

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.

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The Drupka Mystique: Bhutan in 21st 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

dances. Thematically these songs are natural expressions of love and hate, joys and sorrows of existence and they point towards harmonious co-existence of man and nature. Thus is the ecological wisdom enshrined unobtrusively in the way of life! The accounts of the dances and other folk practices are interspersed with stories and anecdotes; that saves the description from becoming monotonous. One of the stories is associated with the 'Thro-Cham', it means the 'Furious Dance'; it is performed to subdue the evil spirit.

The tone of the author becomes jovial when she comes to the linguistic nuances and good-humoredly narrates the stories of people fumbling with Hindi and English and creating funny situations. She recounts the incidence of the 'cow's son' in tongue-in-the-cheek manner. Bhutan may be slow to accept change but the impact of globalization cannot be warded off. At every step Dimri encounters change and she feels confused because while change means progress, it also means annihilation of the traditional culture. The need is to keep the beauty of the culture intact despite transformations. Yet, the saving grace is that Bhutan is not very eager to accept outside cultural hegemony. It likes to retain its own ethos. That is one reason why the tiny country still remains a mystery.

Being a litterateur, it is natural that Jaiwanti should shift her attention to Bhutanese literature. Bhutan has its own traditional literature steeped in myth, legends and folklore but it is slow on creating new literatures. Talking specifically of indigenous literature in English, Dimri remarks with sympathetic understanding, 'Creation of literature and that too in a foreign

language for an underdeveloped country could verily be not one of the priorities at the initial stage of development' (p.121). Some translation and compilation work is being undertaken in the earnest at the behest of the Royal Government.

To add to the author's wide-eyed wonderment at the land so unique in many ways, she had had a chance to go round the country for an Orientation Programme; that broadened her purview. She aptly calls it 'circumambulating'—a word with hallowed connotations.

The last chapter entitled 'The Drupka Mystique' expounds the mystery of the land of the peaceful Dragon. It is 'a semantic construct which encapsulates the mood and the spirit, the air and the atmosphere of Druk Yuel in general and the Drupkas in particular'. These six pages are revelatory in which she catches the mysteriousness and the aura of the land. The book ends with 'Karding-chela' means 'Thank You'. With a glossary, end notes and a select bibliography, the work becomes a pleasant amalgam of scholarly exercise and a socio-cultural document exuding the joyous abandon of travel writing.

Professor Dimri, in bringing out the book, has not only captured her experiences but has also done great service to all those who wish to know more about Bhutan beyond 'tourist pamphlets'. I remember, we knew the word Druk in the 1970s-1980s only in connection with the tasty fruit jams and fruit juices coming from Bhutan. I acknowledge now that Druk, Drupka and Druk yuel mean much more.

The book is well brought out, has an attractive cover and good quality printing. Inside, it has got some useful and eye-catching sketches. But

I wish Dimri could have also provided a small pronunciation key to some typical Bhutanese words, for example, one does not know how the Bhutanese would pronounce Chorten or in Dzongkha whether 'D' is silent or 'Z'. One typographical error pertaining to the spellings of circumambulation/circumambulating is too glaring to be ignored. The language is effective, poetic at times, befitting the theme.

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Crisis in Higher Education: Role Analysis of Teachers in a University System, by Rani Mehta, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, 2004, ISBN: 81-7835-305-9, pp. 386, Rs. 790.

In recent years, tremendous changes have come about in education. This is particularly so with the advent of the WTO regime in higher education. These changes influenced both, the techniques as well as the methodologies of imparting education, thereby affecting the very purpose and objectives of higher education.

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