

except as 'nostalgia for a feudal world of Urdu literature and courtly entertainments' (Mee 119). Seth has the Nawab Sahib of Baitar express genuine concern about Urdu: 'Next week he (LN Agarwal) will try to force his Hindi bill through the Legislative Assembly, and Urdu, my language, the language of Mast, the language of most of the Muslims of this province, will be made more useless than ever' (ASB 998).

The mediation of historical material with reference to the depiction of rural space in *A Suitable Boy* vis-à-vis that in Phanishwarnath Renu's *Maila Anchal* (The Soiled Border), a Hindi novel published in 1954, has been examined by Angela Eyre. A common narrative strand between the two novels is the Zamindari Abolition Bill. While the intended beneficiaries of the bill are articulate and eminently visible in Renu's novel, those in Seth's novel are too weak and isolated. However, both novels narrate the failure of the land reform measure—*Maila Anchal* with a wealth of details and *A Suitable Boy* with the pathetic plight of the destitute serf, Kaccheru. The difference in the representation of peasantry, as Angela rightly says, proceeds from the difference in the narrative form of the two novels. The capacious frame of *A Suitable Boy* cuts a large swathe of India in an encompassing formation which substantially outweighs the thinness of rural representation, unlike *Maila Anchal's* focused regional locale.

Seth's next novel, *An Equal Music*, in a complete departure from *A Suitable Boy*, is basically set in London, except when it goes to Vienna and Venice, and this matter of location piques Mala Pandurang. She problematizes Seth's cosmo-

politan transnationalism in the absence of 'a humanist worldliness'. As the cultural map of the world remains divided between the metropolis and the margin, 'personal core of cosmopolitanism is not enough'. But, as Seth said to Jay Currie and Michele Denis in an interview (June 1999 online, np), the situation in *An Equal Music* did not warrant any laying of his ethnicity on it. Besides Mala's cogent critique, Meenakshi Bharat views this novel through the lens of ecocriticism, while Anjana Sharma is chary of approving Seth's phallogocentric choice of the fictive patterning with denial of agency to women. Anjana forgets Seth's fictional credo wherein Julia's decision to stick with her husband and son is in line with Lata's choice for Haresh in *A Suitable Boy* and Liz Dorati's for Phil Weiss in *The Golden Gate*. When it comes to choosing family for Seth, no feminist breaking out, or no concession to romantic passion for that matter.

Finally, a few words about the book's production. I lack the space to list the typos; suffice it to say that they are many and will need to be weeded out in the next print. The bibliography is not up to date. At any rate, I think it is severely incomplete. It is not precise either. For instance: it is not mentioned which paper in Meenakshi Mukherjee's book, *The Perishable Empire*, discusses Seth's work. Besides, there is no index to refer the reader to pages in the text. But it is churlish to cavil about these omissions. They are less obvious and must be seen against the real virtues of the book.

Dr. Murari Prasad  
Sana'a University, Yemen

*The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition and Memory in the North West Frontier*, by Mukulika Banerjee, Oxford University Press, James Curry; Santa Fe: SAR Press and Delhi, 2000.

This is a study of the work of the Khudai Khidmatgar (servants of God, from now on wards KK) led by Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan known popularly as frontier Gandhi and Badshah Khan. 'Most of the Khudai Khidmatgars had not had many previous opportunities to tell their stories of struggle and heroism' (p.7). In this remarkable study combining the insights of ethnography, oral history and critical cultural studies, the author talks to 'surviving Pathan member of the KK in order to discuss what it was that made ordinary Pathans adopt non-violence' (p.4). Under the charismatic leadership of Badshah Khan, the Pathans of North West Frontier province (NWFP) adopted the path of non-violence in solving their own problems as well as fighting against the British. Badshah Khan devoted himself to education, social reforms and sanitation improvement of his fellow Pathans. Badshah Khan led the life of a *faqir* spending more than 'twenty-years fervently trekking in the villages of settled districts' (p.77). Banerjee presents us an intimate portrait of the life and work of Badshah Khan as well as the Khudai Khidmatgar movement. Her explanation of this 'profound social creativity' (p.16) is carried out in the context of the Orientalist view of the Pathans as violent, and dangerous held not only by the British but also by some of the nationalist leaders of India.

KK or Servants of God was launched in November 1929 and it built upon the earlier two decades

of work in social reform of Badshah Khan Land his followers. Soon it formed alliance with Congress and was particularly influenced by Gandhi. 'Like Congress in the rest of India, the KK distributed spinning wheels and instructed villagers in the technique of spinning thread . . .' (p.78). The movement gave rise to varieties of creative experiments among people and poetry used to be read in its meetings. One veteran tells of Badshah Khan: ' . . . When he used to visit he was never a burden on anyone. He was like a faqir, he carried his own food with him and he ate only dry bread . . . people who went with him had to carry their own food too-usually a little gur and channa (sugar and chick peas)' (p.126).

Badshah Khan and the KK were influenced by Gandhi in following the path of non-violence but Banerjee quite creatively shows how this chosen path was interpreted to emerge from both Islam as well as the local culture of Pukhtunwali. For Badshah Khan, before Gandhi, prophet Mohammed also had adopted the path of non-violence. In her concluding chapter, Banerjee links this chosen path of non-violence to the Pathan tradition of self-restraint: 'In respect of non-violence, where Gandhi drew on traditions of androgyny, Badshah Khan drew instead on traditions of self-restraint. While Islam condoned revenge, it valued forgiveness more highly and within *Pukhtunwali*, while it was creditable to seek revenge, a man even gained more honour by showing restraint and responsibility, particularly in the context of an enemy who requested sanctuary...the strength of will which Gandhi attributes to the feminine principle in Indian cosmology is similarly

present as a virtue of ideal Pathan manhood' (p.212).

Banerjee discusses with care and empathy, the tumultuous history of Pathans and Indian nationalist politics. The KK allied with the Congress and was in fact part of the ruling coalition in the NWFP before the partition. But the British decided, unlike other such similar situations, that this province would go through a referendum to decide whether people would like to join India or Pakistan. But Badshah Khan and KK opposed this and they felt let down by the Congress. They also wanted the third option of an independent Pakhtunistan which was rejected by both the British and the Congress. The KK boycotted the referendum as a consequence of which its result went in favour of Pakistan. Banerjee's empathetic interpretation of this deserves our careful attention. 'In their determination to avoid clashes with their political rivals and their steadfast adherence to the principles of non-violence and service, they played a key role in ensuring that the course of events in the frontier did not decline from an intense political drama into an out and out bloodbath. To that extent they, forever, remain proud of a great and good moral victory' (p.191).

In her chapter, 'The Work of Memory', Banerjee tells us how in their discussion with her the veterans of KK rework the memory of their struggle. 'In discussing the movement's aims they emphasize not an unpartitioned India and autonomous Pukhtunistan, each of which would imply failure, but rather that of expelling the British which was certainly successful. They also stress their moral education under Badshah Khan—their cultivation of

an ethic of non violence, humility and service as a great achievement on its own right' (p.203). In the concluding pages, Banerjee engages herself with an interesting dialogue with Weber based on the life and work of Gandhi, Badshah Khan and KK. Banerjee argues how Weber's formulation of the relationship between politics and ethics needs to be rethought. For Weber, 'The proactive, pragmatic ethic of the politician embraces violence' (p. 203). In the concluding pages, Banerjee engages herself with an interesting dialogue with Weber based on the life and work of Gandhi, Badshah Khan and KK. Banerjee argues how Weber's formulation of the relationship between politics and ethics needs to be rethought. For Weber, 'the proactive, pragmatic ethic of the politician embraces violence' (p.203). But both Gandhi and Badshah Khan adopted the path of non-violence. Yet the adoption of non-violence never became the ethic of submission which Weber thought inevitable. This largely reflected the fact that like Weber, Gandhi and Badshah Khan realized the importance of ensuring that every activist had a high degree of 'truthfulness', or integrity and self-awareness (p.214). As Banerjee argues, contra-Weber, 'the Khudai Khidmatgars' struggle was directed not only outwards to the enemy, but also inwards, to free themselves from 'ethically base' motivations such as pride and envy. Far from being an 'ethic of indignity', non-violence thus gave its practitioners unprecedented pride in themselves and their actions, a pride which still remains fifty years after the event" (p. 214).

Banerjee discusses the work of this

outstanding social creativity that took place in the frontier. Building on the seminal work of Indian anthropologist and social theorist JPS Uberoi, Banerjee argues how frontier is a place of social creativity and civilizational dialogue. It is in this frontier that one of the great social experiments in anti-colonial struggle, non-violent resistance and social reform emerged which has a great global significance now as we face a growing xenophobia, an ascendant banality of patriotism and valorization of war and violence. We all are grateful to the author for helping us to learn from this remarkable movement.

Dr. Annanta Kumar Giri  
Madras Institute of Development  
Studies, Chennai.

*The Drupka Mystique: Bhutan in 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, by Jaiwanti Dimri, Authorpress, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 188, Rs. 450.

In the ever-growing corpus of women's literature in English, travel writing by women as a genre holds but a small segment as it is relatively a newcomer in the field. Probably, it is due to woman's restricted mobility so far, or may be because she rarely could travel alone and enjoy the ambiance of a place on her own terms. Things have changed since and women traveling alone on job-assignments in particular are recording their impressions that give travel writing a new dynamism. It is exactly at this point that Jaiwanti Dimri's *The Drupka Mystique* enters the scene and leaves the reader captivated by her compelling style. A Professor in the Department of English, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla, Jaiwanti Dimri has

had the unique opportunity to visit Bhutan on a teaching assignment and the book under review owes its origin to the rich experience she garnered during her sojourn there. Strictly speaking, *The Drupka Mystique* is not a travel book, nor is it a historical or literary document. It is, to put it a little poetically, 'a product of the labour of love'. The author chooses to call it 'vignettes' born out of her observations of and interactions with the people of Bhutan, but I would like to change it to 'loving vignettes' precisely because the pictures throb with life as the author pours her affection for the land into it. She has made commendable efforts to understand Bhutan in all her beauty, mystery and mystique and yet keep her authorial distance to notice her weaknesses not as a nation but as a developing society.

Befittingly, Jaiwanti Dimri introduces the land and the people in Part I of her book—its geographical situation, the rugged mountainous terrain, the proximity to nature, the spiritual wealth and the political history of Bhutan. The problem is that very few of us really know the country beyond bare facts. Dimri's book provides a vast panorama of the way of life of the people, which is influenced by Buddhist philosophy and proximity to nature. Jaiwanti Dimri's depiction is all-inclusive and she takes care to give as much information as possible within the limited space of her introductory chapter. By the time we flip through the pages to go to Part II, we are quite familiar with the country: its history, culture, religion, geography, flora and fauna, folklore and dances, in fact, all that one would like to know. For example, in a vague and general way we all are aware that Rivalsar in

Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh is the birthplace of Guru Padmasambhava, but it is fascinating to realize that the original name of the lake was Dhanakosha Lake and that the Mahaguru Padmasambhava was born in a lotus on its holy waters. The peculiarity of the writer is that she does not linger unnecessarily and glides with ease from one information to another without being fragmentary. The first chapter is informative and it also provides a base for the journey further.

Part II is both informative and interactive. It paints a rich picture of the socio-cultural life of the people, their literature, their folkways and the impact of the modern culture on these people who are basically attached to their religion and culture, and love to be unassuming and simple. Chapter 2 makes an interesting reading as it tells about the significance of *chortens*, flags and *manis* that are spread across the hills. 'Here, there, everywhere—on the hilltop, at the crossroads, by the roadside, near a Dzong, a Lhang or a monastery, in the towns and the forests, there would be a chorten and a mani and the prayer flag,' says the writer (p. 61). The concept of *chorten* is connected with Lord Buddha; it is a sacred relic. The prayer flags are associated with Sab Dag Ba Dhan. To put up a flag is auspicious but superstition has it that it is to be erected on specific days lest it brings ill omen. After the ritualistic description of religion, Dimri talks of religion from philosophical angle, in the next chapter.

A lively and interesting chapter, 'Drupka Dances and Songs' deals with the folk practices of the Drupkas. There are three types of songs—Szhungdra, Boedra and Rigsair—sung during the mask