

Verne A. Dusenbery, *Sikhs at Large: Religion, Culture, and Politics in Global Perspective*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008) x + 337 pp. (hb) Rs. 650. ISBN-13: 978-0-19-568598-5 and ISBN-10: 0-19-568598-9.

This is a rich resource in terms of its range and its analytical sharpness. Dusenbery has brought together almost three decades of his ethnographically grounded publications on Sikh communities resident in South-East Asia (Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia) and Australia as well as in North America. The volume's two strongly inter-connected sections, 'Sikh Ethnosociology' and 'Sikhs and the State' focus respectively on 'Sikh understandings of their social world and their place in it' (p. 1) and Sikh response to life as a minority in diverse political contexts.

Each chapter engages with its specific historical and geographical context, and by so doing deepens the reader's critical grasp of subsequent developments.

In some cases the speculation about relevance to other parts of the diaspora is set out, as in chapter eight's discussion of the currently 'coinciding interests' between Sikh organisations and the state in Singapore. In several chapters, careful comparisons are deployed to yield insights: between, for example, (chapters one and two) Gora Sikhs and Jat Sikhs in North America or (chapter nine) between 'the contrasting experiences of Sikhs' (p. 227) in the two modern nation-states of Canada and Singapore with regard to nationalism and multiculturalism.

Dusenbery usefully analyses the concept of a 'Sikh diaspora' itself: chapter four invites the reader to examine the shifting relative importance for Punjabis of ancestral 'genera' such as mode of worship, territorial attachment, language and occupation. He argues that the concept of a territorially delimited Sikh nation state has no secure basis in early Sikh discourse – witness Guru Nanak's travels far beyond Punjab and Guru Gobind Singh's location of the Guru in the Granth and Panth (p. 100). Dusenbery suggests that it was the Partition of 1947 that precipitated the sense of a Sikh *qaum* and the tie of Sikhs to Punjab so specifically. Chapter five further deconstructs 'nation' and 'world religion' as 'master narratives of Sikh identity' (p.118).

In chapter two *izzat* (honour), too, is critically discussed (in terms of its moral and affective dimensions), as also (in chapter six) is the motivation of the acts of philanthropy carried out by overseas Sikhs. Dusenbery untangles philanthropy as a complex interaction between *seva* (voluntary service) and *dan* (giving) in Sikh religious tradition, Jat notions of *izzat* and *sardari* (supremacy of the self) and the tradition of charitable giving in western societies. Chapter three's discussion of sacred language in a 'non-dualistic' culture, as the sound transmitted between Guru and disciple, much as other 'substances' are, is a welcome antidote to still persistent 'Protestant' understandings of the primary importance of understanding scriptural words.

In chapter after chapter, anthropological reflection on a particular situation introduces insights of much wider applicability. For example, in chapter two

Dusenbery shows two events drawing a different response from Gora Sikhs (white converts) and Punjabi Sikhs and outlook between the two, with the Gora Sikhs (who were 'raised sensitive to their personal integrity as individuals' (p. 61) apathetic to *izzat* and primarily attached to Sikh religion (Sikh *maryada* and *dharma*) and the Jat Sikhs primarily concerned with *izzat*, as they had been 'raised sensitive to the variable reputations of the collectivities of which they are a part' (ibid).

Stylistically Dusenbery's volume is good to read. One very minor glitch that I would mention results from the fact that this is a volume of work that has been previously published elsewhere - hence the inclusion of references to 'this volume' which actually refer to the earlier volumes in which some chapters first appeared. There is a degree of overlap in content between some chapters, but this is excusable in preserving the integrity of each: replication is particularly apparent in the case of chapter nine's relationship with chapters seven and eight.

The separate treatments of Sikh-state relations in Canada and Singapore, in chapters seven and eight respectively, are drawn together in a comparative analysis in chapter nine, which the author terms a 'modest attempt...at doing an ethnography of the poetics and politics of recognition at two nodes in this intersection of global ethnoscaples and pluralist polities' (pp. 253-4).

Volumes that embrace a long and distinguished career in a particular field have a distinctive appeal. In this instance, not only does each chapter make a contribution to Sikh studies but it also illuminates the progression in Verne A Dusenbery's impressively cohesive body of scholarship. Because of the times at which they appeared these chapters already inform the discussion in other scholars' more recent publications, for example Arvind-pal Singh Mandair's critique - as overly structuralist - of Dusenbery's analysis of sacred sound (2008 p.327).

Geographically, the obvious lacuna is any treatment of Sikh communities in the UK and other European countries. My hope is that this book stimulates scholars in these countries to continue the theoretical engagement exemplified by Dusenbery. Future comparative studies of Sikh communities' accommodation with politically diverse European states will yield further understanding of the cultural dynamics that are at work, and understanding of the longer-established communities in the UK may well be illuminated by comparison with Sikh experience in Singapore and the countries of North America. It is likely that the explanatory framework of chapter six - the triangle comprising not only *Sikhi* (Sikhs' religious tradition) and Punjabi cultural understandings and cultural expectations but also local religiously and secularly based convention in countries of settlement - will continue to prove fruitful for scholars. Interestingly it illustrates substantial mutual reinforcement between the three dimensions, whereas in other aspects of diasporic Sikh experience, scholars have highlighted more acute tensions between the three dimensions (see, for example, Kamala Nayar's chapter in Jakobsh 2010). Importantly, Dusenbery's corpus demonstrates the value of anthropological approaches -

meticulous fieldwork and analytical rigour - to deepening understanding of social transformations. This is a volume that most definitely merits inclusion on reading lists for South Asian Studies, religious studies, and on the bookshelves of sociologists and anthropologists.

References

A-P. S. Mandair (2008) *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation*, New York: Columbia University Press.

D. Jakobsh (2010) *Sikhism and Women*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

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Gurharpal Singh and Darshan Tatla, *Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community*, (London: Zed Books, 2006), 274 pp. £55.00 (hb). ISBN 1842777165. £17.99 (pb). ISBN 184277717.

The strengths of this text lie in its empirical material. Both authors are leading scholars of Sikhs in Britain and have played a central role in generating academic work in the field and indeed giving due status and recognition to Sikh studies as an area of inquiry. Though some of this material has appeared in their previous publications, there is an empirical depth which gives some credence to the author's claims of providing a 'systematic' and 'comprehensive' study.

Of particular note are the chapters on gurdwaras and on the various legal cases that Sikhs have engaged in to claim minority rights. In each of these chapters the authors present in depth useful facts and figures about various issues which are often speculated about, but not substantiated. The number of gurdwaras and their various caste/ sect denominations is a case in point. Given this wealth of material the analysis of the 2001 Census, for the chapter on Employment and Education, might have benefited from some more robust statistical analysis, as much of the information presented is readily available already in the public domain. To some extent the attempt at being comprehensive means that it might have been better for the authors to focus on issues that were very specifically related to Sikhs, rather than to delve into the wider - though of course intermingled - terrain of British South Asian diasporic concerns. In that sense, the material on the Indian Workers Association and on youth identities, reads 'Punjabi' as 'Sikh', which may be an empirically justifiable move, given the numeric dominance of those with a Sikh heritage in these arenas. However, in terms of the lived identity of these figures, this may be a bit of an ascription.

In place of this more general material, more could have been made of gurdwara culture, the role of worship in everyday life, and in terms of popular culture, the crucial role of *kirtan* in the formation of musical cultures. Being alert to those often neglected areas, where religion actually is central to social practice, would have given the volume a pioneering perspective. Rather, religion is being employed loosely as a term of identification which is rather hollow and can therefore be filled with all manner of social concerns. This treatment of religion is part of a much wider trend within British academia when looking at South Asian minority groups. Sikhs in this sense do provide an interesting case study because the interface between ethnicity and religious is rather porous and particularly, in the British case, where they have been legally allotted the status of a racial group. This partly echoes the long relationship that Sikhs have had with Britain, which is another recurring theme of the book. Indeed, the cover of the book shows a picture of Queen Elizabeth II receiving a *kirpan* from Leicester's Sikh community, above which is a picture of the Harimandir in Amritsar. Perhaps this juxtaposition is a little tongue in cheek but nonetheless the tension between a loyal Sikh soldier in the British Indian army and an anti-colonial Ghadarite is certainly referred to in the text. Postcolonial tensions between the state and the community are well presented in the brief histories of Marxists and Khalistanis that span the 1970s and 1980s. These are, however, relatively muted voices as the main thrust of the book is to establish what the mainstream of the Sikh community is and this is perhaps where the most contentious arguments are put forward.

For Singh and Tatla, it is the *doaba, jat* peasantry and their offspring which form the core of the mainstream Sikh community in Britain. It is the institutional failures and future challenges that this group may face which are of central concern. Given this presupposition, a set of well articulated arguments are put forward concerning the issues of generation; relationship between community and state; relationship to Punjab. In itself this very well done and even if one disagrees with the conclusions drawn by the authors, at the very least an agenda has been presented which aims to articulate what is needed at the interface between communities (via organisation and leadership) and the state. The problem of course is that the empirical parts of the text constantly work to undermine the neat formulation of community and state as singular entities. The Midlands location of the authors belies the universalism of their argument, and the actual representative elite of the Sikhs in the UK, has often not been drawn from the main stream *doabi, Jat* that is both the core hero and buffoon of the text. This is not to say that the authors are not clearly aware of the role of East African Ramgarhias in this representative politics, but this does not stretch to a fuller analysis of the criss-crossing, often conflictual nature of caste politics as it affects the Sikh diaspora in Britain. If one were to reduce mainstream to turban-wearing Sikh male, then both Bhatra and Ramgarhia Sikhs would need to have a more prominent role in the book. This is where the theoretical problem of mixing ethnic and religious identity in too loose a manner creates more

problems than it resolves.

For those interested in the history and character of the numerical majority of Sikhs in Britain, however, certainly this book is a must read. As an introductory text it offers the most detailed date and useful information than has hitherto been present in a single volume. The debates that the book touches on are also certainly those that need to be addressed and it is hoped that it will be read by sections of the Sikh leadership and intelligentsia.

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Agustín Pániker, *Los Sikhs: Historia, identidad y religión*, (Barcelona: Kairós, 2007) 1st edition + 366 pp. (pb) €19.28. ISBN 978-84-7245-654-9.

With 'The Sikhs: History, Identity and Religion', Agustín Pániker brings us the first full-length book on Sikhism published in Spanish, thus making the history and culture of Sikhism now available to a Spanish-speaking audience. *Los Sikhs* is thoroughly researched, and is largely historical in approach, beginning with the origins of Sikhism, tracing its growth and development from Guru Nanak onwards, providing details of the background and contributions of each of the Ten Gurus. After delving into the historical context of Sikhism, Pániker then devotes a number of chapters to the sacred scriptures of the Guru Granth Sahib, Sikh doctrine and practice, the Sikh symbols, and finally ends with a brief discussion of the diversity within Sikhism - looking at the different sects within the Sikh cultural universe and discussing issues of caste and gender.

Although largely aimed at readers new to Sikhism, Pániker addresses issues of interest to scholars in the field, such as the debate regarding whether Sikhism is best viewed as a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam, or rather a unique revelation that should not be reduced to either of the two. Pániker prefers to emphasise the uniqueness of the Sikh message, which he roots firmly in the *sant* tradition, agreeing with McLeod that while Guru Nanak employs the same categories and terminology of the *sants*, he offered a more holistic and integrated philosophy than his predecessors who also founded *Panths*. Pániker also offers valuable insights into commonly held perceptions of the Gurus, such as the portrayal of Guru Nanak as a social reformer. In the opinion of Pániker, Guru Nanak was first and foremost a spiritual leader, a 'mystic of action', who openly criticised many aspects of orthodox Hinduism and Islam, yet did not aim to radically transform the structure of Punjabi society. Pániker points out that Guru Nanak's critique of the caste system was so weak that it did not elicit any reaction from the Bramanical establishment, and also notes that each of the ten Gurus married within their caste (as well as married their children following caste norms). His analysis of the Singh Sabha movement closely echoes the conclusions of Oberoi. Like Oberoi, Pániker interprets the efforts of the Tat

Khalsa as an attempt to 'Sikhize the Sikhs' and establish firm and non-negotiable boundaries with both Hinduism and Islam.

At times Pániker appears to affirm too conclusively a Khalsa vision of Sikhism, such as when he states that the *Rahit Maryada* enjoys great influence in the Punjab and is followed and respected by a majority of Sikhs in the diaspora. Although he is careful to point out that it is not followed to the letter by all Sikhs, it is the Khalsa version of Sikhism that he devotes most attention to. His treatment of sexism and casteism within Sikhism however is very insightful and perceptive. With regards to gender, Pániker argues that the equality promoted by the Sikh Gurus is limited strictly to the spiritual plane - that is equality of spiritual opportunity, which left (and continues to leave) patriarchal institutions, structures and mentalities untouched. Like many other authors, Pániker highlights the great contrast that exists between an exemplary egalitarian gender philosophy and a highly unequal and patriarchal praxis. He concludes that as with the majority of the world's religions, Sikhism is a "child of patriarchy". Concerning caste, Pániker gives a thorough explanation of the caste composition of Sikh society, making it clear that casteism can survive and indeed thrive despite the absence of Brahmanical ideology. He asserts that within the *gurdwara*, Sikhism has eliminated caste, while it continues to remain very much a reality within Sikh society. He analyses specific caste groups within Sikh society, such as the Jats, Ahluvalias and Ramgarhias, and argues that in the Punjab, caste mobility has followed a pattern of 'Rajputization' or 'Khalsaization' rather than Sanscritization, due to the weak influence of Brahminism in the Punjab.

In summary, Pániker has produced a well-researched and thoughtfully written introductory book to Sikhism that will serve as a good foundation from which to explore both historical and modern issues in Sikhism in more depth. He makes the reader aware of the diversity and complexity that characterises the Sikh *Panth*, and provides ample historical background to a faith and culture that is likely to be completely new to a majority of Spanish speakers.

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Harold A. Gould, *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies: The India Lobby in the United States, 1900-1946*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006) 460 pp. (hb) £45.00. ISBN 0-7619-3480-4, ISBN-13 978076194806.

Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies takes its alliterative title from a description of early South Asian migration to the United States by Har Dayal, a prominent figure in the Ghadr movement. The book details the events that led up to the 1943 publication of an article in the *Washington Post* by investigative reporter Drew Pearson in which the contents of a private letter to President Roosevelt

from then US Special Envoy to New Delhi, William Phillips were revealed. In narrating this complex 'subaltern' history, Harold Gould documents South Asians' struggle for civil rights in the United States (and to a lesser extent in Canada), their struggle against racism and colonialism, and discloses for the first time the identity of the person who made the contents of that private letter available. Chapter 1 'Introduction: The Drew Pearson Affair' introduces the 'dramatis personae' and sketches the historical and political contexts that formed the background to Pearson's *Washington Post* letter.

Early American contact and 'ethnographic' impressions of India and of Indians are the subjects of Chapter 2 'The Yankee Traders'. Drawing heavily from the work of Susan Bean and M. V. Kamath, Gould situates the 'India Lobby' within its history of encounter and exchange with America. Arguing that eighteenth and early nineteenth century commerce and trade between India and America facilitated moral, intellectual, and religious cross-fertilization, Gould suggests "the so-called Bengal Renaissance was to India what Unitarianism and Transcendentalism were to America" (70). Moreover, Gould makes a case that this encounter and exchange shows that early Indian migrants in North America had access to both the "'traditional resources' (intra-community networks) and 'indigenous resources' (sympathetic outsiders)" (49) that were necessary for the lobbying effort in the first half of the twentieth century.

Chapter 3 'The Early Pioneers' deals with Indian migration at the turn of the twentieth century to the Vancouver area and to the American West Coast, and particularly to the Imperial Valley in Southern California. Here, Gould offers a skilful and informative redaction of established anthropological and socio-economic studies concerning early South Asian migration. In the Canadian context, Gould draws on the careful and detailed scholarship of Hugh Johnston and Archana Verma. Karen Leonard's insightful study on Sikh migration is his main source for the California communities. Gould also appeals to the influential work by Janet Jensen, Verne Dusenbery, and N. Gerald Barrier. Following Verma, Gould rejects the 'economic hardship' argument to explain the motives for early migration. Instead, Gould argues that early migrants were "moderately prosperous peasantry" who saw migrations as "an opportunity to increase their agricultural wealth and enhance the social status of their kin groups." (82) Immigration, Gould holds, was neither abrupt nor individualistic - it came through collective (*baradari*) deliberations and was tied to *izzat* (83) and to retention of property rights (*haq shuda*). But such bonds of kinship were altered in different ways and to different degrees in the Canadian and American contexts. Gould suggests that while less emphasis on caste made Sikhs more adaptive (than Hindus) in both settings, caste communities did emerge in British Columbia (e.g. Paldi Mahtons). By contrast, intermarriage in California produced a shift from "caste communities" to "ethnic communities". In other words, religious identity became secondary to ethnic identity in the United States (96).

Chapter 4 'The Politicization of Punjabi Immigration' documents the

emergence of Sikh leadership by such personalities as Bhag Singh, Balwant Singh, Teja Singh, Chagan Vairaj Varma, Dr. Sundar Singh and is set against the backdrop of Canadian racism and the saga of the *Komogata Maru*. Gould highlights the introduction and increasing involvement of a 'new breed' of middle class Sikhs from the east coast (e.g. Teja Singh) who shared the intellectual and political sensibilities of a growing number of New England Americans, and the establishment of new organizational and economic institutions such as the Khalsa Diwan Society and local gurdwaras.

If Chapter 4 identified how the presence of east coast Sikhs helped to focus the South Asian community's attention on the issues of immigration and racism, and introduced the institutional vehicles through which the community could be mobilized, the White backlash and the introduction of various measures to counter 'seditious' activities by Sikhs is taken up in Chapter 5 'Intensification of Community Awareness'. Gould documents the employment of spies to keep tabs on the activities of Sikhs on both sides of the border, and argues that such attention was increasingly directed to South Asian students and intellectuals. Moreover, Gould notes that the Sikh peasantry in North America was starting to interact with revolutionary individuals. The result of this interaction brought to light an awareness of the connection between the treatment of South Asians in North America and the evils of colonialism (146).

In excess of eighty pages, Chapter 6 'Ghadr' is the longest chapter in the volume. The chapter is largely descriptive, as the bulk of it is devoted to revealing biographies of key players (e.g. Har Dayal, Sohan Singh Bhakna, Taraknath Das) in the Ghadr movement. Gould is strong here at identifying important links to other world events that shaped the trajectory of Ghadr, and the chapter as a whole offers a good summary of an otherwise complex network of people, events, and political and intellectual sensibilities.

Chapter 7 'From Taraknath to Lajpat Rai' moves the reader to the east coast and the arrival of Lajpat Rai, which, according to Gould, was "for all practical purposes, the beginning of the 'India Lobby'" (231). In Gould's analysis, the radical sensibilities of Ghadr were superseded by a more moderate political stance and affiliation with liberals and liberalism in New York. For Gould, Rai's success on the east coast was his ability to "acquire a voice in the New York media and academia" which provided a conduit to the mainstream political establishment. (256) In Chapter 8 'Let the Lobbying Begin!' Gould provides a balanced assessment of the South Asian mode of reaction to the *Thind* decision (1923) which "ruled that Indians are not "White" and therefore, like all other Asians not entitled to American citizenship" (263) and the counter reaction by those who supported the decision. Gould focuses his analysis on the activities of such 'lobbyists' as J. J. Singh, Anup Singh, and Syud Hossain. Here again, Gould is careful to situate his analysis of the 'India Lobby' within the broader historical and political contexts of world events (e.g. Gandhi's Salt March, WWII, Japanese ascendancy) Chapter 9 'The Propaganda Wars' documents the British initiative to influence American public opinion vis-à-vis Indian

nationalism in India and thereby attempt to defuse those same sympathetic voices in America. At the same time, and by contrast, Gould notes that the India Lobby, through the India League, effectively widened its public profile by linking its interests with those of America and its war effort.

The tenth chapter “‘Deep Throat’ and the ‘Washington Merry-Go-Round’”, further contextualizes and nuances the circumstances and intricacies of the Drew Pearson affair, and reveals the identity of the person who made available the contents of that private, high-level letter. Interestingly, the material surrounding the ‘leak’ comes from Gould’s personal knowledge and private conversations with ‘Deep Throat’. ‘The Final Challenge’ (Chapter 11) focuses primarily on the work of J. J. Singh and the passing of the India Immigration and Naturalization Bill (H.R. 3517) on June 27, 1946, and the subsequent signing of the Cellar-Luce Bill into law by President Truman on July 2, 1946 (the photograph on the cover of the volume). The short, concluding chapter, ‘Aftermath’, offers a concise summary of the volume, but adds two significant corollaries pertaining to the political visibility of South Asians in the American context: i) naming of Asaf Ali India’s Ambassador to the UN, and ii) the selection of Madame Vijayalaskshmi Pandit to lead the first official delegation to the UN’s first General Assembly in New York.

Harold Gould has written a clear and lucid narrative, and is to be commended for his ability to tell a coherent story involving a large and colorful cast of players on three different continents over several decades. He offers a compelling account of a little documented, but important, period in modern history. There are, however, places at which one might have hoped for greater analysis (for example, the reasons why the early Sikh communities followed different social trajectories in Canada and the United States, or the failure of the Ghadr movement). However, this should not be taken as a criticism of the volume as a whole. Gould presents a rich, synthetic, and generally well-nuanced account of a complex, polyvocal, and multifaceted ‘movement’. The volume is user-friendly, offering a *Foreword* by Ainslie Embree, 19 black and white illustrations, a List of Abbreviations, Preface, Glossary, Bibliography, and Index. *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies* is an important work and will be of interest to those working on a wide range of issues relating to the history of South Asian diasporas in Canada and the United States.

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Verne A. Dusenbery and Darshan S. Tatla (eds), *Sikh Diaspora Philanthropy in Punjab: Global Giving for Local Good*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009) xviii +312 pp. (hb). Rs. 600. ISBN-13: 978-019-8061021. ISBN-10: 0-19-806102-1.

An extraordinarily solid and valuable contribution to all aspects of its topic, Sikh diasporic philanthropy or SDP; this book is a model of interdisciplinary work, presenting quantitative and qualitative research findings on the important issues raised by the increasing level of SDP in India's Punjab.

The editors are superbly qualified. Dusenbery's interest stems from his work in British Columbia, Canada, in the late 1970s, his continuing work with diasporic Sikhs, and his personal connection with a nearly diasporic donor. Tatla was a donor himself while living in the UK, but he has now returned to the Punjab and founded the Punjab Centre for Migration Studies in 2003. They held an international workshop on SDP in the Punjab at Lyallpur Khalsa College in Jalandhar in 2006, and revised papers from that workshop constitute most of this book.

Section I, on contexts for giving, opens with the editors' introduction establishing the significance of the topic: India is the largest recipient of remittances from overseas and the Punjab has one of the highest proportions of NRIs or non-resident Indians, most of them Sikhs. After decades of official neglect or mistrust by India's central and state governments, diasporic Sikhs are now being looked to as partners in the social development of the Punjab, and international development agencies and foundations are also engaging with these philanthropists. But are these private donors contributing to the public good? In the second chapter, Tatla traces the history of SDP, documenting the pre-1947 pattern, the effect of 1984 on diasporic engagement with the homeland, and current trends. Meticulously-produced tables show Punjabi media coverage of SDP, the Sants as intermediaries, the major Sikh diaspora charities, non-resident Punjabi donations to Pingalwara (the well-known institution serving Punjab's destitute) and Sikh diasporic patronage for the Punjabi media. Tatla concludes that SDP is "basically motivated by a shared concern for Punjab and inspired by Sikh theological and ethical concepts of *seva*" (70). However, the third chapter by Dusenbery complicates this, asserting that "multiple, complex, and sometimes conflicting motivations" (80) underpin SDP. Dusenbery outlines Sikh religious teachings and practices concerning giving and service, more broadly Punjabi cultural understandings and social expectations, and the experiences of Punjabi Sikhs abroad. He then suggests that Sikh, religious teaching about selfless giving and service, can conflict with cultural notions of *izzat* or honour and *sardari* or supremacy of self, leading to conspicuous philanthropy and competition in local Punjabi settings. In the editors' interviews, mixed motives and mixed agendas were characteristic of most Sikh diasporic philanthropists. Further, the consequences of their philanthropy, the funding of religious institutions, schools, hospitals, sports tournaments, crematoriums, and village gates, can also be mixed in terms of "progress" or "development" of the Punjab.

Section II focuses on the Punjab to illustrate and deepen these themes. Satnam Chana discusses two surveys of NRI philanthropic investment, the first of 477 villages of the Doaba region of the Punjab (conducted in 2002 by the

NRI Sabha Punjab under Chana's supervision) and a follow-up survey of 28 villages of those previously surveyed (conducted in 2007 by Chana). 80% of all Punjabi NRIs are from the Doaba, and the release of the 2002 survey results helped convince the Government of Punjab to institute a matching grant scheme designed to increase "productive philanthropy" by NRIs. In the 2002 survey, over half the donations went to religious places, especially gurdwaras, followed by educational institutions. Fields Chana deemed unproductive like memorial village gates, crematoriums, and sports festivals received more attention than health care and infrastructure, and Chana's tables demonstrate dramatic differences among the villages; he termed the 2002 patterns of SDP spontaneous, non-planned, and largely unorganized. His 2007 survey, however, showed a four-fold increase in funds donated and changes of direction from religious purposes to social development ones, projects often done in conjunction with village panchayats or the Punjab government. Next, Inderpreet Kaur Kullar and M.S. Toor's study of the use of foreign remittances compares NRI and non-NRI farm families on the basis of randomly selected blocks, villages, and households, also focusing on Central Punjab. They studied 180 farm families in depth in 2004-05. The NRI families had higher levels of spending, but non-NRI families placed more emphasis on farm machinery and water and less on religious places and activities. Then, focusing on a single Doaba village, Charanjit Kaur Maan and Gurmej Singh Maan use census data and interviews, wonderfully illustrating how "the diasporic pattern of giving generally means a spirit of competitive consolidation of different factions/castes in the village" (145). The authors bring the village alive, especially by showing what giving from abroad has meant to the full range of religious institutions in the village, not only gurdwaras but high caste Hindu temples, Balmiki or lower caste/class temples, and even a church.

Section III highlights the transnational relationships created by SDP. Hugh Johnston features SDP from Vancouver, British Columbia, specifically excluding gifts for gurdwaras and other religious places as philanthropy. The two donor families presented here add a gender dimension - atypically, both families have contributed to the wife's village and not the husband's. In the case of the Siddoos, the maintenance of an outpatient hospital and pharmacy depends entirely on their two daughters, their training as doctors and their service in the Punjab for several months each year. In the case of Tara Singh Bains, he and his wife retired to her village in India and established a school there. Johnston wonders about the second and third generations of Punjabis in Canada, what their patterns of giving will be like. Margaret Walton-Roberts also traces NRI giving from Vancouver, examining the Guru Nanak Mission Medical and Educational Trust (GNMMET) medical facility initiated by Budh Singh Dhahan. Canadian partners were brought in to assure sustainability, the Canada-India Education Society (CIES) and then the University of British Columbia's School of Nursing. Tracing the institutional and personal challenges of these relationships, Walton-Roberts discusses some transformative effects

with respect to women, both as trainees in the Punjab and as members added to the board of GNMMET. She comments that, like the next article by Purewal, her study shows that SDP both challenges and perpetuates gendered norms within Punjab society (201). Navteej K. Purewal's study of the Bebe Nanaki Gurdwara and Charitable Trust in Birmingham, UK, named for the sister of Guru Nanak by the founder philanthropist Bibi Balwant Kaur, does make that point. The Trust has undertaken projects in Kenya, India, Birmingham, and the Punjab, but as its founder ages she and her female contemporaries have been replaced by "a new generation of male trustees and sangat members" (214-5), causing Purewal like the two previous authors to end with questions about continuity and sustainability.

The final section, IV, discusses "lessons learnt." Autar S. Dhesi asks if diasporic intervention is "boon or bane." His tables, based on a field survey in Doaba in 2004 and 2005, show improvements in sanitation, education, health, and road connectivity. Drawing on a 2007 study he monitored for the Village Life Improvement Foundation (VLIF, an NGO initiated by two NRIs in 1999), he shows holistic development of social infrastructure and universal access to new facilities developed by the VLIF programme, and he discusses various hurdles posed by interactions between formal and informal local institutions. Darshan S. Tatla incisively analyzes the state of information about SDP, the various kinds of projects being undertaken, and the post-1947 changing relationships among NRIs and India's national and Punjab governments. He suggests that philanthropists abroad still view government incentives warily, partly because of considerations of political patronage and alliances with the Congress and Akali parties. Assessing the impacts of SDP to date, Tatla comments on negative outcomes like the destruction of historic structures by "rebuilding," and he remarks on the new assertions of ethnic or caste consciousness through the revival of popular religious forms and the emergence of Dalit politics in the Punjab. His hope is that SDP is bringing a new social ethos to Punjabi and Sikh society, a long-term commitment to productive social welfare activities. Finally, Dusenbery lists the issues raised across the chapters: philanthropists' motivations; productive versus non-productive giving; the effects of demonstration or competitive giving; different priorities for NRIs and non-NRIs; gender and generational differences among diaspora philanthropists; the creation of sustainable structures; problems of equity and social inclusion; and partnering with the state, other development agents, and/or the market. He ends by summarizing the recommendations put forward by participants at the 2006 workshop. Appendices provide additional information, particularly about the Government of the Punjab scheme for matching assistance and its current projects and the NRI Sabha, Punjab, lists of NRI investors and projects.

This excellent book will be widely read and its recommendations should have an impact on Sikh diasporic philanthropists and those who would partner with them.

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Kim Bolan, *Loss of faith: How the Air-India bombers got away with murder*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2005). 388pp. (pb) \$21.99. ISBN 978-0-7710-1131-3 (0-7710-1131-8).

On 16 March 2005, Justice Josephson delivered his historic judgment acquitting both Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri of an alleged conspiracy to blow up Air India Flight 182 in June 1985. The judge's decision naturally came as a great disappointment for relatives who had hoped someone would be found guilty for such a dastardly crime. Their hopes had been raised by the investigation agencies and above all by the media which had implied many times that such a plot was hatched within the Canadian Sikh community. Indeed, such was the force of media coverage that many Sikhs had also come to the same view. The management committee at Ross Street Gurdwara, Vancouver, performed an Akhand Path seeking atonement and many relatives of the deceased were invited though few felt comfortable enough to attend. But the judgment failed to tackle at depth the injurious assertions which had affected the Canadian Sikhs' image for almost two decades.

The judge said that there was a conspiracy to put the two bombs on Air India flights in Vancouver; that both the prosecution and defence acknowledged, apparently for different reasons, that Talwinder Singh Parmar probably was the leader in the conspiracy; and that the device detonated at Narita was linked to Parmar and Reyat. However, Parmar had disappeared from the scene in 1992 when he was allegedly caught by the Punjab police, tortured and killed; his dead body was disposed of by Punjab police through an 'encounter'. Despite Reyat's conviction for the Narita bomb device, the crucial link to Air India plane proved to be the most difficult task. It took sixteen years before Canada's investigating agencies could arrest and charge two Sikhs, Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri in 2001 with a conspiracy to blow up the Air India plane. Still, the prosecution's case did not meet the reasonable criterion of the Canadian judicial system to find the two Sikhs guilty.

Rather than feeling relieved that the judge had accepted or confirmed some elements of the prosecution's case, Bolan asserts that the judgment amounted to a 'loss of faith' in Canadian justice, and quotes many relatives' immediate reactions. Obviously the trial by media was to continue even as 500 pages of the learned judge's verdict had freed the accused Sikhs.

Kim Bolan is a reputedly stubborn journalist who has worked for the *Vancouver Sun* since 1984 - her career became involved in the Punjab crisis as dramatic events in Amritsar embroiled British Columbian Sikhs. Bolan aims to provide many pieces of information, which she asserts were either 'overlooked' or 'underplayed' by the learned judge. Among her findings, Bolan points out financial irregularities in the Khalsa School Vancouver run by Ripudiman Singh

Malik. She also located Surjan Gill, a key figure of the pre-1984 Khalistan movement in Vancouver, now living in west London keeping a low profile, perhaps following a 'deal' in 1996 with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which suggested some association with Indian agencies. But she does not pursue this further.

On the conspiracy to blow up the Air India plane, Bolan's additional evidence consists essentially of her talks with Tara Singh Hayer, proprietor of a Punjabi weekly, *Indo-Canadian Times*, from Vancouver and Rani who worked for Malik at the local Khalsa School. Hayer told Bolan that during a visit to West London he overheard a confession by Ajaib Singh Bagri as he talked to Tarsem Singh Purewal, editor-proprietor of the UK based weekly *Des Pardes*. However, when questioned by the police Purewal denied having heard Bagri's admission to conspiracy to blow up the plane. Nor could Avtar Jandialvi, another person who was present with Hayer on that day, confirm that conversation. So why Bolan should put so much weight on Hayer's crucial hold on Bagri's alleged confession? Both Purewal and Hayer had been murdered and their assassinations remain unsolved to date. Bolan speculates that Hayer was murdered to frighten other witnesses in the case into silence. As to the other witnesses, Bolan heard many stories from Rani [her identity is protected by court order], who appeared for the prosecution and her testimony was subjected to full examination during the trial.

One can only conclude that notwithstanding her investigative feats, Bolan's narrative essentially reads like a sensational account, albeit one that shows empathy with the families of those who died. A more responsible journalist would have shunned adding to such a sentimental atmosphere by alluding to half-baked theories, conjectures and odd pieces of information that would not stand reasonable scrutiny while contributing much to malign the Canadian Sikhs' image.

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Tejwant Singh Gill *Amrita Shergill: Life and Art* (Punjabi) (Patiala: Publications Bureau, Punjabi University, 2008) pp.244. Rs.360 (hb). ISBN 8130201054.

In recent years there seems to have been a revival of interest in the work of Amrita Shergill, one of India's foremost women painters. Geeta Doctor's work about her paintings in 2002 was followed by Yashodhra Dalmia's detailed biography in 2006, not to mention earlier works by Amrita's contemporaries like Karl Khandalavala and Baldoon Dhingra. Gill's work combines both Shergill's intensely lived and sharply divided life as well as her paintings which took the east and the west in their embrace. The objectives of this work are different from the others which have preceded it as it is part of a larger project to

record the history of Punjab, to build up a continuity not only in the state's artistic history but also to project its contribution to the national scenario. This in itself is long overdue - an essential task if histories of art and literature are to have a national fulsomeness.

It is evident from the work that the writer has enjoyed working on this thoroughly researched and sensitively identified-with biography, primarily because a similar feeling of enjoyment is passed on to the reader. For all apparent purposes it follows a linear and an historical account, tracing lineages, histories and relationships right from the exiled Maharaja Dalip Singh's daughter Princess Bamba's ambition to recover her father's birthright to the Hungarian Marie Antoinette's parental backgrounds. In fact Gill goes back to Maharaja Ranjit Singh's times and traces the history of the great patrons of art leading to the development of the Kangra painting school. Gill has divided the work into twenty sections followed by an appendix which contains excerpts from her correspondence. The first four sections trace ancestral histories, the next five childhood and adolescence, the next nine deal with her emotional relationships, bringing the story of her young life to the event of her marriage with her Hungarian first cousin Victor Egan. Of the remaining four sections, two detail the last years of her young life and the details of her untimely death as a result of the complications following in the wake of an abortion, before moving on to a comparative study of Amrita's work in relation to her Mexican contemporary Frida Kahlo, and a final evaluative section.

Gill has not separated her life and art, instead he has very deliberately located her art in her life, in her double cultural heritage and within this larger area zeroing down to her emotional pull towards India. One can see that, through the study of the several self-portraits of Amrita, he has suggested her psychological conflicts. Wisely he stops short of making conclusive statements as well as working through any speculative reconstructions. He locates individual actions of all the characters he deals with in the context of family relationships and social pressures and, wherever possible, supports his position with reference to Amrita's correspondence. Jealousy, possessiveness, desire – all have their psychological reasons at their root.

Amrita Shergill's life is an interesting study in itself – not only because of her background, which was indeed rich and varied as if the fates themselves had conspired to place these reserves at her door, but also because of her location in the twenties and thirties, which was a vibrant period for art and literature, when Paris was the city of exiles and modernism and experimentation were at their peak. Her father Umrao Singh Majithia came from an aristocratic family, her mother belonged to a Hungarian family with musical talent, her maternal uncle Ervin Baktay, was an Indologist. These were the influences which shaped her work and are deeply reflected in her art. On one side the sensuousness of the body and on the other the gracefully clad figure; on one side the attraction towards religious constructs, on the other the acknowledgement of the physical – it is this coming together of opposites which made her life so vibrant and

intense and her art a confluence of cultures. What Gill achieves through this rooting of Amrita in her Punjabi paternal home and her presence in the flow of history not only of Punjab but of India, is to give both – Amrita and her background – a presence in the wider national context. His weaving in of Sant Singh Sekhon's play *Kalakar* and Himanshi Shelat's Gujarati novel *Atho-Ma-Rang* adds to this dimension. There are other literary references such as the one to Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* but one feels the absence of Javed Siddiqi's Urdu play *Tumhari Amrita*, which has had several performances all over India with Shabana Azmi and Farooq Sheikh playing the lead characters. But while the influences on her work and her artistic friendships are explored, only marginal references are there to her younger sister, or later the family inheritance as visible in the work of her nephew Vivan Sundaram, who incidentally has two books on his aunt.

Another question that arises as we read the work is that of its targeted readership. Obviously it is a Punjabi-reading audience but which one? Literary and art historians, family historians or historians of national reconstruction? Or is it a wider readership that the work aims at? The writer's style stands on a meeting point between guarded scholarly assessments, balanced judgments and the free delineation of a life story. The serious reader's memory is jogged by memories of Toru Dutt's life in France, her equally untimely death at a young age and Mary Wollstonecraft's struggle, and finally death, arising out of post-delivery complications. One would also have valued a more detailed reference to the art movements current at that time in India and Amrita's shift from them. A bolder statement about the gender dimensions of the cultural ethos would also have been welcome. A young woman who defies normative patterns, who treats motherhood as incidental (and perhaps dispensable), who travels between continents and across the subcontinent, who rejects her maternal heritage and yet marries a maternal cousin is, to say the least, enigmatic. Her life falls into the pattern of a fairy tale but one which is turbulent and happens to be tragic and sad; it is a life which would easily lend itself to a great deal of imaginative reading, especially given Amrita's bold acknowledgment of the body and its desire. But as one reads this agonising tale of an interrupted life, her several romantic fascinations including one with the handsome young Jawahar (Jawaharlal Nehru), one needs to acknowledge that Gill has done a splendid job, pulling the reader into a world of emotional intensity, histories of Hungary as well as India, personal lineages and art histories all at once, while retaining his own scholarly balance and successfully resisting the temptation towards over dramatisation. A rare feat indeed!

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John R. Hinnells and Richard King (eds.), *Religion and Violence in South Asia: Theory and Practice*, (London: Routledge, 2007) ix + 265 pp. (pb) ISBN 978-0-415-37291-6. (hb) ISBN 9780415372909. (ebk) 9780203088692.

It is perhaps not surprising that since 9/11, there has been a dearth of scholarly interest in the notion of violence *vis-a-vis* religion. But over the past decade, the trajectory of this inquiry has tended to move from historically-driven case studies of violence in specific religious traditions toward more broadly constructed - methodological and theoretical - (re)assessments of what constitutes not only 'violence', but also 'religion' and the intersection of the two.

The present volume makes an important and timely contribution to this inquiry within the context of South Asia. This collection of essays by notable scholars in the field "is designed to look beyond... stereotypical images of violence and to analyze the diverse attitudes towards and manifestations of violence within South Asian traditions" (2). Hinnells and King explain in their *Introduction* that the purpose of the volume is to 'normalize' violence: not to understand violence as exceptional or unreal, but rather as imbedded within the history of South Asia. In doing so, the essays together offer a reconsideration of a matrix of inter-related questions concerning both violence and religion: What counts as violence? Is the question of violence a purely humanistic one, or should violence be understood more broadly?

A distinctive and valuable feature of the volume lies in its acknowledgement and analysis of cultural, epistemic, and symbolic expressions of violence to the extent that verbal and (social) structural violence are seriously considered. Additionally, interwoven throughout several of the essays is a broader concern for the conceptual efficacy of 'religion' when seeking to understand violence in a South Asian context.

The volume is divided into three main parts. Part One offers five assessments relating to 'Classical approaches to violence in South Asian traditions'. Each of the five essays address conceptions and articulations of violence in the Hindu (Laurie Patton), Jain (Paul Dundas), Buddhist (Rupert Gethin), Muslim (Robert Gleave), and Sikh (Balbinder Bhogal) pasts. Part Two turns its attention to three recent instances of 'Religion and violence in contemporary South Asia'. The essays by Peter Schalk, Ian Talbot, and Christophe Jaffrelot are situated in the geographical theatres of Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Gurjarat respectively. These essays deal in turn with politicized Buddhism and *simhalatva*, the historical context for conflict in Pakistan, and the 'communal' violence that plagued Gujarat in 2002. Part Three delivers three critical discussions relating to 'Theory: framing the "religion and violence"' *debate*. Peter Gottschalk takes on the notion of 'communalism' and its place in

colonial epistemologies. Arvind Mandair grapples with the epistemic and symbolic violence of 'religion' in the context of a 'post-colonial' South Asia. Richard King revisits the association of 'religion' and violence as a trope imbedded in scholarly discourse.

The readers of this journal will likely be most interested in the contributions by Balbinder Bhogal and Arvind Mandair. Balbinder Bhogal's 'Text as Sword: Sikh Religious Violence Taken for Wonder' is a corrective to what Bhogal calls the 'break' theory: a reading of Sikh history that posits a 'break' in orientation between Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, a 'break' from religion to violence. According to Bhogal, it is a non-Indic (i.e. western) presupposition that religion and violence stand in opposition to one another that sustains the 'break' theory. This presupposition has allowed such scholars as Hew McLeod and Louis Fenech (cited specifically by Bhogal) to perpetuate what amounts to a misreading of the Guru period. According to Bhogal, the subtext of these erroneous interpretations of Sikh history cast Guru Nanak as religious and non-violent against the non-religious and violent sensibilities of Guru Gobind Singh. Bhogal's approach is to highlight the 'violent' imagery in the *bani* of Guru Nanak and to show its resonance with the orientation and innovations of Gobind Singh.

The strength of Bhogal's article lies in its reappraisal of Nanak's metaphorical and poetic use of 'violent' imagery. In a rather lucid presentation, Bhogal shows the palimpsest of religion and violence in Nanak's *bani* that is all too often read over in the *Adi Granth*. This part of Bhogal's analysis is insightful and cogent. Less convincing however is Bhogal's argument against the 'break' thesis specifically. Bhogal puts forward a strong version of the theory in which a clear and decisive break occurs in Sikh history – a break that definitively distinguishes Nanak from Gobind Singh. But how widely-held is this view? Bhogal himself uses terms such as 'change' and 'innovation' to characterize the traditions of the first and tenth gurus. What precisely is the difference between 'break' and 'change'? In addition, Bhogal does not distinguish as clearly as one might hope between metaphorical and poetic uses of violence on the one hand, and the call to physically take up arms on the other hand. This is not to say that Gobind Singh did not employ violent imagery in poetic and symbolic ways, only that Bhogal seems to downplay the physical dimension of the tenth Guru's orientation.

Arvind Mandair's 'The Global Fiduciary: Mediating the Violence of Religion' is broad in its conceptual scope, and innovative in its analysis of 'religion' in South Asia. Mandair calls into question the symbolic and all too often latent 'violence' imposed by the very term 'religion' in South Asian 'discourse'. Drawing heavily from Jacques Derrida's observation that religion and violence are inextricably linked to the iatrogenic imposition of an assumed universality (i.e. law) of the term 'religion', Mandair argues that when South Asians affirm (or deny) a particular religious affiliation, there lies unexamined an assumed universal meaning of 'religion' that violates the law of the Other (in

this case, the South Asian speaker). Thus, for Mandair, the use of 'religion' in the South Asian context necessarily entails an act of injustice (i.e. violence).

Mandair connects the injustice of 'religion' to the notion of the fiduciary - "the performative experience of the act of faith, without which there can be no address to the other" (217) - and to what Derrida calls the *globalatinization* of Christian values latent in the "conceptual apparatus of international law, global political rhetoric and multiculturalism." (217). All this leads Mandair to speculate upon Derrida's question: "What if *religio* remained untranslatable?" (223) as a possible 'response' for mitigating the violence of 'religion'.

Mandair's piece is conceptually intriguing and presents a sophisticated analysis. However, one might wonder whether Mandair's argument has not inadvertently devalued the experiential authenticity of many diaspora Sikhs whose conceptual framework may differ significantly - 'religiously', socially, morally - from those Sikhs living in South Asia (or of those Sikhs living in South Asia but beyond a Panjabi operational and normative context). Put differently, it may be the case that Mandair has started down a slippery slope toward an (unintended) essentialist view, one that entails an expression of "pure" self-identity, free from "external" (i.e. non-Panjabi) influences.

Notwithstanding the questions and criticisms above, Bhogal and Mandair (as well as the other contributors to this volume) make positive, substantial, and timely contributions to what may become one of the defining discourses (i.e. religion and violence) in South Asian studies in the first decade of the 21st century.

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Anjali Gera Roy and Nandi Bhatia (eds) *Partitioned Lives: Narratives of Home, Displacement and Resettlement*, (Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2008) 283pp. Rs. 595. (hb) ISBN-13 9788131714164, 8131714160.

In the past decade or so, the recovery of lost voices, narratives, and lived experiences of Partition has emerged as a major project within modern Indian historiography. A rich body of literature, as a result, has shaped up bringing to the surface raw accounts of loss, displacement and suffering experienced in various parts of South Asia. *Partitioned Lives* is yet another welcome addition to this growing body that brings together literary, cultural and historical contributions on the theme of Partition. The anthology consists of fifteen contributions seeking to explore the 'imaginings of home in the narratives of the displaced' (xxvi) in fictional writings, cinematic representations, as well as personal memory of the survivors.

Within migration studies, the loss of home/homeland is a central theme invoked in the everyday life of the 'displaced' people. The notion of home is

often bound to a particular place within the territory of imagination that migrants long to return to. This longing and desire to resurrect 'home' appears complicated once we begin to unbundle the Partition processes. And doubly so for those migrants who chose to migrate further than either India or Pakistan, or what we loosely term the South Asian diaspora. For one thing, the national entity that hundreds of thousands had left behind during the imperial migrations of mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not exist any longer. The British imperial power had given way to the two new states of India and Pakistan that were largely meant to constitute a homogenous demography of Hindu/Sikhs and Muslims respectively. This logic of homogeneity meant that, for the first time, the diasporic South Asians were forced to reassess their notion of homeland: did Pakistan become a natural homeland for Muslims now that their ancestral home lay within the boundaries of the Indian nation-state, and similarly, did Lahore automatically become out of bounds for the Hindu/Sikh diaspora? Once the place of intimate associations, home – place of birth, residence, family ties and emotional associations – has been lost, say in India or in Pakistan, can the new assigned nation-state be naturally assumed as one's homeland? These questions have barely been asked within Partition studies as they have so far been mainly concerned with experiences of displacement within India and Pakistan. Yet, for millions within the diaspora, this remains a critical theme often wrapped in deliberate ambiguity and uncertain reason.

Some of the contributions in this anthology join issue with the theme of South Asian diaspora and Partition through fiction and films. In 'Moving Forward though still Facing Back: Partition and the South Asian Diaspora in Canada', Prabhjot Parmar challenges the idea that diasporic response to Partition is either ill-placed or lacking in intimacy, as is sometimes alleged. Through the works of Deepa Mehta (*Earth*, 1998) and Shauna Singh Baldwin (*What the Body Remembers*, 2000) mainly, Parmar ascertains Partition dislocation and disjuncture as a central motif in the lives of the diasporic South Asians as they deal with the realities and demands of being citizens in a new nation-state. Paulomi Chakraborty's 'Refugee Women, Immigrant Women: The Partition as Universal Dislocation in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*' takes forward the same theme, while tying Partition to the universalisation of the experience of dislocation and exile. Another paper 'Eternal Exiles in the Land of the Pure: Mohajirs in Mass Transit' by Amber Fatima Riaz shows, through a close reading of Maniza Naqvi's work (*Mass Transit*, 1998), the difficulty in remembering and living the 'home' of one's longing.

While these contributions begin to address the issue of Partition and diaspora in some ways, we learn little about the ways in which post-1947 politics of belonging and identity have come to constitute the diaspora itself. In many respects, the responses of the diasporic writers in the West to Partition, though contextually different, are not substantially far from those stemming from the second or third generation writers and film-makers in India and Pakistan. By now, we know that the history of Partition migration is hardly etched between

two neat points of departure and arrival, it zig-zags, goes back and forth and often takes unfamiliar routes in time and space as many recent studies have shown. In this volume, Pippa Virdee's essay 'Partition in Transition: Comparative Analysis of Migration in Ludhiana and Lyallpur' underscores yet again this complicated nature of Partition migration. What the recent histories of Partition – particularly of women, Dalits, orphaned children and those somehow at the margins of the new citizenry – tell us is that dislocation and exile are universal conditions that do not always require physical movement, and for many 'home' remains a permanent state of disjuncture even when one is located within one's assigned home/homeland.

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Gurharpal Singh and Ian Talbot, *The Partition of India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) xvii + 206 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-67256-6 (pb) \$29.99, 978-0-521-85661-4 (hb) \$85.00.

In *The Partition of India*, Singh and Talbot admirably synthesize Partition's immense historiography, considerably revising our basic understandings of the period. Organized thematically, this slim volume breaks new ground by detailing the full breadth of Partition. Their most important contributions are giving due attention to Bengal, Kashmir, and regions besides Punjab, including both high politics and history from below, describing Partition violence beyond the summer of 1947, and, most novelly, identifying the longer-term effects of Partition on postcolonial domestic politics and bilateral international relations. They conclude with a brief call to reexamine Partition in comparison to other partitions (e.g. Ireland, Palestine, Cyprus) rather than as a singular event. Simply, this book is a major reconceptualization of the Partition narrative that will prove itself a valuable entry to the wider literature.

In the first chapter, Singh and Talbot provide an extremely helpful review of the historiography of Partition, encompassing national and regional high politics as well as the recent revisions of subaltern and feminist histories. The second chapter studies the historical background leading to the decision for Partition. They argue against a view of Partition as a colonial parting shot and instead emphasize the quadruple consensus of All-India Muslim League separatism, the Congress High Command's wish to dominate postcolonial politics by doing away with incorrigible minorities, the British desire for a speedy departure, and the hope of the *bhadralok* in Bengal and of Sikh and Hindu elites in Punjab to create truncated states in which they could be assured political dominance. The third chapter focuses on the darkest consequence of Partition, its gruesome violence. The authors portray its scope beginning not in August 1947, but a year

earlier in the Great Calcutta Killing and ultimately spanning Bengal, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, in addition to Punjab. They demonstrate both its planned nature as well as its shift from a “traditional” riot to a brutal ethnic cleansing. The fourth chapter, on refugee resettlement, emphasizes, contrary to state-centered nationalist accounts, how class, caste, and gender conditioned migrants’ experiences and how population transfers led to major demographic shifts in cities such as Delhi and Calcutta. The fifth and sixth chapters, exploring the long-term effects of Partition on state policies and interstate relations, respectively, are singular for seeing beyond 1947 as a discrete historical terminus. Singh and Talbot discuss how Partition encouraged unitary governments that have marginalized minorities in both states and how the Kashmir conflict has resulted in a seemingly intractable antagonism.

The main strength of Singh’s and Talbot’s synthesis is its authoritative grasp of historiography and their effort, largely successful, to encompass a wide range of Partition narratives. By giving due attention to different levels of politics, regional and local accounts, interstate relations, and long-term effects, the authors are able to offer valuable insights into the many facets of Partition. This breadth is what allows for their significant revision of our basic understandings of the period and the important extension of the narrative beyond 1947 to include postcolonial state formation, diplomacy, and fissures within the construction of national identities.

The other recent study of Partition, Yasmin Khan’s excellent *The Great Partition* (2007), differs in its use of continuous narrative; Khan’s prose, peppered with contemporary quotations and anecdotes, is appealing and includes glimpses into the mentalities of historical actors that are valuable not only to the non-specialist reader. Though Singh’s and Talbot’s work boasts a wider chronological scope and is more comprehensive in its fuller treatment of Bengal and Partition historiography, Khan’s narrative is chronological and she is not forced to skip neatly between discrete thematic headings, so allowing for a nuance that sometimes falls between the cracks of Singh’s and Talbot’s work (such as the opening anecdote of Malcolm Darling’s ride).

Thus, the main weakness of the book stems from this predilection for thoroughness of historiographic detail that seems to foreclose broader questions beyond the prior scholarship. For example, in the vast literature on the causes of Partition, the grail of the roots of “Muslim separatism” has elicited fervent pursuit and though the authors mention in passing the tension between primordialist and instrumentalist definitions of Muslim identity, their judgement in favor of a golden-ageism of communal fluidity prior to colonialism fails to interrogate the converse innovation of a pan-subcontinental national identity. How did a land mass nearly the size of Europe come to comprise a single nation? What historical processes have made this political assertion appear natural? Yet they are perhaps less blameworthy for such oversight than the historians they diligently summarize.

Notwithstanding, this book is an important contribution and will be useful as

an introductory text for advanced undergraduates or as a reference for postgraduates. Its valuable review of the many approaches to the study of Partition, as well as its imaginative perspective on the totality of Partition beyond 1947, ensure that it will be considered a significant contribution. As more oral histories, especially lacking from the Sikh and Muslim perspectives, are published, this book will become in need of correction. Yet, for a goodly time it will stand among our best introductions to Partition.

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W. Owen Cole, *Cole Sahib, The Story of a Multifaith Journey*, (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2009, 204pp. ISBN: 978-1-84519-336-2 (pb) £16.95

Of all human means to share, transmit and transform through knowledge, the age-old art of storytelling is perhaps unsurpassed. No wonder it works so soundly in this memoir by W. Owen Cole, pioneer and still guiding voice for multifaith, religious education. The insights and reflections presented here, gathered and honed over seven decades, illuminate his personal retrospective on a century gone and direction offered for the century ahead.

The reading of this book is a communal experience. We join family members, friends, colleagues, acquaintances, imagined future audiences and descendents in following a journey through a changing, everyday world and across the seasons of life. It is presented through the author's multiple identities as a son, a husband, a father and grandfather; a schoolboy, a student and a working man; a traveller, a passer-by, a lifelong friend; a teacher, populariser and, dare one say, academic (for the latter is, in Cole tradition, always understated).

Geography is the book's organising principle; a place lived in becomes a chapter. From Bradford the journey takes us to Bath, Harlow, Newcastle, Leeds and Chichester (with Wales occupying a place in the emotional, if not physical, landscape). Mapped out is a breadth of personal and social experience in different neighbourhoods and educational institutions across the country. There is engagement with others making journeys to Britain, be they refugees in wartime Europe, or later migrants from the Commonwealth. We follow Cole to places visited and revisited in India and Pakistan. As circumstances and viewpoints change, and knowledge evolves, one also senses a constancy of inward vision, glimpsed at the outset and tempered over time.

From the start we are drawn by Cole's child's-eye vignettes from his early life, tracing the gradual discovery of a world populated by different religious and cultural identities. With tender humour, he shares the childhood memory of 'my beautiful, black-haired aunty Betty' coming home in tears, having been

stood up on a date after explaining she was not Jewish. Cole's father, a Congregationalist minister and former miner, exudes an affable and practical humanitarianism rather than religiosity or excessive dogma. It seems natural that, years later, Cole would be endeared to Bhai Kanhaiya, the Sikh who saw none as an enemy or stranger as he tended to the wounded in battle.

During the war, Cole was a conscientious objector, leading to work with the Friends Ambulance Unit, from washing dishes, and patients, in hospitals, to felling trees, to a post-war construction project in Germany, to setting up a temporary school in Staffordshire for Hungarian refugees. Here begins an association with the Quakers (with whom, in recent years, he has become formally aligned). After marriage, he converts to Anglicanism; his explanation reveals a habit of appreciating and weighing up context, rather than relying, aloofly, on ideology alone. Elsewhere in the book, we see firm changes of opinion, such as his views on school worship; others, such as reservations about faith schools, allow scope for flexibility.

Significantly, *Cole Sahib* charts a journey in education. Out of all his qualifications, including a PhD, it is clear that the teaching diploma is his most treasured. In a classroom moment reminiscent of Ken Loach's film, *Kes*, Cole recalls the sudden blossoming of an otherwise subdued pupil, when he encourages the boy to talk about his hobby of pheasant rearing. The episode 'taught me a lesson that I have never forgotten, namely that most of us have greater potential than is usually recognised but that it takes some particular circumstance to release it.' Years later, this translates into Owen's pupil-centred initiatives in the multicultural classroom.

For those familiar with Cole's work on South Asian religions, accounts of his journeys to the Indian Subcontinent will be of interest, as well as insights to his collaborative writing and enduring friendship with the late Piara Singh Sambhi. We learn, too, of Cole's work at Patiala, with Professor Harbans Singh, on the groundbreaking *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*. Indeed, in the book's title, *Cole Sahib*, we hear the voice of the many South Asians whose affectionate respect he has earned.

In many ways, there is an echo of the initiatives of Macauliffe in British India, who first arrived in the Punjab in 1864. Quite literally, a century on, Cole enabled knowledge about Sikhs to reach everyday British schools and institutions, helping to establish a body of post-war, English-language resources in Sikh Studies. This latest contribution, in the genre of a memoir, is certainly important, because it serves to contextualise the writer, revealing a great deal about the lenses interpreting the world. In this respect *Cole Sahib* joins *Interfaith Pilgrims* by Eleanor Nesbitt (also a Quaker) contributing to a body of personal and reflective writing within the field. They feature, rather like a research chapter, situating the researcher in relation to the field, outlining the world-views and life experiences which inevitably shape understanding and approach. Thus, in the book, where a detail of religious ritual is reported, somewhat abruptly, as 'superstition', one may be inclined to disagree, yet find

room to accept it as a perspective on an ongoing journey. Elsewhere, in contrast, Cole is mindful to stress the importance of questioning assumptions and understanding nuance.

Cole Sahib is written with a bold sense of purpose and its implications are wide. Running through it is a critique of educational, cultural and social stagnation, drawing attention to 'curriculum inertia' and a 'fossilized world'. Still today, he argues, we are challenged by the apathy, ignorance, arrogance or neglect symptomatic of previous decades. Immersing ourselves in Cole's life story, we are reminded, with urgency, of education's vital role in enabling us to overcome challenge and move forward. We are also privileged to better understand the life of a single individual, dignified by those qualities - much cherished by Sikhs - of contemplation, industriousness and magnanimity, of dedication to family, work and society, and of faith and grit against the odds. As we finish and close the book, it is this rich and resilient character which is, ultimately, the 'Sahib' behind Cole.

Gopinder Kaur Sagoo

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Aatish Taseer, *Stranger to History: A Son's Journey through Islamic Lands*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2009) 323 pp. £14.99 (hb) ISBN 978-1-847676-071-7.

Aatish Taseer's *Stranger to History* comes highly recommended: V. S. Naipaul's praise - "A subtle and poignant work by a young writer to watch" - is printed on the front cover and Antonia Fraser's comments - "... an amazing narrative: a kind of Muslim Odyssey which unfolds before the reader's eyes, bringing revelations, sometimes painful perhaps, but always intensely compelling" - endorse the work on the back cover. Indeed, the author takes the reader on a journey - both in the concrete and figurative sense of the word; it is a personal journey which Taseer embarked on to explore and understand his cultural and religious genealogy. The physical journey took him, in gradual stages, from West to East, beginning in Venice and ending in Delhi. However, the book only covers part of this geographical expedition, charting the author's experiences in Istanbul, Mecca, Iran, and Pakistan, leaving out other parts which covered Jordan, Yemen, and Oman. In all these countries, Taseer traces his routes through the intermediary of contacts, acquaintances, friends, and family, who help him navigate the vagaries of local life and lessen the difficulties of being a stranger in a strange land. They also answer questions and interpret Islamic thought and practice, while also acting as guides and interpreters. While in most cases they assist the author's progress and facilitate access to particular places and personalities, there are also occasions, especially in Iran, where Taseer finds it hard to judge whether someone can be trusted, given the

harshness of Iran's Islamic regime which uses the full force of its powers for those who do not observe its rules. The author himself comes to feel some of the weight of official suspicion when his application for a visa extension runs into difficulties, leading to a somewhat hasty exit, after interrogation and unsuccessful intervention by Iranian friends. It is this episode in particular which shows the hazards of the journey both for Taseer and those who act as intermediaries. The suspicion towards him taints those who help or vouch for him - only he can leave the country and they cannot.

Pakistan is the country that links Taseer with the part of his family with which he has had little contact during his upbringing. Weaving the story of his family background into his travel log, the authors seeks to unravel the less tangible threads of his genealogical quest. The beginnings of these threads lie in the chance encounter of his parents in 1980 in Delhi: a politically engaged Muslim from Pakistan and a Sikh political reporter from India. However, this mixed-faith relationship does not result in a mixed-faith family. Taseer grows up without his father, embedded in the Sikh culture of his maternal extended family, albeit with an awareness of that other - Muslim - inheritance. His efforts to make contact with his father during adolescence do not establish a continuous link with him. Taseer's quest is to understand his father's Muslim-ness, which - he hopes - will shed light on his own (rather ambivalent) sense of having something Muslim in and about him. He seeks to gain this understanding by exploring the cultural and religious expressions of Islam in the countries he visits - as he finds it in individuals and institutions - and by looking at the way in which politics and Islam relate to one another - separated from the affairs of the state in countries like Turkey, intertwined with the affairs of the state in countries like Iran.

The book thus records parts of the personal journey of someone with a dual cultural heritage, although Taseer seeks to capture some of the wider political and cultural contexts around him. The chapters which describe his travel experiences are interwoven with chapters which record his childhood and provide the background to his upbringing. To this reviewer, these are the most interesting parts of the book, because they convey something of what being of mixed heritage means - the sense of being part of a family and knowing some of its history, while also being conscious of being 'other' and 'different' in some respects. Despite his estrangement from his father, Taseer writes, "I grew up with a sense of being Muslim, but it was a very small sense" (p. 14). Eventually, it is the question of what makes him a Muslim despite his lack of faith which sets Taseer off on his journey.

There are also the formative influences of the extended family, of family friends, and of a Christian boarding school in South India. The subtle influences of the maternal grandparents are especially noteworthy; these occur by the sheer fact that the grandparents are part of Taseer's everyday life - with grandmother passing on sacred stories and both grandparents being examples of lived history, having lived the partition of India.

Given the author's background in journalism - he has worked as a reporter for *Time* magazine - this is not an academically conceived or constructed book. It records the experiences and thoughts of someone who sets out to discover missing links in his understanding of Islam, culture and politics, how these combine in different Muslim countries to the point of being inextricably meshed and providing the rationale for and underpinning each other. Some of these experiences are refracted by the lenses of others - by those who acted as guides in the respective countries and their particular 'take' on politics and religion. The book thus provides a set of snapshots taken by the author. The book can also be seen as a primary source for those interested in people of mixed heritage and the way they deal with and relate to both 'self' and 'other' in their lives, as an example of 'mixedness' which does not ultimately result in the easy resolution of ambivalence and 'mixed feelings'.

Elisabeth Arweck

University of Warwick

William B. Milam, *Bangladesh and Pakistan: Flirting with Failure in South Asia*, (London: Hurst, 2009) xii + 276 pp. £50 (hb) 00ISBN 978-1-85065-920-4, £16.99 (pb) ISBN 978-1-850-65-921-1.

Pakistan and Bangladesh, according to former US ambassador Milam, are stumbling between failure and success primarily due to their lack of good governance and developed institutions. His interpretation builds from De Soto's (1989) view of the failures of non-Western countries to inculcate the institutional requirements for markets and private-sector growth. Milam argues that a weak tradition of civilian rule, a stagnant economy in need of major structural reform, and a political culture lacking consensus and prone to corruption, among other reasons, have led to the current state of affairs of weak civilian governments punctuated by military intervention. Milam brings his experience as US ambassador to both countries, and his training in international economics, to write a political history of Bangladesh and Pakistan since their split in 1971 to the present. He also includes a chapter on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social development and argues for their beneficial effects, especially in Bangladesh.

Milam's account extends from January 1971 to January 2008 and his epilogue covers briefly the period from February to July 2008. Milam's basic narrative is straightforward: he argues that since 1971, both countries have followed similar trajectories, oscillating between military rule and unstable democracy, all the while coping with weak economies in need of liberalization. Beginning with the democratic episode of Mujibur Rahman in Bangladesh (1971-1975) and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-1977) in Pakistan, Milam builds the case that both began with a wave of optimism, but their populism led to

economic mismanagement and ultimately a weakening of democratic institutions. When the military intervened in both cases (1975-1981 in Bangladesh under Ziaur Rahman and 1977-1988 under Zia ul Huq in Pakistan), neither regime had lived up to its original promise. These military regimes would experiment with “hybrid” governance—officers in civilian garb – but were ultimately unable to prepare the ground for lasting civilian rule and robust market economies. The subsequent years, according to this narrative, follow a tragic cycle of unstable democracy and military coups. Ultimately, both states face today the same problem they did at their inception, that of creating developed market economies and parliamentary political systems.

As US ambassador to Pakistan (1998-2001) and Bangladesh (1990-1993), Milam demonstrates deep knowledge of both countries. Furthermore, his background in economics allows him to discuss the situation of non-governmental organizations’ social services clearly and intelligently; he concludes that the criticisms of NGOs ignore their positive role as substituting for a state that is unable to adequately provision public goods. Additionally, in comparison to a recent spate of books on Pakistan and other Islamic states, Milam’s approach is less reductionist; he does not make Islam the overriding cause of the political turmoil, as several other authors have. Instead of grand proclamations about Islam, modernity, and identity we are presented with a more sober and credible narrative, emphasizing fundamental issues of governance while not neglecting the tension between Islamic parties and the state.

Based on Milam’s privileged diplomatic location, a reader would assume some special insight, but, occasional footnotes aside, he avoids inserting himself into the narrative and his work reads scarcely differently from a standard history. This can be interpreted as either strength or weakness depending on the reader’s perspective; as an historian, I would have preferred a political memoir for a glimpse into US foreign policy. On the other hand, instead of hoping for some revelation, we should modestly recognize that perhaps his position allowed less for perspicaciousness than the temporality of being able to write a history years before the historian would ever enter the archive.

More significantly, depending on one’s view of De Soto’s theory of underdevelopment caused primarily because of poor legal institutions and bureaucratic formalities, one may find much to agree or disagree with in Milam’s account. Critics of De Soto and the Washington Consensus will be frustrated by his treatment of defects that are solely internal. For example, he ignores the United States’ Cold War policy of bolstering military regimes in Latin America, Indonesia and, of course, Pakistan under Zia.

Milam’s book is reminiscent of Stephen Cohen’s *The Idea of Pakistan* (2001) in its clarity of language and in its intended audience of policymakers, political scientists, and journalists (we can also add, through Milam’s chapter on NGOs, those interested in development). Since it focuses on national politics and only mentions the regions briefly in regard to political tensions with the

center, this book has little to offer to Punjab specialists. It would have been helpful to include maps (of which there are none) and more importantly, a timeline, as the chronology of so many short-lived governments in two different countries becomes difficult to follow. Finally, the editing of the book is unsatisfactory, including many spelling mistakes (especially in the second half) as well as terms that are left undefined or defined far after their first use. Nevertheless, for its intended audience, this book is useful for its timeliness, providing a contemporary history of both countries written not twenty years too late.

Ajeet Singh

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Farzana Shaikh, *Making Sense of Pakistan*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2009) 274pp. (pb) £15.99. ISBN 978-185065-965-5; (hb) ISBN 978-185065-964-8.

Making Sense of Pakistan is an important yet incomplete exposition of how religion defines Pakistan's politics. The first half of the book and its organising questions, namely, 'Why Pakistan?' 'Who is a Pakistani?' and 'The Burden of Islam,' neatly capture the core theoretical propositions of the book. Shaikh answers the question of why Pakistan was created by showing how the political movement for Pakistan in colonial India capitalised on the universalist claims of Islam to legitimise the demand for a separate, Muslim-majority nation-state. Pakistan assumed meaning to would-be Pakistanis because a historically and geographically specific group of Muslims perceived the right to exercise political power as divinely ordained. But the definition of Pakistani citizenship, a question too vaguely answered by Pakistan's founding fathers, became quickly politicised after independence, the paradigmatic question being whether a Pakistani citizen was designated by national creed or by religion. To ask who is a Pakistani is to pose a question about the relationship between Islam and the state. Pakistan's 'burden of Islam' is the tendency of its politicians to rely on religious rhetoric to legitimise their grasp on power.

A key contribution of this book is to lay bare how conflicted and uncertain the relationship between Islam and the state has always been. Shaikh showcases how this uncertainty has characterized every one of Pakistan's administrations, with the ultimate effect of religious radicalisation. The founding fathers of Pakistan, including Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Muhammad Iqbal, and Sayyid Ahmed Khan, were deliberately ambiguous about the relationship of Islam to the state. Each of Pakistan's formative administrations, unable to consolidate loyal bases of support, has capitalized on this uncertainty and turned towards exclusionary religious discourse to destabilise political opposition. Ayub Khan tried to formulate institutions which bypassed formal religious councils in favour of localised *pirs* and *sajjida nashin* to isolate the *ulema*. Though

relatively successful in marginalizing the *ulema*, Ayub Khan nonetheless readily utilized Islamic discourse when it proved useful. Yayha Khan used Islam to legitimise the 1971 civil war against the East Pakistanis. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto similarly sought alliances with local *pirs* and avoided confrontation with the Islamist *ulema* by promulgating an explicitly Islamic constitution. But as Bhutto steadily alienated bases of support with his nationalization policies, he too eventually bowed to Islamist opposition by banning alcohol, nightclubs, and gambling. The direct influence of Islam perhaps reached its zenith under General Zia, who paid public tribute to religious discourse within national politics. To a lesser extent, the same has been true of the democratic administrations of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. Musharraf too, when in need of political support, turned to the mullahs.

Shaikh effectively argues that this recurring tendency to rely on religion to destabilise political opposition has strengthened the Islamists' political voice. The continual engagement in Islamic discourse politically empowers the religious establishment for, if being a good Muslim is a pre-requisite to being a good Pakistani citizen or a legitimate leader, then those institutions claiming the divine right to interpret who is a good Muslim or what is an appropriately Islamic state are accordingly granted considerable political power.

The book's key shortcoming is its continual marginalization of socio-economic interests in explaining Pakistani politics. It thereby effectively attributes a greater causal role to the contested interpretation of Islamic identity than it rightly deserves. For example, Shaikh attributes the first large-scale religious riots in Pakistan, in Punjab in 1953 over whether the Ahmedis were legitimate Pakistani citizens, to the 'chronic ambiguity and confusion over the meaning of Pakistan as a homeland for Muslims' (p. 60). But to see these riots as being driven by a conflicted vision of Pakistani citizenship is to severely underplay the role of political interests in motivating these riots. Key religious organizations in colonial India had long been concerned with denouncing Ahmedis. However, these denunciations only became politically explosive in 1953, at the precise time when the national administration in Pakistan was considering a constitution that was perceived as generally unfavourable to Punjabi interests. Indeed, a powerful Punjabi landlord himself wrote that the anti-Ahmedi riots were instigated by the Chief Minister of Punjab in order to undermine this constitution (Firoz Khan Noon, *From Memory*, [Islamabad, National Book Foundation, 1993] p.234). To therefore understand these riots as being predominantly driven by questions of citizenship is to confuse immediate justifications with underlying causes.

Shaikh's contention that contradictory visions of political Islam predominantly explain Pakistan's lack of commitment to public welfare and social equity is another case in point. Though Shaikh acknowledges that it was the nature of class interests in those areas which became Pakistan which initially drove the lack of commitment to a developmental agenda, she ultimately argues that it was 'the absence of a consensus regarding the role of Islam that has,

above all, severely constrained the economic and social reach of the state' (p. 146, emphasis added). But the interests of wealthy, politically powerful social groups in preventing redistributive policies play a more important role in blocking the state's developmental agenda. To be sure, ambiguity over the public role of Islam has complicated the state's ability to pursue a developmental agenda. Yet the interests of Pakistan's ruling families, particularly of its powerful feudal and industrial families, in preventing a genuinely redistributive agenda that could challenge their grip on power is surely a bigger obstacle to a redistributive agenda than a contested vision of Islam. Only a cursory comparison with neighbouring India, where questions of national identity have not been nearly as contested but where a developmental agenda has been similarly thwarted by the interests of local power-holders, serves to illustrate that it is the structure of socio-economic interests which have, above all, limited the developmental reach of the state.

Maya Tudor

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Shauna Singh Baldwin, *English Lessons and Other Stories*. Reader's Guide Edition (Fredericton: Goose Lane Publishers, 2007), 216 pp. (pb) \$18.99 CDN. ISBN 0-86492-273-6, and Shauna Singh Baldwin, *We Are Not In Pakistan*. (Fredericton: Goose Lane Publishers, 2007) 274 pp.(pb) \$22.95 CDN. ISBN-13: 978-0-86492-488-9..

English Lessons and Other Stories and *We Are Not in Pakistan* are two collections of short stories by the award-winning author of *What the Body Remembers* (1999) and *The Tiger Claw* (2004). *English Lessons* is the earlier of the two collections and contains fifteen short stories (Adesh Bhuaji would be proud). The central characters in *English Lessons* struggle with issues surrounding their South Asian religious and cultural identity. The stories are broadly framed in terms of 'tradition and change', and are situated in a variety of (often overlapping) contexts: culture and religion ('Rawalpindi 1919', 'Nothing Must Spoil This Visit', 'English Lessons', 'Jassie'), family relationships ('Family Ties', 'Dropadi Ma', 'Devika'), miscegenation ('Gayatri', 'Lisa', 'Simran'), prejudice and racism ('Montreal 1962 Toronto 1984'), and honor and shame ('A Pair of Ears', 'The Cat Who Cried' 'The Insult').

Since its initial publication in 1996, the current edition of *English Lessons* comes complete with an Afterword by Kuldip Gill (193-198) and a Reader's Guide consisting of 'About the Author'(202), 'An Interview with the Author' (203-207), and 'Books of Interest Selected by the Author' (209-216). In the last of these, Baldwin shares her reflections on an inventory of books – fiction and non-fiction – that have informed her intellect and creative

imagination.

We Are Not in Pakistan is a collection of 10 longer stories (Manjit Uncle would be proud). If *English Lessons* explores the experiences of its characters against the backdrop of tradition and change, *We Are Not in Pakistan* tends to be oriented toward themes of power and oppression. The stories tend to be weightier in their subject matter than those in *English Lessons*. Baldwin overtly and unapologetically takes on themes of terrorism, racism and alienation on a variety of levels: socio-cultural, political, and psychological.

The subaltern characters in the stories find themselves in a range of geo-political settings and in a variety of psychologically unsettling circumstances. For example, 'Only a Button' is set mainly in post-Chernobyl Soviet Union and in the United States and relates the story of Olena, the marginalized heroine struggling to find her own voice and home. 'The View from the Mountain' set in Costa Rica deals with a post-9/11 world of racial distrust and fractured friendships.

On the other hand, one finds other stories that are thematically reminiscent of those in *English Lessons*. In the title story, 'We Are Not in Pakistan', Baldwin returns to the fault line between old world and new world values. And 'This Raghead' tells the story of racist Larry Reilly who realizes he "needs this raghead's skills" when his physician, Dr. Bakhtiar, comes to his aid after Larry's pacemaker fails. 'The Distance Between Us' is the story of Indian father living in Santa Barbara who meets the Indo-American daughter he didn't know he had. There are also the unexpected tales. 'Naina' is the magical and dream-like telling of a pregnant Indo-Canadian woman whose baby refuses to be born. As Fletcher, Baldwin tells a tale from the perspective of Collette's ubiquitous Lhasa apso.

On a theoretical level, Baldwin's stories call into question key conceptual categories. "Diaspora", "transnationalism", and "identity" are dislodged, problematized, and contested. Her characters, each in their own ways, occupy ephemeral, negotiated, and imagined spaces. They are luminal players occupying interstitial cultural, religious, political, and psychological landscapes. While several of the characters are what some sociologists might understand as 'third culture', there is a hybridity and mimicry that enriches Baldwin's characters. They are at times foreign and at times native. They are, in Homi Bhabha's words, "almost the same, but not quite" (Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1993:86). Moreover, Baldwin masterfully conveys through her characters "a dissembling image of being in at least two places at once" (ibid. 44).

Baldwin's stories betray a keen awareness and sensitivity to time and to place. She is a gifted creator of memorable characters, and a skilled conjurer of sensitive narratives and poignant turns of phrase. More than fine literary accomplishments, *English Lessons* and *We Are Not in Pakistan* are wonderful pedagogical resources, and in this writer's experience add

substantial heuristic value to the classroom experience. Undergraduate students seem to find it easy to relate to, if not personalize, the experiences of Baldwin's characters. These collections of stories will appeal to a wide range of readers interested in issues surrounding power, displacement, and identity. They are, however, first and foremost, must reading for anyone who loves a good story.

Michael Hawley

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Film Review

Kitte Mil Ve Mahi – Never the Twain Shall Meet, Dir. Ajay Bhardwaj, Duration: 72 mins, Punjabi with English subtitles. Format: DVD, 2005

It is hard to write a review of this film which is not also an obituary. Two of the film's central characters, Bhagat Singh Bilga and Lal Singh Dil *urf* Mohammad Bushra, passed away in 2009. This alone makes *Kitte Mil Ve Mahi* poignant and powerful. Both men were involved in revolutionary left politics in the Punjab, yet came from completely different social backgrounds. Bilga, was forged in the Ghadar party and in the later years of his life spent much of his time in England. Lal Singh Dil, a poet and activist, became politicized, ultimately by his caste status, but also through intense involvement in the Naxalite movement. Their ongoing political commitment to social justice and the removal of caste inequality provides the ideological direction and potency to the film.

What makes the documentary aesthetically appealing is the constant intermingling of music with the interviews. At almost all points in the film, when a serious point is made it is followed by some appropriate music or supporting song. For instance when the custodian, Kadar Sakhi, of the Baba Dasondhi Shah shrine, is talking of the way in which the lineage of a particular saint goes back to the Qadiri order from Baghdad, the scene is followed by the BS Balli Qwaali group singing: 'Get me Qadiri bangles to wear.' This is then often followed by some commentary from Bilga or Dil. This interweaving of aesthetics and politics makes the film a powerful and pleasurable viewing and aural experience.

The film touches on a considerable number of themes. Quite clearly the backdrop is that 'other' place and that 'other' time in which Muslims were present in East Punjab and these shrines, to some extent, perceived as their domain. This is never made explicit. Thus Lal Singh Dil is never referred to as Mohammad Bushra, yet for those who can read the imagery, after we are told his name, he is then shown in great detail doing his *wuzu* (ritual cleaning) and doing the *namaz* (prayer). Indeed, in all of the shrine scenes, it is ostensibly Muslim saints, who have been integrated into a Dalit lineage, who are present,

yet absent. The Islam of the shrine fits in so well with Dalit identity, that even the shift from Chisti Sufi Pir to Brahm Chand seems perfectly fine in a world where caste rather than formal religious identity is crucial. Here the normative boundaries established by formal religion of high caste/ low caste and male/female cease to operate. At the shrine of Channi Shah, in Sofi Pina, a woman devotee has taken over the role of the living saint. No one in the film protests at this, rather her pious position is seen as just reward for *seva* and piety to the saint. Localised power and spirituality of a diverse and appropriate nature come to dominate the scene in this Jalandhar-doaba landscape.

This is a film that works at many levels. At its most explicit it is a treatise on the continuing 'slavery' of Dalits in India. This is most powerfully articulated through the voice of Lal Dil, but also supported by Bilga. Yet the shrine culture demonstrates a site of creative appropriation and resistance without articulating it in that way. At a more subtle level, the centrality of caste even punctuates the analysis given in terms of social justice. The struggle that Lal Singh has with the *naxalbari* movement and the left, though not explicated in the film, is certainly present. The endemic nature of caste stratification is illustrated in the contrasting ways in which Bilga and Dil talk about Chamars. Bilga stands as a Marxist when he is critical of the Indian state or the way that the left get marginalised in certain sections of the film. Yet, when it comes to talking of Dalits, he centres himself as the mainstream and them as the 'other'. This is not an unsympathetic position but is in marked contrast to Dil, speaking as a Chamar. An unnecessary debate about those who face oppression and those who fight against it from a position of caste advantage is not made in the film, nor is that my intention now. Rather, it is to highlight the existence of this tussle within the left that partly made Dil turn towards Islam as a way of dealing with caste oppression. But even this conversion did not lead him away from his caste identity as, at the time of his death, he was not buried but cremated in the Dalit cremation grounds of his village.

In opening this review as an obituary, it is important to end it with the optimism that pervades the film in the face of increasingly rigid religious boundary marking in the subcontinent. In the world of Dalit spirituality and shrines, the opposition and resistance that Lal Singh Dil bemoans as lacking in other social spheres, such as the economic and political, seems alive and well. Paying no heed to the requirements of formal religious markers, the sites the film explores are such that all who wish to come and pray are welcome, in whatever form. In the face of changing structures of caste inequality in contemporary Punjab, and the emergence of a proud Dalit/Chamar identity, *Kitte Mille Ve Mahi* provides the cultural background and a clue to the resources mobilized in this new found self-assertion.

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