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is high, but there is also a considerable flexibility in this "informal" relationship. The nominal interest rates are often extremely high, but effective interest rates are usually lower, as the creditor must see to it that his debtor survives.

David Hardiman has shed a great deal of light on the intricacies of this relationship. He begins his account in precolonial times and shows that a state dependent on land revenue collection relied throughout on the *baniya* (moneylender) as crucial intermediary. With the rise of tax farming and the spread of the "commercialization of power," some moneylenders achieved great prominence, but, as Hardiman stresses, moneylenders and traders as a class never aspired to the kind of political power attained by the European bourgeoisie. They knew their limits. In an illuminating chapter on "The Baniya's Life and Faith," he describes these limits. There was a strong solidarity among *baniyas* and a deep consciousness of *abru*, which means both honor and credit-worthiness. The peasant also cherished his *abru* but conceived of it in terms of his standing in his rural community. This depended on his control of land, on marrying his children well, and on his access to credit. As far as the latter was concerned, he relied on the moneylender and would normally refrain from offending him.

British colonial rulers made full use of the symbiotic relationship between peasant and moneylender, because it helped them to collect their land revenue. They strengthened the grip of the moneylender by introducing a law that had fortified the security of credit in their own country. It assumed that debtor and creditor were contracting partners of equal stature, which, of course, did not apply to Indian peasants and moneylenders. Nevertheless, this theory was upheld for a long time, until peasant indebtedness and the transfer of land to moneylenders emerged as a political danger to colonial rule. Unfortunately, Hardiman does not deal with this aspect in detail. He neglects the available literature on the debates preceding the Decan Agriculturists Relief Act and similar measures. As a "subaltern" historian, Hardiman is more interested in the articulation of peasant resistance. He devotes much effort to showing that the "Deccan Riots" of 1875 were not riots but a peasant revolt; he also documents that this revolt was not an isolated instance but that there were similar revolts before and after 1875. In tracing the evidence for such revolts, Hardiman is at his best.

Chapter thirteen, "Usury Under Late Colonial Rule," is more sketchy. Hardiman almost completely ignores the impact of the Great Depression, which forced the British to interfere with the business of the *baniya* in various ways by introducing debt conciliation and registering moneylenders. At the same time, the fall in prices completely ruined the British land revenue system. In earlier times, the peasant had been able to resort to the moneylender whenever the revenue demand was due, but this mechanism broke down. Moreover, the connection between credit and the

trade in grain was interrupted by panic sales at the time of the Depression. A look at the relevant literature would have helped Hardiman to improve this chapter. It would have also provided some background for his interesting description of the decline of the business of village moneylenders.

In his final chapter, Hardiman discusses "The Metamorphosis of Usury" and arrives at the conclusion that although the old-style *baniya* is only of marginal importance nowadays, there has been a "baniyaization" of the new rural middle class, which uses credit to tighten its hold on dwarfholders who must offer their labor to richer neighbors. In conclusion, Hardiman returns to the theme of hegemony taken up in his introduction. Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony has been debated by "subaltern" historians. Some of them have argued that neither any one class nor the colonial nor the postcolonial state has achieved hegemony in India on Gramsci's terms. These historians have not stated whether this finding would also make the category "subaltern" meaningless in the Indian context, because the subaltern is defined as one who accepts hegemony. Hardiman is careful in his use of these terms. He agrees that India never produced a bourgeoisie of the European type, and instead of speaking of the "subaltern" position, he stresses the "mentality of dependence on the superior provider" (p. 336). This fits in well with his study of the *baniya*, but he has also shown that this mentality can occasionally turn into a spirit of revolt. This spirit rarely persists for long, as the facts of life reassert themselves. The *baniyas* knew this; they usually refused to give evidence against rebellious peasants and returned to do business as usual. By providing such insights, Hardiman greatly enriches the knowledge of his readers.

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SAURABH DUBE. *Untouchable Pasts: Religion, Identity, and Power among a Central Indian Community, 1780–1950*. (SUNY Series in Hindu Studies.) Albany: State University of New York Press. 1998. Pp. xvii, 308. \$23.95.

Saurabh Dube aimed to produce "more than an Indian history," "an ethnographic history that works with South Asian materials, articulating a wider set of concerns" to carve out a theoretical third position, apart from "Eurocentric imaginings" and also from "anti-Enlightenment rhetoric" (p. xi). He wanted to show "the construction of multiple Hindu identities . . . particularly by groups and communities who stood on the margins" (p. 5), by exploring the past of an untouchable subcaste that is also a guru-led sect, the Satnamis of Central India, from 1780 to 1950. Dube is a captivating writer who promises much in his introductory chapter.

Significant tensions in Dube's endeavor needed fuller discussion. The tension between sources produced by outsiders (colonial officials and interested

others) and insiders, (Satnamis themselves) should be addressed in the text, not in scattered footnotes. If Satnami illiteracy empowered others to write about them, why not make more use of Satnami oral testimonies or tell us why that was thought unnecessary or proved too difficult? The tension between the young educated male Brahman interviewer and the Satnami untouchable informants is hinted at but remains undiscussed because of Dube's stance against "self-indulgent solipsism" (p. 218). Finally, Dube's introduction promises a sophisticated treatment of gender issues, but, although he states that Satnami myths focus on female (*gurumata*) sexuality and give it a "masculinist representation," (p. 137), he reinforces that view (pp. 115, 142, 219) by providing no alternatives to it. He also views *churi* or secondary marriage, available to both men and women, as a flexible practice allowing women space to negotiate and sometimes subvert patrilineal and patrilocal principles (pp. 113, 218). The lengthy example he offers, however, ends with the murder of the woman (pp. 108–112).

The book proceeds more or less chronologically. Chapter one outlines the theoretical issues and chapter two, 1780–1850, sets the founding guru, Ghasidas, and his movement in its Maratha and early British political contexts. Chapter three, 1850–1900, traces changes in the socioeconomic context and Satnami religious organization and takes up encounters with Christian missionaries. Chapter four, 1900–1950, treats the Satnamis as a caste but neglects them as a sect (there is no mention of the gurus) as Dube tries to assess benefits and losses to the Satnamis under British rule. Chapter five disrupts the periodization to focus on Satnami myths, but it really focuses on a single manuscript about the Satnamis. Produced in the late 1920s by Baba Ramchandra, a political leader from north India drawn to Central India by the Indian nationalist movement, this manuscript was taken north a few years later and found again in the 1970s. Baba Ramchandra actually published a later work about the Satnamis, but Dube prefers the earlier manuscript and gives it an interesting reading. It is sometimes hard to differentiate between Dube's accounts of the myths and his comments on them, but in this case both emphasize the untamed female sexuality that produced disorder and divisions among gurus. (Since Dube privileges this particular source of Satnami myths, much of the material could have been presented earlier to give a fuller picture of the sect's development.) Chapter six, 1925–1950, moves to formal institutionalized politics (the context which produced Ramchandra's manuscript). Diverse Hindu, Arya Samaj, Indian National Congress, and Depressed Classes Association groups and leaders are rather abruptly introduced and linked to contending groups, leaders, and gurus within the Satnami community (the Satnami Mahasabha, involving the guru Agamdas and aligned with the Indian National Congress, the Shri Path Pradarshak Samaj, and a third group involving the guru Muktavandas and aligned with the All-India

Scheduled Caste Federation). Determinedly leaving this lively political scene in 1950, Dube moves on in chapter seven to analyze old and new Satnami histories, the interplay between various texts and contexts. In the course of this, Dube remarks that the guru Muktavandas had been imprisoned for fourteen years on a murder charge (p. 200), thus reminding this reader, whose curiosity about attempts on the founding guru's life "prompted by upper-caste hatred" (p. 40) had not been satisfied, that much has been omitted in favor of analysis of texts which may or may not be well-informed about, or relevant within, the Satnami community. A brief final chapter, in which Dube successfully stakes out a third position, contains what I would term overstatements. "The shape of the stories was well known through their being told across generations and served to organize the memory of the group as a bounded community" (p. 221), for example, implies that Dube utilized Satnami oral testimonies as his primary sources.

Dube used archival records, government publications, oral testimonies, and a few newspapers, journals, and vernacular tracts as well as secondary works. There are important omissions, notably of A. M. Hocart's work (1950) on royal rituals and caste ideologies and practices based on political power, work that would have helped Dube to integrate his own thinking along those lines with Louis Dumont's work (1970) on purity and pollution. Although Dube decries the lack of relevant research on caste, he overlooks books by Frank Conlon (1977), Adrian Mayer (1960), and Stephen Fuchs (1951). Conlon's history of a guru-headed caste-become-sect founded in Maratha territory covers almost the same time period, and Mayer and Fuchs have written about caste in Central India, the latter on untouchables. Dube includes a map and a genealogy of the Satnami gurus, both inadequate. One needs a larger map of India to locate his map, and it does not include the centers of rival claimants to the guruship; the genealogy does not provide even approximate dates for its four generations, and it does not come down to the present. Declining to list the "numerous oral informants whose testimonies have been rehearsed" in the book, Dube provides instead a one-page discussion of his research methodology and time in the field. He does cite interviews in some footnotes.

This engaging book contains fascinating, though often fragmentary, confusing, and contradictory information: there is no space to go into the many issues with which the reader, like the Satnamis apparently, must grapple over and over again. Dube's ethnographic findings on politically contested practices (relations with other castes, particularly low and untouchable ones; the wearing of the sacred thread; the initiation rite or rites; the marriage practices) are elusive. The book is, in fact, not a historical or anthropological investigation of the Satnami past, as Dube tells us himself. His book "constructs a history of the Satnamis"; it is not "a mere unfolding of a chronologically sequential set of events" but "an inter-

pretive exercise" (p. 2). In both history and anthropology, one still needs to present coherently at least enough evidence and discussion of it for a reader to feel confident about one's conclusions. Dube promises exploration of "Satnami strategies and struggles, renderings of Hindu identities by the Satnamis" (pp. 6-7), and he writes persuasively, but one does not feel that he achieved those goals.

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TAZEEN M. MURSHID. *The Sacred and the Secular: Bengal Muslim Discourses, 1871-1977*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1995. Pp. xvi, 492. \$39.95.

Few regions of the world witnessed such rapid transformations in their national identities as did eastern Bengal in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Originally part of a united British India, eastern Bengal split from western Bengal in 1947 to become a part of the new state of Pakistan. In the midst of civil war and a state-directed campaign of ruthless repression, East Pakistan split from Pakistan in 1971-1972 to become the independent state of Bangladesh. In this study, Tazeen M. Murshid examines the "discourses" of the Muslim intelligentsia in Bengal in order to understand their relationship to these momentous changes.

As the title suggests, Murshid's book is concerned in particular with "the persistent tension between a religious and a secular outlook" in the activities and consciousness of this intelligentsia (p. 1). In defining this as a central tension of Bengali intellectual life, Murshid taps into a language of analysis that has long been used to characterize the conflicts that have shaped modern Bengali history. The tension between Muslim/religious identity and Bengali/secular identity has sometimes been used by historians to characterize the competing visions of identity that led Muslim Bengalis first into Pakistan in 1947 and then into an independent, secular Bangladesh in 1971. These visions of identity continue to influence controversy in contemporary Bangladesh. In offering a sustained discussion of this tension in the discourse of the Muslim intelligentsia over a period of more than a century, Murshid's book represents an important contribution to the literature.

Yet at the same time, her book suggests the difficulty in using this terminology to make sense of the Bengali experience. First, of course, is the problem of defining the "intelligentsia." Murshid sees the intelligentsia, quoting Karl Mannheim, as those "whose special task it is to provide an interpretation of the world" for their societies (p. 10). This, of course, is an extremely open-ended definition. Murshid devotes considerable attention at places in her book to giving this category social definition by discussing the changing structure of education and employment in Bengal. But although useful, this is hardly sufficient to provide

a sustained social analysis of the intelligentsia or of its relation to politics or society. In the end, she rightly treats "intelligentsia" as a loose category of analysis that carries only a limited analytical weight in her study. Her main conclusion about the intelligentsia, in fact, is that it was divided in a variety of ways and that it is difficult to generalize about it at all.

This being the case, the structure of Murshid's analysis depends heavily on her treatment of the "discourses" of the "secular and sacred" as they have operated historically in literate Bengal. But here also terminology presents severe problems. Although Murshid makes some attempt to delineate at the start the meaning of these terms, they are used in a myriad of different ways throughout the book.

Most telling, the very nature of the "tension" between the religious and the secular is presented in shifting terms. It is at times treated as a tension between differing orientations held by different groups of people. Sometimes these orientations are treated as products of cultural background or education, as in the differences between the *ashraf*, who idealized cultural origins outside Bengal, and the "vernacular intelligentsia," whose cultural world view (and language) was distinctly Bengali. At other times, Murshid sees differing orientations as products of differing socioeconomic backgrounds, urban/rural connections, or relations with the state. At still other points, Murshid tries to schematize the interactions between secular and religious outlooks in the separate realms of "personal life decisions" and "political decisions" to show how these interactions produced individuals with a range of different orientations (p. 363). Perhaps most strikingly, she at times treats the dichotomy between secular and religious values as a tension within the Bengali Muslim "mind," shaping in the intelligentsia a "schizophrenic or culturally-ambivalent self image" (p. 286). Her concluding language suggests an effort to conflate all of these approaches: "This book has attempted to show the variations which characterize the Muslim mind in specific contexts" (p. 433).

Murshid is in fact most successful in showing that the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular was historically shifting and complex. But beyond this, her book has little clear argument. Murshid's own analysis never fully escapes from the language she analyzes, for she never defines a unifying theoretical framework to focus her analysis. For all the nuanced detail she provides in criticism of simplistic dichotomies, we are left, in the end, with the fundamental dichotomy between secular and religious outlooks as the only organizing framework for the book. Although rich in research and scholarship, Murshid's book dramatizes the inherent limitations in using such terminology to make sense of Bengal's modern cultural history.

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