

arguably also because it signifies the difference between the unfinished project of a democratic state, currently an aspirant player in the global market economy, and the still compelling vision of a welfare nation—or should one say a not-yet nation-state. Children in general appear as the most priceless, therefore valued, or even *exemplary* signifiers of the latter.

The third essay focuses on laboring children facing the additional crisis of distress-based seasonal migration. The author advocates that this population be taken up as a special focus group through more cross-responsible governance within the state bureaucracy, accompanied by the non-state actors/sector. She prescribes several models, such as seasonal hostels, school at worksites and summer “bridge” courses, as well as better pedagogical standards in average village schools—that would result in a “progressive” decline of child labor. Perhaps one could rethink the idea of schooling as *the* preferable solution in this case, like child rights movement activists did during the seventies and eighties in England. Prominent ethnographic work done within the discipline of “sociology of work” that shows how working-class children ultimately get working-class jobs might also provide an alternative insight in this case.

The fourth article in this section is a study of the National Child Labour Project launched during the 1990s. The authors are critical of the project, or rather, like other authors in this section, of the *extent* of state initiative and not its *kind*. They recommend the interlinking of other welfare projects with this scheme. The last article by V. Saravanan looks at the state of child labor in Tamil Nadu and the state government’s initiatives to combat the problem by providing school education and related infrastructure—certainly a success story when one thinks of other parts of the country. The author presents a wealth of data from Child Labour Surveys carried out in recent years to make, or demonstrate, an argument similar to the previous authors’ in this section. The prevalent understanding of children as economic agents seems to be based on a particular understanding of *human capital*—that can perhaps be generally traced back to Adam Smith (social investment/return/profit), later taken up by developmental economists of the Chicago School (Schultz and Baker).

Education in general, and compulsory elementary education programs inspired and guided by UN norms—the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, being the chief human rights document and legally enforceable covenant—is often understood as a universal panacea, followed by states as such and has been repeatedly criticized for its lack of cultural relativism. Prescriptions following such a view holds for its little citizens [as *opposite* to good, capable and rightful little adults,

although perhaps in a similar trajectory] the promise of an affective future. Schooling would take care of, even obliterate or rewrite, the mired particular histories of laboring children following this understanding. The laboring child exists at the intersection of the productive economy of the historical nation-state and the moral economy of the deliberative, liberal democracy—a better state[of things to come? Achievable targets of normative citizenship? Desirable future?]. The laboring child in general—as a compelling incarnation of marginalized, disadvantaged, or at-risk social lives in need of care and moral responsibility—is the social-imaginary palimpsest where bad life-history is to be rewritten along the norms of a liberal-universal standard of governance.

On the whole, this comprehensive book is a welcome addition to the volume of already existing scholarship in this area but restricts itself to Indian examples with occasional references to the South Asian region at large—while the title might suggest otherwise.

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Sushil Kumar, *Liberal Humanism and the Non-Western Other: The Right and the Good in World Affairs*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2014, pp. xv + 340, Rs. 695/-, ISBN: 978-93-82396-05-5.

Professor Sushil Kumar’s book under review rethinks the concept of “remaking society” vis-à-vis western political theory and non-western traditional thought that suffered many a set-back under colonial impact. It is an in-depth analysis of non-western postcolonial societies (with its main focus on the Indian situation) that have faced the challenges of decolonization, modernization and national self-determination. The starting point is essentially politico-sociological, not in a descriptive sense, but in a dynamic vivification of the ground realities based on intense research and extensive evaluation of existing political situations, particularly in the postcolonial scenario. The author, who taught International Politics at the Jawaharlal Nehru University for many years, is well equipped to comment on the ideological base of political theory—both western and non-western, and look at the dynamics of social change and the basics of reorganizing the traditional social structures of non-western countries for developmental necessity. The present book was written during his Fellowship at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. The author has covered a wide canvas, discussed political theories from different angles and then used his expertise to write about the defining

moments of recent political history, the challenges of complex situations and the consequences of imitating the western pattern, which is not suitable for traditional societies.

The discussion begins on the premise that non-western countries, in imitating the western models of Enlightenment and western political theory, tend to create new political problems for themselves. They, therefore, need to connect to their own local aspirations and employ strategies that suit their postcolonial, post-independent power structures. They should "aspire for democratic determination of politics as opposed to determination by those who consider themselves superior to others" (p. 309). The author dwells on binary opposites—superior/inferior, us/them, self/other, western/non-western, citizen/polis and local/global—to understand the top-down democratization of decolonized countries. He questions the validity of abandoning ancestral culture by non-western countries (like India) for the glamour of a more advanced modernized socio-political structure, and perceives ambivalence in the demand that the traditional be retained only as a marker of identity.

Political theories like liberal humanism, Marxism, feminism and others are western in origin and these may not necessarily be suitable for non-western structures. According to him, after Independence, the new leadership of India and elsewhere did not realize that importing a political institution or its underlying political theory was "not like importing a washing machine" (p.6) and had its serious repercussions. This borrowing of the western model of Enlightenment resulted in conveniently forgetting that it will also enhance popular culture of materialism and consumerism and relegate the have-nots to the margins. The author rues the fact that while we had our own model of enlightenment and social ethics suitable for our conditions, there was no point in imitating the West.

Prof. Kumar problematizes the "right" and the "good", placing them against the backdrop of liberal humanism as operative in political institutions and opines that the "right" and the "good" need to be inclusive and "extend a helping hand to the last man in the hovel" (p. 314). This can be achieved only when the global and the local coalesce to merge the advantages of development with the aspirations of the local. The global cannot be wished away; on the same analogy, the local cannot be discarded either. The local is the base of one's identity and the "natural habitat" of human values. It is motivated by what the author terms "neighbourhood sentiments" and is the base from where human values can be transmitted globally. The best way to achieve the synthesis of the global and the local and disseminate the advantages of modernity to the marginalized is to revert

to Gandhian political ideas of humanism. Taking his cue from Gandhian thought, the author believes that if the individual man or woman is able to pull himself/herself away from the lower self and move towards realization of the higher self, a harmonious decolonized society can be set up. Decolonization cannot be a question of political passion, nor is it a matter of social prestige. It can be meaningful only when the individual of the non-western world gets his/her rights.

Nothing escapes the microscopic vision of the author—the ambivalence of the top-down and bottom-up political and social forces, the state-society relations and the impact of materialism on culture—all come within his purview. Further, he discusses various issues to arrive at the conclusion that ancient and medieval political thoughts, state rights, national rights, class rights and individual rights, the role of language and inter-textual narrative have the power to twist and turn meaning and finally the human element that can vouchsafe the "good" and the "right", which is the main thesis of the work. World politics today is a complex web of various influences. Terms like diversity, power politics, pluralism, hegemony, religion and autonomy have assumed several connotations. Neither un-reflexive traditionalism, nor unmediated rationalism can come to the rescue of non-western societies if they do not find their own system harmonious to their particular needs and value system.

With international standard in printing, paper and cover design *Liberal Humanism and the Non-Western Other* is a book that leaves its impact on the readers, for which the publisher deserves our compliment. Besides, the language has flow and makes a smooth read. It raises a myriad questions dwelling on significant changes that need be addressed if India is to protect itself from being a fractured society. The author puts before the reader several posers that are pointed enough to make him/her re-think for further discussion. The questions are answered in a conversational style that forms the base of the discourse. Political theorists, students of international affairs, postcolonial and subaltern studies scholars will find the book very useful.

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Chhanda Chatterjee (ed.), *Literature as History: From Early to Contemporary Times*. Delhi: Primus Books, 2014, pp. x + 176, Hb, Rs. 595/-, ISBN: 978-93-84082-03-1.

The fields of literature and history, emerging as they both do from within the dense web of the complex forces of power—socio-cultural, political, economic, ideological and