

Einfluss auszuhandeln, definiert sie Politik und Wirtschaft. Offen bleibt, für welche Frauen dieser Vorschlag zu realisieren ist.

Neben einer facettenreichen Schilderung der Lebensrealitäten indischer Frauen liefert Kakar einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Analyse kultureller Bedingungen und Konsequenzen von Gewalt, ein Thema, das insbesondere in der Ethnologie lange vernachlässigt worden ist. Das Buch richtet sich an Wissenschaftler indienbezogener Disziplinen, Vertreter der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit aber auch an den interessierten Leser. Es regt dazu an, vorschnelle Urteile abzulegen, Geschlechterverhältnisse in anderen Ländern gründlich zu überdenken und wirft die Frage auf, was Medien dazu bringt „Indien so schnell und radikal abzustempeln“ (S. 123).

*Stephanie Stocker*

HEINZ WERNER WESSLER, „*Der Brachvogel bin ich*“. *Themen und Tendenzen gegenwärtiger Dalit-Literatur in Hindi*. (Beiträge zur Indologie, 49). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014. X, 316 pages, €58.00. ISBN 978-3-447-10323-7

Dalit literature – literature written by “Dalits”, the “oppressed”, the self-chosen designation of the erstwhile so-called untouchables, those outside the fold of the Indian society – emerged when a first generation of educated and politically-aware Dalits in the 1970s in Maharashtra chose poems and short stories as the medium to express themselves and their grievances against the caste-ridden society. Inspired by B.R. Ambedkar (1891–1956), the social and political leader and father-figure of the Dalits, and based in an emerging urban Dalit middle class, the literary movement spread from its origins in Western India to virtually all regions of the subcontinent. In the last twenty years, it has become an established current in Hindi literature.

Heinz Werner Wessler’s book, focussing on the themes and trends in contemporary Dalit literature, is the first monograph on this topic written in German. It adds to the growing research literature in this field (including, most recently, Laura R. Brueck: *Writing Resistance*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014; and Sarah Beth Hunt: *Hindi Dalit Literature and the Politics of Representation*, London: Routledge, 2014).

Drawing on a study of published literary texts as well as on interviews with relevant writers, the author provides an overview of this genre of Hindi literature from ca. 1980 to 2006, with its themes, motifs and developments, situated in the creative space between writing as resistance and writing in the process of becoming mainstream.

He first provides an introduction to the world of Dalit writers, discussing their social and cultural spheres, and the factors governing their identity. Here, he highlights the role of the experience of marginalization, and the prevailing

doubts about the capacity of Hinduism to accommodate the Dalits, who thus frequently turn from Hinduism to embrace Neobuddhism. Yet, the policy of reservation of a quota of places at colleges and posts in the administration or government-owned factories does enable the development of a Dalit middle class, and thus their use of cultural expressions as a form of resistance.

The author then presents the different sub-genres of Hindi Dalit literature, i.e. autobiographies, short stories, novels and poetry. He rounds off the volume with brief biographical notes on the most important authors, and with a useful bibliography providing information on the primary texts cited, as well as on research literature.

With regard to autobiography, the author demonstrates that most of the writers – among them Omprakāś Vālmīki, Sūrajpāl Cauhān, Mohandās Naimiśrāy and Kausalyā Baisamṭrī – see their autobiography not as an individualistic narrative of their personal life, but as an expression of a collective experience. Further, autobiography is typical of Dalit literature as it is the natural space for self-representation as opposed to representation by others – life narratives as expressions of resistance against the dominant caste system and of social emancipation.

Turning then to the *kahānī* (short story), a genre that developed in the first third of the 20th century in Hindi and has remained important, the author provides a brief historical overview of the Dalit short story, and then focuses on some of the key themes presented, e.g. the subtle forms of discrimination witnessed by Dalits even in the urban context; women's struggles against the double repression through caste Hindus as well as through the patriarchal structures within their own social groups, as expressed by women writers such as Rajat Rānī "Mīnū" and Kusum Meghvāl; hierarchical conflicts between different Dalit castes; experiences of those Dalits who have arrived in the urban middle class; village stories and religious discourses in the *kahānī*.

The novel is a genre less favoured by Dalit writers than autobiography or the short story and consequently less covered in research literature. Thus Heinz Werner Wessler's chronological survey of Hindi Dalit novels from Jay Prakāś Kardam's *Karuṇā*, 1986, to Mohandās Naimiśrāy's *Kyā mujhe kharīdoge (Will you buy me?)*, 2005, provides a welcome point of entry into this field. There is a synopsis of the respective novels as well as notes on interpretation.

Poetry is regarded as another important sub-genre of Dalit literature, and is contributed to by almost all Dalit writers. Themes range from the place of Dalits in the wider society, which denies them the use of communal wells and forces them to remain in their traditional, demeaning occupations; their move from mute suffering to outcries against oppression; distinct Dalit perspective on themes taken from the traditional epics; to a critique of caste-based discrimination symbolised by the figure of the Brahmin and the law-book of Manu, in which the Brahmin world-view with its contempt for the "untouchables" finds its classic expression.

Throughout the book, it becomes evident that the question of the importance and legitimacy of Dalit literature is a pivotal debate among Dalit authors. The near consensus of the writers seems to be that only literature written by those born as Dalits can be accepted as Dalit literature, while literature written by non-Dalits, even if it shows Dalits in a positive light, does not qualify as Dalit literature. The defining moment is the collective experience, and the lodestone of Dalit literature is understood to be authenticity. Heinz Werner Wessler raises the question of whether this emphasis on authenticity also holds good if a male Dalit author writes about the experiences of Dalit women – discriminated in Dalit communities and under-represented amongst Dalit writers. Similarly, writings on Dalit life in the village by a member of the urban Dalit middle class might not meet the claim of authenticity.

If, the author argues further, Dalit literature has become accepted as an important current in Hindi literature, how long will it stay vibrant and productive, before its themes and motives become exhausted and repetition sets in? Here, Heinz Werner Wessler sees the future of Dalit literature in a synthesis of social experience and the development of literary style, even though refinement is often regarded as a loss of authenticity.

All in all, the author provides a fascinating picture of changing Dalit narratives influenced by shifting social experiences in North India's Hindi belt. This volume explicitly excludes a discussion of the beginnings of Dalit literature in the form of pamphlets dealing with caste histories, and thus perhaps does not give enough weight to the aspects of Dalit literature as counter-public or to the theoretical discussions implied. Nonetheless, in its more traditional approach as an overview of themes, motifs and developments, this volume provides an entry into the field, and is a welcome addition to the research work on Dalit literature in various Indian languages.

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GERNOT SAALMANN (ed.), *Changing India. Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. New Delhi: Winshield Press, 2015. 289 pages, \$39.99. ISBN 978-81-930-7030-7 (hb)

The book edited by Gernot Saalman has two explicit objectives; first to acquiesce the fact that India is changing like any other region and secondly to explore and explain the various socio-cultural agents that lead to a changing India. The editor has meticulously outlined and defined “change”. Taking his cue from William Ogburn’s book (*Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature*, New York / London: Allen & Unwin, 1922/23) Gernot Saalman first describes the meaning of “change” and gives an overview of the different kinds of “change” that one can talk about. He goes on to give a brief sketch of the changes in the past within India’s socio-political-cultural space,