

Book Reviews

In the Name of Honour: A Memoir, Mukhtar Mai with Marie-Theresa Cuny, Tr. by Linda Coverdale, Foreword by Nicholas D. Kristof, London: Virago Press, 2006, pp. 169, Rs. 395/-

By a curious logic of patriarchy, women have, since ages, been the upholders of man's, and by implication community's honour—be it Sita or Draupadi, Amba or Ahilya, and more recently, Gudiya or Mukhtaran Bibi. Women not only have the onus to safeguard it but they are also the ones who bear the brunt of the rival community's vengeance; and conversely, they become the symbol of the rape of their community and a constant reminder to the men folk of the assertion of the aggressor's position of power. This is what happened during partition rape cases, and this is what has happened in recent times to Mukhtaran Bibi and many like her.

The book under review, *In the Name of Honour*, is a first person narration of Mukhtaran Bibi's sad but daring story put in words by Marie-Theresa Cuny, an activist and a writer from France. The French version of the memoir was translated in English by Linda Coverdale and was published by Philippe Robinet. Robinet's 'A Note to the Reader' makes it clear that Mukhtaran Bibi speaks only Saraiki dialect and 'can read and write no other language'. Mustafa Baloch and Saif Khan helped in translating the conversation between Mukhtaran and Cuny. 'Marie-Theresa Cuny transformed Mukhtar's emotions, thoughts, and impressions into the book, despite the hurdle posed by the great disparity of language.' A live example of 'sisterhood', indeed!

There is probably nothing new in Mukhtaran Bibi's rape case; what is new is the boldness of her stand, the courage to speak and her vision for the future of her community's girls. Mukhtaran's story prior to the rape is simple: Born in Meerawala, a small tribal village in Jatoi tehsil of Muzaffarabad District of Pakistan, in 1972, Mukhtaran Bibi belongs to the clan called Tatla—a poor and marginalized Gujar tribe. When pitted against the powerful Mastois, the Gujars have no option but to obey their command. And this reality of their situation recoiled on the blameless and hapless Mukhtaran when in June 2002 she was gang-raped in full view of the village elders and her own parents, and paraded half-naked.

Mukhtaran is a divorcee. She tells of her marriage in simple straightforward narration. 'Married at eighteen

by my family to a man I did not know and who proved both lazy and incompetent, I had managed to obtain a divorce rather quickly, with the help of my father, and had been living sheltered from the outside world—a world that extended no farther than my native village.' Mukhtaran is illiterate but she taught the Koran orally to the village children free of charge and earned a pittance by embroidery work.

The book provides the human side of the story. It gives us a peep into the psyche of the 'woman' Mukhtaran with her thoughts, emotions, self-confidence, her fears for personal and family security, and the strong will power that sustains her. It lays bare the caste-ridden society and the place of women in it. They are lowest scums in a lowest social order that is still following the jungle law. Mukhtaran was brought before the *Jigra* (village council) ostensibly to beg forgiveness for her little brother's 'imaginary crime' and was gang-raped by four Mastoi men.

Hereafter, the story is one of sodomy and cruelty, tears and the strong impulse to commit suicide, police inactivity and administrative hide and seek. Mukhtaran was shattered and would have ended her life had not something within her resurfaced and inspired her to take revenge. But how? This she was not sure of. The media men got alerted when they heard some men of the Mastoi clan boasting of their 'daring act' openly during their trip to the nearby town. The case got wide coverage in the Pakistani as well as the foreign press.

Soon, Mukhtaran found herself at the centre. She mustered up courage and recounted her side of the horrifying tale to the reporters. Mukhtaran speaks frankly of police apathy towards the poor, how they treated her with disdain, tricked her into placing her thumb impression to blank documents which they later manipulated. But, there still are good human beings like the judge at the lower court whose foresight and sympathetic attitude helped her regain her faith in the system. She got compensation money from Pakistan government which wanted her to keep her mouth shut. With the amount she opened a girls' school in her village knowing fully well the disadvantages of being illiterate. Help poured from Canada, the USA and many sympathetic organizations and agencies.

With honours and recognition pouring in on her, Mukhtaran found that life had lost its earlier simplicity

and obscurity. She was in the thick of events; with publicity came threats from the Mastois and even from the government. Instead of appreciating her courage, the detractors charged her of exploiting the situation to defame Pakistan; of playing in the hands of foreign agencies; and of extracting money. In fact, Mukhtaran does not want funds for herself; the aid-money is important only because it enables her to help the suffering women. Her 'Meerawala Women's Crisis Centre' and the school for girls she is running in her village are doing great work.

Despite threats, Mai does not want to leave her village for the security of some big town, nor is she willing to leave her country. Mukhtar, who is now Mai, elder sister, to myriads of suffering women, continues her fight. The last chapter of the memoir, 'Kausar's Tears' records many tales of domestic violence, kidnapping, rape and other atrocities perpetuated on women and women's faith in Mukhtar Mai's ability to come to their succour. And herein lies her strength, her persistence and her faith in the supreme power guiding her on her path to justice.

Mukhtar Mai's tale turns from being the tear-soaked account of woman as victim to woman as victor. To imagine that she has become a 'hero' overnight and that her fight is now smooth would be to place the focus wrongly. *In the Name of Honour* reveals many a skeleton in the cupboard. Despite the fact that Mukhtar Mai is now a celebrity and that the financial condition of her family has improved considerably, the patriarchal power structure still holds the power. Mukhtaran has to seek permission from her elder brother for everything, including her travels, and he often poses hurdles.

Narrated in simple language, often in direct style and in present tense, Mukhtar Mai's memoir is deep despite its obvious simplicity. The dominant feature of the book is the patriarchal structure and patriarchal attitude to women. This is reinforced through women's abject silence. Mukhtar laments that though the male members of her family were fully aware of Mastois intentions, they never revealed it to the women folk. Her father's only injunction to her was, 'Mukhtaran, get ready, and follow me'. (p. 6) The book is also a veiled attack on the caste/class divide in the tribal village. The Gujars are the poor, lower in caste than the rich and powerful Mastois. 'We know that the Mastois always take their revenge on a woman of the lower caste,' says Mukhtar Mai, 'It's the woman's place to humiliate herself, to beg for forgiveness before all the men of the village assembled in a *jigra* in front of the Mastois' farmhouse'. (p. 6) The maintainance and reconstruction of patriarchy is the basis to honour-rape. Therefore, interaction between patriarchy, ideology, societal beliefs and events such as these substantiate honour-rape in which women are

objectified and tyrannized.

'Oppression can only survive through silence,' says Carmen de Montefloves, in another context. By breaking her silence, Mukhtar Mai has shown that any talk on violence against women concentrating on rape or other forms of violence must also take cognizance of the atrocities carried out in the name of honour. A court ruling in our country defines cruelty as, 'delight in or indifference to pain or misery in others. It connotes acts which are savage or merciless'. In humiliating women, interfering in their personal life and causing them mental harassment, whose honour are these 'so-called' guardians of tradition upholding? When feminists exhort women 'to write'; 'to write their body' they want women to be articulate, to stand up against injustice and not to hide their disgrace because it is not their dishonour but the shame of entire humanity.

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The Bhotias in Indian Himalayas: A Socio-Linguistic Approach by Anandamayee Ghosh, Delhi: BR Publishing Corporation, 2007, pp. xix+ 215, 8 plates, ISBN 81-7646-569-0.

Both lay persons and specialists are since long constantly engaged in studies of the Himalayan people and their diversified culture. Different universities and research institutions across continents have been established for 'Himalayan studies'. One such venture at present is being accomplished under the series, 'Languages of the Greater Himalayan Region' by George van Driem. Some titles in this series are published by Brill, Leiden. Language has been used by some scholars as one of the yardsticks for knowing the ethnicity and cultural history of the people speaking numerous languages in Indian Himalaya. The present monograph tries to study the languages of the Bhotias, i.e., the Tibetan-speaking people who traversed high altitudinal passes from Tibet to India over many centuries, and other Himalayan nomads who settled down permanently on the south slopes of the Himalayas.

Divided into five chapters and three appendices, *The Bhotias in Indian Himalayas* examines the languages of scores of communities, and tries to establish linkages amongst them. Anandamayee Ghosh seems to have the competence to deal with such a challenging topic and unearth the speech pattern of a diverse group of people occupying a vast Himalayan landscape extending from Ladakh in the west to Arunachal in the east. For distinguishing the linguistic characteristics of various groups she has divided the Indian Himalaya into three major sectors: western, central and eastern—each sector

inhabited by distinct linguistic group.

She has given a preliminary history of the migration of the Bhotias in different sectors of the Indian Himalaya but seems totally unaware of latest archaeological researches made since the times of A H Francke who surveyed the western sector in the beginning of the twentieth century. It is quite surprising to notice that for the possible number of monasteries established by Rin-chen bzang-po (AD 958-1055) in Ladakh, Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur, Ghosh preferred to cite Francke's works published in 1914 and 1926 (cited in notes 8 and 9 on page 12) rather than checking the Tibetan versions of biographies (one of these biographies translated into English by Snellgrove and Skorupski), providing altogether different names of localities. She provides a useful compilation and analysis on the distribution of different areas in each sector along with an ethnic group that can be distinguished linguistically from another.

A detailed speech-pattern of Bhotias living in the western Himalaya centred on speeches such as Balti, Ladakhi, Purik, Lahauli, Pattani, Tinanni and those of Spiti and upper Kinnaur. What is noticeable at several places is that Ghosh has relied on analysis provided by G A Grierson in his *Linguistic Survey of India: Tibeto-Burman Family* published in the beginning of the previous century. Some of the earlier seminal contributions of T Grahame Bailey, 'A Brief Grammar of the Kanauri Language', ZDMG, Vol. 63, 1909; 'Kanauri vocabulary in two parts: English-Kanauri and Kanauri-English', JRAS, 1910, 1911, Alexander Gerard (in JASB, vol. XI, 1842) and also those of Rahul Sankrityayana (*Kinnerdesh*, pp. 376-390), and Tika Ram Joshi (*A Grammar and Dictionary of Kanawari, the Language of Kanawar, Bashahr State, Punjab*, Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1909) are totally omitted. While referring to Rin-chen bzang-po she intends to state that the Lotsava had earlier visited Lahaul and provided the first hand accounts of many localities of that region. Unfortunately, all places cited by her in note 31 on page 80 are actually located in Kinnaur district. She has misunderstood and misplaced the Nirmand copperplate inscription of Samudrasena, (dated in the Harsha era: equivalent to AD 612-13). Hutchison and Vogel in 1919 (later the same view was repeated by them in their *History of the Panjab Hill States*, Lahore, 1933, Vol. II, page 484) created the misconception that Samudrasena controlled Spiti in the beginning of the seventh century, and numerous scholars repeated the same viewpoint subsequently. In the last section of chapter two, she gives a brief discussion on the Nyam skad spoken by the people living in Pooh and Moorang tehsils of Kinnaur district. Ghosh has observed some similarities of Nyam skad with speeches of Jad in Uttarkashi of Uttrakhand. The possible reason for this phenomenon is because both these areas

of Indian Himalaya are situated in close proximity of western Tibet, culturally also called mNga'-ris in Tibetan inscriptions and literary sources.

Ghosh preferred to club the Bhotia speeches of central and eastern sectors in chapter III. Divergences in the speeches of different ethnic groups in these sectors are more prominent than those noticed among the people of the western sector. There are many ethnic groups in the central sector that are not of Mongoloid origin. It is interesting to note that communities such as Marchas and Tolchas inhabiting the valleys of Mana and Niti close to the Indo-Tibetan border belong to the Khaua stock. The same chapter provides some examples of the speeches of the Sherpa, Kagatse, Tamang, Danjongka, Totos, Monpa, Sar dug pa, Khamba and Memba communities. The speech peculiarity of Dug pa Bhotias living in Darjeeling district is akin to Bhutanese language where syllabic agglutination of phonemes is observed: for example, Tibetan *bumo* is pronounced as *bum*.

The changes that are occurring in the speech-pattern of the Bhotias in recent years are summarized in chapter IV. After giving the names of some prominent poets and prose writers she cites some examples of their writings. She has encountered the use of new terminologies in Tibetan language since the coming of Europeans to Tibet. It seems likely that Bhotia speeches enriched their vocabularies soon after the exodus of Tibetans to India from Tibet.

Apart from discussing the speeches, Ghosh ventures into the life and cultures of the Bhotias. She has observed that as there are many divergences in the speeches of the Bhotias of the Indian Himalaya, so are differences in their food habits, arts and crafts, dresses, housing pattern and performing arts. This chapter could have further been improved by incorporating the results of latest research. There are numerous printing errors and at occasions wrong citation of dates. For example, Hay's report on Spiti was published in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. XIX in 1850, not in 1849 (page 108); Tholing and Tsaparang are wrongly shown in Ladakh (page 121)—these localities are part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region of People's Republic of China; Atisa died in Tibet in AD 1054, not in AD 1053 (page 128); the Christian missionary church at Pooh was established in 1864, not in 1965 (page 152, note 26).

This slim work concludes with vocabularies of 19 speech-groups and a bibliography that certainly needs to be updated. The quality of this work could have been substantially further improved with careful editing.

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Pain and Flesh, by Indira Goswamy, Delhi: BR Publishing Corporation, 2007, pp. 79, Rs. 695/-

A genuine creative genius tends to be trans-generic for it is not necessary that each time his/her imagination would readily dovetail into his/her otherwise preferred mode of writing. Experience and its expression therefore must choose its own form as well as medium. Indira Goswamy for once departs from her fictional forte as she lapses into poetry of pain and flesh. Though in her short prefatory remarks, she describes her poetry 'more like footnotes to [her] fictional writings', the fact remains that it is more like an extension of her fictional enterprise. Poems more often act as epigraphs to prose-interventions—fictional and non-fictional. Goswamy's so-called 'footnotes' therefore need to be seen more as epigraphs to her fictional constructions.

The local customs, landscape and personal relationships invariably impregnate Goswamy's poetic imagination. Rooted in her native Assam, the poems undertake what might be called ecological mimeticism of a kind in which the gap between the landscape and the 'poetic-persona elides under the pressures of provincial possessiveness. Brahmaputra, therefore, does not flow outside, it flows in the veins: 'You flow like the blood/ which flows in my veins.' At times, the mighty river is a dark instinct inside: 'We wore your waves/ like the silky snake/ around our flesh.' The river is an intimate lover too: 'I have slept with you/ in the moonlit night! You have laid out my bed/ with white Kamini flowers.' What really stands out in Goswamy's invocation of Brahmaputra is that she does not spiritualize the river as much. It is not holy and sacred like Ganga, it stands more for the flow of life, and not for its renunciation. The other mighty rivers of the world from Nile to Jhelum, with their respective mythologies and local folklores do enamour the female poet, but it is the 'red river' that disappears inside her. The female body becomes the very locus of the river.

The body or the flesh is Goswamy's site of love which shields even her dead lover from all future threats: 'Like the sun it will bestow light!/ Like the banyan it will cool you/ with its shade /Like the water it will quench/your thirst!/Like the rose, it will emit fragrance/on your path!' The female sensibility of the poetess not only lends element of lyricism in her poetry, it unfolds the mysteries of the feminine through an empathetic involvement. The 'Ode to Whore' is a sheer celebration of the female sexuality without any moral hangovers. The body of the whore is the meeting ground of pain and flesh: 'Out of agony/ I have whipped my own flesh/ and have drunk my own blood.' The whore embodies the entire native

landscape: 'My body which is like/ The supple bodies of the Barali/ which dance with the waves of the red River!/ My breast – the Saramati Peak . . ./' Goswamy's cutting edge is the foregrounding of her female sensibility in the native.

The poetess's body bears the brunt each time anything painful happens in the external world. The buffalo sacrifice is as much a sacrifice of her own female self at the altar of the goddess: 'The flesh I don't know / whether it is his or mine!' Partition too is an experience of ripping the body apart, the poetess asks: 'Can anyone draw that line/In our raw flesh, inside our heart?' The death of the poetess's friend Neelkanta is a body-blow as well: 'A cry bursts out in my heart!/ When the unknown voice/ gouges my flesh/and says, . . ./ Nothing is greater than life!'

Goswamy transforms the inanimate into animate, for that is the only way she can express herself. She speaks thorough the body, and can dialogue with a body only. The abandoned house of VS Naipaul at Chaguanas, Port of Spain, under the intense poetic gaze, stands transformed into a speaking self, articulating its painful history of exile and dislocation. As the poetess touches the houses, she hears 'the echoes of the mighty Atlantic striking/ the shores-/where grows the sugarcane plants.../still emitting the odour/ mixed with the sweat of the debentured [sic] labourers.' Goswamy's poetics is thus the poetics of the body; her female body is the space of her experience as well as expression.

When body becomes the poetic subject, the logic of the sensory and sensual overtakes the intellect. Such poems tend to be exclamatory and at times even rhetorical. Goswamy's fleshy poems lack artistic sophistication, even the metaphors (of heart, rose, river etc.) she invokes are stale and exhausted. Even the layout of the collection is too bold for poetic presentation. It lends it more a character of a coffee-table book, than of an under-played poetic endeavour. As an expression of the finer breath, poetry has its patent book-sizes. The collection should have been sleek, preferably a pocket-size volume. The glossy paper with thick gray border does not add to the poetic merit, rather it suppresses the poetic text.

The authorship of the collection is singularly attributed to Indira Goswamy, which is unjustified and unethical too. The collection has more number of paintings by internationally renowned artist J N Hazarika, than poems by the poetess. At times paintings speak as much, if not more than, the poems. 'Ode to Whore' and 'Buffalo Sacrifice' are more powerfully painted than verbally expressed. The sensuality of the woman is painted in measured strokes, revealing her flesh in intimate

postures. The visual expression of the buffalo sacrifice invokes motifs of tribal art, and is more graphic in detail than the accompanying poem.

The symbiosis of poetry with painting is uneven and this unevenness creeps in because of the better artistic virtues of the painter. The symbiotic effort, nevertheless, deserves all appreciation, but should it mean denial of rights of authorship to the co-artist? In all fairness, the book should have been co-authored, preferably with a theme-painting on the jacket of the book. The publishers seem to cash in on the status of Indira Goswamy as a Jnanpith awardee. If at all, the photo along with the bio-sketch of poetess had to be given, it should have been given inside the jacket-cover, and not on the front and back of it.

Another noticeable aspect of the collection is this sudden transformation of an 'Assamese' writer into an 'English' poetess. Is this changeover innate or forced upon by the pressures of market? The anxiety of the native writer to be heard in the national and international market has brought about many aberrations. The poetic idiom is laboured and lacks English cadence. Nowhere does the poetess nativize English as well. The native rhythms, which one hears in Bhupen Hazarika's lyrics and music, are hardly audible in Goswamy's poetry.

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Education and Culture in North-East India (1826-2000), by Lalit Kumar Barua, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2006, pp. xiii+255, Rs. 350/-

Two trends may be broadly discernible in terms of existing literature on the cultural and intellectual development in nineteenth-century India: one view denotes that the emergence of modern ideas and the development of social protest was the consequence of the introduction of English/western education. The other view takes into account the indigenous knowledge systems and the traditions of protest, and also takes into account the modern ideas in the formation of intellectuals. It is believed that the 'father' of Bengal 'Renaissance' had first been groomed into indigenous systems of knowledge and only later did he come in contact with English/Western knowledge.

The book under review falls into the second category. The author Lalit Kumar Barua argues that the formation of intellectuals in nineteenth-century Assam was the consequence of (i) English education, (ii) contact with

Bengali intelligentsia and (iii) the influence of 'religious tradition of neo-Vaishnavism' in Assam.

However, the cultural and ideological struggle led by intellectuals in nineteenth-century Assam first expressed itself in terms of a literary renaissance (1889-1939). This movement was 'closely allied with the broad stream of pan-Indian cultural development of the time' (p. 46) but simultaneously it also represented the 'distinct cultural and historical identity' of Assam. Though influenced by the Bengal Renaissance the nature of the movement in Assam was different because the 'racial, geographical and historical' factors 'made the Assamese society evolve along different lines from the Bengali'. Pre-colonial Assam 'had an independent entity' and, therefore, its 'political identity' remained intact for a longer period. Secondly, 'caste formation' in Assam was 'not on the same rigid lines'. Moreover, the 'Assamese had been marginalized' for more than half a century. The province 'languished under Bengali's hegemony'. Therefore, the struggle for 'cultural and linguistic identity' was a major preoccupation with the intellectuals of Assam.

In twentieth-century colonial Assam, *Assam Association* integrated aspects related towards cultural and political struggles. Initially this Association kept a distance with the Indian National Congress but gradually it became a close ally of the Congress. However, the struggle for Assamese cultural, linguistic and territorial identity continued to be an important agenda with the Assamese Congress leaders. Therefore, there was a 'convergence' of 'Assamese identity' and 'national identity' during the 'freedom struggle'.

In post-colonial Assam the protest against 'immigration' became one of the major agendas of the political leadership. However, the author argues that it is linked with the question of 'agrarian conflict'. (pp. 189-90) The other important agenda that dominated the politics in north-east India was the question of 'ethnicity'. However, the author argues that historically Assam consisted of multi-cultural communities and 'distinct tribes living in well-marked territories' and they always maintained 'cultural parity with the major linguistic group of the plain and interact with them closely' (p. 227), but in the earlier period, 'the tribal cultural identities were never perceived to be in danger for that reason'. (p. 228) It is only in the post-independence period that there was a 'shift in the linguistic paradigm from equilibrium to conflict'. (p. 228)

The author has discussed three significant Assamese novels to explore the 'identity and difference' from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries (pp. 195-216): *Miri Jiyari* (1894) by Rajani Kanta Bordoloi (1868-1939); *Jivanaṅṅ Batat* (1944) by Birinchi Kumar Barua (1908-64); and

Yaruingam by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya (1924-97). *Miri Jiyari* (literally means a Miri daughter) deals with the symbiotic relationship of the *Missings* (one of the plain tribes of Assam) with nature. It also critiques the prevalence of bride price among the *Missings* as well as the existence of slavery in the neighbouring tribe. *Jivanar Batat* (literally means the high road of life) deals with the folk culture of the Brahmaputra valley, along with social changes within colonial Assam. The political theme of the freedom movement, specifically the movement led by Gandhi has been interwoven within the context. Therefore, regional and national identities are very well represented in this narrative. *Yaruingam* (literally means people's rule) deals with the dilemma of Tangkhul Naga identity. Simultaneously 'several overlapping identities of religion, class and gender' are represented in the novel.

Lalit Kumar Barua in the book under review, therefore, has provided a scholarly account of the social and cultural history of north-east India (1826-2000), with specific reference to the Brahmaputra valley. It is divided into ten chapters: (1) 'Cultural Transition in Eastern India: Bengal and Assam', (2) 'North-East India in the Nineteenth Century', (3) 'Education and Social Change: The Early Phase (1826-1920)', (4) 'Education: Political and Social in Assam (1900-30)', (5) 'Assamese Literary Renaissance: Responses to Tradition and Modernity', (6) 'The Nationalist Discourse: The Impact of Gandhi and the Freedom Struggle in North-East India', (7) 'Historicizing Cultural Identity: Colonial and Post-Colonial Assam', (8) 'Three Assamese Novels: The Exploration of Identity and Difference', (9) 'Education and Multiculturalism in North-East India' and (10) 'Postscript: Identity Crisis in the Brahmaputra Valley'.

The book, however, is not free of certain limitations. It is beset with repetitions, which, at times, make the reading tedious. The author resorts to certain sweeping generalizations without substantiating the same. To illustrate a case in point, 'unlike in Bengal or Maharashtra, for instance, the educated elite in Assam were not strongly based on caste or landed interests; this group in Assam was closer to peasantry'. (p. 91) The narrative is replete with such generalizations. This may be due to author's unwillingness to resort to archival sources, both official as well as non-official. Rather, he has relied mainly on 'secondary sources' or 'secondary discourses' for this study.

The author has used certain concepts, which need to be 'problematized'. For example in Chapter-V, 'Assamese Literary Renaissance: Responses to Tradition and Modernity' (pp. 115-39), the author denotes the stereotype namely, 'tradition-modernity' without examination of this binary and subjecting it to critical gaze. In fact, there are many instances where the author could have

questioned concepts as well as categories, and subjected them to coherent critical analysis. For example the term 'tradition' (p. 48) has been used without examining that many of these were the creations of the colonial construction of knowledge. Moreover, the hegemonic social groups also do 'invent' or 'imagine' what would be deemed as traditions. For example, in chapter VIII, 'Three Assamese Novels: The Exploration of Identity and Difference' (pp. 195-216), the author, while providing a detailed summary of Rajani Kanta Bordoloi's *Miri Jiyari*, uses categories such as 'bride-price, and slavery'. These categories resulted from translations of indigenous terms by colonial ethnographers. The emerging social group internalized these 'discourses' as 'social evils' without much questioning. The author could have examined these categories.

Categories such as 'middle class', 'intellectuals', 'intelligentsia', 'educated elite', 'bhadrolok', 'gentleman', are used in a manner that seemingly are overlapping and in the introduction itself the author could have examined elements of theoretical literature in order to explain these categories.

Though the author intends to cover the entire north-east India, as indicated in the title, (Education and Culture in North-East India, 1826-2000) his predominant concentration has been vested upon the Brahmaputra valley. He has taken into account the question of Naga and Mizo identity but the question of Bodo identity has been overlooked. While the Assamese cultural identity versus Bengali hegemony has been discussed, the Assamese hegemony over the hill tribes has been ignored. Even a cursory glance at the proceedings of Assam Sahitya Sabha would reveal the streaks of Assamese hegemony. Moreover, it is evident that the Bodos and the tribes inhabiting the NEFA/Arunachal Pradesh have contested Assamese hegemony. The intellectuals/educated leaders have been questioning the hegemony of the Assamese language since the 1960s but the author has simply neglected these developments.

Lastly, it may be noted that the author has failed to refer to some significant works by earlier writers which deal with similar themes: these have been reflected in Sajal Nag's *Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationality Questions in North-East India* (Manohar, Delhi, 1990) and *In the Writings of Hiren Gohain*.

Amidst the various shortcomings the book provides significant contribution towards cultural studies of northeast India and deserves reading.

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Translation and Interpreting Reader and Workbook, ed. by Ravinder Gargesh and Krishen Kumar Goswami, New Delhi: Orient Longman Private Limited and University of Delhi, pp. 269, Rs.145/-.

The in depth study in the area of Art of Translation demands more attention not because it paves way for global interaction but also offers an excellent opportunity to undergo socio-cultural survey of various languages and their literatures. In the context of Indian Studies, keeping in view the multilingual and pluralistic cultural nature of our country, translation has an important role to play. Again, it is through translation that we can peep into the rich heritage of India as one integrated unit and feel proud of our cultural legacy.

Translation and Interpreting (Reader and Workbook) apparently a text book, has all the qualities of an edited research work backed up by well conceived text-data in the form of exercises, technical terminology and other relevant material. The book comprises three main categories: English Reader, Hindi Reader and Work Book. Scholarly and well defined articles written in English and Hindi by experts like J C Catford, Isadore Pinchuk, R N Shrivastava, Krishna Kumar Goswami, Ravinder Gargesh, Bhola Nath Tiwari, Kailash Chandra Bhatia etc. are collected in the first two categories of the book. All these articles throw sufficient light on the art, practice and significance of translation and provide valuable material to the readers, more especially, to those who want to study the theoretical aspect of translation: meaning of translation, types of translation, transliteration, translation and poetry, translating an advertisement, machine translation, interpretation etc. The third category is based on various exercises providing adequate/elaborate material for such translators/students who want to practice both oral and written translations.

The entire material of the book is designed/ chapterized very skillfully and with deep insight to cater to the needs of both Hindi and English enthusiasts/translators/students which, undoubtedly, adds to the importance of the book.

Broadly speaking, translation turns a text of one language (SL) into a correct and understandable version of another language (TL) without losing the suggestion of the original. Many people think that being bilingual is all that is needed to be a translator. That is not true. No doubt, being bilingual is an important pre-requisite but translation skills are built and developed on the basis of one's own long drawn-out communicative and writing experiences in both the languages. As a matter of fact, translation is a process based on the theory of extracting the meaning of a text from its present form, and

reproducing it with different form of a second language.

Conventionally, it is suggested that translators should meet three requirements, namely: 1) Familiarity with the source language, 2) Familiarity with the target language, and 3) Familiarity with the subject matter to perform the job successfully. Based on this concept, the translator discovers the meaning behind the forms in the source language (SL) and does his best to reproduce the same meaning in the target language (TL) using the TL forms and structures to the best of his knowledge. Naturally and supposedly what changes are the form and the code and what should remain unchanged is the meaning and the message. (Larson, 1984) Therefore, one may discern the most common definition of translation, i.e., the selection of the nearest equivalent for a language unit in the SL in a target language.

Computers are already being used to translate one language into another, but humans are still involved in the process either through pre-writing or post-editing. There is no way that a computer can ever be able to translate languages the way a human being could since language uses metaphor/imagery to convey a particular meaning. Translating is more than simply looking up a few words in a dictionary. A quality translation requires a thorough knowledge of both the source language and the target language.

To translate from one language into another has never been an easy endeavour. It is an exercise, both painstaking and cumbersome, and only those who have engaged themselves with translation work can realize the complex character of this art. I have been associated with translation work for over three decades translating from English, more specifically from Kashmiri into Hindi and back. I have a few words (based upon my close understanding about translation study and activity) for up-coming translators and translation-lovers and for the readers for whom the book under review is primarily meant: A good translator ought to be a good writer. You needn't translate everything that has been written, you need to translate the best only. A good translator adjusts and not compromises with the original text. Translators are like ambassadors representing and exchanging the best of their literary world. Art of translation is as old as mankind; don't you translate your thought before you speak it out? Try to get into the mind of the writer. Check your translation twice or may be thrice before finalizing the script. Put the original passage 'aside' and listen to your translation with your ear 'tuned in', as if it were a passage originally written in the TL.

If your material is highly technical, with vocabulary that is distinctive to a discipline, it is important that the translator has at least some background or experience of that discipline. A good translator of poetry and drama

may be a bad choice for a chemical engineering or biotechnology text.

If you have a native speaker of your target language handy, particularly one who is familiar with the subject, that person could be as useful as your teacher for final script-review. Take his assistance without fail.

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India: Development and Participation by Dre're Jean and Amartya Sen, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. XVII + 512, Rs. 395/-.

Development, over the years, has acquired a complex character. It is now no longer conceived in terms of economic growth alone, because of its inadequacy to measure it. The new conception of development means 'Growth plus Social Change'. The trickle down theory of economic growth and the import substitution policy have failed to tackle the problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and ill health of the people fully in the developing nations. It is now realized that these can possibly be achieved by placing 'people' at the centre-stage of development and by developing economic, social and political institutions so as to enhance the freedom of individuals and groups.

In the above backdrop, the book under review by two eminent economists is a welcome addition to the available literature on the subject. This is a revised edition of their earlier publication entitled *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity* (1995). The contents of the book have been well presented; the focus here is on the 'intrinsic value, constructive role and instrumental importance of public participation in development'. Further, the analysis on economic development and social opportunity emphasizes the liberalization debate in the post economic era. It is observed that positive functions such as public education, health services and social security arrangements have been excluded from the debate along with the role of co-operative action in economic and social reforms. Instead, there has been over-occupation with the 'narrow' sphere of economic reforms. Comparing the progress of various states, it is observed that though India's overall development scenario is not very encouraging, yet some of the states, barring Bihar and UP, have done much better on certain indicators of development such as population control, land reform, empowerment of disadvantaged groups, democratic decentralization, rapid economic growth and innovative education programs etc.

It is also observed that India needs to learn from China on a 'discriminating' basis, especially the lessons related to their opening to the market forces. Further, there is a need to promote elementary education not only as a fundamental right but also to ensure universal attainment of literacy and other basic educational achievements. A greater public awareness and interest on issues of population, health and environment may help in finding solutions to these problems. There is also a concern shown for female deprivation and missing women as well as inequities in gender roles. The role of women's agency to develop freedom in them for contesting and reassessment of their roles has been stated. It is also mentioned that recent military and nuclear escalations have led to massive economic, political and social costs in terms of resource use and other consequences. Moreover, the expansion of market has been observed to promote human capabilities necessary for eliminating endemic deprivation but we need to get out of the 'cage' through a coordinated government and public action. The practice of democracy should be to make it advantageous to the majority of people through various participatory processes. This is perhaps, the only way by which we can correct distortions in our priorities to tackle the development issues discussed above so as to proceed in the right direction of development.

As stated above, the book provides a wide spectrum of issues of India's development. Both the diagnostic and curative dimensions have been given in a profound manner. However, without strengthening the grassroot movements and the governmental efforts for democratic decentralization, it may be difficult to translate the macro-level analysis into micro or meso level action (individual, group or community), because of the factious nature of the society, in which we are living.

The get-up of the book is very good. Beside, it has a rich reference material. The book will surely be of immense value to the students or scholars interested in pursuing studies in development economics, sociology and political science.

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Saath Chalte Hué-Rowing Together by Sukrita Paul Kumar and Savita Singh, New Delhi: Rajkamal, 2008, pp. 179, Rs 250/-

Poet to poet translation, infrequent in the past, is gradually increasing as a dynamic collaboration between

creative imaginations. Transcreation requires sensitivity, understanding, felicity with words, sensibility and imagination to avoid being wooden and clumsy. Often, writers are averse to their works being translated because the process becomes a mere faithful rendering, rather than catching the essence and flavour of the work.

Therefore, it is a good idea to have poets translating each other's writings, thus, giving the poems a whole new persona in clothes of different fabrics and hues while preserving the essential grain and spirit of the inspiration. Since 2005, the collaborative 'Poet to Poet Translation Project' of Cove Park Resource Centre, British Council, Scotland and Edinburgh: UNESCO City of Literature successfully showcased how mutual transcreations across cultures and languages may be rewarding, both for the poets and for the readers.

In India, Sukrita and Savita Singh have brought together *Saath Chalte Hué-Rowing Together* with reciprocal transcreation of poems into Hindi and English. This commendable creative cooperation between the two poets reveals how creative egos are channelled to a rich partnership; as both claim each other's poetry for themselves, imbuing them with their own colours through the prisms of their experience and imagination.

The title evokes the words of Sri Chinmoy: 'O my friend,/Let us claim each other first./then let us walk together/Towards our destined goals.' This kinship is apparent throughout the ambulations of the poets alongside each other. The rendering of *Saath Chalte Hué* into *Rowing Together*, or vice-versa, is an apt pointer to the travellers who veer away from the everyday and the obvious to burrow deep into the undiscovered, the unexplored. 'Rowing' suggests the effort made in concert, the delight of the voyage and the joy of arrival. It also gives weight to the importance of mutual trust and equal energy and commitment in the enterprise.

The poems are divided thematically into eight sections with poems by Sukrita and Singh in the original juxtaposed with the transcreated versions. The name of the 'original' writer is given at the bottom of the page, the translation alongside is by the poet rowing with her. Both blend seamlessly together largely because of the empathy between the poets, which helps them encompass not only the words but also the silences of the poems.

The first section: *Hona-Being* has eight poems, five by Sukrita and three by Singh. The poems revolve round the desire to be and the trepidation of the unknown. '*Jab Saanp Ashray ke Liye Aaye-When the Snakes Came for Shelter*' by Sukrita is a powerful and intense poem, which uses the symbol of the snakes to foreground the struggle for freedom in Zimbabwe and the continued peacetime battle against treachery and oppression of women

everywhere. The translation into Hindi, for the most part, matches the English and is able to catch the sinister undertone admirably: 'Her long dark limbs/Glistened/And entwined in the coiling/snakes/As darkness slithered/Towards the break of dawn/Haunting Salvador Dali'-'*Uske chharharey kaley ang/Chamakte thhé/gunthhe hué kundali marte/saanpon se/Jab pahuncha andhera rengta hua/Bhor ke ujale ki taraf/Salvador Dali ko haunt karta hua*'. Singh's '*Prem ke Baare Mein-Of Love*' captures the lost promise of Sylvia Plath's life and the poetry she could have created. The pathos of her death in lonesomeness and despair questions the man-woman relationship and the haloed idea of love.

The second theme: *Srijana-Creating* has five poems by Singh and four by Sukrita. Singh's poems explore the agonizing process of writing, of translating the imagined on paper: 'For some times now/A poem lay within me/I told her wait as yet [. . .]/Why is life for such as us/so troubled /So difficult' ('*Hum Jaison ka Jivan-Life of Such as Us*'). In '*Gallery Mein-In the Gallery*' Sukrita dextrously interplays images of steel, human flesh and trees to underscore the paradoxes of livings just like the tree trunks as pieces of art can be 'A withering or a blossoming'.

Section three entitled: *Anyata-Othering* consists of four poems by Singh and three by Sukrita. Singh uses concrete imagery in '*Sara ka Sundar Badan-Sarah's Beautiful Body*', '*Allen ka Dost-Allen's Friend*', and '*Ruth ka Sapna-Ruth's Dream*' to evoke alienation and emptiness. Singh employs the snow motif in many poems to underline the difficult and the sad but, paradoxically, desired experience by the poet. Sukrita's poems are musings on the life of the elderly in a materialistic and individualistic society ('*America mein Budhate Hué - Ageing in America*') and of the homeless but spirited poor in the workers' world ('*Hum Beghar-We the Homeless*'). The poems are vignettes of the close 'other' within us who we are afraid to encounter. '*Sunami ke Snapshots-Tsunami Snapshots*' brings out the fundamental unease of the poet with the random draw of hand by nature-providence. The helplessness of a sensitive mind while grappling with the tsunamic ironies and paradoxes of life is feelingly articulated.

The fourth theme: *Nirakhana-Seeing* contains four poems each by the two poets. Sukrita delves into the ineffable bond between mothers and daughters. The continuity of ties in womanhood through the generations is represented by the unsevered umbilical cord of the heart. The pain of birthing and separation is placed hopefully and contrapuntally to the joy of oneness: 'I am,/I know now,/my mother,/as you /are yours' ('*Itihas-History*'). Singh's poems vivify the objectification and suppression of woman as well as her joys and strivings.

'*Jaise Ek Stree Janati Hai - The Way a Woman Knows*' brings out these themes in an interesting metaphor: 'Who can get to know the body/As a woman would/Who can know which boat she can make with it/ Which river she can cross.'

Section five: *Palna* - Nurturing puts together three poems each by Singh and Sukrita. Singh evokes nature imagery in her attempts to 'make a nest' of belonging and identification in the face of disjointedness: 'Once when I told them my name/I too am a tree I explained/ Every tree refused to recognize me'. Sukrita, once again, bridges the past and the present, the self and the other with resonant simplicity. An example of her layered verse is apparent in ('*Ant se Prarambhi-End from the Beginning*'), in which the primordial forest with an unfathomable well is seen 'inviting lovers /to come down the spiral steps/ carved on his chest,/to reach the womb of time/ and touch the/beginnings of history').

The sixth theme: *Chintana*-Reflecting has one poem by Singh and four by Sukrita. The mood in this section is contemplative and gentle with nature imagery and the theme of bonding foregrounded once more. In this section, despite the loss there is an undercurrent of hope as is made clear in these words: 'A suspended story, a void/That was filled/By you and you,/My children' ('*Chetana Pravah-Stream of Consciousness*'). The seventh section: *Pira*-Suffering consists of three poems by Sukrita and two by Singh. The section begins with an extremely penetrating '*Akhet-The Hunt*' on the Gujarat riots in the larger perspective of the brutal, mindless violence in the cycle of creation and destruction, of karma and retribution. It resurrects the: 'Ghosts of unborn children/ not resting till/they enter bodies of/their killers and of/ those who raped their mothers'. All the poems in this section make for compelling reading in these times of escalating intolerance and schisms in society. The pain and the mourning of women seek sanity in the encompassing reality where Singh laments: 'So many wounds on the body/Many more on the mind/Even more on the map of the country' ('*Desh ke Manchitra Par-On the Map of the Country*').

The final section, entitled: *Basera*-Dwelling, houses three poems by Sukrita and five by Singh. '*Bevafa Yaadein-Unloyal Memory*' uses crisp imagery of a locked-up house to capture the nebulous eroding of remembrances with every re-memorying. '*Jo Narcissus ke Saath Dub Gaya-That which Drowned with Narcissus*' is a yearning for

beauty that is unalloyed, perfect. '*Sach Kahin Chala Gaya-Truth has Wandered Away*' is a longing for freedom and truth when 'We are left only with lies now/That can take us far/[. . .] Freedom is merely a suspect word/ Power is the real issue.'

Saath Chalte Hué-Rowing Together is a navigation of the broad stream and the backwaters in camaraderie and team spirit. The distinct personalities of the poets complement each other even as they bring their own quintessence to the venture. The reader is taken into the boat as a partner who maps the passing landscape and the stopovers as the poets take up the oars. In midstream the currents of what is meant by 'original' work, inter-language exchanges, and translation as creation are met and grappled with. The baggage of the supremacy of one language is tossed overboard for a lighter, smoother sailing. Both the oars, one of Hindi and one of English, are grasped with equal fervour and command. The craft of poetic creation and transcreation is finely balanced in the rhythm of the rowers. Thus, the deep clear waters as well as the tumultuous rapids of ideas, images and words are negotiated in tandem by both the poet-translators with fluid, clean, and assured strokes.

There are, naturally, a few instances when a piece appears more forceful and flowing in one language than the other. For instance, in '*When the Snakes Came for Shelter*' these lines of underlying portent: 'She smelt no danger/Nor did they,/there'd be no holding the venom/ if they did') are somewhat watered down in the Hindi rendering. However, such log jams are very small and occasional. They do not take a bit away from the captivating world that the poets take us to sight downstream. Many poems, such as '*Hum Beghar-We the Homeless*' obscure the barrier of the original with the transcreated. Each version is complete in itself. Both are 'original' even as one is a flawless transcreation of the other. In *Saath Chalte Hué-Rowing Together* the 'signposts of having co-travelled' are clear and vivid as the two poet-translators inhabit each other's imaginative worlds in words and in silences. Medha Singh's sketches are beautiful icons of the themes and add to the experience of reading the verse. It is hoped that this excellent volume will fuel more such collaborative literary expeditions and discoveries.

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