

Book Reviews

Nafisa Hoodbhoy, *Aboard the Democracy Train, A Journey through Pakistan's Last Decade of Democracy*, Karachi: Paramount Publishing Enterprise, 2013, pp.236, price: Pak Rupee 695.

A good number of political writers, who have written on Pakistan, are those who traveled through this country, spent some time here, observed the political events and then penned down their observations. Their's may not be the works the type of which could have come from trained historians and political scientists, yet their works serve as primary sources on the politics and society of the country as they provide the first hand information on the occurrences of the country. V.S. Naipal's *Among the Believers* was an impressionistic work. Emma Duncan's *Breaking the Curfew* is a good account of Pakistan's tormenting experience of going through a military regime. More recently, Anatol Lieven has come up with *Pakistan A Hard Country*, arguing that despite all its failings and the predictions of its doom's day, Pakistan would survive given a number of factors, including its inherent resilience.

The foreign journalists and writers who come to Pakistan often enjoy the benefit of having a good training in methodology and a critical eye which together enable them to see what many others, not endowed with these qualities, may lose sight of. Nafisa Hoodbhoy is a rare combination. She is some one who entered journalism while she was in Pakistan but now lives in the US, where she continues to do journalism as well as broadcasting. Going by her book one realizes that she may have become an American, but her soul is very much ingrained in Pakistani soil. Her book is a good account of not only how Pakistan has developed over the years, but also of how she herself has evolved as a person as well as a professional. It would not be wrong to say that Hoodbhoy born soon after the creation of Pakistan, has in fact grown with her country. She has so closely related herself and her personal life and environment with the happenings in the country that it would be very

difficult for even her to draw a boundary between her inner world and the outer troubled world that Pakistan has been since long.

The 'journey' whose reference one finds in the sub-title of the book, refers not only to her travel in the 1980s as part of Benazir's election campaign, but as a symbol of Pakistan's long struggle for realizing a democratic milieu in the country.

Hoodbhoy was the first female reporter to be inducted in an English newspaper in Pakistan. Instead of working behind the desk she preferred to go to the field, talk to people, see the society from close angles, and to gauge the aspirations and expectations of the people directly from spending time with them. Her journalistic pursuits took her to the far-off regions of the province of Sindh. She saw from very close quarters the lifestyle of the Sindhi feudals, the extravaganza of their female folk, and also experienced the extremely deplorable conditions in which the peasants and the other underprivileged section of the Sindhi society live. Couched in a literary style, her narrative is a true portrayal of the conditions she saw with her own eyes. This not only makes the book a good piece of political and social analysis but that of literature as well.

Apart from investigation into the social contradictions of the Pakistani society and particularly those of Sindh she also takes pains to highlight the successes and weaknesses of Pakistani political class. She praises the courage and conviction of Benazir Bhutto while she was challenging the military dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq but she also criticizes her government which not only failed in arresting the fast-growing trend of corruption in the country but was easily tempted to become a part of it.

Hoodbhoy is at her best when she takes on the patriarchal values and practices prevalent in Pakistani society. It is here that her personal experience showed her the way. She chose a profession which in those days was not common for women. Not only this, she chose to become a working journalist and served as a reporter, reporting from the more dangerous parts of the society—the slums, ghettos, rural strongholds of the feudals, etc. At times she had to face awkward situations from which she could come out only through her strong will and cooperation of her like-minded friends.

Another aspect of the book is its good depiction and exposure of the class-ridden Pakistani society. She shows how cruelly the society has been divided between those who are born with a golden spoon in the mouth and those who languish in utter poverty and destitution.

An important theme that recurs in the book is the growth of ethnic polarization in Sindh over the years. She shows that in the

beginning, that is almost throughout 1950s, there survived an environment of cohabitation; people did not find it difficult to adjust with each other, but then later, especially in the 1960s onward, ethnicity became an important factor in the politics of the province. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, it resulted in some of the worst violent incidents. Hoodbhoy also writes about Pakistan's crisis following the events of 9/11. It was during this period that Pakistan faced a series of terrorist attacks on its civilian and military installations and public places, to make things worse there were natural calamities which further exposed incompetence of the state institutions to meet a challenging situation.

The last three chapters of the book show how strongly Pakistan has become vulnerable to internal as well as external threats. Over the years, according to Hoodbhoy, certain good things have also happened in Pakistan. The unprecedented freedom which the media came to enjoy, and, a series of bold decisions taken by the judiciary, can be taken, as hopeful signs for a better future of Pakistan. Regarding democracy she is very right when she says: 'Democracy is a noisy business in Pakistan but it is a form of government that the majority of the people have chosen to go forward' (p.217). To add to this one can say that despite all its failings and weaknesses democracy is still the only hope for Pakistan. Pakistan will flourish in its continuation, progress and strength as a better and better state.

Hoodbhoy's book, it is hoped, will find a respectable place in the political literature on Pakistan. It will also serve as a useful guide to understand the historical context of contemporary issues in Pakistan.

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***Yādgār-e-Manzūr*, ed. Dr. Mazhar Mahmud Shirani, Dār-ul Navādir - Lahore, 2013, pp.568, hardcover.**

This is a collection of selected writings of Syed Manzur-ul-Hasan Barkati [1926-2002–Tonk], a scholar specialising in the history of Tonk [Rajasthan, India] that previously was the only Muslim state in the erstwhile British colonial arrangement of Rajputana. The editor, Dr. Mazhar Mahmud Shirani and the introducer/reviewer Hakim Mahmud Ahmad Barkati, both belong to Tonk state. It is creditable that Dr. Mazhar Shirani has undertaken such a taxing enterprise of collecting and editing and finally presenting the numerous writings of Syed Manzur-ul-

Hasan Barkati – which are extremely valuable in their scope and content, variety and historical importance.

The book is sub-divided into 9 rubrics by the editor who has exercised a critical eye on the contents. These are:

- i. History and society;
- ii. conventions [*majālis*] and sights [*manāzir*]
- iii. *Ghālibiyāt*;
- iv. national celebrities and Tonk;
- v. books and libraries;
- vi. scholars and poets of Tonk;
- vii. reportages;
- viii. extracts from letters/correspondence;
- ix. appendices.

It is clear that this collection of information will be the definitive reference-work for all future historians on Tonk. The vast scope and broad spectrum of the rubrics attest to the accumulation of facts of vital importance with regard to the socio-cultural and politico-religious panorama of Tonk will make it a primary original source-book. The style of the author [Manzur-ul-Hasan Barkati] is lively and literary. The whole work is coloured with flashes of literary insight and a lucid, racy mode of composition. Topics of great interest among the many dealt with in this compendium are:

- i. The role of Tonk in the ‘silken letters’ movement;
- ii. The contribution of Tonk to Urdu poetry;
- iii. The celebration of *Īd* and *Īd-i-mīlād-un-Nabī* [PBUH];
- iv. The historical buildings of Tonk;
- v. Ghalib and Tonk;
- vi. The major libraries and MSS collections of Tonk;
- vii. Great intellectuals and scholars of Tonk, such as Hafiz Mahmud Shirani [and others];
- viii. The visit of Dr. Mazhar Mahmud Shirani to his ancestral homeland [as recorded by Manzur-ul-Hasan Barkati].

This is just a brief sighting of the sumptuous fare presented to the reader within the 500-odd pages of this book.

The introducer, Hakim Mahmood Ahmad Barkati [who was tragically murdered in Karachi recently] has given an overview of the book, its author and its contents – in what must be his last written critical assessment. He brings out the major changes that occurred in Tonk after its incorporation in the Indian union. These were:

- i. The transfer of all Tonk State Muslim employees from the capital to distant postings far away and appointing Hindus to replace them;
- ii. The abolition of Friday as a holiday and its replacement by Sunday;
- iii. The imposition of a ban on cow-slaughter;
- iv. The abolition of the Department of *Shari'a* [dealing with Muslim religious affairs];
- v. The imposition of Hindi in all official matters and the abolition of Urdu [in the Arabic script];
- vi. A ban on the ceremonial firing of cannon at the beginning and end of the Friday and the two 'Id prayers;
- vii. The '*Īd-i-mīlād-un-Nabī* (PBUH) was celebrated for a week with speeches, recitation of poetry and distribution of sweets. All this was done away with and the '*Īd-i-mīlād* holiday was abolished.
- viii. The ceremonial procession of the Muslim ruler to the '*Īd-gah* – along with his military escort and the interaction of the Nawab with his subjects was also terminated.

In short, the state of Tonk was shorn of its Muslim identity and its manifestation in the religio-cultural aspects of communal life. The Muslims felt that their survival – religious, economic and cultural – lay in Pakistan. This is a very insightful assessment made by Hakim Mahmud Ahmad Barkati and proves that the true intention of the anti-Muslim Indian government was the eradication of Muslims as a religious as well as demographic entity.

In conclusion, we can reiterate that works of this nature are extremely valuable and highly desirable. The salvation of difficult-of-access material in transient or defunct journals is a matter of paramount importance. And this has been done so expertly and adroitly by Dr. Mazhar Mahmud Shirani, setting an example that many others should admire and follow.

I would request Dr. Shirani to make a similar collection of the remaining essays, comments, reviews and literary memorabilia written by Hakim Mahmud Ahmad Barkati and put them together for publication – as he has previously done in two collections. This will be a farewell tribute to a scholar-extraordinary.

Gujrat Pedia, Vol. 1, ed. Ahmad Salim *et al.*, University of Gujrat, Gujrat – Pakistan, 2012, Price: Rs. 2,000; pp. 584, hardcover.

This is the first volume of a ‘mega-project’ covering the town, city and surrounding areas [*tehsīl*] of Gujrat, Punjab, in a multi-pronged approach taking for its area of investigation the diverse aspects of its history and variegated existence. The first volume covers 16 chapters and contains within its compass rich and plentiful information on a scale not attempted before. The first two chapters examine the historical sources of Gujrat history written over the centuries in both published and unpublished form. This is followed by an account of Gujrat’s demographic features. The role of the people and political personalities in the freedom struggle for Pakistan is also given in detail. This is a very important feature of the multifaceted aspects composing the totality of this ambitious project. The political history of Gujrat after independence is also given followed by an analysis of Gujrat’s electoral politics. This latter discussion revolving round certain influential clans and fraternities [*biraderi*] might be of some anthropological interest but could have been abridged or even omitted without loss to the thematic unity of the volume. A description of those soldiers from Gujrat who sacrificed their lives for their homeland is graphically described. Certainly, Gujrat has been a fertile recruiting ground for soldiers of the Pak army especially in the Punjab regiment. It can boast of 2 awardees of *Nishan-i-Haider*, [Maj. Aziz Bhatti and Maj. Shabbir Sharif], Pakistan’s highest military decoration for gallantry. In describing Gujrat’s spiritual heritage, the authors make mention of various religious gatherings and events with an enumeration of the life-sketches of various eminent religious scholars [*ulemā*] and spiritual guides [*pīrs*] who lived and worked in Gujrat. The cultural heritage of Gujrat in its societal manifestations in the form of public functions, religious celebrations, festivals and fairs, customs and rituals of socio-cultural import is treated next. The various tribes, clans and castes that inhabit the Gujrat territory and their mutual interaction are described. The profession of *qasā’ī* is applied to wool-carders and not to butchers – as is commonly assumed. Gujrat has been an important centre of music and its allied disciplines. Apart from classical music, Gujrat is a great centre of folk [*lōk*] music. The great vocalist and renowned classical singer, *Malika-e-Mauseeqi* Roshan Ara Begum, made her home in Gujrat district [Lalamusa].

A very important issue that has been tackled is that of education – its centres, its network and the teaching fraternity. Gujrat has, over the years, produced several luminaries in the field of secondary and advanced education – such as Prof. B.A. Hashmi, the second Vice-

Chancellor of Karachi University. There is an extensive essay on Dr. M. Nizamuddin, current Vice-Chancellor of the University of Gujrat, which is the largest entry of any kind in the volume, and is followed by an avid account of the University of Gujrat. An interesting item is the welcome address presented to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan [d. 1898] on his tour of Gujrat to collect funds for the proposed MAO College [established 1877] and its reply. Unfortunately the date of Sir Syed's visit is not given. It could have easily been traced out from *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan kā safarnāma Punjāb*, ed. Md. Ismail Panipati, Lahore, 1961.

The work of institutions and pioneers in the area of medicine is given prominent notice. A now-forgotten medical practitioner, Col. S. Mazhar Husain Shah, Civil Surgeon of Delhi [before 1947] and personal physician of the Quaid-e-Azam hailed from Gujrat and was buried there [1979]. He also edited the text of Avicenna's *Canon* in which he was assisted by Karachi-based polymath, Hakim Mahmud Ahmad Barkati [1926-2013].

Industry, social welfare and important personalities of the past constitute the last 3 of the total of 16 chapters. Among those luminaries of Gujrat who have passed away is Kemal A. Faruki, the Islamic scholar whose fluent Arabic was invaluable at the Islamic Summit [1974] at Lahore. There is also a Prof. P. Nasir who spent his working life teaching science in Venezuela. The scions of Gujrat have excelled in different disciplines and areas and added lustre to their homeland.

As this is the first volume, it is expected that others will follow and a comprehensive coverage of Gujrat-related aspects will be provided. The mention of certain sectarians could have been omitted without loss. Other aspects that need to be highlighted in future volumes are: the poetry of rural Gujrat; bibliophiles, libraries and MSS collections especially Orientalia; the contribution of Gujrat to the national economy; the future prospects of Gujrat and its population.

There is no doubt that this mega-project could never have materialized without the encouragement and support of the Vice-Chancellor, University of Gujrat, Dr. M. Nizamuddin. His efforts at making the grand heritage of Gujrat available to others in this proposed multi-volume work are highly commendable. The team of researchers also deserves credit for their efforts in this direction. Like Gujrat, most districts of Pakistan have a very rich past, and it is to be hoped that this pioneering effort on the part of the University of Gujrat will find echoes in work done in academic institutions all over the country.

Zeenat: a novel by Mirza Kalich Beg, translated by Zunaira Yousaf, University of Sindh (Shamsul ‘Ulama Mirza Kalich Beg Chair), 2009, pages 168, price, Rs.120 [paperback].

This is the English translation of a Sindhi novel. The original novel was written by Mirza Kalich Beg, a prolific writer, translator and creative artist. Originally of Turkish descent, Mirza Kalich Beg was only the first generation of his family to be born in South Asia. This accounts for his many references to, and nostalgia for, the Turks and the Ottoman Empire. The second half of the 19th century saw the consolidation of the British colonial yoke over the vast South Asian subcontinent. One factor that the colonialists were habitually pointing out was the backward condition – educationally, economically and gender-wise – of South Asian women generally and Muslim women particularly. Urdu novelists like ‘Deputy’ Nazir Ahmad had already taken up the advocacy of ‘suppressed’ women outlining their emancipation in novels like *Mira’t al-‘Urūs* [‘The Bride’s mirror’] and *Bināt al-Na’ash* [= ‘Ursa Major’ – name of a constellation. In Arabic, it is feminine gender]. Nazir Ahmad’s contemporary, Syed Ahmad [d. 1912], in addition to his many scholarly works, also wrote three novels focusing on female social empowerment: *Haq al-Nisā*, *Tahrīr al-nisā* and *Akhlāq al-nisā*.

It was natural that this forward-looking trend should manifest itself in regional literatures as well. According to the prefatory note by the Secretary, Sindhi Adabi Board, Mirza Kalich Beg began translating an Urdu novel titled *Sehat al-Nisā* but stopped midway when the idea of writing a separate novel occurred to him. Later, the translation was published. Mirza Kalich Beg in his foreword mentions the areas of female advancement which he terms necessary. The chief among these are: the proper education of girls, the matrimonial concerns in all attendant details, the adult age for marriageable girls, abandonment of the veil, and the avoidance of huge expenses on marriage ceremonies. Apart from these, there are other spheres that, according to the author, stand in need of reform: patriotism, foreign travel, social etiquette, agriculture, etc. The author exhibits his obedience to tradition e.g. when he feels that the wife has to show obedience to the husband but not vice versa. He is in advance of his time when, within the novel, he depicts some intimacy between the husband and wife in the presence of others. The current holder of the ‘Mirza Kalich Beg Chair’, Dr. Muhammad Qasim Bughio, states in his note that the author has ‘very successfully depicted the early 20th century society of Sindh along with its merits and demerits’. But the note [referred to above] by Mirza gives the date as 1 October 1890. It is thus a picture of Sindh in the late 19th century ~~Sindh~~

and not of the 20th century. The novel is ‘frozen’ in the late 19th century. It is a period-piece of local interest – far removed from the exuberant claims of equality to *Jane Eyre* and *Emma* made by its translator. There is no account of Mirza’s other novels or a chronology that would put *Zeenat* in proper perspective. There is also no elucidation or annotation of certain terms/allusions/references that require explanation.

The novel contains 20 chapters out of which 14 are set in South Asia chiefly in Hyderabad [Sindh] and Bombay with passing references to Karachi. The central character, Zeenat, is an informally educated girl who is married off in her teens and is separated from her husband by a number of adventurous stratagems. She is later reunited with him and the couple goes to Baghdad in the service of the British. Later, the husband [Ali Reza] takes up service as part of the Ottoman government and moves to Istanbul. He is devoted to his duties and earns the caliphal favour by being appointed prime minister. [The caliph is not named.] He uncovers a plot to murder the Caliph and overthrow the imperial government. This further endears him to the Caliph. Eventually, Ali Reza and Zeenat return to South Asia and settle in Hyderabad [Sindh] where first Zeenat and then Ali Reza die. While in the service of the Ottoman Caliph, Ali Reza seeks out his ancestral home in Georgia – which is a vicarious desire of the author.

The last 6 chapters take the novel out of the humdrum and monotonous life of slow-moving Sindh and open an exciting chapter of courage and intrigue. There is a strong consciousness of being Muslim but no aversion to the British and their stranglehold on India. How is Zeenat educated ‘at home’ and how she endures her travails is not deeply described. No other community, apart from Memons, is mentioned. Urdu is mistakenly called ‘Hindi’. Zeenat is supposedly ‘beautiful’ but her beauty is not described.

The Muslim women depicted do not present an attractive picture. They simply eat, drink and reproduce – these being the major concerns of their lives confined within comfortable but constricting spaces. Apparently, at the time, the ideal of a South Asian Muslim woman was marriage to a husband who would tolerate her, who would make her a mother, and provide for the family. The question of attachment, affection, education and culture was irrelevant.

The time-frame is not mentioned but it is clearly post-British conquest of Sindh [1843] and before the ‘Mutiny’ [1857]. The references to cars are certainly not to the mechanical vehicles. Even in its ‘advanced’ approach, the focus remains on the men and not on the women. When Ali Reza discovers his long-last and presumed-dead wife [Zeenat], he rushes to her and takes her in his arms before the members

of his family. But the feelings of Zeenat or her reactions are not described at all. According to Annemarie Schimmel, 'The novel *Zinat* is not a highly artistic work, not even in its language ... it gives perhaps a better picture of the social standards and the ambitions, ideals, and worries of a Muslim middle-class family in the later 19th century ... [*Mirza Qalich Beg and his novel Zinat* in *Pearls from the Indus: studies in Sindhi literature*, Jamshoro, 1986, p.198]. The author shows a pro-Turkish attitude although, as Schimmel writes, he 'had no idea about the real city of Istanbul and its peculiarities ...' [p.200]. The strong nexus between Turkey and South Asia is then brought out by Schimmel mentioning that the most pro-Turkish personality in Sindh at that time was Hassanally Bey Effendi, Turkish Consul in Karachi.

In short, *Zeenat* has the merit of brevity. Its episodic structure removes the need for a coherent or involved plot. It survives on the strength of its characters – chiefly Zeenat. She remains a mysterious, elusive character whether within or without the veil and almost defies the reader to understand her. Its chief weakness, thus, is a lack of insight into feminine psychology.

Unfortunately, the English of the translation is poor. It would have benefited from editing and translation by a person proficient in the language.

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***Food Prints An Epicurean Voyage through Pakistan* by Shanaz Ramzi, published by Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2012, pages: 219, large size (square of 8.5 inch side), price Rs. 2200.**

Food is the foremost survival need of humanity. 'Food getting is a physical imperative; subsistence, a fundamental interest; and hunger, a diffuse primary drive'.¹ This biological need is fulfilled in the most cultural way by those who claim to be most 'cultured', but even the earliest hominids had devised expert ways to get food through hunting and gathering. Amidst the chaotic conditions of 18th century India, Nazir Akbarabadi, a renowned popular poet of Urdu, has written an unforgettable poem, 'Roti Nama'; a verse of it says:

'Neither, we know of the moon or the sun

¹ E. Adamson Hoebel, *Anthropology: The Study of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 235.

O fellow, all these seem to us as breads'

This verse reflects the utter desperation of people who have to live without food. On the other hand, Ramzi writes, 'It is no small wonder ... that eating in Pakistan constitutes the single greatest entertainment and pastime of people from all communities and classes'. This may also allude to the fact about importance of the book under review, written by Ramzi, on such an 'essential recreational need' of Pakistanis.

Anthropologists find an intimate link between the cultural ecology and food. Hoebel writes:

The physical environment does not determine directly what a culture of a people will be, but it does indeed limit its nature. Indirectly, the environment is a powerful factor in cultural selectivity and innovation. Nonetheless the culture and food preferences and work habits that it sustains are important determinants of the ways in which a people utilize their physical setting. Particularly significant is the world view of a people.²

This paragraph shows that food is inevitably linked with other aspects of the cultural life.

There are people living in deserts eating in the shells of ostrich eggs and storing water underneath sand to keep it safe in intensely hot seasons. They survive, as they learnt the art of procuring food from the environment and gradually evolved better and more feasible ways to 'cook' it. The art of culinary is not limited to cooking, but to presenting it as well. If the food availability depends largely on immediate environment, ways to cook it are engulfed in historical, religious, cultural and health-related concepts of the people, thus in the same environment people of different religious concepts cook and eat different foods, observe different rituals related to foods, and draw different kinds of gratification from the same food. True, it is all in the head, but a lot is in the surroundings, too. From religion, gender, class, ethnicity, health, medicine, superstitions, magic, rituals, pottery, spirituality, seasons, tourism, droughts, famines, wars, food security, pregnancy, and Malthusian theory to sexuality, in short, almost every aspect of life is related to food. Even those who take food as a sign of involvement in 'this-world' and do try to forsake it for the sake of getting spiritual elevation, they have to eat, though minimal, to survive. Taking food is life, cooking is embedded in social history, and presenting and enjoying it is culture, perpetually in evolution, especially in the phase of globalization, where the global variety of cuisine has got its way into our

² *Ibid.*, p.236.

kitchens, making us more attuned to once unknown tastes. The tourists cannot separate their experience of a new place without their experience of food. Pakistan, having an immensely rich cultural variety, presents to the world a fantastic blend of richly-tasteful dishes, a good variety of them are introduced, discussed, and contextualized in the book under review, with a unique label, 'Food Prints'. The context in the book changes incessantly because the regional, historical, ethnic, and global dimensions of the subject, give it an appeal, hardly any one who lives or wishes to know about Pakistani society, would be able to resist knowing. The book under review serves such a purpose to elevate 'food' from its very 'basic' status' to a 'cultural item' because of the anthropological approach of the writer, a journalist by profession, who has been writing on the same subject in daily *Dawn*, too.

From the hunting-gathering phase to the globalization age, one can see each sample found in Pakistan. This is more true with respect to food than perhaps in any other aspect. The book opens with a reference to geography and history, from Mehrgarh to the present, indicating the process of demographic, religious and cultural transformation, having its imprints on food. What can be called different 'gastronomical community', is suggested here, presenting Pakistan as a host of such diverse communities. The author presents Karachi as a separate region, 'cosmopolitan' in its cuisine, too. Among this city's 'salad bowl' of people, apart from the prominent ethnic groups, she highlights the Makranis, Sheedis, Parsis, Memon, Bohras, Khojas, Hindus, Bengalis, Afghan, Goans, Anglo-Indian Christians, and the Chinese, who are adding to the culinary variety of the metropolis. She has been writing on the culture and customs of these people in *Dawn* and thus is a familiar name for the English newspaper readers, at the least.

The chapter following introduction is 'Cooking the Pakistani Way', which describes the common features of Pakistani cooking, as being following the Islamic condition of *halal*, no pork or lard at all, wheat as staple diet, use of oil/ghee and spices, a layer of oil in the dish to make it presentable, etc. She mentions flavouring, cooking utensils, and techniques of cooking. In the big business centres (Karachi, Lahore) dinner and in the small cities lunch is the main meal of the day in home. The villagers' work schedule, however, has put them with a heavy breakfast and an early dinner. Women are chief decision-makers about meals. One staple and one main dish at least in every house and two staples and at least two main dishes at a time in affluent households indicate the class pattern of meals. Deserts are not taken regularly. A chapter on spices, aromatics, herbs, and garnishes, is followed by a chapter on culinary evolution.

Embedded in the historic evolution of cooking and eating patterns, the material presented by Ramzi also informs those who are part of the local cultures, about the cultural anatomy of their food. For instance, it would definitely be interesting for a food lover to know that *chana chaat* was popularized in the reign of Mughal Emperor Mohammad Shah (1719-1748), when a court hakim recommended this highly spiced dish 'to keep stomach problems and germs at bay' (p. 152). There is a comprehensive introduction of the main dishes popular in various culinary regions of Pakistan. The fact remains that even the alluring pictures and introduction cannot convey how good the dishes taste in reality.

A significant section of the book, spread over 47 pages, gives ten tried recipes of the author, and 32 other Pakistani recipes. This makes the book more useful. A glossary of 4 pages, a bibliography of 4 pages, and an eight pages index make it a genuine researched book.

The book is must for the tourists who want to see and taste Pakistan to experience its rich culinary heritage. The researchers particularly the social historians, who want to look into the cultural diversity, all can trace the intimate linkages in this book between the environmental, social, cultural and religious factors evolving the food preference of a particular people. The book becomes all the more important in the context of dearth of material on cultural aspect of Pakistan. The cultural cosmos of Pakistan is in need of more researchers to document, to investigate, and to celebrate it. Produced in a style of collectors' item, the book is definitely going to tickle the taste buds of every reader, and also stimulate the thinking of every one who takes the business of social sciences seriously.

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Arif Hasan and Mansoor Raza, *From Micro-finance to the Building of Local Institutions*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 210, price: Pak Rupees: 795.

The Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) needs no introduction in the development circles of South Asia. In fact, the achievements of OPP have been appreciated at a wider scale in different parts of the world, due to many reasons, the microfinance program initiated by OPP being among the prime reasons, called as 'the earliest and one of the most important programme of its kind in Pakistan'. The Orangi Charitable Trust (OCT)

has been one of its four components, which started functioning in 1987. The book under review is mainly designed to outline the origins and evolutions of the micro-credit program in Pakistan. The book comprises three parts: Part One having ten chapters, mostly brief, 74 pages in total). Part Two covering eighty pages describes ten case studies. Part Three, comprising appendices, has compiled 13 different items related to the subject under discussion, such as: documents, notes, lists of interviewees and members, literature consulted, related to the issue under study, extracts from financial statements, etc.

The origin of OCT is described as not developed on a prepared blue-print rather it developed in a flexible manner depending upon the response and involvement of the community expressing its needs and requirements. Its highlights included giving loans to people who already had some business in running condition hence the poorest of the poor were not targeted. In fact, this focus has saved the OCT programme from disaster many other micro-credit programs had to face. Moreover the OCT focused more the new middle class emerging from newly educated young persons especially in the rural Sindh. Another consideration has been to recruit the local residents of the area for the offices, so as to enhance their sense of ownership among the community they were serving. The culture developed in the organization has also helped OCT succeed as a non-bureaucratic environment, approach and style of operation has been ensured. It is labeled as 'democratic, transparent and populist in nature' as well. NGOs are expected to adopt this approach for effective performance.

The book, apparently sounding a typical writing on the successful programs of the OPP, is in fact an in-depth analysis of the microfinance system operating in Pakistan. It lists 12 micro-finance institutions of Pakistan, which have been giving loan of about 12 billion rupees to 978,137 borrowers. The OCT has a loan profile of 45,533 active borrowers and loan portfolio of Rs. 2.2 billion only in all the four provinces. This book focuses on Sindh only, as the case studies presented were chosen from there. The book provides a comprehensive outline of the evolution, principles, objectives, and operation of the OCT.

The book starts the OCT story from the vision of eminent social worker, Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan, who picking his lesson from the historical knowledge, tried the old-tested methods as he found them suiting 'the conditions of the weak and poor producers and consumers in a capitalist system'. Orangi was full of such producers. Cooperatives were decided to be formed by the people of Orangi. The riots of December 1986 left many houses in serious economic distress. A Riot Repair Programme was initiated by the OPP for psychological redress

and reconstruction in the area. It then started giving loans for small enterprises for economic uplift. OPP also became a guarantor for people who wanted loan from the bank but were settled on an un-leased area. OPP then mortgaged its own securities worth Rupees 1.1 million to have cash for disbursement. Later on the OPP-OCT program went through various stages since 1987, all explained in the book.

The initial chapters discuss the history of the OCT program, computerisation of accounts, vision, present structure, and the loan process inside and outside Orangi Town. The authors have discussed the factors constituting the partnership model in chapter IX. These refer to making the potential partner understand the culture, methodology and rationale of the OCT program. Later on the partner organisation gets into an agreement with the OCT and they are then provided with training, guidance, core funding for operational expenses and a line of credit at reduced service charges. The chapter on the partnership model also explains the qualities of current leaders, staff, procedure of lending, fund management and sustainability. The next chapter discusses impact and repercussions of the partnership model as to on partner organisations' leaders, staff, human resource development, women, and Pakistan Poverty Alleviation fund's policies,

The case studies include ten institutions working as partners to the OCT. These include two in Khairpur—Khajji Cooperative Society and Sassui Cooperative Society— five OCT branch offices in Pir Jo Goth, Khairpur Miras, two projects in Saddar Ji Bhatian— MIOP Women Livestock Cooperative Farming Project, Mehran Education Welfare Society—Foundation for Rural Development, Piryallo City; Saath Development Society, Kandiaro; Mehran Rural Development Society, Naushero Feroz; Indus Community Development Organisation, Moro; and Shadab Rural Development Organisation, Shahdadpur. Leaders and functionaries of these organizations were interviewed about evolution of their organisation, problems, structure, functions, working, loan disbursement and recovery system, and evaluation and impact of the loan program on the functionaries, the beneficiaries, and the community at large. There were old organisations which later joined OCT. One can see that it was not merely the economic uplift of the target population, but extra benefits of the profit which was invested in computer training, ambulance, building mother and child healthcare facility, etc. in the case of Saath Development Society. The perception of its leader might have a universal application, when he says: '...projects designed by foreign NGOs or at a national level were not as beneficial to the community as tailor made programmes such as those run by him'. (p.119). During 2009 and September 2010, the Mehran Rural Development Society has given

loans worth 7.8 million rupees whereas it meets its office cost of Rs. 45,000 as well from the service charges whereas the mark-up rate is just three percent on small loans (Rs. 5,000) and 2.2 for big loans (Rs. 10,000). Description of these case studies also reveals the dynamics of their working in an environment where other actors are also operating.

This book is a commendable attempt to record, document and analyze the experience of OCT in order to guide the fellow organizations, and those who want to understand, participate, benefit, monitor, or initiate such programs on their own level. The innovative efforts focused at grass roots development, sustainable development and effective participatory development, need to be understood in the present socio-economic context of Pakistan, especially when the graph of poverty is going up due to climatic change-related environmental calamities, mal-governance and above all political uncertainty prevalent throughout the proudly called 'democratic regimes'. This book is definitely going to contribute in that direction.

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***Pakistani Women Multiple Locations and Competing Narratives,* edited by, Sadaf Ahmed, published by Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2010, pages: 316, price not printed.**

The women of Pakistan though have been a subject of academic research for about three decades, yet the continuing and emerging issues of womanhood need attention of academia on permanent basis. The availability of already published quality research on Pakistani women has been another problem for those interested in the subject. There was felt a need to compile material scattered in different forms. The book under review is an attempt in that direction. The editor herself has very well elaborated the context, relevance and utility of compiling the selection of anthropological and sociological studies which were based on sound, rigorous research, and that presented an analysis that was not simplistic. The studies also represent rural and urban localities, small towns and the diaspora. The data was collected from the field in most of the studies but there are found theoretical emphasis as well.

The editor has highlighted five aspects of the studies, and the existence of Pakistani women, deemed important in this selection. The first one is about 'representative' character of the studies found on Pakistani women. Giving a review of studies being published in the last

three decades, she finds that due to dearth of research work having sound research base and not simplistic in analysis, only the recently printed works were chosen. In this sense, the data and findings may not seem new but they are presented with a view to circulate it widely, to have an insightful look at Pakistani women and to elaborate the diversity of class, occupation, locality, ethnicity, ideologies, etc. affecting their life texts and patterns. The second is on invisibility of women's work, followed by the hegemonic discourse. Muslim identity, the notion of respectability and honour associated with noble character of women, drawing strength from religious notions, all meshed with patriarchal control, are the themes discussed with bold to low tones. The fourth theme refers to competing discourses and multiple identities. It refers to 'patriarchal bargain' managed by women within strictness of ideologies. Whereas the political ideologies have been changing in Pakistan with every new regime, women's preferred domain of activity has been fluctuating between home and nation-building. The fifth highlight has been 'placing Pakistani women' in the backdrop of immense variety in their locales. Dismantling a homogeneous image of Pakistani women has been a major objective of bringing out this edited volume. The 'veiled, impoverished, or belonging to the rural areas' is the only portrayal of women one would find in the history and academia of the west. The history has remained, on the other.

To provide a context to the volume, the series editor has referred to the cultural antiquity of the land of today's Pakistan, the foreign influences, development issues, globalization, and the conflict of tradition and modern affecting gender dynamics in the today's Pakistan. As the land abounds in rich cultural material, relevant to women's lives, there is great scope for exploring more and deeper in the vastness of the cultural landscape. The volume is a token of paying tribute and encouraging the researchers on sociology and anthropology of gender in this region.

The ten articles included in it are written by established as well as young researchers.

Anita M. Weiss writes about the working women of walled city of old Lahore, who live in families being transformed under the pressures of poverty, globalization, aspirations for development, and the contradictions thereof. Such families are changing in their structure, and their increasing permissiveness for women to work outside home for meeting new obligations reflects 'renegotiation of gendered

expectations'. Such findings have been corroborated by other studies in later years, indicating a continuation of such trends.³

The *lok* (folk) theatre has been the most powerful medium of giving message, entertainment and performance of art, affordable for a commoner since long till the cinema took lead only to be eclipsed by electronic media later on. Fouzia Saeed has focused the life world of women working in folk theatre to counter the narratives written about performing arts by men from male perspective. She argues that women's role in this field depicts a high level of professionalism in a traditionally male domain. These women face constraints similar to women of other occupations. Initially the folk theatre had been using men to play female roles with needed get-up. The author gives a history of this theatre, quality of stage setting performance types, and name six popular theatres apart from one owned by a popular heroine, Bali Jatti. Three famous women performers are also introduced here. Only one, Gaman Theatre, had no women performer, the others availed of female's attraction for gathering crowd. The main problems of *lok* theatre women's lives have been mentioned as: no choice of occupation; a role of males in negotiation for terms and payment of work; subordination to control and psycho-physical violence by males, economic hardships, and stigma put on their work even by their children. It has been a tragedy in the lives of women in performing arts that even the people who take benefit of their earning or the husbands who marry them for art, turn into hostiles and mostly put a curb on their art activities. If this true for top-class performers, one can imagine the fate of an ordinary theatre performer.

Situating women in the macro and micro levels of patriarchy, structures of domination, and poverty to show women's experiences, Lubna Nazir Chaudhry holds that: 'In order to be studied, women's lives must be contextualized within existing power structures...' Women are found negotiating with the power structures because they have an awareness of their powerlessness. The author has tried to prove that women's control on land, meaning legal title, access, actual control and financial control, enables them to ensure food security in a better way especially in the cases of small farmers' families. It is further proved that participation of women in the public life as citizens is conditional with their access to basic social services, multiple livelihood bases and nearby

³ See Anwar Shaheen, "Urban Women, Alternative Earning Strategies And the Exigencies of Globalization: A Study of Karachi", in S. Seweieringa and N. Katjasungkana (eds.), *The Future of Asian Feminism: Confronting Fundamentalisms, Conflicts and Neoliberalism* (Cambridge Scholarly Publishing, 2012), Chapter 9, pp.155-81.

towns provided by state-controlled institutions of law and order. The author has also given suggestions related to various aspects of women's lies, e.g. research in impact of economic policies, land reform and giving entitlements to women and men indiscriminately, health, education system, special assistance to the poor, information campaign, regulation of wages, measures to enhance women's public participation, and educational scholarship for women and other disadvantaged groups. Some recommendations for future research are also given.

Amina Jamal has explained the construction of identities, a Pakistani woman has to adopt, formed as composite effects of gender, citizenship, religion, society and family. Whereas the project of Islamization has been shaping the ideas about 'the nation', 'the Muslim woman', and 'citizen', a woman's assertion on her sexual autonomy transcending all such trappings is taken as a serious threat to 'the heterosexual middle-class nuclear family and thus to the nation-state...'. With reference to landmark case of Saima Waheed, the judgment revealed how sexual agency of a woman, though validated through constitution and religion, originates ambiguity around the concept of universal human rights' application on women, how 'feared' threats to the social and moral fabric result thereof. The insecurities were hanging over identities based in culture and religion. Moreover, added factors like, class, ethnicity and culture, all politicized and mobilized, together negotiate a woman's identity. It thus became a case challenging feminist scholarship and activism in Pakistan.

Shahnaz Khan tries to seek the history and impact of the Zina Ordinance in Pakistan. She points out that women's keeping in internment in order to be reproduced at the time of court trial of their accused rapist, termed as a gender bias in the criminal system when women come across it. However, if women run away from their homes and are put under the charge of '*zina*' prison or shelter houses give them refuge from the social and familial victimization. After introducing and contextualizing the Ordinance, she looks into the lives of women imprisoned under the Ordinance, legal implications. Narratives of such women show that families try to control the women bodies, but prison or shelters reject such claims of families. Contradictory court rulings, definition of age of majority, poverty, illiteracy, lack of social support, and lack of bail money, all vindicate women's vulnerability to a legal system very high on male bias. Khan finds women's equality as 'rhetorical'; as the poor women are suffering differently from the middle and upper class women. She concludes that: 'it is the perverse customs and practices of the Pakistani society and of Muslims in general that are deemed responsible for the horrors perpetrated under the *zina* laws. In

the ‘corrupt’ state of Pakistan, as the author holds, prevails ‘a national narrative of purity and perfection to mask the material impurity of the nations’, thus the unwanted, impure citizens, women in this case, are imprisoned, to ‘keep the family and the nation chaste’. (p.159).

How British Pakistani men and women construct, negotiate, contest and assert chronic ill-health, is analyzed by Kaveri Harriss. As the habits of diet, lifestyle, and minority/majority status affect a community’s health profile, ethnic differences are found to be complicating such a picture. She finds that, ‘there is a complex interplay of factors affecting ethnic inequalities in health, such as the long-term impact of migration, racism and discrimination, poor delivery and take-up of health-care, differences in culture and lifestyles, and biological susceptibility’. In this sense this article explores a less common dimension of existence. Moreover, the use of poetics, found helpful, while collecting data through ethnographic field work and in-depth interviews with Pakistanis in East London. Women, though responsible for family health, were found to be internalizing ill-health as a part of self identity, more perfectly than men. (p. 168). There were found differences between inner and outer selves, women suffering under the powerful pressure of *sabr* (patience), which in fact denotes, ‘endurance, perseverance and persistence’. Analysis of narratives showed that the respondent women were trying their best to keep their heroic, stoical, brave, profile in everyday life. They had applied pressure on families successfully to get family care in ill health phase, yet their claims were weaker than men’s, due to weaker bargaining position within the household. They could not succeed in gaining family’s attention if they are not ‘emotionally central’ to their kin.

Another dimension of women’s identity, explored by Rubina Saigol, in its multiple layers is that of *Mohajir* women of Pakistan. The *Mohajir* identity has emerged in the 1980s, but despite the leaders’ following rhetoric for political campaign, the identity itself is fractured, and *Mohajir* women has not adopted it as such in a straightforward manner, as Saigol asserts. Identities, other than ethnic, coming from the past and present, deriving from religious, national supra-national, regional and familial sources, cross-cut the ethnic one. Women’s voices are found rejecting the ‘hegemonic’ identity, harped by the party. This article is also based on narratives.

Amineh Ahmed has delved into an interesting aspect of women’s social lives—celebrating happiness and sorrow. A common name, *gham khadi*, meaning ‘sorrow joy’ is used in Pashto to denote all such events or activities. Though both are inevitable part of life, their celebration, as the author argues, has recently become a priority, and thus a concept

characterizing Pakhtunwali—the Pakhtun code of life. The Pakhtun women, mostly confined in the home, get chance to grieve and see relatives. They are found taking *gham khadi* as a source of personal self-definition and a chance to participate in a complex web of relationships, made up of ‘overlapping bonds, loyalties, allegiances and debts between families’. These life cycle celebrations include a series of reciprocal visits, funerals, weddings, hosting, gifting, expressions of congratulation or condolence, all keeping in view the family status and previous record of such exchanges. Zekeiya Eglar⁴ has once explained such complex network operated by women of a Punjabi village near Gujrat. This is a common feature of life-cycle events in all ethnic groups and regions of Pakistan, as has been recorded by Razzaqi⁵ and few other researchers, as well. With a good theoretical background of this cultural aspect of a community, the author provides an in-depth analysis of the current and previously available accounts. Larger attendance means honour and social prestige; emphasizes the collective aspect, sharing of grief or happiness, and binds the individual to perform on reciprocal basis, whenever a need arises. There are specific laws and moral values attached to operate in this network. So much so that social obligation of attending and gifting becomes burdensome, hence not welcomed always. A comparison of women attending Al-Huda religious teachings sessions and of those not attending is also presented, to highlight another level of conflict in control over women and identity.

The last brief article by Shahla Haeri discusses the democratizing effect of anthropology. She focuses on the ‘missing’ women in the social science literature, who have been actively participating in the public life of modern Muslim states like Pakistan or Iran. Such ‘veiling’ of professional Muslim women is established despite their high visibility in public sphere. Haeri explains that there are many reasons—representational, historical, and theoretical—behind it. The true representation of Muslim women, therefore, needs to be completed at least by the anthropologists, she suggests.

The book under review, a unit in the Oxford in Pakistan Readings in Sociology and Social Anthropology series, is a good effort in at least acknowledging the academic worth of material scattered and inaccessible for a common researcher. It also highlights the need for

⁴ Zekeiya Eglar, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), reprint 2011, Karachi: Oxford University Press.

⁵ Shahid Hussain Razzaqi, *Pakistani Muslim Women and the Rasoom-o-Riwaj* (Lahore: Idara-e-Saqafat-e-Islamia, 1965, 1st edn., 1981 2nd edn., Sang-e-Meel, 1996).

commissioning comprehensive researches by the Pakistani authors more than ever, because those working in the foreign universities when can launch high quality researches, why the academia in Pakistan is ignoring a vast unexplored area of potential topics related to Pakistani womanhood. The micro-sociological researches at the university and NGOs levels are no doubt providing immense data, but the rigorous research at the standard presented in this book, guides us and demands more laborious efforts and applying higher standardization in this direction. The Oxford University Press, among many other publishing houses has got prominence regarding quality material on women, of course. The book under review is just one example.

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