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Author(s): Nita Kumar

Review by: Nita Kumar

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dence of the South Indian religious tradition of *Shaiva Siddhanta*, of *bhakti* (devotional worship), and the dissatisfaction with certain theological ideas such as pantheism incited the missionaries to rethink and revise the dominant paradigm.

While tracing the consolidation of what he also calls the “conventional” missionary view, Oddie connects the epistemological strands of missionary endeavors with their “evaluation” of the beliefs and practices they actually encountered. He assigns each actor in his history a place on a scale between “sympathetic” to “unsympathetic” to Hinduism, and diagnoses a rise in “sympathetic” accounts by the end of the nineteenth-century. There is, however, no satisfactory sociological explanation of how and why this transformation in missionary attitudes occurred except for a rather vague statement regarding the “changing climate of opinion” in India and in Europe (p. 345).

The problem with this book is that the author never strays away from a well-known Protestant missionary subgenre of historiography. The Protestant missionary “imagination” thus appears as being constructed *sui generis*, as an autonomous process of missionary cognition, while all other actors who are surely as important (Indians, converts, and other Europeans) in this history are relegated to footnotes, passing remarks or generalized under the category of “influences.” This book is structured as a pedagogical manual. It follows a stiff straightforward line of reasoning that strings together causes and effects, and constructs an apparently “coherent” and uncomplicated framework for the events and concepts shaping the Protestant missionary view of Hinduism in the nineteenth century.

The author’s didactic intention is clear from his strategy of asking numerous questions at the beginning of each new chapter or section, and then answering them point by point in the text that follows. The questions for each missionary, since most of the chapters contain short biographies, are the following: what did he (or she in the last chapter) inherit and thus already know while in Britain or India? What did he learn in the field? What did he do with it and why? How did he influence others? The answers subsequently provided are as clearly presented as the questions. For graduate students this may be a blessing, but a research scholar will pause and wonder what the scholarly value of such an exercise is meant to be.

Of course, every historian limits his or her subject to a manageable scope but, in this particular case, the silences of what is left out are all too eloquent. By choosing to write within a genre of a narrow (Protestant) missionary historiography without opening a dialogue with contemporary currents of social and cultural history (Subaltern, postcolonial, textual critique), Oddie overlooks some crucial and little explored topics. Others are presented in a cartoonish fashion, such as the role of Indians (Brahman pundits, converts, etc.) in the Protestant missionary construction of Hinduism. In this book, the question of what those who know only mis-

sionary history actually know about missionary history seems dead on target.

INES G. ŽUPANOV

*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, CEIAS
Paris*

TITHI BHATTACHARYA. *The Sentinels of Culture: Class, Education, and the Colonial Intellectual in Bengal (1848–85)*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2005. Pp. xiii, 272. \$35.00.

There is an excitement to this book. It is about education, and education, Tithi Bhattacharya believes (as do I), was the biggest concern of colonizer and colonized alike in nineteenth-century India. “Education and its handmaiden, reform, could make or break, the known universe” (p. 2). The palette is exciting—Calcutta *bhadralok*, or new middle-class society—and the author’s ambition is large, too: to provide an “explanatory framework” for the “obsessive importance” (p. 3) given to education by this class. But in the first pages confusion arises. We are told that “education and culture” form the two explanatory axes of identity for this burgeoning class (p. 2). Culture? If not treated as an opaque term beyond usefulness, should it not at least be accepted by the author as a complex one? Bhattacharya moves on to argue, without irony or qualification, about how “the world of culture” (p. 2) works, how culture was related to social and economic power (p. 3), and how the world of culture is not to be taken as a “natural attribute of the *bhadralok* as a social group” (p. 3).

Culture is amorphous for Bhattacharya, and, apparently, for the postcolonial authors whom she critiques as well. Whereas one can grasp her objection to a concept that conflates premodernity and conservatism on the one hand, and colonial power and dominance on the other, her description of the problem is somewhat simplistic. In her actual study of the *bhadralok*, Bhattacharya is on stronger ground. She refreshingly shifts the locus of explanation about their identity from their “culture” to their economic base as a class with professional moorings. That they were a troubled class is explored throughout the book. In chapter one we are introduced to the question of their homogeneity. The answer is that the *bhadralok* came in two parts, a landed rentier class, and a petty bourgeoisie, and that education was of differential value to them. At the same time, as an incipient spokesman for the nation, the *bhadralok*’s very identity lay in the dissolution of class interests. Pursuing this further in chapter two, Bhattacharya makes the interesting point that *vidya*, or knowledge, came to be associated in the mid-nineteenth century with private property. “The great advantage of *vidya* . . . was that it could be owned as property without risking the negative effects of ownership” (p. 70).

As private property, then, education could and should not be shared with all. The class of *bhadralok* was a troubled one because it had to be unified on the basis of education, while keeping other classes out, in

which it had the support of the colonial state; at the same time, it was divided within in terms of wealth and therefore social consciousness.

Bhattacharya uses data on books, their numbers, types, and patterns of circulation to show how books were a tool in the project of class formation. I find chapter two more interesting than three, which is devoted solely to books and print. Perhaps it is because the conclusion is: "Print had united spatially and contextually the ideological determinations of the *bhadralok*" (p. 152), and some newer questions needed to be posed? One that certainly might strike the reader is regarding the gendered nature of *bhadralok* identity. Bhattacharya mentions that a crucial consideration for *bhadralok* men was marrying into the right families, and that high on their list of reform issues was the banning of widow burning. What jumps out in many parts of the book and is never pursued is the explicit masculinity of the *bhadralok* and the production of a new kind of epistemological and literary masculinity. Even if the author had no interest in the women of nineteenth-century Bengal and wished to focus solely on the men, a large dimension of the picture goes missing when we do not talk of the gendered identities of men. This is even more striking when we hear about the body-building concerns of the middle class, and of their "informal networks" of solidarity (p. 190) in chapter four and elsewhere. "While the discourse on education emphasized democracy in opportunity, in actuality it was very much dependent on the individual's class background or gender" (p. 184). It is only the class that has merited scrutiny, not the gendered identity. In the next two chapters, the discussion of precolonial education as it was replaced by colonial education is interesting, and there is some new data in on the use of the Bengali versus the English language.

In sum, this book is an exciting addition to the slowly growing field of modern Indian social history. It uses some new and some old sources to weave a rich tapestry of *bhadralok* life between 1848 and 1885, taking up theoretical issues relating to class identity and grounding said identity in property, profession, and ideology. The book makes a convincing connection between the ideological frameworks of *bhadralok* identity and the symbolic-discursive utilization of education. It would have done well, in the interests of its own problematic, to complicate the category of "culture" as well as that of class, and to consider the category of gender alongside these.

NITA KUMAR
Claremont McKenna College

VEENA TALWAR OLDENBURG. *Dowry Murder: The Imperial Origins of a Cultural Crime*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2004. Pp. xv, 261. \$20.00.

Veena Talwar Oldenburg's interesting 2002 book focuses on the important and horrifying contemporary incidents of dowry murder in India. The title refers to the murder of young Indian brides by in-laws and/or hus-

bands. Such "bride burnings"—so-called because the murders often involve the burning to death of the wife in a kitchen fire—occur either as retribution for having brought an inadequate dowry into the marriage or as a means of enabling a second marriage and the acquisition of a new dowry. First reported in the 1980s in northern India, dowry deaths have since spread more widely through the country. In 2000 a UNICEF research institute reported the number of Indian dowry deaths at 5,000 a year.

The book—subtitled "the imperial origins of a cultural crime"—weaves together British colonial records from the late nineteenth-century Punjab, the author's personal memories of the conflicts of an early marriage, and observations drawn from ten months spent as a volunteer at *Saheli*, a women's center in New Delhi. Five out of the six chapters focus on colonial records and policies in the Punjab (a region now mostly in Pakistan). Here Oldenburg makes a convincing case that the Punjabi region's increasing preference for sons was a dual product of the commercialization of agriculture (with the resulting commodification of land) in the northwest and British legal and revenue practices that vested heritable rights to land only in sons. "By the turn of the nineteenth century, the Punjab would become a region where sons would be even more fiercely desired than traditional Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh brands of patriarchy had ever imagined or ordained" (p. 99). Thus it was British policies themselves—not excessive dowry expenses, as the British frequently claimed—that lay behind the low ratios of women to men in the Punjab and the widespread practice of infanticide.

Dowry, Oldenburg concludes, may also not be the sole (or even central) issue in twentieth-century Indian marriage conflicts. A final chapter explores Oldenburg's own memories (both personal and familial) of marriage conflicts and her observations during ten months as a volunteer at *Saheli*. There she was "surprised to find that only a small fraction of the women who came in were indeed newly married or had a 'dowry problem'" (p. 204). Rather wives of three or four years or women with children were the ones who sought help. Their stories suggest that a wider range of problems (aside from dowry alone) now beset Indian arranged marriages: the anonymity of urban settings allow fraudulent claims to remain unchallenged concerning the wealth and/or education of proposed groom; the higher age at which girls marry in urban settings makes it more difficult for them to adjust to life in their in-laws' homes; and finally the sexual incompatibilities of couples and/or violence and abuse toward wives destroys marriages.

Overall, Oldenburg's project may have been too broad to be successfully accomplished. Even as late as the early 1900s Punjabi communities practiced at least three forms of marriage: those without "price" (that is dowry marriages), those arranged through bride price, and those arranged by exchange (where two brothers from different families married each other's sisters). Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth cen-