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Edited by
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Culture of Imperialism and Imperialism of Culture

K. Raghavendra Rao*

CULTURE AND IMPERIALISM

By Edward W. Said

Vintage Books, London, 1994

Edward Said is the celebrated originator of the concept of Orientalism whose essence is the claim and assertion that the modern orient has no sense of its own self-identity, and that it has been forced, by the historical processes of colonialism and imperialism, to define and identify itself in terms and frames constructed by the Occident and then injected into the very bloodstream of the cultures of the Orient. While it was a very powerful and helpful theoretical tool upto a point, it was not without its problems. There were two — one geographical, and the other a more serious and intellectual one. The geographical one was that his source-material centred predominantly on the Arabic Middle East. The other problem was that it appeared to cast the Orient too much in the passive role of an unresisting victim of cultural and civilizational oppression and suppression.

In this work, a continuation of the Orientalism discourse, Said seeks to restore the balance on both these points. He now brings into the ambit of his critical-theoretical scope Asia and Africa, and also focuses on the processes generated within the Orient to counter the forces radiating from the colonial and imperial Occident. He comes up with some brilliant insights. The most important one is that, in a reverse historical process, the Occident is itself, a product to a significant extent, of the forces and factors that belong to the Orient. In short, the victim defines and re-constitutes the identity and the historical fate of the victimiser! Though in a somewhat strained manner, he demonstrates successfully how some of the cultural artefacts of the Occident Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park* or the *Opera Aida* or the so-called liberalism of Camus and Gide or Conrad's novels or Kipling's *Kim*, cannot be fully understood and their ideological significance (and hence their literary or cultural significance as well) adequately grasped without situating them within their colonial-imperialist matrix. He also demonstrates the cultural politics involved in occulting the imperialist context of these great literary and cultural achievements.

...Said's new work must be welcomed as an important contribution to our understanding of the subtle and not-so-subtle connections between culture and imperialism, and hence a contribution towards our efforts to create a new world that can transcend the tyrannies of tradition and modernity without losing their contrapuntal energies.

One of the most brilliant operations of the author is his effort to locate Yeats and the Irish literary culture firmly within the terrain of the non-West.

Another fundamental insight, which, unfortunately he does not pursue with his customary zeal and scholarship is that "modernity" must be seen as heavily implicated in a colonial-imperialist genesis. Another strength of this volume is the richly detailed presentation of the Islamic cultural-ideological landscape outside the Indian subcontinent where most of us, not merely the BJP, are accustomed to regard Islam historically as an inherently fundamentalist and unchangeable category.

All these strengths, however, should not blind us to the serious flaws that scar the brilliant face of this intellectually exciting work. The first and foremost flaw is the choice of Fanon as its central methodological reference point. This is not to deny the originality or the theoretical virtues of Fanon, but it is to suggest that Fanon is severely limited when it comes to the issue of generating a positive historical agenda for the Third World. The obvious reason for this is that Fanon situates, in the final analysis, the oppressor and

the oppressed, within the same questionably universalist framework. I think Gandhi would have provided a more adequate theoretical tool for the kind of comparativist work Said has undertaken. Unfortunately, the author seems to have derived his concept of Gandhi from the weak Marxist interpretation of the Mahatma by Partha Chatterji.

Ultimately, Said ends up with weak moral and Utopian prescriptions such as there should be international collaboration between the anti-imperial sectors in the imperium and the liberationist groups in the spaces imperially or neo-imperially controlled. Gandhi, in contrast to Tagore, rejected the pseudo-universalism of the liberal West. Said's ingrained liberalism bobs to the surface on two other issues as well. It is almost pathological that he strives hard to elevate that monstrosity of modernity, the international immigrant, as the symbol of a new modern/post-modern civilization, and this is but to sneak back into the liberal fold. Secondly, and here Gandhi could have been a great help, Said fails to draw a distinction between "essence" as a historical category and essentialization as an historical process. This is an important issue and deserves some elaboration. One can condemn the attempt to essentialize Hinduism or Islam or whatever, without necessarily abandoning stable frameworks for making sense of Hinduism or Islam. This was the Gandhian method of seeking essences without falling into an essentialist trap. In fact, this was also ultimately the point of Marx's dialectic as differentiated from the essentialist implications of Hegel's dialectic.

The above critical and dissenting notes notwithstanding, Said's new work must be welcomed as an important contribution to our understanding of the subtle and not-so-subtle connections between culture and imperialism, and hence a contribution towards our efforts to create a new world that can transcend the tyrannies of tradition and modernity without losing their contrapuntal energies.

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Herman Kulke's *Kings and Cults: State Formation and Legitimation in India and Southeast Asia* is a collection of his sixteen papers — published in various journals over a period of twenty years — that focus on state formation and royal policy in medieval India and Southeast Asia. The author underscores the close and interdependent relationship between *Ksetra* and *Ksatra*, the sacred and temporal domains of power. The central strand unifying the book is the theme of 'legitimation': the varied engagement of medieval rulers with religious institutions in bids to gain credence for their rule.

More than half the articles deal with the eastern Indian kingdom of Orissa. The historical case illustrates the simultaneity of the processes of the development of kingship and the cult of Jagannath in the region with remarkable clarity. In A.D. 1230 King Anangabhimha of the Ganga dynasty ritually dedicated his kingdom to Purusottama-Jagannath of Puri. Jagannath was formally installed as the state deity and the overlord of the king. This inaugurated a long history of the association of royalty with the cult of Jagannath over several centuries, which also came to be recognised by the colonial regime at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The author discusses various aspects of this relationship to elaborate his central argument: the connections with divinity legitimated the rule of the *rajās*. The modes of legitimation were modified and changed as the process of state formation went through distinct — local, regional, and imperial — phases, and human sovereigns encountered sharp turns of fortune. Thus, even as the powerful Gajapatis 'monopolized' the 'state cult of Jagannath' between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, the weak *rajās* of Khurda 'shared' their ritual privileges with the feudatory *rajās* of Orissa to gain their support in the face of incessant Maratha aggression in the mid eighteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, the Khurda *raja*, whose control extended to Puri, after being dispossessed of his territories by the British, tried to re-establish his sole authority over the seat of Jagannath in a somewhat desperate bid to retain ritual domination over the feudatories. A little later the Khurda *rajās* became the model for the tributary chiefs, and they

Investing in the Divine *

Ishita Banerjee Dube

KINGS AND CULTS: STATE FORMATION AND
LEGITIMATION IN INDIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

By Herman Kulke
Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1993

sought to appropriate Jagannath to enhance their prestige and authority. At the same time, the *rajās* and chiefs were not the only players in this appropriation of divinity for purposes of 'legitimation'. The hierarchical grids of power in Puri, represented by the priests, the temple and their land holdings, were equally interested in projecting a 'historical "trans-dynastic" continuity of historiography' (p.190), centring on the divine site. Madala Panji, the temple chronicle of Puri first compiled around 1600, constructed an unbroken chronicle of the past, which also indirectly served to strengthen the sanctity of the dynastic rule.

This theme of a complex, and at some places contradictory, intermeshing of regal authority and priestly interests is played out in greater detail in the two articles on South India. Applying C.C. Berg's method of 'functional interpretation' of Javanese texts — albeit with certain reservations — Kulke shows how the legend of Hiranyavarman in the *Cidambarammahatmya* was first drawn up by Brahmins, in the second-half of the eleventh century, to legitimize the usurpation of the Chola throne by the Eastern Chalukya King Rajendra II, who took the title of Kulottunga I. On the death of the ruler, the legend was interpolated by the priests as the entrenchment of royal power was a threat to their authority. This motive also underlay the creation of the 'Sankara tradition' of the Sringeri *matha* and the conflation of the identities of Madhava *mantrin*, who successfully served the early rulers of the Vijayanagara empire, and Madhavacarya/Vidyaranya, the first *mahant* of the Sringeri *matha*. These examples underline the critical place of the interests that went into the making of legends and traditions.

The concern with 'legitima-

tion' leads Kulke to reinstate Max Weber's classic, *The Religion of India*, into a position of importance by highlighting its relevance for understanding 'Hinduization'. He argues that, in several ways, Weber's study anticipated Srinivas' concept of Sanskritization and Surajit Sinha's concept of Rajputization, all efforts to analyse the process of transformation of tribes into castes. In pointing to 'legitimation' as the main motive that impelled the incorporation of ruling tribal elites within the fold of Hinduism Weber in fact went beyond latter day anthropologists and sociologists. Not only did he look at the process from the standpoint of the Hindus, but also discussed it from the perspective of the tribal groups who were, of course, the main actors in the drama.

The articles on Southeast Asia develop an 'evolutionary model' of medieval state formations, drawing a close parallel with the interrelated stages of the making of the medieval Indian state(s). They also illustrate that the quest for 'legitimation' by the indigenous rulers of far flung lands resulted in the spread of Indian religions, particularly Hinduism, in Southeast Asia's early courts. This dependence of rulers on religion as a linchpin of support is used to challenge and refute the 'widely accepted notion' of the divinity of kings in ancient Cambodia, and *inter alia* in Orissa.

Kings and Cults constitutes an important intervention in the research on the growth of medieval kingdoms in India and Southeast Asia. It makes a significant contribution to the debate on the nature of Indic Kingship. The most striking feature here is the author's mastery over sources which range from primary and secondary literature in several languages to a wealth of epigraphic evidence. Kulke's work is a combination of

erudition and insight, a product of meticulous and sustained scholarship in the arena of the historical study of kingship and religion. Clearly, the different essays were crying out to be put together.

The book also has certain gaps, a few problems. While all the articles point to the entangled relationship of divine and regal authority, Kulke falls short of taking the further step of exploring the aspects and facets of the ritual constitution of kingship.¹ The distinction between *Ksetra* and *Ksatra*, the sacred and temporal domains of power, assumes a binary character. Moreover, the preoccupation with 'legitimation' engenders a somewhat singular reading of a wealth of extremely complex material. The evidence rehearsed is richer than the interpretation. The book, it seems to me, focuses on only one side of a larger story. The manner in which royal power impinged upon religious authority is elaborated: but key questions centring on the effects of regal appropriations on religious institutions, the latter's active negotiation of kingship and its attributes, and indeed the mutual imprecation and shared past of the two closely intermeshed realms tend to be obscured. It is the richness of Kulke's work which brings these issues to the fore.

¹ See, for instance, Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1987) and also Arjun Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A South Indian Case* (Cambridge, 1981).

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Obituary

Professor S.R.K. Chopra, renowned anthropologist, former Vice-Chancellor of Kurukshetra University, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Panjab University, Chandigarh and Member of the Governing Body and Society of I.I.A.S., Shimla, passed away on 3 July 1994.

We place on record the services rendered by him to the Institute and offer sincere condolences to the bereaved family.

The two volumes on *Women Writing in India* (600 B.C. to the present), edited by Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, have been the centre of much discussion and controversy. A wide range of reviews from very positive to the very unfavourable, have, however, in common the recognition of the seminality of these volumes for the gender question.

'Women Writing' places squarely, at the centre of events and narratives, the viewpoints, attitudes and imaginations of women which had all along existed in the twilight zone of the contested margins of patriarchies, societies and nations.

The discourses, whether in literature, history, or other areas of human activity, have been predominantly male, and usually of the upper caste/upper class. The so called 'Indian traditions' consisting of countless texts like the Puranas, the Aranyakas or the Dharma Shastras, owe their ascriptive and prescriptive nature to the Brahmin male, who defined the role of the 'other' gender as well as all other 'castes' and 'classes', and got on to prescribe the duties and responsibilities requisite to their station in life. Therefore, the available texts, which have been looked upon as 'the sources of Indian tradition', are in fact often monologic and extremely narrow in their attitudes and content, although they have wide applicability and sanctity. The voices of women (cutting across caste/class distinctions) and of the lower castes, were either absent, subverted or muted in these texts, whether they be the scriptural texts or subsequent texts written in the same patriarchal mode.

It is noteworthy that even in the contexts of women writing in India, the mode was not necessarily different from that of a patriarchal one. But here Tharu and Lalita are not so much concerned with those women who spoke in a male voice, but women who spoke in their own voices, leading to creation of texts that were dialogic rather than monologic. These two volumes are, therefore, not concerned with 'Women Writing in India' *per se*, but selectively those women authors who voiced the anxieties and concerns of Women (Intro. 35-36) and often expressed deviance and/or defiance. The translation of the songs of the Buddhist nuns (Therigatha) or of medieval poets like Akka Mahadevi are the best examples of this professed concern of the editors. A surprising, perhaps even glaring omission in the present anthology, are the poems (*vak*) of Lallesvari of Kashmir who scandalized her fourteenth century contemporaries by dancing naked, and defiantly stat-

Indian Women Writers

Vijaya Ramaswamy*

WOMEN WRITING IN INDIA — 600 B.C. TO THE PRESENT

2 volumes

Edited by Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha

The Feminist Press at the City University of New York,
New York, 1991 and 1993. Reprint, Delhi: OUP, 1991 and 1993.

ing that she perceived around her 'only sheep, not men'.

However, this anthology does include women poets like Sanchi Honnamma or Bahina Bai (17th century), whose writings valorized and revalidated the same images of the ideal women prescribed in the Brahmanical texts and presented as the epitome of 'Hindu' culture and tradition. Bahina, both in her writings and in her life, aimed at the ideal balancing of wifely duties with spiritual aspirations. Honnamma authored the *Hadi badeya dharma*, or the scriptural text on the 'duties of a *pati-vrata*'. Their inclusion in this collection is extremely important since their texts not only have to be read in terms of their own historical context but also 'against the grain', a methodology the editors pursue in their analysis of all 'traditional' texts. In so doing these same texts become complex documents of the embattled practices of self and agency at the margins of patriarchies.

The editors of *Women Writing in India* tackle another crucial issue in their lengthy introduction. Even those women who write as women, (and not in the patriarchal mode), may still be underwriting the politics of caste, class or nation in their narratives. By underwriting these ideologies these women are in fact reinforcing the dominant structure. This point by Tharu and Lalita is strikingly demonstrated, for instance, in the writings of Meera Bai who clearly rebels against the dominant ideology of gender, but is silent or passive regarding the structural inequalities present in feudalism.

The introduction to the second volume dwells at length on the rejection of the accepted notion of 'nation' and dwells, instead, on the substitute notion of imagined communities'. They emphasise (p. 53) that they "understand the nation and nationality not as an essence but as a *historically constituted terrain*" (italics sic). Presumably then, even the writings of Sarojini Naidu, Mahadevi Verma and all those others who were avowedly part of the mainstream nationalism have to be

"read against the grain", as it were — a reading which would have surprised these authors!

A woman writer who would have fitted well into Tharu and Lalita's understanding of things is Neelambikai Ammaiyar, a freedom fighter from Tamil Nadu and the sister of Maraimalai Adigal, a leading political and literary figure in the early twentieth century. She viewed the struggle in Tamil Nadu as being distinct from the mainstream nationalist struggle. In fact, the freedom struggle, as exemplified in the many writings of Neelambikai Ammaiyar was closely bound up with the rejection of Sanskrit, *Marga* literary traditions and a return to "pure Tamil". She, along with Dharmambal, Achalambikai Ammaiyar and others, spearheaded the "*Tani Tamil Eyakkam*" literally "Tamil separatist movement". A critical analysis of her works would in fact provide a response to the kind of questions raised by G. N. Devy (*After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticisms*, Bombay: Orient Longman, 1992). Tharu and Lalita do not seem to upfront this seminal issue of *bhasha* traditions, which should have been a central concern of an anthology providing narratives in translations from so many regions. It is also somewhat ironic that the editors, while questioning the reality of 'nation' in their text, should have retained the concept of 'India' in their title.

A major point validly made in the introduction to these volumes is the

de-linking of the experiences and writings of Indian women from European and American feminist writings. Elaine Showlater's conception of 'gynocritics' to designate scholarship concerned with woman as the producer of textual meaning, was motivated towards the retrieval of the feminine from a dominantly masculine discourse. This was to be done through deconstructing the male texts which contained 'unreal' and 'untrue' portraits of women. But even the focus of 'gynocritics' was a monolithic representation of the 'feminist', who was a stereotype of White middle class America. The 'feminist' studies emanating from America and Western Europe underwrote the ideologies of capitalism and liberal humanism. The editors, however, do not comment either on feminist writings among the American Blacks nor on those from the East European countries which would break this 'monolithic' image of 'Women Writings in the West'. A related question in the context of the oppositional nature of 'gynocritics' is the validity of the assumption that all portrayal of women in women's writing is 'authentic' and 'real' — an assumption Tharu and Lalita rightly challenge.

These soul-searching issues are as relevant to women writing in India as elsewhere, although the worlds of the Indian women representing different regions, castes/classes would be very different from those of the middle class White American feminists (irrespective of the school of thought they claim to represent). It is very rarely that Indian women go beyond their gender concerns and question the societal structure itself. The rare exceptions are some of the Women *bhakti* poets.

These two volumes on 'Women Writing in India' form the beginning of a lengthy exercise to understand the gender issue and women's writings against the broader framework of caste, class and nation in the 'Indian' context.

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Interrogating Post-Colonialism: Theory, Text and Context

A National Seminar on "Interrogating Post-Colonialism: Theory, Text and Context", in collaboration with the Indian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, will be held on 3, 4 & 5 October, 1994.

Professor Meenakshi Mukherjee, Centre of English and Linguistics, School of Languages, Jawaharlal Nehru University, will be the convenor of the seminar.

Some Important
Publications from

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Sekhar Bandyopadhyay *et al.*

**Bengal: Communities,
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Carving Out a Space On/Off Stage

Pankaj K. Singh*

BRITISH AND IRISH WOMEN DRAMATISTS SINCE 1958: A CRITICAL HANDBOOK

Edited by Trevor R. Griffiths and Margaret Llewellyn-Jones
Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993

Few know that in the year that Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* created history in the British theatre it was a woman's play, that Enid Bagnold's *The Chalk Garden* proved to be the greatest commercial success in London; or that Agatha Christie's *The Mouse Trap* which opened in London in 1952 has continued to play to packed houses and has been the world's longest running play with 16000 performances. Sexual politics at work in the canon making! Even though, in Britain, women have been active in theatre in the last thirty years, the major critical histories of contemporary British drama have virtually ignored them. The present anthology puts on record the activities and achievements of women in theatre since 1958, to redress the balance in favour of women playwrights who have remained largely invisible so far.

The year 1958 is identified as a "crossroads" for women dramatists when parallel to commercially successful drama of women, appeared plays by Ann Jellicoe, Dorris Lessing and Shelagh Delaney which "marked the beginning of a search for a theatrical form appropriate to the representation of women" (p. 11). For example, Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* subverts the patriarchal myth of motherhood and makes woman the 'subject' in the total semiotic structure.

Finding approximate parallels to Elaine Showalter's feminine-feminist -female in the film critic Patricia Erens's terms 'reflection' revolution ritual' the editors evolve a three-tier terminology as a kind of an aesthetic core for essays by different authors for assessing the drama, written and, at times, produced by women, along the lines of ideology and form. 'Feminine/reflection' refers to the largely declarative texts showing the situation of women with no overt challenge either to dominant ideology or to conventional form. 'Feminist/revolutionary' is the term used for interrogative texts which subvert both the ideology and the conventional dramatic form, using Brechtian techniques to reveal that gender is a social construct. 'Female/ritualistic' is the most radical form of drama in women's theatre, where the non-verbal means of signification are emphasised with a multiplicity of visual and aural experiences in a

non-linear, usually group-devised script, to discard the monologic patriarchal discourse.

Three chapters are devoted to the situation in England, and a chapter each to women playwrights in Ireland and Scotland, as also to the groups who, even within the women's theatre, stand further marginalised, such as the Welsh Women, Lesbians or Women of Colour, in order to focus on their group specificities within the larger common framework.

In Wales, since women dramatists work more through writing workshops, their work has remained largely unpublished; hence the information available is limited, as regretted by Margaret Llewellyn-Jones. Unlike the Irish and Scottish dramatists they are not particularly concerned with cultural history or the issue of gender in a radical way. In Ireland, women dramatists are more actively engaged in challenging the image of Irish theatre as "a male-authored literary drama" (p. 110). They turn to Irish mythology to reclaim active images of Women from the past, while some like Margaretta D'Arcy have been concentrating more on community work in the 1980s, helping the Irish women find their own voice through drama. The emergence of women's drama in Scotland was marked by the rediscovery of some earlier plays of women of the forties and fifties. With the increase in the number of women as artistic directors, administrators and newspaper critics, the climate has become less hostile to women's writing in Scotland. In addition to women's experience, these playwrights also deal with "the outcast, the marginalized, the invisible, the absurd; the classic experience of the Other, where otherness becomes multiple oppression crucial to character structure" (p. 124).

The state of modern "Lesbian theatre" is more unfortunate since it has to survive on 'self-exploitation'; it is usually unpaid work carried on by the enthusiasm and zest of members of different theatre groups such as Gay Sweatshop and Harmonie Imbalance, as Rose Collis reports in her essay "Sister George is Dead". Due to sexist prejudice, there are also problems in finding venues and getting press coverage. Susan Croft in her essay, 'Black Women playwrights

in Britain' records the activities of the women of colour - the Afro-Caribbeans and the Asians - who, starting in the late seventies, have become more active since 1986. Though marginalized in a white society they yet have wider audience possibilities than the Lesbians, because of the support of their racial communities. While some of their themes are similar to those troubling the white woman, such as identity, sexuality, family and violence, yet the social context is different due to racism and imperialism as well as post-imperialism. The concluding chapter takes stock of the situation, focusing on certain key words such as *apocrypha*, *audience*, *bodies*, *context*, *collaboration*, *deconstruction* etc. in an alphabetical order.

A pioneer reference book, it lists information on feminist theatre companies and projects, (pp. 144-45) as also on practising women playwrights, and their published and even unpublished works with performance details, also indicating the sources where these are available.

However, it is more than a reference work. In its attempt to "record, celebrate and interrogate the nature of the achievement of women theatre writers" (p.1), in addition to critically commenting on the work of women dramatists it also problematizes some central issues in women's theatre: how does L'écriture's *Feminine* appear on stage with its emphasis on the woman's body without falling into the trap of voyeurism? Its excessive experimentation is a search for a new form, rejecting the monolithic form of a well-made play with one climax, and its radical ideology in voicing authentic women's plays in the mainstream theatre, partly due to commercial risks involved and partly due to the patriarchal stronghold. Collaborative texts resulting from theatre workshops have been central to the growth of women's theatre, since these provide a space for sharing experience and exploring the 'new' territory together - however, collaborative and improvised texts are financially less viable (due to reluctance of funding), and have fewer chances of getting published or being included in the canon which is used to the idea of a god-like solitary creator of text, and can also at times lead to problems of organisation and decision-making in the absence of any hierarchical order.

Hence, in addition to carving out a permanent space for women dramatists off stage, i.e. in the literary canon, by recording their work on stage the anthology also offers for contemplation some basic dilemmas of the feminist theatre and thus provides suggestions for further research in the area.

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State, Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Colonial India

Chetan Singh*

COLONIZING THE BODY: STATE MEDICINE AND EPIDEMIC DISEASE IN NINETEENTH CENTURY INDIA

By David Arnold,

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, Rs. 390

A generation of historians in post-Independence India has been consumed by the study of the State in colonial India. Its economically exploitative nature, and the supporting politic-administrative structures it created for this purpose, were for long the focus of attention. A fairly clear picture of the more obvious power equations between the rulers and the ruled was thus created. Subsequently, it was the multiplicity of responses that colonialism evoked from the different social sections and regions of India that came to the notice of the scholars. The discussions that were consequently generated revealed the subtleties underlying the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. An enormous grey area now appeared between the unconcealed wielding of authority and its insidious penetration in apparently innocuous spheres; between the outward acceptance of political subordination and the sly re-assertion of freedom in new forms by the subordinated groups. It is into these relatively uncharted waters that many of the more adventurous scholars have now begun to launch their researches. David Arnold, in his latest monograph, takes on board not only 'State medicine and epidemic disease' but binds them to the extended network of connections that went into the making of a colonial socio-cultural order. To use his own words:

It is an essay in the political and cultural problematic of the body in a colonized society as reflected and refracted in medical discourse and practice and as manifested in the varying perception of, and response to, epidemic disease. It is a study of a colonizing process rather than a history of Western medicine in India. (p. 7)

Arnold begins his endeavour by examining the manner in which 'occidental therapeutics' tried to understand 'oriental' diseases and Indian medicine. In nineteenth century India, the understanding of disease was dominated by the 'environmentalist paradigm'. This was later expanded to include the habits of the Indian people as a factor that supposedly contributed to the 'peculiar-ity' of disease in the subcontinent. Such an approach, the author suggests, was part of the process by which India was Orientalized by Europe (p. 59).

It was within the limited confines of the army and the jails that western medicine first systematically confronted 'epidemic disease' in India. Even though these spheres of operation were rather restricted the

lessons were learnt quite rapidly. Earlier assumptions that British soldiers in India were naturally more prone to disease were dispelled. The social reality of the Indian soldier's relative poverty exposed him to a far greater range of debilities. This, Arnold argues, typically 'reflected the fortunes of the agrarian economy' and its 'material as well as cultural circumstances' (p. 93).

The next three chapters deal separately and at length with the three major epidemic diseases of smallpox, cholera and plague that erupted periodically across the Indian subcontinent. Some sort of control over each of these devastating visitations was a matter of considerable concern to colonial administrators. It was initially the security of the British Indian army from disease that took priority. Only subsequently did the economic disruption caused by epidemics assume significance. The sizeable working population in the large congested cities and the impoverished peasants in the countryside suffered almost equally in this respect. Not surprisingly, therefore, Lord Bentinck observed (in the context of vaccination against smallpox) that '... every life saved is additional revenue' (p. 136).

Financial, administrative and political compulsions, however, prevented the government from taking an active interventionist position. Indigenous methods for the prevention (and attempted treatment), particularly of smallpox, were inextricably tied to religious practice. The latter was a ground upon which the British preferred not to tread, or did so only with utter circumspection. Even with regard to cholera a

combination of extraneous factors operated. Opinions about the causes of its spread centered around the controversy of 'contagion' against 'anticontagionism'. Acceptance of the former would have necessitated the introduction of tighter quarantine regulations which ultimately went against colonial commercial priorities, (p. 194).

The author further emphasizes the political weakness of colonial rule by arguing that, "Because cholera epidemics were seen to be so intimately bound up with Hindu rites and pilgrimages, even the introduction of sanitary measures and Haffkine's anti-cholera serum did not resolve the political problems that surrounded attempts to contain cholera' (p. 198). A much

clearer interventionist approach was at first adopted by the colonial administration in order to control plague. Once again, however, aggrieved social sensibilities and popular protest forced it to modify its approach.

Arnold has argued that, in the long term, the Indian middle class and the new urban elite were, for various reasons, drawn into more active participation. Indian doctors in charge of dispensaries became important intermediaries for the spread of Western medicine. It is to these and other similar questions that he devotes his attention in the concluding chapter on 'Health and Hegemony'.

As mentioned earlier David Arnold considers his work to be 'a study of a colonizing process'. In order to elaborate this process he focuses

upon three major diseases. While the significance of these diseases for nineteenth century medical discourse in India is undeniable, his virtual exclusion of a host of others from the central discussion requires explanation. Is it because many of the latter do not lend themselves so easily to the dramatic effect the author so successfully creates? Smallpox, cholera and plague ran rampant as awesome killers that rapidly decimated entire families and populations. They were not merely physiological afflictions but were serious and immediate threats to socio-economic stability and public order. Perhaps the same was not equally true of tuberculosis, pneumonia, dysentery, malaria and typhoid which (though devoid of the horror associated with the earlier three diseases) were probably in the long term even more deadly. But just as the most overt expression of colonialism in India was British political control, 'state medicine' revealed itself most clearly in attempting to manage diseases which were perceived by the colonizers as imminently dangerous to their rule.

David Arnold's monograph while enlarging the canvas upon which the 'colonizing process' has so far been depicted, stops short of filling in the details. The winning over of the Indian elite by Western medicine does not unmistakably translate into British 'hegemony'. Quite the reverse may have been true! The manner and the areas in which European medical knowledge in India was used seemed to underline both its intimidating character and its intimate relationship with the political objectives of the rulers. This could not have escaped the notice of those to whom it was applied. It would be worth inquiring whether the demonstratively successful application of western medicine to the treatment of less disruptive but more common diseases would not have contributed more towards the establishment of 'hegemonic' influence.

Yet the author can hardly be faulted for not taking on more than what he already has. By integrating the 'medical discourse' in the nineteenth century to the 'colonizing process' in India, David Arnold has widened our understanding of the overarching structures that dominated the subcontinent. But, just as some of the author's earlier work highlighted the 'subaltern' aspects of agrarian life and administrative organization in colonial India, it is possible that he may not have long to wait for studies on 'subaltern' disease to put in an appearance!

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