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The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India

Sudhir Chandra

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Marking a departure from studies on history and literature in colonial India, *The Oppressive Present* explores the emergence of social consciousness as a result of and in response to the colonial mediation in the late nineteenth century. In focusing on contemporary literature in Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, and Marathi, it charts an epochal change in the gradual loss of the old pre-colonial self and the configuration of a new, colonized self. It reveals that the 'oppressive present' of generations of subjugated Indians remains so for their freed descendants: the consciousness of those colonized generations continues to characterize the 'modern educated Indian'. The book proposes *ambivalence* rather than binary categories — such as communalism and nationalism, communalism and secularism, modernity and tradition — as key to understanding the making of this consciousness.

This cross-disciplinary volume will prove essential to scholars and students of modern and contemporary Indian history and society, comparative literature and post-colonial studies.

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