond the Community, Towards a Secular Nationalism' wherein the Ghadar movement under Har Dayal 'was not just an anti-colonial, all-community movement, but showed distinct signs of a rational-secular discourse of the nation that tried to move beyond the religious community as a category and attempted critiques of religion itself' (p.167). In this chapter the author has taken up the Ghadar movement for discussion.

Another exponent of secular nationalism that the author dwells at length is the life, ideas and activities of Bhagat Singh. Bhagat Singh not only moved away from communitarian aspect embedded within the earlier visions of nationalism, but also provided a rational-secular critique of religion as an institution. Bhagat Singh and his associates adhered to secularism, scientific temper and reorganization of society on a socialist worldview.

In the last chapter titled 'Glimmers of a 'Dalit' Vision of Nationalism' the author deliberates upon the process of formation of political consciousness among the Dalits. Jotiba Phule's writings *Gulamgiri* (Slavery) by inverting the colonial discourse of Aryan invasion did play a significant role in fostering a critical consciousness among the Dalits of India. Phule's another work *Tritaya Netra* (third eye) not of course mentioned by the scholar, did create a sense of feeling among the Dalits that they can liberate themselves from their low status by means of education. Besides, Phule the anti-brahmanical movement in South India also create a political consciousness among the Dalits of Punjab. Another factor that provided a sense of power to the Dalits was what Sudipta Kaviraj terms as 'enumerative identity' derived from decennial census. The politics of mass mobilization and representative institutions further added a sense of power among the Dalits. In the context of Punjab the vision of Dalit nationalism was articulated through Ad Dharm movement in the 1920's. The leaders of this movement were disappointed with 'composite' as well as with the 'religious' nationalists and were in quest of autonomous and alternative communitarian identity. The early leaders of the Ad Dharm movement were Mangoo Ram, Swami Shudranand, Vasant Raj and Thakur Chand and all of them belonged to Chamar community of Punjab. They were somewhat more 'privileged' within their caste because of financial security derived from leather business

and education received from schools run by Arya Samaj. The movement celebrated Ravi Das as Bhakti saint as their guru since he belonged to Chamar caste. Some of the leaders of Ad Dharm in Punjab did not approve of Mangoo Ram's extreme line and they recognized the liberal aspects of Arya Samaj. Therefore, 'a part of movement' says the author of this book 'broke up to rejoin the Arya Samaj on the plea that the Aryas were accommodative Hindus and, later, it petered out to merge with Ambedkar's Scheduled Caste Federation, with many Ad Dharmis even joining the Congress'.

Overall the book enlarges the frontiers of our knowledge of the complexities of an ancient people trying to emerge in the garb of a new community - modern Punjab. It is worth reading.

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Anushka Singh, *Sedition in Liberal Democracies*, Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 406, Rs. 995/-, ISBN: 9780199481699.

Scholars have made persistent efforts to understand the meaning and concept of freedom of speech in the domains of liberal democracy and the context of law of sedition. This history of western liberal democracy predominantly traces its genealogy in the edifice of enlightenment and debates around western modernity. In this context, the recent book written by Anushka Singh, provides us an interesting window through her empirically grounded research and theoretically nuanced terrain to understand the discursive meaning of freedom of expression and how free expression of colonial subjects as well as right bearing citizens became a site of democratic resistance and also pathways of laws of sedition in western as well as non-western societies. Singh's book is an interesting and innovative addition to the existing body of knowledge in the domains of social sciences and specifically in the domains of juridical and political understanding of pedantic laws including sedition and extra-ordinary laws in a comparative framework. Liberalism is a political theory of modernity and democracy and it offers an interesting terrain to map the nuances of sedition in the liberal democracies. In this particular book Singh has established the normative universality of freedom of expression and how it has unfolded over the centuries and became a site of competing claims as also site of contestations by liberal democratic citizenry on the one hand and neo-liberal authoritarian state on the

other. In order to substantiate these claims the author has provided us multi-layered accounts on the functioning of normative liberal democracies from praxiological approach and has critiqued the positivist understanding of laws of sedition through her field-based hermeneutical and juridico-political research. In her methodological mapping of conundrum between free speech and seditious laws, she has preferred speech act theory over normative analytical methodological mapping (p. 21). She reiterates that 'the appropriate context [of modern Indian state] is informed by a form of government which she refers as a liberal democracy, which claims to be the guarantee of the liberal right to freedom of a speech and expression to all its citizens' (p.20).

Interestingly, Singh further argues that as an ideal as well as evaluative framework, democracy realizes itself politically through a democratic state. This process of realization is, however, fraught, since it involves reconciling conflicting tendencies which inhere in the logic of democracy and the 'state'. A liberal democratic state, it may be said, is a fraught combination of competing tendencies and tradition since it attempts to bring together liberalism and democracy in one hand and imperatives of democracy and the state on the other. It is in the contestation emerging from the convergence of these conflict tendencies, that the category of 'extreme speech' emerges, of which sedition is a kind. Sedition is a form of political speech, and expression against the authority of a government and the state which is forbidden for exceeding the limit of legitimate criticism and therefore not protected by right to freedom of speech and expression. By raising the issue of condition under which speech may be freely exercised or legitimately curbed, sedition, thus, reveals a dilemma within liberal democracy (p. 366). And as a matter of consequence, this dilemma creates a creative tension between precedence of seditious laws and the well beings of rights bearing citizens whose rights are being implicated in the name of hyper securitized state and principles of panopticism.

As far as conceptual and theoretical landscape of the book is concerned, the author has critically engaged with the concept of freedom of expression and how extreme expressions of individuals, groups and communities have created the ontological conditions of emergent authoritarian state in the context of seditious laws and how state has legitimized and derived normative justifications from diverse liberal intellectual traditions within the realms of liberal political philosophies/theories of the West, including in the canonical writings of Jefferson, Rousseau, and J.S. Mill. In this section of the book, Anushka has made an attempt to map the family resemblances between freedom of expression and how freedom of expression can be restricted and controlled if it takes away the rights

of other individuals and groups who constitute the society and particular state—in order to prove the contours of liberal democracy and its promise to provide safeguards to individual's liberty and freedom. The normative political ideals of liberal democracy and the political agency of state thus becomes a site of continuous control that slips into the discourses of political governmentality and as a consequence it (state) devises different forms of strategies through seditious laws to control life of individuals and communities. There have been many kinds of control by state. Liberal democracy is inherently capitalist in nature. Therefore, it creates certain kinds of exclusions where individuals are not treated equally and the principles of political equality are not available to all the citizens in an equal manner. Over here she is taking cognizance of debates on democracy from the perspective of political liberalism and just society and she cites and critically engages with contemporary philosophers and their writings to make a mention of a few, such as Chantal Mouffe and John Rawls. John Rawls talks about political equality based on principles of justice and liberty and Chantal Mouffe talks about democratic paradox where there is always control on the freedom of others and the state plays a very important role in controlling the freedom of others. The author problematises the discourse of agnostic democracy which is inherently a site of dissent and resistance against any essentialist consensus concerning normative democracy.

In order to provide the theoretical and conceptual insights concerning sedition in liberal democracies, the introductory chapter captures the nuanced understanding of sedition as a law and its important history in the discourses of western liberal democracy as well as colonial and post-colonial Indian democracy. In this chapter, the author offers an interesting and captivating accounts about seditious laws—how these laws have come into being and are used extensively against the rights of individuals/groups and communities across the political ideology- to control freedom of expression and liberty of individuals. According to the author, there are two types of seditious laws. In the first category, there is physical violence involved and the second category is where speech or words or verbal expressions can create harm or threat to the existing state. Therefore, sedition is used by state to control freedom of expression. While proving her argument, she has used the philosophy of language of J.L. Austin and John Searle's works on speech theory and has explained why speech theory needs to be preferred because it allows scope for performative theory action when laws of seditions are used against dissenting/resisting individuals and communities. In another part of her chapter, she invokes Agamben and Michael Foucault where she demonstrates how in certain conditions ordinary becomes extraordinary and

extraordinary becomes ordinary and therefore, state creates canons of governmentality and discourses of political rationality through different forms of extraordinary laws to combat militancy and 'terrorism'.

Singh says that studies on contemporary liberal democracy have shown that violence is integral to the workings of liberal democratic states despite its official denial. However, she has also interrogated the theoretical claims on which liberal democracy has been found and how governmental rationality allows the curtailment of individual liberty for the sake of security of state. Thus, if the concept of state is essentially anachronistic to the principles on which liberal democracies operate, then it is an imperative of the state to supersede other imperatives of liberal democracy to uphold the exceptions through seditious laws within the discourse of liberal democratic rights.

Apart from theoretically condensed debates on legitimacy and illegitimacy of freedom of expression in the domains of liberal democracies, Anushka finds interesting family resemblances between sedition as a law and anti-terror laws as an extension of neo-liberal global state in the name of hyper security. The book is divided into six important chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. The second theme of the book is about comparative framework between Western liberal democracies and practice of sedition in India. She takes up three western countries including England, USA and Australia as a site of advance liberal democracies and advancement in the terms of developmental discourse. She makes interesting comparison about comparative constitutional normative universalism; how it is practiced in the context of free speech, as universal values and how in these specific countries sedition has been practiced in the context of individual liberty on the one hand and threat to the state on the other. According to her, the concept of sedition owes its genesis to English law and most other liberal democracies have been influenced by common law of sedition in England though ironically England is also one of the earliest liberal democracies to have abolished the offence of sedition. The USA which is seen as the strongest liberal democracy in the contemporary world has developed a robust free speech jurisprudence. Despite these strongest free speech principles, USA has retained the laws of sedition. Australian liberal democracy has made one of the earliest and definitive attempts to modify the language of sedition to bring it within the counter terror legislation.

Singh also suggests that there are two particular paradigms to study the existence of sedition as an offence. The first one is conventional paradigm of violence as a physical act and second is a non-conventional paradigm of violence through words. Within the first paradigm, sedition is compared with elite political offence (a) treason

(b) incitement of dissatisfaction/violence/over throw (c) political conspiracies. Within the second paradigm, sedition is compared with four speech crimes; (a) personal libel (b) hate speech (c) blasphemy (d) pornography. In this chapter, the author maintains how ex-colonies like India have similar laws as in England. Seditious laws were used to control the rights of native colonial subjects of India in different forms, particularly when there was a nationalistic struggle against the British Empire. In the post-colonial scenario, India as a free and independent country did not choose to repeal seditious laws from colonial India. Rather, seditious laws have been variedly used on Indian citizens. Therefore, the theory of sedition is also informed by judicial pronouncements that contribute to an idea of sedition as a speech act and identifies what emerges as a crime of sedition within the legal juridical regime of India. Singh has also used the method of deconstruction and normative speech theory to unpack different meanings of seditions in the everyday life of individuals and communities who have been subjected to these laws. In light of the author's critical analysis, we can say that there is a return to Hobbesian Leviathan in disguised forms of sedition and extra-ordinary anti-terror laws in contemporary India.

Chapter five does an empirical mapping of seditious laws in the everyday life of individual, groups and communities from three states of India – Haryana, Maharashtra and Punjab. Regarding the choice of these three states the author states that 'the regions are not chosen as a field sites, in fact they emerged as a field area following the case laws method in which the intertwined dynamics of sedition with socio-political variables lent it a different character' (p. 27). These regions have numerous cases where seditious laws have been imposed on the individuals, communities and classes whenever they resisted state authorities. Next section of the book focuses on how anti-terror laws have been imposed on the Indian citizens including students, peasants and working classes on different pretext. In a shift from colonial to post-colonial India, from sedition that was construed to be resistance by the nationalists and therefore, an honour and a political act, sedition now is considered to be an offence against the nation. She cites diverse cases from different parts of India to substantiate her argument concerning this alarming shift. Yet again, Singh uses speech theory to philosophically articulate this shift from '*Rashtradroh*' to '*Deshadroh*'. In English this is known as a shift from sedition as a political resistance to crime against the nation.

The second last chapter of the book deals with Indian democracy and the moment of contradiction. In this section the author has demonstrated with her dense field-based and archival research, how Indian democracy is being used as a site of state control on the life of people- peasants, students, journalist, activists and minorities. Though the

National Crime Record Bureau shows that in 2014, for the first time, 58 per cent arrests were in relation to sedition and anti-terror laws, while in 2015 a total of 30 cases of sedition were filed all over India and a total of 73 persons were arrested in relation to these cases. Despite this decline in number of cases registered, the number of people arrested for sedition has risen. This data highlights the gap between executive and judicial discourse of sedition in India. While conviction for sedition at the level of higher judiciary is becoming a rarity and use of sedition laws in the domain of executive is veracious. Anushka has shown how sedition and anti-terror laws are being used against a diverse spectrum of Indian masses – wherever for raising slogans or resisting the authoritarian nature of the state (state and/or central regimes) – and have been imposed on people across political ideologies. Therefore, the author notices a juridical shift in the domain of anti-terror laws and Indian democracy that is facing continuous moments of contradictions to deliver justice and the fundamental rights of people in this country.

The conclusive part of the book has been beautifully titled ‘the life of law and contradictions of liberal democracies’ where Anushka makes an insightful comment on the life of law that exist both within and beyond the statues, therefore subject to interpretations. This assertion has been made in the background of journey of laws of sedition. The first concern itself with analysing the language of law of sedition, the second deals with studying judicial dispositions on sedition and the third pertains to interrogating the everyday life of law. The book makes a claim about Indian democracy; how it has not only been controlled but contradicted, about its practice from aspiratory perspectives of marginal people of India.

This book not only offers an interesting reading for the academic fraternity and which is engaged in social sciences and politico-juridical domains, but also for activists and ordinary citizens interested to know the practice of seditious law and extraordinary laws in contemporary India and beyond.

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E.V. Ramakrishnan, *Indigenous Imaginaries: Literature, Region, Modernity*, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2017, pp. xvii + 274, Rs. 775/-, ISBN: 9789386689450.

E.V. Ramarkishnan’s book should be seen in the light of the statement he has made in the third chapter of the book. According to him, translating India to European terms has led to a crisis of representing ourselves which

speaks volumes about the nature and scope of the book. As Indian academics is heavily working under the influence of Western philosophy and paradigm(s) in post-colonial times, the present book by E.V. Ramakrishnan is the result of an author’s search for Indian epistemology. To use A.K. Ramanujan’s phrase, also used by the author in this book, the author is also searching the Indian way of thinking.

The book is a compilation of scholarly essays written and presented by the author in various national/international seminars in India and abroad in which the author argues for redefining the study of literature from the perspective of comparative studies. Divided into three sections, Ramakrishnan explores contestations between Western and Indian epistemologies. He is of the opinion that going back to literature written in regional languages and translation can be potent tools in this search. Besides, the author discusses Bhakti literature, relevance of literature in the age of globalization and identity politics in contemporary India. The author has studied regional literature with special focus on Rabindranath Tagore, Valmiki, Mahatma Gandhi, Mahasweta Devi, Amitav Ghosh, Bhalchandra Nemade, Aga Shahid Ali to name a few, which also indicates the vast range of writers from different regions of India.

The opening chapter traces the history of English discipline in India, introduction of the printing press, its role in spreading Malayalam literature and construction of modernity in India. Prose written in Malayalam did not borrow motifs from the mythology and drifted away from the model of Sanskrit. Printing of literature in Malayalam facilitated the process of Malayalam identity formation. Thus, the author establishes a historical connect between press, modernity and Malayalam identity. Studying regional literature, for the author, is part of the politics to resist hegemonic structures of European countries which have legitimized homogenization of the world. Citing Chinua Achebe, the author makes a very valid point that the adjective ‘universal’ for European mind does not go beyond the boundaries of Europe. Study of regional literature demystifies the Western canon, it also resists their cultural hegemonic position.

Ramakrishnan finds translation studies to be symbiotically related to the study of regional literature in India. The author opines that modern Indian languages came into being in the beginning of the second millennium, which helped in resisting the hegemony of Sanskrit lasting for more than a thousand years in literary and knowledge domains. Since the advent of European colonial forces in India, regional languages have negotiated with the external influence by assimilation and resistance. According to the author, translation, especially translation of epics, has played a very important role in establishing regional languages in different parts of India and also in establishing a dialogic relation between *mārgi* and *desi*. By deviating

from the Sanskrit version, regional languages resisted the Sanskrit canon. The author gives a survey of translations of the Ramayana in various regional languages taking place from the tenth century to the sixteenth century. The author discusses the influence of Persian and Arabic languages of power and authority in shaping the Sufi discourse in north India. Ramakrishnan also discusses the role played by Arabic and Persian languages in liberating people from Sanskrit. He should have also included the role played by Sufi poet like Baba Farid (c. 1175-c.1266), considered to be the first poet of Punjabi, who, despite being a scholar of Arabic, wrote his poetry in the dialect of Punjabi. During the medieval period, Arabic and Persian became the languages of the elite. Issues of power that Prof. Ramakrishnan reads into dominant position of Sanskrit can also be read in relation to Arabic and Persian. In this context, Punjabi Sufi poetry created a space which gave resistance to cultural domination of Persian and Arabic languages. However, the author makes a very insightful comment regarding the promotion of Sanskrit by the British as it suited their Orientalist agenda. The British looked down upon regional languages by calling them dialects and incapable of communicating modern knowledge. Regional languages suffered at the hands of both Orientalists as well as Anglicists.

In the third chapter, the author has studied dialogism in Bhakti poetry, which challenged the monologue of Sanskrit literature. As the “poets of the Bhakti movement spoke from within the domain of lived experiences,” their self was not the result of borrowed paradigm. The author’s position is justified by Sundar Sarukkai’s idea that lived experience constitutes the self that experiences. Self is not the result of reflection on the self as a distant object. Thus, the lived experience of Bhakti poets gave them ethical ground and paradigm to question and resist the dominance of mainstream institutionalized religion and Sanskrit as used in the religious discourse. Bhakti movement is also seen by the author as a voice of the Dalit against oppressive Brahmanical institution.

The fifth chapter in the first section, which deals with identity politics and the discourse of minority in contemporary India, provides theoretical introduction to the chapters in the second section of the book as the next section has chapters dealing with representation of modernity, the Other, imagining India as a nation. Ramakrishnan redefines the term secular and the way it stands relevant even in modernity. His argument is that modernity has failed to do away with religion or pre-modern religious practices; rather modernity has redefined the significance of religion in the social space. Understanding the relation between state powers and religion, his argument is that in some cases state can have clear religious attitude

and people can be secular; and vice-versa as being secular and being atheist are two different categories. In Indian context, one can be religious, yet secular. Ambivalence in the nature of secular modern has resulted in the discourse of minorities- Muslims and Dalits –which has taken different trajectories. To validate the argument, the author studies the case of Kerala and Malayalam literature.

Ramakrishnan opines that Rabindranath Tagore critiques homogenizing modernity of the West. He has situated Tagore in the larger national context and placed him along with other poets from different parts of India such as Kumaran Asan (Malayalam), Muhammad Iqbal (Urdu), Keshavsut (Marathi), Subramania Bharati (Tamil), Bhai Veer Singh (Punjabi), Bhartendu Harishchandra (Hindi) who were negotiating with the colonial modernity. The author is of the opinion that in these poets the pain of being torn into two different worlds can be seen. They introduced the voice of modernity in their writings and have also contributed towards consolidation of their regional identity.

In the writings of Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, the first major Muslim novelist of Kerala, tensions between the secular modern and insider view of a Muslim writer, who “distances himself from the homogenising logic of modernity,” have been explored. Basheer’s *Balyasakhi* (1944), an autobiographical bildungsroman narrative, through the story of Majid, narrates the experiences of the Muslim minority in Kerala; the narrator of *Shabdangal* (1947) is a soldier, who was an orphan and raised by a priest. Imagining nation from the point of view of a soldier or a Muslim immediately after the nation was born was an important artistic device of the writer. *Ntuppuppakkoranendarnnu* (1951) is one of the most significant novels written by the novelist and it discusses the issue of Muslim reform in post-colonial India. Through his study of Balachandra Nemade’s *Kosla*, Ramakrishnan has also narrated the nation from a regional lens.

In the narratives of Amitav Ghosh, Mahasweta Devi and Anand, the author explores the issue of memory in postcolonial Indian fiction. Memory takes various forms as it includes collective memory in its ambit and also the narratives of resistance into which are woven myths and legends of the community. Another aspect of memory and modernity is explored in the comparative study of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s writings and Malayalam fiction. In Marquez’s polyphonic fiction is embedded the culture and history of the society. Kerala’s fiction also confronts colonial modernity while retaining its regional elements. Ramakrishnan establishes geographical, historical and cultural similarities between their writings, despite their different locations. Cosmopolitan nature of Kerala and Keralites, incomplete project of modernity and

contestations between traditions and modernity are the elements that bring Latin American writers close to Kerala writers.

In the last section of the book, the chapter titled 'Hegemony, Ideology and the Idea of Literary', Ramakrishnan discusses the process of Sanskrit being relegated from its position of hegemony. The author studies 'the literary' as a space of "contestations and containments". In the West, the dominance of Latin was challenged by vernaculars as the latter also became the language in which knowledge was being generated and ideas were exchanged. During the British period, according to the author, the dominant position of Sanskrit was challenged by English. What intrigues readers here is that by the time European forces started controlling the administration of the country, the language of administration was not Sanskrit in most parts of the land, but Persian and Arabic. In the next chapter, Ramakrishnan problematizes the concept of canon in the Indian context, given its long oral tradition and linguistic diversity. Regional literature(s) in India is plural and has been influenced by internal conflicts, which are unique to every region. The diverse and varied nature of Indian regional literature(s) also questions unified or homogenous literary historiography in India. He also engages with the issues of power, centre and destabilising the power centres with the help of translation.

The book began with discussing 'telos of translation' and it reaches its end discussing translation and its role in shaping modernist discourse in India. Instead of discussing translation of regional literature into English, the chapter focuses on the contribution of the translation of European poets such as Rilke, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats and Baudelaire in bringing modernist discourse in India. Translations done by poets such as Buddhadeb Bose, Agyeya, Dilip Chitre, Ayyappa Paniker, publishing in various journals, provided Indian readers and young poets a new poetical discourse. Understanding translation as a cultural practice,

Ramakrishnan opines that their translations were also crucial in shaping Indian modernity and modernism in Indian literature, which is different from that of the West. In the last chapter, Ramakrishnan has studied shifting paradigms of literary historiography with special focus on Malayalam literary history. The author believes that literary histories run parallel to national histories- as political and cultural ideologies that intersect the space of historiography as well.

Focusing on Malayalam literary history, the author begins with the publication of *Malayala bhasha chaaritharam* by P. Govind Pillai in 1881. Using Pillai's ideas, Ramakrishnan also problematizes the canon as the history of Malayalam literature that goes back to the oral tradition. He discusses different essentialist and revisionist histories of Malayalam literature written by different authors. The author critically examines histories written and edited volumes produced by P.K. Parmeswaran, V.J. Varghese, M.N. Vijayan. Ramakrishnan argues that the literary historiography of Malayalam literature in the new millennium includes history or histories of women's writings, folk literature, oral literature, tribal literature, peasant literature, subaltern literature and histories of fine arts and performative traditions is also seen as an integral part of the literary sensibility, which indicates that in contemporary times both vertical and horizontal boundaries have been blurred. E.V. Ramakrishnan engages with larger issues of concern in literary studies, literary historiography and translation studies in postcolonial India. In this vast canvas, ranging from Bhakti poetry to modern writings in different languages, the book is a compilation of insightful and relevant essays on regional literature, modernity and nation.

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