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**Asaduddin, M. (Ed.). (2022), *Post-truth: Phenomenon, Impact, Consequences*, New Delhi: Pencraft International, 232 pp., Rs. 950 (Hardbound), ISBN 9789382178415**

*Reviewed by Mariyam Ilyas Siddiqui*

*Post-truth: Phenomenon, Impact, Consequences* (2022), edited by M. Asaduddin is a pertinent read for the current times. This anthology provokes questions on the implication of 'post-truth' for the human subject, and the world focusing on truth and reality, in opposition to falsehood and deceit. Since the idea of post-truth relies heavily on emotions and beliefs, to question the notion of 'truth' itself becomes a radical quest. The volume is an outcome of discussions, dialogues and deliberations held in 2019 at the annual international conference of the Indian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (IACLALS).

The Introduction to this anthology enumerates how post-truth can be temporally interpreted and defined in the present worldview. How do we understand 'truth, and what is 'post' truth? Do we place post-truth 'between' truth and falsehood, or does one re-define it completely? The questions have an underlying argument that lies have always been pervasive in human civilization. But at the same time society must always be vigilant to safeguard the sanctity of truth.

The book explores the various meanings and ramifications of the idea of post-truth over three sections, studied through diverse literary and trans-disciplinary lenses. The first section 'Post-truth: Phenomena, Events, Perceptions' examines propaganda, populism, and the vile

politics of fascism setting the tone with the article “Ministries of (Post) Truth in Fascist Dystopias: Examining the Relationship Between the Written Word and the Post-truth Condition” by Apoorva Dimri that reflects on how the idea of resistance emerges from dystopian texts set in authoritarian and totalitarian worldviews, and how the written word is interpreted in a post-truth world. The article “Affective Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Post-truth” by Mukul Chaturvedi studies personal testimonies and witnesses as a means of resistance, and a medium to sabotage the all-pervading post-truth world where ‘truth’ is relegated as an ‘alternative fact’. Through these testimonies movements like #MeToo became euphoric as the notions of ‘truth’ stand contested.

In “‘Seeking’ the History of (Post) Truth: A Reading Through Jotirao Phule”, Rahee Punyashloka argues that it is impossible to historicize post-truth, as the very Brahmanical ‘truth-making’ processes within which meaning-formation occurs, are questioned. In another argument, Akash Raha presents truth as a relic in a worldview where democratic social movements are losing their touch with reality, in the article “The Crisis of Contemporary Indian Student Movements in the Age of Post-truth.” The article questions the novelty of a post-truth age, as it examines post-truth, its consumption, and assimilation in the cultural realm.

The second section titled ‘Post-truth: Textual Studies’ reflects on how written words can defy our understanding of post-truth exploring the possibility to challenge the very nature of the post-truth age. Srinjoyee Dutta in her article “Fractious Truths and Factious Genres: Reading Haruki Murakami’s *Kafka on the Shore* in the Post-truth Age” puts forth the probability of ‘Postmodernism’ being instrumental in the rise of the post-truth movement. It problematizes the difference between a ‘fact’ and an ‘event’, because a postmodern writer usually decides what is a ‘fact’ and what is an ‘event’, and in art, one does not necessarily need to present ‘facts’. How does one then differentiate fiction from the real? The article “Migrant Fictions in the Age of Post-truth” by Garishma, builds on this through the consequent insecure world as reflected in the changing nature of migrant fiction in the post-truth world. According to Sania Iqbal Hashmi, Post-truth is a ‘mirror image’ of the definition of truth as offered by John Dewey in 1953. In Hashmi’s article “The True Staging(s) of an Encounter: Manu Joseph’s *Miss Laila As/For/With Ishrat Jahan*”, the author makes a critique of those in power, as they cloak truth to wield their power, showing how ‘new truth’ is established

over an existing truth. Further, in “The (Post)Truth of Our (Hyper)Real World: Re-presenting the Real in Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club* and Brett Ellis’ *American Psycho*”, Ritwick Bhattacharjee advocates Bertolt Brecht’s idea of reality that is never concrete and changes with time, resulting in the loss of truth. To extricate the truth needs strategies, and Sagar Taranga Mandal in the article “Excising Massacres: Towards a Critique of Grieving in Joe Sacco’s *Footnotes in Gaza*”, displays one such means of navigating an instance of the disturbed and contested past- the 1956 Suez crisis, wherein the media snubbed popular voices during massacres which Sacco presents in his *Footnotes* as human archives.

The struggle to understand post-truth can be mitigated through the study and analysis of relevant literatures. Therefore, in this Post-truth age literature helps us reflect and address what ‘truth’ is. A similar argument is seen in “Post-truth and Kashmir Conflict: A Study of Recent Literary Output About Kashmir” by Somjyoti Mridha which debunks the idea of a single history of human existence. Additionally, Fuzail Asar Siddiqui in his article ‘Alternate Histories as Post-truth: Reading Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle* argues that there is no post-truth world; because based on what we believe to be true, the truth changes and there will never be a singular explanation of any event leading to the crucial juncture of the politics of identity. “The individual in the Era of Post-truth: Reading Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar’s *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*” by Semanti Basu, reflects on how the Adivasi is put under surveillance for his representation of the Adivasi. There were different opinions on this social issue and the literary text, as politics gave precedence to one opinion over another.

The last section of the book “Post-truth: Films, Visualities, Children’s Literature” draws on articles examining post-truth through visuals. Nishat Haider in her article “Post-truth, Politics and Gender in *Leila*” has presented her thoughts on *Leila*, a Netflix series, set in the future, that mirrors our existing political and social situation. Likewise, Nilak Dutta’s article “Post-truth Live: A Case Study of *Peepli Live*” critiques post-truth at three levels: participants, media representation of farmers’ plight and political manoeuvring, ensuring that no poetic justice served in the movie, establishing that media is merely creating narratives that suits their purpose.

In “Of Biopics and Emotional Subterfuges: Hindi Cinema in the Age of

Post-truth”, Shailendra Kumar Singh claims that biopics in Hindi cinema are made to simply give an alternative ‘unreal’ account of celebrities. Figuring out the authenticity of truth is further explored by Ved Prakash through his article “Clicking Photograph, Creating Fiction: Discussing Steve McCurry’s ‘The Afghan Girl’ and the phenomenon of post-truth” showing how photography as a discipline has always involved manipulations and distortions as and when they are documented. The last article in the book titled “Children, Fantasy, Resistance: The Case of Bhajju System” by Samarth Singhal, puts forward an idea of consumption of art, versus ‘critical art’.

As a volume, the book is an exhaustive assessment of the understanding, assessment, and manifestation of post-truth, its distortions and deceptions of truth, and a useful resource for a critical understanding of the present times.

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