

K Satchidananda Murty is well-known in the Indian academic circles primarily due to the eminent offices he has held over the years. Few, if any, of the current generation of students of philosophy in the country are familiar with his works. This sad but unsurprising state of affairs is partly remedied by this collection of articles on Murty. The reader now has access to the basic elements of Murty's thoughts over a wide variety of issues ranging from traditional philosophy, especially Indian philosophy, to more contemporary social and political concerns. However, though Murty's engagements with issues of world-peace and Indian foreign policy have been emphasized at length both in the preface and in the long citation from Martin Luther University, the collection includes only one short article on the former issue ('Murty on Peace: A Critical Appreciation' by D.P. Chattopadhyaya) and none on the latter. Since very few academic philosophers ostensibly engage in such broader activities, it would have been illuminating to see the mind of a philosopher at work on these urgent issues. The collection also does not contain the usual 'Replies' depriving us, thus, from witnessing Murty actually at work.

Perhaps because people are generally unfamiliar with Murty's works, the collection contains an unusually large number of survey-type articles reviewing various aspects of Murty's admirably wide variety of interests. In a felicitation volume of this nature, one would expect that most of the contributions will take off from where Murty had

If . . . one is to argue for major revisions of syllabi and of research areas to cover more of ancient Indian philosophy, then contemporary scholarship must show the way; otherwise, the lack of credibility of contemporary work will inevitably be traced to the lack of credibility of the origin, e.g. the system of Advaita Vedanta.

Realms of Satchidananda Murty

Nirmalangshu Mukherjee*

THE PHILOSOPHY OF K. SATCHIDANANDA MURTY

Edited by Sibajiban Bhattacharya and Ashok Vohra

New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1995,
xx + 320 pp., Rs. 350.

left an issue and extend the discussion to new heights typically by questioning the validity of Murty's thoughts themselves; for such a well-known thinker, repeated mention of his basic propositions would, under the more usual circumstances, have looked redundant. Except for some rare cases, discussed below, this spirit of inspiration is largely missing. We are told over and over again about the various sources from which Murty drew his inspiration; we do not see much evidence of the inspiration that Murty himself has generated. This problem is compounded by the inclusion of an unduly large number of contributions from retired professors who are Murty's contemporaries; only a handful of younger scholars have been included. As such, there is a general sense of friendly chat regarding a colleague rather than incisive philosophical reflection on important issues. Again this is not necessarily a real criticism of the volume; it is more a commentary on the sad state of affairs of philosophy in India.

The plan of discussion in this review is as follows. The articles in the collection may be roughly divided into three groups. In the first, there are two general reviews of Murty's work ('The Ramifications of the Real in the Philosophy of Inclusiveness' by R. Balasubramaniam and 'The Philosophy of K. Satchidananda Murty' by Sibajiban Bhattacharya). I will briefly discuss both to convey a general feel for Murty's philosophical thinking. The survey-article on Murty's works in Telugu (by P. Sriramachandrudu), not discussed here, perhaps also falls in this category.

In the second group, there are a large number of review articles on specific aspects of Murty's work

which basically cover the ground - albeit a bit more fully - already covered in the general reviews. Most of these articles simply engage in an exegesis of Murty's writings usually with liberal citations and personal recollections. They seldom raise a problem or deeply examine an angle or develop ideas beyond Murty's words. Hence I will not discuss this group of articles though a number of them (e.g. the pieces by Ashok Vohra, Stephen H. Phillips, J.S.R.L. Narayana Moorthy, John Grimes and S.S. Barlingay among others) display finescholarship, and are nice to read.

In the third group, we finally have the sort of articles that should have found more space, i.e. articles that are themselves products of philosophical reflection - of uneven quality - on a topic that interested Murty. These include 'Sleep-Learning or Wake-Up Call etc.' by Arindam Chakravarty, 'The Realms of Between etc.' by Daya Krishna, and, most importantly, 'Murty's Critique of Revelation etc.' by Rajendra Prasad. Chattopadhyaya's article (mentioned above) is difficult to classify in the suggested scheme; so I will discuss it here as well.

Balasubramaniam begins by expressing some concern over what is taught in the Indian universities. He complains, following Murty, that philosophy has been 'equated' with logic and epistemology and that 'exaggerated importance' has been given to the systems of philosophy from Descartes to Hegel including Kant. The complaint is probably restricted to Western Philosophy alone though much of the more interesting recent work in Indian Philosophy, especially on Nyaya, is precisely devoted to logic and epistemology. Should we then take Balasubramaniam (and Murty) to be unhappy about this work as well? Balasubramaniam is probably right about the facts if we think of 'logic and epistemology' as including the

philosophies of language, mind and science. This will cover much of twentieth-century analytic philosophy, and when it is linked to the 'systems' mentioned above, it will cover much of what is sometimes called the 'semantic tradition' in Western Philosophy whose ancestry is easily traceable to Plato and Aristotle, especially the latter (it is curious that Balasubramaniam is somehow able to exclude 'the rationalist and empiricist traditions' from his purview). So the complaint is really against an 'exaggerated importance' to Western Analytic Tradition plus such approaches to Indian Philosophy, mentioned above, which betray a similar fascination with 'the mystery of logic'. These are serious issues affecting the (quality of) lives of many. As a starter, the book under discussion might itself be taken as a test-case of whether there is enough motivation for any major 'revision and updating of the syllabuses'.

Balasubramaniam's article has two parts. In the first (Sections I-III), he traces Murty's general views on the nature of philosophical activity and the sources of these views. He also enumerates, in a chronological order, some of the important publications by Murty. The central message of this part is that, although Murty may be explicitly viewed as upholding a Vedantin position, he drew inspiration from much of the rest of Eastern and Western philosophies, especially from Buddhist and existentialist thoughts. Except for minor issues regarding proper interpretation of traditional views, the discussion in this area is largely documentary in nature. For example, Balasubramaniam objects to Murty's contention that Sankara is a theist (6), on the grounds that, according to Sankara, Brahman is 'transrelational'; anything 'transrelational', according to Balasubramaniam, is 'translinguistic' and, hence, 'trans-theistic'. It is hard to see anything more than terminological disputes in such argumentation; hence, it is hard to appreciate the heat that such issues generate.

In the second part (Sections IV-VI), Balasubramaniam attempts to develop some of the themes already noted in the first part. For example,

in Section IV, he explicitly states a few propositions which he takes to be the basic principles of Murty's philosophy. One of them is the proposition that 'there is need for metaphysical reflection' though we should not entertain any illusion of 'final metaphysics' and guard 'against the danger of both anti-metaphysics and pseudo-metaphysics'. I expect wide agreement on this point. Murty's second principle is that 'metaphysics and theology are not only not incompatible, but also converging'. Balasubramaniam thinks that this will be a 'shock to the . . . anti-metaphysicians . . . and the parochial descriptive metaphysicians' (15). Prima facie, it is not clear why it is so shocking. The anti-metaphysician, whoever he is, can certainly grant that metaphysics and theology converge; that is why he rejects both. As for the descriptive metaphysician, insofar as we make sense of religious experience in this world, there is no reason why the conditions of such experience cannot be investigated. And in investigating these conditions, a descriptive metaphysician may well uphold the requirement for an ontology of God, i.e. an object (not a 'manipulable' material object, of course) of such experiences. In fact, Sankara himself may well be viewed as a descriptive metaphysician of sorts. It seems to me that the notion of non-convergence is much harder to make sense of.

Sibajiban Bhattacharya covers roughly the same material as Balasubramaniam, but he has a markedly different plan of organization. He divides his paper into five sections each dealing with a broad theme that engages Murty. He then articulates these themes individually by carefully arranged citations from Murty's works. With admirable editing skill, he not only gives the reader a first-hand view of Murty's writings but is also able to impose some order on these citations without explicitly interpreting them - the order being the interpretation. In the second part of each section, he goes on to comment on what he has just ordered. For example, after articulating Murty's view that philosophy is both a cultural and a culture-transcending activity, Bhattacharya raises the pertinent

empirical issue of whether we can ever form a comprehensive knowledge of a culture without which, it seems, we cannot begin to transcend it. Again, in connection with Murty's noble plea that we (partly) transcend our own cultures by understanding other cultures, Bhattacharya raises the methodological point (73) of how to do it. Murty's suggestion that we take notice of anthropological works will not do since 'pluralism cannot be understood by noting what is common to all cultures . . . there is so much misunderstanding . . . not because people have failed to note what the anthropologists have found'.

Bhattacharya has some interesting things to say on Murty's concept of revelation which is closely linked to Murty's general conception of God. According to Murty, a special revelation of God does not make sense; conditions for an awareness of God must be generally available in order for particular awareness of an individual to be possible - a special revelation presupposes a general revelation. The universe, thus, is a theistic order which displays God's presence to everyone, including the atheist. We return to some aspects of this interesting idea in connection with Rajendra Prasad's paper. For now, let us notice that Murty supplies one linguistic argument in support of the untenability of special revelation. He argues that 'reveals' is at least a two-place predicate in that 'a revelation without a revealer and a recipient is unintelligible'. Bhattacharya argues that 'kills' is also two-place but that does not prevent self-killing. But 'visits' is also at least two-place and we cannot make sense of self-visit. So the question is whether 'reveals' is akin to 'kills' or to 'visits'. My general feeling is that the logical apparatus of relations is too thick to address such conceptually loaded linguistic issues. For example, if the values of the distinct variables are to be chosen from distinct domains, as seems likely for 'reveals', then identical values cannot be chosen. This is an empirical, not a logical, issue.

Turning to the papers in the third group, Arindam Chakravarty is interested in what he calls the 'semantics of Vedic sentences'. At

issue is the vexing problem of being able to tell something, in order to generate an awareness, which, in principle, cannot be told. After rushing through and rejecting several eminently plausible options, Chakravarty, with characteristic flourish, presents a sharpened version of the problem in terms of a set of inconsistent propositions. He then goes on to argue that the inconsistency may be removed by appealing to the notion of 'word-generated indeterminate perception'. If I understand him, the basic idea is that sometimes language may be so used, as if in a dream, such that the 'metaphysical falsehood' of what is said (e.g. in a 'scripture or a particular sentence from the Veda') is recognized and the listener (reader?) wakes up fresh with a 'direct realisation of unity'. So Chakravarty builds into the unexplained notion of 'use of language' the problem itself. Further, it seems that the solution is over-general since it is not clear why, in particular, Vedic sentences are needed; any set of straight contradictions, palpable category mistakes and the like, other things being equal (e.g. adequate psychological preparation, assuming the infallibility of the text, etc.) should at least generate such 'immaculate conceptions' (you never get a perception from incoherent text alone)! Zen masters are said to use such techniques on their disciples.

In the beginning it looked as though Daya Krishna was going to undertake a detailed review of Murty's book *The Realms of Between*. For most of the paper though, the discussion, short and witty, largely focuses on some of the central concepts displayed in the enigmatic title of the book. Daya Krishna is unhappy about both of Murty's realms, viz. immanence ('this world') and transcendence ('the Other World'). For example, he thinks that 'the idea of "this world" gives it a false sense of unity which it does not have' and he goes on to enumerate some of the 'radical diversities'. I do not see why someone cannot use 'the world', just as we use 'human body', as a collective unity. Murty can very well agree to the diversity while viewing the entire body of diversities as a 'realm'. For transcendence, Daya

Krishna makes the interesting suggestion that transcendence be understood not in terms of eternity but in terms of temporality since it is 'time that provides the foundation for the infinity of all ideal pursuits of man'. However, this idea would have a lasting effect on Murty only when the notion of 'foundation for the infinity' is clarified in detail.

Rajendra Prasad's rigorously argued paper on the concept of revelation is a very sophisticated treatment of the topic. He begins by distinguishing carefully between the internal questions on revelation - e.g. questions about the content, method and the purpose of revelation - from philosophical questions which abstract away from specific religious questions such as above and focus on the very concept of revelation itself. One such question, as noted earlier in connection with Bhattacharya's paper, is the meaning of the predicate 'X reveals Y to Z'. Rejecting Bhattacharya's analysis of 'reveals' as a possible reflexive predicate, Rajendra Prasad insists that the revealer-recipient distinction, a la Murty, ought to be maintained. His argument is that Murty's interpretation of 'reveals' reveals a preference for commonsense, and the commonsensical notion of revelation is 'relative to concealment' (134). Each of these contentions may be challenged along with the over-all strategy of depending exclusively on the ordinary meaning of 'reveals'. Setting aside the issue of whether ordinarily 'reveals' does not mean what Rajendra Prasad says (I do not

There is no good reason why a contemporary student would voluntarily turn his mind, except for a curiosity in the archaic, to the difficult task of understanding ancient texts for the sake of turning his mind. . . . Faith may well be a pre-condition for the realization of Brahman, as Murty has argued; it cannot be a pre-condition for research-engagement on Vedanta as well.

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Kate Teltscher begins her book by referring to Mark Tully's being virtually forced out of the BBC because he had become 'too great an Indophile (or Hinduphile) to continue as the BBC's man in Delhi'. She stresses that what was really on trial was not one particular newsmen who had over the years come to be closely associated with India, but the entire issue of the representation of India in England and in the West. Though Teltscher's analogy between Tully's TV interview defending his position and the trial of Warren Hastings seems rather far-fetched, she makes a valid point when she refers to the historical continuity of the debate over the representation of India in Britain and Europe - a debate which stretches back to the seventeenth century when the foundations of the East India Company were laid.

Britain's transition from a trading partner to a ruling colonial power is traced in the book through the detailed analysis of a large number of textual representations of India covering the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Although the main thrust of the book is on mid-eighteenth-century British writing on India, the author examines the different aspects of European representations of India in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and successfully concludes that these texts do not form any single narrative about colonial expansion, but are part of representations of India which are 'diverse, shifting, historically contingent, complex and competitive'. Stating that a specific British tradition of writing about India emerged only in the middle of the eighteenth century, from around 1765 when the British acceded to the *diwani*, Teltscher refers to the period preceding this as part of a broad European tradition of writing about India because during this period, as Stephen Greenblatt has pointed out, European mimetic capital easily crossed the boundaries of nation and creed.

The strength of Kate Teltscher's study lies in the wide variety of representations of India which she has chosen to analyse. These range from travel accounts and missionary records to histories and parliamentary debates, as also some works of fiction and poetry. In her attempt to build up a network of intertextual relations, the author does not separate literary from non-literary texts. Rather, throughout her book she tries to show how the

Contentious History of Colonial Authority

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INDIA INSCRIBED:

EUROPEAN AND BRITISH WRITING ON INDIA, 1600-1800

by Kate Teltscher

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different works on India inform one another, how they are 'unified in their production of an India for a domestic or expatriate audience' and how they share certain assumptions, strategies and imagery.

Making it clear at the outset that her aim is neither to evaluate the accuracy of the texts discussed nor to test the extent of their knowledge about India, Kate Teltscher says that her aim is to 'let the "fictional" aspects of the documents to be the centre of her analysis', meaning by 'fictional' the 'forming, shaping, moulding elements: the crafting of the narrative'. Although the author acknowledges her debt to Edward Said's *Orientalism* in her method of analysis, she refuses to accept what

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she calls the monolithic and homogenous nature of Said's notion of orientalist discourse. Teltscher proposes a 'more conflictual model' constructed from contending discourses in place of 'Said's sense of an unbroken, unchanging tradition of European representation of the East' which pays 'insufficient regard to historical context and neglects inconsistencies, contradictions and instabilities'.

Teltscher tries to show that the European and British identities as revealed in their writings on India are not stable and that they keep on changing with the shifts in domestic policies. While this adds a new and interesting dimension to her study, little attempt has been made in the book to relate the shifts in the self-representations as revealed in Western projections of life and society in India to the changes that were taking place in the content and course of European and more so, of British colonialism. The tensions and contradictions of the newly assumed

colonial role of England which form the central part of Teltscher's work could perhaps have been better presented had these been seen against the background of the emerging British attitudes in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The pre-colonial and colonial self-representations which the author finds so easy to distinguish can be understood adequately only when related to the gradual emergence of England as a colonial power and its attendant anxieties and contradictions. To suggest that with the accession to the *diwani* in 1765 'the Self (England) took on the guise of the Other (India)' and the assumption of colonial power resulted in the birth of a much more precarious sense

of self would be to see only a part of the picture. An analysis of the changes in the British economy as it geared itself to the needs of an emerging empire in India and the resultant conflicts and contradictions, as revealed in the philosophical writings of the period, could perhaps have been meaningfully linked with the growth of an overall sense of precariousness of the Self in relation to the Other.

The first chapter of the book deals with seventeenth-century European writing on India. Samuel Purchas' four folio volumes published in 1625 entitled *A History of the World in Sea Voyages and Land Travells* are taken for detailed analysis and the link between trade and travel writing explored. In discussing various travel writers of the seventeenth century ranging from Haklyut to Thomas Roe and Bernier, Teltscher shows that although for the most part these representations picture India negatively as an inverse to England and Europe, there are certain exceptions which help one

go beyond simple binaries. Edward Terry's reference to the devotion of the Muslim, which he uses in censuring the laxity of the Christian in his own country, and Roe's portrayal of Emperor Jehangir receiving a 'professed, poore holy' beggar with 'such familiaritie and shew of kindness, that it must needs argue an humilite not found easily among Kings' are highlighted by the author to show that familiar rhetorical patterns of comparison and contrast between East and West do not always hold, and that European and Christian certainties tend to give way.

Chapter Two explores seventeenth-century images of Indian women. The world of Indian women has always been a sort of closed mystery for the European writer, and the accounts of Indian women presented by European travel writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are often shrouded in sexual fantasy. The secret *harem* of the Muslim and the occult sexual practices of the Hindu dominate the European image of Indian women. The author rightly points out that the lure of female sexuality combined with the threat of female power, which formed the centre of many a travel narrative of India, was actually an extension of European attitudes towards witchcraft and women, with the 1620s witnessing European witchcraft trials at their height. However, the European stereotype of the Indian woman is seriously challenged by the *sati*. Whether the European observer saw *sati* as an ultimate expression of wifely subservience and fidelity, as an act of suicide born out of social compulsion resulting in damnation, as a sort of religious martyrdom, or even as a means to regulate and punish female sexuality, it ran counter to the commonly presented image of the Indian woman in a fantasy land.

As one moves to eighteenth-century representations of India, missionary accounts come to dominate the scene, and the third chapter of the book discusses in detail how the Jesuits and the Lutherans, each in their own ways, tried to re-fashion India to suit their and colonialism's needs. However, representations of India by the two missions were bound to be markedly different since the Jesuits adopted an Indian life-style, whereas the Lutherans retained their European identity. Teltscher points out that unlike

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Interrogating Post-Colonialism: Theory, Text and Context includes twenty of the twenty-six papers presented at the 1994 IAS conference on post-colonialism, an academic formation which had begun to mystify outsiders much as structuralism once did. Theory, at its worst, attempts to encompass so much that it resembles a ballooning tent barely connected with the solid earth, but at its best, it pegs itself to texts and history as *Interrogating Post-Colonialism* does. In general, lucid and free of jargon, this is exactly the sort of book late entrants need.

When publishing was less expensive, end-papers were fascinating. One history of literature, for example, had a literary map of England to support the ensuing tour through nineteenth-century England. Meenakshi Mukherjee's introductory essay and Harish Trivedi's concluding one are like those end-papers of yore, the one setting out the issues, the other interrogating post-colonialism with incisive vigour. Here, for instance, is Professor Mukherjee: 'Post-colonialism is not merely a chronological label referring to the period after the demise of empires. It is an emancipatory concept, particularly for the students of literature outside the western world, because it makes us interrogate many aspects of the study of literature that we are made to take for granted, enabling us to read our texts in our own terms, but also to reinterpret canonical texts from Europe from the perspective of our specific historical and geographical location.' (4). Professor Mukherjee then goes on to warn us that the term 'post-colonialism' 'tends to confer a central position to one century of European imperialism in the long narrative of the human race, making it the determining marker of history' (8). Aware of this, G.J.V. Prasad defends the 'awful English' of *Kanthapura* on historical grounds to emphasize that 'we should be wary of reading Indian English, as being solely determined by colonialism' (193).

While 'diasporic Indians' have pioneered post-colonial theory, Meenakshi Mukherjee hopes that

Theory, at its worst, attempts to encompass so much that it resembles a ballooning tent barely connected with the solid earth, but at its best, it pegs itself to texts and history as Interrogating Post-Colonialism does.

Perspectives on Post-Colonial Theory

Shobhana Bhattacharji*

INTERROGATING POST-COLONIALISM: THEORY, TEXT AND CONTEXT

Edited by Harish Trivedi and Meenakshi Mukherjee

Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1996, viii + 252 pp., Rs.300.

material and market studies might reveal why 'home-based Indians' have not made any major contribution to it (8-9). The two essays by Satish Aikant and C. Vijayshree consider diasporic writing from somewhat opposing positions. Aikant questions expatriate Indians' use of Indian history to reclaim or reconstruct a tradition, but does not ask what it is reclaimed for. His belief that by presenting several versions of the Emergency in *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie 'opens up the discursive terrain for several alternative versions' reduces actual happenings to mere words (219).

In contrast, C. Vijayshree's 'casual survey of Indian expatriate writing' establishes that about sixty writers are settled abroad or constantly shifting between India and another country. 'To emigrate', she points out, 'is a political act because it implies a preference for a foreign country over one's own home' (224). She points out that 'a majority of these writers are middle class intellectuals with a strong urge to succeed... restless to be heard, appreciated and recognized' (225). Very few of them return to India, yet they are obsessed with the past and homelands (226-7).

Harish Trivedi is even more forceful about the 'fancy-free irresponsibility' of Rushdie and others: 'It is misleading... to speak, as is often done, of their chosen location in the coercive or oppressive terms of exile or diaspora, when what actually happened was that these writers voted with their feet - to say nothing of their heart and soul - for the many cultural and material attractions of the West. (242). Of course, Aijaz Ahmad has said this and more, but it will more than bear repetition.

The essays, grouped under 'Post-Colonial Issues' and 'Post-Colonialism in India,' are arranged to emphasize certain issues as well as to evoke the immediacy of a seminar. For instance, Arun Prabha Mukherjee's energetic plea for historical and social contexts to correct the tendency towards homogenization in post-colonial studies is followed by Gareth Griffith's unease at her presentation. Mukherjee feels that class, caste, and religion are not sufficiently considered in post-colonial theory. This concern seems to

be shared by the editors and some other contributors. Asserting that 'there can be no comparison between... the upper caste urban Indian and the slaves or the indentured labour who were transported [sic] across the seas', the editors have included essays on the experience of indentured Indian labour by Satendra Nandan and Vijay Misra. Other essays are equally specific in their concentration on particular writers and periods. T.N. Dhar, for instance, makes the excellent point that in *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao is dealing with real history, and not with illusory space as Tiffin suggests. Dhar points out that confusing the notions 'Hindu' and 'Indian' strengthens Hindu versions of history. It is unfortunate that Raja Rao himself believes that *Kanthapura* was written in the days when he did not think that social concern was 'a very immature thing.' (See Shobhana Bhattacharji, 'Interview with Raja Rao', *Book Review*, September-October 1982, p.66). Dhar's comment is difficult to accept, however, when he says that Rao wanted to educate the people about leaders like Tantia Tope, Sarojini Naidu and the Rani of Jhansi, using the *harikatha* as an instrument of education (145-46). In *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao is recounting a historical happening where Gandhi was mythicized through the use of the *harikatha*. In any case, how could a novel in English educate the villagers?

At a time when 'history' has been rendered slippery in theoretical studies, Rita Kothari's study of Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* is rightly unequivocal in its assumption that a historical play is based on an event from the past, that the playwright interprets history, and that *Tughlaq* reverberates with contemporary references without obliterating the complexity of Tughlaq's own period. I am not sure, however, that simplifying history and myth into a binary of linear and timeless modes of narration holds good. Also doubtful is Kothari's statement that the 'ahistoricity' of *Tughlaq* 'is an affirmation of the dignity and autonomy of non-modern peoples' (159), as Karnad's non-linear, semi-fictionalized method was effectively used by nineteenth-century European

dramatists who also straddled fiction and history to interpret the present. This is not to deny that the most invigorating aspect of post-colonial studies is its engagement with history, and that Kothari's excellent essay stimulates one's mind.

In the midst of fake objectivity and equally fake frankness in literary studies about 'where one is coming from,' Bruce Bennett, concerned with questions of nation and nationalism, is refreshingly honest: 'I prefer... this search for community in my country to the ungrounded discourse that sometimes characterizes post-colonial and post-modern modes of writing... (106). Jaidev, even more firmly, wants 'to steer clear of post-modernism as well as the debate about the problematic status of "nationness"... While it was tragic that the early post-colonial dream of a good nation was allowed to collapse so easily, in order for us to become meaningfully postcolonial it remains still a necessity to retrieve it and reshape it in accordance with a truly post-colonial agenda' (178). Jasbir Jain, in her comparison of *Anand Math* and novels by three twentieth-century Indian women, also addresses the problem of the nation.

Unfortunately, typographical errors mar *Interrogating Post-Colonialism* throughout. The lack of uniformity in the use of quotations and references is slightly annoying too, but the quality of the articles is too good to talk about this except in this last paragraph. Also, S.K. Sareen could not have been born in 1995 if he presented a paper at Shimla the previous year. The biographical information on his birth, thus, may be ignored. I have to end with a faintly negative remark about this excellent book, but some of the contributors have made assumptions about history which are either unclear or unacceptable. At the base of studies of history and post-colonialism is a concern with what has recently been described as 'a more or less rootless nationalism' which, without an adequate nation in any conventional sense, seeks 'sustenance from throwing its weight about, both abroad and at home.' (Nirmal Mukarji, 'Strengthening Indian Democracy', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 11 May 1996, p. 1130.) Although some contributors have attempted to address central issues, considering how important history and ideas of the nation are to post-colonial studies, *Interrogating Post-Colonialism* would have benefited from a clarification of the contentiousness surrounding the terms.

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Faced with the formidable task of dealing with an epic text like the *Mahabharata*, Rekha Jhanji's monograph, in a surprisingly short exposition, manages to raise questions of a fundamental nature regarding the metaphysical, cosmological and socio-cultural presuppositions underlying the depiction of the human condition in this epic.

The author looks at the *Mahabharata* from an existential point of view, which she characterizes as an interest in the concrete, lived life of human relations against the background of nature. She reads the *Mahabharata*, not as a historical document but as a document of the human condition in a 'possible world'. One would have liked a more substantial discussion on this perspective, as well as a more detailed analysis, in its light, of examples and events from the *Mahabharata*. The polyphonic character of the text which Jhanji talks of is really an attempt to look at each problem from several angles. For instance, Yudhisthira's problem that the life of righteousness and renunciation cannot be found in the performance of kingly duties, is put to several characters. Each brings to bear his particular ability, aptitude, role and relation to the problem, but the direction of the answer and the ultimate framework within which one discriminates between *dharma* and *adharma* remains the same. This multi-angled discussion is the method of non-dualism or the unity of theory and practice, of thought and life, of the universal and the particular, and of the eternal and the temporal, systematically presented in the *Mahabharata*. The author would therefore need to realize that the existentialism of the *Mahabharata* must of necessity differ from the existentialism of Western thought, which rejects theory and affirms the concrete and is therefore founded in the conscious dualism of theory and practice, thought and life, and the 'ought' and the 'is'.

The dichotomy which Jhanji

This monograph initiates an important and much needed discussion on the Mahabharata. Showing the range and richness of issues that the text tackles, it brings into focus their significance for contemporary thought and life.

Problematic Dichotomies

Anuradha Veeravalli*

HUMAN CONDITION IN THE MAHABHARATA

by Rekha Jhanji

Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1995, 79 pp., Rs. 100

perceives, whether between the soul and the body, *purusha* and *prakrti*, and *abhyudaya/trivarga* and *moksha* is problematic. Quoting Bhima, she concludes that there has to be a clear choice between worldly happiness and spiritual realization, between the pursuit of *dharma*, *artha* and *kama*, on the one hand, and that of *moksha*, on the other. It is not clear from the quotation, which talks of having to follow *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* equally and at different times, that this conclusion follows.

I am no scholar of the *Mahabharata*, but it seems clear at least in the Shantiparva, when Yudhisthira is to retire from the temptations and trappings of looking after the kingdom, that there is not one person who supports him, or feels that his interest in renunciation justifies his wanting *sanyasa*. In fact, Bhima, who Jhanji quotes in her favour, is Yudhisthira's most scorching critic. Calling him a foolish and unintelligent reciter of the vedas, and lamenting the fact that they are in the unenviable position of having to obey the words of a eunuch such as him, Bhima says: 'As the deer and boars, and birds (though they had a forest life) cannot attain to heaven, even so, those Ksatriyas that are not bereft of prowess cannot attain to heaven leading only a forest life. They should acquire religious merit by other ways.' (*The Mahabharata*, tr. Pratap Chandra Roy, Vol. VIII, Rajadharmanusasanaparva, Calcutta: Oriental Publishing Co., p. 16.) Again, Bhima says, 'Every kind of renunciation occurs in kingly duties.' (Ibid., p. 142.)

Thus, it is the renunciation of the fruits of action with respect to *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* that is advocated, and not the renunciation of *dharma*, *artha* and *kama*. This also makes it clear why the *sanyasa ashrama* is ordained only of the brahmin, though it is not closed to the other *varnas*. There is no dichotomy between the pursuit of *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* on the one hand, and *moksha* on the other. In fact, there is a necessary relation

between them. Each human being can achieve *moksha* only in understanding the meaning of renunciation in and through the performance of his duties with respect to his particular *varna* and *ashrama*. The *kshetra* and *kshetrajna*, *nara* and *narayana*, the worldly and the spiritual, must join forces in *dharmakshetra*, and if this involves telling a lie, so be it. Duryodhana's choice of Krishna's army over Krishna is therefore significant, and Bhishma's argument that the practice of *dharma* without belief in the existence of the soul would lack faith, is not merely pragmatic, but true.

In addition to chapters on human condition and the purpose of life, the book has a chapter on interpersonal relations. A variety of relations that the *Mahabharata* depicts, such as those between parents and children, husbands and wives, and between friends, are discussed. Though important issues are raised, the discussion fails to reflect the sense of the dramatic, the comparisons and contradictions, the debates and the counterdebates that surround each of these relations in the *Mahabharata*. Some apparent contradictions, as in the depiction of women like Kunti, Draupadi and Gandhari, who at once appear strong-willed yet insignificant and insecure in their roles, puzzle Jhanji. They do not, however, hold her attention enough to prompt an analysis, and she is too quick to conclude that 'if this was the plight of women from the royalty, we can easily imagine how insignificant must have been the lives of ordinary women'. These women represented the voices of sanity and truth while attempting to live and work within the framework of womanhood and marriage with great dignity and strength. However, this does not seem to impress the modern feminist mind.

Jhanji weaves into the narrative, the underlying Sankhya metaphysics, its implications for understanding man, his place in creation

and in society. She brings out the correspondence between the five elements of the universe - air, water, earth, fire, and ether - and the elements of the human body. Besides, the three *gunas* which constitute the nature of the universe also constitute that of the human being. The author rightly points out that this allows the characterization in the *Mahabharata* to escape being stereotypical. Showing the relationship between the *gunas* and their distribution among of the different castes, she throws fresh light on the otherwise hackneyed view of a rigid social hierarchy. She contrasts two views about the origin of the *varnas* - Bhrgu's view that all *varnas* were created equally from Brahman but that some fell from grace as they did not understand that every created being is Supreme Brahma; and Parasara's theory that the Brahmin emerged from the mouth, the Kshatriya from the arms, the Vaishya from the thighs and the Sudra from the feet of Brahma. Jhanji notes that both recognize the possibility of upward and downward mobility, according to the performance of virtuous action or the lack of it. However, she does not dwell on how this affects the body of the text. For instance, in what way would it influence an analysis of Karna's case where, apparently, he was denied his due because he was the son of a *suta*?

This is related to the question that the author brings up regarding the conflict between individual effort/autonomy and destiny. According to her the 'holistic' system of the *Mahabharata* shows that 'the autonomy of being human lies not in recognizing one's unique historicity but in becoming aware of one's inseparable unity with the rest of creation.' Elsewhere she argues, perhaps rightly, that there can be no tragedy in the *Mahabharata* in the Greek sense of the term, since here destiny is ultimately forged by one's own *karma*. Putting these insights together could bring about a completely new way of looking at the conflict between autonomy and destiny, and of defining its scope and limits.

This monograph initiates an important and much needed discussion on the *Mahabharata*. Showing the range and richness of issues that the text tackles, it brings into focus their significance for contemporary thought and life.

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The first thing that strikes one on picking up *Art and Nationalism* is that it is a big and beautiful book. Running into over 400 pages of text and notes, it is produced in fine glossy paper, with over 30 colour and nearly 200 black-and-white plates. These add to the sensuous qualities that are so essential in making a book on art and visual imagery appealing to both academic and lay readers. Woven through this web of images is the changing story of Indian art in the heyday of the Empire. Partha Mitter suggests that reactions to 'westernization' amongst Indian artists veered between enthusiastic acceptance and vehement resistance, and the attempts by these artists to create a 'national identity' was shaped by this struggle. The central theme in this book is this contested relationship and its implications for defining 'Indian art' at different periods in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Mitter divides the period under study - 1850-1922 - into two parts: the first (c. 1850-1900) was the era of 'optimistic westernization', dominated by 'pro-westernization' groups; the second (c. 1900-22) represented a counterpoint of 'orientalizing' or of 'cultural nationalism', when the emergent swadeshi art was closely linked to the creation of a Hindu identity.

The first phase was characterized by an art-historical puzzle - how did European academic naturalism oust earlier Indian art without any apparent resistance from Indian artists? Mitter argues that concentrating on 'Western influence' - whether as a 'civilizing' or a 'destructive' force - relegates the artist to a passive role. On the contrary, he wishes to focus on 'the relations between Western art as a specific source in the colonial era, and its cultural transformation by Indian artists - while accepting that the options before the Indian artist existed within the confines of colonial hegemony'. Therefore, he argues for a realm of 'individual choices' made by the artists that mediated the Western artistic influences on their work, presumably resulting in an 'indigenous' form.

In the early period, colonial policy played an important role in shaping art education and, by extension, aesthetics in India. Both Bombay and Calcutta, the two major metropolitan cities of nineteenth-century India, witnessed the setting up of art schools which encouraged a shift towards Western perspective, 'accurate' drawings of objects and figures, and chiaroscuro. Art education too

Art, Empire, Nation

G. Arunima*

ART AND NATIONALISM IN COLONIAL INDIA, 1850-1922:
OCCIDENTAL ORIENTATIONS

by Partha Mitter

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, ix + 475 pp., Rs. 1250.

followed the parameters set by Macaulay's Minutes in attempting to civilize native aesthetic sensibility, and was founded on similar notions of progress and morality. Surprisingly, 'history painting', which dominated contemporary European art, became an important element within the Indian aesthetic tradition of the period. Art became the channel for imagining the nation, and 'all the powers of European art' were to be employed to tap Indian mythology. This was the first step towards nationhood which elided the notions of 'Hindu'/'Indian' and 'history'. Accompanying this process was the shift in patronage, with individuals increasingly being substituted by institutions. The growth of art societies and exhibitions enabled a wider section of the public to witness, and hence participate, in the process of nation-building. The growth of the self-conscious salon artist was widely taken as a 'triumphant vindication of the Raj education policy'. With the exception of Raja Ravi Varma, most of the important artists of the latter half of the nineteenth century, like M.V. Shurandhar, M.F. Pithawalla, Pestonji Bomanji or J.P. Gangooly, were products of art schools whose professional success and social standing could not be separated from the context within which their art acquired meaning and value.

Mitter's discussion of the artistic trends in the first phase of 'optimistic westernization' thus makes a strong case for the transformative aspect of colonial art policy. This is in spite of his attempt to locate 'cultural transformations' and 'individual choices' made by Indian artists within this period. However, understanding the work of a figure like Raja Ravi Varma becomes a problem within this framework as he was an autodidact with no formal exposure to 'Western' artistic techniques or Victorian aesthetic ideas in his formative years. Nevertheless, he became the foremost exponent of Academic naturalism in the late nineteenth century, and gained recognition as the first 'modern' Indian artist.

I wish to suggest that the methodological limits imposed by Mitter's question regarding 'western influences and individual choices' represents nineteenth-century Indian art as merely a consequence of colonial art policy. He leaves no space for other readings of changing trajectories of form or aesthetics. The increasing importance of European naturalism notwithstanding, there are important dissonances between the *oeuvre* of different artists, and changes in style and/or content within the life-span of any one of them. A more minute examination of the paintings themselves might have highlighted the representational dilemmas and 'choices' confronting the artists.

This is definitely more explicit in what is one of the richest chapters of this book, 'Power of the Printed Image', which deals with the growth of pictorial journalism, children's literature, cartoons and caricatures. This sense of creative art provided a powerful medium for social and political satire. Mitter examines a growing body of illustrated journals and children's literature that combined cartoons, caricature and satirical verse to provide a critique of Indian society. However, the many Indian variants of the *Punch* (for instance, the Hindi/Parsi/or Urdu *Punch*) became vehicles for satirizing colonial rule. Often, these coalesced in the caricature of the 'Westernized Bengali woman' - smoking cigars and reading novels - epitomizing at once the moral turpitude of 'Western values' and the plight of a colonized and emasculated Indian society that 'empowered' women in such destructive ways. One wishes that Mitter had gone beyond his wryly descriptive commentary of these artistic trends and engaged with some of the more challenging historiography of colonial Bengal (for instance, the work of Tanika Sarkar) that examines the complex dynamics of gender and colonialism. Also, it would have been interesting had he moved beyond the narrow confines of Bengali literature to explore similar traditions elsewhere in India too.

The art of the second phase of 'cultural nationalism' was linked to the growth of the swadeshi movement in Bengal. Mitter examines the changing responses to academic nationalism in the work of the Bengali thinkers - Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, and his nephew, Balendranath Tagore. Their aesthetics represents a mediation of naturalism by a search for cultural authenticity. This quest for authenticity, so intimately linked to a sense of its loss, found its apotheosis in the work of swadeshi artists like Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose and Surendranath Ganguly, amongst others. In their attempt to reclaim an authentic Indian past, they rejected the technologies of academic naturalism, and looked towards a wider 'oriental' tradition. This process of 'orientalizing' involved tapping such diverse artistic traditions as Mughal miniatures and Japanese art. Unfortunately, Partha Mitter's main concern with the creation of a 'national identity' freezes the possibility of a more complex discussion of art and aesthetics in this period. The latter is almost wholly confined to an exegesis of the swadeshi ideologues - E. B. Havell, Ananda Coomaraswamy and Sister Nivedita - who sounded the intellectual death-knell to the older, 'Western' traditions in Indian art. Many of the contours of the 'Western' vs 'oriental' debate are already familiar to us through the work of Tapati Guha Thakurta. Besides, 'Western' art by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had witnessed many radical movements that challenged, and displaced, academic naturalism. The question, then, for us is why the swadeshi artists did not engage with these trends, and whether their 'orientalizing' tendencies were equally critical of the Impressionists or Pre-Raphaelites, say, as they had been of Academic naturalism?

In the 1920s, Abanindranath Tagore and the Bengal School moved away from the political didacticism of swadeshi art. Partha Mitter mentions suggestively in his Epilogue that Abanindranath's paintings gained 'greater richness' as he veered away from propagandist art. One wishes that Mitter had led one through a textured reading of this period and this phenomenon. The movement away from revivalism marked the celebration of 'modern' art and of the avant-garde, as well as the search for a 'universal language of art'. 'Art' and 'nationalism' were soon to part ways as India itself shook off the hegemonic control of colonial rule.

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One picks up this volume with high expectations since it is meant to honour one of our most interesting social scientists as well as because its contributors are among the most skillful practitioners of the social sciences. However, as one puts down the volume after a careful reading, one is left with a sense of being let down pretty badly. For one thing, most of the contributions shy away from a concentrated engagement with the themes of democracy, theoretically or practically. The overall impression is that they abandon democracy in the air, leaving behind a discourse that is intellectually flabby and morally vacuous.

The editorial Introduction is a somewhat hurried affair, showing neither a real grip on its thematic nor a meaningful intellectual and political portrait of Rajni Kothari's fascinating personality. The editors, as close associates of Kothari, illuminated Kothari's central role in integrating Indian political science into an American-sponsored, global and neo-colonial Political Science, by weaning it away from its ritualistic attachment to British colonial umbilical cords. I recall how in the late 1960s, some of us, Indian political scientists, were brought together by Kothari's C.S.D.S. in Bangalore and subjected to a crash programme in political development and modernization via behaviourism, with the help of a battery of American apostles of the new wisdom. I am not saying this pejoratively, but only to set the historical record straight. Of course, this had certainly an intellectually liberating effect, but retrospectively one feels that one could have been more reflective and critical about the entire enterprise by confronting this neo-colonial epistemology with its rivals - the Marxist discourse and, more daringly and creatively, a non-Western discourse. The editors miss this history consciously or subconsciously, and hence they cannot offer a satisfactory explanation for the apparent swing in Kothari's concerns away from an anti-Marxist liberalism towards a romantic and utopian grass-rootism. I guess that this swing conceals a continuity between his liberalism and his anti-liberal populism. The second stance should be seen equally as part of the same process of globalization. It is significant that the swing coincides

Democratic Discourse in Danger

K. Raghavendra Rao*

THE MULTIVERSE OF DEMOCRACY

Edited by D.L. Sheth and Ashis Nandy

New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996, 278 pp., Rs. 345.

with the internal self-questioning and crisis within the Western liberal discourse. Maybe there is some poetic justice in the fact that most of the contributors who engage in a critique of liberalism in the volume fail to come up with alternative models of democracy. Their arguments seem to come perilously close to ditching the historical project of democracy altogether, in spite of all the sophistication and sophistry

to a large-scale ideal. Richard Falk's interesting reading of the Gulf War as an indicator, not of the triumph of technological sophistication but of the futility of war and violence, is suddenly transformed into a tribute to Kothari's wisdom, claimed to be embodied in his unoriginal critique of Western technocratic hegemony and in his espousal of a democracy based on an acceptance of traditional identities. In a well-argued but brief

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Turning now briefly to individual contributions, one finds mostly negation and frustration rather than positive construction and reconstruction. The first section is anti-statist, often on legitimate grounds, but is not sufficiently alive to the evils of violence, ecological destruction, and socio-cultural exploitation located in and generated from spaces outside the state. Bhiku Parekh's article is an excellent overview of the relevant literature and themes, but it seems to underestimate the socio-economic constitution of the state, offering it almost absolute autonomy in order to present it as an absolute evil. Ali Marzui is over-critical of third-world democracies, but when it comes to suggesting alternatives or remedies, he is simply too general and vague. Johan Goaltung's suggestion that genuine democracy can arise only on the basis of a small-scale ideal remains utopian in the sense that he fails to see, as Gandhiji saw, that democracy as a political superstructure cannot flourish on the basis of an economy and a society wedded

presentation, Wallerstein cuts the United States to size by drawing attention to its economic decline and the consequent decline of its status as a global military power, as demonstrated in the Gulf war victory.

In a lengthy paper, R.B.J. Walker finds in democratic discourse a fundamental dichotomization between accounts of democracy 'that affirm and challenge the resolutions of states sovereignty', and formulates them in terms of temporality and spatiality, of a history of modernity and of the geography of the centre-periphery paradigm. Maria Mies argues in her insightful critique of modernity as a creature generated by and in the service of a male, Western, industrial middle class, echoing Gandhiji, that 'if we do not want to give up the values of freedom and equality for all, then we can achieve this goal only at a much lower standard of living than that of the Western middle class.' Fred Dallmayr examines the texts of Voegelin and Lefort, to offer his own critique of post-modernity. He finds the alternatives of liberal democracy

and populist or popular democracy equally uninviting. Hence his solution is to let these options interact with each other dialectically so that democracy can become 'an open-ended regime which remains a constant mask.' This means that there should be a visible spectacle of multiplicity based on an invisible and hidden foundation of unity.

One wonders why Pantham should find it necessary to integrate his perceptive Gandhian discourse into the Western discourse of post-modernity and post-relativism. I see no special advantage in this, and would even argue that Pantham's presentation of the Gandhian position would have gained from avoiding the imperial connection. T.N. Madan's autobiographical account of the encounter between the Western anthropological tradition and third-world efforts to relate to it is a very helpful pointer to the future course that the discipline of anthropology should take both as a global enterprise and as an Indian sub-enterprise, but one wonders all the same how it can be related to the central thematic of the volume, which is democracy.

I know that it is invidious to openly identify contributions which could have been left out in the interest of the volume as a whole. Morris-Jones' epistolary exercise in Nehru's name is full of commonplace wisdom, and it is difficult to see how it can fit into the editor's scholarly agenda and ambitions. Perhaps the long-standing personal association between Morris-Jones and Kothari makes its inclusion logical. James Manor's piece is too transparent and naive as an understanding of Indian politics, and it states the obvious without offering a deeper theoretical or empirical explanation of the obvious. His use of the terms, degeneration and regeneration, does not help because they mix the levels and contexts of political activity indiscriminately. Lastly, Edward Goldsmith's brave attempt to sort out the 'is-ought' problematic by making it a non-issue or a pseudo-issue does not wash, and it would take a far tougher philosophical and historical effort even to see what is really at issue. All in all, this is disappointing fare, in spite of occasional insights and illuminations.

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Metaphorically speaking, metaphor is literally the dream work of language. For many, it is a nightmare. Philosophers dig up language to unearth fecund metaphors, either to eliminate or to celebrate them. However, like booby-traps, though deliberately deployed in the sensitive areas of language, metaphors strike in the most unexpected moments, waking us from dreams, rendering us mere witnesses who arrived hopelessly late on the scene. Arundhati Mukherji's *Some Quibbles about Metaphor* is a serious and scholarly commentary on philosophy's nocturnal games with metaphor.

Perhaps, Mukherji knows that quibbling is the only sane strategy when we play with metaphor. This is not an evasion but a necessary *detour* to pose metaphor as a philosophical question. She is refreshingly free from the temptation to play the role of a field linguist who offers us yet another theory of metaphor. Instead, with an astute eye, she scans the analytical, continental and Indian perspectives, and questions metaphor about its relationship with philosophical discourse as such. This genuinely philosophical impulse saves her from the habits of piecemeal research prevalent in contemporary philosophy of language.

Mukherji divides the available theories of metaphor into two conflicting paradigms. The 'literal-truth' paradigm associated with Austin and Searle gives primacy to literal meaning, and grants metaphor only the status of secondary or parasitic meaning. Pitched against this is the 'all-metaphor-no-truth' paradigm of Nietzsche and Gadamer which, according to Mukherji, gives primacy to metaphor and condemns truth - as that clichéd quotation from Nietzsche says - to be a mobile army of metaphors. For the literal-truth paradigm, metaphor is deviant meaning, whereas according to the latter the literal is dead metaphor. Between these two unacceptable options Mukherji finds an unsatisfactory middle path in Davidson's theory of metaphor. Though Davidson too subscribes to the literal-truth paradigm, he does not treat metaphor as anything secondary. According to him, metaphor has no additional cognitive content and the meaning of a metaphor is nothing other than its literal meaning. The 'more' of metaphor is to be sought not at the level of meaning but at the level of performance. Mukherji argues that Davidson is not justified in holding at once that the meaning of a sentence is given by its truth-conditions and that a metaphorical sentence has no meaning apart from its literal one.

Philosophy's Own Metaphors

Sanil. V.*

SOME QUIBBLES ABOUT METAPHOR

by Arundhati Mukherji

New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1995, xiv + 85 pp., Rs. 70

Distancing herself from all these three perspectives, Mukherji wishes to see metaphor as the site of innovation in the open texture of language. The primacy of the literal is applicable only within the language game of natural science. However, language games are essentially plural, and some of them grant the possibility of 'different kinds of truth claims'. Also, all meaningful sentences do not have essentially the same structure and purpose independent of the language games within which they appear. Hence, according to Mukherji, metaphors could be true and meaningful, relative to different language games.

Instead of finding solace in a 'game theory of metaphor' Mukherji goes on to investigate the relation between metaphor and the specific language game of philosophy. She undertakes the ambitious task of interrogating a wide range of philosophers - Aristotle, Kant, Husserl, Frege, Wittgenstein and Derrida - to unearth the founding metaphors of their philosophical discourse. According to her, all the concepts of traditional philosophy - *eidos*, form, essence, etc. - can be traced to a founding metaphor: the metaphor of presence. To overcome the obsolescence of this tradition, she proposes that philosophical thought be guided by another metaphor which she adopts from Derrida - the metaphor of *différance* - as 'a new kind of method and learning' which would enable us to appreciate elements of creativity in language. Thought, guided by this new metaphor, would overcome the traditional division between poetry and philosophy.

This book also contains appendices on Indian theories of metaphor, on Wittgenstein's language games and on the possibility of a generative grammar for metaphor. Like a lively metaphor, Mukherji moves across various terrains and traditions but often without leaving any trace. Given the complexity of the issues at hand, the size of the book is unjustifiably small. She could have brought the Indian and the Chomskian view on metaphor to the main body of the text, establishing their linkages with other traditions and theories.

Of course, without a certain hermeneutic vigilance, transgression of traditional boundaries could easily fall into empty eclecticism. Hence thinking across established philosophical territories is a risky affair. But metaphor by its very nature demands an interdisciplinary inquiry. While it is the responsibility of the contemporary philosopher to demolish the obsolete barriers between various traditions of philosophy, we shall not forget that essential thinkers are not already cast in the role of participants in ongoing debates. Nietzsche, Searle, Gadamer and Davidson are not media-friendly philosophical personalities readily available for taking on each other on topics of contemporary interest, say metaphor. A multidisciplinary approach should first of all establish, with utmost rigour and responsibility, a clearly demarcated plane of thought where various thinkers can meet and act on each others' thought. Neither the manifest content of thought nor the speculative intention of thinkers might be sufficient to establish this meeting place. Hence what we need is not a comparative philosophy but a constructive one which can judge every thought with respect to its claim to contemporaneity and establish immanent connections between thoughts by thinking them again.

The conventional classification of certain traditions as 'literal-truth paradigm' and others as 'all-metaphor-no-truth' paradigm betrays the lethargy of comparative thinking. Mukherji is uncharitable to Nietzsche and Gadamer when she puts both of them within the 'all-metaphor-no-truth' paradigm. Perhaps no modern philosopher was so much alert to the perils of truth as Nietzsche was. For him, truth was not a mere illusion but a necessary illusion, and it is this necessity that occupied his thought all along. Gadamer has always insisted on the primacy of truth as *aletheia* or unconcealment. For him language is world-disclosive. The bearer of truth is not the proposition but the disclosive event of discourse. One does not say the truth but truth happens in the saying. Perhaps a more fruitful meeting between Nietzsche and Gadamer could have taken place in

the presence of Heidegger whom Mukherji totally ignores. Gadamer's reference to the metaphorical foundation of language should not be confused with the celebration of the rhetorical trope of metaphor. The latter is only the rhetorical form of the universal - both linguistic and logical - generative principle of language. Both Nietzsche and Gadamer try to negotiate the distance separating philosophy and poetry, not by celebrating metaphor but by debunking it.

While examining philosophemes, Mukherji gives up the distinction between the concept and the metaphor a bit too fast. Unfortunately, as it has become commonplace now, the name of Derrida is associated with this hasty celebration of the primacy of metaphor over the concept. In fact, Derrida spends much of his effort to show that a general metaphorology which can interrogate all concepts with respect to their metaphorical credentials - either to eliminate or to celebrate metaphor - is impossible. If every concept has a metaphorical origin, the concept metaphor too will have an originary metaphor - the metaphor of metaphor - and this metaphor will escape the general metaphorology which presupposes the concept 'metaphor'. Derrida questions philosophical discourse against the background of this impossibility. Instead of reducing concepts to metaphors, he criticizes traditional philosophy for pre-supposing a continuity between them. Mukherji's decision to characterize *différance* as a metaphor misses the spirit and rigour of Derrida's critique. A careful reading of some of Derrida's essays which are explicitly on metaphor - e.g. 'White Mythology', 'The Retreat of Metaphor', and the essay on Rousseau in *Of Grammatology* - would have saved Mukherji from the popular misrepresentations of his works.

The roots of some of the inadequacies of interpretation I have pointed out above go deeper than mere oversight on the part of the author. By her philosophical temperament, Mukherji belongs to a new generation which dares to experiment with new possibilities of thinking and does not hesitate to transgress the boundaries between the analytical, continental and Indian traditions of philosophy. However, philosophers of this generation have not yet discovered a rigorous idiom adequate to their ambitious tasks. *Some Quibbles about Metaphor*, merely indicates this new experience of thinking without ever directly expressing or stating it.

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Studying literary movements in India presents a number of problems for the reflective literary historian. The adequacy of labels borrowed from other literary traditions, their definition and deployment in relation to the material studied, divergences between the use of the same category in different Indian languages - all these pose challenges that need to be addressed. E.V. Ramakrishnan is indeed aware of them. *Making It New* acknowledges several of them, and grapples with some. Even though the way the text addresses some of these issues leaves the reader frustrated or in disagreement, *Making It New* remains a rewarding experience for any student interested in the contemporary literary scene in Indian languages.

Using a set of Marxist tools for his analysis, Ramakrishnan attempts to historicize modernist poetry in three Indian languages - Malayalam, Marathi and Hindi. Central to Ramakrishnan's understanding of modernism is the distinction between high modernism and the avant-garde, as reformulated by Peter Burger in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. While high modernism is seen as an aestheticizing project which sets out the aesthetic realm as autonomous from the rest of societal practice, the avant-garde is seen as questioning the very autonomy of the aesthetic and thus the very status of art as institution. Ramakrishnan's mapping of this distinction onto the scenario of modernisms in Indian languages presents a number of possibilities and problems.

Ramakrishnan's central argument is presented in the first and second sections of the book. In the first chapter which seeks to present a materialist view of modernism in Indian poetry, Ramakrishnan presents a macro-narrative which has two major moments. The first is the presentation of literary pressures on the modernist subject as belonging to three categories, namely the local or nativist, pan-Indian, and the alien. In practical terms, this is perhaps too easily

Even though the way the text addresses some of these issues leaves the reader frustrated or in disagreement, Making It New remains a rewarding experience for any student interested in the contemporary literary scene in Indian languages.

Mapping Modernisms

Udaya Kumar*

MAKING IT NEW:

MODERNISM IN MALAYALAM, MARATHI AND HINDI POETRY

by E.V. Ramakrishnan

Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1995, viii + 260 pp., Rs 350

equated with the regional Indian language, the Sanskrit tradition and the impact of English. The ideological burden of this distinction, as it is deployed in analysis, arguably constrains Ramakrishnan in understanding these three elements as involved in a dynamic relation, a relation of exchange and negotiation. Such a dynamic would of course involve relations of power, but not in any simple or unequivocal way. The second moment in Ramakrishnan's macro-narrative is the schematic chronology that he presents for Indian literatures as moving from nationalist/romanticist poetry to progressive realist poetry to modernism and the avant-garde. Once again, such schematism does not allow much room for the recognition of specific and differential temporalities that operate in literary history. For example, Ramakrishnan does not see the survival and unreflected deployment of several elements from romanticism in progressive, realist writing. For him, the inadequacy of progressive writing arises primarily from a lack of understanding of the need to devise new literary forms to suit the problematic nature of the relations between writer and audience in the age of print capitalism. This analysis is open to many of the objections that such a separation of formal issues and content-related issues often invite.

In the second chapter, the author examines the use of myth in high modernist poetry in Indian languages. Ramakrishnan here makes a distinction between the high modernist use of myth and later deployment of mythopoeic strategies by the avant-garde. Ramakrishnan equates the use of myth by high modernists with a pan-Indian, nationalist impulse. His scenario for the shift from high modernism to the avant-garde is rather schematic too: he sees in it a shift from the aesthetic to the ethical, from the individual to community, from the national to the nativist, and from the use of myth to a focus on history. These binaries carry with them a certain set of judgements which have not been adequately theorized or historicized in *Making It New*. The reader may wonder why the

new mythopoeisis in Naxalite poetry, or the use of archetypes in, say, Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan's poems, is not interrogated in relation to its assumptions. This is partly because in making a schematic distinction between the isolated individual self in high modernist poetry and an inclusive, communitarian self in avant-garde poetry, Ramakrishnan partly erases the question of the transformations of the subject in modernist poetry. Questions of politics and relations between the individual and the community would need to be located in terms of the subject's ethic of responsibility and the modalities of his/her self-interrogation. Ramakrishnan's analysis of the avant-garde, in spite of the insights it contains on individual poets and poems, fails to follow the question of the subject beyond the avant-garde's explicit self-understanding.

Section Two contains more detailed studies of the avant-garde, with chapters on the poetry of Muktibodh, modern Marathi Dalit writing, and the search for a Dravidian poetics in Malayalam poetry. Ramakrishnan's analysis of Muktibodh emphasizes the emergence of an inclusive 'I' in his poems and the genealogy of this process that goes back to Bhakti poetry and folk literature. He regards Dalit writing as dialogic in the Bakhtinian sense, although the analysis leaves it rather unclear whether a literature that contextualizes itself in terms of conflict would necessarily involve dialogicity. The study of attempts at a Dravidian poetics in Malayalam poetry singles out two poets for special attention as they mark, for Ramakrishnan, the external limits of a response to nativism: Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan's poetry of immersion in nativist traditions and K.G. Sankara Pillai's ironic stance which indicates the impossibility of being nativist in a society from which native elements are fast disappearing. Ramakrishnan argues that the poetry of M. Govindan, Ayyappa Panikker, Sachidanandan and Attoor Ravivarma suffer from the poets' conscious efforts at being nativist. Ramakrishnan seems uneasy with this feeling of self-consciousness in poetry. His complaint against

Sankara Pillai is also that his poetry suffers from an oppressive sense of self-consciousness. How does one go about theorizing this moment of self-consciousness or in understanding its aesthetic effects? *Making It New* does not provide an answer to this, and its silence may be misread as the valorization of a poetics of spontaneity.

In Section Three, Ramakrishnan presents detailed studies of Kedarnath Singh, Dilip Chitre and Sachidanandan. In Singh's poetry, Ramakrishnan sees an evolution from the preoccupation of the early poems with a 'literary self that is not rooted in experience but in vague, universal angst' to the 'dialectical vision born of the perception of the contradictory nature of reality' that mark his later work. The chapter on Chitre places him in the context of contemporary Marathi poetry, especially the work of Kolatkar, and traces his movement from being an imagist and a surrealist to become 'a narrative poet who chronicles the inner life of his community through the medium of autobiographical utterances'. Ramakrishnan studies Sachidanandan too from an evolutionary scenario: from the early poems marked by an insular romantic self that seeks self-transformation to the clearly avant-garde, political poems of 1970s to the later work which continues to articulate the political concerns with an added interest in the cultural identity of Kerala.

The interviews contained in the appendix provide interesting insights into the work and life of these poets. Ramakrishnan's readings of individual poems and his comments on the use of certain images in modern Indian poetry are more valuable than the macro-argument that he presents. The attempt at historicizing modernism in *Making It New* suffers from limitations that arise from conceptualizing the political as a national allegorical narrative. This runs counter to Ramakrishnan's insistence that literary history needs to be located at the local rather than at the national level. The dilemmas delineated in high-modernist poetry are often understood as representations of the crisis of the post-colonial. This simplification is happily transgressed by the details of Ramakrishnan's analyses of poems and poets, which often sketch a more complex scenario. This is what makes *Making It New* a remarkable interrogation of the modernist moment in the poetry of three Indian languages.

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Among the various 'posts' that dominate the current academic discourse, the 'post-colonial' is probably the most contentious, for there are widespread disagreements about its spatial and literary contours. In the first major and influential work on the subject, edited by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, post-colonial writings include writings in English of all those countries which went through a phase of colonialism. But Jussawalla and Dasenbrock, in their book of interviews with the writers of the post-colonial world, argue that writings from Australia, Canada, and New Zealand have to be excluded from it, because these countries form an outward wave of European settlement, and their literature and culture are 'essentially European in form and spirit.' These disagreements notwithstanding, it is largely true that the novel is the most important site of the post-colonial and the genre most amenable to the explication of its theoretical concerns and literary practices.

Without directly touching upon the definitional problems concerning the term 'post-colonial', including its hyphenated and non-hyphenated incarnations, which he uses almost interchangeably, and without specifying the overall ambit of the post-colonial novel, Juneja contends that that its main shape is that of the novel of colonial consciousness. He draws our attention 'to the polyvalence, polyphony and heterogeneity of the post-colonial voice'. Juneja discusses the political, economic, and psychological strategies which colonizers used for infusing in their colonial subjects a sense of racial and cultural inferiority in order to show how the novel of colonial consciousness embodies significant aspects of this process and its complex consequences. Because of these, like the novel in the true Bakhtinian mould, the post-colonial novel embodies a plurality of voices and consciousnesses, 'competing languages and discourses,' and is characterized by 'dialogic dynamism.' In contrast to novels which concentrate on individuals, these novels focus on communities, make extensive use of folk and oral traditions, and bend the English language to suit their cultural character. They also deal with the complex and vexing issue of the disfigurement of their past by the

Voices of the Post-Colonial Subject

T.N. Dhar*

POST COLONIAL NOVEL:
NARRATIVES OF COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

by Om P. Juneja

New Delhi: Creative Books, 1995, ix + 182 pp., Rs.300.

colonial masters and its retrieval by the novelists.

With the help of a fairly large corpus of Indian, African, West Indian, and Afro-American novels, Juneja demonstrates that though there are recognizable commonalities between novels from different countries, there are noticeable differences too. Juneja devotes a chapter each to the structural principles and fictional strategies used by the post-colonial novelists, showing how their novels are organized around collective groups and how they make extensive use of situational plots. He also discusses the use of the English language by Desani, Raja Rao, Salman Rushdie,

into the country's pre-colonial culture, mainly because the British reminded the Indians that their culture had destroyed their manliness. This produced oddities like Desani's Hatterr, who spurned everything native and lauded everything Western, and led others, like the characters in Narayan and Rao, to seek sustenance in their roots. In the West Indies, people from different cultural backgrounds defined themselves in relation to the British, the consequences of which can be seen in Naipaul. The subjugation of the Afro-Americans by the Whites is reflected in all its complexity in their psychological and sociological alienation, in the

He discusses a large variety of texts from several perspectives, makes use of the insights of virtually all the known theoreticians in the field to evolve his own framework, and pays due attention to critical materials on the novelists who figure in his discussion. Interestingly, these account for some of its major deficiencies too. By incorporating too many diverse concepts and formulations into his framework, Juneja produces a kind of spongy eclecticism which sometimes cracks under its own weight, for it overlooks their contradictions and their contestatory spirit.

Chinua Achebe, Tutouola, and Wole Soyinka. However, Juneja's main focus is on the hybridity of the post-colonial novel and on its involvement with history.

The post-colonial novel is characterized by hybridity because, Juneja suggests, colonial subjects learnt to look at themselves through the eyes of their colonizers. Since Africans were made to believe that they were barbarians with a dark past, their novelists undertook to problematize Western modes of thinking and education (in Aluko) and revive people's interest in their collective past and distinctive identity (in Achebe and Ngugi). In India, Western culture got absorbed

novels of Ellison and Wright.

Taking due cognizance of current thinking on the overlap of history and fiction, Juneja states that post-colonial writers use the resources of fiction to contend the master narratives produced by the colonials, to 'demystify and dismantle' them and to 'situate the historical in the political, social, cultural and economic life of a community.' He discusses Achebe's well-known pronouncements on this new aspiration of the novel and his views on the pre- and post-colonial past of his country, as well as Ngugi's attempt at mixing mythical, realistic and historical modes to present his version of his country's past. The

same impulse of presenting the truth about their community defines the essential spirit of the novels of Ellison, Baldwin, and Walker. Juneja thinks that Indian novelists counter the master narratives of colonial historians by using myth, and that Shashi Tharoor virtually rewrites the old Indian tradition of writing history.

Juneja's work has several interesting features. He discusses a large variety of texts from several perspectives, makes use of the insights of virtually all the known theoreticians in the field to evolve his own framework, and pays due attention to critical materials on the novelists who figure in his discussion. Interestingly, these account for some of its major deficiencies too. By incorporating too many diverse concepts and formulations into his framework, Juneja produces a kind of spongy eclecticism which sometimes cracks under its own weight, for it overlooks their contradictions and their contestatory spirit. For example, in his discussion on the novelist's urge to produce his versions of the past, Juneja fails to see the inherent weaknesses of his position when he uncritically absorbs Tiffin's formulation that novelists like Raja Rao do so by transmuting history into myth. He does not notice that in her attempt to produce a masterful generalization, Tiffin homogenizes widely divergent experiences and cultural practices, and that this runs counter to the spirit of his own detailed analysis of Achebe's novels. Raja Rao's use of myth and Shashi Tharoor's attempt at writing a history of India through the allegorical mode with an overlay of mythic charge are too complex to be reduced to a single frame. Juneja's tendency to bring in too many critics in his discussion and to weave words, phrases, and even full sentences from them into his writing adversely affects the style and readability of his own text. In spite of these flaws, some of which are partly the result of unresolved debates in post-colonial theory, Juneja's work deserves attention. It has a viable framework, is adequately focused, and provides useful discussion on a large number of known and lesser known novels.

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Decolonizing Minds

Shyam Asnani*

POLITICS AS FICTION: THE NOVELS OF NGUGI WA THING'O

by Harish Narang

New Delhi: Creative Books, 1995, Rs. 250.

Harish Narang's new book testifies to the magical sweep of Ngugi's voice and to the cogency of what it has been saying to the colonized minds of the Third World in general and of Africa in particular. In a very useful Preface, Narang outlines the reasons why this vibrant body of African literature has been so ruthlessly neglected in Indian academics, despite the striking similarities between the socio-cultural experience portrayed in it and our own colonial past. He attributes this to the anglophile's belief that no worthwhile writing in English is possible for Indians, the refusal of senior academics to acknowledge the complicity between the colonial project and English literary studies in India, and to the lack of co-ordination between curricula and national goals. In choosing a Kenyan author for analysis, Narang aims to highlight the common core of experience underlying the writings of Kenyans and Indians, and to underline the need for paying more attention to such writings and for including them as a part of our literature curricula (xii).

In *Politics as Fiction*, Narang has executed his plan with meticulous perspicacity. The reader is guided through a series of close textual explications with due attention to Ngugi's biography, the place of Kenyan political issues in his works, his position in the overall literary development of East Africa, his troubles with political authority over some parts of *Petals of Blood* (1977), the ban on staging the play *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (*I Will Marry When I Want*, 1982), his unlawful detention by the police, the forfeiture of his position as Professor of Literature at Nairobi University, his subsequent migration to England as a full-time writer, and his continued participation in the struggle for the restoration of democracy in Kenya.

The first chapter of Narang's book seeks to define the relationship between literature and politics within the broader framework of the relationship between literature and society. Chapter Two traces the inception and development of the novel as a genre in Africa through references to representative texts. These two chapters and the Introduction comprise Part One of the book, while the analyses of Ngugi's novels and the Conclusion form Part Two.

Ngugi's early novels, *The River Between* (1965) and *Weep Not Child* (1964), address the introduction of Western education system in Kenya and its crippling, corrupting and devastating impact on the life of the people, especially the young. In the delineation of Howland's character, Ngugi seems to evince some kind of a vague sympathy for white settlers, but he indicts severely, in his treatment of a collaborator like Jacobo, a section of Africans for the perpetration of colonialism in Kenya. *A Grain of Wheat* (1969) and *Petals of Blood* (1977) have the most violent phase of the freedom struggle - The Mau Mau Struggle - as their *leitmotif*. Mixing fact and fiction, Kenyatta and Thuku with Khika and Karanja, Ngugi, we are told, creates in these texts a complex picture of the freedom struggle, which is truer than history and more imaginative than ordinary fiction.

Narang discusses *Petals of Blood* in detail, as it is here that Ngugi has finally succeeded in writing a political novel - a novel in which political idea and ideology are not merely aspects of 'local colour' but function as determinants of form and content. Ngugi's apprehensions about a new class of exploiters in the form of local politicians working in league with local businessmen hinted at in *A Grain of Wheat* receives elaborate depiction in the alliance of Mzigo, Khui, Kimeria and Nderi Wa Riera backed by the forces of neo-colonialism. Narang suggests that the decay of Kenyan society is 'represented in the novel by a worm-eaten beanflower, although on the face of it, it appeared to be healthy and thriving - represented by the red petals of the same beanflower which when viewed from a particular angle appear to be overflowing with life-giving blood' (114). The deft use of 'traditional verbal material' to get across a desired sense of community and its deliberate shift of scene from the Gikuyu heartland make Ngugi appear more national and less regional, and the new, high political voltage that the book is charged with is further strengthened and intensified by Ngugi's blunt statement that 'fiction should be firmly on the side of the oppressed'.

An angry, revolutionary novel, *Devil on the Cross* (1982) articulates

contd. on page 18

Contentious History ...

contd. from page 8

travel literature which was marked by anxiety or self-contradiction in its representation of India, missionary writing displayed a sense of certainty and consistency. 'Hinduism, as the manifest work of Satan', says the author, 'provides Christianity with devils to destroy: an element lacking in eighteenth-century Europe with the decline in witchcraft persecution'.

In Chapter Four, Teltscher draws from a wide range of writing on India to show how the anxieties of colonial rule are sought to be resolved by painting the Indians as being born for submission by foreign rulers. The idea of oriental despotism is revived to justify British intervention and to portray colonial rule as a blessing for the Indians. Teltscher highlights the contradictions inherent in the British perception of mutual and related advantages of colonial rule, and locates the sites of Indian defiance and resistance. The author discusses the anonymous novel *Hartly House, Calcutta* (1789) which focuses on the relationship between an English girl and an Indian Brahman, to show that not all the texts exude the same sense of cultural confidence and that some effectively challenge the very concept of British moral and intellectual supremacy.

Chapter Five of the book deals with the challenges posed to the complimentary representations of British rule in India by the debate in England over the Company's policy and the impeachment of Warren Hastings. Teltscher shows through her analysis of the writings of the period that Edmund Burke's rhetoric during the impeachment of Hastings was deeply influenced by the contemporary discourse on India and that anti-Company writing appropriated and inverted many of the pro-Company representations of India, a common stock of Indian images being used by both sides in the debate. Burke declared that the 'open, honest, candid and ingenuous' character of the British was under threat from Asia's negative influence, and that every one who went to India was 'unbaptized' and lost every idea of religion and morality which had been impressed on him in Europe. Teltscher argues that Burke is describing 'not so much the process

of Indianization here, but rather the renunciation of a European identity. The self is not turning into the other, but rather turning against itself.'

William Jones is the focus of the sixth chapter. Teltscher successfully shows how Jones appropriated the authority of the pundits and tried to re-locate Indian culture within the English poetic tradition. Teltscher maintains that, for Jones, Hindu culture had to be mediated or Europeanized before being transmitted to the West, and that Jones implied European cultural primacy in his very advocacy of Hindu culture. Though some could have reservations on this point, few can disagree with Teltscher when she says that 'Jones' work furthers the aims of the administration which he served, and is saturated with European tropes; ... that it is fruitful to relate Jones' literary pursuits to the context of colonial rule; that whatever his intentions, however manifold his talents, in mastering Indian traditions, Jones cleared the way for a tradition of mastery'.

The book concludes with the challenge to British authority by Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan and with the emergence of the East India Company in its colonial role with a new sense of confidence. British anxieties and conflicts are pushed 'to the margins of later texts of imperialism - until 1857 at least'. This is a rather abrupt ending to an otherwise illuminating book since, by the closing decades of the eighteenth century, the content of British colonialism was already undergoing major changes and by the first decades of the nineteenth-century India would be turned into a veritable battleground of different philosophies ranging from Utilitarianism to Evangelism. These conflicts and contradictions were reflected in both fictional and non-fictional writing on India beginning from the 1820s.

Kate Teltscher deserves thanks for making a valuable addition to studies on British writing on India. Her effort to open up a new and refreshing dimension in European and British writing on India of a period which has not received much attention deserves special mention. The author's lucid style and unostentatious manner of presenting her arguments add to the overall attractiveness of the book.

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Philosophy and Fiction

Nirbhai Singh*

As a matter of course, I do not take much interest in fictional writings. But earlier in the year, I laid my hands on *Days and Nights* - a novel by Sujata Miri, a distinguished philosopher. This, as the blurb says, is her first fictional writing to be published. I was drawn to it initially by the curious phenomenon of the combination of a philosopher and a novelist in its author; but when I read it and was charmed into re-reading it, I was struck by the philosophical depth it achieves in its deceptively simple narrative. Bisham Sahni, the distinguished playwright and novelist, has written the Foreword to *Days and Nights* - and, I think, that itself is indicative of its success as fiction.

The novel is set in the cultural milieu of pre-partition Punjab and post-partition Delhi. The story spans three generations in the life of a middle-class Punjabi family. The author, who is herself a Punjabi, treats, with marvellous sensitivity, the apparent rigidities of cultural mores as well as the inevitable transformation of values within the form of life of a community known for its great vitality, and yet, paradoxically weighed down by an urge for changelessness.

There are glimpses of existentialist thought, perhaps even of Wittgenstein's ideas jostling with traditional Indian wisdom about human life and its predicaments - but all this in wonderful understatement, woven delicately into the narrative and the conversations among characters - without even

Nevertheless, for me, it is primarily a philosophical work in the form of fiction. It addresses itself, to my mind, to questions such as: What is the telos of human life? What constitutes familial bond? ... Is it at all possible to transcend the ego in this life? Are feminine dignity and beauty things of special, irreplaceable value?

A Life and Its Rhythms

DAYS AND NIGHTS

by Sujata Miri

Delhi: National Publishing House, 1996, viii + 147 pp., Rs. 200.

the word 'philosophy' ever figuring in it. Nevertheless, for me, it is primarily a philosophical work in the form of fiction. It addresses itself, to my mind, to questions such as: What is the *telos* of human life? What constitutes familial bond? How is it possible for cultures to fuse? Is love a true basis for knowledge? Is it at all possible to transcend the ego in this life? Are feminine dignity and beauty things of special, irreplaceable value?

Days and Nights may not have the answers to all these questions, but in the life of its protagonist, Vidya (Manorama after marriage), they find an earthy and, therefore, urgent expression. The temporal frame within which these questions arise is the course of Vidya's life from her birth in a moderately wealthy middle-class Punjabi family in Gujranwala (now in Pakistan), to her marriage to a Western educated man, through her travels across the country to Calcutta and, finally, after the shattering events of the partition days, to Delhi. Manorama's search is the search for (in the words of Nussbaum) 'love's knowledge' - a search that can be sustained only by one endowed with great courage and a profound sense of fortitude. While, at the end of her life, there is an inevitable sense of disappointment at love unrequited, there is also profound gratitude for the wholeness of her life and intimations of release.

Manorama's first hesitant romantic awakenings end quickly in disappointment - her 'prince' marries her own younger cousin; her marriage is a constant uphill struggle; her elder son - for long under her protective shadows - grows up merely to tolerate her in her old age; and her immersion, in later life, in work for the poor of the slums brings her happiness not unmixed with the sadness of life itself. But with all the rough edges, the coherence, the beauty and the unity shine forth.

I found the book greatly moving and extraordinarily deft in its handling of larger issues of life. I now look forward avidly to more such stories from the pen of this

gifted philosopher-writer. [Translated from Punjabi]

Simple, Straight Narrative

Vijaya Ramaswamy*

Sujata Miri's *Days and Nights* is a simple narrative of the life of Vidya, the fourth of several children born to a middle-class Punjabi - Sardari Lal Whig - settled in Gujranwala and his second wife Iqbal dai. Unlike the pastiche-dominated novels of the sixties and the seventies, Sujata Miri's novel displays a respect for the simple, straight-forward narrative - a quality it shares with another recent novel: Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*.

Days and Nights is clearly a woman's book, although the apparent passivity of the heroine may make some feminists unhappy. Sujata does not seek to identify with feminism in the limited sense of writing about angry, oppressed womanhood. Vidya is, however, a typical woman of her times - 1920s to 1970s. Brought up in a Hindu joint family, Vidya's identity is eclipsed by those of her parents, her brothers and sisters. Her being an image of docile womanhood does not however mean that she was a girl devoid of sweet dreams and the occasional rebelliousness. She goes to school and college like her brothers and sisters, cycles to work, and has friends among both sexes. This is a freedom Vidya's father allows her. When she is seventeen she meets a man whom she thinks of as 'the prince'. The situation promises romantic possibilities, but the 'prince' marries her cousin Savitri, and Vidya is married off to Mukund. Vidya's reaction to this clinical marital arrangement made by her father is worth quoting: 'She almost screamed in protest. Controlling herself Vidya stifled the sob that rose in her throat. "Oh, No! No! They have fixed everything. It's too late . . . too late." Composing herself, she left the room without any dramatics, graceful as always. . . ' (26)

Vidya the individual is swept away in the tide formed by her other

roles - Vidya the daughter of Sardari Lal, Vidya the wife of the frustrated, depression-prone bureaucrat Mukund, and Vidya the mother of her children. It is significant that after her marriage Vidya loses her own name and becomes Manorama, a name that rings strange till she learns to get used to it. This does not mean that Vidya, now Manorama, never steps out of her domestic space. She becomes a reputed social worker in Delhi circles, and is almost tipped to be a Congress candidate for parliament elections. Vidya however prefers to stay out of public life, although she never loses her concern for orphans and for the downtrodden of society. It is this involvement which makes her adopt the destitute Munki as a member of the household.

There is a dramatic moment in the novel when Tek, the 'prince', re-enters her life. A novelist like Shoba De would have perceived immense possibilities here, but Sujata Miri's treatment of the situation is subtle and oblique. Memories of their first love turn into a mature friendship. Acceptance brings in its wake a certain deep, warm silence. One wonders what may have gone on inside the mind of the heroine. This novel makes no pretense of exploring interior spaces. Vidya's husband dies, her children outgrow her, and she dies of old age, which is another way of saying that she died of loneliness and boredom. The manner in which Sujata has sketched the life of Vidya brings to one's mind a line from Gilbert's and Guber's *Madwoman in the Attic*, a path-breaking book on women's literary tradition. The authors point out that 'to be selfless and silent is not to be noble, it is to be dead'.

The novel leaves us feeling somewhat thwarted - the riots are mentioned but only in passing. The great trek of the refugees across the Indo-Pakistan borders figures, but only as peripheral images. To accuse the author of not doing what we expect her to do may however be unfair, as her aim has been to set out the narrative of Vidya in miniature, and not on an epic scale, as in *War and Peace* or *A Suitable Boy*.

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The emergence of writing on environment and development in India goes back to the 1970s. Literature on these issues has shown considerable growth since then, with the rise of environmental movements and non-governmental organizations concerned with problems of ecology and development. *The State of India's Environment: The First Citizen's Report*, published in 1982, can be seen as a landmark in this respect. This pioneering work has been followed in the last decade by a number of critical studies challenging development strategies in many of their assumptions and practices, in areas as varied as forests, mining, fishing, wild life, water resources, industrial pollution, medicinal herbs, biodiversity and relations to global trading systems.

Gadgil and Guha are well-known to environmental activists and students of ecological issues, especially through their widely acclaimed work, *This Fissured Land* (1992), which traced an ecological history of India. The present volume, *Ecology and Equity*, marks the culmination of a series of studies carried out by the authors on ecology, society and development in India. The book comprises two parts: while the first part presents a theoretical framework for understanding the use and abuse of natural resources by different layers of the complex Indian society, in the second part the authors formulate an environment-sensitive agenda for development, and propose an ideal framework for environmental reconstruction in India.

The first part of the book, entitled 'The India That Is', documents the take-over of various natural resources by the state during the colonial period and the passing over of state power into the hands of caste-based social groups: the land-owning warrior and priestly castes of the countryside and

The concept of 'conservative, liberal socialism' sketched by the authors presents a dream rather than a programme. Ecology and Equity does not suggest how this dream can be actualized. Can this process be viably undertaken by party politics in India, or by non-governmental organizations, or by environmental movements? Would it be possible to change the environment of politics before changing the politics of environment?

Green Hope

Shekhar Pathak*

ECOLOGY AND EQUITY:
THE USE AND ABUSE OF NATURE IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

by Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha

New Delhi: Penguin India, 1995, xi + 213 pp., Rs. 150.

the priestly and trading castes of the cities. Gadgil and Guha argue that the interests of these social groups lie behind the refashioning of natural resource-use in India in terms of an industry-oriented model of development akin to that of the Soviet Union. This implied a rejection of the Gandhian alternative model, and gave rise to a use of science and technology which to some extent resulted in the destruction of natural resources. The authors argue that this development strategy helped the 'Indian omnivores' at the expense of the vast majority of the population, reducing the latter to the status of 'ecological refugees'.

Gadgil and Guha record state intrusion into forests, rivers, lakes and fishing activity. Bamboo or the chirpine was supplied to industries at a price of Rs 1.50 per tonne in 1960 when the prevailing prices were as high as Rs 3000 per tonne; at the same time, wood for fuel or funeral pyres became dearer. While public sector resin factories received pine resin at subsidized rates, local industry was provided with erratic supplies at higher rates. Grazing lands, highland pastures and agricultural fields were acquired for the development of industry, tourism, airports, and government buildings. Projects for land reforms materialized only in Kerala and West Bengal. In post-1947 India, the authors see only a few islands of prosperity peeping out of a vast sea of poverty.

The 'Indian omnivores', according to the authors, strengthened their position through an alliance with the 'iron triangle' of industry, politicians and bureau-technocrats. Higher education became crucial for outsiders to gain access to this power nexus, and the authors see the importance of job reservations and quotas in contemporary India in this light. The social effects of this development strategy are analysed in detail in the volume - the destruction of indigenous village systems of collective labour, increasing dependence on the state, disruption of practices of community management of natural resources, rapid increase in deforestation, mining, pollution and urbanization,

all these changing the rural as well as the urban landscape. These changes were largely insensitive to the interests of 'ecosystem people' and 'ecological refugees': while 'omnivores' captured natural resources using the state machine, the cost of resource capture was passed on to the rest of the population.

These processes led to the emergence of protest movements in several parts of the country, although mainstream politics remained uninterested in the problems of resource loot. Environmental movements in India were spear-headed by social activists from a wide variety of backgrounds. Gradually, over the past years, distinct ideologies of environmental management emerged in India, and the spectrum ranges from Gandhian activism to ecological Marxism to emphasis on appropriate technology and scientific conservation.

The second part of *Ecology and Equity*, 'The India That Might Be', analyses the limitations of Gandhian, Marxist and capitalist approaches to ecology and development, and proposes a working synthesis of positive elements from all three. The authors call this synthesis 'conservative, liberal socialism', and envisage participatory democracy, accountability, decentralization and equity as its elements, with less of bureaucracy and more of appropriate technology. Based on their conception of India as a 'bio-mass based civilization' with three quarters of the population in rural areas, the authors advocate the combined use of folk wisdom and modern science in the conservation of natural resources.

The concept of 'conservative, liberal socialism' sketched by the authors presents a dream rather than a programme. *Ecology and Equity* does not suggest how this dream can be actualized. Can this process be viably undertaken by party politics in India, or by non-governmental organizations, or by environmental movements? Would it be possible to change the environment of politics before changing the politics of environment? The authors are silent on these

questions. Some other shortcomings of the volume should also be noted. While Gadgil and Guha have provided detailed information on Karnataka, Maharashtra, on the metropolitan cities, and on some parts of the Himalayas, similar coverage is missing when it comes to problems, protests and activists from other regions. One would also have liked the volume to consider in greater detail the cultural aspects of environmental issues as well as the challenges posed for the environment by the impact of market economy, consumerism, increasing world trade and the operation of multinationals. Given the magnitude and diversity of the area the book covers, these omissions are understandable, and given the urgency of the issues it addresses, *Ecology and Equity* must be seen as a highly commendable effort.

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Ngugi's rage not only at his physical incarceration but also at the attempts to gag his voice. *Matigari* (1989), however, is more forceful in capturing the spirit of resistance to the menacing forces of repressive comprador bourgeoisie and imperialism. The concluding chapter examines the relevance of Ngugi's non-fictional essays collected in various books - *The Black Hermit, Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary, Homecoming, Decolonizing the Mind, Writers in Politics*, etc. These essays throw valuable light on the thematic concerns articulated in his novels. One wishes Narang had devoted a chapter to Ngugi's short stories - collected in *Secret Lives* (1975) - commonly known as part of Ngugi's 'creative autobiographies', where 'what happened to the characters . . . can be taken as a metaphor of what is happening in the land'. The book would also have gained in its immediacy of appeal for the Indian readers had Narang commented on Gandhi's influence on Ngugi, especially as Ngugi has spoken of Gandhi as a great source of inspiration, and as numerous references to India's struggle for independence are discernible in *Weep Not Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*.

As it is, Narang succeeds admirably in raising a very stimulating debate about the issues that people of free Kenya still continue to grapple with. There is a delicate balance in *Politics as Fiction* between Narang's views and those of the other critics with whom he disagrees.

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Can It be Time to Go?

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human affairs inherited from the past, but also by a lunatic increase in deliberate brutality. Thus, on the one hand, a majority of human beings, after seven or eight millennia of historical culture, ceased to live by growing food or herding animals. Further, a radical transformation in the systems of transport and communication almost erased, at least in most of Europe and the United States, the old cultural differences between the urban and the rural areas. One of the most obvious indications of the changes that took place in the fabric of everyday life was that it became virtually impossible for most of the major creative talents of the age to think in pastoral terms without inviting the charge of sentimental falsification or reactionary pathos. Writers, of course, continued to evoke landscapes of memory and desire, but a majority of those who wanted to engage with the reality of the world they inhabited understood that they needed idioms, tones, images and colours which were different from those which George Eliot or Tolstoy, Tchaikovsky or Ravel, Cézanne or Monet had employed. An accurate rendering of the structures of experience in a radically transformed age demanded fractured rhythms (as in the poems Eliot and Pound), ruptured novelistic forms (as in Joyce, Celine or Kafka), fragmented or tortured pictorial images (as in the works of Picasso, Klee, Dali or Kokoshcha), and difficult musical harmonies (as in the compositions of Schoenberg, Weber or Ives).

The changes in the patterns of daily life after 1914, caused by the new modes of agricultural and industrial production, were difficult enough for people, but the really

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catastrophic aspects of the decades that followed were the genocidal days that began with the First World War. The wars fought during the hundred years before 1914 were short skirmishes in comparison with what happened in the thirty-one years which followed. Nineteenth-century wars were limited and generally fought according to some acceptable rules - or at least people thought that there were or ought to be such rules. They were, of course, like all wars brutal, but to most observers they did not seem to threaten the conditions of civilized life. It was possible for Jane Austen to write during the Napoleonic wars and, apart from describing handsome soldiers on parade, not to mention the wars in her novels. Similarly, George Eliot could remain seemingly oblivious to the wars of Empire. Those who did discuss violent revolutions and wars did so in ethical terms of justice and humanity (except, perhaps, for Clausewitz). There was outrage when the generally accepted conventions about the conduct of warfare were violated and unarmed civilians or undefended cities were attacked. Thus, General Sherman found himself in a morally indefensible position when in the name of military strategy, he ordered the burning of Atlanta during the American Civil War, and General Gordon's hapless last stand against the Mahdi produced countless adventure yarns (never mind, for the moment, the politics of these wars - as well as the shameful massacre of the native Indians in America and the utterly immoral colonial adventures throughout the nineteenth century). Indeed, it is almost impossible to think of a work written after 1914 which is as full of righteous indignation at the killings of civilians by armed soldiers as Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, or outrage at the attacks on ordinary citizens by revolutionary zealots as in Conrad's *The Secret Agent* or Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*.

Wars and revolutions after 1914 were qualitatively different. They were not only more savage, but were also paradoxically, more rationally organized than ever before. The technological means of mass destruction made available at the beginning of the First World War required efficient management and the direct involvement of the largest sections of the civilian populations in the production, maintenance and functioning of the war machinery. 1914 thus inaugurated a century of total war which destroyed incredible quantities of products and consumed the energies of everyone - bureaucrats, contractors, engineers,

scientists, warrior intellectuals and an incalculable number of skilled and unskilled workers including women (indeed, the First World War produced a revolution in the employment of women outside the household in Europe and America). Hobsbawm gives some amazing statistics to show how war, technology and business had become intermeshed. By the end of the First World War, France was producing 200,000 shells a day. During the Second World War, the United States army ordered 519 million pairs of socks and 219 million pairs of pants, whereas the German army ordered 4.4 million pairs of scissors and 6.2 million stamp pads for its military offices. It is not surprising, as Hobsbawm notes, that civilian populations, being an intimate part of the new military and industrial complex, became legitimate targets of attack.

The real paradox of the years of 'penal peace' that followed the end of the First World War is that they were ruinous for both the victors and the defeated, and resulted in the destruction of a Europe with which people had become familiar over the previous hundred years. A genocidal war, in which there were no great civil or moral principles involved, gave way to a brutalized and opportunistic politics of self-interest and power. The Treaty of Versailles parcelled out the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires into small ethnic and linguistic states (a disastrous notion for which the world is still paying a bitter price) and imposed heavy burdens on Germany in an attempt to keep it weak. While many who survived their experiences in the battlefield became staunch opponents of all wars, there were a large number of others who continued to be fascinated with a life of blood, sacrifice, guns and masculine power, and waited for a chance to take fierce revenge against those who had humiliated them. The longing to strike back amongst the defeated increased, when those who had won refused to take the necessary steps to reintegrate the losers into an economically stable and well-organized Europe. It is not surprising, therefore, that a belligerent nationalist like Hitler could appeal to a mass of resentful little men of all classes with his pathological rhetoric of ethnic purity, glory, tradition, will, religion and armed power. What gave his runic chant of these words greater emotional charge was that the 1920s and 1930s had also resulted in the weakening of the Allied powers. England began to lose its grip over its colonies, France was politically

exhausted, America was caught up in a 'system endangering' economic crisis and the Soviet Union was in the midst of a ghastly war against its own citizens under the direction of a savage dictator.

Hobsbawm's description of Europe in the aftermath of the war is in many ways exemplary in its clarity. He draws fine and subtle distinctions between various right-wing reactionary convictions (Churchill was after all a conservative and a colonialist but not a Nazi), and brushes aside mythic explanations of Nazism as a conspiracy of monopoly capital against labour movements and democracies (industry sides with those who enable it to function smoothly and make profit). But, unfortunately, he also adds to the mystification of the left and, when it comes to concerns outside of Europe, settles for the most conventional explanations. Thus, in the face of massive evidence to the contrary, he declares that the threat to liberal democracies in the inter-war periods came 'exclusively from the right,' and that the Marxist movements were unquestionably committed to liberal and open societies. In order to sustain his claim, he offers a fragmentary discussion of the Spanish Civil War without considering the evidence against the communists by people like Orwell, Simone Weil and others, and by completely ignoring the testimony of countless people who were disgusted with Stalin's blood-thirsty utopia, the Hobbesian calculation involved in the Soviet-German pact and the loyal support extended to Russia's gulag politics by nearly all the communist parties (many of whom did not even support the elementary right to life of poets like Mandelstam or Akhmatova). Further, Hobsbawm's treatment of the anti-colonialist movements of the period, which in many ways sustained the principles of humane and enlightened societies in our century, is perfunctory and careless. In a few brief sentences, for example, he talks of Gandhi as a Hindu spiritualist who used 'passivity' as a revolutionary force. Hobsbawm is so hypnotized by Europe that he fails to see that Gandhi's call to freedom may have helped nourish the idea of a political society, with its related concerns for justice and equality, during the long years of catastrophe in Europe. Indeed, I would like to assert that it was amongst people who were outside the moral economies of Europe and the U.S. that the thought, the desire and the hope of freedom and human rights were kept alive - Gandhi was perhaps amongst the greatest of

those who wanted to see freedom become a part of the realms of action and speech. (There were, of course, others besides him - liberal thinkers in Nazi Germany, black writers in racist America, novelists, poets and painters in Latin America, none of whom find a mention in the section on the cultural history of the period between 1914 and 1945.)

The second part of Hobsbawm's triptych, concerned primarily with the European decades which began after the Second World War and came to an end in the 1970s, is entitled 'The Golden Age'. Hobsbawm is aware of the irony in his classification, yet he is also full of surprise and admiration for all the decisive achievements and changes that occurred in Europe against all expectations soon after the disasters of the war. The decades, he thinks, acquire a lustre if one examines them from the point of view of someone who has seen Europe in rubbles, and of someone who is now saddened by Europe's present disarray and decline. The year 1945, he asserts, inaugurated 'an era of secular boom' in which Europe gained in economic confidence, brought about a series of revolutionary social changes and completely changed its cultural maps. He realizes that the golden age was not homogeneous and that it was created under the threat of a nuclear holocaust and at a cost to human beings and the environment which was often too high. Yet, the 'seismic changes' of the era did hold out, for the first time in human history, the possibility of eradicating hunger, freeing people from crippling labour, giving education to the majority of children and providing security for the aged.

In retrospect, it seems to Hobsbawm that, before the troubles of the seventies and the eighties, people, in the West at least, lived through 'thirty glorious years.' More and more people began to believe that prosperity was no longer a dream. The scale of the changes that took place was so astonishing that a life of luxury, which only the very rich could once enjoy, became the expected standard of comfort for every citizen. Hobsbawm's statistics and itemization of things which define the period are revelatory: the yield of grain per hectare doubled; the catch of fish trebled; cheese and butter were produced in such surplus that they had to be dumped into the sea; most households acquired fridges, transistors, televisions, record players, telephones, cars and washing machines; travel for relaxation and pleasure became, like the grand tour of the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries, a part of the experience of most people; and the majority of the population ceased to grow food and live in villages. While many of these changes were a result of the most esoteric of researches in science and technology (Hobsbawm's chapter on modern physics and engineering is one of the most lucid and sensible ones I have read), they were also sustained by genuine structural changes in the social arrangements in many European countries and in the U.S. Capitalism had absorbed the lessons of the slump and of retaliatory politics. Germany and Italy, who had lost the war, were not only integrated into the European Union, but were provided with massive aid for reconstruction under the Marshall Plan. Further, most of the capitalist countries tried to ensure that there was a safety net provided by state-sponsored welfare and social security schemes to save people from becoming helpless victims of ill-health, economic fluctuations, misfortune and old age.

The irony, however, of the age of gold was two-fold. It came into existence under conditions of extreme tension between different nations and ideologies, and its success depended upon the ability of its 'golden' warriors from 'golden' cities to inflict enormous amounts of suffering on people who lay outside their spheres of influence. In retrospect, it seems as if the Cold War was absurd, and that the Americans and the Soviets were engaged in a shadowy contest whose real heroes can now be found only in the fictional thrillers of Ian Fleming or le Carré. Hobsbawm may be right in suggesting that to a European or an American looking back after the fall of the Russian empire, the apocalyptic tone of the Cold War seems like the bluster of a cheap devil in a bad drama. Unfortunately, however, its impact was disastrous, both on the internal politics of the two belligerent powers and on a world that found itself dependent on them. America used the bogey of communism with its characteristic insincerity, cynicism and viciousness to deal with internal dissent (Joe McCarthy may have been an 'insignificant demagogue,' but he was nasty enough to have ruined many respectable lives; and the 'golden' boys of American democracy used the fear of communism to unleash dogs on school-going children, intensify the dereliction of the ghettos, refuse fair wages to Chicano workers, shoot students protesting against war crimes etc.), as well as, effectively, destroy for decades the possibility of forming reasonably democratic

governments in places inhabited by people they thought were economically, physically and racially inferior (the following list of countries should have a 'mantric' quality to dispel the golden haze that Hobsbawm casts over the decades since 1947 - Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Timor, Afghanistan, Suez, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Congo, Uganda, Angola, Ethiopia, South Africa, Rhodesia, Cuba, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Paraguay. . .).

The counter player in the insane nuclear game, the Soviet Union, used it to justify the nightmare traps it laid for its citizens and to bludgeon Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Poland and Albania into submission. For twenty-five years the two warriors burnished with gold filled the world with quantities of arms which were beyond belief. Indeed, as Hobsbawm acknowledges, the Cold War provided the rich countries with enormous quantities of 'trade in death'; it made good business and good social sense, for it provided jobs to millions of army men, bureaucrats, industrialists, contractors, engineers, scientists, financiers, skilled and unskilled workers and intellectuals. Given that Hobsbawm is aware of all this, I am surprised that he still persists in dismissing the Cold War as a side show of the age of gold. Considering the fact that his historical enterprise is utterly serious, I would have imagined that he would have found it difficult to find words which were derisive enough to describe the age.

What disturbs me more about Hobsbawm's emplotment of the historically important events of the period is that, amidst all the wealth of detail he provides, there is very little space left to notice the lives spent by most of us in the poorer regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America. China gets noticed because Mao's grotesqueries of the 1960s are luridly visible (though the scandal of his invasion of Tibet does not seem to merit inclusion). But the scant attention which Hobsbawm pays to others who are beyond the gaze of Europe reminds me of a surrealist map I once saw in which Paris is so large that it pushes the rest of the world into oblivion. The indifference, the ignorance, the silence of Hobsbawm's history of the non-European world is so profound that it seems as if none of us who live elsewhere have, for a whole century, had a thought, a hope, an ambition, a deed, a word or an idea which is worthy of remembrance.

The third part of Hobsbawm's triptych has to do with the collapse

of the age of secular miracles. He calls the period between 1970 and 1990 'The Landslide.' It is a period of economic gloom and of the breakdown of seemingly strong and stable civil societies into tribal or ethnic fragments. The evident failure of different ideological states over the past two decades to sustain the institutions of a responsible civil society, combined with the obvious corruption of those entrusted with the task of providing basic security to the citizens, has resulted in the strengthening of a politics based on exclusive identities and self-determination. Hobsbawm very rightly mocks such politics and demonstrates its 'sad and tragic absurdity.' The politics either of identity, ethnicity or religious purity is a mark of 'intellectual nullity' and thrives on hysteria. Its combination of xenophobic, holistic fantasies and polymorphous emotionalism provides the 'humus' in which bigotry, self-righteousness, intolerance, paranoia and murder grow. Unfortunately, it is precisely the irrationalism of identity politics which has caught the fancy of large numbers of people across the world. The result has been that the last two decades have seen more military action and guerrilla wars than people could have imagined was possible a few decades ago. Though given the criminalization of such politics and its links with the international arms bazaar, it is not always 'clear who is fighting whom and why'. Thus, none of us are sure about the tribal or religious factions at furious war with each other in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kashmir, Punjab, Sri Lanka or elsewhere. All we are certain about is that a few armed thugs, who have neither a vision of a good society nor the means of constructing one, have the ability and the desire to destroy at will.

The only bright spot of the last two decades is the final realization that the secular religion called 'communism' was not only fatal but also vacuous. One no longer has to carry the Marxist intellectual burden of demanding that good societies must be socially responsible towards their citizens but need not be free. The notions of social responsibility and freedom are ideas that must also be remembered as one confronts, at the end of the century, a mafia capitalism that is seeking to spread its tentacles everywhere.

Hobsbawm, however, does not see much hope for change - he is sure that the cries and follies of our century will continue into the next millennium.

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Realms of Satchidananda Murty
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think that every ordinary use of 'reveals' requires prior concealment), it is unclear why the nominal 'revelation' cannot have a technical use unrelated to the logical form of 'reveals'. The concept of subtraction need not presuppose agency although the common meaning of 'X subtracts Y from Z' does presuppose agency.

Rajendra Prasad's incisive discussion of the relationship between special and general revelation contains many new ideas. Although he agrees with Murty's striking idea that special revelation implies general revelation, he is worried about the consequence that even the atheist must be aware of God since, according to Murty, His revelation 'is a kind of direct awareness similar to our awareness of ourselves'. The atheist is obviously aware of himself, how then can he fail to be aware of Him? Murty's answer via 'unconscious awareness' is as difficult to grasp as the Vedantin's question-begging response that the atheist isn't really aware of himself until he is aware of Himself. If I understand him, Rajendra Prasad solves the problem by distinguishing between being aware of X and forming a conscious belief of X: the atheist cannot fail to be aware of God though he fails to form the relevant belief. The burden is thus shifted from the concept of awareness to the more slippery concept of belief. More accurately perhaps the atheist does not form the second-order conscious belief of his belief in God though he cannot fail to entertain the first-order unconscious belief. This enables us to escape the unsavory consequence that there is some awareness without belief-formation. If that is so, then my atheism is indistinguishable from the dog's since it also undeniably forms unconscious first-order beliefs given the availability of universal/general revelation. A mention of the recipient's capacities, at this point, will not improve the explanation, as noted in connection with Chakravarty's paper. However, there are many more strands in this paper which deserve careful examination.

D.P. Chattopadhyaya's article on peace has a flavour quite distinct

from the ones discussed so far. No explicit argument or a problem-solving concept is at issue. Taking cues from some of Murty's remarks, Chattopadhyaya reflects upon how to think constructively on the issue of peace and which hasty opinions we should stay away from. For example, he rightly objects to Murty's view that some cultures stress stability and harmony while others stress competition and strife. Apart from being empirically false (and inconsistent with Murty's view that 'God, Truth, Beauty and Goodness have revealed themselves to the best minds in every culture and country'), such views themselves may become sources of intolerance. Similarly, Chattopadhyaya rejects Murty's idea of a *Republica Litteraria* by showing quickly that 'generally speaking, intellectuals are pro-establishment'. I will add that such proposals, coming from Plato to Murty, invariably reveal a vested interest of a historical nature. Chattopadhyaya would rather develop his approach to peace from ideas such as 'charity begins at home', 'the will-to-peace of millions' and 'a peace instinct, *ahimsa*, in us'.

These are all noble ideas, perhaps even empirically justified, plus or minus a bit. But these are essentially therapeutic suggestions against an attitude of war-mongering. They do not get us anywhere because nobody causes war for the sake of causing war, at least in the modern times. Wars, at least *preparations* of them, are instruments in the hands of powerful institutions to the point that mass-starvation follows if defence production is curtailed. Since the discussion, either by or on Murty, does not contain much of institutional analysis, it escapes Chattopadhyaya's valid insistence that an analysis of peace ought to 'bear upon the practical problems experienced by us now'.

Finally, I share with Rajendra Prasad his surprise that fairly obvious logical points in these areas are seldom noted 'though the number of scholars who have written on Advaita Vedanta in this century is legion' (136). This is a fairly serious complaint in view of the noticeably dwindling audience for academic philosophy. If, as noted in the beginning of this review, one is to argue for major revisions of

Thomas Kuhn: An Obituary

Mahasweta Chaudhury

It was in the Popperian citadel - London School of Economics - that I first got acquainted with Kuhn's work. In fact, a comparative study of the methodologies of Kuhn and Popper was a popular topic for student essays at that time (mid-sixties), although few people had heard of him till then. Now, however, Kuhn has become a household name in the academia. After Kuhn's death in late June, *Time* described him in an obituary as the scholar 'who made the word "paradigm" a cliché of academic parlance.'

Thomas Kuhn is well-known for his rejection of the logico-rational image of science that holds objective truth as the goal of scientists. As an alternative, he offers a socio-psychological interpretation of the tradition of scientific research (physics), and emphasizes that except for some rare periods - which he calls 'revolutionary science' - scientists ('normal science'), in actual practice, try dogmatically to fit data to a dominant theory or 'paradigm' (like the Newtonian theory) which they do not question.

This transition from the rational image of science (as envisaged by Popper and many others) slowly gained momentum and generated considerable popularity, as well as a large variety of interpretations and misinterpretations (one single critique mentions twenty-two possible meanings for 'paradigm') that Kuhn himself regretted having used the word 'paradigm'.

Kuhn later retracted much of his anti-rational position, but remained the champion of a methodology of commitment rather than criticism. With the death of Feyerabend and of Popper in 1994 and with Kuhn's death in 1996, a fiery period in the history of the philosophy of science has come to an end.

Thomas Kuhn, celebrated philosopher of science, died in June 1996.

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syllabi and of research areas to cover more of ancient Indian philosophy, then *contemporary* scholarship must show the way; otherwise, the lack of credibility of contemporary work will inevitably be traced to the lack of credibility of the origin, e.g. the system of Advaita Vedanta. There is no good reason why a contemporary student would voluntarily turn his mind, except for a curiosity in the archaic, to the difficult task of

understanding ancient texts for the sake of turning his mind. Those who write on Indian philosophy are typically the ones who also teach. Faith may well be a precondition for the realization of Brahman, as Murty has argued; it cannot be a precondition for research-engagement on Vedanta as well.

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