

Gurinder Singh Mann, *Sikhism* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 2004), 128pp. ((pb) \$19. ISBN 0-13-040977-4.

Gurinder Singh Mann's book *Sikhism* is published as part of the *Religions of the World* series edited by the late Ninian Smart. Assuming that 'religions and ideologies not only form civilizations but directly influence international events' (p. 6), the editor invited a new generation of scholars to write introductory books in an accessible and informative style. Mann's book, however, goes well beyond the scope of an introductory text and successfully offers a fresh interpretation of Sikh history and religiosity.

The book is divided into five chapters. The opening chapter examines the life and legacy of Guru Nanak, and here comes the author's most significant contribution. Based largely on Guru Nanak's writings, Mann's analysis of his life and more particularly the founding of Kartarpur ('Creator's Abode'), Guru Nanak's town, provide us with a new way of understanding the starting point of the Sikh tradition. He argues that Guru Nanak consciously worked toward creating a new religious community and for the first time in Sikh scholarship offers a sense of composition of the community at the stage of its origin. Departing from traditional understanding that Guru Nanak was an iconoclast, Mann argues that Guru Nanak created institutional structures, ceremonies, and rituals at Kartarpur. These were taken from the socio-religious context of his time but a clear Sikh stamp was put on them in the process of appropriation. Mann exemplifies this with the initiation rite (*charan pahul*) at Kartarpur. Using Bhai Gurdas's *Var* (1: 23) Mann explains this as follows: 'the initiate's toe was washed and other Sikhs drank that water' (p. 28). These details are corroborated in the Persian work *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* ('School of Religions') written in the 1640s.

Having provided a different starting point, Mann then goes on to present later developments as constituting a coherent pattern rooted in the founder's teachings. The second chapter covers the consolidation of the community under the nine successors of Guru Nanak and the emergence and elaborations of institutions such as a sacred text, a sacred mythology, a sacred geography, and so on. The Sikh confrontation with the Mughal administration resulted in Guru Arjan's execution/martyrdom. Not surprisingly, the dominant rural Sikh constituency since the days of Kartarpur played a significant role in resisting the challenge of the Mughal authorities: 'The Jats, who had a history of defiance against authority, would have had no compunction in resisting any onslaught on the community's autonomy' (p. 36). This tension between the Mughals and the Sikhs continued and later led to Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution/martyrdom in 1675 under the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb. In response to this situation, Guru Gobind Singh declared the Sikhs to be the Khalsa, 'the community of the pure,' embodying Guru Nanak's conception of a life of 'honor and fearlessness.' Based on contemporary sources, Mann presents the 'Khalsa' and

the 'Sikh' as synonymous terms. Those who undergo the ceremony of the *khande di pahul* ('nectar made with the double-edged sword') are the Singhs, the distinction thus is between the Sikhs and the Singhs, both being part of the Khalsa. The elevation of the community to be the Khalsa also obliged it to establish the divine rule of justice and humility. The process of the political ascendancy of the Khalsa began with Banda Singh's short-lived rule (1710-16) and came to fruition with the establishment of the Khalsa Raj under Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1799-1839).

The third chapter focuses on the impact of modernity on the Sikh tradition during the colonial period (1849-1947), doctrinal debates of the times, the post-partition Sikh situation, and the move toward a world community. Mann again departs from existing scholarship that divides Sikh thinking of the period between the Sanatan Sikhs and the Tat Khalsa and convincingly argues that there were three strands represented by three prominent individuals. First, Khem Singh Bedi supported the centrality of the Singh identity and the significance of the *khande di pahul*, but he also stressed the idea of divine incarnations, the need for a living guru, and the indivisibility of Sikh and Hindu society. Second, Gurmukh Singh held the middle position that the activities of the ten Gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib serve as the ultimate source of Sikh belief and practice. The Singh identity was the ideal but those who had not undergone the *khande di pahul* were an indivisible part of the Khalsa as long as they recognized the Guru Granth. Sikhs constituted a distinct community and the question of Hindu-Sikh relationship was a redundant issue. Third, Teja Singh Bhasaur's position was far more radical. He claimed that anyone who has not undergone the *khande di pahul* should have no place within the community. In his vision of 'orthodoxy' the periphery was to be simply excised, and raising the issue of Hindu-Sikh relationship was an insult to the Sikhs. Mann concludes: 'Bedi and Bhasaur were eventually sidelined' (p. 63). Thus Gurmukh Singh's middle position achieved general acceptance, both in institutional and ideological terms. It will be interesting to watch how scholars like Harjot Oberoi will respond to this new layout presented so cogently by Mann.

The fourth chapter examines the textual sources and other interpretive literature that form the basis of the belief system, devotional activity, ceremonies, and Sikh festivals. It is a succinct statement that emphasizes the close relationship between Sikh religious and temporal concerns. While discussing the architecture of the Darbar Sahib ('Honorable Court,' the present-day Golden Temple), Mann makes the point that 'while participating in the prayers at the Darbar Sahib, the Akal Takhat is not visible, but as the leaders sit on the podium of the Akal Takhat, the Darbar Sahib is in full view, representing how religious beliefs shape decisions regarding temporal matters, not vice versa' (p. 89).

The final chapter analyses the structure of Sikh society, nature of authority within the Panth, women in Sikh society and the future of the Sikh community

at the turn of the twenty-first century. Mann argues that Sikh society needs to be understood at its own terms and rejects the stance that sees it as some sort of extension of the caste system of the Hindu society. Although Mann is fully aware of the gap between the 'ideal' and the 'real' situation on social differentiation and gender within the Panth, he highlights the changing perspectives on these issues in different historical contexts. Similarly, the authority of the Guru Panth is established impeccably in the mainstream Sikh community, although some Sikh Sants become authoritative figures among their followers by providing 'an important service to many people at a time of emotional distress' (p. 102). Mann projects a vibrant role for the diaspora Sikh community at the turn of the new millennium when he says that 'the Sikh societies in Britain and North America are in a considerably higher degree of animation than in any other part of the world, including the Punjab' (p. 117).

To assist the readers in their exploration the book contains a number of useful aids. It contains a timeline of major historical events, maps of Punjab and Sikh sacred geography, glossary, transliteration guide, list of festivals, reading list, index, and an excellent selection of images from paintings and photographs. On page 43 Mann has given a fascinating portrait of Guru Gobind Singh in Mughal style, holding an arrow in hand. This portrait comes from an early manuscript of the *Dasam Granth*, the greater portion of which was prepared at Anandpur in the 1690s. The portrait fits in well with the contemporary genre of royal painting depicted in the portraits of Raja Sidh Sen (r. 1684-1727) and Raja Ajmer Dev of Mankot. (See *Arts of India: 1550-1990* {Victoria and Albert [V&A]} 1999).

I have some minor concerns about certain details in the book. First, there are two references from the *Adi Granth* that are hard to identify with the observations in the text (pp. 26-7, 80). It would have been much better if actual citations were given. Second, the author claims that the *Prem Sumarg* was 'written in 1820s' (p. 62) but it is an earlier text. In fact, I have seen a manuscript of *Prem Sumarag* dated 1815 CE. Third, the translation of Punjabi term *chauri* as 'flywhisk' does not accurately reflect the 'royal function' of this symbol. Finally, the author's interpretation of Sikh ideas of 'political sovereignty' requires further analysis, especially its implications in the modern context. These minor criticisms, however, should not conceal the basic importance of the book.

In summary, *Sikhism* is an excellent short statement on the religion and history of the Sikhs. It is written in an engaging style and indicates Mann's mastery of the early Sikh sources and acute awareness of current debates in the field. This exciting book will be useful for both specialists in religious and Sikh studies, and of immense value for general readers interested in the Sikh tradition. Here is scholarship of the new generation at its most rigorous and essential reading for anyone in the field of Sikh studies.

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Himadri Banerjee, *The Other Sikhs: A View from Eastern India*, Vol. 1 (New Delhi: Manohar, 2003), 279pp. (hb) Rs. 550. ISBN 81-7304-495-3.

The Other Sikhs: A View from Eastern India, Vol. 1 by Himadri Banerjee combines an extensively researched and finely detailed survey with a systematic analysis of how Sikhs had been depicted in Assamese, Oriya and Bangla (Bengali) texts up to 1947. All but a handful of these texts are by non-Sikhs, the vast majority being Hindus or Brahmos. As only a few pages describe 'other' Sikhs, ie those living outside the Punjab region, *Other Perceptions of Sikhs* would be a more appropriate title. The author does, however, anticipate a second volume that is to concentrate precisely on those 'other Sikhs' indigenous to or long settled in eastern India, whose ways of being Sikh may also be 'other' than what we find in the Punjab.

As it stands, the book is at once a pioneering effort and, I suspect, close to the definitive study of its actual topic, so extensive has been the author's assembling, presenting and analyzing of extant documentary sources, especially those in Bangla. We may hope that parallel studies (by this author or others) will be done on perceptions of Sikhs in other regions of India - as well as on any 'other Sikhs' themselves who may have for long resided in those regions. It would also be desirable to have the present study brought forward from 1947 to the present.

It was a daunting challenge for the author to present in a coherent fashion hundreds of published accounts (in multiple genres) of Sikhs in three languages-cum-regions over 150 or more years reflecting the divergent religious, cultural and political orientations of their respective writers. Our author arranges the accounts first by language/region and then within each of these by Sikh chronology (roughly) of topics of concern to the writers. Within each of these sets he distinguishes between prose expositions/critiques and imaginative literary treatments of Sikhs. It makes for somewhat jagged reading, but has its rationale and allows for greater precision than a more elegantly simplified presentation would have permitted. Moreover, he has attempted, and with considerable success, to correlate how Sikhs are presented in these documents with the religious, cultural and/or political orientations of the respective writers.

Among the more general themes emerging from *The Other Sikhs* is the remarkable extent to which the changing historical (religious and political especially) milieu of the writers influenced what Sikh topics they chose to write about and how they evaluated them. In both Orissa and Bengal, it was primarily Brahmos who initiated prose studies (including some of the best in scholarly terms) of Sikhs. Typically they focused on Guru Nanak as a monotheistic, non-idolatrous, socio-religious reformer (a pre-colonial

embodiment of the Brahmo ideal, as it were) while largely ignoring most of later Sikh history. Much of their work was done carefully and on the basis of Sikh documentary and testimonial sources. With the waning of Brahmo prominence and the rise of Hindu Indian nationalist fervor, writers in Bengal (and somewhat later and less enthusiastically in Orissa) turned their attention to subsequent more militant phases and personages of the Sikh Panth, especially Guru Gobind Singh, Banda Bahadur and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Nationalist writers on the Sikhs ranging from 'moderates' to 'extremists', generally relied only on secondary sources (British, Sikh and other Indian) and typically characterized Sikh heroes as fellow Hindus struggling to free India from 'foreign' Mughal/Muslim oppression: i.e., as inspiring models for nationalist activists. The very few Muslims who wrote on the Sikhs in Bengal, on the other hand, castigated the Sikhs as anti-Muslim - and indeed a number of Muslims of the time went from Bengal to the Punjab for military *jihad* against the Sikhs. In the second quarter of the twentieth century, interest in the Sikhs shifted from exemplary figures of the past (spiritual or militant) to contemporary heroic but non-violent Akali Sikhs struggling in the Punjab to wrest control of historic gurdwaras from their hereditary custodians, a cause with which Bengali and Oriya writers for the most part were in sympathy.

Assamese accounts of the Sikhs, while the least plentiful and least marked by historical research and least concerned with the events and persons of mainline Sikh history in the Punjab, reflect the different milieu and concerns of the writers, but are no less interesting. Their most developed topics concern those Sikh warriors who in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries fought and settled in Assam and with their Assamese wives founded a distinct community of Assamese Sikhs. They are presented mostly in literary works that, though linked to historical events, allow free rein to literary imagination and political advocacy. Sikh warriors of Assamese literature are not anti-Moghul heroes in far-off Punjab but heroes or villains in Assamese struggles against outsiders.

Our author's analyses of how depictions of Sikhs reveal the orientations and interests of those who wrote about them thus provide a model for comparable studies elsewhere in India. The book is not without some problems, however, due in large part to the diversity and complexity of the evidence the author has assiduously gathered and faithfully presented. He also had to contend with the tensions, suspicions and controversies involving Sikhs and those who studied them in the late twentieth century. Not surprisingly, a certain ambivalence on the vexing question, 'Who is a Sikh?' surfaces occasionally and not all that consistently. At times, as when analyzing Hindu Indian nationalist interpretations of Sikh heroes, the author seems to side explicitly with the Tat Khalsa version of Singh Sabha 'orthodoxy' (currently in the ascendancy in Sikh circles) of Sikh disjunction from things Hindu against the Sanatan Sikh version of Sikh-Hindu symbiosis. But then, in his advocacy of studying and appreciating the contributions of 'other Sikhs', we seem to find him leaning in the opposite direction, at least implicitly honoring the claim of those 'others' to

be Sikh and arguing for the value of studying them.

There is also some occasion for puzzlement in the author's insistence on categorizing as 'Sikh studies' virtually anything written in prose or poetry on Sikhs for virtually any purpose. The expression, 'Sikh studies', as currently understood in the academic circles in which the author moves and for which he writes, refers to scholarly study, research and writing. When he proposes that 'Sikh studies' embrace research on those 'other Sikhs' long since settled outside the Punjab, we can only concur heartily. Indeed, academic research, reasonably free of bias and harassment, on 'other Sikhs' within the Punjab itself would enrich 'Sikh studies' as an academic field and provide readers a more representative, as distinct from normative, depiction of what it means to be Sikh. What the author intends, apparently, in dubbing non-academic writing on Sikhs as 'Sikh studies' is to acknowledge with favor the diversity of viewpoints, the verve, the imaginative flights, the human feelings and sense of involvement that he finds in much non-academic writing on Sikhs, but only rarely, if ever, in recent strictly academic 'Sikh studies'. This is a legitimate concern, one that we might suggest the author address directly in an essay on the optimal character of academic 'Sikh studies' rather than obliquely as here.

Let me close this review by pointing to one very practical 'lesson' that we may gain from *The Other Sikhs*. It may well be that in other parts of India, including the northern 'Hindi belt', there was comparable currency of the view that Sikhs were and still are (or should be) courageous defenders of India and their fellow Hindus against foreign and quasi-foreign (Mughal/Muslim) foes. If that was the case, then it is more understandable why in the last quarter of the twentieth century Hindu leaders and populace had such difficulty in understanding what Sikh spokesmen were feeling, saying and doing. Even though adherents to Tat Khalsa orthodoxy throughout the century insisted that 'We are not Hindus', the typical Hindu writers (in Bengal and Orissa anyway, and probably elsewhere) who chose to write on Sikhs, seem not to have listened to them. They wrote what they and their nationalist readers wanted to be so and may well have believed was so. They were not for the most part scholars, but advocates committed to political goals.

The Other Sikhs: A View from Eastern India, Vol. 1 by Himadri Banerjee deserves a place in any library, personal or institutional, where the study of Sikhs or of the intellectual history of eastern India is taken seriously. The documentation is extensive, detailed, carefully scrutinized and convincingly interpreted. We may look forward with much interest to the companion volume in which we anticipate meeting those 'other Sikhs' themselves.

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Doris Jakobsh, *Relocating Gender in Sikh History: Transformations, Meaning*

and Identity (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), xi and 296pp. (hb) Rs. 265. ISBN 019 566 3152.

Doris Jakobsh's book *Relocating Gender in Sikh History* is a welcome addition to research on gender dimensions of Sikhism. Apart from being a contribution to the historical and sociological study of Sikhism, the book (a revised version of the author's Ph.D. thesis) locates itself in contemporary analytical frameworks in historiography and gender analysis. Emphasizing gender as a socio-historical construct, Jakobsh attempts to unravel the construction of Sikh women during two broad periods of Sikh history – the early Sikh period (the era of the Gurus) and the colonial period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Much of the analysis pertains to the second period of focus during which the moulding of Sikh women's gendered identity took place in response to ideas brought by the British and those being advanced by the two reform movements, the Singh Sabha and the Arya Samaj.

Jakobsh begins her work with the argument that 'close scrutiny and rigorous analysis of sources with regard to historiography as it pertains to women has been virtually non-existent' (p234). Additionally, there has been a tendency among Sikhs and Sikh scholars to argue, that since Sikh women are in principle accorded theological equality, their status within Sikhism is unproblematic. It is further presumed that since Sikhs are not circumscribed by the rigidities of the Brahmanical caste system, their women are protected from the structural inferiority suffered by Hindu women. Following Harjot Oberoi's work on the construction of Sikh identity, Jakobsh identifies and illustrates four principles by which women have been dealt with in Sikh history – these are the principles of silence, negation, accommodation and idealization. She argues that one has to go beyond these principles to recover the inevitably gendered nature of the history of any community.

As is well known from contemporary research on the colonial period of India's history, women were easy 'sites' on which the colonizers could rest their case for the inferiority of their subjects and the need for transformation, which only they could bring about. Hence, the easily identifiable practices of sati, dowry, purdah and female infanticide (all signifiers of the ill-treatment of Indian women) became the issues which the British took up to tar the Indian with. Indian reformist males, whether in Bengal or in Punjab responded to such accusations with a two pronged defence – on the one hand, to prove the theological equality and historical good treatment of women, while admitting that there had been a decline from earlier standards, and on the other hand, to initiate their own programs of education and reform.

As Jakobsh shows, for Sikh reformers too, the bodies and practices of women became the vehicles and sites for refashioning Sikh identity, vis-à-vis Hindus and other Sikhs who were outside the Tat Khalsa vision of reform. She argues that in putting forth the Victorian ideal of wife as helpmate whose prime role should be that of a good wife and mother, reformers may actually have

narrowed the possibilities of what a woman could aspire to be. What comes out clearly is that even in the refashioning of women's identities, it is men who held power. Social reform aimed at women, sought, in fact, to divest them of any voice they had – the campaign against wearing jewelry would relieve them of the only material assets they could call their own, robbing them of their economic agency. Attempts to purify marriage ceremonies and other festivals of ribald or bawdy songs and insults to males, practices which allowed women to vent their frustration or anger, took away the few cultural 'safety valves' that tradition afforded them. However, women associated with the reform agenda did manage to have some say in supporting crucial changes such as the Anand Marriage Bill and equality in the rites of initiation into the Khalsa panth. However, as Jakobsh's analysis reveals, men fought against implementing radical reform suggestions which would have struck at the roots of gender inequality and women's inferior position – fixing the age of marriage being one such issue. Women were aware of the important consequences of such decisions and supported reform proposals that would give them greater equality even when the chances of implementation were bleak. The British at their end accepted the Anand Marriage Bill not with a view to improving women's position but hoping that it would lead to a reduction in marriage expenses and also create a rift between Arya Samaj and Tat Khalsa by strengthening a separate Sikh identity through distinct life-cycle rituals.

Interestingly, much of the negotiation of women's 'feminine' identity took place among urban and literate Hindus and Sikhs, who were influenced by British ideas and criticisms, although it is the vast body of the peasantry at whom reformist intentions would necessarily have to be aimed. This has certain interesting implications for the present construction of women and society in the Punjab. To what extent have the reformist designs of the Arya Samaj and the Singh Sabha succeeded in lifting women out of so-called superstitious beliefs and unbecoming behavioural practices and turning them into 'refined helpmates' of their husbands? To what extent have Punjabi, especially Sikh women been freed of gender constructions which still make them victims of feticide, infanticide, dowry deaths and domestic violence? The perceived hardiness and 'usefulness' of the rural Sikh woman, the progressive stance of the educated, professional urban (and now often rural) woman does not square with her continued construction as a sexual and economic burden, who is thought better off not being born. Singh Sabha reformers remained within the orbit of the self-serving and 'male' critique of Indian society espoused by the British. At no point did they go beneath the surface to transform gender relations in Sikh society by allowing women a voice in societal reform. In a significant section in the conclusion, Jakobsh shows that sects such as the *Udasis* and the *Namdharis* which allowed women greater ritual space and opportunities for leadership were maligned and sidelined by the developing Tat Khalsa hegemonic discourse. Her detailed research should encourage other scholars of gender in Sikh studies to explore the many leads provided by her.

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Gurpreet Maini *The Giant Awakens: Punjab Industry and Growth*. (India Research Press, 2004), 279pp. (hb). Rs. 690. ISBN: 81-87943-38-6.

The rise of militancy during the decade of 1980s raised many questions about the state of affairs in Punjab. As a region of independent India, Punjab's achievements had been enviable. Thanks to the success of green revolution and the hard work of its people, Punjab emerged as one of the frontline states of India. Its per-capita income was the highest in the country. Why then did a violent movement against the Indian state emerge here? Who were the Sikh militants? What were the reasons for their having taken to the path of violence? What kept the movement going for so long? And what has been the impact of militancy on Punjab's economy? Though not directly concerned with all these questions, Gurpreet Maini's book on 'industry and growth' in Punjab has, in a sense, been written with all these questions in the background.

The starting point for Maini's book is that while in most other parts of the world, agricultural growth provided a ground for development of industry and urban employment, this did not happen in the case of Punjab. As a consequence the 'large employable workforce' created by the economic prosperity ushered in by the green revolution could not fulfill its aspirations for better employment outside agriculture. Though many scholars and journalists, who wrote on the 'Punjab crisis' of 1980s, pointed to this failure of the Punjab economy as a crucial explanatory factor responsible for the rise of militancy, no one has really looked into it seriously. Maini's book intends to do precisely that. Or, to put it in other words, the core question for her is 'what are the historical and politico-economic reasons that have kept Punjab industrially backward?'

Since Maini is not a professional economist, she does not attempt a 'technical' answer to this question. She rather goes into the social and political history of the region and tries to identify various factors that have cumulatively shaped the economic fortunes of Punjab. As is the case with other regions of India, the British colonial rule was a very critical period for the modernization of Punjab's economy. It was during the British period that modern industry was introduced in the subcontinent. All the major industrial centres of India – Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras – were set-up by the colonial rulers. No such city was developed in the Punjab. However, the British were not completely indifferent to Punjab. They developed the region agriculturally. They laid canals for irrigation of un-irrigated lands and set-up canal colonies. They protected agrarian communities of the regions from 'non-agriculturalist' moneylenders by passing legislation. And they recruited them in their army by giving them the special status of 'martial communities'.

This patronage of agrarian communities obviously had a political and cultural impact. The Unionist Party, which represented the agrarian interests of the region, remained loyal to the British all through. More importantly, the colonial policies encouraged and strengthened the agrarian ethos in the region. This, according to Maini, resulted in the development of 'a feudal society composed of landlords (zamindars), rich peasants, tenants at will, agricultural labourers and servants' (p.38). Though a middle class also grew in region and some industry too developed, the culture conducive for industry did not grow. Punjab came to be known as a land of prosperous agriculture and brave soldiers.

The Nehruvian model of planned development with greater emphasis on industry, which was adopted after independence from colonial rule should have changed this hegemonic status of agriculture. However, in the case of Punjab it did not happen. During the initial year after independence, the state agencies in the region were busy helping refugees from western Punjab. In terms of development initiatives, agriculture once again became the focus. Though green revolution technology was introduced in other states as well, it came to be identified almost solely with the Punjab. The agrarian ethos was once again reinforced, particularly among the traditional agrarian castes, which also emerged as the ruling castes/classes in the region.

However, absence of a culture conducive for industrial development is not the only factor that Maini underlines while examining the relatively slow pace of industrialization in the region. In fact she places more emphasis on the politically unstable and uncertain conditions that the region has had since independence. Its being a border state has been a negative factor. The Punjab border has been 'hot', marked by tensions and wars, which work to discourage heavy investments in the region.

Apart from this geographical disadvantage, certain social and political movements that came up in the region also worked as 'speed breakers', to use Maini's expression, in the path to industrial growth. The state had not yet recovered from the devastations caused by partition when the Akalis started the Punjabi Suba movement. Though they eventually succeeded in getting the region reorganized as per their wishes, Punjab lost some of the critical mineral resources and industrial clusters. Similarly, the rise of Sikh militancy during the 1980s also had a negative impact. The atmosphere of uncertainty and fear generated by the violent movement discouraged any new investments in the state. Though not much of existing industry flew from the state, the savings and surpluses generated in the Punjab were invested elsewhere.

Further, Punjab also missed out on availing itself of the benefits of the new economic policy that was initiated during the early 1990s. The performance of Punjab during the post-liberalization period has been quite dismal. The share of Punjab in the investments made by the central government had always been less than some other states. This situation continues in the new regime of private and foreign investments.

What could be the way out? For Maini rapid industrialization is a must if

Punjab is to progress. To achieve it she emphasizes the need of committed and visionary leadership and the active role of the State. Her suggestion is not to go back to the Nehruvian model of planned development. The state needs to intervene to create an environment conducive to the growth of modern industry. It should formulate policies that encourage the development of industrial clusters, some of which have already come up. Attracting foreign capital and inviting NRIs to invest in the state would also require the State's initiatives. And most importantly, for the industry to be able to grow and expand, the State would be required to invest in the development of infrastructure, such as power and road network.

While it is difficult to disagree with the prognosis suggested by Maini for the future development of Punjab, I am not very sure about her nearly exclusive pre-occupation with industrial development. While economy is certainly important, one cannot look at everything in terms of economy. Questions of identity and culture have to be analyzed and understood in their own terms and not always in terms of the impact they have for economic development of a region or a community.

Further, the new industrial development being promoted by policies of liberalization and globalization did not always produce happiness. Some of these new industries, for example, do not produce much employment and may in fact widen social disparities. Maini is perhaps aware of this and that is why she pleads for the development of regionally suitable industries, such as agro-processing. Moreover, given that the subject has not received much attention, her book deserves to be welcomed and read by all those who wish to know about the economy and history of contemporary Punjab.

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Tejwant Singh Gill (translated) *Dreams and Desires: Seventy Poems of Mohan Singh*, (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2003), pp xvii + 108, (hb) Rs 200, ISBN 81-7380-881-33.

Sikh 'Professors' and civil servants after their retirement translate Guru Nanak's *Japuji* into English, but Tejwant Singh Gill is exceptional that he has opted for translating modern Punjabi poets including the most contemporary one, his wife.

Mohan Singh (1905-1978) is one of the major Punjabi poets of the 20th century. The 1947-1970 period in East Punjabi poetry is rightly named after Mohan Singh and Amrita Pritam. His first collection *Save Patr* (Green Leaves, 1936) has been published several times both in Perso-Arabic and Gurmukhi scripts, rivalled only by Ahmad Rahi's *Trinjan* (1953). Thus both of them have been the bridge connecting East and West Punjab. It must have been a matter of

pride for Gill, when Mohan Singh, senior in age and calibre, asked him to preface his last book *Buhe* (Doors) published in 1977.

Like many other Punjabis, my early literary training started studying Mohan Singh's poems in the school curriculum. I still remember them by heart. These experiential, lyrical and rhymed poems created by a Punjabi coming from the core region of the Punjab, Dhan Pothohar, the heartland of almost all the pre-1947 authors, guarantee a certain place for him in the history of Punjabi literature.

I belong to the generation of poets who were successors to Mohan Singh. But we sought inspiration from somewhere else. Our role models were world poets like Neruda, Hikmet and Brecht and to some extent Faiz. After 1947, Mohan Singh became an adherent of the Stalinist socialist-realist trend in art and literature, which dominated the world 'progressive' scene. As put succinctly by Gill in the introduction, it arose from 'ideological simulation rather than experience' and 'was bound by rhetoric only' (p xi). Pash (1950-1988) described such poets as 'chefs who are expert in making an omelette with egg shells'. Mohan Singh's real poetic genius shown in his first four books published prior to 1947 seemed to us too far in time. The days of *ustadi-shigirdi* (maestro – pupil relationship) were over. It was a free for all - no hassle of acquiring knowledge of prosody and Farsi/Urdu or Sanskrit languages and classical Punjabi literature. To write in blank verse and call it 'people's literature' was the fashion of the times. The loss was enormous.

It is interesting to note that Gill, known as 'Gramshkiwala' in Punjab, has applied literary, and not ideological standards in selecting the poems. Unlike his other writings both in Punjabi and English, in his introduction, he has used post-structuralist jargon with restraint. I shared my view with Gill some years ago that if Mohan Singh had not jumped on the bandwagon of 'progressives', he would have been a great poet. He told me that Teja Singh (1894-1958), the essayist, had said the same thing.

World poetry reached us through translation, of course. There is a certain element of truth in the cliché that it is impossible to translate poetry. No word can be replaced by another word, especially in another language. In that sense translation is not possible. But what is it that comes through even in the translation and what is it that is lost or uncommunicated? These basic questions will continue to be asked without any definitive answers. Progress Publishers published the Punjabi translation of Pushkin, the national poet of Russia, in 1980, but it did not touch a chord with any Punjabi reader. Why? Did the translator not do his job properly or was Pushkin too lyrical to be translated?

The same question buzzed in my mind while reading *Dreams and Desires*.

The selection is derived from eight books spanning 40-year period from 1936 to 1977. Each book is represented on average by ten poems, which Gill obviously found worth translating. While reading everybody's favourite poems like On

the Well's Persian Wheel, Suhan's Bank, Soldier's Feeling, Sikhi, [The] Rosenberg[s] and above all that Beneath the Mango Tree, I was kept disturbed by the background music of Punjabi originals, which prevented me from concentrating on the translations. Despite the ever-present discord, some versions – in their 'after life', as Gill puts it – stand on their own e.g. Suhan's Bank (p 6), Congregation (p 55), and Memory (p 77). The first one with its last line of each stanza is enjoyable. It would be worth examining the feedback of a reader who does not know Punjabi. Gill based his translating strategy on 'rhythm, utterance and discourse'. But at some places his use of diction sounds archaic and he seems to have lost track for the sake of rhyming.

Despite their 150-year old printing tradition, Punjabi publishers still need to learn how to love their trade. The misuse of computer graphics has made the situation worse. Apart from the title, the cover is kitsch and vulgar. It shows glamorous flowers with plastic veneer. A teenager letterhead like flowery border is repeated on each page. Mohan Singh, having taught Farsi at Khalsa College Amritsar, could not have tolerated the word *Awazan* misspelled as *Awajan* several times in the book. It should have included brief bio-details of the poet and chronology of his times and the original Punjabi title of each poem. A bi-lingual edition would have been ideal.

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O.P. Narula. *I Still Remember: a small town in Punjab*. (New Delhi: Shrishti Publishers, 2002). 120pp. (pb). Rs. 125 ISBN: 81-87075-85-6

While there is a voluminous set of academic literature that addresses the political and social events, official policies and decisions, and political personalities that precipitated the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, there are very few sources of academic literature that can adequately address the grotesque violence, physical dislocation, searing emotional pain, and spiritual anguish caused by the maelstrom of violence that swept much of northern India throughout the summer and fall of 1947. The lives of the individuals and families who lived through that turbulent time period and the fortunes of the independent nation states of India and Pakistan have continued to be haunted by the painful and fragmented memories of those days. While scholars have 'accounted' for the conditions and causes of the Partition, there is still a great deal of memory and experience from those days that has not yet been accounted for. How does one remember and memorialize the painful experiences that marked the events of 1947, and that have continued to hauntingly affect the postcolonial societies of India and Pakistan? Where academic literature has fallen short of capturing the visceral nature of that time period, literature such as novels, short stories, memoirs, and poetry provides an alternative set of histories

by recollecting the memories bearing testimony to the experience of those times. Although language can never fluently describe the texture of memory, when it is expressed through creative and personalized literary forms it does provide a distinctive vantage point from which we can imagine the stories of those individuals and communities whose lives were - and are still - permanently affected by the migrations and violence that indelibly scarred India's fabled 'tryst with destiny.'

I Still Remember: a small town in Punjab, written by O.P. Narula is part of a growing genre of unofficial Partition literature which attempts to situate and describe the lives of those individuals, families, and societies that were forever changed by the Partition of the Punjab. In the Introduction to his book, Narula writes that this book is intended to record the 'extraordinary ordinariness of life' – less than a generation ago – in and around the small Punjabi town of Daska. Guided by the well worn adage that all history is local, Narula grounds his narrative in the soil of small sleepy towns such as Daska, Kandan Sian, and Gujranwalla in order to recapture 'the all but lost narrative of our yesterday.' Set in the Punjab of the 1930s, *I Still Remember: a small town in Punjab*, is largely based on Narula's life and is centered on the places, characters, and experiences of his childhood and adolescence. The main protagonist of the story is a young man named Opana (a name perhaps derived from the author's name, O.P. Narula) and the narrative traces in a non linear fashion his childhood, deeply influenced by the daily rhythms of an undivided Punjab, and his journey into adolescence and adulthood set against the backdrop of the Partition. As a young engineering student in Lahore in 1947, Opana is forced by the 'logic' of the Partition to acquire Indian citizenship while at the same time becoming an exile and a refugee from the land of his birth and his ancestral homeland. Opana's story thus spans the life of an individual, and his family, who lived and thrived in the undivided Punjab of the 1920s and 1930s only to return to that land for a bittersweet reunion over fifty years later. Opana's story is drawn from a treasure house of memories filled with gems describing the games and dreams of childhood, the challenges and promises of adolescence, the fears and uncertainties of establishing a new home, and the possibility and promise of redemption.

After reading this fictional memoir, the reader is left with a feeling of enchantment from the description of a world whose warp and woof are structured around the commitments to family, community, society, and the workings of nature through the passing of seasons, the course of rivers, and the color of the soil. In his description of village life, Narula paints a picture of an enchanted universe replete with soothsayers, mythical house ghosts, ceremonies invoking rain, village superstitions, family weddings, colorful family members, and seasonal fairs for patron saints. During the colorful seasonal festivals and fairs, different religious communities came together and participated in events of shared cultural significance. Narula presents a world in which Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs lived together in harmony according to a common code of

behavior and expectations. Rather than emphasizing the differences between these religious communities, Narula describes the bonds of community, honor, and respect that tied them together. In the world of the undivided Punjab, there was a notion of *Punjabiyyat*, Punjabi-ness, that anchored individuals, families, and communities in a world of shared values, experiences, and history. As Punjabis these religious communities would have shared more in common with each other than with their fellow religious community members in different parts of India or Pakistan.

In addition to describing the interconnected world of pre-Partition Punjab, Narula's narrative also evokes the transformations that modernity has brought to the culture and modes of life that flourished in Opana's world only a generation ago. Sifting through an archive of memories, the author recalls with nostalgia the ways of life that were - and continue to be - changed with the onset of modernity. In a world marked by the absence of electricity, fans, and ice, for example, Narula describes the pleasures of the *behak*, night-long open air vigil, in which the young boys of the village would take the household cattle out and look over them while they grazed in the unploughed fields. During these evenings under the open night sky, the young boys of the village would play games, i.e. *kabaddi*, recite songs, and tell stories. Narula also describes and laments the lost hobby and sport of *Kabutar-bazi*, pigeon hunting, explaining that it began to lose its appeal 'as the pace of life got faster and people had less and less time to "stand and stare".' In addition to the passing of institutions such as *Kabutar-bazi*, Narula's narrative also describes how the world of Opana's childhood, a world marked by an endless web of familial relations and responsibilities, was transformed over time with the replacement of joint family systems with the more modern institution of the nuclear family. The world of Opana's childhood and adolescence was slowly transformed over time by the inevitable changes which accompany the introduction of new technologies and access to new opportunities. Those changes that would have been commonplace in society however were further compounded by the events that forever changed the rhythms of life that structured the lives of Opana and his family in the undivided Punjab.

Whether the author is describing Rama Mota's *pakora* shop in the middle of Qaber Bazaar, the Muslim employees - Bholi, Mehran and Baba Wadhaya - who worked in Opana's house in Daska, or the frustrated Urdu teacher, Moulvi Shobab Din, Narula succeeds in presenting a world of interconnected and interdependent relationships without falling into the traps of presenting an uncritical nostalgia or undergoing a communal revisionism. Writing from the vantage point of the present day, Narula does not re-read the experiences of his childhood or adolescence through the sectarian or nationalist lenses of a Hindu or an Indian citizen, respectively. The story of Opana is not indicative of a revisionist historical narrative and at no point in his narrative does Narula's story depart from the rhythms of the seasons or contours of the landscape. In one passage, Narula describes the glory of winter days in Kandan Sian, in

which people enjoyed the delicacies of *gur* (jaggery) coated carrots and *abu* (lightly roasted, still juicy wheatseed) and listened to the evergreen tales of *Heer Ranjha*, *Mirza Sahiban*, and *Sohni Mahiwal*. Through these stories, Narula points out the intimate connection between landscape and memory as he describes the Chenab river which runs through the aforementioned stories. Narula emphasizes the importance of rivers in the life of the Punjab in his selection of the following poem entitled ‘*Mere phull chhanan wich pane*,’: ‘When I die, please put my bones in the Chanab, for I am a poet of love. The ‘Ganga’ is a river for piety and does not care for love’s sacrifice, but the Chanab understands.’ This distinction between the Chanab and the Ganga is an important one because it demonstrates a high awareness and appreciation by Narula, and by extension on the part of his characters, for the landscapes of his past, landscapes which through time became coterminous and inseparable from those who inhabited those landscapes. Given this worldview, the tragedy of Partition is visible in the boundaries demarcated and etched into the landscape of the Punjab with the blood of its own children.

Many members of the generation that lived through the Partition are still alive and in order for the social processes of healing and recovery to heal and assist our understanding of the past, and hence the future, it is imperative that the voices and experiences of that generation be systematically preserved and recorded. While beginnings have been made to record these unofficial experiences in alternative mediums such as fiction, poetry, art, and film, greater efforts must be made in order to understand the totality of the issues surrounding the Partition because these issues affect our perception of the past and our movement into the future. Certain stories have been told over and over by the historians of the Partition with the result that oftentimes these stories have come to somehow capture the official history of the Partition. *I Still Remember: a small town in Punjab*, is an invaluable contribution to the recovery of memory from the sometimes totalizing narrative of history because it tells a story rooted in the local and personal experiences and memories of individuals, families, and communities affected by the events of 1947. With the generation directly affected by the Partition slowly disappearing, *I Still Remember: a small town in Punjab*, provides a historical testimony to a world that is passing out of existence, but not completely out of reach.

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Film review of *Pinjar*, directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi, released October 2003. Cast: Urmila Matondkar, Manoj Bajpai, Sanjay Suri and Priyanshu Chatterjee.

Pinjar revisits one of the most traumatic periods in Indian history – the partition

of Punjab. The film is an adaptation of Amrita Pritam's novel *Pinjar*, which was partly based on her own personal experiences of being uprooted from Lahore after 1947. Chandraprakash Dwivedi's film begins to address sensitive issues about partition which to date have largely been neglected, not only in Indian cinema but also in wider society. The central character in the film is Puro, and the film focuses on her journey through life, after being abducted, displaced and being forced to convert to Islam.

The film's backdrop however, is the relationship between Hindus and Muslims. It is set in time when the Punjab was gripped by communal hatred amongst the Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. The film draws on the impact partition had on families, who were displaced and forced to flee their homes. The film also touches on the grimmer and more violent side but without resorting to depicting the blood bath that took place. We learn about the widespread murders, abductions, and the looting that went on. Conversely, through Rashid's character we learn of the perpetrator and his remorse for the crimes he committed. This is symbolic of the acceptance that for society this is necessary in order to learn and move on from this dark episode.

Nationalist histories in India and Pakistan have been complacent in approaching this period. While both view partition as a necessary evil, neither acknowledges the broken communities, broken homes and the people on the periphery who have failed to receive any acknowledgment for the price they paid to achieve an independent homeland. The suffering of women and other marginal groups has only recently been examined by scholars such as Urvashi Butalia, Kamala Bhasin and Ritu Menon. The social stigma of abduction and rape, and the ostracisation of women are issues which are still relevant in society today.

Amrita Pritam's book spans 13 years, but the film adaptation starts in 1946 and ends in 1948, and therefore it misses some of the subtle nuances in the book. The story begins with an affluent Hindu family living in Amritsar who travel back to their ancestral village to find a suitable partner for Puro. But Puro is abducted by Rashid just before her marriage could be arranged to the secularist minded poet Ramchand. The abduction is due to an old family vendetta and is unrelated to the increasing Hindu-Muslim animosity present during that period. Puro manages to escape from her captivity but is then rejected by her parents, who plead with her to go away in order to uphold the family honour, for the sake of her younger siblings. Initially turning to suicide as an option, Puro finally concedes to life with Rashid, who marries her and converts her to Islam. Hamida, as she is now known, struggles with her new identity, which is further exacerbated with the announcement of partition.

There are some touching scenes of Hamida going back to her village, roaming the green fields of Punjab, searching for a lost past, a life with Ramchand which was snatched away from her. Amongst the mayhem of mass migration, she encounters Ramchand in a refugee camp. He informs her that his sister, who is now married to Trilok (Puro's brother), has been abducted during

their journey. She vows to help Ramchand's sister, Laajo, symbolic of all those women who like her have been victims of a patriarchal society, that embodies the honour of the family in women alone.

Hamida seeks the assistance of Rashid, who himself is struggling to come to terms with his actions. Having abducted Puro against her will, he is unable to live with the guilt of separating her from her previous life. He is repenting and sees this as way of somehow washing away old sins. The journey for both of them is a touching one, it highlights the human dimension which has, until recently, been absent from studies of partition. It also touches upon real emotions and the complexities of relations, between Hindus and Muslims, as these were not black and white.

Lajjo is reunited with her brother Ramchand and husband Trilock, both of whom try to convince Puro to come back. She however, has now accepted her new life with Rashid and refuses to return. This highlights two important dimensions in human relations; firstly, how Lajjo was accepted back by the family because she was not alone, there were also other abductions and other victims. Thus the family was not alone in the 'shame' associated with women being abducted but more importantly Lajjo's family were sympathetic and accepted her back, others were not so lucky. Secondly, Puro's refusal to go back to her previous life, shows how many women accepted their new lives and refused to go back. Many were forcibly repatriated, as highlighted by Menon and Bhasin's work. Indeed being forcibly taken back did not offer the women an easy solution; they still had to live in a society that was largely unsympathetic to the suffering of women, often viewing them with contempt.

Whilst in Hollywood, the Jewish holocaust has received much attention, the Indian audiences continue to shy away from these difficult issues. This is perhaps a reflection of the wider society, a nation that is unable to reconcile with its past, a past which is difficult to acknowledge. *Pinjar*, however does begin to address some of the more delicate and sensitive issues which arose during the partition disturbances. Indian cinema has not been very good at depicting them in a serious and impartial manner. There have been some previous attempts, the most significant one on partition being M S Sathyu's *Garam Hawa* in 1973. The film provided a Muslim perspective on communal rioting in Agra. Following that was *Tamas*, which was an adaptation of Bhisham Sahni's novel. Since then there has only been one other film which tried to examine partition - Deepa Mehta's *1947 Earth*, based on an adaptation of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man*. The film depicts a story of a pacifist Muslim man who gradually turns to more extreme methods during the partition period. Though critically acclaimed, none these films have been big blockbusters, the only one to have achieved accolade was the melodramatic, *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha*. With its patriotic and jingoistic rhetoric, it hit all the right notes, yet ironically it is now seen as rather dated in a period of détente between the two countries. Thus the film *Pinjar* fits in well with a new era (hopefully) of good relations between India and Pakistan.

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