

Book Reviews

Jürgen Wasim Frembgen and Paul Rollier (eds.), *Wrestlers, Pigeon Fanciers, and Kite Flyers Traditional Sports and Pastimes in Lahore*, published by Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2014, pp.172, price, Rs.1,350/-.

Lahore has always been a vibrant cultural city. It has absorbed a multitude of cultural influences from diverse sources, indigenous and foreign, in abundance. In any culture the roots are no doubt in the soil, but the plant is free to catch light, air, and vibes from the whole universe. The popular culture reflects the actual longings of the people and how they pursue what they think is essential for their pleasure. The book under review discusses three aspects of the popular culture in the old Walled City of Lahore—an urban space—which is taken as a representative of the culture of old Lahore, trying to survive under the pressures of a modernizing and globalizing surrounding. Here there is wrestling, an Olympic sport; kite flying a seasonal activity in many parts of the world, and pigeon flying, a common scene in the sky but a rare hobby of those who fancy it today. All these three indicate varying degrees of passion; wrestling is a fulltime activity for which daily exercise and fitness is essential, whereas the pigeons and kites can be abandoned anytime. Excellence in the three comes from the professional standards, accepted globally or locally, but expertise is involved which requires practice and a perfect temperament. The book under review throws light on such aspects adeptly.

The traditional wrestling sport is depicted as a celebration of male body. Of course, it is a male passion, depicted in oily shining muscles of proud wrestlers, the scenes of *akharas* (wrestlers arena), training, and *dangal* (wrestlers tournament), all portrayed in pictures and description. The patronage system, their legendary sumptuous food, health aspect, and the elements of religiosity are also explained. The institution of *akhara* is worth exploring if someone has the sagacity to

know the reality of health-building in the Punjab. The province has produced legendary world class wrestlers,¹ and their traditions still make the hearts of young wrestlers pounding. It is lamented that the status of wrestling in Pakistani sport is declining after 1990s, main reasons being inability to adapt to the revised rules, anyhow this is taken as to revise massively the tradition of *kushti* (local wrestling style) which, according to authors, would amount to ‘the distortion of an ancient martial art and the loss of its inherent values’ (p. 40). This is how the local is being corrupted by the global. The local is painted in these three accounts very smoothly and plainly. One would enjoy reading the words like *chibi* (hit against the throat), *langota* (waist cloth), *dastar bandi* (wearing the honorary turban), *dand* (push-up) and *malish* (massage), and many more, used to explain the whole cultural complex woven around *kushti*.

The authors have keenly learnt and wrote about the rules of the games, because the rules have been developed over time, and the professional association, such as Kite Flying Association of Lahore, have tightened them so much that in kite flying competition, the flyer has to stay on one point, and wear bells in fingers to indicate that he is not making them ring in order to obey the rules. Of course this tightness of rules mars the fun, spontaneity and sense of freedom that ensures boundless joy of kite ‘flying’. The joy can be derived by the passionate flyers as if both, the flyer and kite, are the same, free, high, in adventure. Furthermore, the feelings can be so nurtured that it may lead to the expression: ‘I felt that kites also signified a hope, a desire for escape, fancy dreams entrusted to a breath of wind, and connected to a string and the hand that clasped it’ (p.145). This quote from memoirs of a kite flyer suffices to explain how high one can go with a small kite costing a few pennies only. On the other hand, the authors have also explained how this passion turns into a broil if *aadab* (manners) of kite flying are not followed. The authors have mentioned the social troubles caused by the kites flying as well.

The three sports/pastimes are ancient and have been adopted by the South Asian communities to give them their local colours, thus come the innovations. The practices associated with wrestling, kite and pigeon flying make their own cultural complexes, which nurture their own passion, skills, norms of competence and competition, and standards of excellence. Such aspects are discussed elaborately from an ethnographic perspective. One would wonder how much notions, emotions and material facts are associated with the ordinary-looking acts of kite-flying

¹ Such as Gama, Jhara, Gunga, Bholu brothers, The author has described the history of wrestler’s family as well. (pp.16-17).

or pigeon-keeping. The authors have skillfully described such diverse aspects in a comprehensive manner.

This ethnographic book is an exquisite effort to document folk culture and in fact to celebrate the real genuine 'folk', which has not been known to urban or high society at large, save a few pockets. This folk culture is basically rooted in rural traditions which are still surviving in cities. One can learn about the pigeon catchers described here as to explain their tricks of entrapping and business of selling pigeons. (p. 76). The culture around this business and hobby is described here as difference between a '*chiri-mar* [bird-catcher] and the art of *kabutar-bazi*, insisting that the poor indulge in the former while only 'men of substance' ... can afford the latter.' (p.77). The high altitude of a *chiri-mar* aviary provides him a chance to look into the privacy of scores of homes around him, whereas he is at the risk of falling from that delicate structure of bamboo, erected to catch birds. This and such other 'inner aspects' of this pastime are explained in the book through observation.'

All the three games have their rich historical and cultural background, but the religious orthodoxy has been criticizing kite and pigeon flying on the grounds which are rejected by the authors. They call kite flying a 'vital part of popular culture' which reflects colour and richness of life; bring people together for leisure, fun and sports; and a celebration to welcome spring. Even it is called an occasion of 'utopian freedom', 'emotional escape from daily cares', an expression of collective identity, and aesthetic aspect so much ingrained in the Islamic culture'. With such forceful approbation, it is clear that the sport is judged in a non-emotional, secular and objective manner. Wary of the efforts of religious extremists, the authors point out the 'puritanical kill joys on cultural appropriateness', in contrast to the passion, pleasure and enjoyment of the folk, thinking these as polluting the purity of Islam, deriving inspiration from the self-acclaimed guardians of Islamic norms. The authors appreciate the effort to call the kite-flying festival as '*Jashn-e baharan*' (spring festival) to give it its true status as a marker of identity of the Punjab.

The three sports are analyzed in the light of long field work. Though spread over roughly 46-56 pages each, all the three chapters explain the culture of enjoyment, popular slogans and expectations from the public, history, norms and rule and the very embeddedness of the folk games, no one can deny as being an important aspect of our society. The local readers would also enjoy the local terms studied in the analytical paragraphs, giving the book a very rich indigenous flavor.

***Vikram and the Vampire, or Tales of Hindu Devilry*, Sir Richard F. Burton (tr), Scotland, 1989 [1st edition 1970].**

The *Baithal Pacchisi* [twenty-five tales told by a vampire (baithal)] is one of the popular story-cycles current in the South Asian subcontinent. It is of great antiquity and has been translated from the original Sanskrit into the common vernaculars of India. The original has twenty-five tales [hence ‘*pacchisi*’] but in the translation of Sir Richard Burton there are eleven stories only. These are narrated to a king named Vikram [= ‘victorious’], supposedly identified with Chandragupta II Vikramaditya [c. 260 - 415 CE]. Vikram is clearly a title and not a personal name. The original 25 tales were translated into English by several persons – such as Babington [1831], Hillings [1848], Edward B. Eastwick [1853] and Duncan Forbes [1859] before Richard Burton [1870]. The first Urdu version was made by in 1801 by Mazhar Ali Khan ‘Vila’ – a teacher attached to Fort William College, Calcutta [reprinted with notes by Gauhar Naushahi, Lahore, 1965]. Story-cycles form a recognized part of South Asian literature and have a popular and mass appeal. Frances W. Pritchett has examined a number of story-cycles in her book *Marvelous Encounters: folk romances in Urdu and Hindi*, Riverdale, 1985. These stories and their structural framework [story within a story] influenced later foreign story-cycles such as the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* and the *Decameron* [100 tales] of Boccaccio the Florentine.

Sir Richard F. Burton [d.1890] was an extraordinary linguist [knowing 26 languages] and explorer, adventurer and prolific writer of the 19th century. In his action-packed life he was also able to study Sanskrit and its complexities. In his preface to the first edition of 1870, Burton writes: ‘The Baithal Pacchisi, or twenty-five [tales of a] Baithal – a vampire or evil spirit which animates dead bodies – is an old and thoroughly Hindu repertory...Composed in Sanskrit...it has been translated into all the...modern dialects of the great peninsula. The reason why it has not found favour with the Muslims is doubtless the highly polytheistic spirit which pervades it...’

Regarding the style of the original stories, Burton continues... ‘The merit of the old stories lies in their suggestiveness and in their general acceptability. I have ventured to remedy the conciseness of their language, and to clothe the skeleton with flesh and blood’.

In his comprehensive study of Urdu prose story-cycles [‘*Urdu ki nasari dastaanein*’, Karachi, 2014], Dr Gyan Chand Jain writes that the tales of Baithal Pacchisi were put into Hindi from the Urdu version made by Mazhar Ali Khan ‘Vila’. Thus the preservation of this ancient Hindu story-cycle was initially performed by a Muslim who wrote in Urdu.

This is evidence of the broadminded attitude of Muslims towards all other literatures even though they might be in opposition to their [Muslim] beliefs.

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Khwaja Razi Haider (ed.), *Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Khatoot Kay Aaeney Main*, published by Peace Publications, Lahore, 2015, pp.510, price, Rs.1095/-.

Based on the letters written by, and address to, the Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the book under review is a valuable addition to the literature on the founder of the nation and the freedom movement. The book was first published in 1985 and the present volume is its second edition which carries a number of additions to the earlier impressions. The contents of the book are relevant for general readers as well as researchers.

Khwaja Razi Haider, the editor of the book, is a well-known figure in the field of research, particularly the history of the Pakistan movement and the Quaid-i-Azam. From 1966 till date he has worked continuously, and has produced about 12 researched books, a number of translations and various scripts for television and radio, all on the Pakistan movement. He also had a long affiliation with the Quaid-i-Azam Academy, first as a Research Officer and later as its Director.

For a student of Pakistan movement it is quite disheartening that very few authentic works based on Jinnah's correspondence is available in Urdu because of negligence or the challenging task of translation of primary sources like correspondence. The editor and translator of the present volume, therefore, deserve our appreciations. The book will help the Urdu readership to understand Jinnah in a better way.

In the modern political history of the Indian subcontinent, Jinnah played the most crucial role, particularly with reference to his services to the Muslim community. For a deeper knowledge of a leader like him, and his era, letters and correspondence are very important, as remarked by Muhammad Ismail Panipati in his book *Makatib-e-Sir Syed*. He observes that the translation of private letters are the best source to know about any leader and a reformer's original and real thoughts. These

letters reveal the unattended but important events which can shed light on the personality and leadership of a reformer or national leader.²

In the letters of Jinnah we can find a very noticeable trait of putting forth arguments instead of relying on emotive means. The letters also disclose Jinnah's personal aspects and characteristics. Issues confronted by the Muslims, the matters related to the Muslim League and the demand for Pakistan constitutes the main content of the correspondence.

The book comprises 189 letters written by various personalities and political leaders. Of these 82 letters are written by Jinnah and 107 letters have been address to him. Likewise, 11 telegrams are also included in the book, of which 6 are from Jinnah and 5 addressed to him. Moreover, of the total letters, 14 are personal in nature while remaining 186 letters and all of the telegrams are political.

These letters cover the politics of the era from 1893 to 1947, particularly the periods dealing with World War I & II, Elections of 1936-37, the Lahore Resolution, struggle for Pakistan and the emergence of Pakistan. Numerically, most of the letters belong to 1940 and 1944 (26 letters each), and 1941 (25 letters) respectively. It is interesting that the longest correspondence is between Jinnah and Nehru; in this respect, 10 letters are addressed to Jinnah while 8 letters are written by him. In this correspondence, Jinnah tries to represent Muslim League as a sole representative of the undivided India's Muslim community. The second longest correspondence is between Nawab Bahadur Yar Jang and Jinnah, having 13 letters from the Nawab and 7 letters from Jinnah. The central point of the correspondence deal with issues in the All Indian States, especially Hyderabad. Then comes correspondence between Gandhi and Jinnah. In this correspondence, there are seven letters from Gandhi addressed to Jinnah and six replies from Jinnah. These letters bring to the fore the position of these two historical figures on the issues of communal unity, Round Table Conferences, Jinnah's address in Lukhnow session and the Day of Deliverance observed by the League. In this correspondence letter of 11 January 1940 written by Gandhi is noteworthy for in it Gandhi addressed Jinnah as Quaid-i-Azam.

The correspondence between Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi and Jinnah is also quite important. It comprises in total 13 letters of which seven letters are addressed to Jinnah and in reply Jinnah has written six letters. This part of the correspondence deal with political developments in the Punjab and Muslim League's policy towards them.

² Muhammad Ismail Panipati, *Makatib-e-Sir Syed*, Vol.I, p.19, Lahore, 1976.

The correspondence between Jinnah and Dr. Muhammad Iqbal is also very important. Iqbal wrote 16 letters to Jinnah, while two letters from Jinnah have been incorporated in the book. In these letters matter relating to Muslim majority provinces, particularly the Punjab, are highlighted along other contemporary issues.

The book also includes letters of Abdul Sattar Khairi, M.A.H. Ispahani, Linlithgow, Hatim Alvi, Molvi Fazlul Haq, Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman and few other personalities. Through these letters, one gets the picture of the political conditions in Bengal, Sindh and the Punjab.

As a primary source on Jinnah and the Pakistan movement, it is hoped that interested students and researchers will fully utilize the book under review. However, it would be pertinent to mention some proof reading errors. In the second edition there are more or less 150 mistakes! Even the index is quite poor; 17 words selected randomly were not found on the mentioned page. This seems quite disappointing, particularly so, in a book dealing with Jinnah who was known to be a very meticulous person.

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Abdullah Malik, *Jail Yatra*, M.R. Shahid (ed.), published by Dar-ul-Shaoor, Lahore, 2013, pp.200, price, Rs,400/-.

Political historian senior leftist journalist, writer, political activist and a member of the communist party, Abdullah Malik was born in the second decade of the 20th century on 20 October 1920 in Lahore's Kocha Chabak Sawaran, which was located in the heart of the city. He got his early education in a small school and graduated for the government Islamia College. Abdullah Malik started writing in his early age and edited the college magazine *Crescent*. For a brief period he was associated with the anti-imperialist movement namely 'Tehreek-e-Ahrar'. Abdullah Malik joined the Communist Party of India before partition and attended its conference held in Bombay in 1943. He later joined the All India Muslim League where he was responsible for formulation of the Punjab Muslim League manifesto which had proposed progressive agrarian reforms and the nationalization of industry. After partition he came to Pakistan and in 1951 joined the Urdu daily, *Imroze*, founded by Mian Iftikhar-ud-din. In late 1960s, Abdullah Malik served as the correspondent of *Imroze* and *The Pakistan Times* in London. He

was jailed in 1971 by the military regime of General Yahya Khan for opposing the military action in East Pakistan. Malik had been one of those Pakistanis who had great sympathy for the Bangalis.

Abdullah Malik's career spread over more than six decades. During this period he wrote a large number of books and more than 100 articles covering the issues facing Pakistan, the history of the Punjab, culture, politics and the issues of third world countries. These articles suggest that he had vast knowledge of a wide range of subjects. He critically examined the capitalist and feudal systems and also worked as a human rights activist.

Abdullah Malik penned down his daily diary, a habit that continued till his last years and months. The first diary he wrote was *purani Mehfilain yaad aa Ra'hi Hein* (Remembering the gatherings of yore). That diary covered the first twenty seven years (1920-1947) of his life. It was published during his life time.

In the present book, *Jail Yatra*, Malik writes about his daily routine and produced scholarly work on history, independence movements and politics. This diary comprised description of two eventful days (28 May to 29 May) of 1971 and almost two months of 1981 (11 June - 1st August 1981). This book describes an episode in which Abdullah Malik was sentenced to one year prison and was fined Rupees 50,000 for describing East Pakistan as Bangladesh during the military era of Yahya Khan, before the election of 1971. The military officer who sentenced him noted, in his written order, that he was an educated and responsible person and also a responsible senior journalist. Malik had spoken some words by mistake, the military officer, therefore, wanted to award him the punishment of lashing but, as he was an old man, Malik was spared from this punishment.

Abdullah Malik was a very devoted and organized person. He regularly woke up early in the morning and wrote daily diary in the jail chambers about his different activities and also about history, politics and journalism. He wrote both poetry and prose. He also wrote about his family background his family members: wife Ayesha, son Kausur Abdullah Malik and Sarmad Abdullah Malik; friends and politicians like Hamid Akhtar, I.A. Rehman, Atizaz Ahsan, Malik Qasim, Mulana Kausar Niazi, Mian Muhammad Qasuri, Abid Minto, Rao-Rasheed Amin Mughul, C.R. Aslam, Javed Latif, Khurshid, Mian Murtaza, Hamid Sheikh, Haji Anwar Rasheed, Mian Manatullah etc. He also read Mulana Abdul Kalam Azad, *Ghubar-e-Khatir*. Malik advocated freedom of print media and stood for the freedom of journalists and journalism. He was a staunch progressive writer and always sided with truth and justice.

This diary was published first in *Irtiqa* magazine in six or seven parts and then in a book form. The book is indeed a useful addition to the history and politics of Pakistan.

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Zulfiqar Halepoto, *Paani ka Aalimi Bohraan aur Pak-Bharat Tanazeaat*, published by Fiction House, Lahore, 2012, pp.128, price, Rs.200/-.

‘Running water is beautiful water’. When we talk of Pakistan, Indus River system is lifeline of the country. The narrow water stream originating from lofty mountains ends up in Arabian Sea harnessing the vast area of Pakistan. The mighty Indus, once a sacred stream revered by the people of Indus Valley, gradually became a commodity to be manipulated by the upper riparian’s to deny the rights and share of the lower riparian areas.

With the rapid increase in population, energy requirements multiplied. To meet the energy demands, hydel power projects were designed to generate electricity, including multipurpose dams. The British were wise enough to expand the irrigation system in the Indus Basin. Later, the hydrological experts in the country worked on the same footings favoring construction of multipurpose dams and also diverting river water through canals. For many years, this approach produced positive results, but, ultimately the lower areas of Indus plain started to degrade because of decreasing water flow in the stream.

The Indus delta is the utmost affected area where fresh water flow is reduced and this has resulted in the sea water intrusion in creeks of Indus delta. Ecological degradation is increasing in deltaic plains. Not only vegetation and aquatic life of delta is threatened, but large population settled on the Indus banks is also suffering.

To highlight the water issues of the Indus River system, an attempt has been made by Zulfiqar Halepoto in the form of *Paani ka Aalimi Bohraan aur Pak Bharat Tanazeaat*. While preparing the case of river waters, Mr. Halepoto stated that water is historically associated with nations and civilizations; therefore, it cannot be assessed with calculated engineering systems only. Highlighting the various analogies of running water, Halepoto concisely discusses the impact of global warming on rivers. He mentions that Pakistan is losing 2.2 billion dollars per annum due to environmental degradation. Environmental loss is

more devastating in the third world countries, and South Asia is prone to environmental disasters. Explaining the impact of global warming vis-à-vis water scarcity in South Asia, the author refers few significant reports of the UNEP and IPCC. He has further listed major calamities in South Asia of the last two decades. Cyclones in Bangladesh (1991), cyclone in Pakistan (1999), heavy rainfall in Bangladesh (2004), and floods in Pakistan (1992) etc., all can be linked with the negative impact of global warming. To counter the threats of climate change, world leaders gathered at Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and Agenda 21 was signed. Later Kyoto Protocol, 1997, stressed, that states should control the Green House Gases, emission by the year 2012. The failure of Agenda 21 and Kyoto Protocol depict the non seriousness of developed and developing world towards environmental protection. For instance, America was not the signatory of Kyoto Protocol, as well as China refused to cut down its carbon emissions. Later in Copenhagen 2009, nothing substantial was agreed regarding environmental protection.

Halepoto is very much critical regarding Indus Water Treaty of 1960. He blames General Ayub Khan of selling 36 MAF water to India, while India was demanding only 8 MAF. While describing the hydrological scenario of the Indus Basin, Halepoto stresses four major factors contributing to the loss of water flow in the Indus: hydro-power projects and extended irrigation system in the upper riparian region; Indus Water Treaty of 1960, water reservoir development in Afghanistan and climate change.

The challenge for Pakistan is two pronged. One to settle the water issues with India and other is river water distribution among the provinces. It is likely that in future, as scarcity of water will increase in South Asia it could become the major source of conflict between the two countries.

The author asserts that hydrological planning is very much necessary to conserve the available water and to restore ecological balance of the Indus delta. To deal with the scarcity of water, it is suggested, to conserve water by cleaning siltation from canals, controlling water theft, looking forward to alternate energy sources for power generation, to give up the idea of constructing large and small dams on rivers and using modern methods of cultivation like sprinkle and drip technique, which consumes less water.

Thus, the books give a brief description of hydrological division and water conflict between India and Pakistan. It appears more a compilation of various documents and tables rather than an analytical research work. It is very disappointing that book contains twenty maps and only few are correctly represented with proper scale and direction.

Bibliography is also missing, making it difficult for the readers to access the original sources. The book is Halepoto's ambitious attempt to write on hydrological issues of the region. How far author is successful, that is left to the reader to decide. Anyhow, this book can be useful for general readers who are keenly interested in regional water issues and particularly for high school students of geography.

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