



Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent

by Priyamvada Gopal, London, Verso, 2019, 624 pp., £25.00 (Hardback), ISBN 9781784784126

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shield South Asians, and Muslim immigrants in particular, from ongoing surveillance by the British and American nation-states?

The broad scope of Raychaudhuri's argument also compels the reader to press on the role of gender, sexuality and religion in representations of 'progressive' forms of nostalgia. Even if, as Raychaudhuri contends in Chapter 3, 'food production, food consumption, and the nostalgia that can be identified in both can be a way of constructing ... a matrilineal heritage which can ... [allow] women of different generations to exercise their own agency' (p. 89), how is homophilia experienced and imagined differently by cisgender women and by queer or trans South Asian immigrant subjects? Within the transnational scope of Raychaudhuri's book, what remains under-theorised are the ways in which the recuperation of nostalgia as a radical force of 'homemaking' intersects with the mobilisation of nostalgia by the Hindu Right in contemporary India to create homelands that are anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant. Thus, even as Raychaudhuri analyses the role that Indian Muslim actors such as Shah Rukh Khan play in Bollywood representations of South Asian diasporic communities in Chapter 5, his view that 'these films end on a note of renewed hope' (p. 148) eclipses the fact that such media representations continue to be powerfully deployed by Right-wing Hindu nationalists to conjure global imaginations of Hindu homelands.

Raychaudhuri argues for 'a nostalgically driven tradition of anti-fascist, anti-racist and anti-capitalist activity' (p. 61), for a nostalgia that looks towards the future as much as to the past. To this end, it is worth conceptualising 'homemaking' not just as a representational narrative but also as a lived, uneven practice of survival that engages directly with the shifting racial conditions of South Asian diasporic populations globally.

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Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent, by Priyamvada Gopal, London, Verso, 2019, 624 pp., £25.00 (hardback), ISBN 9781784784126

This is a sweeping account of anti-colonial thought in the very heart of the British Empire. Gopal has managed a signal accomplishment by restoring the agency of colonial subjects in the struggle in the metropole against empire. This agency, as she demonstrates, pushed and prodded British actors into taking more strident political positions while unsettling notions of benign and paternalist rule abroad. Africans and Indians themselves stoked 'crises of conscience' amongst their rulers (p. 398). *Insurgent Empire* is written with great passion and a sense of urgency. Given the constantly reappearing spectre of imperial nostalgia in contemporary politics, it is a timely intervention.

Gopal's account stretches from the Indian Mutiny-Rebellion of 1857 through the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya a century later (indeed, it encompasses the author's own exchanges in the early 2000s with defenders of empire such as Niall Ferguson). Along the way, the reader encounters familiar figures such as Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, J. Keir Hardie and Fenner

Brockway, but there are also lesser-known men and women who have hitherto received limited scholarly attention. Take, for example, Richard Congreve, who, as his fellow Britons bayed for blood in the aftermath of the Mutiny-Rebellion, called for Indian independence. Shapurji Saklatvala, the lone communist and Indian in the British parliament in the 1920s, has been remarkably understudied, yet he finds a prominent place in *Insurgent Empire*. Gopal concludes her work by focusing on Margery Perham, an Oxford don and government advisor, a rare female voice in those spheres in the 1950s and 1960s. The brutal British response to the Mau Mau Rebellion forced Perham to relinquish many a cherished belief: that gradual political reform in the colonies was the best policy, and that the British were bestowing habits of self-rule upon their imperial subjects. When she witnessed the Union Jack being forever lowered in Nigeria in 1960, she felt 'physical shock', yet when the new Nigerian standard was raised in its place, she realised that 'the incalculable force of human energy and pride would be harnessed behind the new nation' (p. 440).

Perham's unsettlement is representative of the stories found in *Insurgent Empire*. Running through its pages is an important theme: that decolonisation was unequivocally not 'the logical conclusion of the liberal and liberalizing project that empire ostensibly was', but rather the result of constant pressure from the colonised (p. 3). It was not entirely orchestrated in Westminster and Whitehall. Instead, there was a 'vital *relationship* between anti-colonial resistance in the periphery and the emergence of such dissent in the metropole', and those peripheral voices were often the chief instigators (p. 7). Gopal identifies the phenomenon of 'reverse tutelage', whereby Britons' views of empire were radically transformed through travel and interaction with imperial subjects. These subjects planted seeds of doubt, shattering a smug British world-view that Britons were the authors of freedom and liberty or the conferrers of particular values. Along the way came the realisation that exploitation at home and abroad were inextricably linked. Saklatvala was one of the most eloquent spokesmen on this subject, constantly reminding British workers that, in Gopal's words, there was 'an unbridgeable antagonism between empire and democracy' (p. 217).

Gopal is deeply influenced by the ideas of Edward Said but, for the most part, she avoids a blind spot of many Saidian scholars: the construction of a hegemonic imperialism and the consequent focus on colonisers at the expense of the colonised. She deftly relies upon the Trinidadian intellectual George Padmore, for example, to demonstrate how colonial thinkers and leaders constructed vast transnational alliances (Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana was one of Padmore's protégés) that nudged along both anti-colonial sentiment in the United Kingdom and the process of decolonisation. Black leaders tore apart ideas like colonial paternalism, racial hierarchy and political gradualism, savaging those on the Right and the Left in Britain who clung to such quaint beliefs. Padmore was not afraid of calling a spade a spade: he pointed out the similarities between Nazism and imperialism, writing about Britain's own 'colonial fascism'. He relentlessly coaxed Britons to confront their misdeeds abroad. As *International African Opinion*, a journal that Padmore helped run, asked its readers: 'What are you going to do about it?' (p. 342).

If this book has a notable shortcoming, then it lies in the relative glossing over of anti-colonial alliances in the late Victorian era. Gopal frames this period as just a prelude to truly sustained and productive co-operation between colonial subjects and British anti-imperialists in the inter-war period, but such alliances had already blossomed in significant ways. By 1900, black activists were listening to Indian nationalists at London Indian Society meetings and Indians were involved in planning the first Pan-African Conference. These colonised subjects also forged wide-ranging ties with Irish nationalists and British radicals. Saklatvala's and Padmore's calls for working-class solidarity with colonised subjects were enunciated as early as 1885 when, on the heels of the Third Reform Act, Lalmohan Ghosh,

the first-ever Indian to stand as a candidate for parliament, appealed to newly enfranchised labourers and Irishmen in London. Gopal pays limited attention to Henry Hyndman—a far more complex individual than has been advanced in scholarly literature—although Hyndman is an apt case study of a Briton influenced and radicalised by Indian nationalist thought.

These are somewhat unfair criticisms: Gopal makes no claims to have written a comprehensive narrative of anti-colonial thought, and the scholarly community in general has largely written off the importance of ‘moderate’ colonial voices in the Victorian era. *Insurgent Empire* is a compelling counterblast against persistent ideas and frames of thought about a benign imperialism. One hopes that it pushes and prods the imperial apologists of today into their own crises of conscience.

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In a Pure Muslim Land: Shi'ism between Pakistan and the Middle East, by Simon Wolfgang Fuchs, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2019, 376 pp., US\$34.95 (paperback), ISBN: 9781469649795

In a Pure Muslim Land is a ground-breaking addition to the growing field of Shi'i studies. By centring Pakistan in the story of Shi'i Islam, Simon Wolfgang Fuchs' work broadens a dialogue that is typically restricted to the Middle East. Fuchs' book follows in the footsteps of Andreas Rieck, whose book, *The Shi'as of Pakistan*, offers an overview of the position of the Shi'a community across the country. Instead, Fuchs highlights transnational relationships and religious concepts that travel across borders and are thereby transformed in the process.

Although roughly separated in chronological order, the book is primarily organised thematically. It is divided into five chapters, in addition to a short introduction and conclusion. In the introduction, Fuchs lays out his key arguments, focusing on sectarianism, transnational connections and local authority. In the first chapter, Fuchs describes the positions and organisations of the Shi'i community during the late colonial period, while concentrating on how the Shi'a organised themselves and how they confronted the political and religious landscape of India at the beginning of the twentieth century. He describes the rise and fall of the All India Shi'a Conference and the tensions and conflicts between the clergy and laymen regarding the organisation. Furthermore, as the late colonial period drew to a close and the partition of India and Pakistan appeared to be more and more likely, the Shi'a community felt the pressures (both externally and internally) of how to balance their own interests with those of the more populous Sunni community, represented by the Muslim League.

In Chapter 2, the author turns his attention to the struggle between the reformists and the traditionalists in the face of Partition. The reformists, such as Muhammad Husayn Najafi Dhakko, challenged established norms among the Shi'a community in South Asia.