



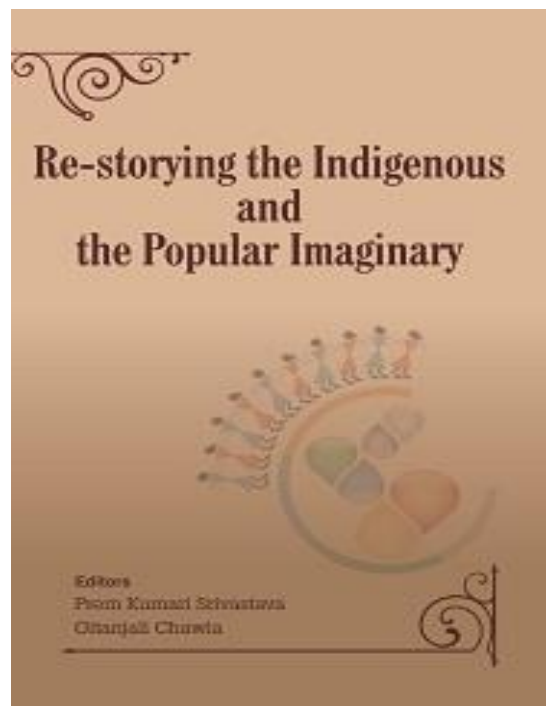
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BOOK REVIEW

Re-searching the Indigenous: Re-imagining the Popular

Anchala Paliwal



Edited by Prem Kumari Srivastava and Gitanjali Chawla

Re-storying the Indigenous and the Popular Imaginary (Volume III)

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As a continuing engagement with the idea of the Indigenous, the third volume *Re-storying the Indigenous and the Popular Imaginary* resumes the project pursued in the previous two volumes - *Cultures of the Indigenous: India and Beyond* and *De-territorialising Diversities: Literatures of the Indigenous and Marginalised*, by the same editors both published simultaneously in 2014. In the Foreword, the editors, Prem Kumari Srivastava and Gitanjali Chawla clearly mention the “Critical self-consciousness” with which they have constructed these works and their commitment to the tradition of “knowledge keeping” (p. xviii). They aptly establish the relationship between the Indigenous and Popular as concentric circles “. . . each existing independently but also leading to the continued existence of the other.” (p. xxxii)

It is remarkable that in the entire series comprising three volumes, various areas of study and different topics/ themes have been incorporated with very minor overlaps. There is a plethora of plurality presented in this series. Also the contributors are different in each volume enriching its academic scope. As a series it’s a promising endeavour and a fourth volume will be much awaited. *Re-storying the Indigenous and the Popular Imaginary* is not restricted by its position as the third volume in an already well appreciated series. Through its special attention to the convergences between the Indigenous and the Popular, it seeks to make an intervention into prefabricated polarities and/or categories to a more expanded and inclusive analysis of actual lived experiences and narratives. This book is available as a hardbound edition. The distinctly designed logo displays diversity, community, co-operation and correlations. Paper type and quality is satisfactory, print quality of the text and illustrations is fine and font size of the text enables efficient reading. It is a carefully crafted book.

The book is divided into three segments: Interrogations, Confluences and Retellings broadly delineating the various areas addressed in each chapter. From exploring the politics of land and spaces to analysing cinematic representations, from commoditization of the indigenous to gendered renderings of epics and its characters, the present volume manages to encompass several aspects of the popular. The specific

areas of study in the included essays are generally not rare. However, they fit in perfectly with the larger rubric of the stated allegiances to the focus of this volume in interrogating the Popular, understanding the Indigenous and its relationship. The editors and contributors have a wide range of expertise in Popular Culture Studies, Translation Studies, Tribal Studies, Folklore and Indigenous Studies.

The high point of this book is the conceptual framework provided by Simi Malhotra in “The *Lok*-al in a Global World: Folk and Popular Culture Studies as a Means to a Cosmopolitics of the Future” where she examines the possibilities of *lok* culture, advancing and interrogating the notion of culture and the *lok* themselves: the folk/mass/popular/indigenous/marginal. (p. 10) Apart from providing an intensely persuasive initiation into the book, the arguments offered in this essay could influence further research in the field of Popular Culture studies.

In the first chapter, Abhinaba Chatterjee while critiquing the fourth world literature, reviews the Aboriginal literature in Australia, its process of translation and the role and reach of translation. Payel Paul goes on to examine how Australian Aborigines and Indian Adivasis are understood in popular imagination, and their assertion of identity in their life narratives. T.S Satyanath undertakes a fascinating study of representation of hunters in paintings and sculptures within the context of appropriating non-agrarian communities. These chapters are under the ‘Interrogations’ segment.

In the segment titled ‘Confluences’, Hina Nandrajog surveys the songs of love and longing of the Gaddis from the female perspective which imparts a special significance to nomadic experience of life and their practise of transhumance. Abubakkar K.K. examines *Mappilappattu* of the *Mappilas* giving an insight into integration of communities, languages and practices and its impact on identities. In the next chapter, Mona Sinha and Manjari Chaturvedi delve into the dynamics of Dilli Haat- a space that set out to display a microcosm of rural India, its inception, splendid growth and now an overriding consumption. Hiya Chatterjee offers a lucid and

gripping analysis of a graphic novel, *Sita's Ramayana* and a film *Sita Sings the Blues* as alter/counter narratives to dominant chronicles and prevalent beliefs.

In the last segment 'Retellings', Anupama Jaidev discusses Mahasweta Devi's play *Bayen*, the forced segregation of the protagonist underlining structures of misogyny and myth in a patriarchal society. Vinanti Vasishth analyses the 'out of context' erroneous representations of tribal women which not only exhibit the prejudiced perception of presenters but also portrays them in a precarious position bereft of any agency. Likewise, Smriti Suman reviews the representations of the Indigenous in Hindi Cinema with a special focus on Mrinal Sen's *Mrigya* as a notable instance of non-essentialist representation.

Important books on Indigenous studies include *Critical Indigenous Studies: Engagements in First World Locations* (2016) edited by Aileen Moreton-Robinson and *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (2008) edited by Denzin, Lincoln and Smith, which are widely considered as pioneering works in this field. *Re-storying the Indigenous and the Popular Imaginary* is a compilation of essays focussing on specific communities/ tribes/ spaces/ cultural practices rather than presenting an overall composite picture. This book gives a glimpse into the multifarious discourses of the Indigenous and offers researchers an insight of the negotiations between the Indigenous and the Popular Imaginary. As an outcome of interdisciplinary approach, hopefully it will open up further avenues of academic enquiry into both the Popular and the Indigenous.

Key Words:

Indigenous, Popular, Culture, Representations, tribal, imagination

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