Priya Atwal, *Royals and Rebels: The Rise and Fall of the Sikh Empire*, (Oxford University Press, 2020). 312pp.

There are very few other occasions that I love to attend more than Punjabi weddings. Although the guests, the food and music and the colours overall are dazzling, the focus of attention at these oft-multiple-day events is always the bride and groom. It is the glory of both that simply overwhelms everything and everyone else. Yet attendees should know full well that the wedding's final destination, the *darśan* or sacred viewing of the newlyweds on these auspicious occasions, were journeys long in the making with many background participants, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, friends all of whom play crucial roles in ensuring that the days' events are perfectly executed, time and again instructing both bride and groom on how to properly comport themselves and on how to act and speak and on whom to focus in the symbolism-saturated situation that is the Punjabi *viāh*/*vivāh*. It is this constant, behind-the-scenes work on the part of oft-neglected actors that allows our prime figures to literally shine.

Priya Atwal's wonderful new book, *Royals and Rebels*, takes this understanding of the Punjabi wedding very much to heart as she offers us a long-anticipated corrective to the common, tired historiography of what is often called the Sikh Empire, the *Khālsā Rāj*, or the Lahore *Darbār* - all descriptions she interrogates. What she submits to us instead of the clichéd and stale "great-man-of-history studies" which focus on Ranjit Singh (1783-1839 CE), the maharaja of the erstwhile "kingdom" (the bride and groom rolled into one here if I may continue the metaphor) is an honest and fresh concentration on both the many concealed participants of his courtly entourage, all of whom allowed the *sher-i pañjāb* to shine and be lionized, as well as the objects of these hidden contributors' attention - the man and his male heirs themselves. These are all figures at the very heart of the Sukerchakia *misl* or alliance of which Ranjit Singh eventually became patriarch after the untimely death of his father, Maha Singh, in 1790.

In the span of five chapters bookended by an Introduction and a Conclusion, and culminating in two supremely useful Appendices naming and tagging the original villages, towns and families of all the known wives of Ranjit Singh and his heirs, we are finally able to fully appreciate the arduous attempt on the part of all of these participants to elevate this *misl* and its predominant family to the position of royalty, thus transforming the limited Sukerchakia confederacy from an organization headed by a strongman or *sardār* (a common grouping in eighteenth-century northern India) into a bona fide dynasty whose power and influence was felt throughout the vast Punjab region. We are also able to comprehensively understand its final dissolution under the jackboots of a marching British imperialism.

The wedding metaphor is here chosen purposefully since Atwal begins (and sustains) her story of the Sikh kingdom with just such a wedding - that of Nau Nihal Singh, the grandson of the *maharaja*, in 1837. Within the description of Nau Nihal Singh's nuptials that are scattered throughout the book, Atwal clearly unpacks all of the intricate and important negotiations that are ongoing throughout the event, synchronically and diachronically, and what this event meant to Ranjit Singh. At the same time, she underscores the diplomatic engagement that is the wedding - the work of the "weaponized" princes and the *maharanis* for example - making clear by extension the Lahore Darbar's courtly culture of "dynastic colonialism." This is a fresh perspective on the court drawn from studies of nineteenth-century European dynasties.

In her early chapters, Atwal demonstrates that in so coming to dominate Mughal Punjab, all of the dynasty's players drew upon the many influences which inundated the environment of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Land of Five Rivers to articulate and ultimately embody an understanding of monarchy that was uniquely Sikh, all while drawing upon ideas of sovereignty from both the specifically Sikh and also the more general Indian past. These inspirations included the teachings and memories of the Sikh Gurus, the Persianate inheritance of northern India, the remembered examples of the once-glorious Mughals, and, too, the standards of the British royals and top administrators of the soon-to-be British Raj themselves - the former with whom Ranjit Singh considered himself and his family to be on an equal footing.

This was, as Priya Atwal strongly implies, no mere mimicry of past standards but rather something altogether new in northern India. Indeed, she underscores such innovation in the way that both the *maharaja* and those who supported him drew upon an array of symbolic items and gestures to both accommodate and resist the will of British administrators in the light of the overwhelming power of the English, thus allowing the Lahore Darbar to also stand apart from any other such monarchies. Such items included paintings and manuscripts. A case in point is the simply extraordinary *Shāh-nāmah* of Ferdausi manuscript, a late eighteenth-century folio which shows us both Guru Nanak and Guru Arjan accompanied by musicians in the borders. This does visually what Guru Gobind Singh's *Zafar-nāmah* attempted literally, connecting the Sikh tradition (and now the Lahore Darbar) to India's deep Islamicate past. In this list too she includes medals of valour, clothing, and even a new take on traditional symbols of power. Given Ranjit Singh's identification with the Khalsa, the order of Sikhs established by the tenth and last Guru of the Sikhs in 1699, Atwal makes clear that the Sikh tradition occupied a special place in the imaginary of Ranjit Singh - a location illustrated gloriously by the maharaja's throne which is today lodged within the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. As far as I know Atwal is the first scholar to comment on the fact that the throne was constructed along the same lines as Harmandir Sahib, which was transformed by Ranjit Singh's largesse into the Golden Temple (p. 41).

As inspired as the discovery of such connections are, in my opinion the most important thing to which Atwal makes us privy throughout the entire book, but particularly in later chapters, is the essential and effective role of women in the

everyday running of this potent north Indian state. This includes their prominent responsibilities in what was really Ranjit Singh's pride and joy - the Khalsa army. This was a female agency which was only suppressed and ultimately silenced in the post-Ranjit Singh period of the 1840s through the machinations of certain calculating, ambitious *sardars* such as Sher Singh, Hira Singh and Gulab Singh, and equally manipulative British administrators like George Broadfoot and Henry Lawrence. All of these men had their detractors of course (Broadfoot's being the famous J.D. Cunningham) but they, amongst many others, drew upon gendered narratives and tropes of female inability in order to further their own positions and achieve their own goals, reifying the caricatured image of the deceitful and wily woman in the process and retrojecting this distortion into the Indian past.

The women in question included Sada Kaur, Ranjit Singh's mother-in-law, who guided Ranjit Singh during his early years in the 1790s, allowing him to navigate the tumultuous waters of political diplomacy while at the same time instructing him in defeating opponents and allowing them to retain their dignity so that they may prove to be useful allies in future. In this roster of powerful women are also included Ranjit Singh's wives Mai Nakain and particularly Maharani Jind Kaur (more popularly known as Jindan), whose post-Ranjit Singh life was frustrated at every turn by men like Lawrence and Gulab Singh as she tried to exercise those privileges which were commonly held by the women of the Darbar earlier. An incredibly competent administrator who was astute to a point, it appears Jindan was well aware of these gendered stereotypes of women and occasionally turned them on their head. In many instances, for example, using *purdah* or veiling (and the lack thereof) very much to her advantage whilst doing all she could to avoid the war into which British administrators ultimately forced her. Atwal's work is the first, as far as I know, to honestly assess Jindan in her multiple roles, unpacking and finally dismissing the caricatured images of the *maharani* as either heroine or whore, reputations have pursued her since the late nineteenth century.

In much the same way that Atwal questions the caricature of Ranjit Singh's wives within historiography, she also does scholarship a great service by presenting us with a scrupulous reassessment of Ranjit Singh's first successor, the much-maligned Kharak Singh. Considered an imbecile until, basically, the publication of *Royals and Rebels*, Kharak Singh's scholarly and highly cultured dimension is brought out in the description of the wonderful, illuminated Sanskrit manuscript whose author he had charged with its production, the *Sarvasiddantattvachudamani* (the *Crest Jewel of the Essence of Astronomy*). Indeed, she implies, Kharak Singh too was imagined inept and harmful in such a way as to allow the British to ultimately create a narrative which made the need to destroy the great Lahore Darbar, and tame the Sukerchakias in the process absolutely essential.

In conclusion, *Royals and Rebels* is, put simply, a superb book that captures all of the enthusiasm of a Punjabi wedding as well as that of the once-glorious

Khalsa Raj. It finally allows the Lahore court of the Sukerchakias to be given its rightful place in both the unfolding history of nineteenth-century royalty and of India whilst further exposing the sheer avarice of British empire.

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Gurinder Singh Kairon, Meeta Rajivlochan, and M. Rajivlochan, *Partap Singh Kairon: A Visionary* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2020). 287pp.

For a keen observer of politics, the study of political leaders is helpful in many ways. First, a study of their political career helps in understanding the political and economic changes and developments that happened during their times. Second, leadership study becomes crucial in understanding the processes of party formation, policy agenda-setting, and symbolism especially if parties and party systems are fluid and weakly institutionalised. Third, leadership profiles help in analysing the social composition of the political elites and discerning the demographic shifts, if any. Fourth, focus on the career of a political leader brings into focus the shifting political and economic realities of his times and space. Fifth, in a diverse federal polity, the comparative study of leadership of different regions helps in looking at the specificities of the regional politics. Inexplicably, despite all the advantages, the study of political leaders and their leadership styles has been sketchy in political writings in India. This is intriguing because India has had a long tradition of an impressive array of political parties and leaders at the national, state, and sub-state levels during its seven-and-half decades of successful democratic existence (and even earlier during the nationalist struggle).

Sifting through leadership studies in India reveals that only limited focus has been given to state-level leaders despite India having a string of powerful state leaders all these years. In the first decades of independence, states had Congress leaders like C.B. Gupta, K. Kamaraj, B.C. Roy, Y.S. Parmar, S.K. Sinha, Mohanlal Sukhadia, S. Nijalingappa, D.P. Mishra, and Ravi Shankar Shukla, among others. Even the opposition had leaders like Sheikh Abdullah, C.N. Annadurai, and E.M.S. Namboodiripad who enjoyed signficant national level stature as well. Even after the emergence of the person-centred leadership of Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi, leaders like Devraj Urs, R.K. Hegde and Jyoti Basu among others, remained prominent. The decline of the Congress along with other national parties, barring the late resurgence of the BJP, has witnessed the resurgence of state parties and state-level leadership in the last three decades.

Reading about the political life of Partap Singh Kairon in this well-crafted biography makes us acquainted with the political journey that saw him lead the Congress to victories in the 1958 and 1962 elections as the chief minister. Equally significant also, it tells us a lot about the politics of Punjab as it unfolded

during those tumultuous decades following the Partition and even before. It makes us realise the indelible mark that Kairon left on the state, whether it be the state's achievements in the agrarian and industrial sectors or in building the capital city of Chandigarh with its landmark buildings and premier educational institutions such as Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Research and Panjab University. It also reminds us about his willingness to appoint even his opponents to positions of responsibility if he considered them competent. His administrative acumen included ensuring accountability, introducing a strong work culture, extending office hours, cutting down public holidays related to religion, rewarding and punishing governmental officials, and giving autonomy to educational institutions. The political and personal guts it took to make these tough decisions come through many anecdotes given in the book's narrative. A workaholic who would be always on the move, even when facing bad health, to remain connected with people, Kairon was instrumental in resurrecting Punjab after the Partition and making it the number one state of India. Sifting through the text that specifically focuses on his chief ministerial years helps the reader understand why, after all these years, Kairon still remains etched in the peoples' memory as an unparalleled leader who was committed to building a modern progressive state at a time when sectarian forces were bent on reigniting communal divides among people on linguistic and communal basis.

The meticulously researched book draws extensively from private papers, oral history transcripts, newspaper reports, interviews, and several academic works on Indian politics. It is no surprise that there is not a single book or article referred in the bibliography that focuses on Kairon, drawing our attention to the neglect of the study of state-level political leader in India by academics. The books referred to are on national leaders like Nehru, confirming how one is compelled to study state leaders through national-level proxy in India. And even here, the focus has been only on a few national leaders like Nehru, Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Patel.

What has clearly enabled the authors to do a competent job is their success in having access to relevant private papers and correspondences. The fact that one of the co-authors happens to be the younger son of the leader must have helped. However, this has also brought its own limitations. It is not that the biography turns into hagiography, but rather that objectivity has certainly suffered. The book lacks a critique of the leader's actions/decisions taken during his political career, even when such a presentation is warranted. His rather tough decisions bordering on authoritarianism as the chief minister such as detaining Akali workers and leaders like Tara Singh for long years, and restraining the media from publicising opposition voices are not sufficiently discussed in the book. The authors rather blame other power-hungry leaders for always conspiring against their own government, thus absolving Kairon completely for the rampant factionalism and opportunistic alliances within his own party. The charges of corruption, misconduct, and high-handedness brought against Kairon by rival factional leaders before the Congress Party high command are straight away rejected as false by the authors. Even Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri

is not spared for asking Kairon to resign or the judiciary for conducting an inquiry on corruption charges. One does not find any appreciation for the legal grounds on which the charges were levelled. The details of the specific charges are missing. Thus, the way the volume becomes an uncritical celebration of the political life of the leader weakens its academic value.

What endears this work of labour (and of love) to the readers, however, is the very comprehensive narrative, almost like a meticulously written diary, that details the political events and developments in the state during his lifetime till his tragic assassination while coming back after yet another trip to meet the "high command." Weaving through all the multiple sources mentioned above, the volume does a commendable job to acquaint the reader to Kairon, the political leader, beginning with the days he commenced his career after getting elected as a member of the provincial legislative assembly in 1937 and, even earlier, when he was a political activist of the Kirti Kisan party in early 1930s after returning from America where he earned his dual masters degrees and also dabbled with radical journalism and Marxist-Leninist ideology. As a bargain, we also come to know about the politics of representation involving the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, and the politics of coalition. The decline of the Unionist Party, growing communal divides leading to the Partition, rejection of communal electorates, growing Akali-Congress divide over the issue of creation of a "territorial homeland" for the Sikhs inhabiting the "East Punjab", contention over not only Punjabi language but also the Gurmukhi script all come under discussion as the book traces Kairon's early career.

In addition, the book focuses on the way the Congress would function at the state level after transitioning from being a "movement party" to becoming the "ruling party". In the absence of an effective opposition, the Congress would be divided along factional lines led by powerful leaders with their own support bases. These state bosses, coming from the dominant castes, would however need to seek support of the national leadership in their efforts to score over their rivals. They would also not hesitate in making tactical alliances with opposition parties for this purpose. The Congress, in its own way, thus acted both as the "ruling party" as well as the "party of opposition". Transitioning from the movement party to the ruling party, the Congress had introduced a "high command" culture whereby the national leadership at Delhi would intervene to bring peace among the warring factions and, in the process, leverage their own power and influence. Also, the Congress would be a "party of parties" as members having affiliations with other parties and organisations, and also different ideological inclinations, would be allowed to remain within the party and even in command leadership positions.

Reading the text confirms that Punjab was no exception to the above features of the "Congress system". For one, Kairon, despite remaining in Akali Dal, would be elected as a member of the Punjab Congress working committee in 1939, years before he formally joined the party. At the time, the party was riven by factional wars. Leaders like Bhim Sen Sachar and Gopichand Bhargava led the warring factions within the Congress in the state, each desperately seeking support from the high command. Darbara Singh would become another

powerful rival in Kairon's time. While facing active challenges from these factional leaders, Kairon also had to visit Delhi frequently to meet the "high command" to seek its guidance. In those early days of independence when ideology and personal integrity still mattered, the leadership divisions were not only personal in nature, but also ideological. The right-wing conservative leaders who had a truce with Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha often opposed the secular stand taken by Kairon over various sensitive issues.

Reading the text reveals how the pre-partition cordial relationship between the Congress and Akali Dal turned into open hostility over the latter's demand for the recognition of the Punjabi language as the sole official language of the state, followed by the demand for Punjabi Suba. The national leadership's reluctance to reorganise the border state ostensibly on a linguistic basis made the state's politics contentious. Both the "high command" as well as Kairon considered the demand as communal and therefore a threat to national unity and territorial integrity. He was also vehemently opposed to the demand because he thought it was detrimental to the interests of Punjabis. Kairon would have a running battle over the issue of Punjabi Suba with both Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh, the two prominent Akali leaders of his time and also with leaders within his party like Hardwari Lal, Shankar Dayal Sharma and Devi Lal. On language issues, Kairon was a great promoter of the Punjabi language but was ready to accept Hindi as the second state language for its Hindi-speaking regions.

Writing about the political idiom/language used by political leaders in the early decades of Indian independence, Morris-Jones referred to them as being bilingual and well-versed in resorting alternatively to traditional and modern language. There was no such duality for Kairon. He was out and out an uncompromised modern leader, much ahead of his time that was marked by narrow linguistic and communal politics. He was almost a Nehru as an institution builder, modernizer, and secularist. Like Nehru, Kairon had this vision and a relentless drive to transform post-partition Punjab into a modern progressive state, showcasing what an awakened India could do. This book is a must read for all those who are interested in the Punjabi leader and the politics of his state during his life and times.

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Ashutosh Kumar, *Electoral Politics in Punjab: Factors and Phases* (New York: Routledge, 2020). 116 pp.

This book makes an important contribution to the existing area-studies literature on the electoral politics and political history of Punjab, particularly focusing on the contemporary period. Its analysis is couched squarely in the political science literature on comparative political parties and electoral politics. Kumar's book

is particularly important because it is one of the few existing works which covers the entire history and dynamics of electoral politics from the colonial period to the present in Punjab. The result is a detailed piece of academic research and presentation.

The book is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 serves as the book's introduction and contextualizes its empirical analysis within the existing literature on state-level electoral politics. Kumar acknowledges the importance of national-level political analysis, but correctly points out that one is best served by utilizing the states as the primary unit of analysis to better understand the nature of electoral competition and democratic representation of various societal interests in a huge and diverse democracy such as India. As he writes, "States are being viewed as having emerged as the platforms where not only electoral politics but the whole gamut of political and economic processes unfolds, which all have national impact" (p. 3). The importance of state-level political parties became particularly relevant with the decline of the Congress Party and the ascendance of coalition governments in the center starting in the late-1980s. State-level political parties, as Kumar correctly points out, are central in representing the political interests of parochial societal identity groups within the various states, and thus integrating them into the wider Indian democratic system. The leadership of most of these state-level regional political parties often comes from societal groups marginalized in national politics, but having a higher degree of social and political status within their respective states. Nonetheless, Kumar argues that the leadership of these state-level (often "ethnic") political parties has become more "dynastic" and "family-centered" in recent times, thus partially eroding their previous organizational strength and resulting in more "transactional politics" based on overt patronage and clientelism. This is a potentially concerning trend looking ahead into the future.

The second chapter integrates electoral politics in Punjab into the wider theoretical discussion of the book in a comparative perspective. While there are several reasons for Punjab's "exceptionalism" within wider democratic India, Kumar points toward the existence and centrality of the minority Sikh community, which is a majority in contemporary Punjab. As such, the Sikh-based Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) political party is considered to be the "main driver" of Punjab politics and forms the centerpiece of Kumar's analysis of electoral politics in the state. Avoiding reductionist arguments, Kumar instead carefully examines how various non-religious (i.e., socioeconomic and caste-based) identities influence both the SAD and Punjab's electoral politics more generally. In particular, he emphasizes that the SAD's electoral base is narrowly limited within the land-owning Jat Sikh community which dominates the rural areas and secondarily within the upper-caste urban Sikhs. In contrast, both Hindus and the Scheduled Caste population tends to vote for political parties, other than the SAD. As Kumar points out, these dynamics makes it comparatively more difficult for the SAD to compete with the catch-all Congress Party, which receives support from a wider cross-section of Punjabi society. The importance of socioeconomic status and caste in the various political parties' electoral support bases also dilutes the SAD's ideological

preference to not consider caste, which is anathema in Sikhism. Nonetheless, pragmatic political considerations makes it necessary to consider even for the SAD.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the politics of colonial Punjab and the politics of Punjab after Partition, respectively. Both provide short, but empirically incisive and relevant, overviews of the dynamics of electoral competition during these two periods. Kumar's ability to present these very complex periods in a concise manner represents particular a strength of these two chapters. Chapter 3 shows how the SAD attempted to gain political strength and representation for the Sikhs in emerging colonial political institutions. Yet, the SAD (with its various factions) was not the only political party or entity with significant Sikh support during the colonial period. Others included the Chief Khalsa Diwan, the Khalsa National Party, Congress Party and the Unionist Party which Kumar carefully considers in relation to both the British Raj and demands put forth by the Muslim League on the eve of Independence. Chapter 4 covers the period of electoral politics from 1947 to 1997, although it could have been bifurcated into two - one on the period from 1947 to Operation Bluestar and the other until the end of militancy - to provide more nuanced empirical detail. Nonetheless, the reader gets a focused analysis of the electoral and political dynamics of this period in which the SAD initially tried to extract various concessions for the Sikh community (and Punjab more generally) from the central government and then faced a challenge within the Sikh community from more militant and separatist organizations.

Chapters 5 and 6 offer much of the original empirical analysis and contribution of Kumar's book. The 5th chapter covers each state assembly election in Punjab from the end of militancy in 1997 to the last election in 2017. Kumar examines the nature of both inter-party and intra-party political competition in these elections in careful detail, pointing in particular toward the factional dynamics and relevant political issues which defined each electoral contest. This analysis is supplemented with a table on page 69 showing the electoral performance of each political party in state assembly elections in the period after the creation of the *Punjabi Suba* in 1966 to the present. In addition to the performance of the various political parties, Kumar uses Center for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) data to examine the societal support bases of each political party. Chapter 6 does the same for all national parliamentary elections from 1997 to 2019, including a supplementary table of party performance on page 100. The result is an empirically rich and analytically incisive narrative of electoral politics in Punjab during the entire post-militancy period to the present.

In the final chapter, Kumar sums up and provides analysis of potential political trends into the future. In particular, four trends stand out in this concluding chapter. First, the SAD's current situation as a "dynastic" political party centered around the Badal family as opposed to the previously more "cadre-based" party with more diffuse political leadership. Second, the SAD's challenge in trying to diversify its electoral support base to include the

Scheduled Caste population in Punjab which constitutes a third of the state's population, without concurrently losing its traditional Jat Sikh support base. Third, the ecological and agrarian crises facing Punjab in the coming decades. Finally, the challenge for political parties to better represent societal interests and the long-term developmental challenges of Punjab, as opposed to short-term partisan political gain. These challenges, according to Kumar, will determine the next phase of electoral politics and development in Punjab.

In conclusion, this book is an important descriptive and analytical overview of various factors and phases in electoral politics in Punjab. As one point of critique, the book lacks an overarching theoretical or empirical argument. But, ironically, this possible weakness also serves as a potential strength of the book - that is, what the book lacks in terms of a concise argument, it makes up for with an empirically-detailed analysis of the history of electoral competition in Punjab. Without an understanding of state's electoral politics, it is difficult to comprehend the political history of Punjab and its contextualization within the larger Indian democracy. Hence, Kumar's book, which is unique in its comprehensive coverage of the phenomenon in question, is a requisite reading for any serious student and scholar of Punjab politics and electoral history - both novice and expert alike.

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Shilpi Rajpal, *Curing Madness? A Social and Cultural History of Insanity in Colonial North India, 1800–1950s,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). 296 pp.

This is an excellent book narrating the history of insanity and mental illness in colonial North India, with wider implications for social histories of science and medicine in South Asia. Rajpal offers a finely grained account of discourses and social attitudes and beliefs, and policy-level decisions around the treatment of the mentally ill across colonial Punjab and the United Provinces - including major cities of colonial India - from Lahore to Agra and from Bareilly to Ranchi. The book's relevance to Punjab scholars is clear: the Lahore mental asylum is one of its focal points, and the Punjab Archives - in both India and Pakistan - provide some of its most compelling material.

While a major aim of the book is to highlight the inherently asymmetrical and racially hierarchical attitudes of the colonial British state towards 'insane' Indians (as opposed to 'insane' Europeans), Rajpal is also critical of Indian nationalist interlocutors, who often had equally disparaging views towards the mentally ill. To quote the author on this: "Psychiatric diseases, unlike other illnesses, were difficult to diagnose, thereby lending power to imperial authorities and later to anticolonial nationalism, which used them to their respective advantages" (p.8). Firmly grounded in the archive and rooted in the

historical method, the author nonetheless draws interdisciplinary connections with theorists outside the discipline, from Frantz Fanon to Michel Foucault.

Chapter One examines the connections between the treatment of lunacy and the policies of the colonial state, convincingly demonstrating that the indifference of the state toward the mental sciences accounted for the underdevelopment of psychiatry as a discipline in India. Rajpal traces the evolution of 'insanity' as a legal concept, and the stamp of the white man's burden on legislations like The Lunatic Asylum Act of 1858, and also the reform attempts after the report of the Indian Hemp Drug Commission in 1894. This chapter offers a good overview of colonial discourse around and policy towards defining and governing 'lunacy' and setting up lunatic asylums or mental hospitals.

The following chapter shines a light on the infrastructures behind the "management" of madness, focusing on asylum architecture, the perspective of personnel running the asylums, and the moral anxieties around medication of patients. The discussion on the anxieties of the spatial location of the Delhi and Lahore asylums is particularly fascinating. The colonial authorities considered the capital city of Delhi as unsuitable for such an undesirable institution. Eventually, the asylum at Delhi was closed, and all inmates moved to the Lahore asylum, created in March 1900 (designed by the eminent Punjabi architect Ganga Ram), henceforth Punjab's only central asylum (pp. 67-72). The author also offers rich detail on the historically shifting geographies of the Lahore asylum itself, from its institution along reformed lines at the end of the nineteenth century, going back to the attempts of figures like Ranjit Singh's Transylvanian physician Honigberger in pre-annexation Punjab. (pp. 72-78).

While drawing connections between the treatment of insanity in the metropole (Britain) and the colony (India), Rajpal constantly highlights the apathy of the colonial state toward Indians who were mentally ill, typecasting them as "stupid" (p.82, p.149), "unintelligent" (166-7), "feeble-minded" (p.166, p.265). Using several case studies such as the cultivator Pahloo at the Lahore asylum, or the petty criminal named "A.D.," both of whose only 'claim' to insanity was their so-called "feeble-mindedness" or their "weak intellect," the author points out how incarceration in the correctional context of the asylum often *drove* these perfectly functional men to the 'edge' of their sanity (pp.166-7).

Building on the work of historian Waltraud Ernst, Rajpal also examines the gendered nature of the incarceration in the mental asylums or *pagal-khana*s, where men outnumbered women. She also points out the racial and hierarchical and gendered constructs about European women being more prone to post-partum mental illness than 'savage' or 'uncivilised' Indians, revealing prejudices like those held by the Lahore asylum Superintendent, who believed that for Indians, "processes of child-birth are easier than in more civilized races." Regardless, Rajpal offers evidence of women like 'Jumna Devi' or 'Raj Dulari', who were both referred to the Lahore asylum in the immediate aftermath of childbirth, on account of being unable to care for their children. Despite the

academic nature of the study then, its tone emphasises the plight of many unfortunate inmates like Pahloo, A.D., or indeed Raj Dulari, foregrounding their poignant, and often tragic, experiences inside the asylum.

In one of the most powerful chapters in the book on "Everyday Histories", the author examines quotidian histories of life behind the asylum walls, attempting to access the voices of the mentally ill themselves. Rajpal notes the many attempts of those in the asylum to resist the mundane and banal routine of the asylum - including refusing to wear clothes, and most commonly and consistently, demanding a better diet. The author also reveals examples of inmates surviving by making the 'alien space' of the asylum adaptable, by forging new bonds and roles, but also, by keeping pet animals (rabbits, pigeons, lambs), playing cards, and, in the case of a few skilled musicians, performing music on instruments. (p.126, p.136).

The chapter on 'Case Notes and Histories' excavates the various categories used to pigeonhole the mentally ill, from the 'delinquent' to 'criminal lunatic,' the latter being used to effectively incarcerate a number of individuals like 'political criminals,' who were far removed from medical insanity (p.163). The indifference towards, even deprecation of, indigenous medical traditions like Ayurveda and Unani is the theme of the book's final chapter, which explores the connections with modernity and madness more centrally.

Rajpal has visited dusty archives in remote locations, and institutions as varied as the present-day Agra and Lahore mental asylums, with their roots in colonial times, to construct her narrative. The result is not just an impressive historical tome, but also an account where the stories of those deemed "insane" occupy centre stage, even as the author weighs in on larger debates about how the inequities and asymmetries of colonialism impinged upon the history of care and cure of madness in north India. With an impressive range of primary sources and spatial and temporal depth, this book is an important, empirically grounded contribution towards understanding the lives of the mentally ill: a group still burdened by immense social stigma in South Asia. It will appeal to historians, anthropologists, sociologists, science, technology, and society (STS) theorists, medical and mental health professionals, and those more generally interested in the colonial history of Punjab and of South Asia.

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