

## Book Reviews

R.K. Kaul, *Studies in William Jones: An Interpreter of Oriental Literature*, Simla : Indian Institute Advanced Studies, 1995, pp.123.

"The Orient was almost a European invention", wrote Edward Said, "and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences". Though Said's statement suggests a metaphoric of the Orient, it is meaningless in its denotational level, at least it must leave India and the Indian subcontinent aside. Said's *Orientalism* might be an European/Western experience, his notion of the Orient might have been one of Europe's deepest and recurring images of the *Other*, but the Orient as such has been an independent cultural notion at least the Indian aspect of the notion. One can understand India and Indian culture without any Foucauldian lens that Said feels useful for developing an insight. Professor Kaul in his present study has rightly challenged Said's spreading his Arabic and Islamic prejudices into the intentions of so noble and so generous a scholar like William Jones. Political ideologies do determine/influence the disciplines of knowledge, but not all and always. Kaul further points to the most precarious aspect of Said's study that the target of his wrath is neither Robert Clive nor Warren Hastings the conquerors who were the real culprits of colonialism, but against the intellectuals (whom he calls Orientalists) "Who only claimed that a knowledge of native language, customs and religious practices would make the administration more efficient." On the other hand, Kaul confidently argues that William Jones like Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox was quite innocent of the so-called Orientalist dogma that the West is superior to the Orient in all regards. Instead of the derogatory Orientalism, Kaul prefers to ascribe Lovejoy's "Unitaritarianism" to Jones who asserted "whatever is beautiful in itself must be so in all countries and at all time." Kaul's central observation is that Jones the scholar was absolutely different from Jones the administrator. Therefore no colonialist bias can be ascribed to him. Said's determination to find fault with Jones is only superficial and intentional - whereas the truth is that the earlier Orientalists were absolutely free from any racial or political prejudice, although some of the later Orientalists might be accused of this crime. Said's further observations in his paper "Orientalism Reconsidered" that the Orientalists understood the Orient in terms of a metaphorical feminine and that they interpreted the historical unity of humanity from the European point of view are also rejected convincingly by Kaul. In Kaul's view, Said's failure in formulating a universal Orientalism theory is due to his attempt at generalising his own Arab reaction to the formation of Israel. He has failed to note that India is a case significantly different from other Oriental countries such as Persia, Arabia, Egypt and Iraq.

Kaul's observation on Jones' sincerity as an Indologist is also supported by an American comparatist scholar Dorothy Figuiera who stresses Jones' sincere love and respect for India and Indians although he consistently misunderstood certain cultural nuances and philosophical issues. Kaul's basic argument regarding Jones' sincere love for the Oriental Culture - an aesthetic approach rather than any racial or political approach - is illustrated in the chapters on Jones' interpretation and understanding of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit poetry. Particularly the author appropriately quotes Jones' sincere adoration of the Hindu doctrines: "I am no Hindu; but I hold the doctrine of the Hindus concerning a future state to be incomparably more rational, more pious,

and more likely to deter men from vice, than the horrid opinions inculcated by Christians on punishment *without end.*" (p.97)

Kaul does not question Said's intellectual popularity, but he rightly warns that this popularity should not be based on any craze for novelty. It is one thing to formulate a system of thought fitting to the current trend of scholarship, but another thing to ground it on facts and validity. Said's failure in assessing the merit of William Jones' as a sincere Orientalist is the result of his lack of patience in considering the necessary data with sufficient accuracy.

**Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold : Conversion, Modernity and Belief*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 332.**

"..... the book as a whole", writes the author, "establishes the need to historicize conversion not only as a spiritual but also a political activity the narrativization of which crucially elucidates the momentous transitions to secular societies." The multidimensional insight of the writer correlates several disciplines and discourses of several genres in interpreting the events of religions conversion as essentially political rather than spiritual as it seems only in its surface level. The author must be congratulated warmly for both her powerful imagination and sophisticated critical skill. The way she handles religion, politics, laws, literature, demography, history, eunomy, sexism and colonialism is remarkable enough to assess her intellectual progress from her inaugural work *The Mask of Conquest*. On reading the book the reader is not only convinced that the religious conversion is only apparently a spiritual urge, while outside this fold the controlling force is a spectacular cultural politics, he feels also obliged to accept the author's view that the modern concept of nation and religious secularism are two opposing goals. Unless religious differences are wiped out, it is logically incompatible to count minor religious groups under a single national identity. If a nation as a political concept is based on a unique cultural identity then religion must be one among several other common signs of the same culture. Either boundaries between national and religious identity be blurred or other customary laws than the mainstream one be declared anti-national. But in reality, the political tension due to religious differences in a modern secular state is often aggravated by the fact that religion is more a category of identification than merely a subjectivity of belief. Religious secularism will therefore be meaningless as long as religion (as a system of beliefs) is considered as an independent category of identity, without its subordination to the cultural identity of the nation as a whole. A secular society must be constituted by an institutional rationality, not by any individual subjectivity.

The author's principal argument is that "conversion ranks among the most destabilizing activity in modern society, altering not only demographic patterns but also the characterization of belief as communally sanctioned to religious ideology". The questions which frame the terms of the author's inquiry are: why do the conversion movements accompany the fight against racism, sexism and colonialism? How are the struggle for basic rights and conversion linked? What are the limitations of the secular ideologies, in ensuing these rights, revealed by conversion? Does that revelation bring conversion close to cultural criticism? And does conversion offer any alternative politics of identity that crosses the traditional boundaries between communities and

identities? In the eight chapters of the book Virswanathan characterizes conversion as assimilation and dissent illustrating her ideas and observations by events and facts as diverse as Newman's conversion to Catholicism, Ramabai's conversion to and her subsequent challenge of Christianity, Annie Besant's conversion to Theosophy and Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism. The reasons and consequences of these diverse conversions reveal various changes in political, psychological and social spheres while always displaying a political motivation in each case of these conversions. When Annie Besant's conversion, for example, has been interpreted traditionally as an act of great spiritual generosity, Viswanathan shows how outside this shift, Besant's doctrine of universal brotherhood paved the way for a commonwealth model displacing empire; how Ambedkar's conversion shapes the Indian constitution. Chapter five is particularly interesting for its illumination of the emotional responses affected by conversion as displayed in several literary works.

Viswanathan's documentation is so perfect and enlightening that sometimes the text blurs the boundaries between creative and critical narrative. Numerous facts are excavated from the neglected sources, while well known facts are re-presented with illuminating insight and perceptive correlation. The book itself inaugurates a new literacy genre indeed.

**Ranjit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony : History and Power in Colonial India*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, pp.245.**

The book is a collection of modified versions of the essays published during 1988-1992, first two in *Subaltern Studies VI – VII*, Delhi; and the third one in a monograph form by the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. The Marxist perspectives of Professor Guha's thinking predominate the central arguments of the book under review. The universalist pretensions of capital is essentially responsible for the rise of colonialism in all its spheres of activities such as political ideologies, educational curricula and religious secularism. As a result, "historiography has got itself trapped in an abstract universalism.... It is important, therefore, that the critique of historiography should begin by questioning the universalist assumptions of liberal ideology and the attribution of hegemony taken for granted in colonialist and nationalist interpretations of the Indian past".

Guha distinguishes between the colonial state and the metropolitan bourgeoisie state, the latter being the origin of the former. Guha further distinguishes between hegemony and dominance. The bourgeois state is hegemonic the power structure of which is based on persuasion rather than coercion. The situation is converted in the colonial state. The democratic slogan of the Western imperialists for spreading the message of equality and liberty was only a historical paradox – since in the mask of democracy the autocratic set up of the metropolitan bourgeois state propagated a new ruling class and a new ruling culture through coercion rather than persuasion. This ruling culture, otherwise known as colonialism, is a dominance without hegemony. Guha observes that this dominance without hegemony was also predominant in the power structure of the precolonial India as also in the nationalist movement of the colonial India. Guha's masterly readings and interpretations of a vast area of material – from Kahlana to Bankim Chatterjee – reveals the cultural perspectives hitherto unknown. His argument that criticism of a particular power system comes always from outside the fold, and never evolves within, is

obviously Marxist in spirit. In this light Kahlana and Chatterjee are rightly criticized. Both of them are undoubtedly feudalists. But Guha's interpretation and appropriation of the Bhakti doctrine within the Marxist frame of knowledge is one-sided though terribly seductive. In my view, Srngara-Bhakti is never a male-dominated phenomenon even though it appears so very often – particularly in the Chaitanyite Vaishnavism. Even a cursory glance of *Gitagovinda* will contradict this notion. It is here that the Indian concept of love differs from its Troubadourian counterpart which makes Srngara-bhakti female-dominated. In *Gitagovinda* Krsna and Gopins pine for each other. If at times he deserts the milkmaids, at others, his suffering from their absence is acute. Srngara is a reciprocal behaviour. But undoubtedly, the true spirit of Bhakti was lost in the feudalist era. If the Troubadourian “domna” (the lady love) represented the feudal lord during the medieval period, so was the representation of Krsna in the philosophy and rituals of the Bengali-Vaisnavas. Most appropriately Guha exposes the misrepresentation of the Bhakti cult in the feudalist laws and administration of the precolonial and colonial India.

Similarly, one enjoys Guha's rendering the Gandhian principles of discipline, control and (self-)obedience as bourgeoisie in guise and his implicit demarcation of two disciplines elite and subaltern. One remembers at this stage the most effective dramatization of the Indian history and culture by late Professor Rahul Sankrityayan in his historiographic narrative *From the Vulga to the Ganges*. If Gandhi can be interpreted as a personality claiming for hegemony through persuasion (not coercion), and Indian nationalist movement as a bourgeoisie activity with its claim for hegemony without dominance, then perhaps the whole of human activity can be divided to two major camps: dominance without hegemony, and hegemony without dominance.

**C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp.412 (ISBN 0521 570859).**

“Being dominant, of course,” wrote Arnold Toynbee, “does not necessarily involve being either more numerous or more civilized.” Professor Bayly's book is an excellent illustration of Toynbee's statement in its demonstration of the fact that British political intelligence was more powerful and effective rather than its military strength in spreading the imperial territory. Surveillance and communication are the major instruments of political intelligence: “Before they could command men and money, rulers had to assemble stores of information and set up networks of communication” (P.141). It is not that the British introduced the forms of communication into India, they rather skillfully and wisely mastered and manipulated the information systems that prevailed during the Hindu and Mughal administrations for centuries before the British invaded India. Bayly studies the evolution of British intelligence gathering in India between the wars of annexation in 1793-1818 and the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and shows how networks of Indian running-spies and political secretaries were recruited by the British to secure military, social and political information about their colonial subjects. The author notes that the British were forced to master and manipulate the information systems of their Hindu and Mughal predecessors as prevailed before 1830. Later the indigenous agencies were modified with new tasks so as to collect types of information that were different from what their predecessors needed. Public

instruction and statistical movement were set up. But the information these agencies supplied were not properly interpreted by the colonial authorities. Their misinterpretation or superficial understanding of the information they received, as also their misunderstanding of the subtleties of Indian politics and values, resulted in their failure to anticipate the Mutiny of 1857. Besides, introduction of printing press, the English language, public debate in newspapers, libraries and archives transformed Indian societies more than colonial capitalism transformed its economy. Introduction of the western scientific knowledge failed to reduce the significance of the indigenous sciences. The first two chapters of the book study in detail the impact of the indigenous information system on the colonial rulers. The third chapter shows how misinformation caused failure of the British rulers. The Chapters 7 & 8 provide excellent discussions on the subjects of astronomy, medicine, language and geography in their colonial encounters. These chapters provide not only a body of information interesting for political history of the colonial India, their magnificence lies in providing a new mode of studying historical knowledge in their dialectical and literary perspectives. The author's remark "The intellectual associations and alliances which emerged from such encounters were harbingers of an Indian nation. Indian protagonists in colonial debates were forming connections across the whole subcontinent and appealing to a national intellectual tradition two generations before indigenous political associations began to emerge" (p.247) is multiferiously meaningful in the contexts of political, social, psychological and literary transformations of the Indian intellectual tradition during the British colonization. Finally, although the book is intended as a contribution to imperial history (p.365), its contribution to colonialism in various forms of cultural studies is superb indeed.

**Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922 : Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, reprint 1997 (ISBN 052 443547 hardbook), pp.475, plates coloured 30, black and white 190.**

Mitter's book is more a work of art history than a work of history of art in modern India. The book does not merely record a history of pictorial art of India under the British colonial administration, it presents a new concept of art history that aesthetic style is not merely a conventional (E.H.Gombrich) phenomenon, much of it being determined by a strong nationalistic ideology as against the exotic influence of the coloniser's culture. Earlier than Mitter, Tapati Guha-Iyengar in her pioneering Cambridge book *The making of a New Indian Art : Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, C. 1850-1920* (1992) narrated the evolution of a new "national art" from a strong protest against the introduction of European naturalism practiced by Indian artists like Ravi Varma and patronized by the ruling culture. But a dominant nationalist discourse evolved in the *Swadeshi* period when the powerful wave of orientalism propelled by the thinkers like E.B. Havell, A.K. Coomaraswami, Kakuro Okakura and Bhagini Nivedita "The New School of Indian Painting" was founded by Abanindranath Tagore who rejected the European naturalism in favour of a traditional Indian symbolism in both theory and practice of pictorial art.

Mitter writes, "the consequences of westernisation were more elusive and problematic. It is this aspect of westernisation with its implications for national identity that lies at the heart of any enquiry (p.3). I prefer to focus on the relations between western art as a specific source in the colonial era, and its cultural transformations

by Indian artists – while accepting that the options before the Indian artist existed within the confines of colonial hegemony”. Mitter illustrates that the “nationalist” Indian artists adopted the technological skill of the western artists such as perspective, anatomy and chiaroscuro in working out a new Indian symbolism. Abanindranath’s revival of six elements (*sadanga*) of pictorial art prevalent in medieval India as mentioned by Yasodhara (13<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.) in his commentary on Vatsyayana’s *Kamasutra* (3<sup>rd</sup> c. A.D.) was a historic event in the evolution of a new ‘nationalist art’. Mitter deals with this aspect of modern Indian art history in the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of his book. In the final part Mitter’s observation that in formulation of Indian nationalism art played a more vital role than politics coincides with Partha Chatterjee’s views expressed in his *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1993). Particularly in the Indian context, aesthetic sensibility has been more powerful than political revolution. Mitter quotes Lord Ronaldshay: “a man need not be a politician to be a nationalist in the sense in which the word is defined by Mr. B.C.Pal; and the nationalism of a man who is not a politician is a thing of greater significance than that of a man who is.” (p.377)

Mitter’s book provides a picture of the history of modern Indian pictorial art in its informative, technical and theoretical perspectives which simultaneously define and determine the principles of modern Indian art history.

**Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home : Postcolonial relocations and twentieth century fiction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 (ISBN 0521 453348 hardcover, pp.265).**

“What is attempted in these pages”, writes the author, “is an examination of a central aspect of the novel in English, its investment in the notion of ‘home’, in a project that does not restrict itself to an exclusive consideration of either ‘first world’, or ‘third world’ fictions”. The author proposes a transition from English literature to literature in English and introduces a notion of global English transcending the typologies of English literature (British), American (U.S.) literature and world literature (written in or translated into English outside Britain and U.S.A.). She finally argues that in the context of global English the concept of ‘home’ signifies belonging – “connotes the private sphere of patriarchal hierarchy, gendered self-identity, shelter, comfort, nature and protection ..... usually represented as fixed, rooted, stable – the very anti-thesis of travel.” (p.1-2) Since “home” remains the central metaphor of the study, the areas of investigation move centrifugally around the “home” – home in culture, traveling homeward and traveling out of home (countries) along with the travels of literary texts and literary theories. The dimension of the author’s perception obviously demands an in-depth analysis of the conditions of modernity and nationalism inherently associated with the concept of home as she understands.

In the first chapter the author formulates three connotations of concept of the home – a ‘private’ space, a larger geographic place and an imagined location. The term “home-country” suggests the particular intersection of private and public, and of individual and communal as manifest in imagining a space as home. She further observes that traditional notions of nationalism “cannot fully account for the process by which diverse subjects imagine themselves at home in various geographic locations.” Thus she brings together difficult

notions of nationalism and home and subjecthood as discussed in diverse kinds of discourse, finally rethinking the links between self and home in an examination of contemporary feminist theory. The second chapter applies the author's analysis of the relationship of self and home in examining some women novelists with particular reference to colonial situations of the Indian sub-continent – where a group of *English* women achieved a kind of authoritative self – “the full individual” as the desired goal of the feminism in capitalist societies. Precisely speaking, “the *English* home” in the colonies represented as an empire in miniature – and reversely, empire is represented as an expanded domestic space peopled by masters and servants. The next chapter considers Conrad's masculine representations of home and nation – considering some vital questions such as whether Conrad was an aristocrat to see all kinds of terror and domesticity in women, and as an iconoclast destroyed the bourgeois ideals of “sacred home”, “chaste femininity” and “social order”. May be that Conrad threatened the English of their idolized concept of England as home. But the author delinks his novels from their established banner of “Modernism” while relating them to other national writings of the English-speaking world.

The fourth chapter is a theoretical one where George examines Fredric Jameson's concept of “third world” literature as fixed in nationalist moments or nationalist texts. Differing from Jameson, the author resists the urge to be at home everywhere and insists on a revision of the western theories on postcolonial literature. In the fifth chapter Chandra Mahanty's Cartesian modulation of feminine consciousness “I write therefore I resist” is dealt with. She takes up issues other than nationalism such as home, marriage, religion, gendered subjectivity as dealt with in Indian novels in English. She argues that the western criteria of the “Third World Novel” such as national allegory, horrors of gender inequality, despair after independence are indicative of only one category of the whole mass, that is called “postcolonial”. Analysing the prominent feminine novelists the author concludes that if “The Third World Novel” cannot be automatically identified as “postcolonial” women writing cannot be associated with Mahanty's modulation of the Cartesian consciousness.

The book is undoubtedly an exciting experience of the postcolonial ideologies pro and contra. Its textual sophistication explores the intricacies of the experience itself and denounces any simplification of so complicated an issue like postcolonialism in its social, political, historical, psychological, religious and aesthetical dimensions.

**Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments : Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1993, pp.282.**

The eleven chapters of this book are an organization of several essays published during 1988-1992. The concept of “nationalism” is entirely a product of the political history of Europe and the concept as a western gift arrived in the Third World through colonization. Benedict Anderson has (*Imagined Communities : Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London : Verso, 1983) treated the phenomenon as part of the universal history of the modern world, and has demonstrated that “nations” were not determinate products of given sociological conditions such as race, religion and language, but were *imagined* into existence. The institutional forms through which this “nation”/imagined community acquired a concrete shape is called by Anderson “print-

capitalism". The historical experience of this western nationalism supplied a set of modular forms from which the elites of Asia and Africa chose types they liked. But Chatterjee rejects the universality of Anderson's set of modular forms. He rightly asserts that "nationalism" may be defined as an imagined community; but in the Asian and African contexts, it is certainly not similar to the western forms. In its anticolonial origin nationalism in the colonized continents is sufficiently different from its western counterpart so as to affirm its independent identity. Chatterjee remarks that such a confusion as that of Anderson's is due to treating nationalism as essentially a political phenomenon. But in reality, to study the case of India, nationalism was born much earlier - in its anticolonial form - than it was politically born in the event of formation of the Indian National Congress (1885). "By my reading", Chatterjee writes, "anti-colonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power." This is an observation which matches Ranajit Guha's findings: the anticolonial nationalism achieves its success by dividing the social institutions into two domains - material and spiritual. The material domain refers to the exotic elements such as technological supremacy of the colonizer, and the spiritual domain is the esoteric 'essence' of India's cultural identity. Chatterjee further articulates with an excellent precision: "The greater one's success in imitating western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctions of one's spiritual culture. This formula is, I think, a fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalism in Asia and Africa." (p.6) Chatterjee exemplifies his theory from the Indian history of social reform during the nineteenth century. The social reformers of India initially sought for the administrative cooperation, but in the second phase they never allowed the colonial state to intervene in matters affecting their "national" (the inner/inside, esoteric/spiritual) culture. This reaction is the birth of Indian nationalism. But this spiritual essence was never to remain as it was centuries before. It ought to change, but not by any external (colonial) criteria, but by the criteria which are allowed by the very shaping principles of the "inner essence" without any intervention of the western modular forms. Indian "nation" is undoubtedly an "imagined community" like any other nation but imagined not by any external agency or through any western modulars. It is imagined purely by its own people following the modular forms as approved by their own internal cultural tradition. "If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being. In this, its true and essential domain, the nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power. The dynamics of this historical project is completely missed in conventional histories in which the story of nationalism begins with the contest for political power." (p.6)

Chatterjee then proceeds on to identify and analyse the major inner areas of national culture which underwent modifications during this rise of the esoteric nationalism - such as art, language, family and religion. Tapati Guha - Thakurata and Partha Miller have dealt with the issue of Indian art and nationalism in their recent Cambridge publications (q.v.). As it appears in all these areas what the nationalists (middle class elite) strongly opposed is the western (colonial) misunderstanding of the inner spiritual essence of Indian culture as barbaric and monstrous - temples, images, religious rites, role and place of women in families. The fifth chapter titled "The Nationalist" contains an excellent probe into the nationalist experience of the notable saint

of this crucial period Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. This chapter exposes the author's most perceptive insight though not always uncontroversial. In analysing Mahendranath Gupta's most memorable records of Sri Ramakrishna's dialogues, Chatterjee displays his hermeneutic skill par excellence. One is automatically impressed by the author's introduction of a new mode of reading the colonial texts – reading the tension of domination and submission, strategy of survival in a world dominated by the rich and powerful, symbolic approach to woman and wealth, the difference between written prose and colloquial dialogues, reverence for the past as a strong nationalist criterion to count a few only in Chatterjee's reading of the *Kathamrita*.

The book is symbolic of a new mode of enquiry into the interrelated areas of humanities – literature, art, politics, sociology and religion. Chatterjee deserves our sincere compliments for his outstanding contribution to the significant genre of postcolonial studies.

A.C. Sukla

**Rukun Advani, *Indian History from Above and Below : Two Academic Parodies*, Lucknow : Ram Advani, 1993. pp.20.**

Indian historians as a category is non-existent if one chooses to forget the Bengali intellectuals. Or at least that is what some of the non-Bengali men of letters think, the Bengalis believe. Quite a few of these pundits living outside Bengal also think another thought. It is that the fish-loving learned men from Eastern India have a preference for the verbal mode, or who else is there to preserve the sacred Indian oral tradition? And the medium is unmistakably native. (The disappearance of the English language from certain stages of school curriculum in Bengal is continuous with this general inclination of the wise *Bhadralok* towards things *swadeshi*). But material compulsions including a duty towards the coffers of the publishers create the need for dissemination and finally print. The vernacular medium not being able to rise to the occasion gives way to the colonial language with its choking jargons and pathologically unavoidable appendage of foot notes, as that is what bamboozles the reading public and sells.

Something to this effect Rukun Advani says in the present pamphlet. He launches a vitriolic attack on the arm-chair intellectuals, particularly from Bengal, 'Whose dollar salaries rise in proportion with obscurity and jargon'. Advani in a bid to trash the present-day sociological research and field-study makes a pun on the term 'field', which also evokes the idea of the field as an open-air lavatory for the toiling masses in India. He claims to concern himself with their public act of toileting rather than their private one of toiling, as the basic functions of the underdogs are left unresearched by the scholars despite their panchant for 'difficult' tasks such as investigating the ordinary day to day life of the subalterns amid great violence to the olfactory. Through this earthy or '*tota-pani* view from below' Advani gives us an insight into the conditions governing the subaltern's literal and symbolic easing of himself, and into his ironic 'autonomy from the olfactory', that makes him unresponsive to his own smell, to his own plight. On the other hand, the uncertain and ambiguous position of the sociologist leaves him curiously tortured by the order of the native, but not sufficiently touched to come out of the closet for any purpose other than field-study.

Using physiognomic metaphors and allegorising the quotidian functions of the human/bovine private organs Advani mounts a caustic offensive against the fruitless work of the intellectual on the one hand and the upcoming peasant, who imitates his own master while dealing with one of his own clan pushed into subordination by a difference of gender on the other.

In the second part of the pamphlet Advani takes an aerial view of Indian history, so that the focus is on the cultural elites. He deflates the myth of Bankim as a semiotic signifier of the oppressed native in general through playful distortions of the name 'Bankim' keeping in mind the Bengali accent, the colonial habit to bonk him (the native), and the gender-neutral Anglo-colonial word "Bankam".

Even the critics of Bankim are not spared. Advani comes down heavily on the fashion of Bankim-bashing in modern Bengal, and also on the tendency among Indian intellectuals to give a post-colonial twist to every reading of Indian history, going as far as involving the dead in their 'spirited defense' against the colonial domination. He questions the habit of seeing the role of the colonial phallus at every turn of Indian history or in every instance of violence on the native body. He conveys all this through a snide and hilarious parody.

**Gyan Prakash, ed., *After Colonialism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, pp. 352.**

In view of the wide impact of the colonial experience on historical, cultural and literary studies, the Shelby Cullom Davis centre for Historical Studies, Princeton University organized a chain of seminars and symposia during the period-1990-1992-on "Imperialism, Colonialism, and the Colonial Aftermath" with the express purpose of offering a fresh approach to the history of colonialism and its effects on forms of knowledge. The resultant papers were later put together in the form of a book under the title *After Colonialism* published by the Princeton University Press in 1995.

The selection of papers is perhaps aimed at giving print space to the representative essays dealing with particular colonial experiences from different parts of the globe, with the editor trying to do the stitching job by means of a thread of the same old post-colonial theories. The native acting as a defining instrument through his difference, the self/ other dichotomy, the polarity of order and chaos, the colonizer presenting himself as the "unconscious tool of history", then "questioning of the idea of history as history" and a need to recognize the existence of another history of agency and knowledge are some of the stock ideas the editor draws upon to execute his purpose. Sprinklings of Gandhi with his prescription of a return to the village community, his idea of non-modern civilization, and Fanon with his trembling and suffering yet frightening nigger complete editorial stock-in-trade

The first essay is by Edward Said, which explodes the myth of comparative literature providing a transnational perspective on literary performance, revealing the centrality of Latin Christian literatures in its assumption. Said points out the affiliation of fields like Comparative Literature, English studies, Anthropology and Cultural Studies to the empire and sees the beginning of a contrapuntal re-reading of the cultural archives, of a time to put an end to the western practice of isolating the cultural and aesthetic from the worldly domain. Finally he attacks the demystifying discursive practices like Marxism and Deconstruction for avoiding the most powerful political presence of modern times namely imperialism.

Fierman underscores the impossibility of recounting history as a single story from a single perspective. He builds his arguments about the ingenuity of constructing a narrative of world history with an awareness of the existence of non-European experiences, on a rebuttal of Fernand Braudel's unidirectional history of the world with an underlying European master narrative. He acknowledges the advent of an era that makes an epistemological crisis in all the disciplines, a crisis born of the voiceless getting back his voice, a crisis resulting from a hitherto mute and inert people beginning to be seen as speaking and acting.

Joan Dayan in his essay looks at Haitian revolution from a new angle by re-reading its history. This new reading of Haitian history asserts a hybridity through a negation of the black/white polarity, while Ruth Philips draws attention to the silence of the North American museums on the native American tourist art and on the native people's contemporary life styles. Anthony Pagden discusses at length the views of Diderot and Herder on colonialism, which they see as an attempt to abolish cultural pluralities, to minimise the number of cultural variants in the world. They think, moral corruption begins with travel, as it is the first step towards the violation of nature's intentions.

Leonard Blasse and Gauri Viswanathan are pre-occupied with the question of conversion. For Blasse it is a way of copying with cultural difference, whereas Viswanathan reveals a complicity between conversion and colonialism, which renders the converted voiceless. She finds an erasure of the convert's subjectivity as a result of this process. Because the subjective religious experience of the converted is negated by allowing the legislated religious identity to take precedence over it through the British legal judgement that protects the property rights of the converts in their original community. Zachari Lockman deals with the problematic relationship between socialism and nationalism while analysing the history of labour Zionism, which is ultimately seen to have an underlying colonialist orientation.

J. George Klor de Alva writes the last essay in the second part of this volume, which discusses the problem of cultural difference in the context of colonialism. Alva shows how the Europeanized mestizos tried to present national independence as decolonization, while the indigenous inhabitants are yet to be decolonized; and how the European immigrants tried to usurp the position of the natives and the nativist ideology vis-à-vis British colonialism marginalizing the actual natives.

The last part of this volume deals with forms of knowledge and agency that is a direct consequence of displacements spawned by the colonial discourse itself. Irene Silverblatt sees the emergence of subaltern agency in the growth of heretics and witches, the interface of which is a colonial panic.

Emily Apter's essay through a discussion of Elisa Rhais's novels travesties the colonial stereotypes thereby robbing them of the expected meanings. It dwells on the deconstruction of the colonial realism in a context that produced a clash of realism creating possibilities for recognizing the existence of alternative agency in the post-colonial scenario. Apter reveals the erasure of contradictions between global pan-feminism and colonialism at a point where first world feminism instrumentalizes colonial stereotypes in its attempt to present "third world woman" as a negated subjectivity.

Homi Bhabha seems to do a summing up at the end as he makes the primary issues of this volume converge while locating the subaltern agency in the intermediate space between knowledge and reality. The agency that he outlines is contingent and ambivalent and not deterministic and homogenous. He brings us to a notion of the colonial aftermath which lies on the border between the inside and the outside of colonial norms.

S.K.Panda  
Sambalpur University