

turnaround of Sudha Diary Milk during the Lalu regime is dubbed an accident. Simultaneously, 11.82 and 12.17 per cent GDP rate during 2003-04 and 2004-05 respectively, achieved under Rabri regime, which was higher than the 2005-2009 average of 10.74 under Nitish rule is attributed largely to market dynamics. A recent study on Bihar's GDP reveals a higher growth continuum since 1994-95 despite some interruption by the impact of state bifurcation in 2001. ("Unraveling Bihar's Growth Miracle", Chirashree Das Gupta, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Dec. 2010)

Sinha, though, is seriously concerned about the growth pattern and casts doubts on its sustainability. During the first four years of Nitish Kumar's reign, only 0.7 per cent of the total projected investment has fructified. Sinha reluctantly supports the thesis flogged by the government, namely, the fear among investors of the return of Lalu, and the lack of infrastructure for the poor realisation of projects. According to data from the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, the state has not received a single rupee from the proposed investment amounting to Rs 42,941 crores for 2011. (*The Hindu*, 13 December 2011). As far as law and order, roads, health and education are concerned, Sinha insists that spectacular advances have been achieved on these fronts, but he does not bother to critically examine these areas as he has done for other sectors. Not a single institution from the state could bag a position in the top 50 or 100 all India rank in recent years, point out experts. Higher education institutions in 'rising' Bihar remain in disarray against the backdrop of euphoria created over Nalanda International University. Deaths of over 60 - 80 children in a month caused by Japanese encephalitis in two successive years (2010 and 2011) in Muzaffarpur and Gaya Medical College Hospital respectively indicate the systemic failure of the government health machinery. Many field reports suggest that violence against Dalits and women has seen a rise under the Nitish Kumar regime. Sinha offers no explanation for this dark side of 'shining' Bihar.

Frequent floods are the biggest impediment in the all-round development of Bihar. Astonishing therefore that Sinha does not discuss the gravity of flood problems in Bihar at all — or the flood control measures and mitigation plans being executed by the Nitish Kumar government. This is perplexing as the Nitish regime is playing the flood card to the hilt for Special Category Status of Bihar. Neither does Sinha express his views on the Special Category Status, which is the prime political agenda of state government presently. Sinha's only major difference with Nitish is on the issue of cash transfer that he is currently advocating for food subsidy.

The spectre of Lalu Prasad Yadav still haunts Nitish Kumar and his cohort of intimates. Evaluating contemporary heroes is a tricky job. The biographer's dilemma between intimacy and objectivity, that Sinha claims he resolved, still hangs in balance. ■

Nature and nationalism

Green and Saffron: Hindu Nationalism and Indian Environmental Politics

By Mukul Sharma

Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2012, 263 pp., Rs 795 (HB)

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VIDYA VENKAT

The dust raised by the "Indian spring" is yet to settle and Mukul Sharma's book on the confluence of environmental politics and Hindu nationalism has arrived to raise yet another storm. Praiseworthy for its journalistic timing and academic rigour, the most significant contribution of the book is its careful exposition of the politics behind the man leading India's much-watched anti-corruption movement — Anna Hazare. Through case studies of three contemporary environmental movements in India — the anti-dam movement in Tehri, Garhwal, Anna Hazare's Watershed Management Programme in Ralegan Siddhi and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature's

countryside." Rigid disciplinary boundaries ensured that urban academics studying environmental movements in the countryside only considered natural resources as a means of sustenance for local communities, without analysing its symbolic significance for hinterland politics. But Sharma has transcended traditional boundaries to show how the social meanings of environmental resources like forests, rivers and mountains, co-exist and have come to share a symbiotic relationship with conservative politics that reinforce traditional values in the daily lives of rural Indians. In that sense the book is a novel contribution to the understanding of new social movements in India and fills a much-needed gap.

Sharma shows how the Hinduised environmental discourse has carefully excluded Muslims and Dalits from its fold. He quotes a Muslim woman who walked out of a public meeting addressed by Sunderlal Bahuguna in Tehri after she heard him emphasise the superiority of Hindu culture and the holy water of the Ganga by using Aurangzeb's refusal to give water to his dying father as an example. In the Vrindavan conservation project area, Dalits have not been allowed to enter the local Banke Bihari Mandir which instantly excludes them the scope of participation in a project that uses allegiance to Lord Krishna as a mobilising metaphor

Vrindavan-Mathura Revival Project in Uttar Pradesh — Sharma has shown how the powerful metaphor of saving 'Mother nature' has been appropriated by Right-wing political forces for arousing Hindu nationalistic sentiments amongst the masses. In each case traditional Hindu symbols are at work — in Tehri, it is about saving 'Mother Ganga', in Ralegan Siddhi it is about upholding the values of an idyllic Indian village and in Vrindavan, it is the reincarnation of Krishna as a conservationist — that have helped concern for the environment to join forces with the need for preserving the idea of a Hindu nation.

"The Indian environmental debate," Ramachandra Guha had once noted, "is an argument in the cities about what is happening in the Indian

That not all who sit on a satyagraha are Gandhians becomes evident in the chapter "The Making of an Authority", where Sharma uses insights gained from his fieldwork to counter the largely celebratory tone in which Anna Hazare's work has been spoken of. If Gandhi was infamous for his sexual experiments, Anna will be remembered for his chillingly disciplinarian tactics, the roots of which can be traced back to his days in the army. Hazare has used his rural development and water conservation programme in Ralegan Siddhi — Adarsh Gaon Yojana — as a means to experiment with his own grandiose vision of the ideal village. The villagers relate to life under Hazare as that of being in an army. Those who violate rules such as

avoiding consumption of alcohol are flogged; even the vice-sarpanch of Ralegan Siddhi has not been spared, one learns. This disciplinarian rigour combined with moral authority has catapulted Anna into the status of a demi-God. The local villagers are at his beck and call and he has ensured that villagers provide "voluntary labour" for development works. This has been efficiently utilised for village improvement works such as water conservation through digging wells, forest farming, building bunds, et al. Even school-going children have not been spared in providing free labour for village works. Hazare has exercised his authority to ensure that villagers in Ralegan Siddhi do not listen to film songs, strictly adhere to family planning and avoid eating meat as well. Hazare proudly claims to have converted even the Dalits into vegetarians in Ralegan Siddhi! Behind this ideal model of a village, where a community collaborates harmoniously for the common good, is a hegemonic moral order legitimised by encoding such practices in religious notions of purity, pollution and sacrifice, thus preempting contestations. This command-obedience relationship, Sharma notes, is at odds with the basic tenet of individual freedom and plurality ingrained in the idea of a modern democracy, thus highlighting the irony in Hazare's clarion call for saving Indian democracy. What has sustained the movement in Maharashtra is its allegiance to ideas of Maratha culture and pride and the intricate relationship between the agrarian environment and the rural polity that directly relate to the interests of the dominant rural elite Maratha class. Hazare has carefully cultivated an apolitical stance with regards to his work both in the area of rural development and conservation and the various anti-corruption struggles he has been leading in Maharashtra since the 1990s which have now culminated into a nation-wide struggle. It is his firm view that power and politics cause corruption. However, his idea of the ideal village has been joined onto the idea of an ideal nation where self-sufficient villages contribute to the building of a strong India. Here is where Hindutva forces seek an entry point within the discourse.

Sharma has shown how Hindutva is reinventing itself in the Indian hinterland by adopting a militant posture on environmental issues within the larger meta-narrative of Hindu nationalism revealing a process of cultural reassertion on the ground. The author documents how a Hinduised cultural representation of the Ganga river during the anti-dam movement in Tehri brought both environmentalists as well as religious leaders on a common plank. The involvement of the Right-wing Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in the anti-dam movement gave rise to conspiracy theories such as the Tehri dam being an effort of the West and communist Russia to demolish Hindu culture. A VHP leader campaigning against the dam in Roorkee had even likened the need to stop the dam to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. However, Sharma does not rubbish environmental movements as such as reactionary and anti-modern. Rather he subtly shows how mobilisations around environmental issues are legitimate articulations of

the threat to life and livelihood of rural Indians in several places. The book, in fact, starts with the description of the Maa Kosi ka Mela in Bihar, which is an annual religious festival started in the 1990's in response to the devastating floods caused by the Kosi river while changing course. Kosi is now among the many idols of worship that are kept in the local temple in Sonmanki, where the festival takes place. Sharma views the villagers as being overcome by a sense of powerlessness regarding their circumstance and taking refuge in the protection that religious faith offers them.

The book can be viewed as a useful addition to the growing body of anthropological literature documenting manifestations of regional modernities in ways that are distinct from homogenous conceptions of a global modernity. Previous anthropological works concerning environmental movements in India have largely emphasised the idea of resistance to neo-liberal globalisation without adequate attention to the complexities of developmental processes on the ground. While there certainly is a deep sense of resentment against the trajectory of Western modernity and its consequences for the environment, there is also a strong emphasis in these movements to reconceptualise, than merely resist the Western discourse of development. Anthropologists K Sivaramakrishnan and Arun Agrawal have mentioned in their writings as to how though development, as a global keyword of modernity, has been the most powerful influence structuring social and economic transformations in the non-Western world, its complexities cannot be fully fathomed without situating analyses in the regional nature of development and the flexibility and dynamism that the process involves. The concept of region allows large-scale ethnic, religious, social, and geopolitical formations to be considered as they mediate simplistic assumptions regarding binary categories of colonial or postcolonial power and local assimilation or resistance. Sharma has emphasised this point in an interview with Sivaramakrishnan where he has spoken about how his experience of working with civil society organisations helped him to understand the manner in which "sustainable development" – a global catchphrase deployed in mainstream development discourse – has frequently been stripped of cogent meanings and how incongruous actors, ranging from power-driven governments and profit-making corporations to indigenous people and city-action groups, have couched their intentions in the language of sustainable development. Such global catchphrases have been sufficiently vague to allow different and often incompatible interpretations to exist within its scope which are revealed in regional processes. For instance, the case study of the Vrindavan Forest Revival Project in UP shows how prominent environmental and religious organisations sought to justify the caste system as an ancient concept of sustainable development governing allocation of natural resources among different social groups. The caste system was sought to be legitimised as a progenitor of sustainable development within the scope of Hindu environmental discourse. This

reveals a process of reworking of global discourses to help validate elite regional interests.

In fact, the socially exclusive nature of many of these movements is a subject of lengthy discussion in the book. Sharma shows how Hinduised environmental discourse has carefully excluded Muslims and Dalits from its fold. He quotes a Muslim woman who walked out of a public meeting addressed by Sunderlal Bahuguna in Tehri after she heard him emphasise the superiority of Hindu culture and the holy water of the Ganga by using Aurangzeb's refusal to give water to his dying father as an example. In the Vrindavan conservation project area, Dalits have not been allowed to enter the local Banke Bihari Mandir which instantly excludes them the scope of participation in a project that uses allegiance to Lord Krishna as a mobilising metaphor. Muslims in Vrindavan too feel excluded from such environmental discourses in the post-Ayodhya context where Hindu religious symbols have come to be associated with the Hindutva project. The project staff in Vrindavan conversely legitimise such exclusionary practices by claiming that Muslims cause environmental pollution by killing cows.

After mapping the contours of the environmental debate in India, Sharma goes on to draw parallels against the emergence of conservative environmentalism in Europe. However, in contemporary Europe, the environmentalists are seen as closer to the Left than the Right and there is a general perception of environmental movements as being reactionary and against modernity, a view that Sharma does not hold with regards to the Indian situation.

It is obvious from Sharma's thesis that environmental politics provides Right-wing political forces in India a potential electoral plank for staging a comeback. Environmental movements resonate with the everyday realities of a vast majority of rural Indians reeling under various agrarian and ecological crisis. While this affords credibility to the Right-wing political parties joining cause, the element of religion brings with it emotional appeal as well. This "greening of saffron" allows Right-wing organisations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh to improve its appeal beyond its traditional constituency. These possibilities come with their obvious limitations as some environmental movements challenge its traditional stronghold, such as the Save the Narmada movement in Gujarat. But conversely, is this association fruitful for the cause of environmental politics equally? The "saffronisation of green" as Sharma shows has excluded many legitimate actors from its fold, while helping to unite certain dominant elite sections of society. By politically aligning itself with the Hindutva project, the environmental movement, however well-intentioned "risks falling into the trap of valourising and romanticising dangerous forms of indigenism and obscurantism", the author notes. Whether the legitimate cause of preserving the environment must necessarily endanger its own prospects thus is a question for the leaders representing these movements to ponder over. ■

Broken promises

Article 370: A Constitutional History of Jammu and Kashmir

By A. G. Noorani

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2011, 487 pp., Rs 850 (HB)

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NAWAZ GUL QANUNGO

If weather were anything to go by, the Indian establishment must have been pleased to their heart's content. Kashmir was under a clear, bright blue sky on a sunny October day. It was 1996. Though Wednesday, the streets were desolate and the markets abandoned — the resistance conglomerate, Hurriyat Conference, had called the customary *hartaal*. Televisions, however, were on. The Indian state television Doordarshan was broadcasting live a unique coronation from the Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Centre, a high-profile local venue built on the banks of Dal Lake and named after Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, Kashmir's ill-fated prime minister. Farooq Abdullah, Sher-e-Kashmir's son, was going to be crowned chief minister. Millions of Kashmiris,

Kashmir had seen the eruption of an anti-India armed uprising, leaving tens of thousands dead, lakhs displaced, thousands disappeared, orphaned, widowed and half-widowed, bringing to shreds any semblance of legitimate governance. Farooq Abdullah had now come to offer that lost legitimacy, after having relinquished the same position at the outset of militancy. Just what was the deal that prompted Abdullah to finally turn around, even as a much bloodied decade hadn't yet ended?

Nearly a year before, the then Indian prime minister, Narasimha Rao, had spelt the now infamous "sky is the limit" phrase. It was 4 November, 1995. Away in Burkino Faso on an official tour, Rao had a telephonic conversation with Farooq Abdullah. Back in Delhi, the Indian Cabinet had met to discuss the

The subject of discussion in reality is the political thuggery that the Indian establishment has employed in order to keep its control firm over the ever rebellious valley of Kashmir. J&K had acceded to India in 1947 in respect only of defence, foreign affairs, and communications. Article 370 was meant to preserve this status. The book reveals the blueprint of the Constitutional machinations that form the "legal" basis of what the Indian union has been doing vis-à-vis the state of J&K. And Noorani has an uncomplicated position here: there is strictly no constitutional basis

confined to their corners at home, wondered what hour the nightmare had struck.

Standing at the lecture table on the big dias, wearing a black sherwani and karakul cap, Farooq Abdullah, after taking oath, said: "Wazeer-e-azam Narasimha Rao ji ne mujh se kaha ki 'Farooq saab, sirf hamari sarkaar hi aap ke peeche nahi hai...'" (Prime minister Narasimha Rao has told me, 'Farooq saab, its not just the government of India that is backing you...'). An emotional Abdullah tried to speak further – "Aap akele..." – but couldn't as he burst out in sobs, with big drops of tears pouring out of his reddened eyes, rolling down his face. He wiped his face with his handkerchief, and continued: "Rao sahib ne kaha, 'Aap akele nahi hain... Hindustan ke sau karod log aap ke peeche hain...'" (Rao sahib told me, 'You are not alone... a hundred crore of Indians are behind you.)

matter: the meeting announced its decision to hold Assembly elections in Kashmir for the first time after the armed revolt had erupted. Moments later, Rao unleashed a drama that was aired across India by Doordarshan. "From a long distance away from home," said Rao, "I am addressing an appeal through this statement to the people of Jammu and Kashmir." Rao called it a time "which could well turn their destiny once again in glorious manner, so as to make that lovely land a peer to paradise – *jannatnishaan* as it has been called for centuries." ("The die is cast", *Outlook*, 15 November, 1995; 'A failed Gambit', *Outlook*, 22 November, 1995).

In what came to be known as the Burkina Faso Declaration, apart from the now customary economic packages, apart from changing the nomenclature of governor to *sadr e riyasat* and chief minister to *wazir e azam*, and apart from promising that