

The Dissent Of Nazrul Islam: Poetry And History

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the Mahāmakam tank at Kumbakonam as an irregular octagon (p. 163); in reality, it is four-sided.

Branfoot next turns to the sculptural component of the Nāyaka temple. Here he notes that the emphasis on niche carvings that characterizes the art of earlier periods now shifts to carvings on the columns that line the central aisles of corridors and *maṇḍapas*. The author traces the “liberation” of figural and animal sculptures from the confines of the column shaft, until it reaches a climax in huge, virtually three-dimensional compositions, such as those at Madurai, Tenkasi and Krishnapuram. The iconographic classification of Nāyaka plastic art that he presents here is without doubt the most comprehensive that has yet been attempted. Readers will appreciate the author’s useful distinction between fierce deities and epic heroes of all types, and more benign personalities, such as Manmatha and Rati, the divinities associated with erotic love, and figures drawn from *Kuṟuvañci*, the popular Tamil dance drama. The author’s discussion of temple sculpture continues with a chapter on royal portraiture, which he considers to be one of the most original aspects of Nāyaka art. Here Branfoot shows how sculpted effigies of particular rulers, many of whom can be identified with some certainty, are strategically positioned within the temple so as to “greet” deities as they are paraded through the monument. These carvings invariably depict kings with their hands held together in attitudes of adoration, thereby permitting historical figures “permanently” to interact with temple gods.

In his conclusion the author observes that the Tamilnadu temple style survives to the present day, and has even spread beyond South India, as evidenced by recently constructed Hindu monuments in Singapore, Durban, Hawaii, London and elsewhere. A glossary, bibliography and index are appended.

George Michell

PRITI KUMAR MITRA:

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The Dissent of Nazrul Islam makes a significant contribution to the exploration of the history of ideas in South Asia. Mitra unravels the play of ideas in colonial India that inspired and influenced the dissenters while also explicating the concept of dissent. He locates Nazrul Islam as a product within the rubric of these ideas to trace his emergence as a poet, a thinker and a human being. In the introduction Mitra emphasizes the omission of Nazrul from historical studies which necessitated this study. Within the framework of dissent in South Asia he systematically draws out the particularities of Nazrul’s dissent. Mitra writes: “As a rebel he dissented against a number of orthodoxies – political, religious, social and literary – operative in the country. Marking the highest point of nationalist discontent, Nazrul, in his comprehensive rebellion against all orthodoxies, appears to represent a complex microcosm of the entire tradition”. In the three core chapters Mitra focuses on Nazrul’s dissent against the British colonial government in India, the Gandhian non-violent means of nationalist struggle, Islamic fundamentalism and Hindu cultural chauvinism, as well as the hegemony of Rabindranath Tagore in the world of Bengali literature. The painstaking research undertaken over several years answers many questions, just

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