

feminist and also as a woman. She is quick to detect the 'ifs' and 'buts' existing in the feminist movement and the forces and counter-forces that have fragmented it, branching it into various movements. As a socialist-feminist, Johanna had to face many challenges, impasses and hurdles. 'Being a socialist-feminist activist has never been easy,' she says. (p. 201) It was like standing on a 'stony ground' between the heady appeal of radical feminism and the popularity of liberal feminism. Chapter 9, 'Meeting the Challenges of the Political Right', makes an interesting reading as the author gives a birds eye-view of the feminist struggle and subtly explains the difference between socialist-feminism and Marxist-feminism. The chapter is by no means a repetition of the history of feminism; its strength lies in its evaluative and analytical stance.

Over the years feminism has become an institutionalized movement with its leadership coming from the well-educated class. This powerful group relegates the interest of the working class woman to the periphery. The author agrees that many of the issues are identical for all women but many are class specific. For this it is necessary to give more representation to working-class woman and also to consider the restructuring of economy. The problem becomes acute when politics intrudes and feminist organizations work out a reactionary backlash holding back working-class woman's interest. Another marginalized class is cropping up: the Asian and Latino communities coming to the fore in the USA, with globalization. These have their own internal power structures and their community-based organizations are fighting for justice.

The book foresees renewed contestations because the job-based organizations, the feminist organizations and the community-based organizations are taking up fights from different angles. Brenner does not reduce activism to a strategy; she situates the problem in the

political and economic context of a society dominated by the imperatives of capitalism and builds up her thesis that there is a possibility of developing a feminist coalitional aesthetics in which gender, race, class and nationality can interact.

Feminism has made inroads into many fields but the challenges and the impasses outweigh the gains. The picture is not grim, though. Johanna Brenner resolves not to give in to 'what the powerful intend' but to give resistance to oppression and to continue the struggle for justice.

The book has a flow that is not interrupted despite quotations. The author shows an uncanny ability to probe deeper into the problem, carry forward the discussion and reach a conclusion. Beautifully brought out and designed, the work is a significant addition to the reading list of any feminist even if one does not subscribe to the socialist, Marxist views.

USHA BANDE
Former Fellow
IIAS, Shimla

Kathak—The World of Shovana Narayan
by Kamal K. Mishra, Kanishka Publishers,
New Delhi, 2005, Rs. 995

The artiste Padma Sri Shovana Narayan is a living legend in the classical dance form of Kathak. The book on her world of Kathak presents an intensive and holistic study of the dance form, its origin and development along with the analysis of dancer's psyche, motivations and personality. Thus, the personality of the artiste is juxtaposed with the choreographed dance-forms of Kathak, representing every mood of human life through *abhinaya*, techniques and accompaniments of the dance form. The study of dance-form with these objectives in view is the most challenging task. The justification of the study is that among all fine arts, dance is the only form where the artist and the form of art are

synthesized in totality. It is in the body of the artiste that the form evolves and presents rhythm, movement and *abhinaya* in time and space. Secondly, this form of dance had its origin in folk ballads and narrative traditions. These have risen to the heights of classical dance encompassing *nritta*, *nriya* and *sangeeta* representing all the characteristics of the *patra*, the cup, through which the aesthetic emotion of *rasa* is offered to the *sahridaya rasika* for *asvada*. In this way, Kathak is imbued with *rasa*, *abhinaya*, *dharmi*, *vritti*, *pravritti*, *siddhi*, *svara*, *atodya*, *guna* and *rasa*. It is notable that dance and music are the only forms among all fine arts which have retained their classical nature and purity of form through the passage of time, while painting, architecture, sculpture and literature have undergone tremendous changes, evolving and reacting to the modern political and social milieu. The classical forms of dances such as Kathak, Bharatanatyam, Odissi, etc., as well as music still maintain their purity and are practiced according to the *sastriya* injunctions in matters of techniques, format, elements and principles. Moreover, dance is a form of art wherein a synthesis of space, time, rhythm and movement is presented in the form of the dancer itself. Hence, it is more complex than other arts where the artist creates the form representing rhythm and movement in time and space. For instance, in painting rhythm, movement, volume, etc., are created in the pictorial space through different forms or music where words and sounds create rhythmic forms in time. But in dance the body of the dancer evolves and depicts movement and rhythm in time and space and the emotions are expressed through gestures, postures and rhythmic movement. Hence, the art form and the artiste become complementary to each other. If the art form has endowed the artist with a personality, artiste also provides worldwide publicity and new dimensions of growth by the creative talent. The dance form of Kathak was prevalent in the courts of the princely states of

India during the medieval period. From the courts of medieval rulers it had shifted its place to temples and was also performed during festivals and the public performance to create social awareness, along with recreation. Though Kathak in traditional form represented luxurious Mughal elegance, sensitivity and grace, Shovana Narayan has improvised it with different costumes in conformity with the themes. Through her efforts, Kathak has touched international horizons and attained a social function to serve as a means to generate awareness for social reforms in the society. She is adept in dance and has been a successful and imaginative choreographer besides her proficiency in the pure dance form of Kathak. In her experiments to improvise it in the contemporary society, she has redefined the teaching tradition of dance. Herself a staunch believer in the *gurusisya parampara*, she has the credit to revive the tradition and relate it to the modern society. Her life is a model of perfect synthesis between a working woman, professional performing artiste, a teacher of dance and a loving and caring woman as a wife and mother. All the roles demand intense and whole-hearted attention, devotion and time.

Shovana Narayan's life presents a perfect example of time management in modern society of competition and excellence from the beginning of her career to the climax of her achievements. It is an ideal to be followed by any woman artist who wishes to achieve such success as Shovana Narayan. In this perspective the book is a successful attempt of its kind.

In conformity with the subject of the book, the author and publisher have presented each page of the book with expressive moods of the dancer like the choreographers providing a framework to the dance form of Kathak. Every page is significant with colour, and emotion presented by the facial portrait in the half tone in blue on which the text of the book is presented to the reader. Dance, for Shovana Narayan, has remained a

source of eternal joy and life-time engagement. But it was used as a prize for her success in the academic field in her childhood, which has proved to be a successful method for her achievement in Administrative Accounts Services of India. The threat that she would be deprived of the joy of creation in dance if she fails to achieve the academic excellence, worked wonders in her childhood days. Consequently, she learnt to manage her time in dance and academic studies not at the cost of one for the other, besides her other duties. It enabled her to perform the duties of an Audit Officer, a performing artiste, besides her household duties in the best possible manner. So also, reading the book gives a wonderful experience through colourful reproductions of dance performances, representations of various themes of choreographed dance representing varied emotions of life and inspiring biography of the devoted life of the dancer achieving the ecstasies of life.

The author has presented all aspects of the personality of Shovana Narayan by digging deep in her psyche as an artist, by giving opinions of her disciples, colleagues, dance critics and journalists about her performance and devotion for the dance. Besides, he has included reviews and opinions on her performance, pertaining to choreographers and innovations in the dance form, costumes and themes and juxtaposing the traditional dance form of Kathak with some of the western dance forms without sacrificing the purity of the dance form of Kathak.

The book illustrates an example of an artiste who is open minded with innovations used in expanding the horizons of dance form while maintaining the purity of the classical form of dance at the same time. It reveals that her creativity and individuality is not confined to the *sastriya* injunctions, rather she takes inspiration from the *sastra* to take the art form to new frontiers. This has been brought out in the book. The

dancer has experimented with traditional hallmarks of the story-telling in her performances but used contemporary themes including religious themes, such as, the life of Buddha and Krishna, based on the literary works of Maithilisharan Gupta, Surdas, Mirabai and Jayadeva. It is not only the aesthetic emotion of *sringara* centred around *nayikas* which had remained the epicentre of traditional Kathak, but with the innovative ideas of the dancer, it has reached to *Bhakti* and *Sufism* of Kabir, Khusro, Rumi, etc. Similarly, she has experimented with the themes representing the identity of women in different roles viz., Draupadi, Yashodhara, Shakuntala, Mira, Shraddha of *Kamayani*, Padmini and Kamla, queens of Chittor and Gujarat respectively, the issues related to girl-child, along with mythical themes of *Siva-parinaya* and socio-religious contemporary themes of Ma Sharada, Vivekananda, Jago Durga, etc. Introducing these new emotions and social issues, the purity of the dance form has always been maintained. Thus, the innovative experiments have successfully extended the horizons of the dance form. The inclusion of the poetic texts of these choreographers in the Appendix would have proved beneficial for the guidance and use of beginners in this field.

The book leads the reader to a work of art itself and to the innermost depth of dance form, its minute and subtle moods, the sounds of *ghunghuroo*, the rhythmic sequences, the *layakari* and *abhinaya*, almost hypnotizing influence of dance. Further, it presents an objective analysis of the artiste's inner psyche through interview and introspection and corroborating the information from other sources. The achievements and awards, the experiments of synthesizing Kathak with other art forms to make it a contemporary art form also reflect the talent of the artist and present new ideas to younger budding artistes to adopt in their career.

The book appears as a piece of tapestry interwoven with tradition and contemporaneity of east and west with

the silken threads of emotions and moods representing the universal elements of dance. It is a cultural confluence of the rivers Ganga, Yamuna, Danube, Volga and Thames and it could only be made possible through the dance form of Kathak and the efforts of artiste Shovana Narayan. The author has also highlighted the personality and attitudes of the dancer by illustrating the progressive attitude towards life from the themes of her dances. Shovana is compassionate and introspective but through her dance, reaches the people and communicates to them her emotions and concerns regarding the role of women in society and adapt the dance form as an instrument to bring about a social change. In this way, the book proposes the hypothesis that the aesthetic enjoyment is not a transcendental experience, but becomes a powerful means to arouse social sensibility for reforms in society for the eradication of social evils such as gender discrimination, oppression of deprived classes, physically and mentally challenged children.

The book with flower like beautiful pages depicting the dancer in different moods and emotions really reflects the dedication of the author and publishers in carrying out the work to its fruition. Except for some printing errors, which appear like a thorn with a beautiful flower or bee attracted to the fragrance, the book makes a very interesting reading throughout, and gives a wonderful experience.

NEELIMA VASHISHTHA
Fellow, IAS, Shimla

Iron and Social Change in Early India, edited by Bhairabi Prasad Sahu, Oxford University Press, 2005

The advent of iron technology in the Indian subcontinent and its impact on urbanization, with emphasis on the second urbanization (i.e. of the Gangetic plains), is the subject of this edited book. There is reason to associate the first

urbanization of Harappan civilization with copper technology. This book is a part of Oxford University Press series on Debates in Indian History and Society. The book is a collection of previously-published articles by eminent scholars who have provided valuable inputs to this problem. The articles have been organized in three divisions, aptly named as 'The Formulation and Early Contestations', 'Towards Widening Horizons' and 'Perspectives from the Regions'. The articles provide snaps in the evolving important shifts in the discussion of the theme, over time, using Kosambi's proposal of 1952 as the origin.

Iron originated in the Indian subcontinent around the middle of second millennium BC. It is further established that the origin of iron technology was a product of indigenous development. However, the impact of iron technology on society in the Indian subcontinent, especially the social and economic spheres, is still a hotly debated topic, primarily because of intricate nuances associated with this problem of connecting iron technology and social change. The focus of attention has been the important direct and indirect connection of iron technology and plough share technology. The impact of this connection has also been seriously debated. Further, the impact of flourishing plough share technology on society has been critically viewed in this collection of articles. The questions to which answers are sought are how a society of surplus emerged once the dense jungles of the fertile Gangetic plains were cleared and what was the role of iron technology in making this happen. It is very important to understand this because this is a very relevant and fundamental social and historical subject. The surplus in food production combined with the establishment of active trading networks appear to be the cause of several other important developments in early India like emergence of cities, germination of new religious thinking, increase in use of

metallic coins, and formation of new state-societies. The articles in the book, thoughtfully selected and organized by the Editor, present different views on the impact of advent of iron technology on second urbanization.

In the elaborate introduction of the Editor, the approach to addressing the problem of the impact of iron technology on important social changes, especially in the initial years of advent of iron technology in the Indian subcontinent, has been well laid out. The Editor has summarized all the articles that follow the introduction by providing a very critical analysis of the material presented in each of these articles. The Editor has also placed the articles in an appropriate, almost chronological, sequence.

The serious tone of the discussion is rightly set with the first time proposal of Kosambi, in 1952, of a connection between iron technology and the clearance of the forests of Gangetic plains. This article originated the debate on impact of iron technology on society. The article of RS Sharma outlining how iron transformed the economy and society around 700 BC is a well-cited work, in which he has related the advent of iron technology and its impact in creation of active trading society on the rise of 'protestant' movements like Buddhism. In another article in the same volume, RS Sharma argues that iron acted as a catalyst that transformed material life in the Gangetic plains. He co-relates the rise in craft production in other raw materials with the remarkable growth in the use of iron tools from around 500 BC. The impact of iron on surplus produce and the growth of cities, around the same time, have been argued by DP Agrawal from the perspective of its increasing abundance and cheapness compared to bronze. Although Radomir Pleiner's concept of iron technology diffusing into India from external sources is almost invalid in light of recent scholarship, his analysis of archaeological data envisages a two stage development