

Dharmakīrti. It is also true with other systems of Indian thought.

Chapter III presents classification of *anumāna* as *svārtha* and *pasārtha* and critically examines how far this distinction is logically tenable.

Chapter IV presents the form of *svārthānumāna* and chapters V to VIII discuss different forms of reason or *hetu* . It has been concluded that *Dharmakīrti* 's theory of Inference is complete for "the limited zone of deductive inferences with a positive or negative, singular existential proposition as the conclusion."

Chapter X takes up the discussion of the nature and function of *parārthānumāna* and Chapter XI discusses the role of 'example' in an inference.

Chapter XII attempts a comparison of *parārthānumāna* with Aristotelian Syllogism and examines all prevalent views.

At the end of the XIth Chapter, Rajendra Prasad poses a dilemma and examines the solutions offered by different scholars in the next two Chapters XII and XIII. The discussions here are distinct contributions of the author to understand Indian theory of inference.

Chapter XII discusses the idea of permissible and impermissible inferences. All types of *hetvābhāsas* are discussed here in detail.

Chapter XV is the concluding chapter wherein the author takes an overview of the discussions advanced so far in the previous chapters. In his opinion *Dharmakīrti* 's Theory of inference is a simple but elegant theory. Of course, he does not fail to point out the limitations of this theory keeping in line with the classical Indian intellectual traditions.

Rajendra Prasad is critical in his approach not only with the views held by modern scholars but he is equally critical of the views of the

traditional interpreter. In Chapter III he frankly concludes that the traditional distinction between inference for one's own knowledge (*svārthānumāna*) and inference for other's knowledge (*parārthānumāna*) is not tenable at all. Similarly, in Chapter IX while showing the limitations of *Dharmakīrti* 's theory of inference, Prasad points out in clear terms how this theory is applicable only with a three-membered conjunctive proposition and not elsewhere.

In this way at a number of places Rajendra Prasad has demonstrated his laudable approach of a free and frank investigator of truth without carrying any unacademic burden.

His clarity in thought is matched with the simplicity of medium of expression. Since the author is a western-trained philosopher he has freely used idiom of Western Philosophy and Logic which has made the reading of the book under review most enjoyable.

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Dalit aur Ashwet Sahitya : Kuchh Vichar [Dalit and Black Literatures: Some Thoughts], edited by CHAMAN LAL, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 2001, pp. 142, Rs. 240.

Dalit literature is perhaps unique in the sense that it has sprung out of lived, intensely felt experience. Beginning in the 1960's in Marathi, it has steadily been growing in variety and strength and has taken on the character of a movement that has spread over to other languages and regions. And within the space of four decades, it has emerged as an important voice in the orchestra of literacy voices in India. It has also

entered the courses of study in several universities, particularly in Maharashtra. Dr Gangadhar Pantawane, the editor of the Dalit literary journal, *Asmitadarsh* , goes so far as to call dalit literature as *the* authentic voice of Indian literature, capable of vocalizing the consciousness of those who did not have the freedom to think and express themselves earlier. Although things move slowly here yet there are unmistakable signs that this literature is the harbinger of a slow and silent revolution in the country.

It is therefore appropriate that a premier institution like the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, devoted its academic time and resources to discussing the dalit (and the black) literature and later published the papers presented at a seminar held at Shimla in 1997.

Most of the papers on black literature were in English and have been published separately. This volume on dalit literature contains 15 papers, 14 of which were presented in Hindi. There are some deliberations on dalit literature and thought and also on dalit literature in Marathi as well as in Hindi. Among the contributors are dalit intellectuals, writers and editors and non-dalit critics and scholars committed to the dalit cause.

To this reviewer the book is an exciting anthology because it deals with a literature on the anvil, as it were, a literature that is in the process of realizing itself and because it raises some questions that keep troubling dalit and non-dalit writers. What is dalit literature? Can non-dalits also write dalit literature? What are the sources of its inspiration? In which direction is it moving? What about its aesthetics?

It is also a deeply disturbing book because it challenges some of our most cherished notions and estab-

lished reputations. Buddha, Gandhi, Dayanand and Vivekanand are all interrogated. So is Munshi Prem Chand.

Finally, reading it is an educative experience because it opens up a world that had existed on the margins of the consciousness of many of us and the horrifying reality on which this literature is based makes us sit up and take notice.

How do dalit writers define dalit literature? To my mind, the best definition is that given by Mohan Das Nemisharai. He begins by quoting Tolstoy: "I am riding on the back of another person; he is out of breath carrying me but I assure myself and others that I am sympathetic towards him and that I wish to lighten his burden in every possible way—but without getting off his back." This has been translated by me from the Hindi translation.

This, according to Nemisharai, roughly describes the relationship between dalits and non-dalits. The burden, he says, may be the burden of a human being, or of a caste, or of traditions and dead beliefs. But a dalit wants to free himself from this burden. Dalit literature, says Nemisharai, is a literature that liberates him from this burden.

Then there is the related question that comes up again and again in this anthology: Can non-dalits write dalit literature? Nemisharai shares the deep distrust that dalit writers have of the motives of those non-dalits who would speak for them and says that their portrayal of dalits might not be realistic and it might appear like casually throwing a piece of bread to a starving dalit from a distance.

Apart from general questions raised, Nemisharai examines dalit writing in different genres in Hindi—poetry, novel, drama and short

stories as well as like in researches and refers to their slow acceptance. He accuses the Hindi literary establishment of being conservative and status-quoist. It wanted change, but without overturning tradition. It would shock many people to know that a pre-Prem Chand novelist, Lajja Ram Mehta, in his novel *Adarsh Hindu* (1914) actually showed a 'mehtar' being thrown out of a railway compartment for being an untouchable. It would shock them even more to read the following two lines ascribed to Acharya Ram Chandra Shukla, the doyen of Hindi literature. These lines were written by the Acharya in response to his wife's complaint about his poorly paid job.

Rag-covered we'll munch grams
for food, but
Never shall I serve a *chaupat*
chamar.

(This translation has been done by the writer of this review from the original Hindi)

In several of his stories like 'Thakur ka Kuan', 'Sadgati', 'Ghaswali', 'Mandir', and 'Doodh Ka Daam', Prem Chand presents the plight of dalits with great sensitivity. He was also the first Indian writer to show interdining and intermarriage between non-dalits and dalits in his novels. But Nemisharai cites two instances to show Prem Chand's limitations. One, he kept quiet when Dr Ambedkar burnt the *Manusmṛiti* in 1927. Two, he once even opposed the entry of dalits in temples at the instance of Gandhiji.

Gangadhar Pantawane's paper-'Dalit Literature: Present state and future directions' is introspective and is also a manifesto of sorts for dalit writers, Pantawane is categorical in stating that the inspiration for dalit

literature came only from Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and rejects any suggestion of an inspiration from either Marxist ideology or black literature. He also questions the adequacy of dalit literature and turns his critical gaze at writing that is merely abusive, or that looks to non-dalit writers and critics for an approving nod. He also takes a dig at writers who seem satisfied after having a few of their pieces published. Dalits, he says, have also lagged behind in thought, analysis and research.

More importantly, he wants dalit writers to abjure the use of metaphors and words associated with Hindu beliefs and concepts. For this reason he finds fault with a poem 'Jaitalbhoor Hatyakand' by the eminent Gujarati dalit poet Neerav Patel who uses the image of Nataraj and Shiva's third eye to indicate dalit anger:

Let me begin my tandava Nataraj,
Let me open my third eye
Mahadev
Let me release my chakra, God!
(The translation is my own: done from Hindi)

Pantawane ends by emphasizing the need for translations from one language to another and for a national dalit literary journal which will help in giving a new direction to dalit literature.

Chaman Lal, who is also the editor of the book, principally focuses on two major issues: firstly, on the question can non-dalits write dalit literature?; and secondly on the question of dalit aesthetics.

He disagrees with the view that only dalits can write truthfully about dalits and refers to Prem Chand, Nirala, Nagarjun, Dhoomil and Jagdish Chandra, among others, who

have written sensitively about them. Moreover, in these scientific days when the influence of ancestry is considered less important than that of environmental factors, there is, he says, a much greater chance of such sensitive writers emerging who though not dalits themselves are able to relate to the suffering of dalits. He is also aware of the enormous difficulty of 'de-classing' oneself, but those few who are able to achieve this rare feat need to be recognized.

Dalit aesthetics, Chaman Lal goes on, is in the making but he holds that literary standards for this literature are the same as they apply to the literature of the oppressed everywhere. He also warns against superficiality and mere sloganeering and the tendency to focus on content rather than form. Finally he sees this literature as part of world literature of humanism that is oriented toward change and calls it a cultural act for liberation.

Another key paper is by Om Prakash Valmiki, the author of the famous autobiography, *Jhoothan*, who in explaining why he writes, speaks for all dalit writers.

He begins by pouring out his pain and anger at the Hindu society which for all its avowed faith in the dictum *The whole world is my family*, has relegated a part of itself to a sub-human existence. Those who segregated dalits as untouchables, he points out, were not foreigners like Babar or the English but their own men who belonged to the so-called great Indian Culture, whose atrocities on the dalit far exceeded those inflicted by foreigners.

The past that may fill some people with pride is for Valmiki a frightening, dark night that is haunted by the cries of countless Eklavyas and Shambooks, as he puts it. He writes because Hindi literature has given no

space to express this heritage of pain and the pain of growing up in a caste-ridden society. The Hindu literary establishment which he accuses of narrowness, hypocrisy and feudal outlook has accommodated a variety of experimentations and isms—but not dalit writing. In this situation writing, is not a matter of fun but a matter of commitment. Following Sartre, he says that writing is a mode of action, a weapon to be used in the struggle against evil.

In her paper Ramnika Gupta discusses two major tendencies of Hindu dalit literature—the tendency towards denial, denial of godhood and fate, and the dismantling of myths and traditions, and the tendency towards acceptance, acceptance of pain and affirmation of struggle for dignity and societal change and proceeds to give specific examples from poems to illustrate these tendencies. She also notes the general tendency in dalit writing to focus on group suffering rather than on the individual, though this too is changing. She believes that the traditional aesthetics is unable to express the anguish of a whole oppressed society and feels that direct, unadorned language of the common man can better serve the expressive needs of the literature. Such a literature, she concludes, is not the kind of literature that entertains but one that furthers the transformation of society.

Jayant Parmar gives a general idea of the Marathi dalit literary scene and highlights important developments in it, particularly in three genres, namely poetry, short story and autobiography in which it excels. An important source of inspiration for dalits, he says, were the black struggle and the emergence of Black Panthers in America. Among important dalit poets are Daya

Pawar, Namdev Dhasal and Sharan Kumar Limbale, lines from whose poems are given to us for sampling. In short fiction he refers to the short stories of Keshav Meshram, Shankarrao Kharat, Yogiraj Waghmare and Arjun Dangle among others and says that the major note that we have in them is that of struggle between haves and have-nots and of the desire to create a new, more equal world where man is accepted as a man. In autobiographical writing Daya Pawar leads the way with *Balunt* (1978) in which he describes his experiences with honesty and without feeling embarrassed. Dalit theatre is alive too for we learn that a play by Premnand Gazhvi has had a run of 1000 shows so far!

There are two papers on autobiographies: Vimal Thorat's paper on dalit autobiographies in Marathi and N Singh's paper on *Jhoothan* by Om Prakash Valmiki. All these autobiographies are harrowing revelations of what it means to grow up as a dalit in a caste-ridden society. They just are not merely the accounts of individual experience but they also document the travails of a whole community.

Vimal Thorat fixes upon four autobiographies in each of which, in different ways, dalithood is the chief villain. While joining duty, Madhav Kondwilkar is asked the inevitable question about his caste. As a dalit woman Kusum Panwade is denied a job requiring expertise in Sanskrit that she deserved on merit till she discloses that her husband was a Maratha. Prahlad Sonkamble recalls how in return for the promise of half a bread, he was driven as a child to remove a stinking dead dog from a non-dalit courtyard and Shraavan Kumar Limbale describes the agonised pain of his being an illegitimate child from the union of

a dalit woman and a Patel.

Om Prakash Valmiki's *Jhoothan* is a book that has the capacity to burn us all inside out and deserves to be part of required reading for all Indians. Perhaps the most searing episode relates to the teacher bewailing the poverty of Dronacharya in the *Mahabharat* who had to give flour mixed with water to his son Ashwaththama, instead of milk. When the young Valmiki asked him why no one had ever thought of writing an epic on dalits who drank rice water, the teacher got furious and shouted with anger. "You son of a *Chuhra*, you dare to compare yourself to Dronacharya. OK, I will write an epic for you. 'And he proceeded to "write" the epic with the help of the stick on my back. This epic indicative of a feudal mindset is not only engraved on my back but on every bit of my consciousness also'.

I should like to recall another episode which taught Valmiki the reality of love in our modern caste-ridden society. At first the high caste girl who had fallen in love with him did not believe him when he divulged which caste he belonged to. But all her love disappeared when she realized that he was telling the truth.

Sushila Tankbhonre's paper on dalit women writing is more a plea for creating conditions in which they can wield the pen than an account of their writing. The number of dalit women writers who are engaged in writing poetry, short stories, and reminiscences is small: Neera Parmar from Ranchi, Kusum Meghwal from Rajasthan, Kaberi and Ramnika Gupta from Bihar and Rajat Rani Meenu from Delhi. Sushila Tankbhonre herself edits a journal *Jaag Birader* [Wake up, brother] from Nagpur and Kusum Panwade's

autobiography has already been referred to.

There are two general papers that I wish to take up at the end. These are Dr Dharmvir's paper on 'Dalit Thought' and Kunwar Prasoon's paper on dalit *mukti*.

Among the general papers by far the most radical is the one by Dharmvir who is an IAS and who writes on dalit thought, its present state and development. His paper has two sets of audience: a general audience and a dalit audience. The latter accounts for the impassioned tone of the paper.

Dalit thought, he says, has been accursed because it has been in the stranglehold of Brahminism and can become truly liberated only when it strikes out on its own. Dalit intellectuals need to reject the claims of non-dalits to represent them and also to resist the temptation to make obeisance to them.

Another problem that worries Dharmvir is that dalit writers and thinkers tend to be atheistic merely as a reaction to Brahminism. The Ganga, the Jamuna, the Himalayas, the sun and the moon—all these belong as much to dalits as to a brahmin and dalits should establish a direct relationship with nature and the universe and forge a new god, even more powerful to counter the Brahmin god, if necessary.

Dharmvir discusses the irrelevance of Buddhist thought to dalits. Buddha was a prince and he had fought a personal battle and cannot represent the struggling dalit. Dharmvir does not spare Dr Ambedkar himself for having fallen into the Buddhist trap. He wants dalits to steer clear of Buddhist thought, without of course, rejecting Dr Ambedkar.

About the problem of finding an acceptable term for dalits, Dharmvir

is very clear that concealing dalithood by changing one's religion is no solution at all of the real problem of feeling inferior. He looks at the present misery of dalits in terms of history and exhorts them not to be disheartened because every caste/cultural group has had to pass through trying times. The dalit has to straighten his back and accept responsibility to fight the battles that have been thrust upon him. In a telling image he says that the possibilities of qualitative change are so many that a sparrow can become a hawk.

About dalit writing, he says that though dalit writers can have their own views about traditional language and literary standards, they cannot afford to ignore the aesthetics in their writing. He points out that in spite of all the tears that they have shed, they have yet to transmute their pain and anguish into a great poem.

Finally, Dharmvir makes a strong plea for producing a history of dalit thought and its evolution through several stages over time. He is deeply suspicious of Hindu liberals like Gandhi, Dayanand and Vivekanand who, he says, tried to mislead the dalit masses and wants them to move beyond conversion and build on the experiences and perceptions of dalit thinkers like Raidas and Kabir and decide their future course of action.

Kunwar Prasoon, a social activist in Tehri Garhwal, discusses the ultimate question—How will the dalits finally get liberated? Through direct struggle *a la* Dr Ambedkar? Through persuasive efforts *a la* Gandhiji? Through BSP style of politics? Or through change of religion? He centres his discussion of the various options round a collection of papers called *From Harijan to Dalit* edited by Rajkishore (New Delhi: Vani, 1994).

He begins by talking of nomenclature and agrees with Rajkishore that time should come when both the terms *harijan* and *dalit* will fall out of use.

He goes on to say that India needs to put in a direct struggle in the style of Dr Ambedkar as well as Gandhi-like efforts at effecting a change in the psyche of the people. He does not see much hope in BSP politics led by Kanshi Ram and Mayawati as they are more interested in vote bank politics than in the welfare of the masses. Change of religion does not enthuse the author much either as all religions are equally incomplete.

Kunwar Prasoan then praises Om Prakash Valmiki's *Jhoothan* for its depiction of dalit suffering. But he draws attention to Mahashweta's story *Doulati* woven round the daughter of a bonded tribal labourer and says that her depiction of Doulati's sufferings is much grimmer and sadder as she lays bare the sordid details of her exploitation at the hands of her feudal masters.

Kunwar Prasoan however ends on a note of hope with the prognosis that a time will come when dalits will rule the country. But he also knows that for the liberation of dalits to be real, non-dalits need to be liberated too from the sin of oppression.

The slim volume is loaded with new and challenging ideas that have the capacity to shake us to our roots and deserve to be widely read and discussed. It is, however, marred by several printing and other errors which a more careful proof reading could have avoided.

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Between Worlds: Travels Among Mediums, Shamans and Healers, by UMA SINGH, Penguin, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 200+photographs, Rs. 225.

Uma Singh's *Between Worlds* records her experiences among exorcists, spiritualists and faith healers as the sub-title of the book indicates. It would however, be limiting the scope of the work to just one-dimension were we to look at it from the magico-religious angle only, missing out on its other aspects that make it multi-dimensional. *Between Worlds* is, in fact, as esoteric as magic, as full of surprises as a travelogue and as gripping as fiction. It reflects on the socio-religious life of the community, gives valuable insight into ecological truths and offers a sociological and psychological treatise. It is a book you keep down only after you have read it from cover to cover, such is the spell it casts, and such is the rhythmic beauty of its language. It is born not just out of the prying curiosity of an outsider to probe an inner world of inscrutable secrets but because of the deeply felt urge to know, to comprehend and to grapple with a baffling reality whose existence may be doubted but cannot be denied; something that exists between two worlds—the known and the unknown, the natural and the supernatural. And there lies the significance of the title.

Those who happen to know Uma Singh may probably pick up the book with amused disbelief. Here is a Westernized young woman with part of her childhood spent in France, and adult life in cosmopolitan Shimla and metropolitan Delhi, energetically trying to uncover the realm of the ethereal, all agog to undertake the perilous journey not only through the difficult Himalayan

topography but also into the darkness of the unintelligible and inexplicable labyrinthine lanes of the magico-religious. In traversing the threshold of the rational, the solid, the known, the author reveals the basic ethos of Indian worldview, as underneath the Westernized veneer is located the persona who belongs to a culture nurtured in myths, legends and the sublime, and affirms faith in a deep human relationship with the earth—a relationship that comprises elements of mysticism, awe and an appreciation of the sacred in nature.

Between Worlds is based on Singh's research 'dealing with magico-religious beliefs and mythology,' in the Ravi river valley of Chamba, so the blurb on the book tells us. Chamba is the northern-most district of Himachal Pradesh. Though breathtakingly beautiful, it is strewn with intimidating geographical features—deep ravines, narrow eerie gorges, dark ancient forests and inhospitable peaks. The district is rich in history, folklore, myths and legends that form an integral part of the tribal culture. Conducting research on the fiercely guarded mystical practices can be a challenge as well as a dangerous adventure for an outsider to embark upon, both because of personal limitations and the hazards of entering a carefully shielded belief system. Some amount of resistance, suspicion, fear and hostility from the locals/tribals cannot be ruled out. Ms Singh records the few searing questions she encountered despite the active support and presence of the influential persons of Chamba: 'Koi chakkar to nahin hai?' (Is there a catch in it?). Or 'Why are you writing a book?' 'How much money will you get for it?' (pp. 65-64 and 103). She