What roles do the modern media play in the sphere of culture, politics and governance? Christiane Brosius’ *Empowering Visions: the Politics of Representation in Hindu Nationalism* is an attempt to address ‘why, how and when Hindutva ideologues and pragmatics exploited the video media in order to claim power over public opinion-making and opinion-shaping’ (p 3). Grounded on the theories of popular culture, anthropology of audiovisuals and thick ethnographic analysis, Brosius brilliantly depicts the roles played by Jain Studios’ videography in representing Hindutva’s cultural nationalism as an alternative conception of modernity, nationhood and national identity against the existing morally corrupt culture of secularism. These alternative empowering visions are realized through active entwining of ‘imagination to politics and ideology, space to time, image to narrative, and agent to action’ (p 4).

The author argues that the Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies, since the late 1980s, have heavily exploited the modern media, particularly audiovisual technologies, to create visions of an idealized Hindu way of life. Employing Werner Schiffauer’s idea of ‘field of discourse’—‘as a sphere in which cultural agents interact with each other with regards to interpretations, norms, values, questions of style and memories’ (p 3)—Brosius argues that Jain Studio’s production and distribution of propaganda videos has helped the Bharatiya Janata Party in spreading cultural and ideological images to influence the public consciousness with a pan-Indian cultural nationalism grounded on the glories of the golden age. By depicting the people passionately participating in the saffron revolution, these images and narratives invite further participation of the audience. Key images and narratives from the domain of local popular culture were appropriated and commodified in a package to heighten ‘political marketing’ and mobilization (p 93); to influence the popular psyche of the people; and to present itself as a credible force to reshape the modern nation-state, reclaim the stolen stories and rewrite the national history.

Selective use of particularistic media imaginations and narratives has colonized the public conscience, and provocative representations in the public sphere have generated antithetical feelings of ‘self’ and ‘the other’. Visual media has convincingly justified Hindutva’s agenda of Hindu cultural identity as credible, depicting Muslims as anti-nationals and a threat to the nation, and arguing that national history has been misrepresented by anti-nationals. Self-empowerment is to be achieved only by re-mapping Indianness through a return to the ‘indigenous and ‘true’ history of the Hindu people’ (p 12). A sense of ‘pop patriotism’ is being crafted by softly manipulating the Hindu sentiment through devout citizenship, righteousness, self-sacrifice, sacred violence, heroism, national devotion, and the notion of martyrdom that has ‘left deep scars on the skin of civil society, and changed the mental maps of large parts of Indian citizenry for good’ (p 180). The video media, which is a part of Hindutva’s ‘cheerful revolution’, aimed at forming a powerful paternalistic state with a seemingly disciplined and infantile citizenry ever ready to sacrifice for the cause of universal brotherhood.
and moral community (p 93). Since 1998, the Internet has decentralized the power of representation and disseminated Hindutva ideology on a wider scale. The presentation of imaginary and narratives in cultural production has, thus, played a significant role in redefining identity, history, nationhood, governance and politics.

The only shortcoming of the book would be its overemphasis on the cultural production of image and narratives, and not the reception of it by the people. Despite this, the book is an admirable contribution to the Anthem South Asian Studies series. Its uniqueness lies in its provocative and telling arguments embedded in ethnographic description and provides a valuable contribution to the field of popular culture and anthropology of iconography.

Sarbeswar Sahoo © 2008
National University of Singapore, Singapore

Culture and the Making of Identity in Contemporary India
Kamala Ganesh and Usha Thakkar (eds)
New Delhi: Sage, 2005
ISBN 07-6193-307-7

This book contains edited contributions to a recent conference on cultural transformations in post-colonial India at the Asiatic Society of Mumbai. With 16 essays, the range of this volume spans several disciplines: theatre, art history, musicology, literary criticism, gender, historiography, and science. Edited by an anthropologist, Kamala Ganesh, and a political scientist, Usha Thakkar, the book attempts to document and analyse the latest developments in thought surrounding culture and identity in India.

Part one includes four essays that cover ‘tradition’ in Sanskrit and ancient India, Indian music, Indian art history, and analysis of the Indian English novel. The final essay of this section, by Meenakshi Mukherjee on the subject of the novel, forms a bridge into the first two pieces in part two, both focused on literary translation across cultures. Also in this part are two short pieces on contemporary Indian theatre. Part three tackles gender through discussions of female Marathi bhakti sant (saints in the devotional tradition) poets, feminist Gandhians, feminism itself, and feminist historiography. The final portion of the book contains two position pieces on science, hegemony, and science criticism in modern India. As the author of the introduction states, ‘even in the more abstract, formal, academic, creative, and symbolic realms—in what can be called fields of culture—the theme of identity continues to be a potent reference point’ (p 33). Unfortunately, the volume achieves little more than to confirm this observation across many fields, without detailed critique or debate.

Rather than a focused set of discussions about identity or culture, the book is an oddly grouped collection of specialist articles, anecdotal pieces, and polemics about various issues in contemporary India, not all of which are clearly related to ‘culture’. For example, Tapati Guha-Thakurta contributes a thoughtful and analytical review of Indian art historiography in ‘Lineages of the Modern in Indian Art: The Making of a National History’, but practitioners of literary translation, such as Dilip Chitre, or theatre directing, such as Anuradha Kapur and Vijaya Mehta, offer reflections about the state of their art forms with little analytical or historical grounding. Likewise, Vimla Bhaguna’s report about her life as a feminist Gandhian, as well as Usha Thakkar’s exposition of Bhaguna’s life, offer little more than journalistic-style reporting as opposed to serious critique.

For a book with a goal of exploring the ramifications of culture and identity, the analysis of culture in theory and practice remains remarkably under-explored. This volume does not
expand beyond rather outdated parameters of syncretism and indigenism/foreignness to interrogate how cultural forms change, mutate, or take different shapes in today’s Indian landscape. Instead, the book simply documents how in music, art, theatre, and literary translation, practitioners reflect on colonial or national legacies.

Parts of the book are awkwardly organized, as part one includes music, art, and translation of the novel, but part two includes two pieces by literary translators (Dilip Chitre and U.R. Ananthamurthy) that would have worked well with Mukherjee’s piece on the novel in part one. A section on the performing arts, such as theatre and music together, would have read more smoothly. Part three mixes gender, feminism, and historiography, and this section also may have benefited from a different layout.

The presentation of views across the disciplinary and artistic spectrum is admirable, but the execution fails to satisfy specialized followers of developments in contemporary India. Ganesh declares that ‘the debate on what constitutes “Indian culture” and “Indianness” is a hoary and rambling one’ (p 15). In the book she co-edits, Indian culture is subject to rambling and hoary reflections, but certainly not to reasoned debate.

Neilesh Bose © 2008
Tufts University, USA

Precolonial and Colonial Punjab: Society, Economics, Politics and Culture
Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pall (eds)
New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2005
ISBN 81-7304-654-9

This collection of 21 essays is the first in a two-volume celebration of Punjab historian Indu Banga’s illustrious career. By nature, such edited collections are diverse in their scope, and in the following I attempt to provide a brief sampling of this volume’s contents.

The first part of the book, dealing with the pre-colonial period, is effective in clarifying issues of agricultural development, urbanization, and cultural change in late medieval Punjabi society. Chetan Singh’s ‘Well-irrigation and Socio-economic Change’ attempts to temper previous works’ laudation of the use of the irrigation device known as the Persian wheel. Rather than being an impetus for agricultural expansion and the sedentarization of some pastoral tribes, Singh argues that the Persian wheel is better seen as a device that complements, but does not exhaustively replace, more rudimentary irrigation technologies. In his comprehensive historical essay, ‘Batala as a Medieval Town’, Jagtar Singh Grewal rightly maintains that growth of cities in medieval Punjab, such as Lahore, is best understood in relationship to the smaller towns that depended on them, such as Batala. Jean-Marie Lafont’s ‘Cultural Life under Maharaja Ranjit Singh’ enriches our understanding of three important phenomena: Punjab’s role as a crossroads of civilizations, Ranjit Singh’s role as progressive patron and restorer of Mughal architectural monuments, and European (predominantly French) participation in Punjabi culture before the 1849 annexation of the region by the British. In complement, Radha Sharma’s ‘The State and Agrarian Society’ summarizes the policies of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s land revenue administration for the extension of land cultivation and the improvement of the condition of peasant landholders.

The strengths of the essays in this volume’s second part lie in their exposition of the cultural impact of colonial rule. Sasha’s ‘Epidemics in the Colonial Punjab’ relies on newspaper sources and administrative reports to evaluate colonialist culpability in the spread of epidemics in Punjab and provides an important but overlooked angle into colonial life. John C.B. Webster’s
‘Women of Amritsar’ lays bare the presumptions of British missionaries who provide critical insight into the position of Indian colonial-era women. Against the grain of recent scholarship, Webster concludes that the scholar who applies rigorous methodological scrutiny to albeit problematic records like missionary sources, can emerge from the sources with a better picture of the role of women in history than the sceptic who discards such sources altogether. In the essay on ‘Agricultural Labourers in the Punjab’, Himadri Banarjee paints the realities of agrarian life in the late 1800s, including the nature of the demand and supply of agricultural labourers, their socio-economic backgrounds, changes in methods of payment for agricultural labour, and the growth of particular subregions of Punjab as is evidenced by changes in wages paid to workers. Sukhdev Singh Sohal’s ‘Nightmare of Two Cities’ details the trauma exerted upon the Punjabi cities of Amritsar and Lahore by the violence of the 1947 partition of the subcontinent. Sohal sees his work as a part of a crucial shift from the discussion of the politics of partition to the ensuing violence and its impact on Punjabi people. Providing a glimpse into the literature of colonial Punjab are Sheena Pall (‘Bhagyawati: The First Hindi Novel of the Punjab’) and Tejwant Singh Gill (‘Colonialism and Punjabi Literature’).

The strength of this volume is that its essays bring various disciplines and generations of scholars together in one place. Digging into the abundant footnotes reveals the seminal texts, court records, literature, census records, and tracts on which twentieth-century scholars have founded the contemporary study of medieval and colonial Punjab. Perusing the table of contents makes known these leading figures, as well as their students who carry their legacy into the twenty-first century. Precolonial and Colonial Punjab is a fitting dedication to Dr Banga’s encyclopaedic career and will surely find its place alongside other indispensable volumes associated with her name on the bookshelves of scholars of the Punjab region.

Rahuldeep S. Gill © 2008
University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

Engaging with the World: Critical Reflections on India’s Foreign Policy
Rajen Harshe and K.M. Seethi (eds)
New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2005
ISBN 81-2502-825-0

The volume under review purports to examine critically India’s foreign policy since its independence. Apparently it is exhaustive in scope, covering issues such as the nuclear question, India’s relations with the big powers and its neighbours, South East Asia, West Asia, the Indian Ocean Rim, and Africa. While adequate attention has been accorded to the region and countries that have been part of the traditional thinking on India’s foreign policy, one can identify certain gaps in terms of the book’s self-claimed comprehensiveness. Even as chapters on India’s relations with Israel and the Indian Ocean Rim countries deserve our attention, engagement with the European Union, or Latin American countries, is conspicuous by its absence.

Organized into six parts, the volume contains 25 chapters in all. The chapter titles suggest their contents. It would be pointless to mention all of the authors and their titles given the limited space. Rather, it makes sense to bring out some of the general limitations of the volume as a whole. As often happens with the published outcome of seminar proceedings, there is a considerable gestation—seven years to be precise—between the seminar on which the volume is based and its ultimate publication. This has made many of the contributions appear outdated. After all, international relations is a rapidly changing field, and the failure on the part of the
contributor to incorporate such changes in their analysis and presentation has compromised the quality and usefulness of the volume as a whole.

The levers of India’s foreign policy are no longer driven by security concerns and military objectives alone. New imperatives and dynamics of the contemporary world system are impinging on them in a very substantial fashion. In this sense, the volume’s lack of focus on India’s engagement with the World Trade Organisation, or the general initiatives in the domain of India’s economic foreign policy initiatives, constrain the analytical insights that the reader may expect from such a collection. Students of India’s foreign policy may get an old-world feel from the book as it forecloses any discussion of some of the most exciting and challenging issues confronting the foreign policy establishment today. Amongst these are energy and environmental security concerns; terrorism and India’s eagerness to join the global war against terror; India’s newly found warmth with countries such as Brazil and South Africa; strategic expansion in South-East Asia through the Look East policy and attempts towards forging a consolidated regional Asian market through linkages with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); and a newly acquired zeal to go for mutually beneficial relations with China, notwithstanding the chequered trajectory of the past.

Some of the chapters do offer interesting insights on certain facets of India’s foreign policy. R. Shreekanthan Nair’s ‘India’s Israel Policy’ and Rajen Hershe’s ‘South Asian Regional Cooperation: Problems and Prospects’ make for good reading. The former in particular fills an important gap in existing literature by its meticulous documentation of India’s relations with Israel.

In the recent past, there has been an abundance of scholarly writings on India’s foreign policy, synthesizing India’s relations with the world at large and the attendant challenges of foreign policy-making in contemporary times. The current volume belongs to this genre of writings. However, whereas the contributors do some justice to the history of India’s foreign policy, they fail in identifying and delineating emergent issues in the changed global context. With some reservation, the book can be recommended for inclusion in undergraduate course lists on India’s foreign policy. If nothing else, the sheer coverage in terms of contents and variety should make the volume an accessible resource for beginners in the field.

_Aparajita Gangopadhyay © 2008_  
_Goa University, India_

**The State in India: Past and Present**  
Masaaki Kimura and Akio Tanabe (eds)  
New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006  
ISBN 01-95672-77-1

This collection of 12 essays presents an assessment of the past and the present of the state in India by an interdisciplinary array of experts. Without discounting the universal problematic of the state posed by the contemporary dynamics of global order, it looks at the state in India in the context of its own history and society. It is this fine balance between the particular and the universal, the empirical grounding and the theoretical sophistication, that imparts the volume its value. Akio Tanabe’s introduction maps out the discursive terrain relating to the role, form and evolution of the Indian state, taking into account various approaches and points of view. He dwells on the processes embodying various struggles of a plethora of groups and communities—religious, ethnic, linguistic, caste. Such groups are engaged in the collective enterprise of maximizing their legitimate rights of participation, autonomy and resource
distribution in the socio-political sphere. Indeed, their collective claims on the state are pregnant with inevitable redefinition of entitlements and agencies of the subordinate groups in Indian society.

In our times, the state has monopolized the function of legitimate redistribution of resources. However, that has not always been the case. The distribution of resources in pre-colonial India was mainly managed by the social system of rights rather than by the state. Seen thus, the prevailing discontent over representation and entitlements vis-à-vis state is an outcome of the modern transformations in the form and function of the state. The first section, ‘Formation and Concept of the State’, explores the characteristics of state formation and concept of the state in India. The contributions by Gen’ichi Yamazaki, Herman Kulke and Masaaki Kimura devote considerable attention to the nature of the state in relation to society in terms of organization and legitimacy of power. Whereas Yamazaki elaborates the process of state formation in ancient north India, Kulke offers an historical account of state formation in early medieval India. While comparing the Indian with to the Japanese, Kimura focuses on socio-political power at the village level and the way it conditions the structure of larger level politics.

In the second section, ‘Forms and Process of the State’, the contributions of Hiroyuki Kotani, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Tsukasa Mizushima, Akio Tanabe and Nicholas Dirks take up particular regional and historical contexts to document the transformations of the state. Kotani, Mizushima and Tanabe underline the importance of the rights-based structure of the Indian local community variously called the jajmani system, mirasi rights or vatan. Tanabe probes the relationship between the social system of rights and the state of Khurda in eighteenth-century Orissa—based on historical materials concerning a mid-eighteenth-century conflict in coastal northern Andhra called ‘the Bobbili war’. Subrahmanyam reconsiders the process of state formation by investigating the market and its rationality as well as values and ethics prevalent in society such as honour and marital status. Dirks outlines the colonial epistemology of the ethnographic state, and stresses its continuing dominance in post-colonial India.

In the last section, ‘Ideas and Problematics of the State’, Peter van der Veer emphasizes the significance of religion in the creation of the public sphere in India. Ashis Nandy puts forward a critique of the political culture of the Indian state. His analysis advocates a containment of the growing reach and scope of the Indian state. Matin Zuberi offers an assessment of the achievements of the post-Independence Indian state in the context of international politics. For him, the formation of a modern democratic state in India is the defining moment in its history, for the colonial Indian state was incapable of organizing or developing Indian society.

Given the range and depth of analysis and the wide historical canvass, the volume stands out as an important contribution to the understanding of the relationship between state and society in India. Students and scholars of Indian history, politics and society will find it rewarding.

Manish K. Thakur © 2008
Goa University, India

**Views on Development. The Local and Global in India and Pakistan**

Kristoffel Lieten

New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2004
ISBN 81-8878-916-X

The exclusion of the poor in development planning remains relatively unaddressed in development studies. Postmodernist re-evaluations highlight how power is exercised through
the defining of issues and solutions to marginalize the voices of the poor, who do not fit into the modernist ideal but are nonetheless expected to benefit from it. Acutely sensitive to such exclusionary practices, Kristoffel Lieten challenges several development paradigms on the basis of anthropological fieldwork in India and Pakistan, arguing that the wisdom and experience of poor people are an essential source of knowledge about development issues.

Development is deconstructed in the preface as an illusive, ideological vision rather than a measurable state of affairs that seeks ‘the restructuring of society in a capitalist sense’ and ‘the commoditising of practically every aspect of human life’ (p xiv). Despite eschewing its designation of one mode of social organization as superior to another, Lieten does not dismiss development altogether and adopts a sceptical stance towards arguments that the South is better off without it. In Chapter One he argues that the liberalist, middle-class representation of development as an oppressive, subjugating process glosses over the ‘unsavoury features of class, gender and ethnic inequalities and suppression’ and the ‘captivey of human beings to the vagaries of nature’ that characterized pre-modernity (p 17). Post-development discourses are not only naïve and irrational, but also fail to present a realistic alternative—and where development is seen to go wrong is where it is most urgently needed, rather than a justification for its disbandment.

Indeed, Chapter Two dislodges academic constructs of rural poverty to show that, far from being a postmodern illusion, development is very much a lived and desirable aspiration of the poor, especially the common peasant. While confirming dramatic improvements to living standards, documented interviews with villagers demonstrate widespread concerns about the bare log (the rich and powerful) undermining progress through corruption and nepotism with concomitant demands for nyaya or insaaf; that is, the rule of law. Lieten, unfortunately, does not further explore local interpretations and strategies for realizing this discourse of good governance, but notes that the poor perceive the state positively as the ‘repository of the development vision and development instruments’ (pp 49–50), demanding ‘more government intervention and support’ and ‘political changes in which the State is functioning’ (p 57).

The final chapter on fertility and child labour challenges the demographers’ myth that poor parents consciously produce many children to enhance family income and ensure a source of support in old age. Drawing on research in a wealthy village (Wazirpur) in northern Pakistan, Lieten demonstrates that while school attendance figures were higher and work participation figures lower relative to national averages, fertility remained high due to people copulating without access to or knowledge of contraceptives. Few parents perceive child labour as an aid to economic survival, while Islamic orthodoxy, rather than a reason for high fertility, is used by parents to bypass discomforting self-assessments of bad family planning, a consequence largely of ineffective government campaigns.

This study offers an array of original data to challenge some dominant development discourses. Lieten’s arguments and research will be of interest to geographers, economists, development studies scholars and political scientists, both regional specialists as well as generalists. A significant outcome of his findings, particularly for those advocating neoliberal solutions to poverty, is that contrary to the commonplace portrayal of the South Asian state as distant and unwelcoming, the poor call for greater state intervention, not less, placing little faith in the self-correcting mechanisms of the market and its ability to ensure a trickle-down of the fruits of growth.

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Clifford Chance LLP, UK

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The rise of movements for the assertion of Dalit (ex-untouchable) identity is one of the most significant developments in contemporary India. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has been at the fore of such movements in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. On 3 June 1995, when the Mayawati-led BSP won the state elections, for the first time in Independent India a Dalit woman became a chief minister, and that too of the most populous state. But the BSP government soon fell. Its attempts to regain and retain power were largely unsuccessful until, on 11 May 2007, it won the state elections with an overwhelming single-party majority. These are the crude facts. But what caused the change in the BSP’s fortunes? How did it evolve as a party and a movement? How did it mobilize its own primary constituency, the Dalits? Badri Narayan’s *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion* offers valuable insights to understanding the BSP phenomenon and identity politics in India today.

The book examines how and why the BSP selectively appropriates, re-invents and employs myths, legends, heroes and histories from local culture, especially Dalit *virangana* (female heroes) from the Revolt of 1857, as symbols of Dalit assertion. Unlike other studies—prominent among which are Sudha Pai’s *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution* (New Delhi: Sage, 2002) and Christophe Jaffrelot’s *India’s Silent Revolution* (New Delhi: Permanent Black 2003)—Narayan concentrates on the BSP’s cultural mobilization of Dalits at the grassroots level rather than focusing on its political elite.

The central argument advanced by Narayan is that the BSP has tried to create a language of dissent by telling and retelling stories of local heroes like Jhalkari Bai, Udadevi and Mahaviridevi, putting up their statues and organizing celebrations in their honour since it realizes that the language of Dalit movements, otherwise popular in Maharashtra, is not enough for it to flourish in Uttar Pradesh. By doing so, the BSP is carving out spaces for subverting upper-caste dominance and de-marginalizing the Dalits; bringing different Dalit castes under one political umbrella; establishing Dalits’ participation in India’s freedom struggle otherwise denied in mainstream nationalist history; building Mayawati’s image as the legitimate heir of the 1857 female heroes.

The book, although competent in explaining how the BSP uses the 1857 female Dalit heroes to prop up Mayawati’s image, falls short of linking this with feminist politics from a Dalit perspective. Can the female Dalit heroes be recovered as the voices of Dalit women otherwise absent in history? Are these icons exceptions to the norm or can they be interpreted as examples that ordinary Dalit women may emulate? What does the BSP’s use of such icons mean for the vast majority of Dalit women? Entitled *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion*, one would have expected the book to explore these questions and to engage with feminist readings of the *virangana*.

In the 150th anniversary year of the Revolt of 1857, as the Dalits celebrate the BSP’s success, this book is, nonetheless, topical. Remarkably well researched, the book draws on a rich resource of songs, stories, widespread fieldwork and interviews conducted by Narayan and his team over the past eight years in the Awadh and Bundelkhand regions of Uttar Pradesh. Students of subaltern studies, political science, sociology and history will find this volume useful. Peppered with poetry and anecdotes as it is, any layperson interested in the topic will also find the reading enjoyable.
Virtual Worlds: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cybertechnology
P.K. Nayar
Sage Publications: New Delhi, 2004
ISBN 07-6193-229-1

This book makes the ambitious claim of being ‘a survey of the technocultural condition of the late twentieth century or the “age of information”’ (p 19). The framework that the author sets for himself as a result of this broad claim allows an attempt to engage the interdisciplinary connections necessary to study virtual worlds. In addition, it allows the author to talk about the various frameworks for examining the intersections of digital technologies and online/offline contextual engagements with such technologies. He maps connections between Science and Technology Studies, Cyborg Feminisms and Internet Research, while conceptually discussing the various frameworks available for a discussion of ‘cyberculture as it mediates and is in turn influenced by globalization and politics, architecture, medical science and war’ (p 11). Thus, the book is an accessible survey of important theoretical and contemporary issues that should form the basis of research at the intersection of the Internet, society, culture, economics and politics. I would recommend it as an overview of work that feeds into cyberculture studies. The book is written in accessible language and covers many important topics. The objective of the book is achieved in a broad overarching way.

My critique of the book is based on a careful examination of his chapters on Politics, Body and Gender. While the strength of each of these chapters is in listing and briefly defining, the weakness is in each chapter’s lack of depth and analysis. This lack of depth and analysis sometimes leads to hasty and incomplete understandings of these bodies of literature.

In the chapter on Politics, for instance, he documents economic, social and political linkages, describing how Internet communication technologies are ‘effectively technologies of globalization’ (p 185) while cyberspace is grounded in a material ‘infrastructure of wires and cables, hard disks and processing units’ (p 193). Where he tends to fall short in this chapter is when he brackets issues of race, gender, sexuality and class as (implicitly) not part of discussions of politics, public sphere, identity and power in cyberculture. Thus, for instance, when he lays out the issues of individual identity in cyberspace, he limits himself to early Internet hyperbole and euphoria. ‘Hierarchies are difficult to maintain in cyberspace’, he claims, suggesting that ‘women masquerading as men, for instance, seek to neutralize gender-based discrimination’ (p 161). These ideas, rather than being listed as one perspective on cyberculture, are stated as facts, with the conclusion that at ‘the level of the individual, then, cyberspace ignores identities [and] [a]t the institutional level hierarchies can be reordered to benefit individuals’ (p 161).

Such claims point to a methodological blind spot. It is problematic, for instance that the chapter on gender serves to be a token chapter to touch upon politico-ethical issues. The effect is that even though gender is taken up as a category for analysis in the book, it has been deployed in ways that continue to be mobilized in a polarized manner—as if ‘gender’ is somehow outside of everyday practices that engage technologies. Further, implicit in the way the book takes up the various themes is the notion of an overarching theory that leaves us without a critical understanding of how power works. Ultimately, the way in which the issues are framed create the effect of perpetuating a modernist developmentalist view of technology.

Radhika Gajjala © 2008
Bowling Green State University, USA
Investigating Social Capital: Comparative Perspectives on Civil Society, Participation and Governance
Sanjeev Prakash and Per Selle (eds)
New Delhi: Sage, 2004
ISBN 07-6199-690-7

The idea of ‘social capital’ understood in the sense that capital is already embedded in the social relations of society dates back to the writings of Karl Marx. However, the points of reference for ‘social capital’ in the context of contemporary political, economic, and development discourse are more likely to derive from the works of Robert Putnam, a political theorist from Harvard. Putnam argues that social networks, for him measured through density of voluntary associations, ‘can improve the efficiency of society’—Robert Putnam, Making Democracy Work (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p 169. Put simply, the personalized trust generated within networks creates a broader societal trust, referred to as ‘social capital’. This facilitates the communication of information, thereby lowering transaction costs for the individual that, when aggregated up, produce positive outcomes for society. More recently, a critical literature has burgeoned, catalysed by the work of Ben Fine, the leading critic of Putnam’s ‘Social Capital’.

In the introductory chapter ‘Why Investigate Social Capital?’, editors Sanjeev Prakash and Per Selle establish the book’s position in relation to social capital literature, asserting the need to ‘re-evaluate some of the key assumptions that underpin the Putnam-inspired literature’ (p 18), while stating that ‘the contributors to this volume take a less sceptical view’ than Ben Fine (p 32). The aim, the editors claim, is to offer ‘a set of empirical and conceptual analyses of the contexts, causes and consequences of social capital in an attempt to achieve a basic modicum of clarity and consistency’ (p 19).

Yet a collection of 12 chapters spanning five countries (India, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden) and grouped under three themes (‘Social Capital: Whence it Came’, ‘Empirical Approaches’, ‘New Directions and Cul-de-Sacs’) makes clarity and consistency near impossible. This is evident in the introductory chapter, where Prakash and Selle struggle to a bring out a coherent line of enquiry, unconvincingly relate chapters to each other, and fail to draw out any new understanding of social capital or directions for further ‘investigation’ from the disparate findings generated. While the selection of cases may be ‘neither accidental nor random’ (p 18), it is evident that the workshop theme ‘Investigating Social Capital’ (Solstrand, Norway, May 2000) from which the chapters were drawn is too expansive to serve any collective analytical purpose.

However, this is not to say that the book is without worth. Each chapter is well structured, underpinned by a clear argument, and, depending on the interests of the reader, thought-provoking. Taking into account the readership of this journal, the review will focus on the two chapters that refer to India. In ‘Is Civil Society the Answer?’, Susan Rudolph argues that western perceptions of civil society, which inform ideas of social capital, need to be reconsidered for non-western contexts. Using findings from micro-studies of Indian villages, she substantiates her assertion by noting that in India strong links within groups do not translate into wider societal trust, democratic processes of elections and party activity can undermine old forms of community with potentially negative implications, and social progress is not necessarily cumulative but can regress. Such contrarian findings lead Rudolph to argue that, for civil society and social capital to be of analytical use in the developing world, two fundamental changes need to be made. Firstly, the overarching context needs to be addressed, in this case the protracted social revolution in an unequal and modernizing India. Secondly, and perhaps paying too much homage to
Putnam’s definition of social capital, she argues, requires a finer taxonomy of associations.

Enrique Pantoja, in one of the more insightful papers produced by the World Bank, noted that the relevance of social capital is in its ability to make sense of differences in development performance and aid the formulation of more effective policy—Enrique Pantoja, Exploring the Concept of Social Capital and its Relevance for Community-based Development: The Case of Coal-mining Areas in Orissa, India (Washington, DC: World Bank, World Bank Social Capital Initiative Working Paper 18, 1999). Anirudh Krishna, in his chapter ‘Putting Social Capital to Work: Agency and Development’, makes his own contribution to Pantoja’s supposition. He compares development performance (using four indicators—livelihood stability, poverty reduction, employment generation, and quality of health, education and water supply services) across 60 villages in Rajasthan. Once performances are measured, Krishna evaluates the validity of three explanations for the differences—institutionalist, social capital, and agency—and puts forth his own. His findings suggest development performance is ‘significantly and substantially influenced’ by the interaction between social capital and agency, but that neither can realize development alone (p. 224). His policy conclusion is that a mid-to-high agency rating is required to realize the potential of high-levels of social capital for development (p. 226). In other words, the key to delivering effective development policy is enhancing the ability to deliver effective policy.

To conclude, although the chapters were of good quality, the book itself was outdated when it was published in 2004, and is even more so now. While social capital may have been the ‘hot topic’ at the time of the workshop in 2000, its rapid demise as a viable concept in social science condemns any book ‘investigating it’ as passé. However, the two chapters reviewed remain relevant for understanding contemporary India, albeit in a capacity only tenuously related to social capital. Rudolph highlights the impracticalities of imposing on India concepts derived from western experience. And Krishna proves her correct in a lengthy and ultimately futile process of modifying western concepts of social capital for use in the Indian context.

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Religious Identity and Political Destiny: Hindutva in the Culture of Ethnicism
Deepa Reddy
Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006
ISBN 978-0-7591-0686-4

This book presents itself so much as a personal journey that it seems only right and proper to begin with the Acknowledgements. Deepa Reddy has many people to thank, but one particular sentiment stood out for me: to her husband and father-in-law she offers thanks for some crucial advice—never fear controversy. The value of this advice is apparent when one moves on to the Prologue, where Reddy begins to sketch out her objectives. She poses some critical questions: ‘is there a way to understand the phenomenon of (Hindu) religious ethnicism without always-already reading it as a most dangerous form of extremism; indeed, without the pejorative undertones of “illicit”? Is there a way to acknowledge the place of religion, faith and belief within religious ethnicism, to read it as religious, in some sense, rather than as a secularized machination of religion?’ (p. xix). The context for such questions is an academic environment in India that is bound strongly to political activism, to the extent that Hindu ethnicism has
consistently been ‘dismissed as pathological’ (p xxiii), and therefore, she argues, insufficiently understood.

Reddy describes how this pathological inflection has emerged as part of a routinized discursive formation that encompasses but stretches way beyond the relatively ring-fenced environment of academic research. As she began her fieldwork on the place of religion and secularism in Indian public life, she discovered that this was ‘the topic on everyone’s mind’ (p 2), but at the same time that her encounters were ‘by and large with a certain stock set of positions, many of which were defined in whole or in part by political alignments’ (p 2). The patterns of a politics defined by the structural opposition of religion to secularism revealed themselves in conversations that felt ‘like reading several newspaper briefs all at the same time: the questions, the complaints, the arguments and indeed often the examples given all bore striking resemblance to those already widely circulated through the media’ (p 3). This approach is reminiscent of that of Peter van der Veer and others who have accounted for communal violence by emphasizing its narrative construction: ‘no sooner has violence occurred’, Reddy says, ‘than it becomes ‘‘violence’’: a narrative, a trope, the reason to condemn ethnicism and religion combined and the excuse to avoid engaging ethnicist critiques’ (pp xxv–xxvi).

Rather than going on to attempt a sociological explanation of such violence, however, Reddy uses this observation as the starting point for an exploration of the intellectual terrain which, she says, ‘values . . . assertions of difference, but only sometimes’ (p xxvi). By this, she means the various positions that have been established on the basis of a recognition and critique of difference, and the social dynamics that result from this. So, she goes on to produce analyses focused on a series of different fields: firstly, Indian academic discourse focused on communalism and Hindu nationalism, which she engages through the analysis of a series of significant texts; secondly, left-leaning women’s groups in Hyderabad; and only thirdly does she turn to Hindu nationalists themselves, and these only within a broader examination of different approaches to Indian culture and the idea of the nation as expressed by a number of interlocutors encountered during a trip to Delhi. This broader framework, she explains, enabled her to ‘consider ethnicist belief as a point on a much wider continuum of meanings that extends, most importantly, to the everyday practice of religion’ (p 18).

Reddy has rather self-consciously deployed the word ‘ethnicism’ in order to create some critical distance from more highly charged terms in the Indian context: fascism, fundamentalism, and most importantly, communalism. Although it sits rather uneasily in the Indian context, this term does enable Reddy to make some critical connections that might otherwise be obscured: most notably, she makes a connection between Dalit political identity and Hindu nationalism as different forms of ethnicism, arguing that the peculiar trajectories of a politics governed by the opposition of secularism to communalism prevent a recognition of this connection and the dynamic which it created in that seminal period of Indian politics, the late 1980s, early 1990s. Ultimately, Reddy’s argument leads her to an understanding of contemporary Hindu nationalist ethnicism as gaining sustenance from the unresponsiveness and inarticulacy of secular discourses. She wants in the end to ‘challenge the discomfort each modern academic is prone to feel when religion exceeds its allotted space in the secular order . . . to challenge the idea that such an apparently uncontrolled overflowing can produce only new and still newer expressions of fundamentalism’ (p 185). One issue here is the extent to which academics are prone to such discomfort. In Religious Studies, for example, there is increasing exploration of the dynamic potentials of religious discourses, their ability to operate in a range of different ways, across a range of different political spaces. The general point, however, is certainly significant, and this book provides real insights into the discourses of modern Indian politics in relation to everyday understandings of life. In particular it addresses the everyday mental frameworks in which the ideology of Hindu nationalism resonates. This is
a subtle, complex and multilayered field of thought, and Reddy’s singular and engaging approach helps greatly in understanding it.

John Zavos © 2008
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Paradise Poisoned: Learning about Conflict, Terrorism and Development from Sri Lanka’s Civil Wars
John Richardson
Kandy: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2005
ISBN 95-5580-094-4

This book is the product of a 17-year project since 1987, devoted to understanding linkages between deadly conflict, terrorism and development, by viewing them through the lens of Sri Lanka’s post-independence history, from 1948 through to 1988.

The reference to ‘paradise’ in the title is to the Sri Lanka of remarkable stability and promise during the early years after independence in 1948, when there was extraordinarily good pre-conditions for a peaceful development scenario. How this paradise failed to realize its potential and produced one of the most violent and protracted internal wars in the world is the story of the book, narrated through five parts and 22 chapters. The five parts are broadly focused on the following themes: (a) The linkages between deadly conflict, terrorism and development in Sri Lanka; (b) whether Sri Lanka was a development success story; (c) the United Front Government’s attempts to cope with violent insurrections and the shortcomings of its Marxist development model; (d) failure of the state’s open economy development model and strengthening of presidential authority to prevent conflict and terrorism from escalating out of control; and (e) deadly conflict and terrorism is not only predictable, but preventable.

John Richardson theorizes the links between conflict, terrorism and development as a vicious cycle. Development failures cause social pathologies that contribute to intensifying violence. Intensifying violence makes development failures more probable. Frequent outcomes are deadly conflict and terrorism that, in turn, further exacerbate development failures and social pathologies. In keeping with this model he has identified 10 development failures in Sri Lanka: unsustainable entitlement programmes; polarizing political rhetoric and tactics; ‘winner takes all’ official language policies; the ‘outstation’ mentality in implanting Sri Lanka’s development strategies and programmes, which has prevented devolution of power; half-hearted reforms of secondary and higher education, coupled with discriminatory university admissions policies targeting Tamil youth; perpetuation of government-controlled economic management schemes long after their economic inefficacy had been demonstrated; over-ambitious and over-politicized economic reform policies; inadequate funding, Sinhalization and politicization of the security forces; use of repressive measures to secure the United National Party’s parliamentary majority for an additional term in 1982; and attempts to restore order in the north and east (especially in volatile Jaffna province) with military forces that were clearly incapable of achieving that goal. Narratives describing each failed policy are given in different chapters, and a brief recapitulation that emphasizes important points is given in the penultimate chapter. This is followed by a description and prescription of 10 imperatives for preventing deadly conflict and terrorism.

The book throws much light on the causes of conflict during the period 1948–1988. The exacerbation of the conflict in the two decades after 1988 show that there is still much to do in understanding this conflict. Nevertheless this is an important study of ethnic politics, conflict
resolution, human rights, democratic governance, and overall social development, whose scope and sweep are global and not limited to Sri Lanka alone.

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Gendered Citizenship: Historical and Conceptual Explorations
Anupama Roy
New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2005
ISBN 81-2502-797-1

Anupama Roy’s interdisciplinary work Gendered Citizenship: Historical and Conceptual Explorations sits at the intersection between a number of mutually informing subject areas, and as a result makes an interesting and original contribution to each. As a work of political theory, it provides a conceptual exploration of the notion of citizenship, focusing in particular on the exclusions that underpin the supposedly inclusive category of the citizen. Although she locates a number of such exclusions, including caste, status, race and economic position, her main focus is on exclusions based on gender. It is, therefore, to the field of gender studies/feminist theory that she makes her second contribution, arguing that women have been, and continue to be, marginalized by a primarily male-imagined conception of universal citizenship that is in many cases inimical to their lived experiences and concerns. Drawing primarily on the political appropriation of the category of Indian women during both the nationalist and postcolonial eras, she explores how the emergent Indian nation-state both used and excluded women in its discourse of citizenship and self-identity. Her third contribution is thus to the history and theory of anti-colonial nationalisms, mainly in India, but also elsewhere; in particular, how conditions surrounding the emergence of modern postcolonial polities impacted on their construction of citizenship models.

In her opening chapter, Roy lays out both her project and the theoretical foundations on which it rests. A wide-ranging exploration of the conceptual category of ‘citizen’, from ancient slave societies to more recent Marxist and feminist interventions, provides the backdrop for the more focused discussion that underpins the rest of the book. This begins with a look at the treatment of the ‘woman question’ by anti-colonial nationalism, primarily, but not exclusively, in India. Roy outlines the processes by which nationalists reconstructed a ‘new’ elite womanhood as a national symbol, while at the same time conforming to ‘traditional’ images and identities, thus arguably reinforcing the marginalization of women in political terms and leaving unresolved key issues such as sati, infanticide, dowry, rape and domestic violence, as well as the less sensational but more pervasive forms of discrimination that surround women’s lives. Here many South Asian specialists will perhaps find themselves on somewhat familiar ground, but Roy is to be commended for the engaging way in which she synthesizes existing scholarship and directs it to her own argument about the processes by which the relationship between ‘woman’ and ‘citizen’ was negotiated and contested. In a discussion of the (contested) relationship between women, the domestic and the political, drawn primarily from the example of prescriptive Hindi literature of the early twentieth century, Roy follows the likes of Charu Gupta, among others, in re-imagining the public and private spheres as fluid and overlapping rather than static and opposed. She then moves on to a more empirical study of the history of women’s suffrage in India and the role of gender divisions in the construction of the Indian constitution, before bringing the reader up to date with a look at the issue of citizenship in postcolonial South Asia. Throughout, her theme
remains the processes of exclusion by which the supposedly inclusive category of ‘citizen’ is constructed.

This is a thoughtful and well-conceived book, the main contribution of which is to draw together ideas and examples from various fields and combine them in an engaging, gendered exploration of the idea of citizenship. The author is to be commended on the skilful way in which she weaves the theoretical with the factual and engages with a variety of ideas from various authors in various fields, without losing her own distinctive voice or obscuring her own political and social agenda. There has been a wealth of literature on Indian women in the late colonial and postcolonial eras produced in recent years, with the result that producing truly original contributions is not always easy. By approaching the experience of Indian women from the wider perspective of universal ideas of citizenship, and placing their history within the context of wider developments in this political model, both in India and globally, Roy provides a new perspective from which to view this otherwise well-worn ground. The linkages she makes between the colonial and post-colonial, between various anti-colonial movements and between a variety of theoretical fields, including Marxism and feminism, mean that the book will be of considerable interest to scholars in a range of fields, including political science, gender studies, South Asian area studies, South Asian history and indeed the histories of imperialism, nationalism, decolonization and gender more generally.

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Reporting the Partition of Punjab 1947: Press, Public and Other Opinions
Raghuvendra Tanwar
New Delhi: Manohar, 2006
ISBN 81-7304-674-3

T.B. Macaulay is alleged to have remarked that the only true history of a country is to be found in its newspapers. Raghuvendra Tanwar has written a book about the partition of India in 1947, with special reference to the Punjab, which justifies Macaulay’s remark. Anyone who has tried to write history with the help of newspapers knows that it is an extremely arduous task, requiring industry, infinite patience and a highly trained judgement. Tanwar has performed the task with remarkable dexterity and success. His narrative is interesting; his sense of the significant seldom deserts him; he does not fail to see the wood for the trees; and his conclusions are generally fair, impartial and just. His book represents a tour de force of historical scholarship.

Tanwar rightly claims that, although his is ‘a study of the Punjab of 1947 as seen through the columns of important newspapers’, he has not neglected other sources even though their part is ‘merely supportive in nature and therefore limited and selective’ (p 22); and that although his book is in a sense ‘a limited chronicle of the partition of [the] Punjab’ (p 11), he has not lost sight of the wider, all-India context of the subject. While he concentrates on 1947, and deals with the period of partition itself in Punjab, he has not failed to provide the necessary historical background and has done well in dealing at some length with the immediate fall-out of the partition.

Tanwar has dwelt on the ugly happenings of 1947 in Punjab specifically. This has distinguished the book from earlier writings focused on high politics, origin, causes, and questions of final responsibility in relation to partition, and places it in the category of those later writings that sensitized people through narratives of the traumatic experience of the masses.
BOOK REVIEWS

While going through the first chapter readers will gain an understanding of events that preceded violence in Punjab in March 1947. We may not find here any new perception but the review of existing historical trends is engrossing. The narrative in the next two chapters deals with violent disturbances and their effect on ordinary people. Tanwar describes how people confronted problems of corruption and shortage of essential supplies. He also discusses how the apprehensions raised by the 3 June Plan dampened the enthusiasm of the people of Punjab to drive the British out.

The next three chapters focus on intrigue in the Boundary Commission and its implications, highlighting the different reaction of the political leadership and bureaucracy, and portraying how people’s rejection of the award rendered the state non-functional. Instead of merely discussing the administrative attempts of the Indian Government to bring peace to Punjab, the author elaborates the corruption and greed that accompanied these measures in the seventh chapter.

It is disappointing that there is no concluding chapter as such in this important and interesting book, marked by such high scholarship. In addition, although one finds a listing of well-known newspapers in circulation (pp 14–16), there is a lack of uniformity and some discrepancy in presenting the names of some of these. These can, however, be put aside as minor blemishes in an important work.

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An Abode of the Goddess: Kingship, Caste and Sacrificial Organization in a Bengal Village
Masahiko Togawa
New Delhi: Manohar, 2006
ISBN 81-7304-677-8

Studies of ritual in South Asia have a distinguished heritage that draws on the immense sociological interest generated by the region’s colourful punctuations to religious and cultural life. Masahiko Togawa’s complex and well-crafted contribution to understanding village ritual in Bengal is a finely detailed and subtly argued addition to the existing literature. Drawing on years of field research that began in the early 1990s, and which ‘continues intermittently even now’ (p 11), An Abode of the Goddess provides a technical discussion that will be particularly useful for ritual specialists and students of Hindu social organization.

Togawa presents an argument about the place of the kingship (and other caste groups) in the social, political and economic organization of a Bengal village. The resulting ‘analysis of the ritual system shows the strong relationship between village society and the kingship, and indicates how deeply the social life of the village has been influenced by the Hindu kingship through its ritual practices’ (p 13). It is that ‘kingship’ and its search for ritual legitimacy that has led ‘the villagers [to] observe a few special customs’ (p 44) that are not generally practiced in other villages.

Togawa’s focus—and the evidence for the book’s broader claims—is the village of Kshiragram. Its village temple (jogadya-mandir) ‘prospered under the patronage of Bardhaman Raj . . . in the early eighteenth century’ (p 13). According to Togawa this patronage created an historical and cultural prominence for ‘the sample village [which] is widely accepted as one of the fifty-one saktha-pithas [a sacred place of the sakta-cult] all over the Indian subcontinent’ (p 42). It is from the recognition of this status that the book takes its title: a ‘pitha-sthan’ is an ‘abode of the goddess’ Sati or Durga.
Togawa goes on to outline expertly the various historical, theoretical and methodological issues that are relevant to his study of this particular village ‘abode’. Crucially, according to Togawa, ‘anthropologists have failed to accumulate sufficient data from the field concerning the organization of local kingships and their influences to the formation of rural societies’ (p 20). Togawa’s study is a diligent effort to fill that gap with nuanced and expert commentary. One of his key findings is that village rituals for the legitimation of the kingship do not just emerge from the dominant caste groups. In fact, in Kshiragram ‘sacrificial ritual . . . appears from every stratum of society’; Togawa concludes that ‘these sacrificial rituals . . . suggest the continued rising rivalries in rural society’ (p 188).

Even though it covers its chosen subject in remarkably fine detail, Togawa’s book is still generally a pleasure to read. It includes a number of useful maps, and is structured with the sensible use of descriptive headings, striking photographs and instructive tables. The extensive bibliography encompasses a diverse range of material, including a considerable number of Bengali sources. The book also provides a glossary of 150 Bengali words alongside a set of appendices that describe aspects of the Bengal lunar calendar, the 51 sakta-pithas and the temples founded by the Raj Family of Barhaman.

This torrent of technical discussion is part of the book’s appeal; although it is very clear to me that it may frustrate non-specialist readers. Simply, this book will most appeal to scholars of Hindu ritual practice. It should, nonetheless, be noted that readers with broader interests will find that Togawa’s argument about kingship, caste and sacrificial organization in West Bengal has much to offer. Regardless of the book’s eventual audience, Togawa should be commended for marshalling the equal measures of panache and patience required for a volume of this incisive depth.

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Globalization and South Asia: Multi Dimensional Perspectives
Achin Vanaik (ed.)
Delhi: Manohar, 2004
ISBN 81-7304-539-9

Globalisation: India’s Adjustment Experience
Biplab Dasgupta
Delhi: Sage, 2005
ISBN 07-6193-306-9

Over the past 10 years, discussions on globalization and analyses of its consequences have become ubiquitous, leading to a developing lexicon for global studies that is, at worst, hard to comprehend, and, at least, irrelevant. We know from various scholarly volumes written over the past decade that globalization processes follow the cutting edge of neo-liberal capitalist economics and political structures, as they engage technological innovation, media power, travel and communications technology to compress both time and space, allowing goods, ideologies and peoples to flow across national borders. What is new in the two volumes reviewed here is that they do not attempt a re-definition of globalization, but focus on actors, agents and sites of globalization in and of South Asia, and their integration into the processes of globalization. These volumes are timely and much-needed additions to the globalization debate, because they explore the processes of globalization from a unique and focused geographical
perspective. Filled with interesting and provocative ideas, they demonstrate to the interested reader, cleverly using South Asia as a lens, how the world is interconnected. In addition, they demonstrate that South Asia could be an important fulcrum both in the scholarly debate on globalization and in the world of realpolitik. From the two volumes it would seem to the reader that South Asians (particularly Indians) have mastered what the economist Hernando De Soto suggests is the essential ingredient for the successful globalization of developing countries: the conversion of assets into capital (*The Mystery of Capital*, New York: Basic Books, 2000, pp 15–20), and have largely avoided the pitfalls of entry into the circuits of globalization, although some may argue that they still have a long way to go.

Biplab Dasguta’s volume, which is, as the book itself suggests, ‘a sequel to the author’s 1998 study of structural adjustment at the global level’ (p 15), is a focused, comprehensive examination and appraisal of India’s successful navigation of the treacherous waters of globalization through a series of planned economic reforms. In it he recounts how economic reforms have been initiated in India through structural adjustments since 1991, based on processes of globalization, privatization and liberalization. Dasgupta, unlike other authors, distinguishes between these three processes, and clarifies their importance for reform in various sectors in India. He analyses all of the components of the economic structural adjustment programme of reform including in the agrarian, industrial, banking, public, fiscal, trade, environmental and labour sectors. But despite the in-depth analysis, Dasgupta’s conclusions are somewhat predictable and un-illuminating. He argues that an uncritical acceptance of World Trade Organisation and International Monetary Fund conventions for India will not serve the interests of India’s plural population. But despite the expected conclusion, the volume is important; full of fascinating details on the reform and its history, and it will be of great interest to economists, planners, and others interested in the South Asian economy in general.

While Dasgupta’s volume is restrained, Achin Vanaik’s volume is full to the brim with ideas about various aspects of globalization. It is a transcript of dialogue at a conference entitled ‘Globalization and South Asia’ held at the Indian Social Institute under the auspices of the Jamia Millia Islamia and the Academy of Third World Studies in 2002. In the preface, editor Vanaik states that the conference was to focus upon ‘globalization in its broadest sense, and therefore it relationship, not just to economics, but to society, culture, politics, education science and so on’ (p 7). The authors include anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, journalists and gender studies scholars. With this range of contributors, the volume makes a serious attempt at a multi-dimensional dialogue on globalization in South Asia. However, the lay-out leaves something to be desired; because the volume adopts the ‘informal and conversation style’ (p 8) of the conference itself, it can be somewhat disorienting at first. Chapters begin with transcriptions of primary speeches followed by recorded questions from the audience, which are in turn answered and debated by members of the panel. Despite some problems with clarity, then, the sophistry of the audience and their grasp of current affairs in South Asia and its relevance to the subject, is apparent and impresses the reader.

With its unconventional format, Vanaik’s volume moves necessarily but somewhat inelegantly between themes and geographic areas. Three themes that were thought-provoking and needed more space were ‘Globalization and the media’ by Harish Khare, ‘Globalization and culture’ by Rajeev Bhargava, and ‘Globalization, feminism and publishing’ by Ritu Menon. Achin Vanaik’s own paper on ‘Globalization and International Relations’ was also informative. However, in the volume, the geographic sessions take centre-stage: ‘Globalization and Nepal’, ‘Globalization and Pakistan’, and so on. While these sessions were informative, the reader feels that it would have been far better to absorb these papers under the thematic rubric to aid comparative analysis between the various countries. In this case the directness of the link between title and content does not illuminate. Further, despite the fact that many sessions
alluded to religion and belief, no single session was held on it and therefore no chapter in the volume addresses this important facet of culture and society in South Asia.

But these are minor quibbles. I found that the authors of both volumes analyse a vast amount of relevant information on the various aspects of globalization as it pertains to South Asia. The analyses are inspired and insightful, and both texts can illuminate college and university courses, both on globalization and on South Asia. They are also of interest to an educated audience interested in contemporary South Asia, and the complexities of emergent growth in that region.

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