

though the author introduces the subaltern school and broaches the issue of subaltern resistance, the topic deserves more attention, especially considering the author's aim at overcoming outmoded ways of writing history (for a subaltern introduction into the colonial period of South Asian history compare: Crispin Bates, *Subalterns and the Raj. South Asia since 1600*. London: Routledge, 2007).

Another noteworthy feature of Michael Mann's History is the claim to cover the whole of South Asia and not "simply" write the history of India. The author manages to do so by generally disregarding a nationalist framework as the major entrance point to history and also by including not only histories of colonial and post-colonial India, but also of the states of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Especially with respect to Pakistan he succeeds in doing the often neglected country historiographical justice. Rejecting the notion of Pakistan as a "purely artificial construct" in keeping with his conviction that "each nation-state is a historical-political construct" (p. 110) Michael Mann introduces the conflict-ridden history of Pakistan as one of multiple identities, thus going beyond the otherwise dominant focus on an alleged national Muslim identity. Hence, the book refreshingly puts actors, not states, at the centre of historical events.

The book includes maps and illustrations, a helpful index and an exhaustive bibliography. Unfortunately, the new English edition no longer includes the useful glossary of South Asian terms regularly used by the author. What makes this book especially attractive to students and sets the work apart from other overviews is the extensive discussion of ongoing scholarly debates and "concentrated literary review and analysis" (p. x). Michael Mann identifies and describes different historiographical schools, singles out some of the major paradigm shifts in writings on South Asian history (like the one initiated by Christopher A. Bayly in the 1980s), and convincingly problematizes the questionable relationship between history-writing and (contemporary) national ideologies. This nuanced and refreshing overview of the history of South Asia as a whole can be recommended to students and scholars alike.

Manju Ludwig

ANITA GHAI, *Rethinking Disability in India*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2015. 392 pages, £95.00. ISBN 978-1-138-02029-0

In her recently published monograph, Anita Ghai, Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology, University of Delhi, rethinks disability in India in eight chapters. *Rethinking Disability in India* combines a reflection on the author's personal experience of growing up as a disabled person in India with the broader socio-cultural context. A previous book, *(Dis)Embodied Form* (2003), relates

disability to feminist discourse. Her new book is a critique of medical disability models that rely on the idea of a defective individual in contrast to “normal” or “abled” bodies and calls for a paradigm shift towards conceptualizing disability as a “social, cultural and political phenomenon” (p. xxvi).

The book starts with an autobiographical note on Ghai’s personal history, in which she describes painful attempts to cure her of her “disease” in childhood. The medical treatments or traditional methods to make her an “able-bodied” person included, for instance, burying her in sand during the eclipse of the moon. Reflecting on these “traumatic experiences” Ghai writes that she hopes to impart the view “that disabled people are fully human and do not need a cure from disability” (p. 6). In her adult life, the author tried to overcome her disability so as to no longer be viewed as the “other”, before finally becoming a disability rights activist and scholar. She writes about disability-related and non-related challenges in her life such as heart disease, cancer or her difficulties in dealing with unfulfilled marriage and motherhood in a society where women are essentially defined by their relation to fathers, husbands or sons.

The cultural landscape of disability in India is further elaborated in the second chapter, in which the construction of disability as a lack of ability, supernatural punishment, karma (retribution for past action), evil, desexualisation, lifelong childhood/dependency, and heroisation is discussed. Ghai interprets the occurrence of disability in Hindu scriptures, narratives and epics to better understand disability in India. In the end, the evaluation of disability both as misery and as blessing shares the construction of disability in opposition to an idealised normalcy. It is a pity, however, that the scriptures included in this part are exclusively Hindu because the cultural landscape of India is so much more diverse.

The third chapter focusses on definitions of disability and legislation. Definitions are seen as a necessary evil. On the one hand, they are required to guarantee eligibility for social benefits. On the other hand, definitions are highly problematic when they are essentialist or when the power to define is misused. Ghai says that while no coherent definition of disability exists in India, the underlying understanding of disability remains within the framework of medical models of disability.

The transformation of “impairment” to “disability” is addressed in the fourth chapter. According to the social model of disability, a person’s impairment gets transformed into disability by society. Therefore, the author also prefers to use the term “disabled people” instead of other euphemisms to indicate that people are actually disabled by society. The intersections of disability with gender difference, poverty and sexuality are discussed as are the education and work situation. According to the author, inclusive education remains unfulfilled in India and the disabled child is still perceived as a problem to be dealt with instead of as a child with a right to education. Moreover, in the capitalist premise of productivity, the “unproductive” disabled person is evaluated as rather useless. This also leads to the justification of prenatal selection on the basis of disability,

which is legal in India, whereas selection on the basis of sex is forbidden, as discussed in chapter five. Here, the dilemma between feminists' claim to a woman's right to abortion and the right to life of the disabled child is discussed as well as the danger that new technologies of (selective) reproduction can become instruments for eugenics.

In chapter six the medical and social model of disability, the social construction of disability and the framing of disability as aesthetics and resistance are presented and criticised as the prevailing theoretical conceptualisations on disability. Ghai calls for theorising disability as a "critical modality" that challenges the myth of perfection by providing "possibilities for emancipation of those who are 'disabled' by society's view of them, but also those who are unwittingly trapped in their 'normality'" (p. 222).

In chapter seven the issues of identity are addressed as related to disability and in chapter eight Ghai introduces the need for a paradigm shift in both the practical and theoretical engagement with disability in India by emphasizing the importance of advancing disability studies to challenge misinterpretations of disability.

Ghai's book gives an extensive, detailed and complex overview of disability in India. It is the author's position at the interface between a research scholar on disability, a disability rights activist and a disabled person that makes her book so interesting and demonstrative. As do her remarkable expressions of hope and strength as illustrated by her comment, "Polio was a gift – an opportunity from which to learn, experience, understand, and then move on" (p. 15).

Anna-Lena Wolf

GARY JONATHAN BASS, *The Blood Telegram. Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013. XXIV, 499 pages, \$30.00. ISBN 978-0-307-70020-9

NAMRATA GOSWAMI, *Just War Theory and India's Intervention in East Pakistan, 1971*. (PSP Monograph 1). New Delhi: Academy of International Studies / Jamia Millia Islamia, 2014. 90 pages, Rs250.00. ISBN 978-93-83649-18-1

SRINATH RAGHAVAN, 1971. *A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2013. 358 pages, \$29.96. ISBN 978-0-674-72864-6

The war of 1971 that led to the creation of Bangladesh is subject of three new publications by Gary J. Bass, Namrata Goswami and Srinath Raghavan. The first author is professor of international politics at Princeton University, the second research fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses in New