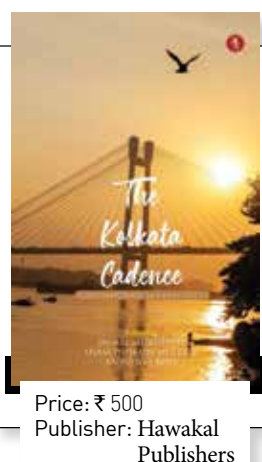




Imprint of cumulative changes

The experimental collection takes the readers through the lanes of the past, invokes nostalgia and creates sync with the ever-changing life of Kolkata through varied verses



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MALASHRI LAL

As a *probsi* Bengali, I've always seen Calcutta through the eyes of writers and tried to seek mirrored images during my occasional visits to the city of my ancestors. Kolkata Cadence, the cultural landscape viewed by fresh eyes, is just what suits my taste and acts as a counterpoint to my nostalgia. Featured here are contemporary Kolkata poets who write candidly about the simultaneity of many existences in this tur-

bulent space. Jorasanko coexists with hovels in the back lanes, the ramshackle tram snakes its way past imposing high rises, the Hooghly river, shrivelled along its embankments, still looks beautiful under the *aas-rah* moon. The 'Calcutta chromosome' mutates once again to capture this vibrant city that writers love, whether living there or recalling its haunting attractions.

The editors, Jagari Mukherjee, Inaam Hussain Mullick and Anindita Bose have brought 25 poets into this anthology, attractively packaged by the publisher. My journey through this book is more by the themes than the authors as I am fascinated by how the cadences — the nuanced waves — flow over the artefacts. Poetry is in the soil, ether and history of the city, inviting words and thoughts to capture the fleet-footed emotions. In the words of Gopal Lahiri: "The narrow shadow of the pillar flickers/candle lights fade into the hollow of life." For

Amit Shankar Saha, poetry is the search for metaphors for "dark times" and "unseason season." I like the provisionality of such vocabulary as though the writer is breaking past the limited resources of the standard language.

Truly Kolkata, changing its name, its affiliations, its institutions, is a city in perennial flux. The stately old mansions are now crumbling into decay yet resonating with the voices of the dead. This picture evokes many thoughts. Malika Bhaumik's "Lost Property Box" and Kiriti Sengupta's "On the Richter Scale" are sophisticated excursions into the memories that old walls continue to retain. Calcutta appears often as a pulsating body as in Raja

Chakraborty's lines, "Amidst the mayhem of motor cars/And multitudes of faceless on-goers/fighting the belching smoke," or in Anjana Basu's images, "The voices, the birds and the dying fish/The city flits from dream to dream/To hell." It's a tense love and hate relationship with the place, also the abode of warm human contacts, of friendships,

love, sexuality, trauma, and violence. Such density exists only in the layers of a complex urbanity, caught on the wing of poets such as Joie Bose ("I love your many facets/you're my prism"), Linda Ashok ("the blanket I wear smells/of a lost town) and Bina Sarkar Elias ("the bare feet of a rickshaw-wallah/etched footprints on my skin").

What happens then to traditions such as the uncomplaining mother slaving in the kitchen? Some remarkable retakes of this stock image are found as in Ananya Chatterjee's lines:

*Ma, though, chokes
Every now and then
It's always the fish bone
in her throat she says*

We believe her... my sister and I. Another kind of challenge to traditions speaks through Sanjukta Dasgupta's emotive poems. In powerful lines, "Sita's Sisters" asks about the anger behind the silence, and the continued violations of a woman's integrity. "Thousands and thousands of Sita's sisters/Programmed parrots/Pathetic puppets/Remote-controlled robots." On Mahatma Gandhi, Sanjukta adopts the path of ironical humour in the "Dhoti Dance": "The frail old man in a dhoti led the British such a dance/that their pantaloons and pajamas slipped off as they/pranced and danced."

This anthology has a refreshing air of experimentation, most of which is successful. Poetry in rhyme, blank verse, haiku and poetic prose appear variously. I was, however, a little daunted by four introductory pieces: an exuberant Foreword by global writer Sanjeev Sethi, followed by separate 'editorial notes' by the team members. Sethi has a charming insider-outsider perspective which I enjoyed. For the editors, one defining vision framing the book may have sufficed so long as it accommodated the highly perceptive individual statements. In fact, the addition of poems by each of them, published poets as they are, would have enriched the volume further.

Altogether, it's been a delight to savour the rich and sensitive collection. The minutiae of Calcutta/Kolkata, this eternal city of soul-searching writers, is poetically rendered with acumen and understanding.

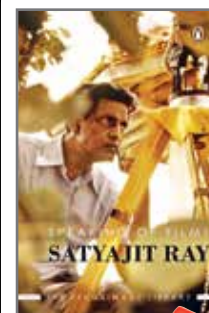
The editors, Jagari Mukherjee, Inaam Hussain Mullick and Anindita Bose have brought 25 poets into this anthology, attractively packaged by the publisher

FRESH OFF THE

SHELF



Speaking of Films



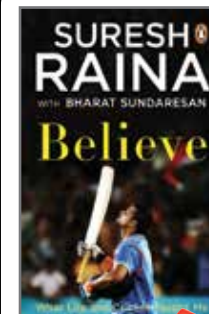
This first-ever translation of *Bishay Chalachitra*, a seminal collection of essays on cinema, *Speaking of Films* retains the lucidity and simplicity that is a hallmark of Ray's writing, and gives an invaluable insight into the mind of a genius.
Author: Satyajit Ray
Publisher: Penguin

Karya



A poetic work calling for change in our casteist society, *Karya* unfurls a kaleidoscope of perspectives. It unfurls the politics and power embedded within a Dalit community.
Author: Aravind Mallagatti
Publisher: Penguin

Believe



Peppered with invaluable insights — about the game and about life — this book will make you believe in the power of hard work, love, luck, hope and camaraderie.
Author: Suresh Raina & Bharat Sundaresan
Publisher: Penguin

MAPPING THE STATES OF INDIA

AMALGAMATION WITH PROVINCES

AUTHOR



SANJEEV CHOPRA

Integration of princely states was clubbed in Part-A, Part-B and Part-C states — the last of which saw the popular movement for merger with neighbouring provinces

After the settlement of privy purses, the States Ministry moved with great alacrity to integrate the princely states with existing provinces, or newly created unions of erstwhile princely states. Thus 216 of these were amalgamated with the neighbouring provinces of Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh (formerly Central Provinces and Berar), Madras, Orissa, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh (formerly the United Provinces), and West Bengal in the part A states, and the other 275 were included in Part B states. These were former princely states or unions of princely states, governed by a Rajpramukh, who was usually the ruler of a constituent state with an elected legislature. The Rajpramukh was appointed by the President of India. The eight Part-B states were Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Bharat, Mysore, Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU), Rajasthan, Saurashtra, and Travancore-Cochin.

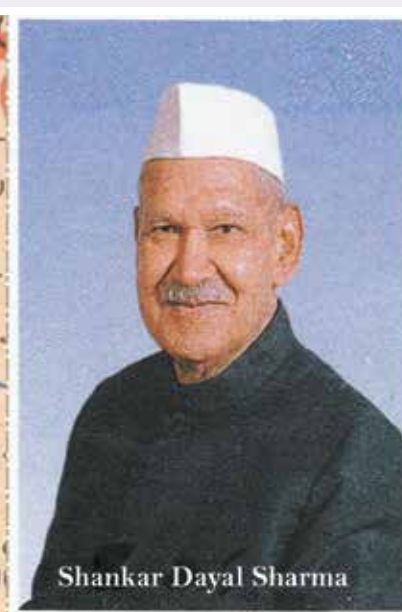
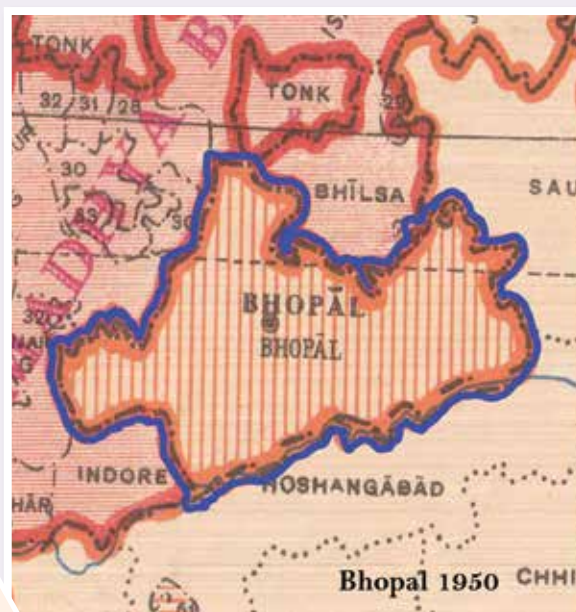
The rest of the states — Bhopal, Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh (erstwhile Punjab Hill states), Kutch, Manipur, Tripura and Vindhya Pradesh (Bundelkhand and Bahgelkhand states), along with Ajmer Merwara, Coorg and Delhi (areas directly administered by the British) — were constituted as Part-C states. These momentous changes were comparatively easier to implement under the Government of India Act 1953, which remained

the constitutional law of India till January 26, 1950. This Act gave overwhelming power and authority to the Central Government to bring about territorial adjustments.

Of these Vindhya Pradesh had first been constituted as a state, but on account of internal bickering, the experiment failed. This was the only example of the Union of states being reconstituted as a Chief Commissionerate. Specific provisions for their administration were laid down in Part-VIII of the Constitution. Initially, the administration had to be carried on by a Chief Commissioner appointed by the President, but

There was not much in common among the Part-C states, except that on account of their strategic importance, historical circumstances, or on the request of their rulers, these states were accorded this status

there was widespread resentment amongst the workers of the Praja Mandal with regard to the denial of 'popular participation', especially



Shankar Dayal Sharma

as those living in part-B and part-A states were directly responsible for their own affairs. YS Parmar from Himachal, Chaudhary Brahm Prakash from Delhi and SN Shukla from Vindhya Pradesh were at the forefront of the demand for responsible and elected legislatures. It led to the passage of the Governance of Part-C states Act of 1951, and each of them got a Chief Minister, albeit with limited powers. Vindhya Pradesh and Himachal were also elevated to the status of Lt Governor's province.

It must be mentioned that there

was not much in common among the Part-C states, except that on account of their strategic importance, historical circumstances, or on the request of their rulers, these states were accorded this status. However, it was quite clear from the very beginning that this was an interim arrangement. In fact, popular movements in many of these states were supportive of merger with the neighbouring provinces. In the first elections held in Ajmer Merwara, Haribhau Upadhyaya from the Congress led the popular ministry winning 20 of the 30 seats, and pressed for land reform legislations, besides campaigning for merger with the neighbour-

ing state of Rajasthan. Elections in Bhopal saw the rise of Shankar Dayal Sharma, who was then the youngest Chief Minister in the country and later became the President of India. Sharma had been at the forefront of the popular agitation against the Nawab of Bhopal for his failure to sign the Instrument of Accession with India and had been arrested and detained for over eight months. Bilaspur was allowed to retain its identity for the Bhakra Nangal project was laid in this state and was soon to be submerged in the dam area. As such the ruler MS Himmat Singh Ji's request to be allowed to be the first CC was accepted. It was merged

into Himachal in 1954. As mentioned earlier, Himachal Pradesh saw the emergence of YS Parmar as a popular leader who was always at odds with the Chief Commissioner. The Chief Commissioner there was EP Moon, former ICS and the author of Divide and Quit — an account which castigated Mountbatten and the British Raj for their complete abdication of responsibility. EP Moon's proximity to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, then the Union Health Minister and a confidante of Nehru was irksome to CM Parmar.

Kutch, Tripura and Manipur were border-states and hence considered to be very sensitive. Kutch was indeed one of the largest states of western India, with an area of 8,461 square miles, a population of nearly five lakhs and revenue of Rs 80 lakh. Menon writes "though Kutch was linguistically and culturally a part of Kathiawar, there were good reasons why we should keep the state directly under our control for some time to come, particularly as with the partition, Kutch had become a frontier state with Pakistan". Another important consideration was the direct involvement of the Centre in the establishment of the Kandla port, which required the building of a railway network and resettlement colonies for the Sindhis who had moved to India. A former Praja Mandal leader and activist Seth Rajmal Shah was the Chief Minister of the state till its eventual merger with Bombay after the SRC recommendations in 1956.

Views expressed are personal