

have a lasting impact. Taken together, the three books constitute a very important contribution to our understanding of the intellectual history of modern India.

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The Ardent Pilgrim: An Introduction to the Life and Work of Mohammed Iqbal. By IQBAL SINGH. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997. xiv, 183 pp. \$18.95 (cloth).

This engaging volume is a revision of the author's biography of the noted poet and thinker, Mohammed Iqbal, originally published in 1951. The author, Iqbal Gurpratap Singh, was a noted journalist who passed away on February 5, 2000, at the age of 89. He had been well known for his column, "So it's reported," a weekly analysis of British reporting on India, which used to appear on the back page of the *India Weekly*.

Divided into twelve chapters, the book touches on a range of subjects, including the early influences on the poet; his education and training in both India and abroad; his return to his homeland and the increasing emphasis in his poetry on Islamic motifs; his desertion of many of the classical themes in Persian and Urdu poetry and his advocacy of the development of *khudi*, or ego; his reaction against the ideals of the West; the occasional dissonance between his philosophy as expressed in his writings and his deeds; his thought as expressed in his major works; some insights into his life; a summary; and finally a chapter entitled "Matters of No Importance?" which explores Iqbal's personal life, including his marital relationships and his estrangement from his elder son. The placement of this last chapter strikes a somewhat odd chord and it would have been better integrated earlier in the work rather than after the summary.

The common theme that runs through the book is that Iqbal's personality was "a sum of contradictions," a confession made by the poet himself in one of his couplets. Singh's purpose in highlighting this feature of Iqbal's persona is not, as he himself cautions, "to prepare the ground for an adverse judgment" but rather to examine "the relation of theory to practice" (p. 141) in the poet's life. This tension is ably demonstrated by example. While in verse Iqbal mocked those who sought titles from the government, he himself accepted knighthood. While in his *Payam-i Mashriq* he denounced the League of Nations as a "Society of Coffin-Thieves," it seems that had the Viceroy agreed to his nomination as a member of the Indian delegation, he would have had no reservations to participation in the deliberations of the "Coffin-Thieves." Such contradictions, and the poet's possible motivations, are discussed in chapter 7, entitled "A Chapter of Deeds." Despite such observations, by no means is *The Ardent Pilgrim* unkind in its assessment of Iqbal. Rather, these contradictions in the poet's personality are seen as aspects of its complexity.

One of the book's strengths lies in Singh's assessment of Iqbal's oeuvre. In a personal yet incisive treatment, the author appraises the contents of a number of the poet's major works. Their themes and literary qualities are expounded upon and salient points of the philosophy contained in them are brought to light. Translations of selected verses are quite beautiful, and at times the reader wishes that Singh had been less sparing in his quotations of them. He goes into some depth in explicating the *Jawid Nama*, considered by many to be the poet's *magnum opus*. Iqbal's personality is

investigated through his poetry, which is situated in its social and political context. It is a balanced account in which Iqbal emerges as a multifaceted, yet very human, figure. In summing up, Singh views Iqbal's importance not in founding any school of poetry but in acting as a bridge between past and present: "Iqbal is the link. Standing on the edge of two epochs, it can be claimed, he represents the last in the chain of classical poets of the Indo-Persian order and the first of the Moderns. That is his significance" (p. 139).

There are occasional blunders in the work. The author compares the Urdu language's history of less than five hundred years with Persian's of two thousand years or greater (p. 26). While descriptions of the trajectory of a language's development and judgments of its age are subjective at best, we can state with some confidence that the Persian language and idiom of which Iqbal was the inheritor did not reach back until the time of Christ. While he certainly would have understood the poetry of say, Rudaki (d. 940), Persian of a more distant past would have been incomprehensible, as the language underwent dramatic changes after Arabic words entered its lexicon with the spread of Islam. Copy errors, however, are few. We may note, for example, "the most fruitful phrase [i.e. phase] of his career" (p. 98) and "Abdul Qadir had been Iqbal's friends [i.e. friend]" (p. 151). These minor drawbacks, however, do not significantly detract from the work.

On the whole, *The Ardent Pilgrim* is engagingly written with an elegance of style that makes it a pleasure to read. It should really be considered a series of interconnected essays on Iqbal. Those who seek a minutely annotated tome of Iqbal scholarship may therefore find themselves disappointed with this volume. Notes are rare, and occasionally statements are made without argument or reference to a source. This fact makes it difficult to trace the origin of the author's quotations. However, the title dubs it to be "An Introduction to the Life and Work of Mohammed Iqbal," and in this claim it is certainly successful.

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Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization: Political Parties, Citizens, and Democracy in South India. By NARENDRA SUBRAMANIAN. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999. 371 pp. \$35.00 (cloth); \$11.95 (paper).

My copy of this book is thoroughly dog-eared and scribbled over, for it is my new basic reference work on the history of Tamil Nadu electoral politics. It traces campaigns, leadership, and mobilization from the 1920s to the 1990s. It has copious detail on voter turnout and election results. It supplements new scholarship in other disciplines and puts cultural studies in particular in new light. At a time when global media soak the public with essentialist images of collective identity and when cultural studies continues to hold fast to nationality as it travels transnationally, this book shows how sharp political analysis can put nationality aside to reveal critical histories that national cultures hide.

As the title indicates, the book aspires to be more than a study of Tamil politics—or rather, to be several different things as well—and it succeeds admirably. Framed in the disciplinary context of comparative politics, it looks at Tamil Nadu through a lens that makes this one Indian state comparable to other polities around the world. Addressing political science, it begins and ends with eloquent arguments about how