

that the ghost of dead children will haunt us because we survived. I once stole some marbles from Mehr ...' (p. 222). Likewise the story of Jhuria in Badri Narayan's chapter is both poignant and powerful, as she describes the hardships they faced when they decided to leave their traditional caste occupation (p. 175).

There is much to learn from these chapters. What strikes one the most is the way the rich empirical data is woven effortlessly with the theoretical and methodological assumptions. Perhaps this is the most productive way to engage with larger debates about gender.

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Kalpna Kannabiran, ed. 2016. *Violence Studies*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. viii + 396 pp. Maps, tables, figures, notes, appendix, references, index. ₹1,095 (hardback).

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Scholarly engagements with violence have always elicited more questions than answers. Kalpna Kannabiran's edited volume *Violence Studies* is no exception. Towards the end of her introductory essay to the volume she notes, 'We are left with questions' (p. 44) of a myriad nature: theoretical, methodological, empirical and normative. Given the nature of the phenomena, the problem of violence continues to be thorny and slippery, defying accurate definitions and theorisations. The volume does not attempt it; instead, it seeks 'to present the question of violence in its complex and simultaneous locations across space, historical time, and disciplinary fields ... to demonstrate possibilities for the development of a field of investigation' (ibid.). This volume has to be used and appraised within the limits set by this broad qualifier.

One of the principal problems in studying violence from a sociological perspective is the gap that marks how violent acts are experienced and communicated by victims and perpetrators and the difficulties of representing it. Categorisations of violence in terms of meta-concepts such as structural/systemic violence, symbolic violence or subjective violence render violence comparable both synchronically and diachronically. However, it is the situatedness of violence within specific historical and cultural contexts that makes sense to both its subjects—victims,

perpetrators and witnesses—and interrogations into it. The chapters in this volume traverse the meta-discourse in making sense of the multiple habitations of violence in India.

Although Kannabiran's larger project is ambitious, this volume charts familiar territory, situating violence vis-à-vis the state, caste, gender and everyday spaces respectively. This is essentially a function of the enframing narrative adopted here to interrogate violence in India. It incorporates the defining political events of colonialism and the partition of the subcontinent, the violence ensuing from the structure of the postcolonial state, and the social, economic and cultural processes of modernity for a society still teetering on the ambivalences between traditional and modern worldviews. The volume encompasses and thus broadens the scope of studying violence in India, attempting 'to signpost a field that is interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary' (p. vi).

The relationship of violence to power—and specifically political power—has always been fraught and ambiguous. This is one of the significant themes marked in this volume. Violence has either been construed as the failure of power, thus excluding it from its definition, while as a specific property of political associations such as the state, violence is central to the definition of political power. State violence is both routine and excessive, manifesting itself in covert or overt violence as the circumstances dictate. In India, the remarkable continuities in colonial modes of violence within a postcolonial social and political structure have defined state power decisively. Violence ensuing from the state has always been justified as a legitimate means to organise 'unruly' subject populations, state violence actually masking the organised societal power of the dominant classes in society. The chapters in the first section of the volume emphasise the molecular, symbolic ubiquity of violence, where the state through various forms of covert and overt violence victimises and excludes certain social groups from the ideals of equal citizenship, perpetuating a cycle of violence by both the coercive apparatuses of the state and dominant groups in society.

Of the most pervasive kinds of societal violence of a dominant group over another in India has been caste violence, the nature and incidence of which has transformed significantly over time as a result of 'caste consciousness, asymmetry of power of dalits and non-dalits, and a triggering event' (p. 188). The realm of caste violence also provides an ideal site for observing the quotidian nature of violence, where the sheer associational context of social life generates violence, operating stealthily

and almost invisibly, marked by well-entrenched norms of a society steeped in mistrust born out of ignorance and separation of each caste from another. V. Geetha's perceptive reading of Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* interrogates the 'stubborn refusal of violence on the part of anti-caste radicals' (p. 213) in their search for liberty, equality and fraternity, which could be effectively contrasted with the Gandhian strategy of non-violent resistance, employed mostly as realpolitik without an emphasis on the enrichment of associational life—the bedrock of Ambedkar's utopia of a casteless society. In contemporary India, the search for an engaged and empathic associational life, as Ambedkar had envisaged, should also be a serious marker to hold the state and its laws wanting, thus shifting the fulcrum of analyses of violence from the state to society and the possibilities that could counter a statist logic of violence and the mechanisms of controlling it.

Phenomenologically speaking, violence is inherently characterised by its need to annihilate the 'other'—physically, morally, historically and experientially. The 'violence of morality' (p. 244) predominantly characterises violence against women to establish a normalised vision of what constitutes a moral social order and works through gender stereotypes in the family and popular media, as well as more overt forms of violations on women's bodies and their psyche. Similarly, violence of poverty and economic exclusion within global financial regimes routinises violence, often combining with other processes whereby 'economic instability, inequality and fragility of livelihoods ... potentially can lead to greater social violence' (p. 364), a process increasingly being witnessed in the countryside as well as in urban areas in India.

Violence Studies serves the useful purpose of bringing together a matrix of violence that constitutes social and political life in contemporary India. However, because the volume does not engage with a specific theoretical grid to situate violence, this assemblage of essays at times seem to lack coherence, united perhaps only by their consensus on 'the moral necessity of rejecting violence and interrogating the politics on which it is based, in order for justice to prevail' (p. 15). Yet, as one of the greatest historians of the 20th century—Eric Hobsbawm—has averred, moral abhorrence towards violence in a liberal culture hinders an understanding of the 'social uses' of violence as a form of practice mediating between the historical boundedness of action in response to specific structural conditions.

The volume would have benefited from a coda, outlining the interdisciplinary agenda of studying violence in the Indian context, synthesising the various ways in which violence has featured in history, politics and society. In a world where most of the practically applicable moral principles have but a relative validity, any exploration of violence would have to contend with the rules of violence and the consequences of its absence. In a more robust analysis of violence, perhaps the need to simultaneously think about civility and cooperation and their essentially delicate and contingent configurations has to be recognised.

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Sareeta Amrute. 2016. *Encoding Race, Encoding Class: Indian IT Workers in Berlin*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press. x + 268 pp. Plates, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 (paperback).

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Encoding Race, Encoding Class is a brilliant ethnography of Indian IT workers in Germany. Based on extended fieldwork conducted between 2002 and 2004 with software engineers on the German ‘green card’ scheme, and on the author’s doctoral dissertation, the book unravels the intersecting threads of race, class, precarity, mobility and subjectivity in the information economy. With the sharp demand for temporary IT labour in the OECD countries since the 1990s, and the consequent mobilisation of technical workers from Asian countries such as China and India, culture and cultural difference (in her analysis, race) have become central to the workings of the global economy. Delving deeply into the lives, experiences and narratives of Indian ‘coders’ in Berlin, Amrute presents a sensitive and lucid account of how they negotiate their unstable work and lifeworlds.

Although the engaging ethnography alone is reason enough to read this book, perhaps Amrute’s most important contribution is her extension of the work of the Italian Autonomist Marxists, weaving the workings of race and class into their analysis of neoliberal capitalism and cognitive labour. Amrute also brings questions of embodiment and materiality into the understanding of digital labour, showing how ‘race and class are integral both to producing differently valued bodies at work and to producing the communicative content of so-called material goods’ (p. 18).