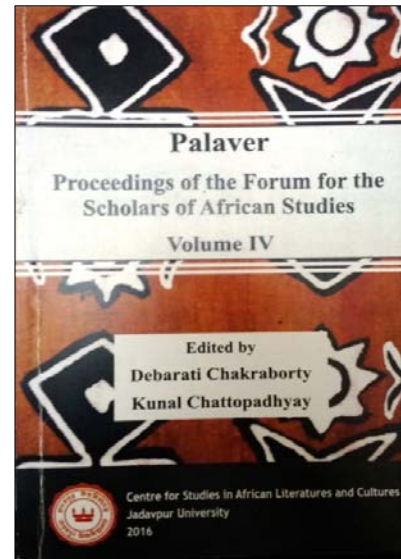


**African Studies in India**by **Mukulika Dattagupta**<sup>1</sup>***Palaver: Proceedings of the Forum******for the Scholars of African Studies (Vol. IV),*****Eds. Debarati Chakraborty and Kunal Chattopadhyay.**

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*Palaver: Proceedings of the Forum for the Scholars of African Studies* Volume IV is a mixed volume as it has a collection of several selected papers. The authors of these papers participated from both India and abroad in at least one of the annual seminars of the Forum for the Scholars of African Studies which were held during the last few years. These papers encompass a vast range in their foci. Each paper offers a unique perception of the identification of a continent and its people in terms of culture, literature, language and politics.

The collection begins with the key-note address which was delivered by Professor Tony E. Afejuku. He deals with literature and language politics of his own country, Nigeria, which was colonized and now has English as its dominant language. He makes an insightful comparative study between the language politics accruing in India and that of Nigeria. He advocates the need for a democratic literature to address the present. His essay also highlights the need of intense love and laws of equality in literature. His ideas seem to be so very apt for the present time and situation. On many occasions, he comments on the imposition of a language as part of the imperialist process within the African continent and also in India.

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Sanchari Bhattacharyya also talks about imposition in terms of traditional and modern. She focuses on a very important aspect of imposition by first questioning the terms 'traditional' and 'modern' and then bringing us all to a sudden but obvious realization that the definition of these two terms are culture- and time- specific. She also tries to trace the definition of these two terms in the context of the African continent. S. Satish Kumar tries to understand the power game underneath the definition of any term or concept. His paper tries to trace the emergence of a huge range of prison literature across Africa. He has questioned and has given a different understanding of some very common terms like 'prison', 'justice' and 'crime'. His questioning of the concept of the 'criminal' seems to be quite relevant. On the other hand, the paper by Oyedola Dvid A and Oyedola Olaoluwa A provides a new perception of the making of a new Africa. They have tried to give new dimensions to terms like 'development', 'freedom' and 'individualism' in the African context.

Africa is a continent which was very intensively victimized by various weapons of colonization. Apartheid was one such weapon. In their contributions, Kaninika Banerjee, Ritam Sen and Chandrayee Dey try to look into the institutionalized racism in South Africa and answer a few questions related to it. Both the papers undertake a close analysis of the protest theatres of South Africa. While discussing South Africa, one cannot ignore the paper by Professor Isabel Hofmeyr. Her paper does an intensive comparative analysis of caste oppression in India and racial oppression in South Africa. She also mentions Gandhi's engagement in both the contexts, which adds an interesting dimension to her paper. It also makes her paper interesting for the readers of any continent as Gandhi is a well-known figure and has remained a very popular subject of study throughout. She also provides examples from the print media in support of her arguments, which adds a tinge of authenticity to her arguments. Her work will provide not only food for thought but will inspire upcoming scholars for further research in this field. Such an effort deserves appreciation. On the other hand, Suchetna Bandyopadhyay has traced the history of Africa and its status in African history. The paper reflects her diligence in this work.

The old and huge continent of Africa too has a very fascinating history. Its history of struggle for the establishment of its true identity is still going on. Just like the protest theatres several movements against the oppressive ruling authority have come up from time to time. India too has a long history of struggle against oppression. In that sense, it identifies with the

African continent in various ways. The essays contributed by Paushali Chakraborti and Ayan Chatterjee present fascinating comparative studies of such movements. Chakraborti does a wonderful comparative study of the Mau Mau movement and the Tebhaga movement and tries to understand the emergence of land as a catalyst and a driving force behind both the movements. At the same time the paper also tries to trace a detailed trajectory of all the political and social complexities of these movements. Similarly, Chatterjee reminds us of the Afejuku's keynote address. Language politics emerges as an issue again in this essay. It focuses on a comparative analysis of the Bhasha Movement and the Soweto Uprising of South Africa. Both these movements were student uprisings. Chatterjee's paper tries to trace the journey of the language in becoming a crucial determinant of the mass expression.

Apart from all these, Sayantan Dasgupta has given us a little glimpse of the status of the continent in European literatures. He has chosen a very interesting text to address the purpose of his paper. Tintin is one of the most popular comic-book characters and therefore draws the attention of every reader easily. In this paper Dasgupta has identified several knots of language politics and racism which remain underneath the intense adventures which Tintin undertakes in Congo. This paper not only identifies the hidden racism in the Tintin comicbook but also locates the areas of miscommunication which result in misconceptions, and thus increases the gaps and fractures that lie between the two continents and their people.

Debashree Dattaray and Riti Sharma have addressed the issue of slavery as an important aspect of the history of Africa and the United States of America. In her paper Dattaray has reflected on the concept of regionalized spaces and boundaries and their impact on the formation of indigeneity and race. Sharma, on the other hand, analyzes the slave narratives and their role in the revitalization of African American history. She has also reflected on the journey of these narratives becoming the representation of a collective memory from an individual one. Both these papers open up new dimensions of American historiography.

This collection of papers will prove to be very helpful for the scholars who work on different aspects of Africa. The papers here are very inspiring and are capable of opening up new windows for further research.