Timothy S. Dobe. *Hindu Christian Faqir: Modern Monks, Global Christianity, and Indian Sainthood*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 363 pages. $39.95.

If the reader finds the title of this book rather diffuse, the blurb on the author on the back cover helps to bring it into sharper focus. "Timothy S. Dobe is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Grinnell College. His research focuses on South Asian religions, especially Hinduism and Christianity, asceticism, sainthood, comparison, colonialism and performance." On the one hand, the book is about Indian saints/ascetics and about two Punjabis, Swami Rama Tirtha and Sadhu Sundar Singh, in particular. On the other, it is about methodology in religious studies with special reference to Indian religions. The two are closely intertwined throughout the book, although both the introduction and conclusion concentrate on methodological issues.

The introductory chapter is appropriately titled "Unsettling Saints," because the book not only explores the relatively unexplored yet nonetheless important phenomenon of sainthood but also unsettles it "by comparing and connecting Hindu and Christian upstart saints, men whose lives link religious subjectivity, ascetic practice and transcendence with the globalizing public sphere" (5). After considering other possibilities, Dobe opts for *faqir* as the most appropriate term for the "Indian saint" because of the colonial associations and Indian traditions surrounding the term as well as because it pointed to "continuing, embodied disciplines of ascetic self-fashioning" (14). At the same time, and here is where Dobe's comparative emphasis comes to fore, the book seeks "to highlight the shifting positions, meanings, and valences of sainthood as a wider category" (18). He does this by looking at the *faqir* as practitioner, performer, and self-fashioner in both the vernacular (non-elite) North Indian and foreign contexts by drawing upon "wide-ranging conversations of asceticism as a comparable category not constrained by singular historical contexts" (28). This involves continual multi-tasking which makes this book a difficult read, especially for the non-specialist.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine the western and Indian assumptions about and characterizations of *faqir*s as well as of authentic religion with which both Rama Tirtha and Sundar Singh had to contend. Chapter 2 focuses upon colonial Punjab where Evangelical Protestant missionaries and vernacular writers provided the relevant assumptions and characterizations, while chapter 3 turns to the wider colonial Indian contexts where these were provided by Orientalists and reformers

of the nineteenth-century Hindu renaissance. Missionaries in the Punjab saw the *faqir* as symptomatic of Indian superstition and idolatry on the one hand, but also as a possible way of "Indianizing" Christianity on the other. The vernacular writers depicted the *faqir* "as a figure blending self-proclaimed mystical knowledge, ascetic self-denial, miraculous power, multiple religious identities and a territorialized genealogical sanctity in complex ways" (64-5). In the wider Indian context, dealt with in chapter 3, the Orientalists saw *faqir*s as sages and mystics who represented the "mystical East" par excellence. Hindu reformers built on this Orientalist characterization and not only presented the modern *faqir* as heir to a tradition of yogis, *rishi*s, and sages representing the "embodied asceticism" of authentic religion but also reinterpreted Jesus Christ in Hindu terms as the ascetic, renouncing Asiatic Christ that the Protestant West had lost.

Both Swami Rama Tirtha and Sadhu Sundar Singh not only accepted but also challenged these assumptions and characterizations on their overseas tours (chapters 4 and 5). Dobe points to physical presence, dress, reproduced images, what each said and did not say, as indicators, but these are best summed up in his term, performance. The former wore either a saffron robe or his academic gown as the occasion warranted. He preached a "Practical Vedanta" which, like modern science, relied on the autonomy of the individual seeker and not on external authority in the search for knowledge and criticized what he called "Churchianity" for doing just the opposite. What was true in the private realm had its parallel in the public realm as well; Rama Tirtha was a religious nationalist who was openly critical of British rule in India. Sadhu Sundar Singh, in his saffron robe, turban, and sandals, physically resembled western pictorial images of Christ so closely than he was subject to much adulation on his tours. He actually preached a very Biblically-based message of the living Christ, complete with testimonies from his own experience, and accepted the adulation he received as a way of connecting people with the living Christ, but refrained from entering into discussions about Hinduism, asceticism, and the "Oriental Christ." He was, on the other hand, publicly critical of the Christianity he found in the West as superficial and found western civilization unable to foster personal spiritual growth, a failure he believed doomed it to destruction. Like Tirtha, he was a religious nationalist, although of a different kind, drawing upon a shared Indian, rather than exclusively Hindu, ascetic tradition.

In chapters 6 and 7 the context shifts to the Punjab and to an argument that "Rama Tirtha and Sundar Singh pursued and performed their sainthood at the intersections of autobiography, ascetic self-transformation, and the publics

attracted to both" (175). These chapters are based on their Urdu writings about themselves. Dobe borrows Robin Rinehart's term, "autohagiography," to describe Rama Tirtha's writings, which include his renunciation of the householder's life, his shift from Krishna *bhakti* to Advaita Vedanta, his relationship with his guru, and especially the way in which he traced his spiritual lineage. Tirtha arranged world religions in a hierarchy with Vedanta at the top so that it became the essence not just of Hindu religion but of religion as such. He then placed the Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Muhammad in his own universalized lineage of "self-realized saints". The parallel chapter on Sadhu Sundar Singh is based on his early work, *A Collection of Incidents* (1915), in which there is no mention of the vision of Christ that led to his conversion, thus suggesting to Dobe that the vision was modeled on St. Paul's conversion experience for the Sadhu's overseas audiences. The *Collection* describes his call to be a *faqir*, and indeed the Christian life in general, to be a calling to pain, suffering, and martyrdom as a witness to the living Christ. Interestingly, Sundar Singh, in this book, traced his spiritual lineage to a series of secret Christian *sanyassi*s and martyrs outside missionary institutions and beyond missionary control, an affirmation of spiritual independence from the West. The concluding chapter seeks to place this book in the context of, and assess its contribution to, religious studies as well as performance studies.

Dobe's primary concern is to relate his materials to religious studies, whereas this reviewer seeks to relate them to historical studies. Historians will find his emphasis upon embodied religion, on agency, and on presentation/performance very congenial. He also did a good job of setting the Punjabi and more broadly Indian colonial contexts, emphasizing their diverse images of holy men and authentic religion. His arrangement of chapters, while not chronological, makes good sense, given the aims he had in view. Bringing the insights of comparative religious studies to bear upon the lives of Rama Tirtha and Sundar Singh is the source of the book's greatest strengths. He has certainly provided an unsettling fresh look at these two *faqir*s and at the ways in which religion functioned in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Punjab. That is all to the good. Dobe's comparative method does, at the same time, raise questions about what constitutes convincing, as opposed to just plausible, evidence for the assertions and arguments offered. On the whole, Dobe is careful about this and his wording reflects that, but there are moments when I become puzzled about whether insights and parallels drawn from Indian or foreign contexts outside Punjab constitute evidence or merely promising hypotheses for events inside the Punjab. For example, Dobe draws a parallel between the Bengali Protestant missionary in

Hoshiarpur, Rev. Kali Charan Chatterji, and a contemporary Catholic Bengali in Bengal, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, with regard to a relatively positive attitude towards ascetics (63). Is the parallel drawn just to make an interesting observation, or imply that Bengalis, regardless of where they lived, were more receptive to "fakirism" than were Punjabis? Or consider the following quotation, which ends with a footnote citing a study conducted in Africa: "The role of the Bible in the narrative [of Sadhu Sundar Singh's conversion], however, unlike [St.] Paul's context in which there was no New Testament, marks the story as a version adapted within a particular missionary context where the Bible had an almost magical power to convert, its own agency" (154).

I must also confess that, for somewhat different reasons, I found the conclusion about Protestant missionary views of ascetics in the chapter entitled "When the Pope Came to the Punjab" a bit of a stretch. "The Pope and his host of saints came to the Punjab in the anti-Catholic imaginations of Protestant missionaries, appearing, avatar-like, in the bodies of South Asian ascetics that so fascinated their imperial and global audiences" (75). Dobe's primary sources for this conclusion were books by William Butler, the pioneer Methodist missionary in the region, and Robert Stewart, a United Presbyterian missionary educator. Both books were published in the United States for American readers. Butler was more a showman and promoter than was Stewart, but both sought to "explain" India to relatively non-elite readers in terms that could be understood and appreciated. The Roman Catholic parallel was a useful device for that purpose and may have had little bearing upon the paradigms with which they and all other Protestant missionaries actually functioned in the Punjab, where the Roman Catholic parallel at that time was largely irrelevant. Incidentally, there are two minor factual errors in that chapter, though they do not affect Dobe's arguments at all. The British officer who invited the first Protestant missionary to the Punjab in 1834 was posted in Ludhiana and not in Lahore (48), and Golok Nath was a Bengali, not a Punjabi (63).

All that said, this is an excellent book. I found it original and challenging. It is not an easy read for the non-specialist, but for those in religious studies and/or Punjab history who are interested in moving beyond the familiar, it is well worth serious examination.

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Lakhwinder Singh, Kesar Singh Bhangoo and Rakesh Sharma. ***Agrarian Distress and Farmer Suicides in North India.*** **New York: Routledge India, 2016. 230 pages. INR 895.**

This book is a critical exploration of agrarian distress and the rising number of farmer suicides in the region of Punjab. Punjab is a traditionally agrarian economy, which was chosen as a site for the Green Revolution in the 1960s. This strategy sought to replicate the American model of capitalist agricultural development in Punjab. It was planned by foreign experts and based on foreign technology and intensive use of chemical inputs. This model of development was also rooted in the political agenda of keeping in check the Punjabi peasantry, who were looked upon as incipient revolutionaries by the Indian state (Anderson and Morrison, 1982: 7).

This strategy transformed Punjabi agriculture and there was a huge increase in agricultural output during the 1960s and 1970s. Punjab was widely touted as an epitome of the success of the capitalist mode of agricultural development. However, by the 1980s this strategy backfired and agricultural development began to languish, while the cost of cultivation rose rapidly in the face of the rising cost of farm inputs and the lack of adequate institutional support for farmers. There was little industrial development in the region and agriculture continued to be the dominant source of employment for the majority of the population. Without any alternative source of livelihood, even today small and marginal farmers in Punjab continue to practice this economically and environmentally unsustainable model of agricultural development, while accumulating high levels of agrarian debt. As a result, the region once known as the "breadbasket of India" has now become infamous for agrarian distress and mounting incidents of farmers' suicides. The book explores the roots and the various dimensions of Punjab's agrarian crisis through extensive empirical research in Punjab. While the work will be of particular interest to specialists in Punjab studies, the findings from this research will also be relevant for social scientists exploring agrarian crisis in other parts of India and the developing world. The lucid writing and the clear presentation will also help this monograph to reach a wider audience, which deserves to be informed about this issue.

The authors begin with a broad introduction, wherein they lay down the general context of agrarian distress in Punjab as well as their proposed line of inquiry and methodology. Following this, the main body of the work is divided

into six key chapters. The first two chapters present a comprehensive review of the problem of agrarian distress in Punjab on the basis of a review of the literature and analysis of official government data. The agrarian crisis originated in Punjab in the 1980s with declining farm yield and productivity level as well as deteriorating quality of the environment due to the intensive use of chemical inputs and the predominance of a cropping pattern dominated by wheat paddy rotation. This crisis deepened with the structural transformation of the Indian economy in 1991 and the launching of the era of liberalization, globalization and privatization. This era led to a decline in the importance of agriculture in national income, cuts to farm subsidies and reduced public investment in agriculture. At this time there was also a political transformation of the state and the ruling political elite in Punjab increasingly turned from farming to non-agricultural sources of income in the form of agri-business concerns, real estate and transport as their major source of income. This eroded the strong political power of farmers' movements in Punjab as the ruling parties became increasingly callous to their concerns. All these factors combined together to make farming an increasingly unviable source of livelihood, especially for small and medium farmers in the region. As returns from agriculture were declining rapidly and the cost of production rose rapidly farmers were forced to resort to borrowing in order to bear the expenses of cultivation. The increasing indebtedness among farmers has become the primary cause of agrarian distress and mounting incidence of farmer suicides in the region. While the authors very lucidly put forth the reasons for farmer suicides in the region, their analysis focuses little on how the Green Revolution model destroyed the social fabric of Punjab and exacerbated social inequities in the region. The large farmers were able to get easy access to new technologies and credit but small and medium farmers were not in a position to do so. By making agricultural productivity dependent on the use of costly inputs, this model of agricultural development made farming unsustainable for small and medium farmers over time. Another important factor, which the authors fail to touch upon, is the continued bias of the central government against Punjab, which hampered the structural transformation of Punjab and is a principal cause for it being an industrially laggard state, with no other source of livelihood other than agriculture for the majority of the population (Singh, 2008).

The next two chapters present the findings from the primary research conducted in the three districts of Mansa, Bathinda and Sangrur in the Malwa region of Punjab. This region has recorded the highest incidence of farmer suicides. The authors have conducted a robust field survey comprising of 1500

farmers and farm labourers and present a rich analysis of the socio-economic profile of these families as well as the main factors, which drive famers to commit suicide. However, the presentation of this section is rather descriptive and more suited to a PhD thesis. It may be a bit tedious for the general reader of the book. The analysis could be made richer if the authors had attempted to align their findings with literature, rather than presenting them in the form of a descriptive analysis.

The next chapter puts forth a case study of Harkrishanpur village in Bathinda district, a small village comprising 126 families, where agrarian distress reached such mounting proportions that the entire village was put up for sale by the *panchayat* (village council) in early 2002 in an attempt to draw the attention of the state authorities. Through this case study and narratives of the fifteen farmer families in the village who committed suicide the authors have presented a very graphic and moving account of the conditions typical of many a village in Punjab and the harrowing circumstances faced by the rural farming community, which is driving them to end their lives prematurely. This chapter very successfully captures the realities of everyday Punjab and is a counter narrative to the success of the capitalist mode of agricultural development. In the last section the authors summarize the key findings and conclusions drawn from this research.

Despite a few shortcomings this book is a very useful addition to the literature on peasant indebtedness and farmer suicides in Punjab. This research provides new empirical evidence on the plight of the peasantry in Punjab in the phase of neo-liberal economic reforms. The book will encourage future research on the subject and is essential reading for those interested in understanding agrarian distress and the crisis in contemporary Punjab.

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Mahmood Ali Ayub and Syed Turab Hussain, *Candles in the Dark: Successful Organizations in Pakistan's Weak Institutional Environment*. London and Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2016. 300 pages. PKR 995.

Many Pakistani institutions, in particular in the public but including the private sector, are dysfunctional, corrupt, inept and demotivating. This leads some commentators to suggest that this reflects indelible characteristics of the

Pakistani people and implicitly Punjabis since they overwhelmingly are the largest ethnicity in the country. The paradox however is that Pakistanis, whether in institutions in the diaspora such as the Gulf States, Europe and the USA or in select organizations in Pakistan, challenge this stereotype by operating in a highly professional and competent manner.

This paradox where some institutions flourish in a broader environment of fragility and hostility, which makes many institutions dysfunctional, is the focus of this book. It proceeds by selecting nine institutions, four that are based in the Punjab and the others are national, that have gained a reputation for being successful: the Motorway Police; Benazir Income Support Programme; National Database and Registration Authority; Institute of Business Administration; Edhi Foundation; Lahore University of Management Sciences; Punjab Education Foundation; Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital; Rescue 1122 and compares them with two failing organizations, Pakistan International Airlines and Pakistan Railways, to make the critical analysis meaningful. All of these organizations, in different ways, have been trail blazers showing how institutions in difficult environments can be successful whether in delivering high quality tertiary and primary education, health and social welfare programmes, or in policing or establishing a registration system for the entire population. In each of these areas these organizations have established an unenviable record for success that has attracted international partners and donor participation. This book not only highlights why institutions succeed but develops thoughtful insights into potential weakness in organizations that are succeeding. A number of points are highlighted that are common to successful institutions: vision and continuity of leadership; clearly defined objectives and goals; management autonomy and political support; financial sustainability; monitoring and evaluation; the role of development partners and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. A weakness is that some institutions need to put in place leadership transition programmes to ensure continuity, others are over dependent on foreign donors and partners while some organizations have governance issues and others need to maintain and replace high quality human resources, while some have issues of institutionalizing polices and resisting political interference.

In contrast, failing institutions have a number of common themes. Pakistan Airlines is subject to massive political interference in recruitment. This results in overstaffing and the politicization of a plethora of trade unions, combined with short-term senior management who are not experienced aviation management experts within a poor regulatory framework where the Civil Aviation Authority

lacks independence. Similarly Pakistan Railways, the largest employer in the country, lacks autonomy and is subject to political interference where critical decisions are not based on a business case and it suffers from acute over-staffing and underfunding. This is combined with mismanagement when inter-departmental coordination is minimal.

This book makes an important contribution to the debate on organizations in Pakistan that operate in a hostile and difficult environment, providing valid evidence for why some have become successful, while remaining critical of their weaknesses.

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Bhupinder Singh Mahal. *Origin of Jat Race: Tracing Ancestry to the Scythians of Antiquity*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2015. 200 pages. INR 895.

Within Punjab Studies very little work has focused on the early history of Jats, with many making the assumption that their presence has been recorded as early as the Indus Valley (Harappan) civilization. Over the past century several hypotheses have been advanced by archaeologists working on ancient north India, by historians of medieval Punjab such as Irfan Habib and by numerous administrators and travellers during colonial rule, especially because of their fascination with enumerating and describing castes, tribes and clans. Most authors suggest that Jats are ancestors of the first Indo-Aryans in northwest India, and so have a long history coinciding with the Harappan civilization, while others suggest that they are descendants of Indo-Scythians, migrating to northwest India at the beginning of the Christian era, thus marking their arrival much later. As Mahal aptly points out, most of these studies are inconsistent and vague regarding actual periods of settlement, the geographical areas from which they originated, along with the different varieties of tribes and clans that migrated. It is generally not suggested that all these tribes and clans may have descended from a common nomadic group such as the Scythians. The latter point is important because it enables us to explain similarity in cultural traits between various Jat and other major historical communities found in northwest India, such as Rajputs. What binds them? Is it the egalitarian ideology espoused by their religious tradition, their political and economic dominance in rural areas or their common

ancestry? Mahal's new book is an attempt to answer these questions.

Mahal had previously written a short piece on Jat ancestry in his first book, *The Nomads and the Mavericks* (2000), but since that book is now out of print, he felt compelled to write a longer piece tracing the ancestry of the Jats—for whom he uses the terms race, tribe or clan interchangeably—to the Scythians of antiquity. What his endeavors have produced is a detailed monograph which pulls together prevailing sources, largely archaeological, to trace the migration history of Jats in Punjab back to Scythian tribes of the first millennium BCE. Organized into 14 bite-size chapters, Mahal, painstakingly produces ample evidence—as shown in material objects found in burial mounds (*kurgan*s), artifacts, customs, beliefs, governance practices and livelihood strategies—to make his claim that modern day Jats are descendants of one of the notable sub-tribes of the larger Scythian nomad group, the Massagatae ('great' Gatae) who, on entering Punjab, transformed and became labeled as Jats. Beginning with antiquity, he explains how Scythians emerged as a formidable nomadic group, how they survived adversaries, developed a mobility culture and evolved a symbiotic relationship with sedentary communities. The nomadic tribe's growth over time, scattering over several regions of the Caucasus Balkan and Caspian Sea regions, sub-divided it into different sub-tribes or factions that were given different names in different geographical regions. Scythians were the first nomadic group to exercise total control over a large territory before being defeated by ethnic groups with larger armies. Around 600 BCE some of these groups were either forced to flee or voluntarily started migrating eastwards, eventually towards Sind and then northwards towards Punjab. Mahal identifies four such waves, the first from around 614 BCE to 120 BCE. Their livelihood depended on mastering the art of pastoralism (producing meat, milk and wool), domesticating animals, especially horses, and developing hunting weaponry and exchanging these for grains and pulses produced by settled communities. This life-style served them well but it meant constant movement due to tensions and sometimes even conflicts with sedentary communities and also because of the constant need for new pastures for grazing their animals—buffaloes, cows and horses. It is interesting that once they entered the lush plains of the Indo-Gangetic delta from the 11th to the 16th centuries, with its bountiful water and very rich and fertile soil, the Jats transformed from being nomadic pastoralists to peasant cultivators *par excellence*.

What proof is there that the Scythian tribes, especially Gatae, were ancestors of present day Jats? Here Mahal first interrogates the available archaeological and material history and associated traits, customs, beliefs and behavior of Scythians

and then attempts to relate them to those of contemporary Jats scattered over several northern Indian states. He goes further to show some of these continuities specifically among Sikh Jats, his own community, albeit in re-invented forms. The book is scattered with these inferences but here I describe some of them to illustrate continuities. The first refers to lifestyle and community solidarity. Mahal shows how Scythian tribes, whilst fiercely independent with a distaste for authority and great fondness for a free-wheeling lifestyle, preferred to live in kindred groups and demonstrated solidarity by taking an oath of brotherhood. They drank a mixture of wine and blood stirred with a double-edged sword from the same vessel. Here he is reminded of the contemporary *Khande-de-Pahul* Khalsa initiation ceremony introduced by the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, at the turn of the 17th century, as well as the Guru's veneration of the double-edged sword. The Jats' lifestyle and living among their kinship group—under the leadership of five elders—and organizing themselves into loose confederacies reminds him of village *panchayat*s and of the *misl* era of Sikh history in the latter part of the 18th century. Both were important for building group solidarity as well as group security. The Scythian tribes loved horses, enjoyed music, dancing, chanting and folk singing especially ballads. In fact they were very creative and innovative and used *garvi*s as household utensils, developed stringed musical instruments and drums and were very fond of hemp-smoking using *hookah*s. He cites the Bhangi *misl* as an example of the continuity in hemp-smoking practices, and we can also trace similar practices amongst Nihangs in Punjab today. He also notices the Jats' fondness for gold, especially wearing gold jewelry such as *mundri*s (earrings). Mahal also suggests in chapter 8 that the Scythian pointed head-dress may well have been the precursor of the turban (68). He provides many other examples of the uncanny resemblances in practices between Scythian tribes and present day Jats in Chapters 8 and 9. Whilst one could argue that seeing connections this way may be stretching the point, nevertheless they do provide very useful pointers to earlier lifestyles of Jats in other lands. To provide validity to his observations, each chapter has extensive footnotes and there is a very extensive bibliography.

Whilst Mahal must be greatly commended for tracing early traits and behavior of Jats and also providing some important insights into the social structure of Jat society, I would have liked him to extend his work to discuss important economic and social transformations in Jat society. If this was undertaken, we might have had his insight into an important dimension to the contemporary unsettled debate within Sikh and Punjab Studies: the issue of caste and Sikh society. If we accept Mahal's interpretation, then Jats entered the Indus

Valley civilization towards its dawn when human settlement was advanced and social structures well established. Jats, presumably, would have been outsiders to the Brahminical caste system and, being nomads, viewed as untouchables. Alberuni, in fact, had described Jats as 'cattle owners, low *Sudra* people' in the early eleventh century. Yet by the seventeenth century *Dabistan-i-Mazahi* refers to Jats as *Vaisya*s. An important question that then arises here is, when and why were they incorporated in the Hindu hierarchical *varna* system and what were the consequences for Jat society? We know that in different historical periods Jats embraced faiths that best appealed to them whether Islam (especially Sufism), Buddhism, Hinduism or Sikhism. In the early sixteenth century, for example, thousands were attracted by the message of Nanak, which appealed to their egalitarian ideology. We could certainly do with more clarity, firstly on the link between the rise in the economic and military power of Jats to become powerful peasant-warriors and elevation in their caste status; secondly, how this elevation with its implication of hierarchy affects the Jat Sikh self-image, given the important egalitarian message, which attracted them to Sikhism. An insight into this question helps us to understand the Jat Sikh-centric ideological view that rejects caste but at the same time not fully detach from the Brahminical *varna* system. After all caste-less Jat tribal groups have now become a caste group and this has important implications. Drawing attention to this issue is not meant to be a criticism of Mahal's book, as he does not cover this period, but more of a personal appeal for further historical research into this question with important contemporary relevance.

Mahal has provided a compelling narrative of the history of Scythians—ancestors of Jats—and has shown that, despite their stereotyping over centuries as 'barbarians', 'outlandish, edgy and menacing' or as having 'unfeeling and hasty temper', they were actually highly cultured, creative, imaginative and resourceful people. Thus despite their pastoralist background they had a sophisticated culture which they carried with them wherever they moved. Providing this insight alone can be seen as a major contribution of Mahal's book. I want to close with two contemporary observations. Firstly, new developments in DNA technology enable us to trace ancestry through scientific methods which would complement the type of work Mahal has undertaken and may be able to dispel myths and broad biological generalizations. This would certainly be a rewarding research project. Secondly, anyone familiar with the recent north Indian political scene knows of the rise of Jat militancy, especially relating to the issue of reservation policy for backward castes, into which Jats also want to be incorporated. The dominant

narrative seems to be that, because Jats are a socially, economically and politically dominant caste in their states, they are not eligible for reservations. This may well be true if one sees caste groups in a rigid monolithic sense, but it does not preclude the fact that for many young Jats, especially those from marginal or small holding backgrounds, agriculture no longer offers a future. With private sector jobs out of their reach, they have no option but to agitate for access to government jobs, or, as seems to be the case in Punjab, to try to migrate out by hook or by crook. There are at least five Indian states where Jats are already included in the OBC (Other Backward Class) list and the issue in Haryana and even in Punjab is not going to go away in the near future.

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