

Sohal, Sukhdev Singh (2012), *Credit, Rural Debt and The Punjab Peasantry (1849-1947)*, (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University), pp. VII+203, price Rs.200. ISBN 978-81-7770-173-9.

Peasant indebtedness and agrarian distress have been a recurring theme of discussion in Punjab for a period of more than 125 years. This started with S.S. Thorburn's book entitled *Musalmans and Moneylenders in Punjab*, published in 1885. Several scholars from the civil service as well as academia brought out books and monographs based on data tried to analyze the growing debt of the peasantry. This included a classic work by M.L. Darling titled *Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt* published in 1925. Remarkably this theme continues to be alive even in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

The Extravagance Theory advanced by the colonial scholars also continues in some form, maintaining that excessive consumption relative to income is the main cause of peasant indebtedness. The debate on this theme has become more focused in recent years, especially after 1997 when the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) began to provide annual data on agricultural/farmers' suicides in India. A large number of studies carried out in different parts of the country, including Punjab, have established a link between indebtedness and suicides among small and marginal farmers. The book under review provides a historical context to this debate. The book rightly locates the process of the emergence and growth of peasant debt in the era of colonial rule. The author holds the opinion that, in the pre-colonial situation, rural credit was dominated by moneylenders, but tradition and customs within the village community regulated it. Money lenders were fairly well established but were not so powerful because of the existence of a vigorous village community and the indifference of the state towards debt recovery. It was British policies which enabled moneylenders to increase in number, rise up the social ladder and increase their financial scale of operation. The British agrarian policies were geared towards the transformation of property relations, especially the establishment of the institution of private property in land and the collection of regular land revenue in the form of cash.

After annexation of Punjab in 1849, land revenue was assessed rigidly and fixed in cash. A bureaucratic system of rigid annual assessment of land revenue, its strict recovery and compliance was established. As land revenue was the main source of government income its policies became oriented towards maximum collection. Land revenue contributed more than 60 per cent of the total revenue of the state government in the 1930s. The quantum of land revenue increased from Rs.15 lakh in 1850 to Rs.300 lakh in 1885. This reflects a rise in land revenue by 20 times within a period of 35 years. Land revenue collection was strictly enforced with a compliance rate of 99 per cent. The situation was worsened by regular famines and droughts which occurred three times between 1860 and 1873 and five times between 1860 and 1901. Droughts and famines ruined the economy of peasants. They suffered loss in income and also loss of cattle which perished due

to fodder shortage, putting extra burden on the peasants. The peasants were forced to pay land revenue in cash at fixed assessed rates even during the drought years. In fact instructions were issued against suspensions and remissions of land revenue during the famine and drought years. This forced many among the peasants to borrow from money lenders. The British rulers allowed mortgage and sale of land for purposes of revenue payment. In the early years of British rule there was no government agency in Punjab which could meet the credit needs of the peasants. So, the peasants had no choice but to borrow from the moneylenders. This created a situation of flourishing moneylenders in the State. Although the population of Punjab was one-eleventh of India yet one-fourth of the moneylenders of India were residing in Punjab.

In 1854, usury regulations were removed. The establishment of judicial institutions by the British contributed significantly to the rise of moneylenders. In 1856 more than one hundred *small cause courts* were established to settle cases related to land disputes. The *Chief Courts* were constituted in 1866 and in the same year, pleaders were given permission to practice in Punjab courts. However, the new judicial system did not protect the peasants from unscrupulous moneylenders. The Evidence Act and the Contract Act, both passed in 1872 gave preference to written evidence, which only helped moneylenders who were literate, in fact the only literate party in the disputes. They could enter any monetary sum they wanted in their account books provided they maintained their account books in accordance with the law. They could win decrees in the courts because they were able to produce documents pertaining to borrowing by peasants with the latter's thumb impression on the written deeds. The manipulation of accounts with high annual interest charged, ranging between 18 and 36 per cent and sometimes rising to between 75 per cent and 125 per cent, made debt unbearable for the peasants. Thus, high/usurious interest rates, the manipulation of accounts by moneylenders and protection offered by the British legal system quickly put peasants into a debt trap. The author cites evidence that in 1865 only 6 per cent of the peasant proprietors were in debt but this proportion increased to 80 per cent in 1879. This led to further transfer of land from peasant proprietors to moneylenders both through mortgages and sales. The judicial system helped the process of transformation of peasants into tenants and the proportion of tenant cultivators among the peasantry increased. The introduction of proprietary land rights, collection of land revenue in cash, the policy of non-suspension and nonremission of land revenue during famines and integration of the Punjab economy into the world economy through railways introduced commercialization and differentiation among the peasantry. The ruined small peasants became tenants and big land owners became prosperous, as, along with rent collection, they also resorted to money lending. Thus, there came into existence two classes of moneylenders viz. professional moneylenders from the non-cultivating castes and landlords-cum-moneylenders. The author has developed a thesis that peasant indebtedness in the state was the consequence of British rule. Protection offered by the legal system to moneylenders and their fraudulent practices created a high

level of indebtedness among the peasants during the first fifty years of the British rule in Punjab. This reflected an alliance between the colonial administration and professional moneylenders. Peasants exhausted their cumulative savings in the form of gold and many among them lost proprietorship of their land and became tenant cultivators. The author also offers the view that the process of commercialization and differentiation among the peasantry began during the first fifty years after annexation of Punjab by the British. This process continued during the subsequent years of colonial rule.

It is further argued that the Land Alienation Act of 1901 and the Cooperative Societies Act 1904, a colonial recipe, could not help in saving the peasants from the clutches of moneylenders. They strengthened the predominance of agriculturist moneylenders and also the prevalence of *benami*-transactions. The Land Alienation Act 1901 prohibited acquisition of land by non-agriculturist moneylenders, paving the way for strengthening the domination of agriculturist moneylenders. The loans of cooperative societies were availed of by 15 per cent of the peasants, especially from the middle peasant category, in 1932. Out of the total cooperative loans, 16.46 per cent were for payment of land revenue, 18.13 per cent for purchase of cattle and 21 per cent for repayment of debt. Only 13 per cent of the members of cooperative societies were free from debt.

The world economic depression of 1929-33 impoverished the whole of Punjab agriculture as prices of agricultural commodities fell drastically, much more than prices of other commodities. However, the liability of the peasant to pay land revenue remained constant in the face of falling incomes. This made cultivation for many of them unviable. They resorted to distress sale of their produce, and also to selling and/or mortgaging their land. The small peasants also sold their ornaments preserved as lifelong small savings. The author has provided evidence that a relatively higher proportion of the households in debt were tenants and marginal farmers. This important fact was always under-played by colonial administrator-scholars like M.L. Darling. The high incidence of debt among the small peasants increased the percentage of area cultivated by tenants at will from 36 per cent in 1891 to 49 per cent in 1937. A large number of these small peasants turned into agricultural labourers. Quoting census data, the author shows that the number of owner cultivators increased by 27.7 per cent between 1921 and 1931, whereas agricultural labourers witnessed a growth of 58.7 per cent during this same period. This clearly demonstrates the process of depeasantization and proletarianization under the impact of increased indebtedness. Thus, given the nature and process of the working of the economic system, wealth was transferred from small cultivators to the big proprietors and a powerful landlord class appeared on the scene. They consisted of only 5-6 per cent of the agricultural population but possessed 40-50 per cent of the area under cultivation. A new alignment emerged in the class alliance between the colonial state and the landlords-cum-moneylenders. This process led to a substantial increase in peasant indebtedness.

A litany of legislation enacted by the Unionist Party such as the Regulation of

Accounts Act of 1930, Relief of Indebtedness Act of 1934, Debtors' Protection Act II of 1936, Punjab Restitution of Mortgages of Land Act of 1938, Punjab Alienation of Land (II Amendment) Act of 1938, Punjab Alienation of Land (III Amendment) Act 1938 and the Registration of Moneylenders Act of 1938 benefited only the rich agriculturists and agricultural moneylenders. The author argues that in spite of these acts, exploitation of agricultural labourers, tenants at will and small peasants continued. However, this argument is based on the strength of a statement by Fazl-i-Hussain rather than any systematic evidence which the author has mustered in other cases. A more detailed and comprehensive study is needed to analyze the situation after the passing of these laws. This reflects one weak aspect of the book.

The book contests Darling's thesis of peasant prosperity as the main cause of indebtedness. Rather he locates the problem of indebtedness in the incidence of a high and rising rate of land revenue, a judicial system protective of moneylenders and the non-remission of land revenue in the crisis years which ruined peasants during the colonial period in Punjab. Further, he invokes nationalist historiography and devotes a chapter to the empirical evidence provided by Professor Brij Narain to challenge colonial historiography of British administrator scholars like Dezil Ibbetson, S.S. Thorburn, H.K. Threveslin, James Wilson, W.H. Myles, H. Culvert and M.L. Darling. He charges them with creating a myth around the benevolence and paternalism of the Raj and perpetuating it. The author upholds Professor Brij Narain's view, along with others', that the indebtedness of peasantry during British rule in Punjab was caused by their policy of assessment, fixation and collection of a high and rising rate of land revenue during periods of crises caused by droughts and great depression. The system of revenue administration and judicial intervention ruined peasants but strengthened moneylenders, with landlord-cum-moneylenders, perpetuating their hold over usury capital. The author quotes Brij Narain to illustrate that income from cultivation by a small peasant was lower than the salary of a peon in a government job. But the author goes beyond the national historiography narrative when he talks of commercialization of agriculture and growing differentiation amongst the peasantry – with agricultural labourers, tenants and small peasants at one end and landlords and agriculturist moneylenders at the other. He is able to locate the emerging conflict of interests among the dominant rural class in colonial Punjab.

The author also negates the Extravagance Theory of peasant indebtedness still upheld by some scholars in contemporary debates on agrarian crisis and rural suicides which have picked up since 1997 under a new policy regime. The book also provides some clues to the non-viability of peasants/small farmers today, as was also experienced earlier due to the great depression of 1929-35 and the collapse of agricultural commodity prices. But the book is not fully able to explain the contemporary agrarian crisis in the state, especially as both land revenue and *abiana* have been abolished, fragmentation of landholdings rectified through land consolidation, all these happening before the initiation of the green revolution. For analysis of the current agrarian crisis scholars have to delve deeply into the

agrarian situation within agriculture, the relation of agriculture with nonagricultural sectors within the country and outside, a rapidly deteriorating environment, especially in terms of quality of soil, depletion of water resources and forms of organization of cultivation which are in conflict with the technology of cultivation. While reading this book one realizes that the Punjab peasantry faced serious economic distress several times and the state was largely hostile or indifferent to their ruination. But they never resorted to the unfortunate phenomenon of peasant suicides, despite facing high indebtedness and downward class mobility with transformation from peasant proprietors to tenants at will and agricultural labourers. In the contemporary Indian agricultural situation, especially in Punjab, peasants' suicides cannot be mechanically related to debt burdens alone. There is something more that needs to be explained within the deep structure of agrarian relations and which is not being captured by contemporary scholarship.

Despite these few shortcomings the book is a very useful addition to the literature on peasant indebtedness in Punjab. It provides a fresh historical interpretation of this phenomenon and critically examines the existing literature on the theme. Along with a new perspective, the book brings out new empirical evidence on the workings of the economic and legal system during British rule in Punjab. The book establishes a critical relation between the colonial state, usury capital and control over land for surplus extraction from the peasantry. Today's situation of commission agents coming from a landowner background symbolizes that critical relationship. The book will encourage future research, especially relating to the impact of the Unionist Party's legislation on different sections of the peasantry. The book is essential reading for those interested in understanding agrarian distress and the crisis in contemporary India.

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Michael Hawley (ed), *Sikh Diaspora: Theory, Agency, and Experience*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013 +417 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-25260-8 (hb) £95.00.

Michael Hawley has put together an exceptionally good edited volume on Sikh diasporas. It delivers its promise in going beyond the 'Sikhs in....' theme and engaging richly and critically with theories of diaspora. There are histories of migration and settlement here, but the chapters avoid museumizing people within bounded nation states, and emphasize instead the heterogeneity of diasporic experience, non-linear processes of movement, temporal change and the interaction between Sikhs and their 'hosts' in specific political regimes and multicultures. The book is also unique in its focus on aesthetics and cultural production. Hawley offers the image of a kaleidoscope as a framing for the book, drawing from its etymology in concepts of *kalos* (beauty), *eidōs* (form or shape) and *skopio* (to examine) to denote 'that which examines aesthetic forms' (p.3). Indeed the chapters that I found most original and exciting, and which I review

here, are those that speak directly to the kaleidoscopic representation of and by Sikhs living outside Punjab.

Contributing to an extensive existing literature, Anjali Gera Roy and Nicola Mooney offer masterful and scholarly reflections on *bhangra*. Gera Roy's interest here is in bhangra as a site for the production and transmission of memories of pre-partition Punjab. She argues that the traditional themes of bhangra lyrics, the amorous evocations of *paranda*, *koka*, *bungaan* and treatment of everything from the ribald to the sublime and divine 'unwittingly press those buttons that activate buried homeland memories' (p.80). She sees bhangra as bridging religious, caste, class and homeland barriers, the 'bhangra map erasing boundaries to put together the broken shards of a fragmented memory' (p.77). Mooney's take is somewhat different, as she emphasizes that the earthy and primordial imaginary which is elaborated in popular bhangra lyrics, its kinaesthetics and music videos, is highly Jat-centric. In bhangra, she sees Jat Sikhs making claims to identity and to authentic rural origins that offset their modern movements and are all the more vital in the diaspora context. But she also critiques these claims as hierarchical and exclusionary on caste, gender and ethnic grounds. Both chapters are significant contributions to debates raging in ethnomusicology and cultural studies, but they benefit from being placed alongside the other, less frequently discussed aspects of Sikh cultural production here.

For example, the stylistic cross-overs that have been interrogated so extensively in bhangra have been overlooked in *kirtan*. Tej Purewal and Harjinder Singh Lallie's chapter is an important corrective in this regard. They begin with the kirtan of Dya Singh, which uses Australian didgeridoos, European gypsy violin and electric guitars alongside the traditional harmonium, tablas and *shabad*, and Snam Kaur Kalsa's New Age combination of Indian *rags* with Celtic and Native American chants, western folk and jazz music, showing that kirtan in the diaspora has been modernised and hybridised just as much as bhangra. They explore the caste and religious underpinnings of Western kirtan revivalism, its intriguing connections to Ramgarhia caste assertions of religious orthodoxy and to sects such as the Namdharis and the Akhand Kirtani Jatha, and the gender and generational implications of the new emphasis on participation and do-it-yourself rather than *ragi*-led performances, particularly as manifest in women's *satsangs* and the rave- or trance-like rapture of Akhand Kirtani Jatha *rainsbais* which are popular with young people.

Hybridity and mixing feature equally centrally in Geetanjali Singh Chanda's novel chapter on Sikh children's literature in the diaspora. This is a didactic genre aiming to educate young Sikhs and encourage them to preserve their Sikh identity, and also educate other North Americans about Sikhism. Some of the books seem to reproduce exclusive masculinist or 'model minority' versions of Sikh identity, whilst others, like Amrit and Rabindra Kaur Singh's *Bindhu's Weddings*, are subversive of gender hierarchies and distinctions between peoples, cultures and languages. Kristina Myrvold's chapter on *katha* in the diaspora is equally original. Her analysis of the exegetical styles of transnational *kathavacaks* shows that they

are highly reflexive in their oratorical delivery, adapting their techniques to the concerns of diasporic audiences and to mediated consumption of their messages. *Katha* illustrates similar modernising processes as *kirtan*, with diasporic youth now producing their own *katha* at Sikh camps, in European languages and, finding traditional *katha* too 'slow' or 'boring', tailoring it to their own interests and cultural referents.

From these 'new' forms of cultural production, the collection also speaks to the 'old'. Kanwal Mand's chapter on the oral histories of elderly Sikh men and women in Tanzania argues convincingly that life story telling is a South Asian expressive genre as much as music, literature or oratory. She explores the plots and stylistic features of these masculine tales of exploration of the jungle, of becoming a 'Kala Singh' or a 'Maasai Wallah', and of feminine seclusion from the Black African public. Segueing from mythical figures in life history narratives to urban myths, Shinder Thandi explores the circulation of discourses about *vilayati* Sikh marriages and abuse and the ambivalences of migration culture in which NRI bridegrooms are sought-after but equally reviled as 'shady characters' with 'hidden designs' and 'masked faces' (p.243). In juxtaposing media and political commentary on NRI bride abuse with the actual life histories of women in such situations, this is a very valuable contribution to the sociological literature on marriage migration in Punjab.

There are other excellent chapters in this volume which speak less directly to the idea of the kaleidoscope. My one crib is that the publishers should reconsider the price as unfortunately, at £95, it is unlikely that many people will be able to read them.

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Anne Murphy, *The Materiality of the Past: History and Representation in Sikh Tradition*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) xiii + 309pp. ISBN 978-019-991629-0 (pb) \$35.00, ISBN 978-0-19-991627-6 (hb) \$99.00.

Anne Murphy's *The Materiality of the Past* will likely find a diverse audience since it engages with a multiplicity of debates – how the past is represented in material objects, sites, and texts, how particular views of history may be created beyond the state-centered narratives of modern nation states, and how the material representation of this past continues in powerful ways in the Sikh and Punjabi diaspora today. Murphy's compelling arguments about the ways in which these themes relate to the objects, sites, and texts associated with the Sikh Gurus in particular, however, ensures that this work will undoubtedly become an important resource for students of Punjab and Sikh Studies.

Murphy's ambitious analysis, sweeping from the eighteenth century to the present, demonstrates that colonial rule did not irrevocably create a rupture

between the pre-modern and the modern in Punjab, as many studies have claimed, but also that what survived into the present was shaped by the temporal circumstances of its survival – the same object or site could authorize and represent varying views of the pasts at different points of time. The textual representation of these pasts over time also produced changing notions of what constituted Sikh communities, or as Murphy notes, “Historical objects are made meaningful in relation to the narratives that they represent and substantiate, the literary historiography that animates the past’s more material form (p. 69).”

The roughly chronological arrangement of much of the book aids the reader in grasping the complexities of this point. Murphy begins the opening section of the book by introducing the term “Sikh Materialities,” representing material objects as diverse as the historical relics associated with the Gurus, sacred sites such as historical *Gurdwārās*, texts that function as objects, as well as the five “Ks” (the uncut hair or *kes*, dagger or *kīrpān*, comb or *kanghā*, steel bracelet or *karā*, and undergarment or *kachhā* worn by Khalsa Sikhs) (pp31–66). Murphy’s careful deliberation over the problematic nature of “relics,” as well as the importance of considering the physical materiality of objects does much to ground her later arguments. Objects and sites represent Sikh pasts and also through their ritual and everyday use produce the Sikh community. The remainder of the book does an excellent job in analyzing the significance of these objects for Sikhs, and the relationships and narratives derived through them, while illustrating how these changed considerably over time.

One of Murphy’s most innovative strategies is to use the ceremony of *khil’at*, the gifting and exchange of robes of honor, as a motif through which to understand how “materialities” functioned and were re-interpreted over time. Building on the works of Stewart Gordon and Finbarr Flood which examined *khil’at* within the courtly contexts of North India, Murphy traces similar practices in the Sikh past (pp. 46–51). In eighteenth-century Punjab, for example, the exchanges of gifts such as clothing, weaponry, and horses between the Gurus and important disciples, usually rural lineage heads, cemented bonds between the spiritual lineages of the Sikh Gurus and the local lineages of loyal followers. The respect accorded to these objects by later generations of these same families, or other Sikhs, may be read in a very reductive sense as an acknowledgment of the embodied sanctity of such artifacts, however, as Murphy reminds us, the *khil’at* ceremony enacted both the spiritual and political authority of kings and spiritual figures. It is virtually impossible to disengage the religious and political forms of authority embedded in these gift exchanges, and it is these deeply entwined forms of authority that the gifted objects contain that also become the basis of the status and power claimed by the recipients of such gifts, and later by their descendants (p.50). The display of such relics by Sikh chiefs was an important part of their claims to political sovereignty in pre-colonial Punjab, just as the continued respect accorded to such objects today produces new forms of community and claims to sovereignty. This point is amply supported by the discussion at the conclusion of the book about

how such objects continue to inform notions of community through their inclusion in rituals, religious processions, Gurdwārās, and museums today (p. 264).

Another major strand in Murphy's work examines claims of territoriality and sovereignty woven through Sikh narratives of pasts and possessions. While grants of land could be one of the ways in which authority was constituted in Sikh states, Murphy's analysis of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Sikh histories suggests that territoriality was not as central to political authority or sovereignty as it would become under colonial rule (p. 183). Here, Murphy confirms what other studies of colonial Punjab have argued, that colonial legal structures, preoccupied with defining discrete, documented, rights to the ownership of land, disrupted the variety of rights to the land that had existed prior to colonial rule. What is new to this work is its scope in demonstrating the impact of these legal and political changes on the representations of Sikh pasts and Sikh selves – far beyond the purely discursive or materialist focus of other studies. If the ownership of property could only be proved by past possession, or through caste genealogies, suddenly the past was crucially important. The muddled question of who "owned" Sikh historical objects or Gurdwārās became fraught, as these properties came to be viewed solely as religious sites, even as their political importance grew (pp.189–92). The inclusion of translated tracts from the Gurdwārā reform period of the 1920s, as Khalsa Sikhs mobilized to use collective non-violent action to reclaim sacred sites and pressure the colonial government to "return" the ownership and management to the Khalsa community, are a rich part of the second section (pp.200–18). These support Murphy's point that the prior history of possession, first articulated in nineteenth-century texts, were central to the claims of Sikh activists, but just as importantly colonial notions of property transformed both the meaning of community ownership and the very nature of the Sikh community. Here Murphy makes the important observation that the Gurdwārā Reform Act of 1925 and the creation of the Shiromanī Gurdwārā Parbandhak Committee to oversee the management of Sikh shrines would achieve two paradoxical goals – an articulation of a non-statist, even de-territorialized system of community representation which nonetheless owed its authority to a specific territorialized control of resources (pp.222–3).

In casting an argument that looks beyond textual sources to the rich engagement sacred sites and material objects have had in the construction of Sikh identity and memory, Murphy highlights the role of Sikh communities in constructing Sikh identity and history. While the larger impacts of the Sikh states, colonial institutions, modern nation states, and nationalist politics inform Murphy's cogent analysis of how Sikh representations of the past were shaped over time, these forces, which dominate most accounts of Punjabi history, do not overwhelm Murphy's focus on the more neglected forms of the pasts commemorated in material culture or texts. The complex narrative of this work does place demands on the reader, but a work as informative and rich as this deserves and rewards multiple readings.

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Hugh Johnston, *Jewels of the Qila: The Remarkable Story of an Indo-Canadian Family*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011) xviii+305 pp. ISBN 978-0-7748-2217-6 (pb) \$32.95 Canadian.

Hugh Johnston has created a warm, detailed, and sensitive account of one of the earliest “pioneer” South Asian immigrants to North America, who arrived in California in 1906 and shifted to Canada a year later. The story of Kapoor Singh Siddoo and his family encompasses more than a century as they lived through, and were impacted by, many of the most important events that marked the global transition from colonial domination to post-modern, multi-cultural, independent nations. Although Siddoo traveled extensively, he spent the majority of his adult life in British Columbia where his two daughters were born and raised. This work is a microcosmic personal history, almost a case study, but it is simultaneously wholly embedded in a much larger transnational story.

Throughout the book, Johnston skillfully and knowledgeably situates quotidian domestic details and family events within the greater complexities of then existing historical, economic, and political circumstances. He carefully notes how their actions converged or diverged from those of other immigrants experiencing similar adaptation challenges and external pressures. The historical scope of events reflected in the family history range from the political (e.g., Ghadar, Indian Independence movement, Khalistan in India, and pursuit of full citizenship and rights for South Asians in Canada), to first-hand experiences involving Partition, and the post-1984 period of civil unrest in Punjab.

The book’s understated subtitle notes that theirs is a “remarkable story of an Indo-Canadian Family.” It certainly is, and in many respects, it is a unique and highly idiosyncratic version of an immigrant achievement narrative. The story reflects unusual levels of entrepreneurial success, political engagement, and commitment to both Canadian society and to the Punjab and India, pre- and postIndependence. While hardly “typical,” like every South Asian immigrant during those times, Kapoor faced similar initial financial and legal obstacles, was subject to prevailing discriminatory laws and racist attitudes, suffered under the same severe immigration restrictions, and bore the continual reminders that they were, in many ways, a “subject people” both in Canada and India for almost a halfcentury.

From that perspective, the Siddoo family’s experiences mirror and illuminate not only the specific impacts of their struggles to adjust to Canadian society, and eventually raise two Indo-Canadian daughters whose values would be a practical amalgam of Canadian-Punjabi/Sikh cultures, but also demonstrates how inextricably all these events were linked to national and international changes. Their collective lives were constantly intertwined with and continuously impinged

upon by events not only in Canada, but also in the United States, England, and India.

On a thematic, macro-level, there is hardly a topic related to South Asian immigration that is not reflected at some point in their story, beginning with the “passenger” migrations of mainly male groups seeking economic gain with the intention of returning home. Other common themes include: chain migration and employment patterns; the high mobility and flexibility necessary to earn a living; the impact of discriminatory legislation that resulted in long separations from wives and children; responses to cultural identity and adjustment challenges; the role of education; the maintenance of religious, ethnic, and national identities; the utilization of kin and networks based on regional and village affiliations; and civic engagement and political activism among local Canadian South Asian groups and other surrounding Asian immigrant communities and White Canadians. There also arise issues of how to balance traditional values, gender roles, and familial expectations with the social practices of the larger Canadian society. Another consistent theme here is “giving back” to one’s country and kinsmen, beginning with early remittances by Kapoor to India well before the First World War. Eventually, he built a hospital in his wife’s natal village of Aur, Punjab, which he funded and which was administered with his two daughters, Sarjit and Jackie, both of whom had trained as physicians at their father’s direction. Kapoor’s philanthropic commitment was a lifelong activity, in both India and Canada, and spoke to his belief that improving the communities where you live is both a social obligation and humanitarian duty.

The ongoing contemporary economic and social impact of massive remittances upon post-Independence India, and especially the Punjab, continue to play a major role in development, but its roots can be clearly seen a century earlier. The scale and circumstances of modern philanthropy have changed dramatically, but the principles and motivations behind it were evident in “pioneer” South Asian communities where Punjabi Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu immigrants, working for very low wages in North America, sent considerable sums back home for the benefit of their families, to support political activities, and to contribute to general social welfare/relief funds.

Johnson explores the universality of the challenges that transcended a single family, even one as large as the extended Siddoo clan. While they may be an atypical example, their experiences still offer a great deal of insight about the general nature of the immigration process, while frequently providing intimate and even charming vignettes and anecdotes that make this account so readable. Although the family’s ideas and actions are grounded in specific contexts, they inevitably contain echoes of the national and international circumstances within which they played out.

A work of this scope, intimacy, and detail is only possible when an author has access to original and secondary materials, which, in this instance, were voluminous. However, they were made immeasurably richer when supplemented by extensive and candid interviews over many years with the family and their

community members. This effort was significantly enhanced by the trust and support the Siddoos extended to Johnston.

There are a few issues that might have been more fully explored, such as Kapoor's apparently preternatural forbearance and equanimity in the face of continual bureaucratic obstacles and discrimination both in Canada and India. Johnston also makes clear that the family evolved and constructed identities over time in response to situational circumstances, as well as contesting those imposed by outsiders. However, the views of the daughters are generally less developed. A bit more attention to the intergenerational aspects of the family dynamics would have undoubtedly proven fascinating.

Finally, the family's religious views were not only complex and eclectic but inclusively drew from many traditions, some esoteric and unconventional. Nevertheless, the core appears to have been Punjabi Jat Sikh customs and rituals. This speaks to both the fluidity and diversity of religious beliefs even within traditional praxis.

The *Jewels of the Qila* is, as intended, an account of a decidedly "IndoCanadian" family. Although their story is unique in many aspects, it also contains significant reflections about the immigrant experience that were, at that time, universal. Although offering a broad focus upon a single family's experiences, the book achieves a certain transcendence becoming a truly transnational account.

This is due to the care the author has taken care to address the complex social and political linkages involved, and his ability to apply the considerable knowledge and understanding he possesses to simultaneously situate their lives and lineage within multiple national and international circumstances and historical events.

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Paul Ghuman (2011) *British Untouchables: A Study of Dalit Identity and Education*, Ashgate, pp. xvii + 142. ISBN 978-0-7546-4877-2.

This book is published in a series - Monitoring Change in Education. Its subtitle rightly indicates the content, which is drawn primarily from qualitative research undertaken within the education sector. 'In total, 104 students, teachers, school governors, and community leaders were interviewed' (p. 6) and the author has added an extra study of a Punjab village, revisited for field research after 50 years in November 2006, 'to broaden the research base and to give it a wider meaning and perspective' (Ibid.). The result is uneven: the data, whilst revealing, is not knit into a theoretically robust framework. A range of views on whether and how caste enters into the lives of British educators and the educated is presented.

Divided into seven chapters, after a short introduction, the book commences with a key chapter on 'Origin and Theories of the Caste System'. This provides a

whistle stop tour of interpretations from an ancient religious perspective, Buddhism, Bhakti movement ('We eat by touching, we wash by touching, from a touch the world was born. So who's untouched? Asks Kabir' cited on p. 14), Sikhi, Gandhi, the British, 'Araya (sic) Samaj', Baba Sahib Ambedkar, Ad Dharma, all the way to the Hindu Council UK's interpretation, which the author rightly criticises for making statements 'with little empirical evidence or textual support' (p.26). The author regrettably does not engage with Ambedkar's theorisation of the genesis and perpetuation of the caste system, presenting him more as a *Dalit* leader, rather than a theorist. In this omission the book's drawback is not unique; Ambedkar's theoretical insights about the caste system have yet to be fully appreciated by Punjabi academics.

Straight on from the 'theory' chapter, the book moves to 'A Case Study of Untouchables in a Punjabi Village' subtitled 'Class a New Avatar of Caste'. What insight, one must ask, is the village study providing for the rest of the book, which directly deals with Britain? Presumably the insertion of this case study from the Punjab is made with the intention to picturize for the British readers, the 'sea changes' that have taken place in one of the sending regions of migrants to the UK. A Dalit 'elderly grandmother' the author has known for 50 years recalls the severe practice of untouchability in the past and how the landlords 'shooed' her 50 years ago, but now (in 2006), 'we use their *Chula* (kitchen) and other facilities... The changes are mind blowing' (p. 32). Indeed they are. But does this mean that Untouchability has been completely eroded in the Punjab?

The twist in the tale lies in the words of an employing landlady, whose children have emigrated leaving her without the domestic support that younger women in the family might have provided her. This elderly ('upper-caste') woman ruefully remarks "We have no choice....There is nobody to help us...Our kids are abroad or working away and we cannot manage...Although I draw a line. I say only Chamars but not Churas (*sic*)..." (p. 40). It seems that the 'pollution line' has simply moved 'downwards': Untouchability persists with respect to Chuhars, if not Chamars. Little attempt is made in the book to theorise the concomitance of change and continuity, disappearance and reappearance, of the practice of Untouchability, though in the shape of a table of comparison 'of socio-economic status and religious orientations of Dalits' (1950 and 2006) (table 3.1 on p. 46) an explanation for the 'decline' of Untouchability emerges, based on demographically geared increase in political power. The claim made in the table that ritual Untouchability has 'completely disappeared', in the light of the quote above, is surely contestable.

With respect to gendered relations, the author cites a telling comment from 1957 of a farmer's unapologetic admission of sexual abuse of dalit women, but then on the basis of a statement from a farmer's son 'that sort of thing cannot happen now' (p. 39), he goes on to confidently claim that dalit women 'are no longer exploited by the village farm owners, and sexual abuse, which was common in the 1950's, has completely ceased.' (p. 49). Whilst the young farmer's view is in itself an indication of the change in gendered power relations, it is still

methodologically an unwarranted conclusion to announce that sexual abuse ‘has completely ceased’ because this conclusion is not triangulated with a dalit woman’s perspective on an important matter of fact. She would be able to corroborate the conclusion as true or false, yet her views were not sought. For all we know, sexual exploitation of dalit women continues, under the guise of a manufactured ‘consent’. On the basis of the study in this book, there is no way to tell. Overall, though, the village study is useful as a record of perceived change that has taken place over 50 years.

Theoretical discussion in the book is interwoven with extensive quotation from respondents. There is a brief discussion on understanding stereotyping (p.65), making caste identity the butt of jokes – ‘Caste teasing does happen but at a ‘joke’ level – it is not too serious’, says a 15 year old Jat boy (p. 77), and the attribution of a ‘persecution complex’ to dalits by ‘high-caste’ respondents is touched upon in chapter 4. The author is of the view that ‘objective information’ is a remedy for stereotyping. This seems to be the author’s underlying reason for the inclusion of the Punjab case study that people in Britain do not know of the ‘sea changes’ that have taken place and if they are told, i.e. given ‘objective information’ about the caste system and how it has changed, then the stereotyping of dalits built on an alleged rationale – they are excluded or derided because they are considered ‘dirty’ and ‘polluting’ - would also diminish.

This is flawed reasoning in many ways but one point in particular is worth mentioning. It is about the role ‘facts’ play in biases and prejudices about others. Stereotypes are always built on a flimsy connection with fact: they are primarily about a refusal to engage on an equal footing with the one who is stereotyped. Stereotypes develop because crude assertions about others’ characteristics, whether as jokes or as lazy generalisations, remain unchecked. They remain unchecked because either the one, who is joked about, about whom generalisations are made, is powerless to challenge the aggressors, or, bystanders feign ignorance and hide behind the excuse of a need for neutrality and noninterference and let the stereotyping continue in their presence. What can ‘objective information’ do here? The matter is not about getting the ‘right’ picture, for all pictures are in a flux, and incomplete. It is rather a matter of understanding the *structure* of stereotyping, any stereotyping, racist, sexist, or casteist and learning to intervene. This ought to be the concern of the educator.

With regards to the inclusion of caste in the Equality Act 2010, the author is largely supportive but also adds a caveat in relation to schools having a policy on casteism, ‘on a par with racism or sexism... the real difficulty lies in the fact that schools may be asked to address too many social issue and thus they might be detracted from pursuing their main objective of preparing students for examination’ (p. 103). Why does teaching about casteism, which the author acknowledges exists in the form of ‘divisions’ and can potentially lead to discrimination, become especially burdensome? Coming from an author who is an experienced and respected educationist and psychologist, an instrumentalist view of the purpose of education (preparation for examination) is out of place in

the book, given that, on the whole the author is sensitive to the problems faced by the victims of casteism and is consistent in wanting to support moves to eradicate casteism. Elsewhere in the book he approves of education about the caste system in Religious Education and in History. His student informants are also reported as developing a consensus that 'teaching of caste history could be a good idea' (p.80). However, it seems that on balance, the author is wary about the practical implications for educationists of the inclusion of caste in the Equality Act 2010. But, as I have argued above, in the context of a check on stereotyping, focussing on the *structure* of caste discrimination would enable one to handle it at par with racism and sexism, and it would not appear as 'yet another' social issue that educators have to be specially trained to tackle.

The book is a result of five years of qualitative research into dalit identity and education in Britain, presenting the views of a cross-section of people in the education sector, dalit and non-dalit. A helpful glossary of terms and a comprehensive index make it accessible to readers with little or no previous acquaintance with this area of study. As a starting point into caste in Britain, it is an excellent picture of the range of views, some affirming, some sceptical, about the salience of caste in the lives of British people. It should be of special interest to educationists, to psychologists, to experts in Punjab studies and to all those who are committed to tackling prejudicial ways of thinking.

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Kailash Puri and Eleanor Nesbitt, *Pool of Life: The Autobiography of a Punjabi Agony Aunt*, (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2013 + 187 pp. ISBN 978-184519-206-8 (pb) £19.95.

The memoirs of Kailash Puri are a unique intervention in the scholarly literature on the Punjabi diaspora in Britain. Her memoirs are important not just as a historical source, but as a contribution to the project of 'telling lives' (Arnold and Blackburn, 2004) as a way of revealing how individual biographies are buffeted by time and circumstance, how accounts of personal lives reflect culturally specific notions of the person, and probing questions of agency and subjectivity. Eleanor Nesbitt argues in her well-written introduction that the stereotyping of the South Asian woman as victim needs to give way to such a nuanced recognition of agency, multiple voices and differentiated experience. Moreover, Puri shows with total lucidity the excess of subjectivity of an authentic, knowing person. She signals themes from her earliest infancy and childhood and weaves into her autobiography a narrative of a certain kind of feminist and sexual awakening (although she is acclaimed by Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh on the back of the book as a Sikh feminist, Puri herself says "feminism has harmed marriage more than any other single pressure", p.143). This is not a narrative of strict historical

accuracy but the creative crafting of selfhood through voice. Daniel James (2000), in his analysis of autobiography and oral history as genres, suggests that both need to be analysed with respect to notions of fidelity to meaning rather than a search for historical information.

Kailash Puri was born as Viranwali, in the hope that her birth would herald the arrival of sons, which turned out in fact to be the case. Her early years were in the Potohar area of northern Punjab, in what was to become Pakistan. As such, her account of her childhood is worth reading against the fiction of Shauna Singh Baldwin (2000; 2012), for both the culture of Potohari Sikhs and the keen attention to gender norms, marriage and discourses of female submission. Puri grew up between Rawalpindi, Lahore and Kallar, where her family enjoyed long-standing patronage from the Bedi family, the descendants of Guru Nanak. Most remarkable in her account of her childhood are the female figures that pepper the narrative, who defy any attempt to generalize about gender norms. The reader is treated to stories about how her grandparents Lalaji and Beyji really did love each other very deeply, although love wasn't much expressed in those days; stories about the differences among Puri and her three older sisters; stories about how Puri as a teenager would discuss boys with her cousin and sit with the 'bhattiwali' to glimpse boys; stories about her Masi Basant, who used to dress up and was rumoured to have 'friendships with men'; and her stories about the quirky superstitious rituals of Puri's father, who sickened with TB and watched his business flounder, locate his violent tempers in his increasing insecurity about his health. At the age of 15, she had a highly unconventional marriage to the promising young botanist Gopal Singh Puri. The marriage was arranged by her mother, without her father's agreement, and in defiance of the practice of 'got' exogamy. Gopal spent several nights up with her on the rooftop kissing her passionately before the marriage, and for their wedding Gopal turned up from Lucknow nearly a day late. Later, in Lucknow, a fortune teller came to their door one day. He looked at her palm and pronounced that "while your name begins with V you will never get on with your husband. You must take a new name beginning with K" (p.62): and so arrived Kailash Puri. Her love for Gopal infuses the whole text, as well as her views about the appropriate relationships between husbands and wives. Gopal tutored her, encouraged her to educate herself and write, and generally shaped her in the mould of companionate wife. Later in life, she discussed her agony aunt column with him and got his advice on everything. The migrations in her life describe her accompanying Gopal to London in the 1940s. She recalls friendly inquisitiveness and the respectful doffing of the grocer to Gopal, 'what can I get for the Maharaja'. They missed partition, but returned to India in 1948 to terrorized and absent relatives. She spent years in Dehra Dun, Nigeria and Ghana as an academic's wife, recalling parties and petty social jealousies among Gopal's colleagues. The easy life she describes gives way to more critical experiences in England when she returned in the 1960s, after mass post-war immigration from South Asia. She describes the indignity of racial prejudice in England, which she counters with her characteristic spirit, and her

search for factory work in Southall and Slough in the 1960s, before she landed a council job. To the surprise of her colleagues, she gave up her well-paid job to become a 'lady of leisure' and freelance journalist once Gopal got his long-awaited academic job at Liverpool Polytechnic.

Puri's list of accomplishments include her membership on the committees of up to sixteen community and racial equality organizations at any one time, her role in popularizing yoga to the English middle classes, and the fact that she introduced a line of ready-made Indian dishes at Marks and Spencer, the first supermarket line of its kind, and taught Indian cooking to Mrs Thatcher in the 1970s. However, it is really her role as a journalist that makes this book of unique historical value. Although her writings were heavily criticised by the Punjabi left ("don't read what Kailash Puri writes: she's a Tory, a member of the bourgeoisie", p.121), it would be unfair to discredit on those grounds her role as a lifeline for nearly three generations of Punjabi migrant women and their children – as well as a whole gamut of other South Asian and English readers. It is a shame that only one chapter in the autobiography addresses her postbag as an agony aunt, and her sexological writings. Readers may wish to read Puri's memoirs alongside Sanjay Suri's (2006) chapter on her, which draws out how her postbag documents the troubles of immigrant women and their daughters over four decades, Puri's unique style of scolding her correspondents with tough love, and the actual content of her column and books on sex – a remarkable contribution indeed, as it involved her inventing a new Punjabi vocabulary to make conversation about sex decent and respectful, and raise it out of the realm of colourful gutter Punjabi (including the 'umbrella of joy' or 'madan chhatri' for the clitoris) (Suri, 2006, p.271). Puri's memoirs are a fascinating historical resource on the family and marital problems afflicting Punjabis in Britain, and a testimony to her lifelong intervention in the British Punjabi public sphere and public culture.

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Mikkel Rytter, *Family Upheaval: Generation, Mobility and Relatedness among Pakistani Migrants in Denmark*, (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013 +234pp. ISBN 9-780857-459398 (hb) £48.00.

Katharine Charsley, *Transnational Pakistani Connections: Marrying 'Back Home'*, (London: Routledge, 2013 +209pp. ISBN 978-0-415-66066-2 (hb) £90.00.

These two important monographs offer 'family-scapes' and 'marriage-scapes' (Appadurai 1996, p.33) as the primary location for migrant and diasporic Pakistanis' negotiations of identity and belonging.

Rytter's book is based on anthropological engagement with Danish Pakistanis in Copenhagen (2001–8). This is a population with origins in villages in the Gujrat district of Punjab – some of which have come to be known as 'Little Scandinavia'. The early migrants to Copenhagen, before the Danish ban on labour migration in 1973, were from landowning *zaats* such as Gujar, Jat, Raja and Malik. They had a privileged social background reflected in the fact that most of the migrant men had 8-12 years of education before they migrated. Although the male pioneers were initially incorporated into the manufacturing sector, they were able to achieve great social mobility and educational success for their children – a process Rytter explains in Part I of the book in terms of intense competition for status among the families in Copenhagen, as well as among their transnational kin in Pakistan. Middle class-ness is an important part of his portrait of Danish Pakistanis, as well as the analytic he advances of 'family upheaval'. By this he emphasizes the dual 'destructive-productive' character of the family for Danish Pakistanis, 'as in time it will inevitably erode the existing moral orders of what it means to be and to do family, as well as facilitating a process in which new possibilities, identities and lines of affiliation and belonging will emerge' (p.4). He traces the outlines of this upheaval both vertically, between generations (of migration, as well as within families), and horizontally, among kin dispersed between Denmark and Pakistan. He conceptualises family as something you 'do' rather than something you 'have'. He contributes to the body of work on 'cultures of relatedness' (e.g. Carsten 2000), arguing convincingly for its suitability to understanding transnational kinship.

In Part II he examines marriage. 'Love marriage' offers Danish Pakistanis a personal 'symbolic mobility' within Denmark, allowing them to fit in with Danish ideals of modern intimacy, but at the cost of severing themselves from their parents and extended families, jeopardizing their vertical relationships in Denmark and horizontal relationships in Pakistan too. For those who agree to an arranged

marriage with kin, more is at stake. Since a 2002 law, cousin marriage has been banned in Denmark as it is deemed automatically to be 'forced' marriage. In order to marry a cousin, Danish Pakistanis have been forced into a semi-legal, ontologically insecure existence of forever commuting in the borderlands between Sweden and Denmark. Family reunification takes place in Sweden, where cousin marriage is not illegal, but they cross the Öresund Bridge on a daily basis to sustain professional and family ties in Denmark. He argues that this law reflects a wider de-kinning of Pakistanis in the white 'family of Denmark'. His point that we can only belong to places that also belong to us becomes even more poignant in Part III, where he explores returns to Pakistan. These are often motivated by disappointments at the deterioration of vertical kin relationships in Denmark, but they come to be equally disappointed by their horizontal relations with kin in Pakistan, too. In Part IV he argues that *kala jaddu* is just another way of 'doing' family – the negative suspicions and accusations about *kala jaddu* (which are frequently lodged at jealous kin in Pakistan) reorganizing emotion and loyalties, and indeed the whole morphology of the transnational family. This is not only a concern of first generation migrants, either. Although his young professional informants reject *kala jaddu* as the sign of a 'village mentality', as they enter new morally-responsible phases of their lives they also ambivalently accept it, as in the example of an older brother who fears that his younger brother has been ensnared by his unwholesome girlfriend through supernatural means.

Rytter argues that intergenerational renegotiations and the reconfiguration of fragile family relationships make upheaval an inevitable part of the migrant and diasporic condition. Charsley's book, which zooms in entirely on transnational marriages between Britain and Pakistan, perhaps offers a more optimistic portrait. She examines transnational marriage as an ambivalent phenomenon that is open to problems – as a pathologising liberal/policy discourse on marriage migration insists – but also a source of pleasure and satisfaction for the participants involved. Her ethnographic writing is beautiful, and the choice of interview excerpts conveys the charisma and sense of humour of her informants so well that the book often had me laughing out loud.

Charsley's book is based on fieldwork in Britain and in Pakistani Punjab (2000-1 and updated in 2007-8). Her main field site is Bristol in the West of England, home to about four thousand ethnic Pakistanis originating in Mirpur district in Kashmir, Rawalpindi and Lahore. In social class terms, the Bristol community seems heterogeneous, with some evidently having made money in business and professional employment, but not as overwhelmingly middle class as the Copenhagen population. Her main argument is to reconceptualise Pakistani 'arranged marriages' not only as strategic, but also emotional and intimate. There are of course many ways in which 'arranged marriages' seek to maintain if not advance status membership, from the nitty-gritty of searching for a suitable *rishta*, which she explores in Chapter 3, to the material culture and symbolic claims of the wedding rituals themselves, as she analyses in Chapter 2. She translates *rishta* not as 'proposal' but as 'match', which allows for a greater appreciation of the

element of emotional connection that has been missing in accounts of South Asian marriage alliances. A good match involves two people of similar age, with similar family backgrounds, a similar educational level, similar professional aspirations and ambitions. But it also involves considerations of attraction and emotional satisfaction on the part of the two people getting married, and the parents in Charsley's account give plenty of space to their children in feeling their way through the likelihood of conjugal happiness.

A *rishta* from 'back home' is an ambiguous proposal. It is well recognized among Bristol Pakistanis that people from back home may have a very different 'mentality', i.e. may not be a good match. But Charsley's informants assert that it is very much possible to develop attraction and romantic feelings for people from back home, especially with transnational kin, with whom young people are likely to have more opportunity to meet and form relationships than with unrelated members of the opposite sex. The consideration of maintaining connection with branches of the family in Pakistan is also emotionally meaningful not only to parents, but to young people.

Transnational kin marriages are the most common form of transnational marriage in Bristol, the category of kin being Alavi's (1972) 'sliding semantic scale' that allows endogamy to be defined as anything stretching from traceable relatives to a member of the same *zaat*. In Chapter 4 she explains transnational kin marriages not in terms of strategically concentrating land and family assets but of minimizing the risk of mistreatment of the young women, by putting her in the hands of 'known' and similar kin. In Chapter 5, she demonstrates how the desire to minimize risks to the young woman has also resulted in resourceful adaptations to the wedding rituals, with temporally-extended marriage ceremonies in which the *nikaah* and *shaadi* may take place months or years before the *rukhsati* ritual (after which the marriage may be consummated), which happens after the men concerned have proven themselves financially or professionally, or when their UK visa is finally in hand.

Charsley too invokes the 'relatedness' approach to conceptualising kinship. Her book is an important contribution in that regard, demonstrating how transnational kin marriages are a temporally-extended and inter-generationally reconfigured way of 'doing' family. Her emphasis on emotion and lavish use of extended narratives allows us to understand what kinship means to people and what it feels like. The final two chapters of the book are, for me, the most theoretically significant. She argues that bringing emotion into the picture has implications for how we understand *izzat* and male power – some of the most pathologised concepts around. In Chapter 6, Charsley analyses the responses of a woman's father to a transnational marriage that became physically and sexually abusive. She takes issue with analytical approaches to *izzat* that have divided social 'masks' from private 'faces' (Das 1976) and argues that there is an 'experiential eliding of *izzat* and emotion under the highly charged conditions in which honour is most threatened' (p.154). In Chapter 7, she argues that many of the problems that arise in transnational marriages, including violence, may be

understood at least partly in terms of the emotional responses of the immigrant husbands to their culturally-unusual situation as transnational *ghar damad*, having to live with or among their wives' natal kin. She also departs from pathologising accounts of masculinity by bringing to the fore emergent takes on *izzat* in terms of personal morality. In one man's words, '*izzat* is if I still respect that lady who was the mother of my three children. If I'm still good to her. If I'm nasty to her, that's not *izzat*' (p.180).

The books raise further questions about transnationalism, and whether it is necessarily conceived in terms of a dyadic relationship between places of origin and places of settlement. In Rytter's book there is a suggestion that the regulation of marriage migration by the Danish state has pushed families away from kin in Pakistan and in the direction of new 'marriage-scapes', towards Britain, North America or the Persian Gulf (p.86). In both books there is also a suggestion that the cachet of European citizenship is making for more strategic transnational marriages with urban middle class families in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore (*ibid.*, and in Charsley's book p.82). It seems important to elaborate these more spatially and socially complex geographies in future work.

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Sawarn Singh, *Economics of Morbidity in Punjab: Causes and Consequences*, (Pearson: Delhi, 2013), pp. XVIII+190. ISBN: 978-81-317-8590-4 (hb) Rs. 575.

Human health and economic growth intertwine in a critical manner in any politico-administrative set up. Their mutual endogeneity and instrumentality as end-products of each other have been well-recognized and documented in studies across economics and other discipline areas. Health status and the overall quality of a health care system is reflected in the morbidity profile of a society. Health as achieved well-being depends upon the prevalence of morbidity with wider socioeconomic and public health policy consequences. The book under review by Dr. Sawarn Singh provides much needed detail and measurement pertaining to the whole gamut of morbidity in Punjab by contextualizing it in a theoretical and empirical framework by pinpointing the economic implications of ill-health for the individual, household, society and public policy.

The author has divided the subject matter in an eloquent manner into six chapters with proper beginning and closing of all the chapters which makes it easier for the reader to grasp the essence of thought and expression. Chapter 1 specifies the various dimensions and deeper nuances of the research methodology and the basic approach of his analysis along with data base and conceptual underpinnings. Chapter 2 delves into the economic domain of morbidity by using scholarly literature based on sound empirical analyses in order to understand the nature, trends, determinants, burden and consequences of sickness along with psychosocial, cultural, geographical and environmental correlates. Chapter 3 provides the basic results of the analysis, based on the sixtieth round of National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) data with a recall period of fifteen days, collected during January-June 2004, pertaining to the morbidity for Punjab. The inter-temporal behavior of morbidity has also been analyzed by taking into account the previous surveys conducted by NSSO during 1973-74 and 1995-96. Chapter 4 tries to decipher the causes of ill health by factoring into the regression analysis the prominent social determinants of health. The author has succinctly knitted the various theories, models and perspectives to build a comprehensive picture of the problem. Chapter 5 deals with the various possible consequences of morbidity in terms of the medical, economic and financial burden. This chapter also highlights the health seeking behavior and coping strategies used by the affected households and individuals. The cost of treatment and its financing practices are discussed in the context of public and private health care. The question of unmet medical need has also been explored. The last chapter provides a summary of major findings with possible lines of intervention by the public authorities to streamline health services.

The findings of the study are not only astonishing and noteworthy but also deserve the immediate attention of all those who aspire to creating a healthy and vibrant Punjabi society. The findings in many ways are very revealing and throw much light on the management of health affairs in the state. The rate of morbidity in the state was found to be the second highest in the country after Kerala. On a per thousand population basis, quite counter-intuitively, the prevalence of morbidity was 127 in Punjab as compared to the national average of 91 during 2004. The illness in rural Punjab was much higher than that of its urban

counterpart. The morbidity has increased over the period by about 4.78 per cent per annum during the period 1973 to 2004. The morbidity was significantly higher among females than males both in rural and urban areas. Respiratory/ENT, fever of unknown origin, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal and disorder of joints and bones are the top five ailments affecting people in rural Punjab. The state has been passing through a phase of health transition where many traditional acute ailments are declining and many other chronic ailments are rising at an alarming rate. This study, by analyzing the causes-cum-consequences facets of morbidity, has established that, in addition to the health delivery system and practices, the social and economic structure of society has vital connections with the various ailments in terms both of causes and also solutions. For example, education at secondary and above level significantly reduces the exposure of individuals to various ailments. Morbidity poses huge costs for society in more ways than one. Ruralites in Punjab had spent Rs. 1790.57 crores out of their own pockets for medical treatment both as in-patients and out-patients during the reference year. Strangely, 1.3 lakh patients suffering from various ailments in rural areas have not received any medical treatment. The study has estimated that the wastage of human capital for the state was approximately equivalent to Rs. 3000 crore from the occurrence of premature deaths. Pointing to policy implications of the study, the author suggests that the problem of morbidity could be better handled by taking appropriate actions on two fronts simultaneously: by strengthening direct medical care in terms of access, quality and affordability of treatment and also by nonmedical interventions like improving individual incomes, education, access to civic amenities, social and economic infrastructure, etc.

The study, given that it is based on long period temporal behavior of morbidity, concluded that the state is in the midst of morbidity transition, as happened in the case of developed countries, with eventual attainment of a 'happystage' consisting of low mortality, low morbidity and longer life span. However, one is tempted to mention here that the present day developed countries have attained such a 'happy-stage' on the strength of exceptionally high quality public health and education delivery systems along with ensuring healthy and safe food, nutrition, quality drinking water, sanitation, environment and a minimum standard of living as part of the welfare state. The sub-optimum availability of such things will delay the occurrence of a 'happy-stage' over a much longer period which will inflict considerable human agony and pain. The last two decades have witnessed a deterioration in the quality of public infrastructure in all spheres in the state. The non-functional public sector and vested interests-driven 'free-for-all' type of private sector has jeopardized the social economy for an overwhelming section of the population with disastrous implications for day to day living. The disturbing profile of morbidity in the state has its ultimate roots in the emergent environment of dismal governance. The firm grip of vested commercial interests has played havoc with institutions created in the past to cater for the larger public cause. Even a casual glance through the daily media pages is more than enough to

get a firsthand understanding of the sorry state of affairs in the health sector of the state.

The book is quite topical and useful for understanding health standards and issues through the prevalence of morbidity in the state. The book is also timely in the sense that the efficacy of the state's health care system has had a serious question mark against it because of the formidable challenge posed to public health by the rising incidence of cancer which requires huge amount of resources for its proper diagnosis and treatment as well as preventive and curative apparatus. The book is a must read for people across the domain of experts including medicos, health researchers, policy planners, academia and opinion builders.

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Rajinder Kaur et al., British Sikh Report 2013, Unknown Place and Publisher, July 2013, 53 pp, online, free to download; website, <http://www.britishsikhreport.org/>, accessed August 2013.

Many survey reports have found both a loyal readership and avowed critics, perhaps due to the empirical data collection methods that drive quantitative reportage as compared to the findings of qualitative studies. This is the case with the hefty 53 page document that uses the 2011 national census to cover Sikhs in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. It remarkably represents one of the few large-scale surveys undertaken of Britain's Sikhs and with a yearly publication planned, will continually benefit long-term research of trends and patterns. The BSR team aims for the report "to be the leading light in respect of statistics for the British Sikh community" (p. 4), which in itself is a strong possibility but one that is somewhat undermined by the realisation that the bulk of the data used is self-sourced by the BSR team. Perhaps this is deliberate as only in a decade's time will new census data be available to utilise. So in using national statistics this year the BSR ought to have been given an opportunity to compare 2011 to 2001 and at the same time make the BSR's own survey comparable to both. Not having done so leaves the BSR's data unconnected to significant national data pools that will be used by planners – the very target readership for this report. An oversight which leads to the question: who then is the report for?

Structurally, the report runs as follows: an introduction sets out its objectives, chapter one is the literature review, chapter two covers research methods and then chapters 3 through to 14 delve into specific feedback areas the BSR team selected. It is not noted how these topics were selected; did respondents contribute? Not covered here for instance are marriage and divorce, race, popculture and the contentious rise of Sikh-ethos 'free schools'. Chapter 15 recognises some of this

in a positive self-review entitled "Future Research". Chapter 1's review of literature will be useful to newer entrants / scholars in the field of Sikh studies as it balances academic references with popular insight as a backdrop to outlining Sikh settlement in Britain. It could have been improved further. For instance, the inclusion of Udham Singh, the popular Indian freedom fighter with emotive ties to Britain, might have deepened the linkage further.

Also the statement that studies on Sikhs have hitherto "...not considered the existence of British Sikhs as a distinct identifiable group" (p. 10) is inaccurate for two reasons. Firstly due to the existence of works that have already looked at Sikhs in Britain such as Ames (1974), Bhachu (1985) and newer examples such as Singh and Tatla (2006). Secondly, as many readers of these works may have found out, the diversity in appearance, belief systems and language use of Sikhs makes this and many other categorisations such as 'Indian', 'Asian' or even 'religious' problematic. The polemic response from many Ravidassias to the Sikh religion option in the national census aptly reflects this. So the report may not be without peers but is without precedent in its annualised format - this is the BSR's niche.

Significantly, the BSR attracted 662 respondents to its survey, so at over 0.15% the sample size is not parsimonious. However, by the authors' own admission, data collection was skewed as an online survey. So, for instance, despite the respondents' age range being 9-92, its average of 30 may not be representative of Britain's Sikhs (p. 12). This reviewer would have liked to have seen the respondents' geographical spread to support the thoughtful section on Sikhs outside the landing area of settlement: England (p. 14). This section could have been a neat link into the burgeoning regionalisation of many Britons' identity into the 'home nations' of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Another one, Southern Ireland, is also left out, perhaps understandably being beyond the report's scope, but nevertheless it ought to have merited a mention. This omission may also suggest a limitation on descriptive feedback in favour of binary responses as Sikhs from the Republic would surely have asked for some inclusion in this founding report?

The individual chapters that form the bulk (25 pages) of the work examine the everyday challenges the Sikh in Britain faces from within and outside the community. Once again the Ravidassia paragraph (p. 19) is a powerful portent of the unsettled "superdiversity" politics prevalent within the *qaum*. The chapter (13) on older Sikhs is also very welcome as they often get forgotten in the global mediatisation that divides generations. The significant challenge Britain's older Sikhs face in the lack of provision for the English-illiterate, both in social amenities and daily lifestyle infrastructure, is pointedly shown here. The authors' connection of this rising dependency problem to the decrease in extended family homesteads amongst Britain's Sikhs is essential reading for social support providers. In particular the high percentage of older respondents who lack social interaction could benefit immensely from provision at usefully located local Sikh temple premises. The data here also confirms the wider (extra-*qaumic*) socialisation spheres that Britain's Sikh youth operate in when compared to their

predecessors. This is an aspect which may further help understand some of their conflicted Brit-Sikh upbringing.

Chapter 14, the “policy recommendations”, is a little unsatisfactory as the target readership is not particularly well identified nor is the anticipated impact of the recommendations. Take for example the statement that there is a need, in electronic media, to raise the quality of work on Sikh culture and history. Two aspects are missing here: the section of the BSR survey that highlighted this and to whom these comments are directed towards. Simply suggesting “Sikh and nonSikh heritage organisations” is non-committal at best (p. 40). Perhaps a critique of the BBC Asian Network could have been useful here? Positively, the report has unearthed many other stakeholders and organisations that can assist with the lifestyle challenges that Britain's Sikhs face. With this in mind, it is a shame that this publication was not better launched as many beneficiaries remain unaware of this report’s existence. This is also partly due to its lack of publication in Punjabi - a serious oversight and a sore point for the very Sikh elders highlighted here as facing linguistic barriers. The BSR team has acknowledged the omission and this reviewer finds that even a single page précis ought to work in 2014.

Annual reports are much-needed and the following observations may help contribute to this one’s continuity. Of singular importance is the need to find affiliation with a professional research institute, a well-known difficulty in Britain's Sikh studies but one that ought to be the focus for this report's committee. Context can be sought in other faith group reports, the British Jewish report is published by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research and the Muslim Council of Britain hones its publications using external researchers, authors and referees. As with the latter, perhaps several smaller reports containing focused insights into Sikhs' ethno-religious life in Britain could avoid the coldness of a large report’s ‘big data’. Contributions from non-Sikh Britons as authors, researchers or respondents are essential in bringing context to what is ultimately a self-generated community report whose impartiality ought to be unassailable. It currently is not. Methodologically, cluster sampling in separate geographical areas will counter the innate tightness of peer snowballing which was the basis for this research. The wisdom of including politicians in the introductory section may well irk those who value the community’s nonpartisan spiritual roots. Overall though, congratulations BSR 2013. With a grassroots approach to understanding whether Britain’s Sikhs can be conceptualised as *Gemeinschaft* or *Gesellschaft*, this reviewer is confident your future reports will help us reflect on this island’s Sikh identity through a range of labels, from those conferred upon this minority community such as ‘Sikhs in Britain’, to those simply reflective of our storied society: British.

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