

Book Reviews

Religion, Philosophy and Science: A Sketch of a Global View by DP Chattopadhyaya, IAS, Shimla, 2006, ix + 253, Rs. 500

Like its predecessor, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Science, Society, Value and Civilizational Dialogue* (IAS, Shimla, 2004) the book under review is a veritable tome of erudition, insight and inspiration. One is left to wonder how the author gathers a rich harvest, gleans from diverse fields, and stores them with care and concern, and invites his readers to travel along with him into corridors of human history. As one reaches the Epilogue, journeying from the Prologue through the chapters, one would feel as having participated in a choral symphony of language, culture, wisdom and enlightenment. The author has put his readers under a debt of eye-opening.

I

The author, Professor DP Chattopadhyaya (hence forth DPC) is a cartographer of a continuous cultural space, and the authored piece *Religion, Philosophy and Science: A Sketch of a Global View* (RPS) is something that is expected from the Chairman of the Project of Civilizational Studies, and he has taken in his stride history, philosophy and science not only with ease but grace as well. In the present climate of piecemeal studies and specializations, RPS is an open window to let in fresh air and encourage newer

modes of awareness. What has sustained DPC through his strenuous endeavour and remarkable achievement? What has been his inspiration or philosophical faith (to borrow the phrase from Karl Jaspers)? In the Epilogue part of the book DPC gives an idea about the conceptual underpinnings and theoretical nexus of the basic themes of the book. He follows both synchronic and diachronic, sociological and historical approaches to the items in the domain of inquiry. He breaks through rigid typologies, and holds on to the thesis that the human and the natural are interdependent; and that *dogma, myth* and *theology* could have non-pejorative employment, if they are situated in their socio-historical contexts; that denominational religions have both hegemonic and harmonic phases, RPS is a meta-historical account of human civilization taken as a whole. His meta-history includes different academic disciplines—some related, some widely apart.

DPC is in favour of trying to understand human civilization in an integral manner. The integral approach is distinguished from holistic mode of approach in recognizing 'the importance of *individuality* of the *parts* within the scope of the concerned *whole*'. The concerned whole, for DPC, is informed of the individuality of its parts. Parts are not lost in the whole but do retain their individual identity. Enlightenment is DPC's acceptable sense of knowledge. He describes himself as a 'gradualist', i.e., he recognizes degrees of truth. The formulation of epistemic gradualism is

interesting. Taking truth as 1 or unity and 0 as nullity or what is false, knowledge would lie and move between the two extremes. No knowledge is absolute, and hence it cannot command universal assent. Accordingly, there would be nothing that could be said as absolutely false. DPC says that neither knowledge-as-realization nor knowledge-as-enlightenment is available to us in its absoluteness. From the point of view of the non-absolute sense of truth, absoluteness can at best be *regulative* but hardly ever *constitutive*. The elusiveness of the epistemic ideal helps DPC in his discovering the non-linear curve and character of man's cognitive enterprises.

Further, DPC understands knowledge having a praxiological implication. In this context he puts into use the concept of *Yoga* to say that human action emanates from truth-consciousness, and reminds us that ratio lies between extremes of number or degree, and appropriately, the evaluative-descriptive words *rational* and *reasonable* are to be so understood.

DPC takes *human consciousness* as paradigmatic form of consciousness. He recognizes the presence of others in the past, present, and in the future. The RPS is significantly dedicated to the future of humanity. The implication of the position is remarkable. It spells toleration: 'I believe that other lives . . . are also *like* my own life.' To quote DPC: 'Denial of this position makes one historically skeptical and takes away the ground for believing in other's existence

and experience. Also it rules out the ground not only of our hope for the future but also of possible objects of future—artistic, scientific, institutional . . .’ (p. 210). For DPC, the ontology of hope is grounded in the ontology of consciousness.

II

In his search for the scientific and philosophical basis DPC has preceded by studying such civilizations as the Hellenic, the Mesopotamian, the Iranian-Indian, and the Chinese. The human quest for knowledge moves about in a triangle formed by man himself, his environment and nature. The proper study, as Alexander Pope’s famous phrase goes, cannot be without reference to man’s immediate situation. In this context DPC mentions the civilizational dichotomy between *self* and *other*, and he has veritably shown that mutual interactions and vibrations between the two had never stopped.

The chapters, entitled ‘Spread of Islam and Sufism in India’ and ‘The Genesis of Science in the Islamic Civilization’, followed by the one titled ‘Interaction between Islam, Judaism and Christendom’ are worth one’s attention and consideration. The story of the Sufi *silsilas* and their influence and growth is itself a fascinating one, and in spite of the Sufi’s role in proselytizing, the Sufis could be said to have won the hearts of the people by their songs. Panjab was partitioned, not the songs of the Sufis.

One point that DPC notes in the context of Sufism is important. And it is that without appropriate social, political and economic qualifications neither the history of Sufism nor mysticism can be generalized, for they sometime have developed under the patronage of political sustenance, and grown under adverse or oppressive socio-political conditions. What about the Bauls in Bengal?

As for Islam, DPC’s chapters would go a long way in removing many a misconception about it. We tend to forget that the career of a new religion is shaped by the doctrines and arguments of the existing and changing older religions. And Islam was no exception. Its original form was plastic, symbolic and seminal. Scriptural literalism was a later and historically conditioned phenomenon. Islamic philosophers of the later days have been skeptics in the Hellenic fashion and made the religion less supernatural and earth-bond. More importantly, Islamic philosophy had always an intimate relation with science, and the Quran expects Muslims to investigate natural phenomena and their causes not only for the sake of knowledge but also for coming close to God. Has not this message gone abegging in India?

In passing DPC touches upon the issue of fundamentalism. St. Paul had remarked that literalism Killeth. But the modern version of fundamentalism has another dimension, i.e., the terrible economic exploitation of the Islamic countries in general, and in particular those having the natural resource of oil. In DPC’s words: ‘The modern politics of fundamentalism cannot be understood in isolation without reference to extremely unfair economic exploitation and suppression’ (p. 58). Was there exploitation and oppression when the basics of fundamentalism were formulated?

Along with it, the idea of false Gods has been responsible for quite an undesirable turn of events in history. The distinction between *self* and *other*, reformulated later as that between *we* and *they*, is a ‘basic truth’ of all religions. DPC notes two possibilities of the distinction: either there could be the spirit of compassion and toleration, conciliation and accommodation, or indifference and intolerance to *other’s* views and values. Internecine conflicts have not been wanting in evidence. All

major world religions have the two possibilities built into them. The point, however, as DPC has rightly held, is to have the readiness to go beyond one’s religious consciousness or the framework of the prevalent religion.

III

The chapter ‘History and Geography of Science’ sustains the observations made in the earlier chapters, though it focuses primarily on the manifestation of the religious phenomena in the Indian sub-continent. The pluralism and catholicity that marks Hinduism is accounted for by its diverse origins and capacity to incorporate and assimilate the elements borrowed from other religions. At this point, DPC brings in the issue of language, in respect of the role it plays in indigenizing assimilated ideas with the local ideas and local practices. But could it be said that Hinduism too underwent or experienced a similar interaction as it had between Islam, Judaism and Christianity? Can we construe the interface of Buddhism and Jainism with Hinduism (or shall we say Brahmanism?) was on a similar line?

The civilizational dialogue between India, China and some neighbouring countries is a remarkable phenomenon. The cultural interaction between the countries and the ideas and ideals of the people may have been continuous, but their resilience and capacity to suck in foreign cultural values and institutions have not been equally perceptible everywhere. However, now the time has come when we will be required to look for the continuity. DPC supports his thesis of the continuous cultural space by what he calls ‘Auxiliary Linguistic Hypothesis’. He refers to the language of the ancient civilizations spoken around a geographic background. Taking into account the languages across continents DPC maps a cultural continuum along with his programme of mapping the history of religion,

science and philosophy in the old world. He finds that neither language families nor cultural areas have any well-defined and permanent boundaries. Boundaries drawn by historical polity have been shifting, but culture is ubiquitous. Many surprises surface in course of DPC's investigations into the striking familial lexical and structural affinities between the languages, dialects and the forms of life of the people speaking it. If the form of life mattered, the Arab world would have been one. Is it language or religion that ushers in unity? Perhaps none. It is the will to be one that does the miracle, if at all it does.

The reason given by DPC is that when people experience different environments and encounter diverse forces of nature and culture, they seek suitable words and expressions for their experiences and encounters. Language travels with its speakers, and syntactical and semantic changes occur as and when it may be needed.

IV

One remarkable feature of the *RPS* is the richness of the notes and references at the end of the chapters. They open further horizons of reflection, and call for a closer reading. A perusal of the *RPS* is a rewarding experience. Coming as it does from a senior philosopher of our times, the *RPS* teaches us the lesson to look for higher generalities in religion, philosophy and science, and attune ourselves to the task of responsibilities to the future of mankind. As a reader, one thing that the present reviewer has missed is a couple of maps illustrating the continuity of the cultural space into which our ancestors moved and lived and had their being.

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Reservation and Private Sector: Quest for Equal Opportunity and Growth, Sukhadeo Thorat, Aryama and Prashant Negi, (eds), Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2006, pp. 424, Rs. 475

The philosophical question often asked is if all Men (Anthropological Men including Women) are born equal, then why do they act differently? The answer to this complex question, perhaps lies in analyzing the factors that have been responsible in differentiating individuals, groups and nations and assigning ranks to them on the basis of evaluation standards set by the group, community or society. We do know that all human groups are stratified on one or the other basis and all societies in their development process or growth have generated inequalities between individuals and groups. A host of factors such as ownership of property or assets, biological and economic inheritance, mental abilities, knowledge, skill, talents, physical strength, age and sex differentials, religion, political ideologies and conformity or non-conformity to norms etc., have been identified by scholars as causing inequalities in different societies.

No doubt, the poor constitute the lower rung of the stratification ladder, yet in the context of the Indian society, poverty is also associated with certain socio-religious conglomerations propagating ritualistic conformity, practice of endogamy and social distancing on the basis of purity-pollution dimensions. Further, India is a democratic country and her aim is to move towards a Civil Society. But as a developing nation, she has yet to acquire the basic expressions of a democracy such as lack of exploitation, equality, popular participation of people, the dignity of employment, adequate income for a minimum decent living, individual and group creativity. However, the Constitution of India, in its preamble, has prescribed social justice, equality

and fraternity as basic goals to be accomplished through democratic means. Over the years, a large number of political systems are showing commitment to democracy and seeking various combinations of political, social, economic and cultural democracy but in reality, they do not have a satisfactory arrangement. There are variations observed within a democratic system, often influenced by varying social and political structures. In some democratic systems, health and education may be considered as functions of human rights but in others, these may be treated as functions of income. Further, in the case of certain social systems, extreme poverty situations may co-exist with the concentration of wealth in a few hands without affecting the fabric of democracy while for others, democracy would mean elimination of extreme wealth and poverty.

In the above backdrop, India is still an imperfect democracy. It augurs well with the fact that despite nearly six decades of democratic governance based on an individual's freedom, rights, equality and justice, we have failed to break down the social solidarities like caste, kinship, linguistics, religious and other primordial ties entrenched in our traditional social structure. In fact, the traditional Indian society based on the pillars of varna-caste system, joint family and autonomous village organization as group based structures, in interaction with the democratic induced individualism, has thrown up a number of contradictions which need to be resolved through good governance by having a fool proof accountability and an effective transparency mechanism built into it.

Caste has been and is still cardinal to the Indian social structure. The hierarchical divisions based on varna-caste system excluded a bulk of our population, from the mainstream socio-cultural life of the people in our society.

The varna system provided an opportunity to an individual to move up the ladder of social hierarchy in the event, he or she performed good deeds (karma) in his or her life time but the caste system based on birth, codified by *Manu Smriti* about 2000 years ago, gave death blow to the varna system. The advent of Buddhism diluted the precincts of caste system by promoting equality and compassion for all but subsequently, the conversions of the Hindus into Islam. (practically from all caste groups but more so from the Shudra and *ati*-Shudras categories) during the Afghan and Mughal rules followed by British Raj, entrenched the caste system much more deep-rootedly into our social and economic life. The British Act of 1935, classified the Shudras and *ati*-Shudras as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and later on the indigenous people or tribal groups were also enlisted. These persons were discriminated, exploited and oppressed by the upper caste Hindus to such a large extent that they were reduced to the status of marginalized groups, who found it not only difficult but impossible to eke out their existence. Their condition was pitiable, as apart from economic deprivation or poverty situation, they were socially stigmatized because of their defiling occupations such as scavenging, leather shoemaking etc. Besides, they were culturally disdained and not allowed to participate in religious fairs or festivals of the upper caste groups because of the purity – pollution dimensions Gandhi gave them the name of Harijans (People of the God) and appealed to the upper caste Hindus to change their hearts towards them and accept them as their brethren. But his appeal turned deaf on their ears. Later, it was Ambedkar (BR) who championed their cause and sought equal opportunity for them to raise their status by having proportionate representation for them in education, employment and after independence of the country, even in elections. They

were nomenclatured by him as Dalits. The term Dalit has got currency in the last few decades as it is no longer now a social or economic category but has embraced within it the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and has acquired a political denomination in independent India. The Constitution of India was framed and made operative in 1950. Keeping in view the appalling and destitute condition of living of the Dalits, provisions were made in the Constitution to safeguard the social and economic interests of them by granting reservations (in education, employment and election) to uplift them and reduce inbuilt social inequities in our social structure. These provisions continued for four decades in the public sector and through advances made by Dalits (SCs and STs) in the educational sphere, they could secure employment in public sector on the basis of quota reserved for them. The State intervention of that sort diversified their educational base and many of them moved up in the social scale and enlarged the cake of the middle class stratum.

This middle class further got expanded by inclusion of OBCs on the basis of reservations made for them in education and employment on quota basis. However, this command economy benefitted a small segment of these deprived groups who were termed as 'creamy layer' while the majority of them got further marginalized, mainly because, they had no access to resources or were lacking social and psychological capacities to avail of the opportunities offered. The command economy pursued for nearly for four decades, due to political follies committed by some of the leaders, led us to a situation of crisis of economic management and compelled our political masters to opt for a New Economic Policy, focusing on privatization, liberalization and market economy. As a consequence of this liberalized policy, there was expansion of private sector and many of jobs hitherto reserved for

Dalits got shrunk. A voice is now being raised for reservation of employment opportunities for them in the private sector.

In the wake of the above, the present book under review by Thorat and his associates is a timely edition brought out by them under the aegis of the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies. The editors have done a good job, after a detailed write up on 'Debate on Reservation in Private Sector', in classifying as many as 43 articles, papers and essays included in the book to focus thrust on different aspects of the reservation issue. These are (1) Caste and Market Discrimination: Theory and Evidences; (2) Reservation and Equal Opportunity Perspective, (3) Reservation: Merit and Efficiency, (4) Globalization, Liberalization and Reservation (5) Reservation and Politics of Caste and (6) Remedies against Discrimination.

The introductory chapter by the editors throws up a debate on reservation in private sector by highlighting the exclusion model and consequent caste untouchability based discrimination in the Indian society leading to social, economic, cultural and political deprivation of the discriminated groups. It has been rightly argued that to tackle the prevailing discrimination in labour, capital, input, product, consumer markets and social needs like education, health and housing in respect of Dalits, a judicious mix of legal and fair access policy is the need of the hour. This is followed by five papers in the first section. Deshpande is forthright in his saying in the essay, 'Do Markets Discriminates', that contrary to the thinking of corporate sector that affirmative action will lower efficiency. This will, instead, increase productivity and improve the lot of the Dalits. Thorat, in his comprehensive treatise on caste system and economic deprivation has argued well that as a consequence of imperfect market situation, Dalits have to face economic discrimination because of their lowest position in the

caste system. As such, the State intervention in the form of affirmative action is required in various market situations such as land, labour, producer and consumer, and in social services to safeguard the interests of the Dalits. Aryamma's debate on 'Public-Private Divide', suggests an overlapping between the two because private prejudices seep into the public sphere. In view of the shrinkage of job opportunity for Dalits, in the public sector it is necessary that the job reservation for them is extended to the private sector. Papola discusses the case of Indian private industry to highlight social exclusion and discrimination in hiring practices. He suggests equal access to information and opportunity to all and preferential treatment measures to the disadvantaged and marginalized groups in the labour market without any loss in efficiency. Madheswaran, on the basis of his analysis of earning differentials by caste in terms of education, employment and earnings brings home to us that participation of SCs in labour market is quite low and even, the extent of unemployment among them is higher than the non SCs.

In the second section, there are six papers. Omvedt is right in suggesting that programmes of social justice especially universalization of education, access to property and resources and 'talent search' should not only catch the imagination of policy makers for Dalits and other deprived groups but also that of business leaders who as a part of programmes, should develop the capacities of the total population. Louis Prakash on the basis of the exclusion, deprivation and marginalization suffered by the Dalits, has called for the State intervention through special provisions and programmes as a part of 'Affirmative Action' for their inclusion in the mainstream social life by having an 'Employment Opportunity Commission'. Sachar, in his short article, opines that without initiating a

legislation, the private sector may be directed by the government to utilize 15 per cent of services or supplies from businesses, owned and controlled by Dalits and backward classes. The hue and cry raised regarding reservation in the private sector, regarding legislation in Maharashtra, has been well brought out by Jogdand. A need has been expressed to recognize the potential and skill of the Dalits and provide them with an opportunity. The potential of Dalits in the private sector should not be underrated, is what Prasad has to say in his article. He asserts that the Indian industry should free itself from its 'caste interests' and democratize its workforce. Negi's paper 'All Snakes, No Ladders', brings out in an illuminating manner, the substantial issues of equality and social justice as these need to be well conceptualized and operationalized for a people-centric and participatory model of development where the State can act as a mediator and safeguard the interest of all, including that of Dalits, for a space in the private sector.

In the third section, in the lead article, Thorat dismisses the myth of reservation and efficiency and advocates reservation and affirmative action for the excluded and discriminated groups like Dalits in the private sector to induce competitiveness and economic growth through elimination of caste discrimination in labour market. Parthasarthy vouches for affirmative action programme to promote substantive rather than formal equality to enlarge the gain of employment to the Dalits and OBCs by measures of the State for their inclusion in the broader socio-economic life. Omvedt discusses the 'Mythologies of Merit', by casting doubt on its conception and advocates affirmative action for the discriminated groups by the Indian industry to achieve true competitiveness and efficiency through a diversified approach. Mehta in his critical essay on 'Affirmation without Reservation', has touched upon a

number of issues pertaining to merit and marginalization of Dalits and is susceptible to the extension of reservation for them to the tune of 52 per cent in the private sector (SCs, STs and OBCs.). This kind of reservation will make a mockery of the status of 'private sector as the private sector'. He is diffident and opines that Malaysia is a racialized State and it is not to be emulated lest our efforts to modernize India, instead of transcending caste, may perpetuate it. Debroy, again is susceptible about reservation policy for Dalits in the private sector and makes a clarion call for a debate in Dharmashastra texts (Manu Smriti and others which are 2000 years or more old), before a debate on reservations. Beteille, in his essay on 'Quotas for Companies' speaks with inhibition about the desirability of numerical quotas and mandatory provisions by the State in the private sector for the inclusion of SCs, STs, and OBCs. He, instead, prefers enabling provisions as a sort of equality of opportunity. Ramachandran argues in his paper on reservation that in view of employment getting very costly in public sector, political parties are now seeking reservation for the weaker sections in India's private sector. Maira views that in case the quota system is not a good solution, then one needs to evolve really fair but efficient solution for the discriminated groups. Bhaumik voices for a working class revolution. His plea is that the majority of private enterprises are small and uncompetitive by global standards. Being financially weak, job reservations in them may prove to create complications than cures. Mitra is clear in his suggestion that a three pronged strategy of having partnership between private and public sectors for expansion of educational opportunities to SCs and STs; entrepreneurship development of the disadvantaged groups and loan programmes and guarantees with built-in accountability and transparency and substantive incentive such as tax breaks

and preference in government procurement to any enterprise having a minimum prescribed degree of representation of discriminated groups, would prove more useful than the reservation policy employment in the private sector. Jhunjhunwala is of the opinion that after a critical examination of reservation policy for the Dalits, in the public sector, we should make cautious march towards their reservation in the private sector. Bajaj is candid in his assertion that instead of reservations in the private sector, which are devoid of merit, we should raise the employability of the backward groups.

Again in the lead article, Thorat and Macwan, in section four, vouch for greater intervention by the State to help the caste based discriminated groups to have equal access to land, employment, capital markets and markets in goods and services and social needs like education, health and housing etc. Weisskopf citing the judgements of US Supreme Court in respect of the University of Michigan affirmative action cases for enlarging diversification in the admission policy from the other discriminated groups, advocates that India can take heart to such policies. Mehta, based on the 'Bhopal Document' for the future of Dalits, agrees that the market economy has a chance to prosper only if we could overcome the oppression of Dalits. Further Teltumbde, dismissing any connection of merit with reservation in the context of employment of Dalits in the business houses because of built-in prejudices against them by the upper castes, brings home to us that Dalit's reservations have done great damage to them by eclipsing in an effective manner their struggle for emancipations. But, paradoxically, the Dalit movement against the present situation is the only alternative for a just world order for them. Thimmaiah cautions the UPA government for not imposing the defective reservation policy on the private sector, without understanding its genuine economic

problems and organizational difficulties. However, Ilaiah, opines that Indian industrialists should come forward in India's development by supporting reservations to make functioning of their enterprises more human and competitive.

In the fifth section, Chaudhury talks of the 'Creamy Layer' in the context of the political economy of reservations. No doubt caste is considered as an index of deprivation but reservation in election to SCs, STs and OBCs etc., has politically made them conscious of having electoral alliances of various kinds to capture power. The 'go-getter' among them, have been the greatest beneficiaries of the political process. Besides, caste is now being employed as a legitimate criterion for seeking public policy oriented affirmative action. Chandoke's article on 'Reservations about Reservations' and Veeramani paper on 'Social Justice and Reservation Scheme' as a rejoinder to her arguments, need to be taken together. Chandoke is forthright in suggesting that the Indian State has inadequately conceptualized and implemented the reservation policy because it is not based on a justified criterion of egalitarianism but on some kind of unjustified rewards. This has led to resentment and hostility against the beneficiaries and we need to apply the protective discrimination sparingly to legitimize it and spare the beneficiaries from humiliation. Veeramani considers her criticism as invalid and thinks that the underprivileged groups started gaining self-respect after getting education and jobs by reservation, which were denied to them by the Brahmanical caste model. Radhakrishnan believes that affirmative action is a broader measure than reservation and the FICCI statement that the private sector can work for affirmative action for the deprived, should be appreciated with a salute.

In the last section, again the lead article by Thorat to suggest remedies

against market discrimination is exhaustive and comprehensive, touching upon market discrimination of Dalits and its implications on growth, equity and inter-group conflicts. He suggests remedies against discrimination in the interface of free market and interventionist policy. There is a need to provide legal safeguards in the context of reservation policy for Dalits in the private sector by enacting 'Employment Opportunity Act', having more proactive schemes for reservation in some categories of jobs, extending reservation policy for various types of markets and having one-time settlement to SCs through the distribution of the agricultural land. Further, Puri, wants us to draw lessons from the USA for reservations in the private sector. Jagannathan, suggests that the corporate sector should set a new agenda for affirmative action through internal audit to identify the number of persons employed from the poorer sections and in terms of improvement in their knowledge and skills, besides training them and giving them preferential treatment in contracts while outsourcing jobs. To enhance the economic and social status of the SCs/STs/OBCs, Vaidyanathan is of the opinion that instead of providing some limited job opportunities to them in listed companies, they should be encouraged to become 'vaishya like' and acquire entrepreneurship. Mehta is again up against reservations as such for Dalits and advocates affirmative action for them and other marginalized groups to have access to the benefits of the markets. Gupta, is also of considered opinion that instead of reservations for the marginalized groups, we should opt for the affirmative action, not based on American experience but based on qualitative judgements, institutional well-being and treating the issue at the individual, rather group level. Bhalla, in his write-up talks of 'legal' and by 'force of government' as two approaches to tackle the problem of social injustice and discrimination in the job

market place. The first one is perused in enlightened USA and the other in Malaysia perhaps as one of the 'best practices'. He advocates financial support to attend educational institutions till the post graduation level for all the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the 'guidance quotas' for minorities in the public sector for all the discriminated groups including women, Muslims and SC/STs and refraining such 'guidance' enforcement on the rest of the population. Aiyar, again, affirms that we should go in for affirmative action for Dalits in the private sector rather than reservations. The Indian industry should come forward to provide quality education to them on the pattern of Delhi Public School networks. Vundrn in his article takes stock of legal remedies against discrimination in USA, South Africa and India, to open new vistas to the Indian statute in order to provide equality and non-discrimination in employment and diversity in the country. In the last paper, Weisskopf, enumerates some aspects of reservation in higher education by drawing upon the findings of a number of studies done in the Indian context of Dalits pursuing higher studies especially in medicine, engineering etc., on the bases of careers followed by them to raise their socio-economic status and mobility. The snag is that the references of these studies as mentioned in the text of the paper, are missing at the end of the same.

Reviewing an edited book is a difficult task especially when a wide spectrum of articles, papers and essays forms part of it. Reservation in the private sector is not only the clarion call made by political leaders of different hues and shades, Dalit leaders, intellectuals, United Progressive Alliance (UPA) partners including its Chairperson and Prime Minister but even by the constituents of other Backward Castes (OBCs). The conscientization process thrown up by the election system in nearly last six decades or so

has politically motivated all of them to seek the State intervention for redressal of the caste based discriminated Untouchables, Schedules Tribes and OBCs because of shrinkage of employment opportunities in the public sector as a result of the 'New Economic Policy'. However, the moot question is whether or not, in an imperfect democracy and in an imperfect market economy, we can provide social justice and equality to all sections of our society irrespective of caste hierarchy, ethnicity and religious adherences either on individual or group basis.

As is observed in the articles contained in this book, the issue of reservation in general and that of it in the private sector is a polemical one. In many of the articles, the ideas pursued and actions suggested have a spill over across the pages. This is good to reinforce the necessity to have certain kind of corrective measures to be adopted by the State in order to reduce inequalities and extend social justice to the historically discriminated and disprivileged people. Some scholars have preferred to go in for 'Affirmative Action' rather than the policy of 'Reservation' in the employment of such groups in the private sector. A few have brought home to us the 'Affirmative Action' being practiced in other countries such as USA, Malaysia or South Africa. But, we need to adapt them to our situation because our historical circumstances, social structural and organizational arrangements and value orientations and value system, have been quite different from these nations. We need to learn lessons from our already prevailing reservation policy in the public sector before introducing any kind of policy (Affirmative Action or Reservations) in the private sector.

Effective land reforms are the basic prerequisites in an agricultural society like ours. This kind of structural change can affect a shift in power relations among landowners, tenants and wage

labourers while inequalities and injustices could be brought down to a minimum acceptable level. Taking industry as early and as close to rural areas, without encroachment on the fertile agricultural land, is another important structural change needed to enlarge the non-farm sector. A large population of Dalits, STs and OBCs who get marginalized in the private agricultural sector, need to be absorbed to develop technical skills and entrepreneurship for self development and employment. The occupational diversification, achieved as such may lead to breakdown of caste solidarities which are becoming political dynamite in the evolution of our democratic process. Greater involvement of youth especially from the disadvantaged groups (both boys and girls) in the Cooperative and Panchayat Raj Institutions, should foster better inclusion of them in our mainstream culture. Above all, we need to streamline our educational system by providing uniform opportunities to all as it is only through it that caste biases and prejudices entrenched in our social structure can be dissolved. Without strengthening the foundation of the primary educational level, the secondary and tertiary tiers of education would remain weak. Health, nutrition and a check on population growth in general and that of disprivileged groups in particular, can help people to get out of the state of destitution and poverty. Reservation, whether in Public or Private Sector is a symptomatic treatment but effective social structural changes along with 'Affirmative Action' measures, may cure the deep rooted entrenched social inequalities and injustices. In making the State move responsive to either 'Reservation' or 'Affirmative Action' policy, no scholar seems to be suggesting the role of 'Dalit' diaspora in uplifting the discriminated groups. They have acquired social mobility beyond our borders and can be instrumental in pressurising the State to help the Dalits

get out of the drudgery through the governments of their settlements abroad.

We, as sociologists, know that in the evolutionary framework, social change is slow and always follows the path of least resistance. The editors of this book, however, have done a good job in bringing out a meaningful compilation on a topic which is currently under severe debate. They need to be congratulated for being objective in including articles for and against the reservation issue in the private sector. It is hoped that this book will be of immense use to policy planners, administrators, economists, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists and the students of Dalit studies.

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A History of Early Vedānta Philosophy, Part II, by Hajime Nakamura (English trans. H. Nakamura, T. Leggett et. al.), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004, pp. xxi + 842, Rs. 395

Late Professor Nakamura was a distinguished Japanese scholar on Indological studies including Indian philosophy. The present work was his doctorate thesis in Japanese language under the title: *Shoki no Vedānta Tetsugaku*, submitted to the University of Tokyo and he was awarded D. Litt. for it in 1943. The thesis was published in four volumes (of 2410 pages in total) in Tokyo in 1956 and it received the Imperial Award from the Japan Academy in 1957. The English translation of Part-I of the work (consisting of the first two volumes) was published in India by the Motilal Banarsidass (MLBD) in 1976 and, for a long period, the English translation of the rest two volumes: III & IV was not made possible. Shortly, before his death, Nakamura could complete the English translation with T Leggett and others.

It is good that MLBD has published the same recently for wider readers in 2004.

The important feature of Nakamura's work is that it has (perhaps for the first time) meticulously taken into account the relevant data from Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tibetan and Chinese sources. Intensive studies on pre-Śankara Vedāntins-cum-Mīmāṃsakas like Upavarsa, Bodhāyana, Tanka, Dravida, Bhartṛprapanca, Sabarasvamin, Bhartṛmitra, Srivatsankamisra, Sundarapandya, Brahmadatta, Govinda and Mandanamisra are found to be nearly inadequate. Further, scholarly as well as critical evaluative account of the pre-Sankarite thinkers (as already mentioned) specially from the philosophical perspective has not been found available to a considerable extent. And, in that way at least, the present work of Nakamura is a substantial contribution.

While dealing with the early Vedānta thinkers, it has well brought into focus as to how some of them viewed the ritual Mīmāṃsa as a necessary pre-requisite for Uttara Mīmāṃsa (e.g. Upavarsa). Both the Mīmāṃsa, according to Bodhayana, constitute 'one doctrinal system' (*sastraiikatva*). But Tanka was found to be Advaitin, conceding only phenomenal significance of the world (*samvyavāharamatra*). Dravida never made a distinction between *Brāhmaṇ* and *Īśvara*, by way of treating *Brāhmaṇ* as 'the supreme divinity' and 'Lord of the world' (*pradevatallokeśvara*). Bhartṛprapanca held that the Vedāntic Atman is an objective thing (*vastu*). That led almost to a point of obliterating the difference between object and subject which appears to be basic to the Vedānta stand in general. Sabarasvamin, though the first commentator on Jaimini Mīmāṃsā, adopted the Vedānta stand insofar as his view on Ātman is concerned. He held the theory of plurality of selves. Bhartṛmitra is considered to be critical about the future rewards of the action performed in the present life and thus he is viewed as a heretic in

contrast to both Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. Sundarapandya is considered to be another pre-Śankara thinker who opted for both Mīmāṃsā-rites and the Vedānta advocacy for knowledge. Brahmadatta was another early Vedāntin who held the theory of *jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vāda*. Govinda, is said to be the *guru* (mentor) of Śankara and disciple of Goudapada. He was one prominent early Vedāntin, paving the path for the emergence of Śankara Advaita. Mandanamisra is another important Vedāntin, contemporary of Śankara who was conversant with both Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. There are references about some pre-Śankara commentators on the *Bhagavad Gītā* like Pisāca, Rantideva and Gupta. But, on account of non-availability of adequate source-materials, the specific views held by these thinkers cannot be rationally formulated.

However, the greater and substantial portion of the present work is devoted to the views of the two illustrious early Vedāntins, namely, Goudapada and Bhartṛhari (consisting of almost 460 pages). Goudapada's *Mandukya-Karika* (also known as *Goudapada-Karika*), consisting of 215 couplets (*Śloka*s) is inseparably bound to the *Mandukya Upaniṣad*. Nakamura holds the view that the first chapter of the *Karika* (*āgama prakarana*) is directly concerned with the *Mandukya-Upaniṣad*, being a commentary on it. He has taken care to focus on the philosophically relevant point, rightly flashed in the *Mandukya-Karika* (III. 23) that which ascertained (in the *śruti*) and also connected with reason and the other is to be accepted. Thus the deciding factor, as Nakamura holds, is reason (p. 315). There is a strong respect for 'reasonableness' (*yujyate*) (II, 27, 8). XX Truth must be stated on the basis of logical reason (*hetu*) (II, 1;5; III,26) and a wrong reason must not be used (IV, 20). All this reveals an apposite point that amidst the diverse interpretations of the texts with somewhat covert

theological coatings, in gradual phased manner, the recognition of the use, importance and validity of philosophical reflection based upon free and independent reason (*hetu*) is found to be well noticed among the seers since ancient times and on this, the Vedāntins and the Buddhists are found to be quite close to each other without disregarding the long-standing tradition.

The other great early Vedānta philosopher is Bhartrhari on whom Nakamura has devoted one detailed scholarly discussion (275 pages). Bhartrhari identifies himself as a monist (*ekatvadarsin*). Nakamura finds him (by way of his critical exposition of Bhartrhari's views) to be a Vedānta philosopher, despite his having some stray resemblance with some aspect of the Buddhist point of view. It is true that Bhartrhari started his intellectual exercise with the study of grammar like any normal linguist; but the striking point is that he never remained confined to that. He moved to metaphysical speculation in holding that word is the ontological primus, i.e. *Brāhmaṇ*. In this respect, he presented himself as belonging to the Vedāntic lineage. But, as is rightly held by Nakamura, Bhartrhari clearly opted for the supremacy of logical reasoning, despite his general adherence to tradition (p. 521). Of course, there are instances of incongruity in his presentation also. His metaphysical stand that the *Brāhmaṇ* consisting of words is ultimately based on the belief in the veracity of Vedic seer's (*ṛṣis*) intuitive experience. This is virtually due to dogmatic *ṛṣi*-bias and not on the basis of sound reason. The supremacy of free-flow of reason (*tarka*) over the testimony of sacred text (*āgama*) is not thereby vindicated. Rather, it is Punyaraja in his *Prakāśa* (commentary on the *Vakyapadiya*, II, 234) maintained boldly that the contents of the sacred books are explained for the benefit of the stupid and to explain truth itself is an impossibility ('*Sastrartha prakriyah kevalam*

abudhanam vyutpadanaya ato na sastrani tattvam vaktum partyanti').

However, Bhartrhari did not go so far with regard to reasoning (*tarka*). While stating his point that the essence of the word is *sphota* and it manifests its form when it is formed as a sentence, he moved on to suggest that it is the manifestation of *Brāhmaṇ* itself. To him, reasoning is the self-manifestation of the word which constitutes *Brāhmaṇ*. Nakamura has brought out Bhartrhari's point by stating that *Brāhmaṇ* is the basis on which logic can be established in the ordinary life, though *Brāhmaṇ* in itself is beyond logic.

This sounds somewhat obscure. Conceding that word or language is indispensable for any meaning-formulation, it has not been made clear as to why word must be made intelligible through a metaphysical construction of *sphota* and that again must point to one non-dual absolute, i.e. *Brāhmaṇ*. It is definitely a matter of reconsideration that *Brāhmaṇ* is the basis of reason and yet it completely transcends reason.

On the whole, Nakamura's work on the history of early Vedānta philosophy is quite exhaustive and it has presented detailed account of the thinkers of that period with their works and contributions. Nakamura's approach is not only aimed at a historical survey but it is also a critical exposition of diverse philosophical concepts with their theoretical background. It, thus, becomes a dependable reference for future research in the concerned area.

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Untouchable Saints: An Indian Phenomenon, Eleanor Zelliot and Rohini Mokashi-Punekar (eds), Delhi: Manohar, 2005, pp. 281, Rs. 750

A saintly lady at Ramanashram in Tiruvannamalai asked me: 'Why women and spirituality? Can spirituality be male or female?' when she came to

know that I am engaged in research into gendered spirituality. A similar question came to my mind when I saw the book under review. Are there 'touchable' and 'untouchable' saints? Does not saintliness transcend such categories? As I read the essays in this collection, an extremely complex picture was presented before me.

An excellent introduction by Eleanor Zelliot and Rohini Kokashi Punekar sets the tone for the essays by situating each of them within an ontological framework. The question of 'touchability' versus 'untouchability' is related largely to the Dalit movements across the country but more particularly to Maharashtra. The songs of these saints cover the entire trop of joyous transcendence to a deep awareness of their lowly station in life at the two ends of the spectrum with great faith and deep dejection following each other in rapid succession, rendering boundaries of caste consciousness fuzzy. Sometimes 'untouchability' figures as much in the problematic of the age and the hagiographies surrounding them as it does in the personal predicament of the saints themselves. A good example of this would be the various versions of the Nandanar legend depending on whether a Brahmin, an upper-caste non-Brahmin or a Dalit is doing the telling. Equally important is the audience which absorbs/uses these hagiographies. Thus, Nandanar and Chokkamela did not appear to be appropriate signifiers of the Dalit movement because of the seeming absence of protest in their voices. On the contrary Ambedkarites and other recent votaries of Dalit causes have seen Saint Raidas as being 'one of them'. What precisely accounts for the rejection of Nandanar and Chokkamela on the one hand and the appropriation of the 'dalit-hood' of Raidas on the other hand by the modern Dalit movements?

The first section of the book deals with the 'Tamil Saints' Tiruppana Alvar from the Vaishnavite tradition and Nandanar from the Saivite Nayanar

tradition. Vasudha Narayan's scholarly essay explores the many facets of the hagiography of Tiruppana Azhvar beginning from the *Divya Suri Charitam* written around the twelfth century and *Alavargal Vaibhavam* written by Vadivalakkiya Nambi Tachchar around the fifteenth century. To this hagiographical tradition she suffixes the Amar Chitra Katha's retelling of the Alvar's story. The following essay by Steven P Hopkins titled 'In Love with the Body of God' also explores the hagiographies of Tiruppana Alvar. Both grapple with the question whether the 'untouchability' of the Alvar was a factor in his attaining God or in his physical distancing from God. The ingenious narrative of hagiographers manages to keep Brahmin orthodoxy intact while giving the Alvar his due as a great devotee. The Alvar is believed to be the incarnation of 'Srivatsa', the auspicious mark on Vishnu's chest. His birth is believed to be a miraculous one since he was 'found'. Once born on earth he never cried unlike most mortal infants. This narrative technique instantly lifts the Alvar out of the 'Panar' caste which is believed to be lowly and divinises him.

In terms of historical reasoning, the reviewer must point out that the 'Panar' or Virali, both being bards and minstrels, do not really represent the 'untouchable' castes. This was certainly the situation in the Sangam age when the great woman bard Auvaiyar who belonged to the 'Viraliyar' jati, claims that she dined with the king on socially equal terms. It is however likely that 'untouchability' began to be associated with them during the medieval period. Or it is possible that the spiritual heights reached by Tiruppana Alvar could only be proved by emphasizing his lowly birth. Therefore some latter day hagiographies chose to emphasize his lowly birth. The *Divya Suri Charitam* clearly states that his caste fell below that of the four *varnas* (Narayan p. 58).

The other oral tradition which is associated with Tiruppana Azhvar undercuts the issue of untouchability in a different way. In essence, the narration is that Loka Saranga Muni, the Brahmin priest of Srirangam threw a stone at the meditating Tiruppana Azhvar since the latter was too deep in spiritual thoughts (this is one of the meaning of 'Alvar' i.e. sunk or lost) to move out of his way. However, he saw the wound received by the Alvar on the deity's forehead. The lore ends with Loka Saranga Muni himself carrying the Alvar on his shoulders into the sanctum sanctorum. Perhaps the Brahmins believed that caste norms had been sufficiently observed in that the feet of the low caste Azhvar did not touch the sacred precincts of the temple! (Narayan p. 60). But this observance of the norm is turned on its head by the conclusion of the tradition. The *Divya Suri Charitam* of Nathamuni clearly states that Tiruppana Azhvar disappeared into the Lord. This physical merging of the 'untouchable' saint into the supreme form of God Ranganatha is the theme of Steven P Hopkins' paper 'In Love with the Body of God'. It seems that the devotee's love for God's form is reciprocated by God's love for Tiruppana Azhvar. The essays on Tiruppana Alvar therefore reveal the inherent tensions in the hagiographical traditions which need to both emphasize his lowly birth in order to show the spiritual heights he reached and at the same time divinize his life sufficiently so that no social norms are transgressed.

The next two essays deal with the legend of Nandanar. Karen Pechilis Prentiss' essay is sub-titled 'Contesting the Order of Things'. Lynn Vincentnathan's is called 'Nandanar: Untouchable Saint and Caste Hindu Anomaly'. The twelfth century hagiographical work *Periyapuranam* narrates the life of the Paraia saint who served as agricultural labourer under a Brahmin landlord. The saint had the ardent desire

to have the darshan of Lord Siva at Chidambaram and struggle to please his lord and get his permission. In multiple versions the Brahmin is cruel or kind depending on whose version constitutes the narration. Once at Chidambaram, Nandanar stays on the borders of the holy town because of his own 'impure' status. The Lord appeared in his dream and pacified him saying that when he entered the sacred flames raised by the Brahmins, he would emerge from it as a Brahmin with tuft and sacred thread. The oracular voice of Siva commanded the Brahmins of Chidambaram to build a fire into which Nandanar would jump and emerge a Brahmin. Nandanar emerged from the flames as a luminous Brahmin and disappeared into the sanctum sanctorum, a threshold that even the Brahmins would not dare cross! The story seems to completely upset the apple cart of Brahminical orthodoxy. The 'untouchable' Nandanar becomes the sacred offering for the *vedi* raised by the Brahmins and succeeds in penetrating the sanctum sanctorum and merging bodily into the Lord (the only other instance of bodily merger being that of the Vaishnavite woman saint Andal). His metamorphosis into Brahminhood therefore undercuts all procedures such as initiation, physical service to the deity and penance etc. undertaken by pious Brahmins.

In the multiple readings of the myriad versions of the Nandanar story, a totally contradictory interpretation has also been voiced. Vincentnathan quotes the narration of a melakkarak (low caste probably untouchable) in which the first part of the story is retained but in the second part, Nandanar enters the fire in a sacred fire raised on the outskirts of Chidambaram and had a vision of Lord Nataraja, the God of Chidambaram at that spot. The place where Nandanar lived and died is today called Omalur, literally 'the place of the sacred fire'. In this version there is neither transgression nor transcendence. In a third

version Nandanar tried to enter the temple in the guise of Nandi but was stopped not only by the Brahmins but by the Lord himself from doing so. (Vincentnathan p. 113). Kamachi, a female agricultural labourer says that as Nandanar ran to his God to escape the wrath of the Brahmin priests, the deity swallowed him to save him. (Vincentnatan p. 116) If Nataraja could swallow (the word used is 'muzhangu') where then is the pollution? The Nandanar legends and their telling criss-cross through time as well as caste and gender lines.

The second major section of this book gives multiple accounts of the lives of the 'untouchable' Marathi saints—Chokkamela, Soyraibai, Karmamela, Nirmala and Banka. The most moving and sensitive essays in this collection belong to this section. Just as Nandanar belonged to the borders/margins of the sacred town of Chidambaram, Rohini locates Chokkamela 'On the Threshold'. Taken literally, this could mean the gates of the Pandarpur temple which he never crossed and where a shrine to him still exists. Economically, he lived on the threshold of poverty and died with other construction labourers when the wall they were building collapsed, crushing them. Socially, as a 'Mahar' involved with animal skins and death rituals, he obviously belonged to the margins of society. Chokka (as he calls himself) was poor, illiterate and out-caste. Yet he lived on terms of intimacy with his God, an intimacy that no Brahmin could dare to presume. Says Chokkamela:

'Filled with joy is the whole self,
I saw he himself within me.
Seeing ceased,
Looking was erased,
He filled my whole being. . .'
(Abhang: 80 vide Punekar p. 138)

According to hagiographical traditions, Vittal in an excessive display of love

put his necklace around the neck of Chokkamela. The saint was whipped and tortured as a thief and he describes this in an *abhang*:

'They thrash me, Vithu, . . .
The pandits whip, . . .
How did Vithoba's necklace come round
your throat:
They curse and strike
and say I polluted you. . . .
Chakrapani, yours is the deed,
With folded hands Chokka begs,
I revealed our secret,
Don't turn away.'
(Abhang: 82 vide Punekar: 130)

Chokkamela's logic would leave the custodians of orthodoxy gasping for breath. The agony of low birth and social oppression is overtaken by the ecstasy of unity with the divine, an intimacy that neither knows nor cares to know about Brahminhood and its taboos.

Moving into contemporary times, Punekar shows how the Mahar community to which BR Ambedkar belonged, had no desire to make Chokkamela its inspiration or symbol in the Dalit movements. Chokkamela's acceptance of his social status ruled him out as the signifier of powerful anti-caste movements. The Mahars traditionally were given the left overs of the upper caste kitchens and not paid in terms of wages. Chokka reflects this when he says:

'Johar, mai-baap, johar,
I am the Mahar of your Mahars . . .
The servant of your servants
Waits with hope.
I have brought, says Chokka,
My bowl for your leavings'.
(Abhang: 343 vide Punekar p. 139).

Ironically his radical overturning of social hierarchies through his spiritual empowerment, was and continues to be overlooked by the progressive dalits.

The entire family of Chokkamela—his son Karmamela, wife Soyraibai, sister Nirmala and brother-in-law Banka Mahar—were Warkaris and devotees of Vittal. Of the entire family, Karmamela alone seems to resent bitterly his social situation of untouchability. He laments:

'You have made us low caste: Why
don't you undertand the fact,
O god of gods? Our whole life
spent in scrounging for leavings.
Have you no sharme?
You ate rice and curd in our house:
Do you are to deny?
Says Chokka's Karmamela,
why have you given me this life?' (Abhang:
15 vide Punekar p. 147)

The incident about the Lord having partaken of rice and curds in Chokka's house is explicated in Eleanor Zelliot's essay 'The Story of Karmamela's Birth'. The childless household of Chokkamela and Soyraibai was blessed by Lord Vittala himself. He also came in the guise of Nirmala, the sister of Chokka and helped deliver Karmamela. Zelliot's next essay deals with the spiritual and domestic sharing between Nirmala and Soyraibai. Soyra describes herself as a Mahari but her poems reflect the celebration of a divine life rather than the miseries of untouchability. The section has a very good piece by Anil Sapkal on the 'Representations of Chokkamela in Marathi Film and Poetry'. VL Manjul's dramatic piece 'God in a Copper Pot' deals with Sane Guruji's fast unto death undertaken in 1947 in order to get the portals of Pandarpur opened for untouchable devotees.

The concluding section of the book is on Raidas or Ravidas who was a chamar by caste and a cobbler by profession. Anne Murphy has translated his poems while James G Lochtefeld and Joseph Schaller deal with the hagiographical details of the saint's life. Schaller looks in particular at the

account of Anantdas in the Raidas Parchai, the poems of Arjun Lal and the rhetoric of social reform. Lochtefeld covers a broader spectrum of hagiographies by beginning with Nabhadās's *Bhaktamal* and going on to the accounts of Anantdas and Priyadas which are replete with suffering, devotion, ecstasy and miracles as in the life of any other saint. The saint himself, as Schaller points out, had no agenda, either of proclaiming his religiosity or seeking social justice as a dalit. What is interesting is the appropriation of the life and poetry of Raidas by the progressive dalit movements of the north. Chandrabhan Prasad and Mahesh Dahiwalā in their joint essay 'Ravidas in the Contemporary World' deal specifically with this aspect. Why is it that Chokkamela is sidelined by the dalit movements while Raidas is found suitable as a signifier of the struggle against social injustice?

The book concludes with some poetic examples of the Bhakti voices on untouchability.

I would have liked that the multiple hagiographies of Chokkamela and Raidas and others had been reduced or conflated by which I mean that two essays in a briefer form could have been brought together. This space could have been given to Janabai and Kanhopatra from the Warkari tradition. The 'untouchables' saints from the Virasaivite/Lingayat tradition like Basavayya and his wife Kalevve, Lingamma, Haralayya (whose intermarriage with the Brahmin Madhavayya set off the great Kalyana massacre) and Guddavve (not to mention the many others Shaivasahranes) who is called a Chandala, surely deserved a place in a book on untouchable saints. The omission of the Virasaivite untouchable saints is the only major lacuna in this otherwise excellent book.

The book is of seminal importance because most of the essays do not have any neat closures. The tension between the voice of the saint and the dalit voice

which is sought to be recovered is apparent. What however comes through, in the opinion of this reviewer, is that the saint himself/herself whether it was Tiruppana Alvar, Chokkamela, Soyrabai, Nandanar or Raidas went beyond concerns of caste and social justice. In particular the essays of Puneekar on the Warkari saints, bring out this point. To talk of transcendence as social transgression would be an oxymoron. Therefore, to recover the logic of untouchability and its social fallout from the voice of these saints is no easy task. One must compliment the authors on their efforts to do so in a convincing manner.

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Rethinking Cultural Studies: A Study of Raymond Williams and Edward Said, by KW Christopher, New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2005, Rs. 450

This thoroughly researched and well-written revision of the author's doctoral dissertation makes a significant contribution to our understanding of cultural theories and cultural studies in relation to contemporary cultural processes. The book under review combines an interest in the analysis and theorizing of culture with an elucidation of contemporary culture and meaning-making processes. Christopher sketches the context in which Cultural Studies evolve and attempts to appraise the contribution of two foremost and prominent cultural theorists Raymond Williams and Edward Said, whose approaches constitute a distinct analytical paradigm.

The wonderful promises of the modern era—progress, science, truth, reason, plenty, comfort, security—looked very battered indeed in the years after the Second World War. Holocaust, cold war, mutually assured destruction, police states, Stalinism, Vietnam: no one was innocent, nothing was plain and simple, fear and desire infested reason and truth, progress created its own

terrorists. Cultural Studies was a symptom of the urgent and profound need to think seriously and in a sustained manner about such matters and their associations with unprecedented personal freedoms and affluence at least in the developed world. Whilst cultural studies cannot supply ultimate answers to the intellectual, cultural and philosophical questions of the day but it has established a lively field of debate and dialogue.

How to teach a new generation of students to engage them ethically with their own culture, without relying on the discredited master narratives of nationalism, racial supremacy, patriarchy or imperialism? The question was quite pressing by the fact that the students themselves were largely a new phenomenon, certainly in Britain and Australia, where higher education until the 1960s remained very much a minority pursuit. The idea that intellectual emancipation should be extended to the poor, to women, to every one, was novel and intimidating. Education, knowledge, ideas, critique, was all thought to be scarce—one simply could not share them out too widely, for the simple reason that more means worse. This was that 'if every one has an MA then nobody does' school of thought. It wanted to ration education, culture and power. Cultural Studies was in part a symptom of the efforts to oppose such arguments and to democratize higher education as well as the cultural domain itself.

Cultural Studies appeared as a field of study in Great Britain in the 1950s out of Leavisism, a form of literary studies named after FR Leavis, its most prominent member. Leavis wanted to use the educational system to disseminate literary knowledge and appreciation more widely. Cultural Studies develops out of Leavisism through the writings of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams. The author of the book under review accentuates that

Cultural Studies as a distinct academic discipline began in the 1960s with Raymond Williams' announcement and the nascent work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in England. The British cultural studies, especially as it became articulated and was practised at the university of Birmingham, sought to distinguish 'popular' culture as a mode of textual and everyday practice from 'mass' or 'consumerist' culture. This approach tends to treat the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham as the major progenitor of a discipline that has now penetrated the humanities and social sciences in all major universities across the globe. The author in the present book has perceived that the study of culture and meaning-making processes stretch well beyond the Birmingham moment, engaging various forms of philosophy, textual studies, Marxism and social theory.

Cultural Studies was from the very beginning interested in knowledge, ideas and culture as part of what Micheal Foucault later called the 'plenitude of the possible' in his *What is Enlightenment* (1984), the work overlooked by Christopher. Culture, knowledge, theory, ideas and—after Foucault—power itself, were not scarce at all, but plentiful, and cultural studies was to study and practise not just the traditional aesthetics and pursuits of the governors, but to include in and as culture as much as possible, indeed everything—the 'whole way of life' of a people (as Raymond Williams puts it). Cultural Studies was a philosophy of plenty, of inclusion, and of renewal. Cultural Studies was of necessity an interdisciplinary field of inquiry.

The author avers that the object of study in Cultural Studies changed over time and took different forms, depending on who was investigating it and why. This was not only a matter of deciding what was meant by culture in general and in specific instances, but

also a question of the analytical agenda—which shifted from class to gender and then to ethnicity and post-colonial matter, for instance. With the emergence of post-colonial and subaltern scholarship, which challenges the Eurocentric descriptions, the emphasis was now on specificity and difference. 'Culture emerge as the main frame of reference in postcolonial thought in the works of Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhaba,' Christopher says (p. 33). The author has very significantly described and simultaneously decentred the crucial position of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and focuses attention on the shifting of the centre of cultural studies from Birmingham to American academic world after a momentous detour through France. Cultural Studies has now acquired a number of characteristics, including a certain philosophical tone and obsession. In Birmingham, Cultural Studies was decisively ingrained in a strategy of political struggle, while in America cultural studies was sponsored by the scholars who rarely had any connection with existing political and cultural movements. Cultural Studies has become more theoretical, preoccupied with finer discussion of deconstruction, gender and post-Marxism. The author aptly sums up this section by noting that with the globalization of communications and the rise of the multi-national corporate hegemony over cultural production and the media, Cultural Studies has acquired a profound importance.

Having delineated and elucidated the intellectual lineage that led to the cultural theory and Cultural Studies in first chapter, the author gives succinct biographical sketches of the Marxist theorist Raymond Williams (1921-1988) and non-Marxist Edward Said (1935-2003). Whilst cultural studies departed from economics and politics, their works provide a valuable focus to rethink cultural studies. The remainder

of the book refreshingly confines itself to resonate closely the work of these two leading cultural theorists. Although they represent different intellectual and theoretical positions, Christopher has elucidated that 'their work has many common themes, shared values and concerns'. The author divulges that the foremost aspect that brought their work close was 'pronounced emphasis on history, on material past'. Both have emphasized the materiality of culture. Whilst Williams speaks of 'secular materialism' or Said of 'secular criticism', it was history and the political and economic contexts of culture that were stressed. Major points of convergence and divergence in their works are illustrated to provide significant background to the themes and ideas covered in densely descriptive the second and the third chapters. The book makes its object clear—'juxtaposes their (Williams and Said) work vis-à-vis cultural studies . . . focusing on the exchange, connections, continuities and opposition between the perspective offered by both and. . . a critical assessment of contemporary cultural studies'.

Chapter two, deals specifically with the cultural theory of Raymond Williams. Between 1946 and 1960 Williams' involvement with the adult education journal *Politics and Letter*, demonstrates an increasingly sophisticated interest in the whole idea of culture. The author states that in many respects Williams' *Culture and Society* (1958), one of the most important books in the development of British cultural studies, represents a flowering of this effort to understand the relationship between literature and politics (p. 45). Williams employs the technique of close textual reading, but he is most concerned to illuminate the context within which the literary text functions. The intellectual heritage of romanticism was reviewed by authors like Richard Hoggart, EP Thompson and Williams, which leads to the re-focusing and

hybridization of the Romantic approach of culture. Williams becomes now more interested in the meaning-making activities and texts of the working classes, which also leads to a broader study of 'popular' culture. The author has pinpointed that the chief value of Williams' cultural theory lies in its recognition of the materiality of culture. All through his career, Williams consistently argued about the materiality of culture. The term 'cultural materialism' was used by Williams to describe his mode of analysis.

Chapter three unfolds the work of America's foremost cultural theorist, Edward W Said. This is for the common knowledge that unlike in Britain, Cultural Studies in America is a recent phenomenon. The author observes that in spite of Said's problematic relationship with the many variants of post-structuralism, his theory is shaped by, and is a response to, the post-structuralist debates about history, identity and representation (p. 79). All major works of Said have been discussed in this book, and it is squabbled that out of these *Orientalism* (1978) gained the widest popularity. *Orientalism* traces the various phases of relationship between the Occident and the Orient and enables postcolonial criticism that calls into question the authority of Western scholarship on other societies.

The author also illustrates the 'travelling theory', a key concept that Said elaborated in his work *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983). Said's main emphasis was on the context of theory that was decontextualized in its travels. He says, 'theory is a response to a specific social and historical situation of which an intellectual occasion is a part. Thus, what is insurrectionary consciousness in one instance becomes tragic vision in another'. An attempt is made within this paradigm of 'travelling theory' to describe the affinity between the work of Williams and Said.

Chapter four provides a comparative

overview of the work of Williams and Said, and pinpoints their major theoretical approaches of Cultural Studies. After going through the text, it is felt that the author is correct in saying that cultural theory that Said articulated was a product of his dialogue with Williams' work. Williams' emphasis on the materiality of culture, his foregrounding of its institutional bases and its relation to power and his persistent emphasis on seeing culture in term of production have greatly influenced Said's work. Williams' influence is more apparent in Said's key concepts: worldliness of texts and secular criticism.

The greatest strength of the book lies in that the author has judiciously analyzed the work of Williams and Said in conjunction with respect to Cultural Studies despite the fact that they occupy opposite positionalities. In juxtaposing their work, interesting patterns of overlap and divergence that emerged have been discussed in detail. Christopher concludes 'the work of Williams and Said, when read in conjunction, presents interesting patterns of overlap . . . , the centre and periphery are engaged in a contrapuntal relationship and, together, they have revolutionized cultural studies by offering alternatives protocols to the study of culture' (p. 150).

Despite the fact that the chapters are broad, no derailing outline/introduction is specified in each chapter to the principal ideas and issues, and the way in which discussion would proceed. Concurrently, each chapter concludes devoid of a substantive analysis of some of the more problematic and pertinent issues amplified in the course of the discussion. Endnotes are used merely for citing references not for elaboration of points, as preferred. Nevertheless, the author must be given credit for incorporating unambiguous examples throughout the book that illustrate and elucidate particular points of investigations. This slim volume has a flow

that is not interrupted despite hefty quotations. Written in an easily accessible style, this book will be a fascinating reading for everyone interested in cultural theories and Cultural Studies.

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Consciousness, Society and Values, AV Afonso (ed.), Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 2006, pp. ix + 304, Rs. 375

Consciousness Studies as a trans-disciplinary programme finds its *bricoleur* representation in bringing together ideas from philosophers, social and natural scientists and literary critics in the volume under discussion. Although conceived in the form of what Professor Afonso calls a representation of 'fractal' kind, the volume goes beyond boundaries set up by disciplines of analytic, phenomenological and social sciences and portrays the depth of development by way of juxtaposition and debate. The thrust of this creative act of collation lies in 'consciousness as embodied in one's introspection and reflected in social and moral values'. The volume unfolds multiple ways of achieving this many layered objective, that is, how consciousness is related to society and human values, which makes it possible to explore some new and very exciting territory.

The volume is divided in four sections. Thematically, it runs through Consciousness as manifested in conscious experience, as embodied and as reflected in social and moral values, as collective, social and ideological entity and as the source of values like bioethics and perpetual peace. This diversity of facets and features of Consciousness are correlated in an emergent spectrum of criss-cross, which possibly is an Indian response by way of a critical assessment and synthesis in specific intellectual and cultural context. Such a contextualization is both reflective as well as

reflexive. The reflective aspect of the project is carried out by way of an interpretative novelty, while the reflexive aspect is embedded in an orientation towards values, which are humane and which have distinct contextual-practical relevance. This value orientation of the volume develops into a substantive programme of inquiry: rather than describing the knowledge organization in the field of Consciousness Studies, it turns into a virtuous enterprise of improving the efforts of all these extremely gifted and well trained scholar-contributors from India.

The first section include six papers by Sangeetha Menon, CA Tomy, Prasenjit Biswas, AV Afonso and TV Madhu that combine a wide array of methodological and critical approaches. Starting with S Paneerselvan's paper entitled, 'The Conscious Mind: Functionalism, Representational Theory and Biological Naturalism and their Compatibility', the section goes onto discovering the middle ground between analytic and phenomenological traditions by way of discussion on structures and forms of Consciousness. Especially it is very interesting to note that Sangeetha Menon, in her paper, identifies the very basics of consciousness in two categories like 'experiencer' and 'experience' and comes to an entangled, integrated and irreducible first person notion of self. This anti-naturalist notion of self sets the tone of discussion in this section. Conceivability of a self emerges out to be the major bone of contention in the neurosciences as well as in consciousness studies and it is echoed in various problematic forms in this section. Afonso in a well argued paper with an alluring title, part of which reads as 'Consciousness as a Subject-dependent Linguistic Process' makes a worth read for whatever it stands for. Afonso meticulously examines whether Popper's three worlds of constructivist epistemology can admit genetic

explanations of self and consciousness that turns out to be an expansive-reconstructive reading of Popper. In such an attempt, Popperian methodology of evolution from pre-reflective to reflective consciousness gets problematized in a genetic explanation such as Jean Piaget's, who in Afonso's extensive reading only partially jibes with Popper. Popper's three world epistemology and Piaget's developmental psychology meet at a distance, although both are evolutionary yet they both fall short of Subject-dependence, which is much more than a linguistic acquisition of concepts. Paneerselvan's essay on compatibility between representational theory and biological naturalism takes Searle to task for his naïve notion of consciousness that does not accommodate any notion of 'unconscious'. It is worth remembering that Searle was taken to task by Derrida¹ for determination of intentional or intensional contexts of consciousness in the same way as Paneerselvan does. The assumed compatibilism between conscious representations and causal interactions between brain and world, for Paneerselvan, makes Searle susceptible to property dualism. This minimalist critique of Searle as a theoretician of intentionality even in the case of 'unconscious' working as background of causal connection exposes Searle's impoverished theoretical moves and especially the fact that Searle's notion of context dependence does not allow a freeplay between intentionality and consciousness in a causal closure. Two papers of this section, one by CA Tomy on the feasibility of Sydney Shoemaker's arguments against absent qualia and the other by Prasenjit Biswas on aposteriori necessity of qualia sharpen the debate on self-world relationship. For CA Tomy, Shoemaker's argument fails to categorically separate mental state from representational content as they are phenomenologically and functionally inseparable. Tomy rather suggests that 'there are no

pure phenomenal states called qualia' (p. 57). In sharp contrast, Prasenjit Biswas argues that qualia are based on a phenomenological doubling of self-consciousness and the content of it is an aposteriori necessity based on counterfactual connection with a phenomenal state. But this connection is looped between doubled up consciousness and all its internal and external correlates, the identity of which could be understood by following what he called a 'non-form'. Once again, in contrast from such hackneyed abstractions, TV Madhu's paper appeals to the craft of constituting oneself as a Subject under certain objective and material conditions that make it possible for the author to establish a dialogue between Marx's notion of Subject of praxis with embodied and speaking Subject of Merleau Ponty. Madhu succeeds in a conceptual blending that produces a space for language as the mediating resource between kinds of embodiment. Such a position overcomes the confusion of qualia-absent qualia argument by highlighting that contexts are determined by language including the very context of production of language itself. Further, first person notions of self and consciousness are germane to this feature of linguistic determination of contexts, which certainly needs a genetic and inclusive domain of the material world, which is an interactive and interconnected Popperian world.

The second section of essays contains Phenomenological approaches to the problem of self-world connection by reinterpreting the notion of world and self in terms of two important constituents: society and time. It is noticeable that the first constituent, that is society, acts as the source of doing what is called 'Constitutive Phenomenology' through the life-world, that is how the experiential enters into the conceptual and vice versa. Sebastian Velassary's phenomenological topos of the social world talks of the I-Thou relationship that allows an ontological

space to remain responsible to the other without altering the consciousness of the self. This avoids the situation of becoming stray dogs of modernity or postmodern narcissist and instead paves way for qualitative sharing of universal values of humaneness in our common lived experience. Without discounting such a loaded phenomenology of the social world, Koshy Tharakan employs a Husserlian-Nietzschean notion of aesthetic that leads to value things of the world in a certain way and this is the way of meaning-giving, structuring and intervening in the world. Interestingly, Tharakan points out that all these features of consciousness in the social world discloses itself not as an actuality, but as 'potentiality',² a notion that Giorgio Agamben employs to describe 'suspension of being' under modern social conditions. In a similar vein, Tharakan mentions how values themselves are objects of valuing and hence they paradoxically manifest in thought and not so much in action. L Anthony Savari Raj continues with this paradoxical suspension of being in contemporary time consciousness in technological, sociological and historical realm. He gives the example of 'nanosecond' that denies any notion of persistence through tensed consciousness that matches with the notion of 'comptime' marking a complete separation of time from experience and human consciousness. In contrast to such 'temporalization of time', history provides a notion of human time that seeks to free itself from external and internal constraints of human condition. Raj, very poignantly commends Raimundo Panikkar's notion of combining temporality with eternity in a non-dualistic mode of experience. He further characterizes such a notion of time as transhistorical, which is an adventure of Being. Reading this essay at this point of time, I can see a very fruitful connection between Alain Badiou's just published magnum opus *Event and Being*³ that argues that event is a trans-

Being and that Being is fable about the event and not an event. Panikkar, in Raj's exposition seems to come very close to Badiou's notion of event as something that moves beyond a singular notion of being and truth.

The third section is much more illustrative of a critical notion of consciousness that presents a common feature of *ideologycritique*. Starting with PK Pokker's 'Conscious as an Ideological Construct', the section goes onto showing how forms of knowledge are situated within a certain ideological-discursive context. Pokker alludes to Lacan's celebrated formulation that the discourse of the unconscious is structured like a language in Althusser's notion of overdetermination of consciousness by ideology that not only structures the acts of linguistic representation, but also determines Subject's relation to the world through her unconscious. Such overdetermined consciousness, for Althusser partakes in ideas that rule the world, while it leaves open the possibility of interpellation of a different subjectivity that can break from the unconscious and reproduce the material relations at the level of the conscious. Essentially such reproduction of material relations would give rise to counter-ideological and counter-hegemonic ideologies that would mark a recovery of the agency from the structure. In a sharper vein Murzban Jal continues the critique by way of identifying the phenomenology of the reified mind. Jal posits the paradigm of reification as a deconstruction of Subjectivity that makes *aufhebung* inoperative in the world. This becomes the toehold for a critique of irreality of representation that dominant ideologies produce and that constitutes the realm of the mental by detaching itself from the real. In such a situation the mind is estranged from the materiality of social relations and body, it's an ephemera that becomes an 'alien object'. This brings forth a theory of reification propounded by Lukacs,

Benjamin and other post-Marxist thinkers, which commits a fundamental inversion of sorts: life is conferred on inanimate objects and humanity is erased. This produces an objectification of social relations of exchange or value and a subjectification of mind as a mere estranged and disembedded instrument of consciousness. The message that Jal purports to give is rather nuanced: commodification from social relations estranges the human being, it is not totalizable in human consciousness, because a self-critical unpacking of this process is but a necessary component of this whole process of reification. It sounds quite like Lukács' views on class consciousness that can overcome this pitfall of the estranged mind.⁴ K Gopinathan in his article on deterritorialization of consciousness exorcizes the Deleuzian notion of 'deterritorialization', which means 'construction of a plane of Gopinathan, is rather dehumanizing as it only marks 'a fractures space (that) invariably fragments the concepts, institutions and values located within it' (p. 205). He calls it a non-space that is everywhere and yet nowhere with its negative effect on society that contradictions co-exist without any possibility of transcendence, which Gopinathan characterizes as becoming-inhuman following Deleuze. Such a becoming is ontologically 'disembodied' and thereby annihilating the possibility of determination of value and meaning as they are encountered in moral practice. OL Snaitang's paper on tribal consciousness in India deals with the exclusionary practices of caste societies of India in committing cultural and epistemic violence on tribes. Neither their religions had been recognized nor had their culture been assigned a proper place. While it is ironically true that tribal culture and religion constitutes the substratum of developed cultures, tribes became strangers in their own homeland. Snaitang portrays the grim picture of victimhood of tribes in the

Indian context and paints how an important segment of achievements of human consciousness can be socially marginalized by erecting walls. Snaitang exemplifies within tribal collective consciousness the ramifications of deterritorialization and reification, to describe it in terms of the foregoing papers. S Lordunathan's paper on 'Phenomenological Inquiry on Structuring of Dalit Consciousness' argues about the thrownness of the broken being of the Dalits in India. In terms of consciousness, Dalits embody, according to the author, a continuous encounter with the closed self of the dominator that declares an ontological war against the face of the other, an other with an alterity. It is this ontological condition that keeps Dalit consciousness as a 'protest consciousness' that exist only as broken particular to provoke an ethic of justice for a co-human community and not for a community of others. V Sujatha in her paper interrogates the very conditions of dominant knowledge systems that derive their sustenance from the 'structuring dispositions' or the *techne* of first principles that 'disenfranchises' an outside. Indian system of medicine, practiced by Ayurveda system of medical practitioners, going by this logic of *techne* and such dispositions, was made to suffer as it was devalued. But as a saving grace, medicinal lores as it exists in the existential contexts of village communities within India could act as an inherited and incorporated knowledge within oral traditions and thereby creating an alternative space of consciousness. Diagnostics, care and other forms of practice combined in transmission of such an indigenous knowledge system very successfully, possibly by remaining excluded from the parlance of dominant knowledge systems.

In the penultimate section of the volume there are four essays by Francis Arakal, SE Bhelkey, SV Bokil and a co-

authored essay by IS Dua and Meenakshi Gupta. The essays focus on how values are an intrinsic part of forms of consciousness. Arakal posits that the Advaita hierarchy of consciousness provides an explanatory bridge between phenomenal consciousness and absolute consciousness by way of a progressive de-superimposition of the Self and the non-Self. This is a practical and synthesizing process of attaining the knowledge of Brahman that always acts as the basis for separating the real from the unreal. Advaita proposes an absolute absence of discontinuity between the phenomenal and the absolute as it transcends the sensible by arriving at the knowledge of the real, which is without contradiction and difference. SE Bhelkey's essay on Kashmiri Saivism (KS) is a worthwhile exposition of the some of the fundamental tenets of epistemic rendering of the relationship between consciousness and the human subject that attempts to functionally integrate three basic roles of human consciousness in the forms of knower, doer and enjoyer in reality, which is 'a united complex of infinitely multiple items' (p. 261). KS interprets the functioning of consciousness as a foreground-background relationship as Consciousness that foregrounds is an appearance of particularities of the world, while it pushes limitless and infinite consciousness without forms in the background. Such dialectic creates a unified agent who simultaneously knows, does and enjoys. This is a sublimation of various substrates of knowledge and values without an end in itself, but it develops into a perspective or a vision that act as the basis to create meaning and value in life and world. Therefore in KS, consciousness plays a foundational role in unifying objects and action in relation to the self-conscious agents who are engaged in knowledge enhancing activities. SV Bokil essay on 'Plato's Republic to Kant's concept of *Republic*' is an

exercise in understanding evolution of the notion of republic, from Plato's abstract domain of realization of truth to Kant's notion of individuated domain of the public. Bokil evaluates this transition as one from an abstract notion of good to public use of reason that justifies fraternity and peace. The last but not the least essay on biotechnology and consciousness argues that human consciousness must assume a voluntary role in the evolution of the species and hence an organic reproduction of species cannot ensure the transmission of consciousness. As they explain, 'Man, (sic) the flowering organism which has been empowered by millions of years of intelligence, will achieve a high moral culture when he recognizes that he ought to control his conscious and not wait for the eternity to make him a heap of earth' (p. 302). This optimism of will and pessimism of spirit is what, according to the authors, has brought about diversity in genetic copying of information that do not exactly become one between oneself and one's clone.

This collection of nineteen essays produces a fabulous gift of critical knowledge on the highly fuzzy and fast track terrain of consciousness studies. In all, the volume gives quite a few challenging riders to the gauntlet thrown by cognitive turn in Philosophy. The phenomenological thrust of essays compounded by analytic method of critique of cognitive reason goes onto establishing a humane connection with the realm of social, political and personal struggles of life. The volume wields a final criterion to evaluate the whole project of consciousness studies by placing it in the midst of valuing, which remains to be the foremost frontier of practice and knowledge in human society. The editorial in the beginning provides the right tips to provoke for and against the grain reading of the all these essays, lucidly written and compiled with a broadview of the emerging intellectual horizon.

NOTES

- 1 Derrida, Jacques (1986), *Limited Inc. a, b, c . . .*, (tr.) Samuel Weber, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- 2 Agamben, Giorgio (2004), *The State of*

- Exception*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Agamben explains potentiality as 'potentiality-not-to', which is a paradoxical manifestation of human subjectivity.
- 3 Badiou, Alain (2006), *Being and Event*, (tr.)

- Oliver Feltham, London: Continuum Books.
- 4 Lukács, G. (1954), *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*, Frankfurt, Suhramp.

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Latest
from IAS

Living with Diversity
Forestry Institutions in the Western Himalaya by SUDHA VASAN

Diversity of forestry institutions that emerges from and permeates practice of forestry in the Western Himalaya is at the center of this work. Thick ethnographic descriptions of a range of forestry institutions in Himachal Pradesh – forest department, colonial forest settlements, national parks and reserved forests, sacred groves, forest cooperatives, indigenous institutions, institutions created in Social Forestry, Joint Forest Management and several other state projects are found in these pages.

The central argument is about the diversity of practice that continuously confronts the synoptic vision of modern forestry. Practical diversity of institutions that clearly emerges in this narrative challenges, defies and transforms state simplifications that attempt to simplify, homogenize and standardize ecological and social landscape. On the one hand the historical perspective in this book highlights the persistence of a mosaic of forestry institutions that reflect multiple attempts at state simplification. However, it is also argued that this diversity is not merely residual diversity driven by pre-existing institutional remnants. Instead it is continuously created and recreated by mutually constituting interactions of structures, dispositions and actions that constitute the logic of practice. Since institutional diversity is an active product of practice, it is neither a chaotic nor structureless institutional environment. Forestry institutions in Himachal Pradesh form a tapestry of interwoven variations that are dynamically recreated within boundaries of structural constraints.

The author relates this theoretical understanding to suggestions for a practical forest policy framework in the region that recognizes and positively deals with the resilience of institutional diversity. Efforts to manage forests by obviating, circumventing, ignoring or assuming away the existence of diversity risk unsustainability. This disjuncture between assumptions and pragmatic reality fundamentally underlies the limited success of forest management efforts. The inevitability and importance of forest policy engaging with institutional diversity is emphasized and a framework for "living with diversity" is suggested.

The book will be of interest and use to those in the fields of environmental studies, forestry, sociology, regional studies of the Himalaya, history, politics, management, human geography, social anthropology and development studies as well as policy-makers, bureaucrats and non-governmental organizations.

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Writing Resistance
A Comparative Study of the Selected Novels by Women Writers by USHA BANDE

Resistance can be as esoteric as silence and silence can be as impenetrable as hegemonic power; conversely, both resistance and silence have the potential to challenge power. By its very nature, resistance is non-confrontational. It works subtly through seemingly small, innocuous everyday acts of non-compliance and achieves the desired results imperceptibly and slowly. As a socio-cultural-historical practice, resistance has been largely successful, the most obvious example being Gandhi's philosophy of 'passive resistance'; as a literary practice it poses challenge to the reader as well as the author.

Indian women writers have provided variegated pictures of resistance practices in the modern Indian context. In this study, Usha Bande examines the treatment of resistance in nine contemporary novels written in English. Through a close reading of the selected novels of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Githa Hariharan, Manju Kapur, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy and Bapsi Sidhwa, she examines women's conditioning, their internalization of patriarchy and the reasons for their inability to subscribe to any oppositional action. Textual resistance functioning within the feminist, cultural and post-colonial milieu of the novels provides a platform to understand the theoretical debates and identify various resistant strategies deployed by the creative writers. She traces — drawing on the theories of feminist resistance, resistance operative during the anti-colonial/nationalist struggle, and subaltern resistance — the inter-connection between gender, cultural practices and the Western influence on India social system. Usha Bande observes that despite the influence of the Western ideologies, which cannot be avoided in the Third World context, and the present socio-economic changes, one cannot sidetrack the strong cultural leanings of the authors that provide unique ethos to the works. In her analysis, Bande focuses on issues such as resistance offered to patriarchy, to the matriarch as patriarchy's agent, rape and violence against women, childhood experiences as resistance and revisionist mythmaking as resistance. Recognition of resistance in these texts help us locate the implicit urges of women to re-define their 'self' and to survive not in abject passivity but with dignity.

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