

Book Reviews

Sheela Reddy, *Mr. and Mrs. Jinnah the Marriage that Shook India*, published by Penguin/Viking, New Delhi, 2017, pp.421 price, Indian Rs.699.

In *Mr. and Mrs. Jinnah*, author Sheela Reddy writes about a very public passion of a very private individual. The role played by Mohammad Ali Jinnah in the unfolding history of South Asia has been praised, propounded, or condemned; but never has his life, his marital life been treated as the center-piece of his existence, and never before has it been treated with the lyricality that Sheela Reddy has brought to it.

Fictional accounts of the Jinnahs: Dinkar Joshi, *Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah* (New Delhi, Pentagon Press, 2012) and Kiran Joshi, *Jinnah Often Came To Our Home* (New Delhi, Tranquebar Press, 2015) are fairly recent, but even with that latitude, they have not been able to approach the allure of Sheela Reddy's narrative.

Oddly, Sheela Reddy achieves this not by excelling in imagination, but by excelling in research. She looked for the couple at places others had overlooked; the correspondence of Sarojini Naidu and her daughters both with and about Ruttie. She put marginilia under the magnifying glass. Comments written on the margins or printed words under lined by either Ruttie or Mohammad Ali Jinnah, were focused on and made the basis of induction. Not the least is her anthropological inquiry into the Parsi and Khoja communities in the colonial era.

Both the Parsis and the Khojas (Seveners or Twelvers) were the most anglicized communities of the time, but at the time of this marriage they were most conservative. That Mohammad Ali Jinnah was 42 and Rutten Bai Petit only 18, showed that the misgivings of the communities were not merely religious. Considering that the earliest communal riots in Bombay that is 1851 and 1874, had taken place between Muslims and

Parsis,¹ the free-will couple had a rough time. Rutten Bai Petit was excommunicated while Mohammad Ali Jinnah had to face fiery clerical denunciation.

Almost all the leaders of the Indian liberation movement had been widowers: Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel and Abul Kalam Azad; but only Mohammad Ali Jinnah had contracted a free-will, inter-religious marriage, which at first was a sensation and at the end a desolation. That Jinnah ran counter to the other widowers to bring about partition caused his marriage and its failure to be linked to his political fortunes.

If we try to pinpoint the central figure in this whole tragedy, we shall focus on the figure of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. That she admired Jinnah for his political work is known, but Sarojini Naidu and both her daughters Padmaja and Leilamani corresponded with Ruttie and when they kept their correspondence within their family, Ruttie Jinnah was a frequent topic of discussion. Jinnah also figured in their letters but more in his political than in his personal state.

Sarojini Naidu had tried to dissuade Ruttie from marrying Jinnah but Ruttie her heart set, would not listen (p.31). Later when she saw them together Sarojini Naidu commented: 'He loves her', Sarojini Naidu wrote to Syed Mahmud. 'the one really human and genuine emotion of his reserved and self-centered nature' (p.47). However, Ruttie Jinnah used to the opulence of her parent's house was extravagant in her expenditure, driving Jinnah to earn more and more and as a natural result neglecting her. The refuge then Ruttie sought was Sarojini Naidu's Taj Mahal suite where she would appropriate all of Mrs. Naidu's attention, not letting her free to mix with other guests. Then Ruttie Jinnah accepted the invitation of Sarojini Naidu to go to Hyderabad, a place where the entry of Jinnah had been banned. She had an extended stay in which she went on a shopping spree, which for the first time caused concern to Jinnah.

It was not only her husband that Ruttie had left behind, but also her baby. As Sarojini wrote to her daughter Padmaja: 'I could beat Ruttie whenever, I think of her child' (p.248). Nevertheless, she understood that Ruttie Jinnah was unhappy: On 23 February 1927, Sarojini Naidu wrote: 'She has only us to love her and understand her' (p.322). A complication arose when Sarojini Naidu, like Motilal Nehru, was converted to Gandhi's ideals. Nevertheless, she never distanced herself from the Jinnahs. She ran down M. C. Chagla for deriding Jinnah. On the Delhi

¹ Richard D. Lambert, *Hindu-Muslim Riots* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Muslim Proposals she wrote to her daughter [22 March 1927]: ‘Jinnah has absolutely risen to his height and carried the better mind of the people with him. I am very proud of Jinnah’ (p.324). Thus Sarojini Naidu was left supporting both Mr. and Mrs. Jinnah.

It was in a letter written to Padmaja Naidu that Ruttie Jinnah revealed herself, before her marriage, and just after Sarojini Naidu had advised her against marrying Jinnah: ‘Whenever I hear or see anything beautiful, it invariably saddens me, and I simply can’t restrain from pining over it—but it is a melancholy in which I rejoice, for I feel that it always leads me towards greater perception and sincerity’ (p.32).

Politically, Ruttie Jinnah had proved an asset to Jinnah. When Jinnah was in the Bombay Town Hall opposing a memorial to the outgoing Governor Lord Willingdons, she had made a speech: ‘We are not slaves’. Her speech cheered loudly, brought the Police Commissioner Vincent out from the Hall. There was a confrontation between the two with Ruttie Jinnah standing her ground. This caused reporters to question Jinnah: ‘Could you not have persuaded Mrs. Jinnah to stay at home?’ ‘However’ Sheela Reddy adds, ‘Ruttie instinctively understood that Jinnah did not want her making speeches’.

‘This did not prevent her from making a strong speech protesting against the deportation of B.G. Horniman, editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*’ (p.182). Two things coalesced; Jinnah’s neglect of his wife—for whatever reason—and Ruttie’s neglect of their child. The age incompatibility naturally increased with time and there undoubtedly was some insensitivity on Ruttie Jinnah’s side, especially with regard to her sister-in-law Fatima Jinnah: ‘When she thought she was just having some innocent fun at Fatima’s expense, pretending to have gone to Hyderabad only to hunt for a suitable husband for Fatima, Jinnah simply refused to play along making her feel like an outsider in her own home (p.214).

Ruttie wrote to Padmaja Naidu on 3 March 1920: ‘Fatima’s deadly reason quite upset the last Sunday. She was reading the Qur’an, so I told her’ ‘it was meant to be talked about and not to be read’. So in all seriousness, she asked me: ‘How could one talk about a book one hadn’t read?’ (p.214) Sheela Reddy mentions also Ruttie Jinnah’s undiagnosed illness brought upon by staying up nights and smoking’. (pp.264-270) She says that the doctors of those times were not conversant with depression, nor were they aware that Veronal that she had started taking was addictive and one went on increasing the dose.

Politics also contributed to her depression. Her life being lived in between Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Sarojini Naidu would make this inevitable. Her contacts with Mahatma Gandhi and Motilal Nehru were

personally cordial, but complicated. She found the company of Motilal Nehru congenial. How Jinnah described the scenes from which he very oddly kept away is recounted by Sheela Reddy:

‘Pandit Motilal and I used to fight like a pair of wild cats on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, yet on the same evening of our altercation he used to dine sumptuously with my wife’ unable to resist adding, as Sheela Reddy remarks (he was his father’s son after all) ‘at my expense’ (p.280). However the pain that Jinnah suffered, over his opposition to Gandhi’s resolution of Non-Co-operation over the Khilafat issue at Calcutta and Nagpur, was real. It was Motilal Nehru who had met Jinnah at the Howrah Railway Station, Calcutta, telling him of his preparations for opposing Gandhi’s Non-Co-operation Resolution. However, when the time came Motilal was ‘emotionally blackmailed’ as Sheela Reddy terms it, by his son Jawaharlal Nehru to cross over to Gandhi’s side (p.235).

Sheela Reddy has given an epic description of Jinnah’s being heckled by the crowd in Calcutta and Nagpur, and how Ruttie Jinnah had been forced to leave the session because the delegates objected to her dress. Both in Calcutta and Nagpur Shaukat Ali had to be bodily prevented from hitting Jinnah. Since Pakistani chroniclers retain a high regard for the Ali Brothers, and rate the Khilafat Movement as momentous as the Pakistan Movement; they would not describe as Sheela Reddy does, how Shaukat Ali shared the same train as the Jinnahs and instigated the crowd at every platform to jeer at them.

Sheela Reddy also brings out that since Jawaharlal Nehru had been present throughout, he had not needed Kanji Dwarkadas to tell him the real reason for Jinnah’s resignation from the Congress. Nehru had told Leonard Mosley that Jinnah left the Congress ‘only because it ceased to be a party for gentlemen, and he was snob’.² Jinnah had used the expression ‘gentleman’ while talking to Durga Das as well, but, it seems he meant the word in a moral and not a social sense. In any case anyone witnessing the scene would find the explanation that he left because he was a snob and politics was a gentleman’s game; a gross understatement.

The whole episode shows how Gandhi had been able to prevail, and how much his victory would cost Congress in the long run. Sheela Reddy’s portrayal is classic: ‘Jinnah spent their holiday in Ooty obsessing about a thin half-naked man, with a weak voice and the habits

² Leonard Mosley, *The Last Days of the British Raj* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p.65.

of a crank who was keeping him awake at night with his unpredictable moves' (p.222).

The main point about Gandhi that Reddy made is rather startling: 'But Ruttie without sharing Jinnah's animus against Gandhi turned away from the one man who might have saved her' (p.273).

On the surface it is an extra-ordinary suggestion. Gandhi had chided Nehru's sister for marrying a 'Mohammadan' (Syed Husain) and had allowed his wife Kasturba to die rather than administer the allopathic medicine that could save her. But if we keep before us the transformation that Gandhi brought about in Sarojini Naidu, her suggestion deeply considered makes sense. It would of course be politically scandalous, psychologically asceticism rather than the occult that Ruttie Jinnah sought, could bring her out of the world she had built around herself.

How did Jinnah fare? When after having obtained the Congress assent and ratification of the Delhi Muslim Proposals, he caused a split in the Muslim League. It was when he was returning from Calcutta attending the meeting of his faction of the Muslim League, that Ruttie Jinnah finally mustered the strength on their way back 'to break out of the cycle of love and guilt and tell him it was finally over'. 'He had not seen it coming' (p.331).

Jinnah's reaction in Sarojini Naidu's words was, 'I have been unhappy for ten years. I cannot endure it any longer. If she wants to be free I will not stand in her way. Let her be happy. But I will not discuss the matter with anyone' (p.336). But despite the finality in his intonation, the misery dragged on because Ruttie fell ill and Jinnah came rushing to her bedside in hospital, nursing her and even eating the food she ate. This was a time of political crisis as the Nehru Report had to be considered.

'But even the combined entreaties of Sarojini, Chagla and Motilal Nehru could not persuade Jinnah to leave Ruttie in her critical condition to participate in the talks' (p.347). Sheela Reddy gives only parts of the explanation Jinnah gave of his differences with Ruttie, long after her death and when a friend had sought Jinnah's counsel over his own marriage, not to him, but to his wife:

'No one could ever understand what happened between Ruttie and me. We never got on. She got on my nerves. She drove me mad. She was a child and I should never have married her. The fault was mine'.³ That Jinnah was right to blame himself, of that there is no doubt. How much he suffered is reflected in the parting missive that Ruttie Jinnah wrote for him:

³ Hector Bolitho, *In Quest of Jinnah* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.213.

‘Try and remember me beloved as the flower you plucked and not the flower you tread on. I have suffered much sweet heart because I have loved much. The measure of my agony has been in accord to the measure of my love’ (p.350). What they said was remorseless, what was left unsaid is poignant.

I was born in Bombay and spent the first eleven years of my life on Napean Sea Road, just near Petit Hall. I never guessed that there was a story behind the tall gates. Now thanks to Sheela Reddy I know.

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Nandita Bhavnani, *The Making of Exile Sindhi Hindus and the Partition of India*, published by Tranquebar, New Delhi, 2014, pp.386, price, not printed.

Sindh had large number of Hindus, belonging to all social classes, who worked as professionals, businessmen, landlords, politicians, bureaucrats and agriculturists. With the Partition of India in 1947, these ‘sons of the soil’ became alien to the land of their ancestors. The book under review is the story of these Hindu exiles. In writing this book, the author, Nandita Bhavnani, has been moved by migration of her own parents. A good deal of information provided in this book is first hand account. Produced with an anthropological perspective it supplements the news and views of other historians.⁴ She has particularly touched upon the human and cultural side of the subject. A similar effort can be observed to some extent in Vazira Yaqub Ali, *Long Partition* (2008).

Bhavnani has also pointed out certain historical facts which help one understand why and how the trouble around partition emerged and why communal issue was not resolved comprehensively. She states that the Muslim League politics was predominantly aimed at safeguarding Muslims’ rights in a minority setting, whereas when Pakistan came into being, it inherited some non-Muslim minorities as well. According to the author, the League had no idea how to deal with them.

The Partition had played havoc with many lives, communities and ideologies. The idea of ‘Partition’ of India was painful to Gandhi, yet he had to see it happening. There were millions like him in India who never thought or reconciled with the ‘cutting down’ of India, yet they

⁴ Ishfaq Ahmed, *Punjab, Bloodies, Partitioned and Cleansed* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012), has adopted this approach.

had to walk through blood streams to reach safe havens, when Partition approached them as a calamity. There were Muslims, there were Hindus, and there were Sikhs, among other identity groups who 'made exile' from their beloved cities and towns and paid the price of 'historic' decision imposed on them. Many were displaced forever mostly against their will. Many benefitted from the 'Partition' and many lived and still are living with scars on their souls, due to the shameful treatment meted out to the humanity on both sides of the newly emerging borders.

The Partition has permeated deep into the subconscious of the two new countries, as the partition literature produced, thereafter, testifies. The total migrants were about 14 millions. Those entering the areas now in Pakistan, then West Pakistan, were 7,849,400, and those leaving the same areas were 5,598,200.⁵ Whereas those affected by other ways were many times more. From Karachi alone 0.2 million Hindus migrated to India⁶ and 0.9 million migrants entered the city. True many of those who reached Karachi and Sindh had horrible stories to tell, and all these carried the atrocities by non-Muslims on the Muslims. It was because of the 'iron curtain' drawn by the sensitivity towards Indian intentions to eliminate Pakistan from the map, that nothing in favour of non-Muslims could be said or forcefully projected in this land. What Partition did to the non-Muslims in Pakistan also remained an untouched topic for over half a century. Gradually with opening up of the space for freedom of expression few writings appeared but these usually carry the plight of non-Muslims in the framework of human rights. Historical and anthropological studies on non-Muslim Pakistanis are rarely produced. The highlight of Bhavnani's book is to show us the other side of the coin, where another face of humanity exists. This other face is of Sindhi Hindus recalling their living together peacefully before Partition, as they were 'obliged by their circumstances' so they even shared their religious activities, holy figures and shrines and had evolved a similar worldview. The Partition devastated the Sindhi Hindus of this 'compelled co-existence', and they drifted towards religious extremism, at least the story of Hassaram Ramchand shows this (pp. 262-64). Yet the author successfully explains that, at the same time, the Sindhi Hindus had also exported their Sufi shrines and the Sufi outlook. In this sense, the author's approach of reading the memories, hearts, and transformation

⁵ Anwar Iqbal Qureshi, *Economic History of Pakistan* (Lahore: Islamic Book Service, 1978), p.131.

⁶ Vazira-Fazila, Yaqoobali-Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

due to experiences, events, different education and socialization occurring to Sindhi Hindu reveals the complexity of the subject and also proves the adept way the author has handled it.

The glaring and very pitiful dimension of Partition was its human cost. What humans paid in terms of miseries, torture, agony, and fear was as if they have been characters of a live horror theatre. The trauma which went along among these people for the rest of their life is rarely articulated, and remains largely hidden deep in hearts, is still relevant. When on the 70th Independence Day, a 104 years old Pakistani Hindu lady explains how she saw killing of her brothers and sisters, can anyone deny the living reality of the painful memories.

Trying to write in a non-partisan manner, the writer has explored into a variety of human aspects involved in Partition. There is story of young girl who had to become financially independent at a young age due to disruption caused by Partition. Partition, of course, meant different for different people, disruption for some, and opportunities for others. Breaking up of families and the hopes or despair regarding re-joining, deprivation from all what had been earned by labour of generations, such as social prestige, political power, business concerns, friendships, patriotic bond with own motherland, a familiar and comfortable religious life, small circles of intimacy and trust, larger circles of acquaintances and respect, all this was nullified in a moment of Partition—the historic event which has been casting its shadows even on the third generation of those who actually conceived, realized, experienced, celebrated or regretted it whatsoever. All that is recorded in the memories of millions of Pakistanis and Indians, of diverse religious denominations, is tapped by the author successfully. Partition meant an identity crisis as well and it still has its vibrant implications shaping the minds of Muslims and Hindus across the borders. The identity which was on one day sign of pride turned into a sign of vulnerability the next day. The cap once worn as political symbol in United India started inviting threat with the change of date. Saree, so proudly worn by Sindhi Hindu women, became a religious marker, and triggered insecurity after Partition. Such have been the subtle, very perceptive and socio-psychological aspects of South Asians experience of Partition, which really need to be recorded at even wider scale.

Zamindar (2008) has explained how the Hindus and Sikhs were forced to leave the city of Karachi. She also wrote about the events soon after Partition which forced them to leave. In the decade of 1941-1951, almost entire community of Hindus had left the city, although both the Sindhi Hindus and Sindhi Muslims had exhibited a high degree of communal harmony. This exodus was not natural, nor incidental, but

‘rather central to understanding the very tensions of Partition’s ambiguous new nations’.⁷ Hindus were very much entrenched and active in the economic structure of Sindh, therefore, the local economy of province was totally disrupted. The economic interests caused the conflict between indigenous Sindhis and patriot refugees which started from the very first day after Partition.⁸

Sought as a solution to the communal problem of India, the ‘Partition’ involved bloodshed, beyond the imagination of any leader or any wise person of that time. No one can report exactly how many innocent people perished in this project. They were Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and may have belonged to other religions. The killers also belonged to all these communities. The police (in India or Pakistan) and local people, many a time, did not stay neutral, rather they supported actively the rioters and looters of their own religious affiliation. What happened in Delhi was more horrible than the violence in Karachi, the capitals of the two new dominions, but the pattern was the same. Muslims were killed, harassed and expelled from their houses in Delhi, to force them to go to Pakistan—the promised land of Muslims. The tyranny, trauma and tragedy they had to pass through across the border, gave rise to severe frustration culminating in counter aggression at the point of destination, where they became vengeful. They were all humans, made of flesh and blood, having feelings of grief, mercy, uncertainty, deprivation and hope, greed, alongwith religious zeal to live with the people of same faith. When they passed through extremely painful and dishonouring process of migration, they expected some relief at the receiving end. At least it happened in the Sindh province where the government not only chalked out many plans but also implemented them to handle all shades of crises, from providing safe exit to non-Muslims to settlement of incoming flood of migrants. Mishaps, lapses and weaknesses of a fragile system inherited by a newly born state, or absence of any such system, caused miseries, frustration and lawlessness to escalate such troubles.

The cultural impact and significance of Partition is noted in terms of Karachi, earlier a big visibly Hindu city, turning fast into an Islamic city, with Jinnah caps, women’s ‘*burqa*’, and mosques call for prayer. The exodus of uncountable Hindus leaving behind only 150,000 was no small a shift, since their proportion dropped from 47.6 to 0.4 per cent during inter-censal period of 1941-1951. The reasons for staying

⁷ Vazira Fazila-Yaqoobali Zamindar, *op.cit.*, p.49. Specially see chapter II for Hindu exodus from Karachi.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.241.

included employment pressure, clan/biradari ties providing security, panchayat decisions, belonging to high status families like a headman, and extreme poverty. Some pastoral tribes (Kohli, Bhil, Meghwar, Odes) did not migrate, as they never wanted to desert their land and cattle, their only sure sources of livelihood. They still live in Sindh, and make the second biggest religious group in Pakistan. On the other hand rich Hindus did not migrate, and one such person owning thousands of acres of land was forced to migrate through allegation of spying for India. Some Hindu journalists, reporting condition of Hindus and supporting their own community in difficult time faced difficulties.

The book carries touching accounts of love for the land of Sindh, as it was for thousands of those who took it as their motherland, and left it in the hope of returning soon when the furor settles. They could never come back to settle. Even the remaining Hindus were treated suspiciously as spies and many of them migrated as late as 1960s. This shows that one's religious identity was determining one's ultimate citizenship and loyalty. The treatment or ultimate reduction of status to that of a second grade citizen was the feeling developed which caused many late migrants to leave Pakistan. They felt subdued in a predominantly Muslim culture, whereas their own culture and religion were under threat of disappearance. Both state apparatus and society could not instill a sense of security and dignity to the Pakistani Hindus, so much so that they were staying inside Sindh and their properties were declared as 'evacuee' properties. All this was not by fault but by design. The upper class was somehow saved from violence or looting due to their connections, however, many of them managed to sell while many left huge properties and businesses. Those from middle and lower classes have been more vulnerable. Bhavnani points out a continued state of communal hostility, discrimination, 'a deep sense of fear, distrust and isolation among most Hindus', which has been recorded by annual reports of human rights watch groups and it is important to note that with heightening tension in Pakistan-India relations, the vulnerability goes higher and higher. It is an unfortunate legacy of the Partition sought as a solution to communal problems of united India.

The book has tried to present a balanced view by reporting points of views and stories narrating the human bond actively working to protect the vulnerable Hindus during various events—bloodshed around partition and the riots in the 1950s and 1960s. There were Muslims and local Sindhis saving their compatriot Hindus in the face of severe danger. In emergencies people were serving food and supplying residence or other reliefs. There were rich people spending generously to feed outgoing or incoming refugees. It was that spirit of Sindh which was

cultivated through centuries of living together and was later tarnished when Muslims dominated the population and the original ‘sons of the soil’ were declared alien, disloyal, etc. In the words of the author, for Hindus who stayed behind in Sindh, ‘their deepest sorrow was that they had lost the Sindh of their past without even migrating’. (p.363). One should also note another subtle dimension of this loss in this book. The ‘*pirs*’ and ‘saints’ were respected by both Muslims and Hindus; the latter mentioned that their ‘*pir*’ was in Sindh and this became one of the reasons of hesitation to migrate. Some elderly folk stayed for the same reason in Pakistan till their death and then their children had to decide to migrate despite having an equally high degree of devotion to their ancestral ‘*pir*’. Muslims left their ‘*pirs*’ in India and Hindus left theirs in Pakistan! That was the meaning of Partition for such devotees. So it is true to assert that it was not mere drawing a line on world map; it was a division of kith and kin, and a partition of self and identity, memories and spirituality, as well.

An important feature of the description and analysis in Bhavnani’s book is to clearly describe the attitude and role of different ethnic communities with their ethnic labels, and nothing above them. Like she differentiates between Sindhi Muslims and ‘*muhajirs*’ and does not put them in one bracket — Muslims. This seems to be the result of her association and goodwill for Sindh and Sindhis and an aversion for the immigrants. This might have been established during her fieldwork when people labeled these groups differently. Moreover, one can see that Sindhis and non-Sindhis still need to come on one page in the political sense in Sindh. The policies pursued after partition could not treat the Sindhis and *muhajirs* alike, nor the Muslims and Hindus alike. The political process widened the hiatus as it suited the leaders. Quaid’s ideals were not put into practice, consequently the fear, mistrust and a wide gap between Muslims and non-Muslims remained firm. Pakistan’s largest concentration of Hindus is in the province of Sindh. A genuine solution still remains for a harmonious, progressive society, fulfilling the ideals of human rights and lifting all classes, all religious groups and all ethnicities to a dignified standard of living and participation as the citizens of the state of Pakistan. Anthropological approach and an objective analysis makes this book a contribution in this direction.

Paul R. Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence*, published by the New Cambridge History of India, IV-I, Cambridge, 1990.

The 'New' Cambridge History of India replaces the old series of the same title issued in 1922-37 and also changes its schema and focus by having four general rubrics under which separate volumes [each by a single author] are planned. The four rubrics are:

- I. The Mughals and their Contemporaries
- II. Indian States and the Transition to Colonialism
- III. The Indian Empire and the beginnings of modern society
- IV. The Evolution of contemporary South Asia.

The ancient Hindu period and the advent of the Muslim presence in India till the coming of the Mughals is omitted. The volume under review comes under the fourth rubric. Paul R. Brass, the author, is Professor of Political Science and South Asian Studies in the University of Washington. His selection indicates the expansion of American interest in subcontinental India, its history and politics - not just from a historical angle but as a means of current engagement with a populous and important geo-political entity. The author has been involved in studies and analyses of India since the 1960s and his special interest is electoral politics. The tilt in favour of this area of interest lends an imbalance in the overall focus of the book. One aspect that is almost totally neglected is that of India's relations with its neighbours and its foreign policy.

The volume is subdivided into 3 parts viz. (i) Political change, (ii) Pluralism and national integration, (iii) Political economy. There is a lack of 'roundedness' in the overall approach that makes itself felt. The index gives only one reference to Pakistan which is surprising given the Indian obsession with Pakistan that dominates its domestic policies and foreign relations as well as in the maintenance of the world's fifth largest army ostensibly to deter 'threats' chiefly emanating from Pakistan. No coverage is given to the three wars India has fought against Pakistan – their causes and consequences. Even Bangladesh with its emergence resulting from India's armed involvement receives cursory mention. Internally, the clichéd 'world's largest democracy' which has fitted into a pattern of dynastic politics and Congress party domination and where the centre totally dominates the scene with its ordinances and dissolution of assemblies and crony chief ministers has not been exposed in all its sordid detail. Even the Indian constitution is centralist with residuary subjects being vested in the centre. Casteism, corruption and overpopulation are acknowledged by Indians to be the most formidable problems facing their country. How these factors have shaped and

influenced national politics deserve a comprehensive investigation. What electoral voting patterns have emerged and what part the marginalized groups such as the minorities have played with the centre tempting them with hopes for a better future are a matter of great interest. The exciting days of the emergency and the fall of Mrs. Gandhi in 1977, her re-emergence after the collapse of the Janata Party in 1980, and her anti-Sikh policies resulting in her assassination in 1984 are important milestones in the electoral history of India and merit greater mention and analysis. The figures of people who died in 'communal' violence have been officially concealed as 'not available'. One vital area of study with implications for the future is that of the rise of Hindu fundamentalism and 'saffron' politics. The domination of the BJP with its history of violence and genocide rising to form a government at the centre and most provinces indicate a narrow, fanatic and murderous mindset that augurs for more such criminality in the foreseeable future. The rise of non-issues in the political program such as the claim to more than 50,000 mosques to be converted into temples, the killing of Muslims and the Cow Protection laws show that India is regressing into a state of mental retardation and fanaticism. Politicians make bad prophets but political analysts such as Paul Brass could have indicated a pattern of political prediction on the basis of long familiarity with the nuances and vicissitudes of the Indian political scene.

The Library of Congress Office in Delhi acquires copies of all publications, documents, reports, surveys and media material in all Indian languages under the PL 480 program for distribution to participating universities in the US. As such, the material is abundantly available without difficulty in the US. This also includes audio-visual material; thus research on India is a comparatively easy task for US researchers. The author does not exhibit his familiarity with Hindi or any Indian language but this imposes no hurdle on the production of 'learned' writings.

Chapter Ten is titled 'Conclusion: problems and prospects'. India's problems have increased in quantity and nature since independence. The interference of the centre in regional politics and the promotion of centrist parties in the provinces is seen by the author as a danger to the concept of democracy. Chief ministers are determined to retain power as long as possible and readily implement ordinances and laws imposed from distant Delhi. The same functionaries are readily bought, or buy other opponents, in order to retain power. On the whole, the author remarks, with justice, that 'the present system of parliamentary government is not working well'.

Important decisions e.g on the nationalization of industry, or electoral rolls of migrants or language implementation are postponed as they antagonize sensitive sectors of the population. Hence a culture of 'ad-hocism' pervades the administrative set-up in India. The problem of violence and civil disorder has also increased as a result of 'a decline of authoritative institutions in Indian politics.' In fact, intolerance and militancy and armed rebellion are the order of the day now. The author then gives a survey as to how economic policies, their faults and failures, have brought India to the brink of collapse. The most important and crucial of these is the rural-urban divide and the suffering of the peasantry of which 50% remains below the poverty line. The author predicts that if a policy of decentralization were to be followed, it would slow down the economic growth of India. Indeed, as the author concludes, 'it would be folly to be sanguine about the future of India....and to fail to recognize that a grave systemic crisis is in progress'.

The author, in spite of his attachment to the people of India and his long association with the country and its institutions, has not weakened his judgement or made it suffer from bias. He has tried to give it the benefit of foresight and wish for its welfare. But it appears that the Indians especially those in power are not receptive to such sincere opinions.

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Asma Aftab, *Gender Politics, Falsifying Reality*, published by EMEL Publications, Islamabad, 2011, pp.182, price, Pak Rupees 690, US \$ 12.

Feminism is no welcome concept for the majority of Pakistanis, a reality which disturbs the real 'feminists' who believe in female emancipation in genuine terms, and are hopeful for realizing this ideal. Feminism, as a vision and an aspiration for gender equality, has not been established as a gender-specific quality rather it has more to do with the temperament and mental inclination of the person, who after sensibly judging its logic and worth, can apply it in the life conditions to ensure more egalitarian gender structure. This quality is labeled as 'closet feminism', found

inherent in fathers⁹ as the main decision-makers, thus falsifying the belief that only or mostly women can uphold it, and also it is a fight by ‘women’ against ‘all men’ to oust them from the positions of power.

The introduction of concept of ‘feminism’ is traced from the eighteenth century in France. It gradually gained popularity, so much so that it is now it is being indicted as even ‘falsifying reality’. The same ‘allegation’ has been addressed in the book under review by Asma Aftab, who, has done this with a zeal to discover, assess and ‘correct’ this ‘falsification’ by feminism, not for the sake of feminism or the feminists, but for the ‘women’—the half of humanity inhabiting this planet and honoured as being ‘mothers’ of the human being. Apparently very humanist with an icing of ‘Islamism’, the acclaimed objective of the author is finding ‘new ways of seeing and saying’ reality. She expresses her gratitude to her father for cultivating this approach in her, thus she endorses her prevalence of ‘closet feminism’.

The author, Aftab, has based her study on texts and life accounts, she adopts the postmodern assertion that no representation is final, and no reality is ultimate and fixed. Her methodological strategy as explained by her is that it focuses:

... on the lived experiences of ordinary womenfolk about the very aspirations of empowerment and emancipation. As a result of my spontaneous and informal interaction with women around, the insight that I gather about the issue of identity and liberation is equally significant in locating the diverse interpretations of feminism as a “lived” idea. That is to say that besides the academic and political connotations of feminism, the informal conversation and unconscious understanding of common womenfolk with little or least academic or professional exposure has its own significance in understanding the indigenous feminist versions of the present day Pakistani society. (pp. 23-24).

With a conviction in ‘small things’, she banks upon the inherent virtue of hope—i.e. emancipation—a political project. Being emotionally committed to her subject of study, she announces this commitment proudly and claims that she intends to ‘present and look into various ways in which Pakistani women have been portrayed in matters of their (self) image and identity by the mainstream feminist discourse, so that on the continuum of dynamics of personal-political, she could locate the

⁹ Anwar Shaheen, ‘Feminist Parenting Strategies in Pakistan’, in Lynn Comerford, Heather Jackson and Kandee Kosier (eds.), *Feminist Parenting*, Bradford (ON Canada): Demeter Press, 2016, pp. 204-229.

academic feminists in the Pakistani context. She identifies two standpoints—patriarchy and patriarchal state upholding masculine interests on one pole, and the feminists at the opposite. She finds that the anti-feminist quarters have also men and women, as well as certain political institutions and cultural traditions. Moreover, the feminists in Pakistan are divided within themselves along class lines, urban, educated, middle and upper-class women, versus rural, illiterate, poor and working class. This division weakens the thrust of feminist movement, whenever and wherever it asserts itself. Thus the ideal is challenged seriously due to faulty political ideology of the feminists, apparently due to its mistaken reality. The author argues that, there can be a positive side of every negative looking concept and injunctions, e.g., those of segregation and suppression understood and practiced in the name of religion or culture. Aftab tries to explore the ideological dimension behind the voicing and representation of Pakistani women in ‘indigenous feminisms’ in literary and life accounts of Pakistani women. Her emphasis is upon the extent to which Pakistani women feel their life as important. So in this sense she tries to appreciate the diversity, and genuine nature of the real ‘local’, as contrasted with the abstract ‘global’.

To acquire a better understanding of the Pakistani reality, Aftab also tries to propose various ‘permutations’ or ‘versions’ to which the global concepts and assumptions can be translated. These suggested versions, she holds, are the ones which can ‘best’ express and represent the Pakistan’s reality. She calls it an attempt to go beyond the ‘standard’ feminist assumptions, to unveil some more ‘native’ ones (p. 11). Her focus is not on one particular genre of Pakistani women, but on a ‘broad spectrum’, regarding their statuses, and this is true that women in Pakistan are no monolithic class or category, rather are diverse, which cannot be simply bi-furcated in urban-educated and rural-illiterate types. In fact, the reality is more complicated; more status bands in the spectrum are identifiable, which can be focus of future research on Pakistani feminisms. Aftab comes close to identify these bands when she denies in postmodern fashion, any prerogative of any one section of feminists/researchers to define the relative facts in absolute terms. This fluidity is another positive aspect of her approach.

While looking into the past, she alludes to ‘feminist Orientalism’ as portraying Oriental women as ‘mere non-entities leading a life of ignorance, superstitions and animality against the erstwhile enlightened and self-conscious Western women’ (p.14). Also the neo-Orientalist version is detested by her. As the third-wave feminism has introduced diverse perceptions and opinions in the mainstream feminist discourse,

supporting democratic and egalitarian viewpoints in academics, Aftab welcomes it.

In her pursuit to challenge the monolithic and hegemonic views of a small group of feminists, she highlights the agency and identity implicit in 'maternity' among women's existentialist experiences and endeavors aimed at mainstreaming it in the feminist debate. She highlights the significance of her two keywords—'identity' and 'image'—which help women know their unique individual self and also let them connect with the selfhood of those around them. The postmodern approach helps retaining individual identities and saves against being marginalized. In this framework, Aftab has tried to analyze the gender politics not only at the global-local and personal-political levels but also at the conscious-subconscious levels which are not easily discernible and empirically investigable. She very modestly claims dealing with only a glimpse of it found in the expressions and experiences of Pakistani women, while its enormous dimensions remain there to be explored.

Feministic conceptions, consciousness and struggle to achieve such ideals vary from culture to culture and across classes. Pakistan, being a composite society, preserving in its fold a unique diversity of customs, traditions, values high ideals of life and beliefs about the universe and existence, presents an interesting conglomeration of practices and notions regarding gender relations. These are, definitely unique to Pakistan, though might have semblance with other neighbouring and Muslim societies.

The author's assertions about womanhood in Pakistan are so vivid and drawn from careful observation, reading and analysis, that only a 'different' or in her words, 'another perspective' can help us have a much comprehensive picture of Pakistan's gender dynamics. She is very much positive in asserting that 'present day Pakistani women are radically different than the feminists' (p.151). For earning women she very rightfully argues that '[b]esides public life, they do not have any high ambitions to be 'superwomen' in their private lives', and 'they have no qualms on their being women and [they] are 'proud to be women; to live like women, to act like women, to look like women and to talk like women' (p. 151). Here she asserts that the feminist movement in Pakistan must acknowledge the fact that one's feminist loyalties and feminine aspirations 'are not necessarily in conflict with each other. This 'indigenous feminism' must be promoted, as it appreciates both femininity and feminism in a single person. This is a reality and a sort of ideology for ordinary women of Pakistan, which can engender a 'new wave of feminism, equally promising not only for women in Pakistani

society but around the globe' (p. 152). This closing sentence of her book, when put after the opening sentence of the author, reveals the logic of her research. She starts with: 'We live in a world of negotiated realities where opposite and diverse views and visions are constantly affecting and modifying not only reality itself but our perceptions of reality as well. To say that reality is forever fixed and settled, is to deny the very dynamics of change and flux operative in all matters of being and knowing' (p. 1). To wind up the argument, she suggests accepting the value and wide prevalence of 'indigenous feminism' and in a world where 'many truths prevail, and deserve to be accepted as truth'; emphasis on only 'one' definition of feminism propounded by upper class feminists is in no way logical or rational. The rule of interdependence, humanism, dignity for all, equity and equality, of course, are to be practiced, after 'negotiation' with a spirit of acceptance in the larger interest of the humanity.

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