Maitrayee Chaudhuri
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If the first half of the book holds our attention by exploring such themes, the last three chapters represent Panikkar's finely-calibrated shift of focus from 'Nation' to 'Region'—more specifically, to the modes of cultural determination in Keralam (as he scrupulously spells it). Here again, the canvas is wide: the creation of a new literary sensibility, the mobilisation of ayurvedic medical practice, the Malabar Marriage Commission Report. The sketches are detailed and impressive.

There are, nevertheless, problems with this attractively produced volume. Almost all the essays were drafted between 1975 and 1992. Therefore, as suggested earlier, related and more recent themes are sadly missing—for instance, the intensified crisis of secularism, or the resurgence of dalits in the cultural-ideological arena. One expected a sensitive analyst like Panikkar to have anticipated these, especially since he is dealing not just with 19th-century intellectuals, but also with modes of 'perceiving the reality of the present and the shape of the future'. Perhaps the reason for this failure lies in his unwillingness to question radically the cementing myths or narratives of national unity. Heterogeneity is acknowledged but quickly zipped into the bag of 'national' wonders. True, he rejects the Sahitya Akademi-sponsored thesis about Indian literature as 'western impact: Indian response', but he appears to subscribe to another, more famous, formula promoted by the Akademi—that India has one literature in many languages. And this simply diffuses—even violently erases—the oppositions between incompatible thinkers and movements (I have in mind Panikkar's invocation of Dayanand Saraswathy, Rammohun Roy, Jotiba Phule and Makti Tangal), as complementing each other in the creation of 'the intellectual and cultural climate for the emergence of a new India'. It would take more space than this review can afford to spell out one's reservations and objections to such a holistic narrative. Suffice it to state here that it is precisely such 'unity' that leads to adversity.

Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages
Hyderabad


The last decade has seen a concerted rethinking of intellectual history in colonial India. This volume containing seven chapters explores the emergence and development of various disciplines in colonial Bengal. They range from the aesthetic discipline of art history to the laying down of new disciplinary principles to be followed within the institution of the family; from 'the science of politics' to the formation of the very objects of a cartographic discipline.

The overriding context is, of course, colonialism. Where this volume moves away from the more typical 'social and intellectual history' literature is that it does not assume that the various modern knowledges which arrived in the colony as already formed disciplines with their objects and boundaries defined, had to be studied only through an institutional approach, i.e., the specific institutions (cultural, educational, professional) through which they were transmitted in the colony.

Instead, the volume argues that a 'ceaseless process of translation' takes place by the indigenous practitioners of the disciplines between new knowledges and prior knowledges. Further the relation between the discursive and non-discursive does not operate in one direction only. The appropriation of the new disciplines within the array of existing non-discursive practices in the colony results in substantial modifications in the disciplinary functions themselves.

Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi

MAITRAYEE CHAUDHURI