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Nalini Natarajan. *Atlantic Gandhi: The Mahatma Overseas*. New Delhi: Sage, 2013. Pp. x, 248. Rp 695.

In *Atlantic Gandhi: The Mahatma Overseas*, Nalini Natarajan focuses on diasporic nationalism as it applies to Mahatma Gandhi. Through scrutinizing Gandhi's writing in *Autobiography* (1927), *Hind Swaraj* (1909), *Satyagraha in South Africa* (1928), as well as many of his letters, travel essays, and journalistic writings, Natarajan demonstrates that Gandhi's diasporic experiences in South Africa led him to develop a view of "Indianness" that he later used in his nationalist campaign. She links Gandhi's diasporic experience with the diasporic experiences of different castes and hypothesizes that the nationalist doctrine that Gandhi constructed was in part inspired by the experience of the Indian diaspora in places like South Africa and the Caribbean. Despite its biographical qualities, *Atlantic Gandhi* is not a biography; it is an excellent interdisciplinary study that investigates how Gandhi understood the different worlds he had seen and experienced and how those experiences helped him form his conception of India and Indianness.

In the first chapter, "From Kathiavar," Natarajan explores the life of the young Gandhi, a student and traveller for whom, like many others, Indianness

as a modern notion of identity did not exist. She points out the importance of Hindu narratives as threads that stitched social groups and communities together in the young Gandhi's mind and, arguably, in the Indian collective consciousness. The second chapter, "Sailing the High Seas," traces the roots of Gandhi's diasporic consciousness on board the ships that took him to England and then to South Africa. Natarajan stresses Gandhi's diasporic individualism against the passive discourse of indentured voyages and his courage in crossing the Black Sea in defiance of his community. In the third chapter, "Deconstructing the Coolie," Natarajan focuses on the homogenizing construction of the "coolie" as an abject figure that denotes Chinese, Indian, or any tropical laborers that worked in the Caribbean and on African/American plantations. She argues that they played an integral part in Gandhi's ideological formation of the diaspora and his later notion of Indianness. Natarajan succinctly and clearly explains what it meant to be a coolie in 1893 and moves on to explore how Gandhi came to deconstruct the coolie and reject the caste system. I believe this chapter's detailed investigation of the coolie would be valuable reading in subaltern studies courses.

In "Plotting a Diasporic Nation," Natarajan argues that Gandhi's position as a lawyer, a firm servant, framed his first experiences with subaltern diasporic populations. She draws on Benedict Anderson's definition of nationalism to explain how Gandhi's travels across South Africa affected his initial subscription to colonialist race theories. Natarajan believes that travelling across South Africa was a necessity for Gandhi's understanding of the nation. She submits that these journeys taught Gandhi that he needed to travel in India and experience it geographically before he could see Indian nationalism as a political reality. In chapter five, "Local Cosmopolitan and Modern Anti-Modern," Natarajan reads *Hind Swaraj* and *Satyagraha in South Africa* to elaborate the contradictory ideologies that structures Gandhi's activism. She mentions Gandhi's travels, knowledge of the British discourse of race, and cross-regional comparisons, among other things, as evidence of his cosmopolitanism. Natarajan elaborates on what she calls Gandhi's "modern anti-modernity" by describing the modern circumstances surrounding the writing of *Hind Swaraj* (101). She understands Gandhi's "imagining of nation" as modern yet notes that Gandhi's conception of India as spiritual, frugal, and vegetarian led to his construction of Indianness as essentially non-modern (111).

In the sixth chapter, "The Tamil Women of the Transvaal," Natarajan argues that the history of Indian diasporic women in South Africa provides context for the workings of indenture and the creation of Indian nationalism. She contextualizes Gandhi's role in the making of diasporic women activists

in South Africa by providing an overview of the gendered history of indentured labour in South Africa. In the section “Gandhian Project: Constructing Wives,” Natarajan examines the impact of Gandhi’s non-violent approach to political activism on women’s empowerment. She also provides context for Gandhi’s sexual philosophy; although she summarizes the points of some of his feminist critics, she takes an apologetic approach by maintaining that Gandhi’s exposure to women on plantations, prostitutes, and victims of rape and murder influenced his view of sexuality as degrading.

In the chapter “Gandhi and Atlantic Modernity” Natarajan demonstrates that Gandhi’s project in Indo-South Africa is of Atlantic dimensions. She argues that through Indian immigration (colonial commerce and indenture), Gandhi’s trajectory in Indo-South Africa is related to issues such as slave transplantation, separation from the metropole, and Euro-creole appropriations of Afro-indigenous subjectivities to build a creole nation. Finally, she discusses the strengths and limitations of subaltern cultural survival by comparing the slave and coolie struggle and resistance methods through cultural production. The chapter “‘Prophet Homespun’: Deenabandhu C.F. Andrews” discusses C. F. Andrews, Gandhi’s chief associate in his anti-indenture activities. Natarajan points to the similarities of Gandhi’s and Andrews’ diasporic experiences and explains how they influenced each other and how the English Andrews took Gandhi’s campaign to the Caribbean.

The text’s closing chapter, “Conclusion: Diasporic Gandhi,” starts with an informative and concise summary of different theories about the notion of diaspora and the constituents of the South African Indian diaspora. Natarajan also explains her use of the term “diasporic phase” for the period that Gandhi spent outside India. Finally, she concludes by explaining how Gandhi’s negotiation of his public and private selves in his expatriate experience helped him develop a notion of Indianness that was based on a way of life that was fundamentally anti-western and which he used as a strategy for uniting the South African Indian diaspora.

*Atlantic Gandhi: The Mahatma Overseas* can occasionally be challenging to read because of its proofreading issues. Nonetheless, Natarajan has done an excellent job studying Gandhi as a cosmopolitan diasporic subject whose life abroad and familiarity with the ideas flourishing along the Atlantic routes shaped his political and cultural philosophy.

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