

or two in each area. He must have a good idea where to go and whom to contact. Slone has established a solid basis for future investigation, in addition to saving newspaper narratives from the oblivion of tropic heat, mold, and termites.

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INDIA

ADHIKARY, QIRON. *Feminist Folktales from India*. Oakland: Masalai Press, 2003. iii + 97 pages. Illustrations, geographical index, map, references. Paper, n. p.; ISBN 0-9714127-3-1.

CROOKE, WILLIAM, and PANDIT RAM GHARIB CHAUBE. *Folktales from Northern India*. Edited and with an Introduction by Sadhana Naithani. ABC-CLIO Classic Folk and Fairy Tales. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2002. 1 + 425 pages. Index. Hardcover US\$45.00; ISBN 1-57607-698-9.

Here are two newly available collections of folktales from India, and both are most welcome as sources of narratives for pleasure and cultural knowledge. Beyond offering these universal, pleasing attributes of folktales, the two books could not be more different in nature. Qiron Adhikary, described on her back cover as a Bengali writer “born and raised in Singapore and Malaysia” and currently living in San Francisco, intends to provide in her collection of twenty-three retold, undated tales from many parts of India “positive female images and role models.” In Crooke and Chaube hundreds of folktales emerge from well-documented ethnographic work undertaken about a century ago, in colonial times, which are quite innocent of selective priorities.

Feminist Folktales makes no claims to scholarship. Adhikary includes a “Geographical Index” and map showing the stories’ places of origin, but gives no indication of the actual sources for the tales themselves, even though she does meticulously list credits for her nice illustrations

(which are not, however, from folktale books). Adhikary does not define feminism. We are left to presume on the basis of content that her endeavor was in fact to assemble stories whose central characters are female. While these heroines are sometimes strong, wise and independent, it is perhaps predictably the case that, more often than not, things do not turn out so well for them.

For example, in the tragic Nagaland tale of “The Girl who Understood Birds,” a young girl is able to predict the future because of her ability to listen in on the conversations of doves. Her father does not believe her words of ill omen; her mother, who does believe them, does not want her daughter to grow up to be a low-status fortuneteller. Thus the girl’s traitorous progenitors collude and force their too precocious child to eat dove soup against her will. “Soon, the little girl could not understand the birds anymore; she became dull and listless” (40). After her predictions of dire drought prove true, her parents are chastised by other villagers for not heeding their prescient daughter’s warnings, but this does not save her from the fate of perpetual madness into which she was cast by consuming soup made from the flesh of her avian benefactors.

Another sad story, this one from Manipur, tells of a wife and mother who, as a consequence of taking an ill-advised drink from an enchanted water hole, turns into a tigress. After hunting and eating flesh, she recollects her family: “I love being a tiger,” she thought, “but I can’t go away and never see my little ones again.” Thus she makes that fatal female effort to have it all. At home, fully aware that increasingly frightening tigress behaviors could endanger her beloved children, she sadly walks away into the jungle, never to return (62–65). My point is that even in a collection aspiring to “feminism,” it seems that only the exceptional story allows a wise and strong female to prosper. Adhikary does give some examples of women who achieve happy endings, such as the persevering Maya (a faithful Savitri type) in the Assamese story of the “Woman who Married a Dead Man” (23).

Ironically but fortunately for those in search of female role models, Crooke and Chaube’s far larger collection, although devoid of feminist motivations or indeed of any thematic desiderata, nonetheless offers a wider range of interesting and successful women than does Adhikary’s more limited selection. Here, among 363 separate items, most of them tales, are a number that could more truly be labeled feminist—in the sense that they are about genuine empowerment. For example, the “Princess who got the Gift of Patience” describes a young woman whose troubles all begin when her father asks her and her six sisters “In whom have you confidence?”—the other six answer “in you,” thereby acknowledging patriarchy; our heroine answers “in myself,” setting in motion a series of difficult trials from which she nonetheless emerges married to her true love (36). It is doubtless no accident that this was told by a woman.

Folktales from Northern India is a treasure trove indeed. In it we find not only charming depictions of the perils and powers of women, but a multitude of stories rich in almost every kind of folkloric virtue: social commentary and social satire; magic and high adventure; moralizing platitudes plus healthy doses of subversion; and of course riddles, word play, and humor. There are animal tales as well, and I was struck by the ways small birds and mice repeatedly prove to be creatures with whom the mighty, be they kings or elephants, must reckon—or as the moral of one story puts it “A little spark destroys a great pile of hay in a moment” (351).

We are indebted to ABC-CLIO for bringing back into print many important collections of tales from what they call the “golden age” of folklore. These include two anthologies from colonial India: Mary Frere’s *Old Deccan Days* with a wonderful introduction by Kirin Narayan (2002) and the compendium under review here, a collection attributed to the joint efforts of William Crooke and Pandit Chaube, edited and introduced by Sadhana Naithani.

This particular volume stands out in the series, however, for it offers far more than a new introduction attached to the reprint of a preexisting book. Naithani assembled this collection by extracting Crooke’s and Chaube’s entries from the contents of two journals, *North Indian*

Notes & Queries and *Indian Antiquary*, published over about a thirty-five year period (1891–1926). Thus Naithani makes these tales accessible under one cover for the first time. Although the editor has not annotated these tales with tale-type or motif codes, an excellent, thirty-page index will help readers identify and locate both. Index entries include standard items, such as “Faithful Animal;” “Shape Changing;” “Tests Set to Suitor;” and so forth.

Naithani provides an excellent, comprehensive, and illuminating introduction to this collection, situating it in the context of its times. When so much European attention had been bestowed on Sanskrit literary traditions and ancient archaeological findings, *North Indian Notes & Queries* had as its mission “to concern itself with the living India, the contemporary India. And in its concern with the real, it placed itself in the rural society—its everyday culture, its age-old customs, its local gods and godlings...” (xxiii). Moreover, Naithani argues persuasively, *MINQ* entries reveal “a discourse aptly created by Indians themselves” (xxv)—both as tale-tellers, and as scholars.

In the process of combing both published journals and unpublished field notes and manuscripts belonging to William Crooke, Naithani was able to highlight the hitherto largely unrecognized but crucial participation in Crooke’s ethnographic enterprise of Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube. Chaube’s name appears as a contributor to *MINQ* as early as 1892. Naithani informs us that, “The papers catalogued as ‘William Crooke Papers’ in the RAI Archive in London contain more folkloric texts in the handwriting of Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube than in that of William Crooke and bear testimony to the fact that Chaube was an unusually prolific scholar” (xxxviii). Particularly in the manuscripts of the *Indian Antiquary* entries, Naithani discovers that “all the information regarding the tellers, the folktale texts, and the comments are in the handwriting of Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube. The titles in the left margin, however, are in William Crooke’s handwriting” (xxxiv–xxxv).

A great virtue of Crooke and Chaube’s collaboration is that “every tale carried the following credits and details: tale told by, tale recorded by, their designation or caste or both, and the place where it was recorded” (xxviii). Naithani comments, moreover, that “this systematic record of narrators and places is not a characteristic of colonial folklore scholarship.” She characterizes the norm as “No body, no mind, no face, and, of course, no gender” (xxviii). However, I should note that the other volume rejuvenated by ABC-CLIO, Mary Frere’s *Old Deccan Days*, offers another distinctive exception to this blindness under equally problematic colonial conditions: all of the stories in Frere’s collection were told to her by Anna Liberata de Souza, her hired *ayah* or “nursemaid.”

I am puzzled by Naithani’s claim that in Crooke and Chaube’s work, “One group of narrators is completely missing...that of women” (xxvii). While male tellers certainly dominate the book, I noticed in the credits, besides the “Old Muhammadan Cookwoman” who told of the self-reliant princess (36), one “Annie Solomon, a Native Christian woman” as the teller of “The King and Fairy” (119), and “the wife of Ramai Kharwar of Dudhi,” recorded by Chaube as the teller of “The Bard and his Wife” (293).

Naithani tells us a little about some of Crooke’s important storytelling sources including the Muslim, “Akbar Shah Manjhi,” whose stories “are limited neither by religion nor by themes.” Crooke describes Manjhi as a “quaint old blind man” (xxv). Manjhi’s last name, “shows his tribal origin, while the first and the middle show that his tribe had converted to Islam.” His stories, Naithani asserts, reveal “that the boundaries between all these were fluid,” especially for a storyteller. Apparently, Manjhi returned again and again to narrate tales to Crooke; ever present as Manjhi’s tales emerged was the diligent Chaube.

Sadly we learn that “Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube is known to have gone insane before his death in 1914. He was a bachelor and had no descendants” (xlii). Little more is known of Chaube’s tragic ending, or its causes. However, Naithani wants to expand its implications,

suggesting that “Pandit Chaube’s insanity not only is a personal tragedy, but is symbolic of the consequential nature of certain aspects of colonial scholarships that have either been looked over or not questioned” (xlvi). Yet neither Naithani nor the enchanted readers of this engrossing collection can regret Chaube’s participation, or imagine that he himself was not committed to its production as a work of enduring relevance and value.

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KAMATH, M. V., and KALINDI RANDERI. *Indian Names: From Classical to Contemporary (For People, Places and Products)*. Mumbai: Arkansh, 2001; 2nd impr. 2002. x + 1023 pages. Indian Rs. 795.00, US \$29.95, CAN \$45.95. ISBN 81-88131-00-8.

This work is a first attempt to collate and order a Sanskrit onomastikon. The introduction informs us that the names have been culled from modern oral usage (friends, friends of friends, etc.) and from ancient and medieval literature. The quantity of names listed is overwhelming—over 38,000! For comparison: the Mahābhārata carries 641 names (MAZUMDAR 1988); for Hebrew 3188 names are listed (includes Biblical, early medieval, and modern names, 2229 of them male and 959 female, see EVEN-SHOSHAN 1970, vol. III, 1496–1508). The Introduction informs the reader how this enormous project was accomplished by the efforts of two authors only, through many years of hard work. The Introduction also gives concise information about the morphology of the names (thus a user can go on creating new names), the methods used for transcription of the Sanskrit devanāgarī script into Latin script and the pronunciation of the devanāgarī letters.

The work carries a main list of all 38,000 names, in Latin alphabetical order. The names are written in Latin transcription and in *devanāgarī* letters. Each name is accompanied by a short commentary in English as to its meanings (and these can be confusingly many!). The authors inform us in their introduction that the translation of names is based on the dictionary by MONIER-WILLIAMS (1872). Wherever applicable, a very short indication is added as to which figure in mythology and literature bore it. For prospective practical uses the same names are listed in a second list grouped according to themes: divine names and appellations; attributes; objects; actions; states; feelings, etc. Thus a person can easily find the kind of name he wishes. In this second list only the bare name is given in Latin transcription and *devanāgarī* letters; its meaning and further details have then to be looked up in the main list.

The social side of name giving is mentioned in tantalizing glimpses; the reader would like to know more. But this is a separate research project, the execution of which might take a long time. A chapter in the Introduction describes very briefly some rites, prayers and blessings used in ceremonies accompanying the early life cycle: conception, birth and name-giving (vii–x); the reader would like to be told more.

The immense work of collecting and annotating all these names has been done with a practical goal in mind: to help people choose names for their children or to name locations and products. The reviewed book comes to fill a socio-psychological need: the need of the modern,