The Partition Notebooks: a Review Essay

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Kiran Doshi, 2017. *Jinnah Often Came to Our House*. New Delhi: Tranquebar Press, Westland Publications Ltd, pp. 490, Rs. 595.

T.C.A. Raghavan, 2017. *The People Next Door: The Curious History of India's Relations with Pakistan*. Noida: Harper Collins Publishers India, pp. 348. Rs. 699.

Arun Bhatnagar, 2018. *India: Shedding the Past, Embracing the Future 1906-2017*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd, pp. 264. Rs. 650.

History is a pitiless science. Under the historian's gaze, new information can turn yesterday's hero into today's villain. This is true of India's partition. It did not follow the script. India's freedom was not a fairly tale of struggle and victory. Partition was tainted with blood. A dark past makes the definitive judgment on Partition difficult. If we scruff the taint, events appear different.

Starting from the early twentieth century, these three works navigate the slippery pathways to Partition, neither eulogising nor demonising the protagonists.

The figures they write about might disappoint some, but triumphs and follies shadow all human life. Two of the authors are former diplomats, and the third is a civil servant. Practitioners are prudent, familiar with good and bad decisions. Being expert in the art of the possible, the authors calm the debate.

Doshi's work won him the Hindu Prize for Fiction 2016. Raghavan's is contemporary history, and Bhatnagar's is commentary. Doshi deals with the past (1904-1937), Raghavan with the present (1947-2008), and Bhatnagar with past and present (1906-2017). Writing on the same epoch tempts singling out the better author. But being different genres, there is reason to avoid a score sheet. A practitioner's views count, regardless of the quality of literary craft, and we should leave it at that.

History in Three Voices

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Hindu-Muslim collaboration for India's independence seemed promising. Then, it fell apart. Doshi's fictionalized political history is about twentieth century upper class Mumbai Muslims, based on lives of people he has known. His exploration of love and betrayal is suffused with backgrounders on the slow disintegration of India's unity. In the service of independence, personal lives are torn. Idealistic nationalists like Rehana stumble into loss. Paradoxically, Doshi's mainly Muslim characters, notably Sultan Kowaishi, put their bets on the material. But it is the lofty Jinnah's complex morality that takes the novel forward, even when others appear to be in the front lines. Raghavan writes about the real India-Pakistan conflict that followed Partition. The account is chronological, but the perception is subtle. Beginning with the accession of princely states, the Indus Waters Treaty, the wars of 1965 and 1971, the restoration of diplomatic relations and efforts to pick up the pieces, the crises of 1987, 1990 and 2001, and the Kargil war, Raghavan ends his book with the stalemate of the twenty first century. Bhatnagar divides his book into four sections: Partition, Prime Ministers, *Hindutva* (Hinduness) and India's Challenges – foreign affairs, the economy, defence, and science. From the founding of the Muslim League in 1906, his commentary moves past India's trials and triumphs to the low of Partition, hitting turbulence as independent India struggles with its past. Like a choice of dishes on a revolving table, Bhatnagar entices us with the sheer breadth of his work.

With faith and politics in contestation, Doshi's novel is imagined with warmth and humour. For a former diplomat, the transition to writing fiction is remarkable. Raghavan, who was India's envoy to Pakistan, and worked on the Pakistan desk in India's Foreign Ministry, provides an "Indian" (p. xi/§4) perspective that is "subjective and selective" (p. ix/§3), "animated and anecdotal" (p. x/§1). He relies upon published information and India's Foreign Ministry archives to deliver informed judgments. Even with few primary sources, the volatility of the India-Pakistan relationship hands us minor gems. Bhatnagar says little on Pakistanis he knew while in government, and many of the Indians he writes about do not come out well. His heart is in Indian science, and its heroic figures.

The authors give agreeable accounts of official India, yet not confined to what governments like to hear. Since deniability is wired into fiction, it is easier for Doshi to break free of taboos. Raghavan shows how Indians and Pakistanis draw different conclusions from the same negotiations, even the same text. He has enough of the Pakistani point of view to claim impartiality. He confesses to an Indian perspective, but observes events as a historian, with diligence and rigour. Bhatnagar assesses personalities with candour and grace.

Rewind into the early 20th century. The British colonisers sang their own paeans. It looked different to Indians. Nationalist politicians, such as Gandhi and Nehru, wrote about the colonised from prison cells. After independence, the lives of the British in India ceased to interest scholars, except imperial romanticists. Research focused on India and its problems. This process has accelerated. As a frontrunner in the world's new economic architecture, India increasingly resembles other great powers in behaviour. This makes India a subject of study for what it is, rather than what others imagine it to be. With the nation's voice growing, India-born authors have a wider audience. Like Ramachandra Guha's *India After Gandhi* or Dipankar Gupta's *The Caged Phoenix: Can India Fly?*, the authors demystify western tropes of India as a supposedly other- worldly culture. One wonders why it needs Indians to normalise India.

A Nation Goes Under the Knife

Most entry points to the creation of Pakistan have been explored. The overwhelming focus is on the west. Amritsar has a Partition Museum, but Kolkata doesn't. Better researched is the Pakistani army's genocide in East Pakistan, and the creation of Bangladesh. India's second partition in 1971 is seen more as an India-Pakistan contest than a humanitarian catastrophe. Consistent with the flow of existing enquiry, neither author comments on the partition of Bengal. This subject deserves its historians.

Hindus and Muslims in East Bengal were polarized considerably before their brethren in the west. From the 19th century, East Bengali Hindus began to abandon

their landholdings, and moved to Kolkata to join the professions. Partition atrocities in the east do not match the horrific numbers of the west, but it was an equal suffering. On August 16, 1946, Pakistan's founder, Muhammed Ali Jinnah's call for "Direct Action Day" saw the massacre of 50,000 Hindu Bengalis in Noakhali, and only Gandhi's fast prevented retaliation against Muslims in Kolkata. In the northwest, polarization was slower. Punjab's Hindus were landowners and traders. The Sikhs lived in the "canal colonies", with little appetite to relocate. The British recognised contrasting attitudes in Bengal and Punjab.

The case of the Sikhs is curious. Their main holy sites were in West Punjab. Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, has nine *Gurudwaras* (temples). Gurudwara Panja Sahib is at Hasan Abdal, and Maharaja Ranjit Singh's *samadhi* (mausoleum) is in West Punjab. Mass migration of Sikhs to the east changed the way they think about their history. Some Sikhs in Europe and the Americas want a sovereign state called Khalistan, in India's Punjab, not in Pakistan's Punjab, where their historical memory is lodged. Why the Sikhs have abandoned ownership of a past rooted in the western half of Punjab needs more research.

Doshi's novel recreates the Muslim side of this past, with conflicted characters hurtling towards Partition. Raghavan says little on events leading to Partition. It is Bhatnagar that deals with Partition in detail. Congress got its strong India, instead of the federated state Jinnah wanted, yet complained for years that India had been divided (p. 62/§3). Bhatnagar is gracious towards the feudal stalwarts who came up short at Partition. Not all feudals bowing before the nationalist juggernaut were immediately discarded. After Hyderabad's merger with India, the last Nizam, Mir Osman Ali Khan, was appointed *Rajpramukh* (first minister), under the watch of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, India's first home minister. Others left wider legacies. The last Nawab of Junagarh, Sir Muhammad Mahabat Khanji III Rasul Khanji's love of wildlife helped develop the Gir forest as a habitat for the Asiatic lion. Bhatnagar plucks the good from the mayhem.

Partition's quibbles continue to confront us, as domestic quarrels. The international response to it needs more research. Bhatnagar has a pointer. Burma's Aung San presciently said Partition "augurs ill not only for the Indian people but also for all Asia and world peace" (p. 62/§5). Others have pronounced on the international aspect, but we have limited knowledge of it.

Dreamers and Disrupters

In the accounts of the authors, most Partition actors falter. Bhatnagar says that India's last viceroy, Louis Mountbatten, was appointed "far too early in the day" (p. 54/§4) being "less than distinguished" (p. 56/§2) and given to "pomp and ceremony" (p. 47/§3). In his predecessor, Archibald Wavell's place, "I might have succeeded in keeping the country together" (p. 56/§6) Mountbatten vainly declares.

Indians fare no better. Nehru had tired of the quarrels with the Muslim League, losing the appetite for a fight. Gandhi was alone in forlorn quietude the day India got carved up. Other nationalists either followed Gandhi and Nehru, or, like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, were sidelined.

Neither author pronounces on Mountbatten's attitude towards Pakistan. But clearly, the British were scouting Hindu-Muslim fault lines for opportunities to strengthen the imperial hold. Doshi says: "The British were at last beginning to realise that they had made a terrible mistake in suppressing Mohammedans after 1857. That had let Hindus progress so much that they were actually becoming a threat to British rule. To counter that, the British had no option but to help Mohammedans become strong again" (p. 53/§4). British partiality for Muslims rankles the lawyer Pandey, who loses out on a job to Jinnah: "You know why the Britisher sponsored him and not me? Because Jinnah is a Mo'mden whereas I belong to the community of no-good agitators, being a Hindu" (p. 48/§4).

The British "found themselves bolstering the Muslim League" (p. 38/§2) Bhatnagar asserts. Wavell found Jinnah "straighter, more positive and more sincere than most of the Congress leaders" (p. 39/§7). Francis Mudie, governor of Punjab, said: "Like most practical administrators in India, I had always preferred the Muslim to the Hindu ... his charm was not put on if he liked you... he was naturally charming" (p. 41/§4). Mudie was smitten by Muslims: "There was no examination of what the Muslims were afraid of and of whether there was any way to remove their fears, other than Partition. Instead there was nothing but politics and what looked ... like attempts to trap Jinnah into some difficult position or other" (p. 41/§5). Likewise, Ian Stephens, editor of the British-owned newspaper, *The Statesman*, published an advertisement on behalf of the rulers of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, prompting Patel to advise his recall to Britain (p. 47/§4). Bhatnagar presents compelling evidence of the British tilt towards Muslims.

Not a Courtier

Why would Jinnah not have felt bolstered by such support? In Doshi's account, Jinnah is a determined disrupter. The more he refuses to concede to opponents, the more interesting he becomes. This might explain why Doshi's novel is about Jinnah, rather than Gandhi or Nehru. To understand Jinnah, we also need to put our finger on the upper class Mumbai Muslim community he came from. What were they like?

Doshi portrays Muslims with a visionary sympathy, based on ties of family, through his marriage to a Muslim. "Half my family is Muslim", he told a gathering of his former colleagues at a discussion honouring his book. The loves and quibbles of the novel's characters have a poignant intimacy. The research on the era Jinnah shaped is good. These are personal journeys, mostly of Indians, but along the way the jour-

neys become political. There is little on how individual Britons responded to the empire slipping away. The few British characters are ornamental.

To Indians, Jinnah is a villain, never mind the many false starts of the nationalist project. Doshi revisits Jinnah, human as any of us. He does not gloss over Jinnah's faults, but also salutes his integrity. Even while disagreeing with Jinnah's politics, there is an effort to understand his compulsions. The stubborn Jinnah was not "open to reason once he had made up his mind to do something" (p. 4/§2). In acts of straightforward obstinacy, he "would only smoke more if asked to smoke less" (p. 48/§1). Does self-obsessed determination finish us, as smoking caused Jinnah's tuberculosis? Is Doshi hinting at Jinnah's self- destruction?

Doshi also finds Jinnah evolving from a secular nationalist to a champion of Muslims. The early Jinnah was a Nehru clone: "The British have not given us the railways, Kowaishi. They've given themselves the railways, and they've done so because troops move faster by train than in bullock carts" (p. 45/§15). Or, consider: "Communal electorates can only make people think communally, not as citizens of one country" (p. 107/§5). Up to page 107 of the novel, Jinnah is the toast of the nationalists.

In his telling of Jinnah's resignation from the Congress party, the point where he transforms into a spokesman for Muslims, Doshi hints at his own sympathies. As Jinnah exchanges glances with Rehana, the secret admirer of his nationalism, his transformation begins. Doshi compares this to "the glance in the eyes of Julius Caesar on the stage at Stratford-on-Avon when he cried *Et tu, Brute*, and fell" (p. 248/§1). The nationalist Jinnah has come full circle.

Doshi unflinchingly locates his work within the bounds of facts, as they might have happened. He avoids hindsight. Turning painful facts into fiction softens his disagreement with Jinnah's politics. This is deliberate.

Unlike other negative accounts, Doshi's Jinnah is honourable, almost. Doshi employs fiction to unmask the vulnerable Jinnah. Consider his wife Ruttie's one final, poignant longing before her death: "I would like to be J's wife in my next life also" (p. 319/§13). Then, the pleading: "Tell him that. And tell him that I promise to be a better wife next time" (p. 319/§13). Doshi's reference to Jinnah weeping at Ruttie's grave is regarded as a fact. He brings poignancy to love.

Bhatnagar, too, courageously humanises the vain, honourable and determined Jinnah. Stanley Wolpert's assessment clarifies Bhatnagar's surrogate sympathy: "Few individuals significantly alter the course of history. Fewer still modify the map of the world. Hardly anyone can be credited with creating a nation- state. Muhammad Ali Jinnah did all three" (p. 191/§1). Mudie's Jinnah is upright: "His great hold on the Muslims of India was due to his reputation for absolute strength and integrity and any compromise might have been interpreted as a sign of weakness" (p. 41/§2). Drawing strength from such portraits, Bhatnagar delivers a posi-

tive assessment: "Jinnah's achievement assures him a place in world history" (p. 191/§2). This is true. Few came close to achieving what Jinnah did. In contrast, Nehru became Prime Minister "because Gandhi declared him his heir" (p. 75/§3), Bhatnagar asserts.

Like Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah, other Partition figures were conflicted. We don't know what went on in the minds of the multitudes caught on the wrong side of the religious divide. They were too poor to relocate. The prosperous had a choice. Most upper class Muslims left for Pakistan, Raghavan says. Azim Husain and Mohammad Yunus chose India. K.L. Gauba converted to Islam, yet questioned the wisdom of a Muslim state, remaining in India. Air Commodore Balwant Das and the diplomat Jamsheed Marker opted for Pakistan. Raja Tridiv Roy, the Chakma leader of the east, chose Pakistan's distant overlordship to immediate Bengali Muslim tyranny. Yet he was an outsider in Pakistan (p. 116/§3), says Raghavan.

Bhatnagar carefully tick marks the shifting loyalties of Muslim officers of the Indian Civil Service. Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, Pakistan's first secretary general, was from the Audit and Accounts Service. Sir Ghulam Muhammad (1951-1955), Pakistan's first finance minister and third governor general, was from the Railway Accounts branch. The two brothers Agha Hilaly and Agha Shahi, who had joined the Indian Civil Service in 1936 and 1943, opted for Pakistan. Hilaly became Pakistan's envoy in New Delhi and Shahi became the Foreign Secretary in 1973. It was esteem for Jinnah that made Hilaly choose Pakistan, Bhatnagar quotes his son Zafar Hilaly as saying (p. 45/§2). Nawab Mohammad Ismail Khan, a prominent Muslim League leader, stayed on in India, but two of his sons and members of the Indian Civil Service, G.A. Madani and I.A. Khan, chose Pakistan (p. 73/§5). Bhatnagar provides a fine reading of Pakistan's leading lights.

Contested Heritage

Even after Muslims had their Pakistan, peaceful coexistence with India remains elusive. Both sides are unable to delink inter- state relations from personal pieties. Indians assert a common identity: "Oh! They are just like us." Pakistanis recoil at this. Pakistani diplomat Shahid Amin terms the Indian assertion of a common culture "a subtle argument to deny the rationale for the very creation of Pakistan"[1]. Pakistan champions an Islam beginning with the Arab conquest of Sind, neglecting its pre- Islamic heritage. Jinnah's vision of a secular state has been long-discarded in favour of Islamic majoritarianism, transforming into violent extremism. Pakistan unflinchingly holds that Muslims were right in drawing away from Hindu domination. The Pakistani author Haroon Khalid writes: "After Partition, while ancient

1 Amin, S., 2009. *Reminiscences of a Pakistani Diplomat*. Karachi: Karachi Council on Foreign Relations, p. 97.

Buddhist sites were preserved, and promoted, as part of the country's rich history, the Hindu heritage was ignored as the trauma of Partition and the quest for shaping an identity distinct from Hindu India animated the national narrative. During the wars of 1965 and 1971 with India, members of the Hindu and Sikh communities were attacked. In 1992, after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in India, many Hindu temples in Pakistan were destroyed"[2].

Raghavan puts the number of temples destroyed at a hundred and twenty (p. 203/§2).

Similar voices have arisen in India, where the Hindu Right asserts a rejection of the Islamic contribution to India. Here, Bhatnagar's meticulous research into *Hindutva* is instructive. *Hindutva* is not recent, but developed alongside the secular nationalist movement as an alternate philosophy, he asserts. After Gandhi's assassination in 1948, *Hindutva* was in retreat, to gradually regain lost ground, culminating in the Bharatiya Janata Party's 2014 election victory. There is a fine analysis of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS – National Volunteer Force), and leaders such as Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Deendayal Upadhyaya and Madhukar Dattatraya Deoras. Bhatnagar calls Mookerjee "a remarkable figure in Indian public life in the forties and fifties and a fearless nationalist," with "lofty idealism" and "impeccable character" (p. 176/§5). Upadhyaya and he are "the two pillars on which the future of the BJP will rest" (p. 177/§3).

While the debate between the Left and the Right continues, Bhatnagar points to the need to correct the course: "The anti- RSS propaganda has been led by individuals and groups whose academic embellishments appear grand but who have actually promoted segregation. Polemics cannot be a permanent feature of thinking societies, which is why the alternative narratives of the RSS on nationalism and culture present complex dilemmas to those who regard intellectualism as a monopoly of a particular stream and are unable to countenance the demolition of monolithic debate" (p. 184/§4).

Bhatnagar is right that the Left-led nationalist project, which sidelined alternate thinking, is being challenged by the Right, with determination, discipline and faith. Understanding India requires a proper acknowledgement of an alternate philosophy that also shapes the nation's politics. Bhatnagar declines the invitation to trivialize an India that has existed in the past, and will continue into the future. Competitive right-wing politics in both countries complicates their relations.

The spiritual contest has influenced Indians and Pakistanis so much that moving forward becomes difficult. Drawing from memories of Islamic rule on the subcon-

2 Khalid, H., 2017. Katas Raj temple complex is a sad monument to Pakistan's unease with its Hindu heritage. *Scroll.in*, December 22. Available at https://scroll.in/article/862322/katas-raj-temple-complex-is-a-sad-monument-to-pakistans-unease-with-its-hindu-heritage.

tinent, Pakistan claims strategic equivalence with India. It is not persuaded about India's wider ambitions. Given the disparities in size, this frustrates Indians. The Wagah border ceremony provides Pakistan "opportunistic equivalence, however superficial and fleeting, with India"[3], asserts Minhaz Merchant. It is not just opportunistic equivalence, however. The two nations are hard- wired in a broader equivalence, because, for Pakistan, the powerful world of Islam is an equalizer. For Pakistanis it is not just cultural or military equivalence. Hindu majoritarianism in India creates the moral equivalence, completing the triad.

Pakistan has moderates too. The *Dawn* newspaper publishes accounts of Hindu festivals and Pakistan's pre-Islamic heritage. In private encounters with the author, Punjabi and Kashmiri Pakistanis have acknowledged their Hindu ancestry. In his book *The Indus Man*, Aitzaz Ahsan explores an alternate identity, away from an exclusive Islam, to one that is shaped by the river Indus. But without Islam, Pakistan would struggle to define its nationhood. As Raghavan says, an Indus identity is more an intellectual construct than a building block of a nation: "This kind of argument gives Pakistan a homogeneity it lacks. Geographical determinism has its limits"[4].

Independence and After

Brother Enemies

Thus, the past is guidance to what follows. Partition is not over. Each day, there is a psychological Partition between Indians and Pakistanis, between Hindus and Muslims in both countries, between competing ideas of state, between different versions of soft power. Politics, sport, cinema – everything comes into the equation.

Like a serene deity, Raghavan keeps his Pakistan secrets to himself. There is not one reference to a conversation he had with a Pakistani. Yet, he puts enough of Pakistani thinking in the public domain. At a discussion meeting on his book, Raghavan said that, even amid hard posturing, deal-making with Pakistan is possible. This is as far as he goes into revealing the pragmatic side of Pakistanis.

Raghavan gives a fine account of the mergers of Junagarh and Hyderabad into India, and Kashmir's contested accession. He tells us more, expertly using published sources. For example, the Pakistani author, Yaqoob Khan Bangash, reveals that Dujana, near Delhi, offered to accede to Pakistan, but was rebuffed (p. 6/§2). Pakistan recognized Kalat as a sovereign state (p. 12/§5), and All India Radio announced Kalat's offer to accede to India (p. 13/§3). Prime Minister Nehru told

3 Merchant, M., 2018. U.S. won't be able to rein in Pakistan over terror: India will have to take action. *DailyO*, January 11. Available at https://www.dailyo.in/politics/us-aid-pakistan-rogue-nation-terror-funding-afpak-jim-mattis-nato-terrorism/story/1/21663.html.

4 He said this in a conversation with the author on July 26, 2018.

the Constituent Assembly that Kalat had approached India to establish a trade agency in Delhi (p. 14/§1). Since India had no border with Kalat, while Pakistan did, these moves precipitated Pakistani action to secure Kalat's accession. If Pakistani Ahmadiyas are not considered Muslim, Gurdaspur's Muslim majority at Partition would be nullified, and Pakistan's claim to Gurdaspur would collapse (p. 22/§1), Raghavan quotes Pakistani historian Tahir Kamran as arguing.

Not So Calm Waters

Water has no boundaries, transporting victors and losers in empire-building. With the environment buckling under our feet, water has become scarce. The India-Pakistan water conflict began immediately after independence. The rivers of the Indus basin flow from India into Pakistan. Raghavan says that, in 1948, the government of India's Punjab state cut off the waters of common rivers, only to be overturned by the federal government. Curiously, India did not insist upon Pakistan paying for canal waters under the agreement of May, 1948. This decision might have introduced an unequal obligation on India, and potentially weakened its future negotiating position.

Under the auspices of the World Bank, the Indus Waters Treaty was concluded in 1960[5]. Like most Indian analysts, Bhatnagar calls the treaty's terms "a gifting away, to a perennially hostile Pakistan, of a lion's share of the waters", and 174 million U.S. dollars for dams to boot (p. 146/§5). Sullen Indians clamour for the treaty's review, if not its abrogation. India's grievance on misplaced generosity is matched by Pakistan's anxiety on punitive Indian action.

India asserts its right to build hydro-electric projects in Jammu and Kashmir, through which four of the five rivers in the Indus basin flow. In the 1980s, India almost withdrew from a negotiation on the Salal hydro-electric project. Raghavan hints that the negotiation was rescued at the urging of former Indian Foreign Secretary Jagat Mehta, as India was also a lower riparian to China (p. 145/§3). In 1987, India showed sensitivity to Pakistan's concerns, by suspending the Tulbul navigation project on the Jhelum river.

Over the passage of time, India's position has hardened. In retaliation against a terrorist attack at Pathankot in September, 2016, where 19 soldiers were killed, India launched a review of the Indus Waters Treaty[6]. Prime Minister Narendra

5 The treaty allows Pakistan use of 80 per cent of the waters of the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab, the three western rivers, while India has 20 per cent. India has rights to the waters of the three eastern rivers – the Beas, Sutlej and Ravi. See Khadka, N.S., 2016. Are India and Pakistan set for water wars?. *BBC.com*, December 22. Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-37521897.

6 Senior Indian officials told the BBC that India would step up using water from the three western rivers, which flow through Jammu and Kashmir state. See Khadka, N.S., 2016. Are India

Modi ominously said: "blood and water cannot flow at the same time"[7]. India suspended a meeting of a committee set to oversee water-sharing. In response, Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's U.N. ambassador, cautioned that water agreements should not be "undermined through unilateral or coercive measures"[8]. Raghavan says that Pakistanis see India's hydro-electric projects in Kashmir in strategic rather than economic terms: "The military mind looks at capabilities, not intentions"[9].

Amid calls in the media for abrogating the treaty, China blocked a tributary of the Yarlung Zangbo (called the Brahmaputra in India), and, in 2017, suspended sharing of data on the Brahmaputra with India. While in theory India could ask for a review of the treaty and greater share of the three western rivers, China's actions constrain India's choices. Would not diversion of Indus waters by China also have an implication for Pakistan?

The Wars

Raghavan's accounts of the 1965 and 1971 wars do not yield new facts, but provide absorbing lessons.

Neutral observers note that it was Pakistan's Operation Gibraltar, the infiltration of armed irregulars into Kashmir, which triggered the 1965 war. Most Pakistani accounts blame India. In Pakistani diplomat Iqbal Akhund's assessment, the 1965 war "was an Indian war of aggression to destroy Pakistan and victory was ours because we prevented India from taking Lahore" (p. 97/§2). This view is now discredited, even in Pakistan. Cyril Almeida writes in *Dawn*: "1965 was a bad idea taken to perfection, all three stages of it. First came Gibraltar, that silliness of sending irregulars and radicalised civilians over into India-held Kashmir to foment revolution. When revolution didn't show up, we got into the business of Grand Slam – sending regular army troops over to wrest a bit of India-held Kashmir and win that most lusted after of victories, a strategic one. Then came actual war across the border, for which we were somehow unprepared and scrambled to fight to a stalemate because the Indians were a bunch of reluctant invaders"[10].

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and Pakistan set for water wars?. *BBC.Com*, December 22. Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-37521897.

7 Rowlatt, J., 2016. Why India's water dispute with Pakistan matters. *BBC.Com*, September 28. Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-37483359.

8 PTI, 2016. Indus Water Treaty: Pakistan warns against use of water as an instrument of coercion. *The Indian Express*, November 25. Available at https://indianexpress.com/article/world/world-news/indus-water-treaty-pakistan-warns-use-of-water-as-an-instrument-of-coercion-4391122/.

9 In conversation with the author on July 26, 2018.

10 Almeida, C., 2015. Gibraltar, Grand Slam and War. *Dawn*, August 30. Available at https://www.dawn.com/news/1203708.

Curiously, despite Pakistan precipitating the 1965 war, India did not ask for the equal and simultaneous implementation of the provisions of the Tashkent Declaration of 1966. Raghavan quotes an Indian Ministry of External Affairs account: "It is clear now – a year after the Tashkent Declaration – that in signing it, Pakistan's immediate interest was to secure withdrawal of Indian forces, repatriation of prisoners of war, the resumption of overflights to and from East Pakistan and the restoration of full diplomatic relations. Since securing these principal gains, Pakistan has been tardy in taking any additional major steps towards complete normalisation of relations" (p. 100/§3).

India won the 1971 war, but did it lose the peace, as many Indians hold? Bhatnagar says that India "botched up" (p. 203/§2) the 1972 Simla Agreement. Raghavan disagrees: "Too rigid a stand by India in Simla, or the failure of the negotiations, would have raised the spectre of external intervention again" (p. 122/§2). India had dismembered a member of the UN through force, and there were "limits on how much more India would be allowed to extract from what remained of Pakistan" (p. 122/§2). Whether India took a conciliatory position at Simla under international pressure needs more research. Recall the relentless Soviet pressure on India in the lead up to Tashkent.

Neighbours and Their Truths

Raghavan's strength lies in that he presents the Pakistani point of view with copious quotes from Pakistani authors. President Ayub Khan tells Indian high commissioner Rajeshwar Dayal that Nehru looked upon him "with contempt…Mr Nehru seemed to think that the Congo was more important to India than Pakistan" (p. 70/§2). Diplomat Abdus Sattar, writing about Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at the 1972 Simla negotiations, says "she was 'petite and seemingly frail' but 'robust in mind' and though 'deceptive in her inarticulate speech' no one could 'miss the thrust of her remarks'" (p. 119/§4). At the negotiation Sattar finds D.P. Dhar "a charmer" and P.N. Haksar "without a peer in knowledge and erudition", T.N. Kaul displayed "unmistakable hostility towards Pakistan" and the India approach to the negotiations was guided by "a visceral antagonism towards Pakistan" (p. 120/§1). Amin writes that Indira Gandhi "more or less froze" and "the atmosphere suddenly became tense" (p. 135/§3) when Pakistan's newly- appointed ambassador, Fida Hussain, raised the need for a Kashmir solution in his meeting with her in 1976.

Little wonder that Indians and Pakistanis draw different conclusions from the same events. Pakistanis call Junagarh's accession to India forcible, and show it as Pakistani territory on maps, while Indians claim a plebiscite settled the accession. Pakistanis accuse India of strangulation in withholding transfer of cash balances, while Indians point out that Gandhi actually fasted for Pakistan to secure its dues. Pakistanis consider Hyderabad's accession to India an act of perfidy, while Indians

consider it pragmatic and strategically logical. Pakistanis consider the award of Muslim-majority Gurdaspur to India unjust, while Indians see it as vital for the defence of Kashmir and the Sikh holy city of Amritsar. For Indians, the 1965 war began on August 5, when Pakistan launched Operation Gibraltar in Jammu and Kashmir, while for Pakistan it began with the Indian attack on Lahore on September 6, commemorated as "Defence of Pakistan Day." Indians claim there was an unwritten understanding during the Simla negotiations to convert the line of control into an international border over time, while Pakistanis deny such an understanding. India gave the *Bharat Ratna* award to Badshah Khan, a respected figure of the nationalist movement, while Pakistanis see him as one who never reconciled to Partition. Indians claim that Pakistan's visiting foreign minister, Yakub Khan, delivered a war ultimatum during a visit to Delhi in January, 1990, while the Pakistanis feel Khan had not been forceful enough in projecting Pakistan's position on Kashmir. The list goes on.

Raghavan judges events in the context of the times, injecting realism into the discourse, however painful. Indians rue not expelling Pakistani forces from Kashmir in 1947, but "military advice was not in favour of this" (p. 9/§2). Pakistan's Prime Minister, Liaqat Ali Khan expressed similar misgivings. Indians view denial of water to Pakistan as a strategic weapon, but at independence it had a "local and provincial flavor" (p. 11/§1). Rahmat Ali's idea of Muslim-majority states in India (Bang-i- Islam, Osmanistan, Haideristan, Siddiqistan, Faruqstan, Muinstan and Maplistan) through a "Pakistan National Liberation Movement" (p. 19/§1) would appear like a fantasy today, even to Pakistanis. Ali, "a potentially disruptive dreamer", who had returned to live in Pakistan in 1948 was told within months to "go back to England failing which he would be arrested" (p. 19/§1).

Just being in Pakistan also gives Raghavan advantage over other Indian scholars, who find it difficult to interrogate Pakistan's complexities and even to access Pakistani authors. For instance, there are Bengalis in Pakistan "who disagreed with the creation of Bangladesh and consciously chose not to live there after 1971" (p. 114/§1). The case of Shahbeg Singh, a Bangladesh war hero, who masterminded terrorism inside Amritsar's Golden Temple, is "poetic justice" (p. 173/§3) to Pakistanis. Armed with privileged access, Raghavan expertly judges the India-Pakistan conundrum: "neither the extent of goodwill nor the extent of hostility in each country for the other can be underestimated" (p. 303/§2).

The Complex Science of Nation-building

While Pakistan sought all kinds of equalizers with its eastern neighbour, India launched a valiant struggle against its past. Bhatnagar's searing eye spares none who fell short in this endeavour. His gaze is stubbornly discerning, even brutal. There is not an issue he does not address.

Prime Ministers in Free Fall

Bhatnagar audaciously throws himself into the front lines, sending ideologically-opposed prime ministers like Nehru and Narendra Modi into free fall. Nehru did not stand up for colleagues, "shied away from building up the armed forces" (p. 86/§2), showed "a very costly error of judgment on China" (p. 100/§8), miscalculated in rejecting U.S. moves for India's permanent membership of the UN Security Council at China's cost (p. 90/§2), and used "tact and guile" to persuade the Chief of the Army Staff, General K.S. Thimayya, to withdraw his resignation (p. 97/§4). At the other end, the Modi-led National Democratic Alliance ruling coalition "has not yet scored a major foreign policy win…with Pakistan and, to a certain degree, China, relations are actually worse" (p. 143/§3). Indira Gandhi interfered in the functioning of the judiciary (p. 115/§5), and groomed Rajiv Gandhi as her "dynastic successor" (p. 112/§4). V.P. Singh "set the stage for unrest on a widespread scale from 1990 onward" (p. 124/§7) and the Atal Behari Vajpayee administration "took forward this train of horrifying lapses and administrative failure in December 1999 when the terrorists who had hijacked an Indian Airlines Airbus had to be released at Kandahar" (p. 125/§1). The H.D. Deve Gowda government was "colourless" (p. 133/§3), and Manmohan Singh had an "ego not quite commensurate with his attainments" (p. 141/§4). But Vajpayee and Singh's "wasted years" (p. 142/§2) may not have been entirely that. By ordering nuclear tests in 1998, Vajpayee created a more favourable strategic environment, and Singh's 1995 civil nuclear agreement with the U.S. consolidated India's nuclear status.

Nor is it all gloom for the prime ministers. Nehru was "a statesman of international stature" (p. 100/§9) and "among India's great prime ministers" (p. 101/§1). V.P. Singh's "integrity was unquestionable" (p. 125/§5), Rajiv Gandhi's "record in economic policy was good" (p. 124/§1), and P.V. Narasimha Rao's legacy in "economic reforms is well- documented" (p. 129/§6). Lal Bahadur Shastri showed resolve in the 1965 war, and Indira Gandhi "played her hand brilliantly in the liberation of Bangladesh" (p. 111/§2). Other leaders are praised: Jayprakash Narayan was a "figure of great moral authority" (p. 94/§2), and the chief minister of the Punjab state, Pratap Singh Kairon had "extraordinary vision and drive" (p. 99/§4). But "the different political dynasties, with the Gandhis at the apex" (p. 220/§2), degraded the polity. "Unwillingness to acknowledge the contribution of its many leaders who were from outside the Nehru family" sapped the Congress party, Shastri almost being "wiped out from the pages of history by his own party" (p. 106/§2).

Bhatnagar lovingly writes about Indian scientists, whose autographs he sought while in school, on the strength of easy access, as his grandfather S.S. Bhatnagar was one of India's leading scientists. Meghnad Saha "received Nehru's consideration and respect" and "scientists working with Nehru had direct access to him,

sometimes more than members of the cabinet" (p. 91/§4). Such has been the legacy of these figures that India is a leading space power.

The Future

Raghavan's book is superb history. He refrains from pronouncing upon Pakistan after 2008, wisely, because a historian's gaze requires distance. But his mind has peeped into possible futures: "Technology is changing everything. The younger generation is being in touch in a neutral way. Things may not appear to be so, but they are better than twenty years ago. In the next twenty years things will continue to get better"[11]. Facebook, WhatsApp and the Internet have made it possible to sidestep sermons and advisories from the political class, for a more honest appraisal of the relationship. Rather than becoming delusional, Indians and Pakistanis might be better off shutting the emotion and pursuing a cool, merit- based approach. But this is difficult to do. Solving problems needs a long and hard gaze beyond social graces and hospitable demeanours, never by themselves enough to address prejudice and animosity.

The regions of Pakistan and India absorbed their colonial encounters differently, and, with independence, chose opposed futures. While the divergence in approach remains, a growing congruence in the use of religion for political purposes further complicates matters. Yet, cultures have the capacity to absorb lessons and correct the course. The greatest challenge before Pakistanis is to fashion an identity that can draw not only upon its kinetic Islam but upon other traditions as well. India can lend a hand by reasserting its vaunted syncretic culture that has absorbed so many intrusions, to create something miraculously Indian. This requires a dialogue of civilisations.

11 He said this in conversation with the author on July 26, 2018.