

The stories tell overwhelmingly of conflicts and sorrows. In many stories, marriages were arranged without complete knowledge of the bridegroom's family circumstances, so that a bride was almost sure to face poverty and/or unhappiness in her new home. One story is that of a purchased wife, an unhappy example of options at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale. In most of the stories, women's reproductive lives were not their own to control, and one gets a fairly horrific impression of family planning and medical services in U.P. The Jeffreys tell us how they got to know each woman and some of the ways in which they participated in the experiences recounted here, but they speak as a united front, always as "we"—one wonders if they could have brought different perspectives to bear on the material. However, their goal was to present the women's stories in a way that made the material exciting and accessible.

I wish I could say that this experiment in presentation had succeeded, but the eight individual women do not stand out vividly and distinctly. The authors describe the women and their interactions with them at length, and the women's own words are used liberally, but somehow each woman's speech has been dulled by translation into standardized prose hardly different from that of the authors or of the other women. Another reason that the eight women are not memorable may be that the interludes include so many short stories like the longer ones, giving an effect of muddle and repetition. One even questions the stated organization of the interludes and stories into separate topics, since all of the topics seem to be covered in every chapter. The absence of a final analytical chapter reinforces one's impression of repetition within and across the chapters. (The page and a half afterword does not engage the intellectual issues raised in the introduction but presents the authors as modest and rather passive recorders of changes which neither they nor their subjects are able to predict.)

It is a shame that the presentation is not more compelling, for one can only commend all the hard work, careful listening, and thoughtful organization and writing that went into this book. By chance I read another book at the same time, Judith Stacey's *Brave New Families, Stories of Domestic Upheaval in Late Twentieth Century America* (New York: Basic Books, 1990). Stacey uses ethnographic and oral history methods to focus on two women and their families, and the similarities in intention and material are really quite striking. Stacey's account offers a suggestive model for thinking and writing about the rural North Indian women and their encompassment in a system beyond their control.

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*Poverty: Human Consciousness and the Amnesia of Development.* By RAJNI KOTHARI. London: Zed Books, 1995. vi, 186 pp. \$55.00 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper).

This book is about awareness—specifically, the author's awareness of poverty as a problem for the people of India. Most broadly, it concerns recent modes of thinking and forgetting about poverty, and new efforts to revitalize public awareness. This is an argument for the ethical and political importance of poverty—as the author says, “a personal statement on a matter that I consider to be very basic, yet one that the human community may already be turning its back on” (p. i). Rajni Kothari has written many books about Indian governance that discuss economic development; he founded the international journal *Alternatives* and the Centre for the Study of

Developing Societies; and he cochairs the International Foundation for Development Alternatives; but he has not “written directly or in a systematic way” (p. 1) on poverty until now. He has taken to it “so late in . . . life” (p. i) not as an academic matter but because politicians are turning their backs on the poor. Few would argue this point. Since 1980, poverty has declined rapidly as a political issue. Corruption, liberalization, civil war, communalism, ethnic struggles, and government crises top the news. Poverty may not have merited even a single sound byte in the national media during the recent U.S. election campaigns.

Kothari considers two problems. How did this “growing amnesia” take hold in India? How can poverty awareness be effectively revitalized? Kothari promotes some good ideas to address these important questions. But the result is disappointing.

Kothari does not deploy his vast personal knowledge to describe the abandonment of poverty as a political issue. He cites causes like the rising middle class, disenchantment with the state, and competing political agendas, all of which had vague, diffuse effects. He does not explore the role of the IMF, World Bank, former USSR, Cold War, Rajiv Gandhi, Manmohan Singh, Congress, populism, regional trends, or the Left. He does not consider the recent world history of development discourse or development regimes. Why did poverty become compelling at the World Bank in the 1970s? Why did poverty become a political issue in India in the 1980s and disappear rapidly after Mrs. Gandhi’s last populist gambit—*garibi hatao*? Poverty has a history as a political issue, but we learn nothing about that. For Kothari, it seems natural and essential for Indian politics and ethics. Amnesia seems to result from malaise and disillusionment among policy elites.

How to revitalize poverty in political discourse seems clear-cut in the soft, fuzzy light of Kothari’s account of its demise. The key is to convince policy elites who have forgotten about poverty that they *must* attend to the poor. Thus Kothari presents moral and political arguments to stimulate their interest and to move their energies in the right direction. His well-deserved public stature makes this stance quite reasonable. Broadly speaking, he has three arguments to make. They all make sense.

First, dealing with poverty is a precondition for India’s survival as a democratic nation. Staggering poverty afflicts a large proportion of the population, which is denied basic rights as citizens by their deprivation. Ethics are discussed at length. In the background, it is vaguely implied that if poverty remains unchecked, the result could be revolution, dictatorship, and national dismemberment—none discussed.

Second, economic development cannot proceed very far alongside massive poverty. Everyone’s environment and living conditions suffer *eventually* from large scale poverty, so India’s middle class cannot succeed in its apparent quest to increase its own share of the wealth *indefinitely*. But how far has this strategy already succeeded? We hear little about urban-rural disparities, suburban zones around major cities, middle-class overseas migration, middle-class-oriented economic policies, and all the other “development initiatives” that benefit middle classes and isolate and protect them from the poor.

Third, past failures in development policy do not mean that poverty is inevitable. We must take heart and keep hope alive. New solutions—thriving alternative development techniques—promise success. They hinge on local mobilization of the poor, whose increasing participation in development institutions combats poverty as it strengthens democracy. In the background, we can hear the influence of Non-Governmental Organizations and their financial backers. NGOs have argued for many years that the local empowerment of the poor—constructive mobilization at the grassroots—can supersede state bureaucratic development regimes and succeed in

ending poverty where socialism, communism, and revolution have failed. We hear Gandhi in Kothari's arguments here, duly cited; but Kothari does not tell us that this very same line of argument has been embraced by the World Bank and many other international funding agencies.

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*Science and the Raj, 1857–1905.* By DEEPAK KUMAR. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995. xv, 273 pp. \$26.00 (cloth).

*Technology and the Raj: Western Technology and Technical Transfers to India, 1700–1947.* Edited by ROY MACLEOD and DEEPAK KUMAR. New Delhi: Sage, 1995. 348 pp. \$32.00 (cloth).

*Colonialism, Chemical Technology and Industry in Southern India, 1880–1937.* By NASIR TYABJI. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995. ix, 242 pp. \$26.00 (cloth).

Scholars usually bemoan the “surprising” absence of work in some particular field in order to legitimize their own contributions that unsurprisingly happen to be in the area which has allegedly not been covered by existing studies. However, given the rich analyses of literally every facet of colonial rule in India, the lack of serious studies of the intersection of colonialism with science and technology is genuinely surprising. To be sure, occasional publications by Claude Alvares, Vandana Shiva, Susantha Goonatilake, and Ashis Nandy, among others, vehemently attacking “Western” science in general or lamenting the premature death of an epistemologically distinct “Indian” science as a consequence of British colonial rule, have appeared and have been duly absorbed by metropolitan universities avidly seeking to add appropriate doses of “multicultural” gloss to their curricula. What most of these studies share is a valorization of a populist, third worldist, “indigenist” rhetoric, the pitch of which is inversely related to the empirical evidence at hand.

In marked contrast to the above mentioned tracts, the three books under review genuinely seek to rectify the existing state of affairs. Rather than being content with the banal demonstration that historical accounts are socially constructed, as if any practicing historian is not aware of this truism, these three volumes get on with the task of filling in the amazingly wide gaps in our knowledge of the dynamics of science and technology in the colonial era. Kumar's *Science and the Raj* provides a detailed and comprehensive macro picture and analysis of the various levels at which British colonial imperatives—economic, political, strategic and cultural—interfaced with science and technology in India between 1857 and 1905. Kumar's important book represents one of the few serious attempts to develop an account that is firmly grounded in a wide range of primary sources. Indeed, Kumar tells us that he “enjoyed working most on archival sources, though some friends warned me that these tools were conventional, official, ancient and so forth” (p. 239). Looking at the results of Kumar's work, one can be thankful that he refused to be seduced by the aura of the