dialog

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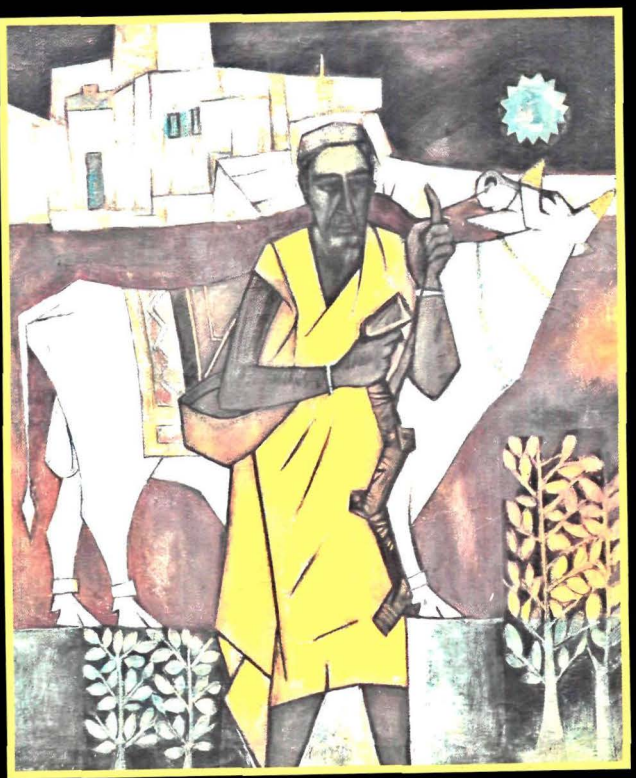

Department of English and Cultural Studies
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CALL FOR PAPERS

Dialog, a refereed bi-annual journal of the Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh, is now open to submissions for its 2014 Winter issue. *Dialog* provides a forum for interdisciplinary research on diverse aspects of culture, society and literature. For its forthcoming issue, it invites scholarly papers, interviews, book reviews and poems.

The journal would like to publish critical articles on any of the following aspects or related issues:

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Scholarly articles of 12-20 pages, or 4, 000 - 6, 000 words, in Times Roman 12 font, should be presented in accordance with the 'Harvard' system of referencing, where the author's name and date of publication are given within the text parenthetically, with detailed reference in the Works Cited (see http://www.staffs.ac.uk/support_depts/infoservices/learning_support/refzone/harvard/). A 50-word biographical note, may also be sent along electronically by October 31, 2014 to ruminasethi@gmail.com

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Editor's Note

This is the first issue of *Dialog* since I took over as Editor.

The contributions to this issue carry forward the task of rewriting histories through the well-rehearsed medium of literature, recognized now as a significant channel of studying social and political struggles. These papers are broadly conceived, and span a variety of subjects, from the study of English as a vehicle of democracy and human rights in colonial Burma to the new imperialism of the era of globalization. If there is one theme that runs through all of them, it is the measure of modernity that characterizes the "new space" each of the authors endeavours to investigate in a unique way. It is not the kind of modernism that arrived from the northern hemisphere in the early decades of the twentieth century, one that can be easily identified with a critique of the myth of progress. That definition of modernism, with which students of literature are quite familiar, went on to create an entire discourse of a return to innocence and primitivism and the appreciation of non-materiality, leading European anthropologists

to imagine Africa or India to be its dark Other. What I am indicating is an incipient modernity that suggests a breakaway from native tradition—one that does not involve an unhesitating embrace of the European system in its place, but a kind of newness that is associated with palimpsest writing, where traces of the present order, partially yet definitely, overwrite the structures of the past.

The papers published in this new issue of *Dialog* refuse to perform a mimesis within the modes of western thought; rather, they uncover modernity in ways that are almost peripheral to the vision that derives from colonialism to a large extent. While, on the one hand, colonialism arrived loaded with "civilizational" values that appeared to have ushered in modernity, there existed other literatures that promoted, as Amit Chaudhuri puts it, those "endlessly multifarious, confusing number of tongues". The dynamism of these new literatures, predominantly in the regional languages—at least in India—proceeded to expose the complex synthesis of a western and non-western civilization, a "cross-fertilization" in which the oppressor-oppressed paradigm was not so considerably foregrounded.

To that effect, the essays here are tentative beginnings that oppose the assumption that prototypically modern movements are "derivative" (Partha Chatterjee). Chatterjee's summation may have a rationale in the face of rapid globalization and the embrace of theories of hybridity, particularly in departments of English in India, yet non-Eurocentric writing has kept alive the tendency to improvise rather than imitate—in all its material and Marxist manifestations—the growth patterns of western models. It is important here to recall Dipesh Chakrabarty's comment on western historicism:

> Historicism—and even the modern, European idea of history—one might say, came to non-European peoples in the nineteenth century as somebody's way of saying "not yet" to somebody else. Consider the classic liberal but historicist essays by John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty" and "On Representative Government," both of which proclaimed self-rule as the highest form of government and yet argued against giving Indians or Africans self-rule on grounds that were indeed historicist. According to Mill, Indians or Africans were *not yet* civilized enough to rule themselves. Some historical time of development and civilization (colonial rule and education, to be precise) had to elapse before they could be considered

prepared for such a task. Mill's historicist argument thus consigned Indians, Africans, and other "rude" nations to an imaginary waiting room of history. In doing so, it converted history itself into a version of this waiting room. We were all headed for the same destination, Mill averred, but some people were to arrive earlier than others. That was what historicist consciousness was: a recommendation to the colonized to wait. Acquiring a historical consciousness, acquiring the public spirit that Mill thought absolutely necessary for the art of self-government, was also to learn this art of waiting. This waiting was the art of realization of the "not yet" of historicism.

The "imaginary waiting room of history" that Mill considered to be an inescapable inevitability for seekers of modernity may not find takers when considering the presence of confrontational politics in decolonized nation-states. There are animated subcultures—distinguished from outmoded ghettoes—which may have emerged out of the colonial encounter, that, nonetheless, resist yielding to western categories of modernity when rewriting postcolonial history. Chandu Menon's Malyalam novel, *Indulekha* (1889), is an early example of writing that had its origin as a translation of Disraeli's *Henrietta Temple*, but was later laudably rewritten as an independent work of fiction. Even as new nations usher in modes of capitalism, administrative bureaucracy, systems of government, and a variety of other infrastructure, already identified as western, tradition is not trounced altogether.

Although *Dialog* has existed for many years and produced remarkable writing, a new Editor ends up adding another dimension, while at the same time finding her own feet. I have introduced the genres of poetry and interview that will appear along with scholarly articles and book reviews. I have also brought in a new Advisory Board. A very warm welcome to Gillian Beer, Sudhir Chandra, Ritu Menon, Susie Tharu, Harish Trivedi, and Robert Young. With the intent of forming an active editing team, I have been able to enlist some of our former research scholars as well as young faculty at various universities in India. It is my pleasure, therefore, to introduce a dedicated crew consisting of Deepti Laroia, Sakoon Singh, Neha Soi and Natasha Vashisht, who have helped enormously with the copyediting and proofreading.

Before I conclude, I must thank my dear friend and well-wisher, Ranjini Mendis, former Chair of the Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS), with whom I first interacted when we began to work together on the fully online, open-access journal, *Postcolonial Text*, which she created. In the span of seven years, much of what I know about journal editing came from her constant support and mentoring. My gratitude to her for her personal warmth in maintaining our friendship, and intimidating professionalism with regard to journal publishing.

RUMINA SETHI
EDITOR

GEETHA GANAPATHY-DORÉ

Acquiring English as "Uncommon Wealth" in Pascal Khoo Thwe's *From the Land of Green Ghosts*

Sri Lanka and Kashmir are currently regarded as troubled earthly paradises but not Burma, officially called Myanmar since 1989 by virtue of the "Adaptation of Expression" law enacted by the military junta. Indeed as the Burmese born, and Cambridge educated, author Pascal Khoo Thwe puts it, "Burma is richly blessed with natural resources, including rubies, jade, fertile soil, virgin hardwood forests—especially teak, fish and a great variety of wildlife" (11). Ever since Kipling published "Mandalay" as part of his *Barrack Room Ballads* in 1892, the "cleaner greener land" of Burma got inextricably linked to English literature as a dreamland for British soldiers. It was while doing his stint in Burma as a police officer (1922-27) in the Indian Imperial Force of *Burma* that George Orwell found material for his satirical first novel, *Burmese Days* (1934)

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which portrays the rivalry between the Burmese and Indian populations for upward social mobility in the context of the British Raj.

Burma was separated from British India and granted a new constitution in 1937. However when Burma got independent in 1948, it chose to declare itself an independent sovereign republic and remain outside the Commonwealth as a non-aligned country. The pressure from Burma's communist left wing, the distrust of India's power and the special relationship that Burmese nationalists had with Japan[1] are cited as possible causes for this decision. The difficult lay of the land added further to its isolation. Today the French speaking Rwanda and the Portuguese speaking Mozambique are members of the Commonwealth. But there is no talk of bringing Myanmar into the fold of Commonwealth in spite of Aung San Suu Kyi's affinities with Britain and the change in the regime's attitude towards democracy. At present Myanmar is a member of ASEAN and has an observer status with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. The democratic transition in Burma is complicated by the clashes occurring between the Rohingya Muslim minority (Huntington 256) in the Rakhine state which is aspiring for autonomy of the Arakan region, and the nationalist Buddhists who fear the former's links with Islamic terrorist groups operating from Pakistan and Bangladesh.

This article intends to explore the motivation for and the process of learning English and its implications in the formation of a political conscience in Burma as depicted in Thwe's docu-fictional narrative. Looking at the writing of the autobiographic text by Thwe as a political act, it will be established that English language's legacy of democracy and human rights, far and above the imperial and mercantile ideology it may embody, remains an enduring and unconventional form of wealth in Burma. At a time when Englishness has become a matter for debate, and multiple allegiances are accepted as the basis of identity, this tribute paid to the English language by Thwe, though it might appear quaint, helps us realize the time lag that exists between Burma and the rest of the world in the unfolding of postcolonial history as much as it allows one to take

stock of English as a democratic tool.

When one reads Pascal Khoo Thwe's richly woven text, whose title *From The Land of Green Ghosts* harks back to the spirits of those murdered, or brought to a premature grave during the oppressive military rule (1962-2011), one notices that the regime exactly speaks what Orwell described as newspeak in his dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It first called itself the *State Peace and Development Council*, before rebaptizing itself as the *State Law and Order Restoration Council* in 1988 and reverting to the old name in 1997. It tells the population that its goal is to end "the exploitation of man by man" (Thwe 51) while allowing the soldiers to commit atrocious crimes such as theft, bootlegging, arson, abduction, rape, torture and murder. The regime's linguistic propaganda which renames an army base as "conquering flowerland" and a church as "Ratanabummi" (cluster of gems) serves its politics of illusion (Thwe 123). The truth remains that Burma/Mynamar—ranked 73rd in terms of real GDP by the IMF in 2012 out of 187 countries—occupies the 149th place in the World Bank's 2013 Human Development Index rankings.[2]

Aung San Suu Kyi's 1991 essay *Freedom from Fear* and 1997 *Letters from Burma* are incontrovertible and unforgettable testimonials about contemporary Burma. Though Amitav Ghosh's essay entitled "At Large in Burma" (1998) and his novel *The Glass Palace* (2000) give a clear picture (Nair 163) of the colonial and postcolonial history (Kadam 20) of Burma from an outsider's point of view, Pascal Khoo Thwe's autobiographical narrative published in 2002 distinguishes itself by bearing witness to what Rushdie calls "the linguistic struggle" (*Imaginary* 17) which takes place in Burma as a reflection of the struggle for democracy. While Orwell was pressured to delocalize his narrative and change the names of some of his characters by his British publisher Gollancz, he chose to focus on the fictional district of Kyauktada which may or may not mirror the Kyauktada township of Yangon/Rangoon as setting, and the European Club as a metaphor for the tragi-comedy of power. The canvas is larger in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* as his sprawling narrative covers India, Burma and Malaysia. While a

major portion of the novel dwells on the exile of the Burmese King Thebaw and Queen Supalayet in Ratnagiri in India, Ghosh chooses to highlight the plight of the Indian refugees in the wake of the 1942 Japanese invasion of Burma as part of his treatment of the drama of the end of Empire. Ghosh's narrative and Thwe's account are naturally connected because both of them deal with personalities and situations that shaped postcolonial Burma. However, Ghosh's literary intention seems to have been to write a modern narrative that matches the 19th century archival material called *The Glass Palace Chronicles of the Kings of Burma* (532). Thwe presents the tribal rather than the royal dimension of Burmese reality. The character of the innovative Burmese woman writer, Ma Thin Thin Aye, who is silenced by a barely literate officer at the Press Scrutiny Board and asked to learn to write proper Burmese in Ghosh's novel (536), provides us the ground to understand Thwe's attempt to represent Burmese diversity in an adequate, albeit foreign, language.

In an article published in *Biography* in 2005, Susan Tridgell rightly deplores the commodification and condescension Thwe's book had been subjected to, a kind of critique which has had the effect of "amplifying the distance between the narrated and narrating self, and muting the political message of the work" (77). The use of specters in the book warrants a comparison with Bao Ninh's 1990 novel, *The Sorrow of War*, recalling the violence of the Vietnam war, and with Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* that deals with issues of human rights abuses in the civil-war ridden Sri Lanka as part of the South Asian literary work of remembering (Morris 229).

The Indo-American writer Mira Kamdar's family memoir, *Motiba's Tattoos*, published in 2005, which evokes her grandparents' lives in, and traumatic escape from, Burma—as Indian migrants—offers another glimpse into the country (Singh 64). The American born and Cambridge trained Thant Myint-U's family history, *The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma*, published in 2006, retraces Burmese history since 1885. BBC correspondent Fergal Keane's military documentary on the Japanese invasion of British India during the second world war entitled *Road of Bones:*

The Epic Siege of Kohima 1944 (2010), and Thant Myint-U's essay "Where China Meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia" published in 2011, are other recent references to grasp regional politics.

Pascal Khoo Thwe's account roughly covers the history of the country from the invasion of Kubla Khan in 1270 to his own father's death in 1996. It is divided into three parts and incorporates two maps (of Burma and the rebel camp), three icons (two intertwined dragons, the masque of death and a dragon), four pencil sketches (the landscapes of Phekon and Mandalay, portraits of a woman and a goddess) and twenty-four black and white photographs of family and friends in Burma and England as the book's unmistakable visual signature. An index is provided to indicate the scholarly aspect of the book. Cambridge don, John Casey's foreword provides the frame story of how he met a young student belonging to the Padaung tribe, working as a waiter in a Chinese restaurant in Mandalay. The fact that the waiter was particularly interested in James Joyce had left a mark in Casey's mind. When Dr. Casey receives a letter from Pascal from a rebel camp near the Thai border, he first sends books and cash hidden in *The New Oxford Book of Modern Verse*. Later he decides to exfiltrate him and take him to read English literature in Cambridge.

Thwe's coming of age story is quite unusual. Eldest son in a family of eleven children from a Padaung family, converted to Catholicism by an Italian priest, he spends his childhood in Phekon. He is surrounded by his paternal grandfather, who does not forget that he was a tribal chief; his father, a veterinary doctor, who is totally disillusioned by the Burmese Socialist Party's programme; his loving grandmother who educates him in his culture by telling stories; and his hardworking mother. After giving up his plans to become a priest, Thwe goes to the University of Mandalay to study English literature and falls in love with Moe, a Burmese girl. When Moe is imprisoned, tortured, raped and killed, Pascal joins student militants, who in the wake of Aung San Suu Kyi's inspiring speeches, notably outside the Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon in 1988, defy the military. When the military intelligence is on its heels, the students

escape to Karen rebels' territory, by trekking across hostile territory, harsh climate and debilitating malaria. Caught in the cross fire between rebels and Burmese soldiers, Thwe manages to survive using the strategy proposed by James Joyce—"silence, exile and cunning" (Thwe 177).

When Casey comes to his rescue, Thwe is in a dilemma: whether to stick with his friends, or save his life, flee the country and tell the world outside about what was happening in Burma. He chooses the second option. Transplantation in Cambridge is yet another learning experience. With support from his benefactor, his teachers and examiners, Pascal obtains an Honours degree in English literature. From the Gate of Humility through the Gate of Virtue, he reaches the Gate of Honour. His discovery of the bust of his grandmother made by the Bertrand Mills Circus in the England of the 1930s provides the epilogue to the story while reconciling his tribal past with his transformed identity at the same time.

Thwe's vividly sensuous homodiegetic prose narrative combines the magic of storytelling with chilling real life events; the eeriness of rice-wine-induced inebriation, dreams, feverish delirium and shamanistic transmigrations with surrealist guerilla warfare, ancestral memory; and the ritual swaying of bodies with Christian mass and saying of grace, tribal life of hunting with modern day amenities, a culture of obedience and the desire to break free, the history of Burma and the literature of England, the poetry of pristine landscapes with dirty politics, the tragedy of nationhood with the comedy of language, the world of the living with the world of the dead, family solidarity with individual agency. However, the border between these antithetic worlds is blurry like the mist that separates lakes and mountains or the surprising similitude between festivals and fights in the jungle called *pwe*.

A self-described odyssey with its unmistakable connections to Homer and Joyce, this experiential text is an elegy written in memory of nine dead young Burmese students, and quotes Virgil's *Aeneid* in its incipit. Pascal Khoo Thwe's epic journey from Mandalay to Cambridge University paradoxically transports the reader from the West to Burma in a reversal of Kipling's *Kim*, as the disciple here is

Eastern and the teacher Western. Narrative strategies of flashbacks, repetitions and anticipatory omens make reading an initiatory circle dance in which the dancers facing the centre step sideways to slowly change their position. The centre turns out to be neither Europe nor ethnic allegiance but a sense of the self. When both the author and the reader are displaced, albeit in opposite directions, they meet in the common ground of exile and take full measure of the universal and existential struggle for a rightful place under the sun. It is by finding this still centre that Pascal Khoo Thwe succeeds in overcoming the feeling of being lost in the modern world.

The anthropology of several Burmese tribes and the ethnography of contemporary England, especially the microcosm of Cambridge as seen by Pascal Khoo Thwe, are highly interesting thanks to his cross cultural perspective and sense of humour which help him caricature himself on the one hand and exoticize the British on the other. When he wants to kill the cat that ate the birds in his Cambridge host Graeme Mitchison's garden (Thwe 271), and eat it, John Casey prefers to divert his attention by teaching him the English idiom, "not enough room to swing a cat" where "cat" refers to a multi-tailed whip. The ironic turning of the tables is, however, obvious, when Thwe writes:

> As I sat alone in my room listening to the noise, I was transported back to the jungle. The males would urinate against the walls of the college building, as if marking the territory like the wild animals of the jungle. As the voices of the drunken female undergraduates rose, I was reminded of the cries of hyenas and excited monkeys. (274)

As for his grandmothers, who were taken by the Bertram Mills Circus to be exhibited as freaks in England, they consider London to be "a big village" and the English "a very strange tribe" who paid money to look at them (Thwe 28).

In *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie writes of having "to conquer English to complete the process of making oneself free" from colonial dependence (17). As the Padaung people feel colonized not by the British, with whom they seemed to have entertained friendly relations but by the Japanese who had ill-treated them during the Second

World War, Pascal Khoo Thwe's relationship with the English language is quite different from the commonly observed backlash of postcolonial writing. Thwe's grandmothers recall the British with nostalgia as long-lost relatives. English books open the door to the "forbidden land" of democracy (Thwe 17). English functions as a counter language to the military regime's language of propaganda, which was used to hide,[3] distort, falsify and erase the truth. If the Padaung myth of the division of one original language into many confusing languages imputes it to human ingratitude unlike the divine punishment meted out to human arrogance in the Biblical myth of the Babel tower,

> After many years of living on lower earth, human beings became discontented. They wanted to enter middle earth... Human beings and animals got to the middle earth together and in amity. But the humans, overcome with hubris, began to forget the language of animals who had been their helpers and killed them for food. The humans then forgot even their own common language, so they split into disparate peoples and were scattered throughout the world. (Thwe 8)

The current tension between the Burman language and English stems from ideological and cultural differences and political objectives. The military regime systematically uses translation, renaming and censorship as strategies for rejecting western ideas, exacting unquestioning obedience on the part of the people and stifling dissent. In the face of arbitrariness, one way of defense available is to invoke divine justice by throwing curses. Pascal Khoo Thwe recalls his grandfather's curses. These are spells hurled at specific persons with the intention of harming them as a form of retributive justice. Thwe is considered to be endowed with special powers of cursing (110). Cursing belongs to the register of magic in the same way as prayers. The grammatical construction is similar in the sense that both curses and prayers can start with "May." The practice of cursing is also mentioned by Salman Rushdie in *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Luka and the Fire of Life*, providing instances of a very old woman and a very young boy having recourse to cursing in helpless circumstances. Indeed J.K. Rowling helped develop an augmented reality video game called Book of Spells as a companion volume to the Harry Potter series. However, neuro-

psycho-sociologists and linguists have some theoretical insights into the act of cursing. According to Timothy Jay,

> [C]ursing is rarely meaningless or purposeless... The functions or purposes of cursing according to the NPS theory serve three independent forces a) neurological control, b) psychological motives and restraints and c) socio-cultural restrictions ... We learn to live in language and exist through the language we learn. Cursing is an emotional element of language that alters the way we view ourselves and others. (81)

Thwe writes that in his tribe, "words became flesh" (17), that is, words acquire corporeality by being pronounced. When a soldier, who dines in the restaurant where Thwe works, tells him that he is "worth only one bullet", Thwe seeks vengeance: "See you again soldier" (140). Indeed he will find the soldier's body riddled with bullets at the Thai-Burma border later in the account (250). However, he contrasts the primitive and aggressive nature of Burmese curses and the sense of fairness built into the English language by saying that he contemplated compiling a "dictionary of Burman Curses" and gave up the project considering the task to be too massive (142). He recalls a Burmese tale about a baby parrot that was raised by a dacoit and another that was raised by a hermit, the former learning how to swear and curse and the latter words of civility and religion (267). Thwe clearly identifies himself with the latter and equates the English language with civilization.

Indeed Thwe draws inspiration from James Joyce's postcolonial strategies to confront the oppressive military regime of his own country. The intertextual references to James Joyce are quite explicit in the narrative. Imitating James Joyce in *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, like Amit Chaudhuri does in his novel, *A Strange and Sublime Address*, Pascal Thwe writes:

> I was a Catholic. My tribe was Kayan (Padaung) ... a sub tribe of Karenni. Our spiritual leader is the Pope. Karenni (Kayali) is our State. Burma is our country. We live in the Shan state. We are Burmese not Burmans. We were one of the smallest of the minority tribes and peoples. (10)

The shift of the narrative voice from the first person singular to the first person plural indicates that his sense of identity is relational

given the coordinates of his geographic, social, familial and political location. After James Joyce, it is Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, and Milton's Sonnet number 23 on his deceased wife, brought to him "like Alcestis from the grave", that leave their mark on the author whose belief in the existence of ghosts is proclaimed in the very title of his account. The mixing of the European spectral tradition with the Padaung conception of one's shadow self as a butterfly that can leave the body when one is "terrified or injured" (Thwe 62), and the Burmese Buddhist belief in thirty seven *Nats* or nature spirits (11) and *natseins* (green ghosts) of human beings who met violent death, gives the book a singular literary unity.

Thwe compares what he had to learn at Mandalay University with the wider choice available at Caius College, Cambridge, and the critical method used to stimulate independent thought. Though the students in Mandalay choose to study English out of an instrumental and integrative motivation, they develop a passion for English literature because they think that it is "the key that unlocked the mysteries of the West" (124). But they are given photocopies of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, James Hilton's *Goodbye Mr. Chips*, and eleven poems from *Palgrave's Golden Treasury* written mostly by the Romantics. Essays are dictated to the students to learn by rote. When the lecturer in political science tells them that a far superior and genuine freedom was available in Burma compared to that in the West, a student protests and is promptly sent to a labour camp from which he returns a mental cripple. Thwe, who is well versed in the traditional method of interpreting dreams and the creative freedom his grandmother has accustomed him to, turns to the English teacher for help. He advises Thwe that he should learn to never argue with the corrupt administration. The abandoning of the signified, that the absence of books and critical reading represent, makes Thwe feel intellectually starved and impoverished. The compulsion to use a double discourse reinforces his quest for truth.

While in Cambridge, Thwe realizes that freedom of thought and opinion precedes freedom of expression and is the basis of political freedom. He is particularly thrilled with academic exercises

in practical criticism where great authors have to stand up to the scrutiny of first year students because their texts are studied anonymously. However, he could be naively comic when, as a Christian, he condemns Oliver Cromwell's destruction of places of worship assimilating him to a military dictator like General Ne Win. Though Thwe is able to connect to the order and beauty of Cambridge which reminds him of a monastery, writing essays proves to be a difficult task like diffusing a land mine. He works very hard to make it. While building analogic bridges for him between Mandalay and Cambridge, Thwe constructs subtle passageways for the reader to have access to ancient wisdom by quoting his grandmother's prayers, stories and tribal sayings and proverbs. The three icons in the book match the three Cambridge gates. The cognitive resources of the East thus seep into the West to enrich its textual repository with oral and narrative modes of tribal wisdom.

In his essay, "The Monolingualism of the Other", Jacques Derrida argues that "all culture is originarily colonial" (Derrida, 1998: 39) and raises the question of the ownership of language:

"Is language in *possession*, ever *a possessing or possessed possession? Possessed* or *possessing* in exclusive *possession*, like a piece of personal *property?* What of this being-at-home in language towards which we never cease returning?" (16).

Though, as Pascal Khoo Thwe believes and Casey concedes, divine providence rather than chance seems to have been at work in engineering Thwe's escape, he confesses that he nurtured a secret desire to master English and teach it at the University. Un-homed from his tribal territory, he is possessed by the spirit of the English language. By moving to England, the language's habitat, he hopes to possess the letter and the security that comes with it.

In the course of this reverse engineering, Pascal Thwe "consumes words like food" (277). As a teacher for children in the refugee camps, he develops a heightened sensibility towards the acquisition of the English vocabulary. When a child, his parents allow him to eat and drink to his fill. This gargantuan appetite for food comes into play when he is exiled from his native Phekon in England; it helps him absorb and incorporate foreign words. He

likens the learning of new words to that of making new friends or "saving bullets" (253), precious ammunition for self-defense and survival in the context of a guerrilla war. He sprinkles his text with Greek, Padaung, Pali, and Burmese words in italics cushioned with their English translations. The sprinkling of foreign words is calculated in such a way as to make the reader actually learn them. At times, Thwe uses words like colours in abstract painting. The repetition of the word "brown" (199) to describe the food eaten at the rebel camp by the Salveen river side inscribes the colour of the soil on the surface of the text.

> The special menu that night went under the name 'Salween Delight'. Sure enough, the soup was brown. There was brown rice with brown beef curry, and kidney-bean soup served on a brown plastic sheet ... After dinner brown tea was served with brown jaggeries. (199)[4]

According to Derrida, it is only after the Ear of the Other receives the signature of the autobiographer that the autobiographical pact is performed (*Ear of the Other*: 50-51). The reader has to attune his ears to the heteroglossia of *From the Land of Green Ghosts* which comes not only from the to-ing and fro-ing between native and English languages but also from the transcription of voices from this and other worlds. The beating of the drums of desire (*klong*) gives a rhythm to the text. Early on, there is a tug of war between the propaganda of Burma Broadcasting Corporation and BBC reports. It is the broadcast by BBC's World service of Casey's article in *Spectator*, "An Evening in Burma", that makes the Burmese army especially target Thwe (Thwe 249-50). Even Aung San Suu Kyi referred to the BBC programme, "Desert Island Discs", in her Nobel speech which shows the power of English in Burma as a medium of truth. Apart from good and bad news, there was fragrant news (Thwe 125), that is, news distorted by the regime. When Pascal has to cross a check point, he disguises himself as a peasant and speaks the peasant register of language in order to escape their vigilance. While in Karenni territory, Thwe interrupts a soldier's radio transmission. They exchange threats, insults, and ritual banter (Thwe 240-42). In the thick of the fight, the reader hears not only explosions but also cries and abuses. The polyphony

of birds chirping in the mornings, the serenades that male students sing to their girlfriends, and the songs of Beatles, Elvis Presley and Bee Gees—broadcast from the Radio or heard on a walkman—provide an alternative to this cacophony. One of the chapters is entitled "Staying Alive". This noisy background to the written text symbolically recreates the mist that hangs over the mountains of Burma. Paradoxically it invokes the silenced voices of the dead students at the same time.

Expelled from his childhood paradise, Pascal is condemned to wander, which is the fate of everyman. His westward journey, though assailed by guilt and doubt, is one of healing. His own father considers Casey the adopted father. Casey is looked upon as a reactionary professor by some students in Cambridge as he believes in the benevolence of the British Empire. His trip to Mandalay is prompted by the nostalgia for the Raj. He asks Thwe to wear the Burmese dress for the graduation ceremony, perpetuating the exotic as discourse. Pascal Thwe does not condemn the use of giraffe women as Circus freaks in the 1930s, but uses irony to laugh it away. His conversion to Catholicism has certainly influenced him in his determination to open up to the West.

Nevertheless, Thwe cannot be considered an unthinking informer, auto-ethnographer or slavish imitator who validates Macaulay's theory of the imperishable empire. English provides him the middle ground between his father's tongue (Padaung), his mother's tongue (Karenni), his parish priest Padre Lesioni's tongue (Italian) and his lover's tongue (Burman). His autobiography has the fourfold purpose of paying the debt to his friends, unifying his self, fostering national reconciliation and East-West rapprochement. At one level, his autobiography is a confession to the world at large, like Saint Augustine's or Rousseau's. It also performs the task of integrating his tribe's memory into modern history. At another level, it is a politically affirmative act, asserting the freedom of expression to inform the outside world about the condition of democracy and human rights in Burma. It demonstrates the inherited capacity of the English language to foster dissidence as a necessary condition for ensuring the quality and vitality of democracies. When a language

is liberated from its exclusive pact with the nation, it gets freed from "the sway of any power except that of poetry and imagination", according to the French speaking writers who wrote "The Manifesto for a world literature in the French language" in 2007 by citing new literatures in English as an illustration of the sheer power of language as a symbolic human practice. It is by operating the shift from world English to the world of English that Thwe's beautiful and sincere story of learning the language frees English itself from the weight of its imperial history.

Notes

[1] On the reciprocal "Burma Lovers" in Japan, see Seekins.

[2] According to the government's own official statistics, as reported by Burma National News, it allocated 23.6 percent ($2 billion) of the 2011 budget to military spending, and spent just 1.3 percent on health ($110 million) and 4.13 percent ($349 million) on education.

[3] The fact that the Americans had landed on the moon (1969) had finally been told to the Burmese population in 1977 (Thwe 76).

[4] This passage is reminiscent of the passage in *Midnight's Children* where Rushdie repeatedly uses the adjective green to convey a sense of fever and disgust (289).

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SAKOON N. SINGH

"Naked Shingles of the World": Fashioning of Science as Exploitative Practice during Victorian Times in Amitav Ghosh's Fiction[1]

This Day relenting God
Hath placed within my hand
A wondrous thing: And God
Be praised. At His command,

Seeking his secret deeds
With tears and toiling breath,
I find thy cunning seeds,
O million murdering Death.

This extract from the poem "In Exile" by the British scientist, novelist and poet Ronald Ross, who received the Nobel Prize for Medicine in the year 1906, is discreetly inserted at the beginning of Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996). The quasi-heroic tone with which Ross gears himself up to take on the "the

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million murdering death", springs from the confidence instilled in soldiers and scientists alike with the burgeoning sentiment of imperialism in the Victorian times.[2] The much celebrated genius and toil of the scientist is about to align itself with scientific knowledge to empower him to take on the evil of disease. And if one were to read it as a harangue of a white scientist located in an imperial colony, the purpose certainly seems more than just a celebration of the power of science, it also underscores the white man's power as a saviour of the disease-afflicted populace in the new world.

However, the fact remains that even though science became a prominent feature of Victorian sensibility, the discourse of science was still largely fashioned by a theological worldview. For the longest time the Victorians witnessed a national debate on the repercussions of rejecting the Biblical premise for Darwin's thesis and the Theory of Evolution. This conflict coexisted with the rapidly increasing colonial expansion. In his poem 'Dover Beach' (1867), Mathew Arnold speaks of the "sea of faith" which was full and is now retreating, leaving "the vast edges drear/ And naked shingles of the world" (II. 27-28), wherein the allusion is to the Darwinian thesis for having muddied the "sea of faith". In this poem, which is considered the anthem of Victorian times, Arnold employs an imagery that gets more sordid towards the conclusion and portrays a struggle which resonates well for this complexity: "Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight/ where ignorant armies clash by night" (II. 35-37).

The Victorians were witness to the gradual shift from a romantic view of nature to a far more aggressive Utilitarian view that sought to extract material benefit from it. This was evident in their new fangled utilitarian approach to a science like Botany. Trade of plant-based products such as tea, tapioca, rubber, cotton, jute, spices and opium dominated the world trade flow, and slowly but surely gave the world another vocabulary in which to speak about nature. Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* (2008) and *River of Smoke* (2011), the two titles of his Ibis trilogy, essentially expose this new vocabulary about nature and its unabashed exploitation. If one looks closely at

the economics of opium trade, starting with the forced plantation of opium in the Indian hinterland to its sale in reluctant Chinese markets, one can deconstruct Victorian economics that was fashioning the science of the day. It is this triptych that the present paper seeks to explore with reference to the evolution of science as a discipline during Victorian times: the colonial encounter, the view of nature and the utilitarian ethos that began to dominate the ideological worldview. The Victorian era is viewed in this study as an epoch, which, owing to these advances in science and colonial expansion, has left behind the legacy of unabashed exploitative practices, both economic and ecological.[3] From the Romantic ideal of the study of nature to 'reveal the bounty of God', it became an instrument of exploitation for the colonizer.

The Victorian age was also marked with heightened racial consciousness. The sanguine confidence in the power of science to make all phenomena intelligible, led to the growth of a pseudo-scientific discipline like phrenology—a practice that could help the Western mind make sense of the varied racial types it was encountering, and also, by positing itself as the superior 'type', justify the subjugation of other races. The colonial tryst with phrenology thus proves that even science was not free from the pervasive racial prejudice. Amitav Ghosh has been very alive to these issues and has portrayed the collusion of science and politics through many of his works. The paper explores the portrayal of practices like phrenology in Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle Of Reason* especially in the backdrop of the overarching 'scientific' ardour to theorize, which was a hallmark of Victorian knowledge. Given the volatile intellectual, political and economic changes that mark this age, it embodies a distinct 'culture of knowledge', spurring the growth of science in a particular direction. As David Arnold argues: "Science, far from being monolithic, manifests itself across time and cultures in myriad forms reflecting as well as informing a given society's cultural, economic and political modalities" (Stepan qtd. in Arnold 1). Ghosh's nuanced understanding of colonial history, along with his interest in the politics of knowledge, lends an exciting edge to his oeuvre for understanding these aspects of the larger politics of science in

Victorian times and climes. Apart from his debut novel, *The Circle of Reason,* the essay looks at other texts like *The Calcutta Chromosome, Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke* to observe this nexus between science and politics.

In the year 1829, Thomas Carlyle wrote his influential tract, *Sign of the Times*, in which he proclaimed the demise of Romanticism and the beginning of the 'Age of Machinery' (Holmes 436). In this essay, he attacked the dehumanizing effects of utilitarianism, statistics and the science of mechanics, and pitted the world of sciences against that of art, poetry and religion. He claimed that the contemporary scientists were rapidly losing touch with nature and were practicing a more derivative science: "Scientists now stand behind whole batteries of retorts, digestives and galvanic piles and interrogate nature, who shows no haste to answer" (Holmes 436).

This break from the past symbolized a major move away from observational natural history towards a more experimental, laboratory-based form of investigation. What earlier went under the nomenclature of natural history branched out into more specialized fields, and most of these came to be practiced indoors under controlled laboratory conditions. Similarly emphasizing this shift, Herschel in his book, *A Preliminary Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy* (1851), shows how by the 1830s, science had shifted from the rolling outdoors[4] to the confines of a laboratory. Science had moved from classification of types to the understanding of the minutiae of the insides of the specimens. Through this book Herschel raised fundamental questions about the value of scientific enquiry and the place of scientists in a society. Science had thus reached a stage in English society where it was now possible to do some self-reflection about it.

Carlyle also claimed that the progress of science had destroyed wonder and, in its stead, substituted quantification and enumeration (Holmes 436). The hitherto held view about nature being a sacred entity that is studied to unravel the divine design was replaced by a competitive urge to exploit nature for material benefit. Interestingly, this also translated into the iconography of the times. Holmes

elaborates that it was also this time that the troubling image of nature as a "shy, reluctant, persecuted female who is physically assaulted by a male science begins to appear. It slowly begins to replace the older Romantic image of a mysterious and seductive nature...who is infinitely more powerful than her merely human practitioners and questioners" (436). Similarly, twentieth century feminist criticism has also identified this "rhetoric of assault, molestation, penetration and even rape of nature by science" that developed consciously and subconsciously at this time (Mellor 185).

In other art forms, Holmes gives the example of the French artist, Louis Ernest Barrias, whose bronze statue, *Nature Unveiling Herself Before Science* (1890), expresses a similar change in the power equation between science and nature (436). Carlyle attacked the ascending utilitarianism, statistics and mechanics as the dehumanizing factors that were out to rob science of its earlier "purity" (436). Carlyle's critique of the practice and theory of science as it progressed in his age represents an important commentary on the development of science in response to the larger changes owing to the strides colonialism was taking. His wistful evocation of an older science that was "pure" and "pastoral" might seem exaggerated from a contemporary vantage point but it certainly encapsulated the disquiet of a generation that stood for an entirely different philosophy of practicing science.

A related aspect which has attracted legitimate attention in recent times is the impact of mechanization and industrialization on ecology in the wake of colonial expansionism. Timothy Morton has dealt with the ecological imbalance the Victorian times spawned (696). The exigencies of the ever-growing monster of Empire wreaked havoc on the ecosystem and original farming practices of many communities. The forced cultivation of cash crops was a prominent feature of colonial expansion as it was in the sale of agricultural products like cotton, indigo and later tea and also opium that the British made their fortunes. According to him these were the times when

intense war, plunder and slavery spread on earth. Monocultures appeared: infeasible ecosystems where business produces only one crop. Ireland was the test case, its potatoes were transplanted from South America. In the resulting potato famine, countless people died or emigrated to America. Language blanketed places from Kingston, Jamaica, to Calicut, India as 'Spice Islands', 'the Indies'. This alone indicates how Europe was thinking. English, Portuguese and French psychic and political maps of the world included special open empty places (empty of society and /or Western Social norms), soaked with desire, producing goods spontaneously, a fruit machine in permanent jackpot mode. (699)

This aspect of Colonial ecology sprung from unilateral trade practices that in some ways directed contemporary science (especially Botany) to enhance the fund of human knowledge about nature so that it could be profitable. The barren landscape of the Indian hinterland, explored by Amitav Ghosh in *Sea of Poppies*, where nothing but opium grows, is indicative of the rot that had set in during these times. The forced farming of opium in India as part of Imperial policy, brings out its disadvantages for the small farmer and the impact of monocultures such as these on the soil and ecology of the region:

In the old days farmers would keep a little of their home made opium for their families, to be used during illnesses, or at harvests and weddings; the rest they would sell to the local nobility. Back then a few clumps of poppy were enough to provide for a household's needs, leaving a little over, to be sold; no one was inclined to plant more because of all the work it took to grow poppies...such punishment was bearable when you have a patch or two of poppies – but what sane person would want to multiply the labours when there were better, more useful crops to grow, like wheat, dal, vegetables? But those toothsome winter crops were steadily shrinking in acreage: now the factory's appetite for opium seemed never to be sated. Come the cold weather, the English sahibs would allow little else to be planted; their agents would go from house to house forcing cash advances on the farmers and making them sign *asami* contracts. (*Sea of Poppies* 30)

According to Ghosh, the memory of opium trade was purged by history because the practitioners were typically Victorian businessmen who were thoroughly genteel and had expunged the memory wholly (Reddy, Interview). *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke* expose the spirit of Utilitarian competition, where nations locked themselves in a struggle to control the world's silver and

bullion. Benjamin Burnham (*Sea of Poppies*), a quintessential Victorian trader-figure based in Calcutta, embodies several contradictions of these contentious times. Outwardly a devout Christian who practices the extreme penance of self-flagellation and takes upon himself the responsibility of rearing and imparting religious education to Paulette, who is rendered an orphan after her father's death, he is at the same time a dealer of opium. On one occasion, he gets into an argument with another British official and the following dialogue ensues:

'Indeed Mr. Burnham?' It was Mr. King, speaking from the other end of table. 'You are evidently greatly solicitous of human life, which is undoubtedly a most commendable thing. But may I ask why your concern does not extend to the lives you put in jeopardy with your consignments of opium? Are you not aware that every shipment you are condemning hundreds, maybe thousands of people to death? Do you see nothing monstrous in your own actions?'

'No , Sir,' answered Mr Burnham coolly. 'Because it is not my hand that passes sentence upon those who choose the indulgence of opium. It is the work of another, invisible, omnipotent: it is the hand of freedom, of the market, of the spirit of liberty itself which is none other than the breadth of God.' (*River of Smoke* 463)

One can understand the complexity of the Victorian times which had embraced the competitiveness and benefits of free trade but still clung on to a theological worldview which they unabashedly used to shirk ethical responsibility and conveniently transfer it onto the nebulous shoulders of the 'invisible, omnipotent.' Ghosh elaborates upon this evangelical impulse in explaining the horrors of opium wars in an interview with Angiola Codacci of L'Espresso Magazine:

As for similarities between past and present there were clear parallelisms between the Iraq war and the Opium War, most of all in the discourses that surround them. There is all this evangelical stuff, this assumed piety: 'we are doing good for the world'. But beneath that there is the most horrific violence, the most horrific avarice and greed. I was writing the novel at a time when this kind of capitalist ideology was absolutely in its ascendant, where it was thought that the market was God. Within this context, it just baffled me that people could not see that for Free Traders, the first major testing ground was opium. All of that has been erased from memory. **(2)**

In this milieu, comparative anatomy or phrenology became the most important empirical element of race science. It became a 'scientific' vehicle for providing empirical support for the belief that the European race was superior to all others. It worked on the principle that by measuring the shape of the skull one could ascertain the internal structure of the brain and thereby determine racial and individual differences in intelligence, temperament and morality. Phrenology was extensively applied at home and in the colonies, and the shape of the head was assumed to be the stable indicator of racial difference. The use of phrenology strengthened the "European's conviction that they were destined to be the masters of humankind and served as a means of reminding bright and uppity African and Asian subordinates of their proper place in the larger scheme of things" (Adas 296). Emphasis on the shape, size and topography of the skull in determining racial characteristics lent a sense of permanence to the development of races in a certain hierarchy. It was deterministic to the extent that it put limits on the possibility of intellectual and scientific advancement of non-European races.

Van Der Veer argues that in the Victorian times, science played a decisive role in the legitimization of dark theories of racial difference, criminality and social relations. According to him, the language-centric understanding of cultures and races of Romantic times was now being replaced by the seemingly immutable idea of physical attributes. He argues that the sympathetic view of Sir William Jones, who used comparative philology and the concept of Indo-Aryan languages to expatiate on his ideas of race, language and culture, was gradually marginalized by the Utilitarians and Evangelists who began attacking Hinduism. These attacks became racialized with the rise of comparative anatomy and saw a high point with the publication of Robert Knox's *The Races of Man*, published in 1840. In the understanding of race relations, language was thus replaced by biology, making racial essentialism hegemonic (137). The introduction of Darwinian evolutionary theory strengthened the then current idea of the gradation of monkey to black man to white man and further legitimized the search for this

missing link in other races. Imperial attitudes towards colonized people were thus linked to evolutionary biology (145).

Phrenology, as a facet of scientific and empirical advancement, thus ironically reinforced racist thinking. In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, many advocates of racial difference highlighted African and Asian deficiencies in scientific acumen as a case in point (146). According to Van der Veer, the implication that one could read an individual's character without access to disciplines of soul searching developed in the church, had democratic implications. It became a popular preoccupation amongst amateurs and enthusiasts even in circles outside the scholarly and professional world. A spate of 'Phrenological Societies' were inaugurated in Britain at this time, culminating in the founding of Phrenological Association in 1838. It was considered a "useful knowledge" (146) that could assist reform. George Combe's *Essays on Phrenology* (1819) greatly popularized the subject. In 1822, Raja Rammohan Roy sent twelve Indian crania to Edinburgh which were investigated to show that "acquisitiveness and secretiveness" were well developed among Hindus. Roy's skull was also studied after his death and was found to show "dignity of character" (Van Der Veer 146).

According to Adas, "No aspect of what Nineteenth Century Europeans considered the scientific study of human types had a greater impact on popular attitudes than phrenology. It left its mark on the fiction of this period, from the bump on Pere Goriot's skull, indicating that he would make a good father (Balzac, 1834), to Dr Mortimer's surprise at finding that Sherlock Holmes had a dolichocephalism skull with 'such well marked supra-orbital development'" (294). By the last decades of the nineteenth century, it had become a "marketable object of mass culture with booths for head reading found at British sea side resorts" (294).

Race science reflected the extreme prejudices of the Victorian society and ironically got a fillip with the emergence of Darwinian science. Evolutionary views gave powerful backing to those who wished to partition society according to ethnic differences or

promote white supremacy. Universities and museums accumulated collections and skulls from all over the world for scientists to measure cranium capacity (thought to be an indicator of intelligence) and deviation from the supposed ideal Caucasian type (Adas 128-29). Seeds of the notorious theory of Aryan superiority over other races were being planted and the world was to subsequently witness the worst attempt of eliminating a whole race using this argument.

Darwin's theory of struggle for survival put forth the suggestion that there was a struggle for existence amongst nations and races. "The Survival of the Fittest" was used to support notions of inbuilt racial difference and appeared to vindicate the imperial scramble for colonies. Janet Browne takes the example of Tasmania where the conquest and the subsequent termination of the aboriginals was seen as natural and befitting (107). Karl Pearson (1857-1936) claimed in 1900 that "no one should regret that a capable and stalwart race of white men should replace a dark skinned tribe which can neither utilize its land for the full benefit of mankind nor contribute its quota to the common stock of human knowledge" (qtd. in Browne 107). Simultaneously, the branch of Eugenics grew strong at this time. Francis Galton, one of the proponents believed that civilized societies tended to prevent natural selection by preserving the "unfit" by the use of medicine, charity, family or religious principals, whereas in a state of nature such people would die. The worst elements in society were the most fecund, he said. And the state ought to intervene actively in preventing them from reproducing their kind (107). These ideas were steadily making headway throughout America and Europe—many eugenicists believed passionately in using ways and means of improving society and promoted parochialism, nationalism, chauvinism and prejudice. Browne contends that "while Darwin's *The Origin of Species* can hardly account for all the racial stereotyping, nationalist fervour and harshly expressed prejudice, there can be no denying the impact of providing a biological backing for human welfare and notions of racial superiority" (108).

Looking toward the import of phrenology in the colonies, especially in India, Gyan Prakash in *Another Reason: Science*

and Imagination in Modern India, takes the case of Edgar Thurston, who was appointed the superintendent of Madras Central Museum in 1885. According to Prakash, he remained in chair till 1910 and worked towards expanding the museum. He was a colonial ethnologist and pursued his interest in anthropometry with unusual enthusiasm: " [H]e kept his calipers and other instruments handy, using them on native visitors to the museum, sometimes paying them, sometimes not" (22). The results of Thurston's observations are contained in his book, entitled *Castes and Tribes of Southern India,* which is considered a classic in the field of Victorian Anthropology. Another instance that Gyan Prakash quotes is that of Kali Kumar Das, the Bhadralok intellectual, founder of the Calcutta Phrenological Society set up in 1845. Das focused on regenerating popular interest in the science of phrenology (22).

Marlow's journey to Africa in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is another important literary reference. When Marlow is approved for a job with "the company" he has to undergo a medical examination:

'[J]ust a formality'. The doctor felt his pulse and then asked him if he would let him measure his head. Rather surprised, I said yes, when he produced a thing like calipers and got the dimensions back and forth and every way taking notes carefully. 'I always ask leave, in the interest of science to measure the crania of those going out there,' he said... 'I have a little theory which you Messieurs who go out there must help me prove. This is my share in the advantages my country shall reap from the possession of such a magnificent dependency. The mere wealth I leave to others. (16-17)

My purpose in juxtaposing these references is to be able to trace the antecedents of the pseudo-science of phrenology and its relation with the project of colonialism. As scientific- 'objective' discourse was gaining a kind of pre-eminence in society at this time, its findings were considered to be value-free, making its notions all the more difficult to challenge. *The Origin of Species* put forth the doctrine that struggle for success was the driving force behind natural selection, and by extension in economics and the social sphere. The notorious doctrine of 'social Darwinism' took the idea of success to justify social and economic policies in which struggle

was the driving force. Herbert Spenser's catch phrase 'survival of the fittest' was well suited to describe economic expansion, rapid adaptation to circumstance and colonization (Browne 72).

Nachketa Bose, alias Alu, the protagonist in *The Circle of Reason*, is nicknamed so because of the uneven shape of his large head. Orphaned after his parents died in a car crash, he is sent all the way from Calcutta to Lalpukur to live with Balaram and his wife Toru Debi. His uncle, Balaram, had discovered phrenology when he chanced upon a second-hand book *Practical Phrenology* at a College Street book shop.[5] He had taken an instant liking to the 'science' which could help practitioners understand psychological traits based on the shape and size of the human head. What started as an engaging distraction for the young man soon develops into an obsession, that much to the chagrin of his wife, he starts carrying out the analysis on all and sundry. When Alu lands at his house, he runs inside and emerges with his giant calipers, "an instrument (for measuring skulls), with three arms of finely planed and polished wood, each tapering to a sharp point at one end and joined to others by a calibrated hinge" (5). He has designed it himself and had it made in Calcutta at considerable expense. When he sees Alu's head, it appears like a collective display of all the features phrenologists have read about: "it was like sitting down for a wedding feast after years of stewed rice...his head abounded with a profusion of bumps and knots and troughs, each more aggressively pronounced than the next and scattered about with the absolute disregard for the discoveries of phrenology" (9). Balaram looks at Alu's head and makes mental formulations about the possible psychological, mental and emotional characteristics that the boy could be endowed with. It is a mix of observation, interpretation, a bit of guess work and elaborate description. Balaram's interest in the 'science' is a matter of curiosity for the villagers who, at times, approach him to know the fate of a newborn based on his skull shape just like they would approach an astrologer. At first his calipers are intimidating but in due course, people come to accept it as a harmless means that feed his 'science'.

The Circle of Reason, set in Post-Independence India portrays phrenology as a left-over pseudo-science that has been lapped up by an unsuspecting Balaram. And as iterated before, it is an important detail that he finds the book at one of the several second-hand book shops dotting College Street. Phrenology, used as a means for racial profiling, was extensively used as a means to justify the inherent biological superiority of white over the subjugated races. Later it was used as a theoretical paradigm in Psychology through which psychological traits could be predicted on the basis of shape and size of the crania. Balaram's love of phrenology is doomed from the very beginning because it comes with the ignorance of those colonized who did not question western knowledge but only mimicked it.

The Circle of Reason is an exploration of the effect of western science on Indian society. This knowledge was not only pseudo-scientific but represented the space where the so-called disinterestedness of science got inextricably aligned with the forces of colonialism in justifying subjugation of certain races by others. Through Balaram's characterization, the irony of the matter is further enhanced because he is a colonized subject who has picked up phrenology, uncritically and second-hand through a discarded book, and has imbibed it without reasoning. He has adopted the very tools that were used at one time to colonize him. In Phrenology and its application, one sees the curious commingling of a staunch faith in empiricism and scientific measurement, on the one hand, and racial prejudice inflamed to a limit, on the other. It is this dichotomy of the establishment of scientific principles against the backdrop of colonialism that Ghosh unravels.

The economic and socio-cultural climate of the Victorian times, in the wake of expansionism, affected the growth of science as a discipline, especially with regard to its treatment of nature as a commercial resource. Ghosh exposes this new vocabulary to speak of nature and attempts to unearth the larger intersection of science and colonialism in the Victorian times that played out in far more interesting ways than is readily conceivable.

Notes

1. This paper was presented in a modified form at the IACLALS Conference hosted by the Department of English, Panjab University, Chandigarh from 20 Feb-22 Feb 2014. In some ways, it responds to Meera Nanda's plenary address that sought to question the validity of a Post Colonial critique of enlightenment rationality. By inquiring into two aspects of science in colonial times- Ecology and Phrenology, it argues that the socio-cultural and economic context of Victorian times drove science in a direction that fed the exigencies of Empire.

2. The Victorian period in British history marks the period from the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837 to her death in 1901. There was a sudden spurt in population between 1801 and 1871. The population of Great Britain had nearly trebled from eight million to twenty-two million people. The new industrial towns like Manchester and Birmingham became areas of concentrated population, and there was a shift from old rural life to new urban life. According to Abrams, this period "was a time of rapid and wrenching economic and social changes that had no parallel in earlier history–changes that made England in the course of the nineteenth century, the leading industrial power, with an empire that occupied more than a quarter of the earth's surface. The pace and depth of such developments while they fostered a mood of nationalistic pride and optimism about future progress, also produced social stresses, turbulence and wide spread anxiety about the ability of the nation and individual to cope, socially, politically and psychologically with the cumulative problems of the age" (178).

3. Science is also staged as the wonder of the times. In Britain, through the display of cutting edge technology for the benefit of the lay people at the Grand Crystal Palace exhibition (1851), science became the panacea of the ills and passport to unprecedented economic progress. Ping describes the organization of The Crystal Exhibition thus: "A Royal commission of architects and engineers was appointed to plan the building and exhibits. Out of 234 plans submitted, the commission, urged by the prince, eventually picked the most original design of all, a massive greenhouse designed by the head gardener of a northern duke. Joseph Paxton, however, was no mere gardener, but an engineer, railroad director, newspaper promoter, and imaginative architect. He offered a building 1,848 feet long, 308 feet broad, and 66 feet high, tall enough to cover the old elm trees already occupying the chosen site in Hyde Park. It was composed of mass produced and standardized parts, including over 6,000 15foot columns and over one million square feet of glass" (1-2). What is particularly notable is not only the scale of the exhibition: the building of grand structures was indicative of the optimism Victorian times exuded about the idea of progress. More interestingly, the design of the building with its unusually big specifications was "tall enough to cover the old elm trees already occupying the chosen site in Hyde Park" (Ping 2) – which is also

symbolic of the optimism the Victorians felt with regard to the ascendance of science over nature.

4. 'Rolling Outdoors' is an expression used in the Romantic context, in contrast to the confines of the laboratory in Victorian times. In addition to showing the transition of science as a discipline in these times, it also points to the change in view of nature from one of worship to utility. Botanizing in the luxuriant surroundings, for the Romantic imagination, was as aesthetic an experience as scientific.

5. College Street Book Shop, Calcutta, is a 1.5 km long street in Central part of the city. It is dotted with many higher educational institutions, including the iconic Presidency College (now University), book stores and other establishments like the Indian Coffee House. It is considered as the convergence point for intellectual activity by the residents of the city. It has earned the nickname *Boi Para* (Colony of books) owing to the existence of many bookstores. Sourced from Wikipedia. www.wikipedia.com 4 Feb 2014 Web 28 Feb 2014 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College_Street_(Kolkata)

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JEFFREY M. SHAW

Mapping Early Twentieth-Century *Zeitgeist*: An Analysis of Hegel's "Cunning of Reason"

Using particular examples of the artistic revolution, technological advances, and political upheavals in Europe during the period from 1900-1920, how might we support Hegel's claim that such an unsettled *zeitgeist* demonstrates "the cunning of reason," or the idea that history progresses using the particular actions of individuals? An aspect of the cunning of reason is "the idea that social action has cumulative unintended consequences" (Knapp 594). While this idea is not central to Hegel scholarship *per se,* the first decades of the twentieth century offer us the opportunity to review Hegel's thesis, that "universal reason, through men, shapes history" (xi). In the disciplines of "law, art, philosophy, religion, literature, science and other spheres, Hegel tried to uncover processes by which rules, concepts and laws emerged that were . . . universalistic" (Knapp

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587). If we take Hegel's thesis and examine the first two decades of the twentieth century, looking specifically at the art, literature, and music scenes of this time, one may argue, as I do in this paper, that Hegel's "cunning of reason" can be used to illustrate the *zeitgeist* of violence and discord that characterized these years. Without venturing any further into Hegelian philosophy in all of its many complexities, the period from 1900-1920 can be shown to manifest this Hegelian Spirit.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) is one of the most enduring, yet controversial philosophers of the modern age. In the words of Paul Strathern, in the year 1770, "Europe stood on the brink of its greatest transformation since the Renaissance. The French Revolution was the political manifestation of this change; the Romantic Movement was its cultural expression" (7). Such was the world into which Hegel was born, and the particular *zeitgeist* of this era—popular upheaval, rapid development, and the overthrow of long-established orders, had a profound impact on Hegel's thought and philosophy. According to Bertrand Russell, Hegel's early interest in mysticism also had a profound effect on his later views. Mysticism imparted to Hegel a belief in the unreality of separateness; in other words, Hegel believed that the collection of physical objects that compose the sensible world was actually only an illusion and only the Whole was real, with the individual parts only finding their reality in relation to this Whole (Russell 731). The Whole was termed the Absolute. There are two important differences between Hegel's view of the Absolute, and other philosophers through history who have also tended to view the world as an absolute entity as opposed to a collection of individual elements. The most important of these differences are that Hegel emphasized logic—the notion that "the nature of Reality can be deduced from the sole consideration that it must be not self-contradictory," and also that this logic can be discerned through an examination of the dialectical process (Russell 731). The dialectical process is a central part of Hegelian thought.

Writing at the time when Napoleon was conquering much of Europe, Hegel sought to transcend a limited, provincial, philosophical

perspective and encompass all of reality within his philosophy. In his view, there is no reality, no world and no being outside of consciousness (Solomon 291). This consciousness is expressed in the Spirit, of which we are all a part, or in which we all participate. Hegel admitted, like his predecessor Fichte, that there is more than one way to conceptualize truth, but that does not mean that there is more than one truth *per se*. For Hegel, "these different conceptions and ways of viewing the world are leading up to something—to a viewpoint that is not relative to any particular viewpoint or perspective" (Solomon 292). It is the dialectical process that brings us to a resolution of this viewpoint. Truth evolves through confrontation—"it is not being but becoming" (Solomon 292). Bertrand Russell offers an example of the dialectical process as Hegel envisioned it:

> First we say "Reality is an uncle." This is the Thesis. But the existence of an uncle implies that of a nephew. Since nothing really exists except the Absolute, and we are now committed to the existence of a nephew, we must conclude: "The Absolute is a nephew." This is the Antithesis. But there is the same objection to this as to the view that the Absolute is an Uncle; therefore we are driven to the view that the Absolute is the whole composed of uncle and nephew. This is the Synthesis. But this Synthesis is still unsatisfactory, because a man can be an uncle only if he has a brother or sister who is a parent of the nephew. Hence we are driven to enlarge our universe to include the brother or sister, with his wife or her husband. In this sort of way, so it is contested, we can be driven on, by the mere force of logic, from any suggested predicate of the Absolute to the final conclusion of the dialectic, which is called the "Absolute Idea." Throughout the whole process, there is an underlying assumption that nothing can be really true unless it is about Reality as a whole. (732)

Such is the Hegelian dialectic. Thesis and Antithesis collide to form the Synthesis—a continual process that can be employed to explain the entire course of human history. In addition, history (the Idea) is guided by the Spirit—history is the development of this Spirit in Time (Hartman xxi).

Before examining the first two decades of the twentieth century from the perspective of a particular Hegelian *zeitgeist*, it might be wise to re-visit Paul Strathern, who had this to say about Hegelian philosophy in general: "[M]any a scholar has ventured into the

quagmire of Hegel's prose. Some have emerged as Marxists, some as existentialists, and others have not emerged at all (the Hegelians)" (29). Intended as a humorous stab at the intimidating complexity of Hegel's philosophy, we will see that it is possible to view the events of particular historical periods in such a way that a *zeitgeist*, or "spirit of the age", can help us discern whether a specific Hegelian Thesis or Antithesis is about to be resolved into its Synthesis.

The first two decades of the twentieth century can be considered the dawn of the "modern" age. Marshall Berman, in *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, gives us a vivid description of the thinkers that preceded the twentieth century, ones who expressed their ideas in an air of both self-delight and self-doubt, in:

> a voice that knows pain and dread, but believes in its power to come through. Grave danger is everywhere, and may strike at any moment, but not even the deepest wounds can stop the flow and overflow of its energy. It is ironic and contradictory . . . denouncing modern life in the name of values that modernity itself has created, hoping . . . that the modernities of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow will heal the wounds that wreck the modern men and women of today. All the great modernists of the nineteenth century. . . Marx, Kierkegaard, Whitman, Ibsen, Baudelaire, Melville, Carlyle, Stirner, Rimbaud, Strindberg, Dostoevesky, and many more, speak in this range. (23)

Berman's description of those individuals who provided the intellectual, artistic and in some cases, political perspectives in the mid to late-nineteenth century includes the names of many of the leading philosophers of the day. He went on to accuse twentieth-century thinkers with demonstrating a remarkable reduction in their perspectives and "shrinkage of imaginative range" (23). However, others have noted that modernists in the early twentieth century "embraced the swift pace of the present and attempted to make art that responded to it and enlarged its implications" (Fleming 549). These two views on the aims, objectives, and styles will demonstrate an interesting progression—nineteenth-century thinkers expressing self-delight and self-doubt as a reaction to their particular times, and twentieth-century thinkers reacting in a way consistent with theirs, culminating with T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* in 1922.

There is an irony in trying to use Hegel's thinking to demonstrate

a particular *zeitgeist,* especially since "Hegel was so utterly wrong in the understanding of his own *zeitgeist* (Avineri 146). While Hegel himself rarely tried to identify particular *zeitgeists,* historians and scholars have used the term to study particular eras through a Hegelian lens. If the *zeitgeist* of the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries—the time in which Hegel was born—was one of change and disruption in established orders, what can we say about the spirit of the times a century later? In fact, can we make some statements about the notion of Hegelian *zeitgeists* in general? Whenever Thesis and Antithesis are in conflict with one another in order to resolve themselves into the Synthesis, we might find that the *zeitgeist* would be one of violence, portending change to the established order, and precipitating chaos. Likewise, I claim that the period in between the resolution of Thesis and Antithesis into a Synthesis, and the beginning of the process again at some later time might be expected to be one in which a *zeitgeist* of some relative calm and serenity might ensue. Keeping this idea in mind, we can certainly say that the period with which we are concerned would be the former—a time of change and violence, with a corresponding *zeitgeist* of particularly violent discord. A quote that is commonly attributed to the British Foreign Secretary Edward Grey in the days just before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 captures the particular *zeitgeist*: "The lights are going out all over Europe, and I fear they will not be lit again in our lifetime." While Hegel asserts that history advances through the work of world-historical figures, who exactly are these figures and what actions do they take that facilitate the Idea's advance? These figures can be politicians, religious leaders, or even artists and philosophers. Capturing the *zeitgeist* of the first decades of the twentieth century, we see that in the world of the arts, there is a correlation between the spirit of discord and unprecedented violence, and the production and creation of art in the realms of literature, painting, and music. In addition, technological advances mirror the spirit of the times, yet they also propel the times further towards resolution of Thesis and Antithesis into Synthesis.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, industrialization had taken

hold in Europe. This industrialization depended not only on heavy industry, but also on scientists, the group primarily responsible for developing poison gases, submarines, tanks and other inventions which contributed to the horrors of the First World War (McClellan and Dorn 335-36). The *zeitgeist* that we are concerned with here does not, however, rely on the War as the catalyst for its appearance. The trends in industrialization and technological advance that resulted in the outbreak of the First Word War had been influencing the art scene for decades. Some examples of this trend will serve to illuminate the *zeitgeist* of discord and change that characterizes the early twentieth century. We will see that the art scene, the advances in technology, and the impact of the horrors of war all contributed to the *zeitgeist* of this particular time.

Technological advances had fundamentally changed the social fabric in Western Europe. As a representative of the impact the industrial revolution had on literature, Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* illustrates the reaction in the literary world to the economic and political environment of England in the 1850s. In this novel, Dickens focused on the material values that "crush the imaginative spirit in men's lives" and on "the inhumanities of Victorian civilization . . . as fostered and sanctioned by a hard philosophy, the aggressive formulation of an inhumane spirit" (xvi). This inhumane spirit is most visible in the arms race that developed in the late nineteenth century, resulting in new military weapons which would, in 1914, lead to unsurpassed carnage for four years on the battlefields of the First World War. Ironically, though, the "imaginative spirit," which Dickens claimed was crushed by industrialization and "hard philosophy," would be reignited in the early twentieth century in an era of radical new art forms.

"The tempo of change continued its acceleration to a point where audiences had difficulty keeping pace with artists and scientists" (Fleming 550). Referring to the first decade of the twentieth century, Fleming notes that it is not only within the art world that technological and social change outpaced humanity's capacity to integrate new ideas into existing worldviews. On the battlefields of the First World War, technology outpaced the opposing armies' ability to adapt new

strategies and tactics to deal with the increasing lethality of modern weaponry. The physical, spiritual, and intellectual carnage wrought by this devastating war accelerated the impact that modernism had on the world of art, literature, and philosophy. Among the new art forms that appeared at this time were Expressionism, Primitivism, Abstraction, Futurism, the Dada movement, and in the music scene, Jazz.

Expressionism, like Primitivism, Futurism, and Abstractionism, portrayed in art the spirit of an age that illustrates Hegel's cunning of reason at work. Norwegian Expressionist artist Edvard Munch's *The Scream* is a prescient portrayal of the violent decades to come. Painted in 1895, this picture portrays a man screaming. The lines of the background and the horizon are painted in such a way as to appear to be shock waves, and the sky is deliberately painted a blood red color (Fleming 551). The picture is a fitting illustration of the entire *zeitgeist* of violent discord that would characterize the coming decades. This particular art school "looked inward to a world of emotional and psychological states rather than outward to a world of fleeting light and shadow, as Impressionism did" (Fleming 551). Perhaps the Expressionists hoped to find refuge within the interior world from the pace of change that one encountered throughout every aspect of life at this time, but while looking inward, these artists continued to express their concern about the course of events that continued to displace traditional ways of life.

Primitivism appeared at this time as a manifestation of Western artists' mistaken idea that African art somehow contained a timeless spirituality and simplicity (Fleming 551). A movement similar to Rousseau's exaltation of the noble savage in the eighteenth century, Primitivism offered those in the West a glimpse of an escape from their modern predicament, however ill-conceived or misguided. Turning to the primitive societies that seemed to be content to let industrialization and modernization pass them by, the primitivists sought an escape in the literal sense from the Western mindset.

Similar to both Expressionism and Primitivism, Abstraction came about as artists began to analyze and detach themselves from the

world of everyday experience. Science began to edge towards the new idea of relativity, and abstraction followed this trend in the art world (Fleming 560). According to Fleming, Cubist pictures (Cubism being a subset of Abstraction) tended to be cold and impassioned, but Picasso would introduce greater creativity, color and life into the Cubist repertoire. Picasso's trend contrasts with Berman's description of the modernist's shrinking creative range, unless of course one takes the entire Cubist, and by implication most of the art forms of the early twentieth century, to be a representation of reduced creativity and lack of imagination as a whole.

Italian Futurists appeared on the scene around 1909. They hoped to deliver Italy into the future by embracing change and assisting in the destruction of past mindsets and traditions. Unlike Dickens, Futurists hoped to embrace industrialization and technology in order to destroy the suffocating traditions of the past, not return to them. They wanted "to destroy museums, libraries, academies, and universities to make way for their particular view of the future" (Fleming, 566). Admiring technology and mechanization, the futurists were the perfect art form for the new age, demonstrating the dialectic inherent in Hegel's cunning of reason. But what was their view of the future other than a world that continued to embrace speed and power? Perhaps the French philosopher Jacques Ellul captures the spirit of these futurists when he notes that mankind was on the path of "carefully considered means to carelessly considered ends" (vi).

The City and Machine school, exemplified by Alfred Stieglitz, embodied the idea that industrialization, technology and increased mechanization would eventually lift humanity from the poverty and misery that had always accompanied human life and lead humankind into a new, enlightened age (Fleming 567). Along with Futurism, this movement provides an interesting counterpoint to the prevailing notion that the combined effects of industrialization and modernization were all negative. Those that adhered to the Machine movement believed that humanity would be generally freed from any dependence on nature as a result of the technological advances which were, in many areas, liberating us from the need to perform

manual labor. The Machine movement proclaimed that technological advances seemed to be improving the quality of life for many. The Machine aesthetic appeared in the realm not only of art but of music as well. Another casualty of the First World War, the Machine school faded as the impact of industrialization and advanced weaponry on the battlefield resulted in tens of millions killed over four years of warfare.

The First World War unleashed tremendous carnage and suffering, and the remnants of European civilization, the very civilization that unleashed the carnage, had to be shattered. Such was the rallying cry of the artist movement which began in neutral Switzerland in 1915 known as Dada (Fleming 575). This movement was radical for its time and its objectives were clear—shatter the old traditional cultural notions and usher in a new set of values and expectations. It sought not necessarily to supplant the traditional ways with industrialization and mechanization, like the Futurists and the Machine School adherents, but to produce a new consciousness. Artists such as Hannah Hoch sought to contrast the past with the modern, "symbolized by draft horses and automobiles and women in traditional roles compared with fashion models in chic clothing," demonstrating the futility of both ways of life (Fleming 575). After the war, the Dada movement flourished in Paris, where Marcel Duchamp painted a mock Mona Lisa with a moustache, symbolizing the futility of all Western culture (Fleming 575). The movement pushed modern sensibilities to the limit and stopped at nothing in their quest to subvert and replace Western cultural values with some new, but not clearly defined, value system.

The great cultural upheaval that splintered the world of the visual arts, likewise, influenced the musical arts as well. Jazz appeared at this time—in a sense, it was another syncretistic development between Western music and non-European musical systems (Fleming, 555). Also in the music world, Igor Stravinsky and other Russians added to the new art forms with their neo-Romantic and Modernist styles. Challenging the musical patterns which had predominated since the Middle Ages, the resultant music

was filled with previously unknown intervals and combinations of notes and was, to the unaccustomed ear, excruciatingly discordant. It represented a break with the past as radical as abstract, non-representational art, or non-grammatical stream of consciousness prose. (Davies 957)

The music scene had created art that meshed perfectly with the discord that many felt in their daily lives as the machine age progressed and the combined impact of industrialization and advanced technology manifested itself in more and more aspects of everyday life. It is important to note that it is in music that we see the contribution of East Europeans in a milieu dominated primarily by Western Europeans. The presence of Eastern Europeans in the musical field, both as composers and as instrumentalists, "emphasized the cultural bonds which overarched the growing political divide" (Davies 956). Unfortunately in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, it would take many more decades to transcend this political divide for a second time.

From a Hegelian dialectical perspective, the Russian Revolution represents a watershed event, equal to the First World War. If the prevailing *zeitgeist* was one of radical change and overthrow of existing orders, then this event epitomizes the age. The overthrow of the Czar and the establishment of the first Communist government planted the seeds of discord that would dominate the next eight decades. It also provided the Thesis against which the Antithesis of Capitalism (in both fascist and democratic forms) would produce another Synthesis. An interesting idea by Ernst Cassier proposes that the conflict between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in the 1940s was actually a contest between the left and right wings of Hegelian thought. If this is so, then Cassier presents the idea that Hegel's philosophy can be employed to explain the driving force behind historical progression.

Having surveyed the devastation of the First World War, and having seen the terrible impact that man's technological progress had brought about, the American poet T.S. Eliot composed *The Wasteland* in 1922; a portrayal of a shattered physical and intellectual Western civilization. This poem begins thus:

April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing'
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain

The misery Eliot is trying to convey is clear in these opening lines. The entire poem stands as a literary equivalent to Munch's *The Scream*. The final section of *The Wasteland* deals with the dissolution of Eastern Europe, which through the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the collapse of the Russian Empire, experienced profound upheaval after the war.

In the field of literature, the German philosopher Oswald Spengler heightened the pessimism and anxiety brought about by the turbulent first decades of the twentieth century with his publication of *The Decline of the West* in 1918 (Davies 952). In this light, one should ask whether or not the artistic and intellectual movements of the early twentieth century were simply the result of the great changes of the time, or did they in some sense facilitate it? A prevailing *zeitgeist* should be seen as a kind of tornado, gathering strength from the accumulation of technological, artistic, and intellectual input. It would be a mistake to view these various artistic and intellectual movements as mere responses to the political, economic and military developments. That would not be consistent with Hegel's notion of the Spirit developing towards the Absolute Idea through the cunning of reason—through the actions of world-historical figures. For a true Hegelian, Van Gogh and Picasso, as well as Kant and Marx, should be seen as equal world-historical figures to Kaiser Wilhelm and Bismarck.

We have seen that a number of artistic and literary movements reflect the *zeitgeist* of discord that prevailed in the early twentieth century. As Marshall Berman explains towards the end of *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*:

I have tried to show a dialectical interplay between unfolding modernization of the environment—particularly the urban environment—and the development of modernist art and thought. This dialectic, crucial all through the nineteenth century, remained vital to the modernism of the 1920s and 1930s: it is central in Joyce's

Hegel's cunning of reason is a useful intellectual device for illustrating the *zeitgeist* of violence and discord that characterized the first two decades of the twentieth century. Having examined artists, writers, and music in this period, one can argue that the spirit of the age is manifest through the contributions of world historical figures whether artists, authors, musicians, or statesmen.

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Immigration and Exclusionary Politics in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*

This paper is an attempt at examining the travails of immigrant workforce in the wake of globalization in two novels: Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* (1997). Desai is a Brooklyn-based author who has been awarded the Booker prize; Yamashita is a critically acclaimed Japanese-American novelist. In their techniques of representation and narration, the two novels vary sufficiently. The former has a realistic structure with some unconventional components; the latter is formally experimental in a magic realist format. However, there is a measure of similarity in their perspectives on globalization in that they delineate the precarious position of underclass labour, economic fragmentation and the attendant exclusions.

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Closely acquainted with the socio-cultural mores of the United States—the principal architect and icon of the globalizing world—and gifted with transnational imagination, both Desai and Yamashita engage with the stubborn fissures in the globalized multicultural world. Their novels have migrant labour at their heart; in both cases labour is illegalized with low paid workers migrating illegally to the USA. The narrative focus of *The Inheritance* seeks to capture the chasm between the tantalizing American affluence and third-world deprivations, while Yamashita's fictional preoccupation can be located in the tangled intertwining of inter-regional flows and disparity of affluence. The palpable salience of multiple exchanges with entrenched asymmetry and inequalities is a thematic strand weaving through both novels.

In both *Tropic* and *The Inheritance*, disadvantaged diasporic subjects are pitted against varied spatial attributes of globalization and are struggling to gain ground. Although the two novels are grounded in disparate material realities and geopolitical spaces, the gains of global fluidity and flow aligned with the privileged few (Masterson) or hegemonic players bind the two tales together. The phenomenon of transnational labour eking out a living is mapped out in literary terms, wedded to their respective contexts. Despite economic and social divides created by globalization, the new types of migrants move into the globalized labour market to cash in despite ethnic obstacles and perverse dynamics.

Conflating global fiction and narratives of globalization, Paul Jay says: "Now, the category of the global seems to threaten the category of the nation as a structuring principle for transnational literary and cultural studies. Seen from this point of view, "global fiction" looks like... [the] one that supersedes all others as it seeks to name fiction which is transnational in nature and produced by–and engaged with—the phenomenon we've come to call globalization. [...] Global fiction, from this point of view, is fiction about globalization" (Web). In other words, the processes of globalization, such as intensified international convergence, growing interconnectedness with "diminishing variance of experience" (Connel, "Global narratives" 82), manifest inequality in development,

dispersal and movement of economic migrants form the mainstay of global novels. Simon Gikandi, a foremost proponent of the theory of cultural globalization, sees globalization "emerging out of networks of trade, of culture, and experiences, in which the distant is assimilated into the familiar and local to facilitate exchange" ("Between Roots and Routes" 31).The two novels in this essay are interleaved with the issue of immigrant labour—one of the principal implications of the phenomenon of globalization.

In *Tropic*, the champion of the third world, Arcangel, takes on the personified NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement), alternately called 'SUPERNAFTA' or 'SUPERSCUMNAFTA', the representative of the first world, in a surreal wrestling match in a Los Angeles stadium. The former, fighting under the name of the Latino superhero, El Gran Mojado, ridicules the First World's description of an electronically interconnected global community encapsulated by a single, collective 'we'. The concept of this new world order is rooted in the notion of one world, shaped by highly intensive and rapid flows, movements and networks across regions and continents. NAFTA, the agreement between the USA, Canada and Mexico entered into force on January 1, 1994, loosening the trade borders between the North American nations for unfettered free trade, thereby gradually eliminating all remaining duties and restrictions. Even as the US exports increased exponentially, for the poor Mexican citizens things only went downhill in the years to follow. A distinctive aspect of the interconnected economic landscape depicted in the novel is the emergence of global informational capitalism and multi-layered global governance with cosmopolitan orientations. However, the post-NAFTA economic globalization had a devastating effect on the agricultural sector of Mexican economy. The dreaded SUPERNAFTA stands for the architecture of American domination. Joseph S. Nye puts it metaphorically as "the hub-and-spokes" of the American hegemony (112). Arcangel can easily blend into a street vagrant, mock the globalists with messianic zeal, and recount the tale of the savage exploitation of South America and Mexico by Europeans.

The consciousness of the colonized and the impoverished excluded from the privileged domains of power speaks through Arcangel, who, as Yamashita said in an interview, accounts for "500 years of history in the Americas". He "expresses all of Latin America" and takes "also the political conscience and history across the border" (Web). Rejected by Los Angeles, Arcangel derides the economic and technological logic of globalization. *Tropic* dissects and denounces the universalist stance pressed by the imperialist band. The design of a small, resourceful clutch of countries to stretch their clout into a global collectivity is a unidirectional presumption. The alternative model of globality embedded in perfect cosmopolitan cohesion, as the novel signals, is cognitively tenuous. In other words, non-imperialist globality is a concept, not an empirical reality. Relatedly, *Tropic* dips into the conceptualization of a globalist 'we' by drawing upon playful aesthetics as well as deploying self-conscious representational strategies to represent globalization. The orange growing in Mazatlán, Mexico, tied to the Tropic of Cancer becomes a trope for the movement of Mexicans –the representatives of the Third World—towards Los Angeles, the representative of the first world. As Liam Connel states: "Through the orange, the novel challenges the notion of the political border by moving the Tropic of Cancer north with illegalised Mexican labourers who travel in search of employment in the USA" ("Globalization and Transnationalism" 227). The trans-geographical flow, building up to a global confluence, has a semblance of universalism displayed by the delusional 'we', but Yamashita is sceptical of a unilateral declaration of cosmopolitanism. With the romance of transnational mobility and its massive visual effect, the narrative gestures towards the formation of a non-particular harmonious collectivity.

Tropic problematizes the global village discourse by foregrounding the stark material inequalities that militate against the commingling of labour, capital and culture. Bobby and Rafaela, an illegal immigrant couple; Gabriel and Emi, a well-placed pair; Manzanar and Buzzworm, the homeless living with deprivation as the daily reality, are too far apart to have a collective consciousness or collective solidarity. Revealingly, the global hub is growing with

expanding nodes and networks. The novel's content is spread over seven days, each of which has seven chapters dealing with the life of the seven major characters, namely Rafaela Cortes, Bobby Ngu, Emi, Buzzworm, Manzanar Murakami, Gabriel Balboa and Arcangel. The discrete schematic representation of the narratives as disjointed fragments in magic realist mode suggests the disjunctive nature of the interconnected world in *Tropic*. This apparently disconnected form exposes fissures in the presumed convergence. Further, we note a white woman's shallow and sham assumptions of an international world in a sushi restaurant: "I love living in LA because I can find anything in the world to eat, right here. It's such a meeting place for all sorts of people. A true celebration of an international world" (129). She is reacting to Emi's "cynical" view on multiculturalism when the latter says: "Cultural diversity is bullshit" (128). Emi is the author's mouthpiece and the book's "rebel". The novel interrogates the smug and cocky consumerist logic deployed for declaring the unitary wholeness of the diverse world. As Sue-Im Lee states, "[...] the white woman's privileged mobility and consumption circulates as evidence and criteria of global village universalism. In constructing a 'we' out of 'my' experience, the woman's global village universalism performs a universal conscription: she speaks of the millions and billions of others in prescribing the supposed unity and the intimacy" (320). The white woman has obviously a superficial stance towards diversity.

The sanguine perception of globalization-led prosperity deludes the nameless cook in Kiran Desai's novel. Impelled by lucrative job prospects and in a desperate attempt to escape penury, Biju, the cook's son, manages to reach New York—the nodal point like Los Angeles in Yamashita's *Tropic*—but gets emotionally shredded in the global market. The glitter of neo-liberal globalization animates Desai's narrative as she mediates its impact on the unmoored immigrants who have gathered to get their gold out there. Described by Hermione Lee as "a magnificent novel of humane breadth and wisdom, comic tenderness and powerful political acuteness" (qtd. in Lyall, "A Cross-cultural Saga." Web), *The Inheritance* unfolds the eruption of disparate particularities or the migratory workforce

steeped in poverty and deprivation and faced with uneven disposition of globalization. Set in Kalimpong, a small eastern Himalayan hill station town in India, the novel depicts India's postcolonial stirrings against the colonizer's cartography and the racially wounded characters. Biju has become an insecure, indigent immigrant struggling to make a tentative living amid exacting conditions in multicultural America. He encounters severe odds amidst discrepancies of the first world's globalized economy:

> The green card the green card. The. . . .
>
> Without it he couldn't leave. To leave he wanted a green card. This was the absurdity. How he desired the triumphant After the Green Card Return Home, thirsted for it—to be able to buy a ticket with the air of someone who could return if he wished, or not, if he didn't wish....He watched the legalized foreigners with envy as they shopped at discount baggage stores for the miraculous, expandable third-world suitcase, accordion-pleated, filled with pockets and zippers to unhook further crannies, the whole structure unfolding into a giant space that could fit in enough to set up an entire life in another country.
>
> Then, of course, there were those who lived and died illegal in America and never saw their families, not for ten years, twenty, thirty, never again.(99)

The disenchanted boy roughs it out far away in America as an illegal immigrant. Scratching around as a desperate, disenfranchised alien, shifting from one temporary job to another in the basement kitchens of New York restaurants and dodging surveillance, Biju is tenuously connected to the transnational workforce.

The loss inherited by the variants of dispersed migrants is too complex to be sorted out in an untidy mélange without a level-playing field. Biju, having failed to find his feet in New York, eventually decides to return to India in a disillusioned state only to be robbed of his hard-earned acquisitions by the barbarians in his own backyard—a repository of counter-modernity. The novel's denouement demonstrates that the situation back home is not only drab and depressing but horrendously brutal as well. Desai portrays the chaos and loss in the wake of colonialism when postcolonial India is on the cusp of globalization. As Pankaj Mishra notes in *The New York*

Times book review of *The Inheritance*, "the beginnings of an apparently leveled field in a late-20th-century global economy serve merely to scratch [the] wounds" caused by centuries of colonial subjection "rather than heal them" (Web).

With temporal shifts and cleverly interwoven flashbacks Desai has made a brilliant attempt at delineating the striated fault lines of the globalized New York. Biju is faced with racial apathy. His mounting frustration suppressed by his transient elation crushes him internally. He realizes that the privileges of legal American citizenship are beyond his reach. The economic and cultural segregation is inescapably evident:

> Here in America, where every nationality confirmed its stereotype—Biju felt he was entering a warm amniotic bath. But then it grew cold. This war was not, after all, satisfying; it could never go deep enough, the crick was never cracked, the itch was never scratched; the irritation built on itself, and the combatants itched all the more. [...] The sound of their fight had travelled up the flight of steps and struck a clunky note, and they might upset the balance, perfectly first-world on top, perfectly third-world twenty-two steps below.(23)

The ethnic particularities stick out even as the boosters of globalization buttress the hegemony of the West. The power imbalance between the colonizers and the colonized is unresolved. However, the aching quandary accompanying the impulse to immigrate and the ensuing identity crisis are poignantly depicted in the fragile location of Biju and the other denizens of grimy tenements. The intersecting fragments of their penury and privations form the intricate filigree of the novel's intent.

According to Roger Rouse, globalization is a new social order "marked by diasporic identities and fluid communities" (qtd. in Behdad, "On Globalization"65). The diasporic component of Desai's novel, as Susan Koshy puts it, suggests "an increasingly bimodal formation" (7). Koshy explicates the dichotomous features of this formation:

> In the United States, there has been a noticeable shift after the1980s from an immigrant population comprised mainly of physicians, managers, engineers, and other professionals to a grouping that includes large numbers of low-end service workers including cab drivers, restaurant workers, shop assistants, day-care workers,

and news-stand vendors. The neo-diaspora foregrounds the internal diversity of the South Asian diaspora in the older and newer migration movements. (7)

Historically, varying economic imperatives of migration seem to have determined the diasporic consciousness of the dispersed population from India. As Biju discovers during his trawls around New York, immigrants are a floating and disposable workforce, not cushioned from the cruelties of the global marketplace. Those who have buoyancy and skill, like Saeed Saeed, succeed; the rest like Biju loathe getting in there.

Desai engages with the nexus between colonial globalization and the contemporary processes of globalization, and sees a continuing pattern of exclusions and gaps in power relations. Biju is ground down by the reality of being a second-class citizen in multicultural America as the judge encountered racial discrimination while studying at Cambridge during colonial subjugation of India. The ostensible momentum of global mélange or the seeming pace of intercultural osmosis cannot easily offset the colonial impairments. Oana Sabo rightly puts it: "The judge's and Biju's diasporic travels underscore the historical continuities between colonial and neoliberal times as well as the ways in which postcolonial subjects and economic migrants feel marginalized in the global north" (376-77). However, Sabo misses the point that Desai sufficiently hints at the breached boundaries of nations and the opportunities accessible along the track of globalization to different kinds of runners. Being a slow-runner and poorly skilled, Biju reaches the end of his tether.

Biju walked back to the Gandhi café, thinking he was emptying out. Year by year, his life wasn't amounting to anything at all; in a space that should have included family, friends, he was the only one displacing the air. And yet, another part of him had expanded: his self-consciousness, his self-pity—oh the tediousness of it. Clumsy in America, a giant-sized midget, a bigfat-sized helping of small.... Shouldn't he return to a life where he might slice his own importance, to where he might relinquish this overrated control over his own destiny and perhaps be subtracted from its determination altogether? He might even experience that greatest luxury of not noticing himself at all. (268)

The economic migrants have to struggle for a piece of the pie despite humiliating unevenness and skewed nature of the globalized world. In *Tropic*, Bobby recounts the maddening tedium of his daily chores:

Ever since he's been here, never stopped working. Always working. Washing dishes. Chopping vegetables. Cleaning floors. Cooking hamburgers. Painting walls. Laying brick. Cutting hedges. Mowing lawn. Digging ditches. Sweeping trash.... Keeping up (79).

Equally, Biju's oppressive treadmill is overly demanding:

Biju approached Tom & Tomoko's—"No jobs."

McSweeney's Pub –"No hiring."

Freddy's Wok—"Can you ride a bicycle?"

Yes, he could.

[...]. General Tso's chicken, emperor's pork, and Biju on a bicycle with the delivery bag on his handlebars, a tremulous figure between heaving buses, regurgitating taxis—what growls, what sounds of flatulence came from this traffic. Biju pounded at his pedals, heckled by taxi drivers direct from Punjab—a man is not a caged thing, a man is wild, *wild* and he must drive as such, in a bucking yodeling taxi. They harassed Biju with such blows from their horns as could split the world into whey and solids...! (49)

Both novels have economically fragmented transnational cross-ethnic labour class but their actions have little transformative power in the hierarchical structural organization. Besides Biju, New York's shadow population includes Rishi, Saran, Jeev, Achootan and Mr Lalkaka. They represent the disaffiliated and uncounted segments of the homeless population slogging away for slave wages.

Buzzworm in *Tropic* indicts the narrative of universal progress by putting the low-paid homeless dregs of society against better-housed cars in Los Angeles: "All these people living in their cars. The cars living in garages. The garages living inside guarded walls. You dump the people outta cars, and you left with things living inside things. Meanwhile people going through the garbage at McDonald's

looking for a crust of bread and leftover fries" (43). If the homeless are not humanized and "the Other" is not engaged "in a substantive sense" (Gikandi 31), how can a global village with cosmopolitan harmony materialize? Buzzworm represents the subject positions of the urban homeless in Los Angeles.

Desai's critique of globalization proceeds in tandem with her depiction of the internal exclusions and material conditions in India. While the USA—the hub of globalization—has problems in managing the influx of immigration, India's state apparatus is incapable of stemming the exodus of unaccommodated labour. Harish-Harry in *The Inheritance* rebuffs Biju's remonstrative plea for sponsoring his workers for their green cards: "How can I sponsor you? . . . . I have to go to the INS and say that no American citizen can do the job. I have to prove it. I have to prove I advertised it. They will look into my restaurant . . . . And the way they have it, it's the owner who gets put in jail for hiring illegal staff. If you are not happy then go right now. . . . You can help cutting the vegetables while lying down and if you are not better, go home. Doctors are very cheap and good in India. Get the best medical attention and later on you can always return" (188-89). Harish-Harry sounds glib like a slippery employer because he knows that back home it would be terribly hard for Biju and others of his ilk to get by.

Desai reconfigures the protracted damage done by colonialism to the Indian psyche and system. In a conversation between the self-absorbed judge, an anachronistic elite, and Bose, a fully emancipated ICS officer who has lost his case to win a pension equal to that of a white ICS man, the veneer of decolonization cracks. Later, Bose's son mirrors his father and mounts a case against his employer, Shell Oil, but to no avail.

"It costs less to live in India," they responded.

But what if they wished to have a holiday in France? Buy a bottle at the duty-free? Send a child to college in America? Who could afford it? If they were paid less, how would India not keep being poor? How could Indians travel in the world and live in the world the same way Westerners did? These differences Bose found unbearable.

But profit could only be harvested in the gap between nations, working one against the other. They were damning the third world to being third-world. They were forcing Bose and his son into an inferior position—thus far and no further—and he couldn't take it. Not after believing he was their friend. He thought of how the English government and its civil servants had sailed away throwing their *topis* overboard, leaving behind only those ridiculous Indians who couldn't rid themselves of what they had broken their souls to learn.

Again they went to court...in a world that was still colonial. (204-05)

Tellingly, Bose's narrative in the novel poses a disturbing question, as Joseph E. Stiglitz, Nobel laureate and Chief Economist at the World Bank does: "Had things really changed since the 'official' ending of colonialism a half century ago?" (Stiglitz 40-41) The judge—a reclusive Anglophile—carries his colonial neuroses and moribund mindset over in resurgent India.

The colonial bequest still survives and impacts the moment of postcolonial globalization. As Biju's plane arrives in London, Desai gives sufficient hint of how imperial colonization and contemporary globalization intermesh: "The first stop was Heathrow and they crawled out at the far end that hadn't been renovated for the new days of globalization but lingered back in the old age of colonization" (285). Disparities and divisions created by colonization persist; the emancipatory potential of globalization remains partly unrealized. "In globalization," as Timothy Brennan notes, "the non-Western world—the former colonies that are still colonies—are assigned the role both as this metaphorical and actual space on a grand scale: an appropriately large middle space in which the unequal exchanges of globalization can be performed as legerdemain" (113). Brennan is of the view that the decolonized world operates in a calculated zone of invisibility, from which it provides the positioning so vital for ensuring the financial and commercial dominance of globalization's main beneficiaries. Arguably then, contemporary post-modern capitalism is imbricated with the colonial system as is evidenced by the sutured narratives of the judge and Biju in a simultaneous focus.

Hobbled by the complicated colonial inheritance and choppy

waters of globalization, Biju's optimism during his illegal sojourn in the USA gets deflated. Unlike Bobby, a Chinese Singaporean who entered the US as a boy, posing as a Vietnamese war refugee, and Rafaela, a Mexican, in *Tropic*, Biju lacks the required enterprise and prowess, and so he cannot manage a modicum of economic security. His enthusiasm is deeply frayed. His fitful and fragile mobility is quashed by the material realities. The cheap immigrant labourers like Rafaela in Yamashita's novel do succeed economically in a global order but the sense of disaffiliation and exclusion from the larger community alienates them too. The benighted and psychologically fragmented Biju, though mesmerized by the onward momentum of the globalized word, does not exemplify the immigrant success story. Initially swelled with possibility, he now shrinks with reality. The dimensions of ontological disconnect in the two novels vary. However, there is a degree of similarity between the unmoored Biju and the marginalized Buzzworm. The former is under constant threat of prosecution in New York and the latter, an African-American Vietnam War veteran, is a champion of the homeless in Los Angeles. They experience tightening unease and alienation in the global market but there is no backlash against globalization in either of the novels. In fact, the narratives of the homeless and the low-wage migrant workers in both *Tropic* and *The Inheritance* endorse the inexorable course of globalization and demonstrate that they would be far worse off without having access to global markets.

Through Biju's appalling misery and embryonic outrage, Desai insinuates a potential coalition of the unprivileged and the deprived in the global market. The novel, of course, does not have utopian ingredients to augment the possibility of this coalition but embedded in its scathing critique of the postcolonial nation, and constricted space in the globalized world, is a tentative hope for a different world emerging from the melancholic state of this one. Yamashita's novel envisions an ideal and utopian transnational world through homeless Manzanar's imaginary instantiation. In addition, the fetish of the first-world's technology-led wealth and progress is trashed

by Arcangel aka El Gran Mojado in his address to the commodified human labour while he is finally confronting SUPERNAFTA in the wrestling ring:

You who live in the declining and abandoned places

of great cities, called barrios, ghettos, and favelas:

What is archaic? What is modern? We are both.

The myth of the first world is that

development is wealth and technology progress.

It is all rubbish.

It means that you are no longer human beings

but only labor.

It means that the land you live on is not earth

but only property. . . .

How will ninety-five percent of us

divide twelve percent? (258-59)

The magical movement of the Tropic of Cancer from the south to the north, the symbolic fusion of the global village, accompanied by an expanding choral symphony of the crowd representing the third-world labour and the urban homeless, merge into a marvelous coalition, melding particularistic subjectivities in a state of unique internationalization.

The utopian vision of a single, all-inclusive totality of the immense humanity in *Tropic* recalls what Hardt and Negri would call 'the multitude', and Bill Ashcroft "transnation". In *Empire*, an influential

study of globalization, Hardt and Negri posit their view on the expansive energy of Empire which signifies a new global order created by the present phase of globalized capitalism. It is different from the Imperial rule of a single powerful nation over subjugated territories and peoples. By the very nature of its expansion and evolution it will be increasingly amenable to the mobilization of a counter-Empire, an alternative global society:

> A new geography is established by the multitude as the productive flows of bodies define new rivers and ports. The cities of the earth will become great deposits of cooperating humanity and locomotives for circulation, temporary residences and networks of the mass distribution of living humanity. (397)

In Hardt and Negri's positive and utopian view, the two historical forces, namely Empire and counter-Empire, will determine the systems of global regulation. In substantial, though not full agreement with Hardt and Negri, Ashcroft proposes his view on the utopian space:

> The concept of the 'transnation', however, while incorporating the separation of state and nation, and endorsing the utopian potentiality of the state's transformation, accommodates the constant, ubiquitous, oppressive and combative discourse of nation-states. It emphasizes the fact that the 'transnation' is a product not only of the nation, existing as a kind of 'smooth space' [Deleuze and Guattari 528] running through it, but also a product of movement, displacement, relocation. The 'transnation' is both global and local. It not only interpenetrates the state, it interpenetrates the multiplicity of states in their international and global relations. . . . The 'transnation', by seeing the *movement* of peoples in globalization as a fundamental feature of spatiality, accentuates the *circulation* of the local in the global. (81)

Ashcroft argues that with increasing mobility and diasporic dispersal of peoples in the age of globalization, cosmopolitan utopianism has gathered strength like pre-independence nationalist utopias in various postcolonial literatures.

In the confrontation of Arcangel and SUPERNAFTA in *Tropic*, globalization, with a spectacular panoply of mythic reality, functions more as an ideology—a solution on the horizon of the ideal human rights—than an accurate account of the world of the twenty-first century. Yamashita uses a fabulist, fantastic genre to configure the

inspirational power of imaginary globalization. On the other hand, Desai's depiction of underclass labour amidst the processes of globalization is immersed in India's postnational splitting of allegiances engendered by the failures of the nation-state, as well as closed contact zones or the elitist character of global cosmopolitanism. Institutional weaknesses of the postcolonial nation have impaired its capability for coping with the pressures of intensified economic differentiations. Its surplus labour in the form of diasporic movements is vulnerable in varying degrees to the churning of global capitalism. By conflating colonialism and contemporary global consciousness, Desai's novel posits that India's complex inheritance continues to undercut its postcolonial liberation as well as the empowering potential of globalization.

Finally, both novels interrogate spatial hierarchies that globalization involves, although the cognitive mapping of international income inequalities and labour migration has distinctive flavour in each novel. The confrontation between the burgeoning global market in Los Angeles and low-income 'wetbacks'—illegal immigrants from Mexico in the US—is presented through the device of an orange moving from poor south to affluent north in *Tropic* whereas this contrast in the *Inheritance* is palpably illustrated by Biju's relocation travails in New York propelled by his urge to ameliorate his conditions. As in Yamashita's novel, in Desai's novel, too, the interconnecting narratives of marginalized individuals are spliced with the globalization processes playing out in the metropolitan maw. The overlapping concerns cohere; the novel ends with Biju balking at the disconcerting prospect of anchorage in his new location. Part of the way Desai's novel addresses the idea of globalization is through a shift from the Imperial lines of advancement to a corporate structure of opportunity that the younger generations must compete within. Perhaps Biju is not equipped to re-invent himself amid New York's endless possibilities. He succumbs to self-pity and a romanticized vision of home. The obstacles to transnational mobility are not configured in Yamashita's novel, but the pinch of economic inequality and cultural segregation experienced by occluded workers—"the poorest human turtles" as Friedman puts it (335)—

in a compressed and integrated world, characterize both novels. Revealingly, the tribulations of illegalized migrant workers register the enormity and flux of globalization; their tales are constructed according to the given thematic thrust and preoccupations in the two novels.

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NEHA SOI

Identity and the Question of Authority in the Globalized World

Into whose culture is one to be hybridized and on whose terms? The willful relegation of this question reveals nevertheless that the underlying logic of this celebratory mode is that of the limitless freedom of a globalized marketplace which pretends that all consumers are equally resourceful and in which all cultures are equally available for consumption, in any combination that the consumer desires. Only to the extent that all cultures are encountered in commodified forms does it become possible to claim that none commands more power than any other or that the consumer alone is the sovereign of all hybridization. This playful 'hybridity' conceals that fact that commodified cultures are equal only to the extent of their commodification.

Ahmad, 'The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality' 17

The new global cultural system promotes difference instead of suppressing it, but selects the dimension of difference. . . . [We] are not all becoming the same, but we are portraying, dramatizing and communicating our differences to each

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other in ways that are more widely intelligible . . . which celebrate particular kinds of diversity while submerging, deflating or suppressing others.

Wilk 124

People are not in charge of globalization; markets and technology are. Certain human actions might accelerate or retard globalization, but in the last instance . . . the invisible hand of the market will always assert its superior wisdom.

Steger, *Globalization: The New Market Ideology* 61

What is it in third-world identity that despite rigorous debates on issues related to it the term still manages to remain a fertile subject of research? What forces scholars to discuss this issue constantly? Why is there only one conclusion about identity that there can be no conclusion? And if every study of identity comes to the same conclusion, why is the subject still researched upon? There is only one answer to all these questions. Identity is of immense significance to all human beings individually as well as socially. It is not a dated concept which loses its relevance with time. As the world changes in its economy, politics, technology, social structure and culture, identity reflects those changes, and this makes the concept an organic and evolving category which cannot be relegated to discussions of a certain age alone. Similarly, the term 'third-world' may be considered obsolete, but what it signifies cannot be dismissed as unimportant. The term not only denotes erstwhile colonies, but also the contemporary developing nations. On a different tangent, 'third-world' can also be used to explain 'third space' denoting the space of cultural interface and hybridization, which is far more inclusive and global. Of course, such a change of nomenclature does not come without requisite qualifications and mutations. The predominance of 'third-world' is being challenged by the relevance of 'third-space' in the world of globalization which denotes the space of interstices, which is constantly enlarging to include peoples and cultures. But this does not make 'third-world' an obsolete term. Any reference to the 'third-space' is evocative of there being at least two prior *spaces* which intermingle to create a

globalized space. Third-world identity may always be defined as an inconclusive subject, but its relevance remains unchallenged nevertheless. The method and reasons for arriving at that conclusion may be different, but productive in lending some understanding of the concept.

Third-world identity has always been a category of manipulative representation. The act of naming is a means of hegemonic intervention. Identity is a mode of executing power and of perpetuating authority. The construction of identity, in both polarized and hybridized forms, is informed by the hegemony of a power group. Through the investigation of identity and representational politics, one can assess that identity is not only an expression of being for itself but for the express purpose of establishing certain relations of hierarchy and authority. The study of identity through the binaries expounded by Edward Said and the theory of hybridization elaborated by Homi Bhabha leads us to the question of the indubitable significance of power structures. The question of agency in representation has always been immensely important and becomes inevitable particularly in the era of globalization. This paper explores the assessment of agency and authority in representation systems through a deconstructive analysis of identity as it is manufactured in the globalized world. Through an analysis of the power structures in force, the argument will progress towards an understanding of identity and difference in the contemporary scenario.

Hierarchies and power structures have lost the clarity and strength they held in colonial times. The polar categories of master and slave were unchallenged then and could be populated without inviting much debate. The construction of identity was the sole prerogative of the colonizer. With the anti-colonial movements taking shape, third-world identity as a discursive colonial artefact came to be challenged and alternative accounts of native identity came to the fore. With colonial interaction and its many outcomes, ranging from outright antagonism to steadfast devotion, from mimicry to mockery, an ambivalent attitude towards western constructs developed, and resulted in various representations of third-world

identity.

Further, the concepts of space and time have undergone an unprecedented change in reception and application. Space, which was earlier a marker of belongingness, permanence and rigidity of boundary, is now perceived in terms of mobility, sharing and transience through advanced systems of travel, international trade and global capitalism. Spatiality is no more a linear and straightforward concept but a complex experience of various cultures, communities and nations: "[t]he isle is full of noises", to borrow Chantal Zabus's metaphor (38). Further in the multicultural society, colonization changes from being territorial in the main, to economic and commercial. With respect to time as well, the world of globalization brings about a radical difference. Time, which was earlier a linear global feature, also becomes complicated in the current scenario. Temporality is observed as a spatial concept in the era of globalization. The globalizing world, or the first world, is seen as the advanced and progressive world aped by the rest. The progressive world is observed as ahead of the rest and is generally defined as *fast moving*. This difference, in the treatment of temporality by space, is suggestive of a lack of "coevalness [which] aims at recognizing contemporality as the condition for truly dialectical confrontation" (Fabian 154). In the absence of this "contemporality", space is marked in terms of time relatively with regard to the rate of progress on the parameters set by the so called advanced spaces. In this condition, mimicry of the globalizing forces or the neo-colonizers is not a state of being, but a state of time. Bhabha's concept of "almost the same but not quite" (*Location* 122) also mutates into almost the same but not *yet* in the contemporary world. With this crumbling of the space-time construct and the simultaneous development of the experiential tangent lending individuality to the concept of identity, the invasion of virtual lives and parallel existence systems, the economic boomerang effect of shifting binaries and the forever migrating peoples and cultures, third-world identity has acquired a complex structure which can also lead some to suggest that no one is in charge anymore. But a system of sustained hybridization cannot function without a directing

power no matter how layered or multiple it may be.

On the surface, the most visible and the popular effect on identity is that of consumption. Consumption is often identified as one of the primary factors affecting identity and with the global availability of consumer products all over the world, it is often construed that global capitalism and consumerism design identity for the third world. Multinational and transnational corporations manufacture an identity for the consumer and popularize it through advertising strategies and marketing systems. With these corporations supplying their products to all corners of the world, one can be forced to assume that the third space is becoming 'homogenously hybridized' with the same set of brands from various locations available for a buyer who is being transformed into a standard hybridized consumer irrespective of his/her location. The visibility effects of the mall or the sign boards in the cosmopolitan cities can lead one to simplistically understand that the identity of the third world is that of a 'homogenously hybridized' consumer created in the picture of the first world. This ostensible replication of the first-world market in the third world can be seen as a capitalistic form of the hegemony of colonialism and the effort to create an in-between class, as Macaulay once intended, which can forward the culture of the neocolonial master and reinforce its inevitability. However, one must consider whether the presence of the same brands everywhere necessarily translates into a homogenizing identity effect.

Firstly, this worldwide visibility of brands and their popularity is primarily depictive of global consumerism. One may find a Coca Cola banner everywhere and a McDonalds at the end of the street in most cosmopolitan cities, but enormous disparities still divide nations from each other. From political borders to the formalities of international travel, from culture to language, great differences can be observed in seemingly similar parts of the world. The presence of the same international brands only signifies a well ordered and managed distribution system of the multinational corporate and only superficially informs identity (Gopinath 49). This is not to suggest that identity or culture remain unchanged under the impact of globalization, but that hybridization of identity is not a function of

consumption alone. Secondly, most multinational companies adapt themselves to suit international clientele. The brand and the advertising equipment remaining constant, the same companies provide localized products to increase international sales and profit. So McDonalds serves 'Aloo Tikki Burgers' in India and hamburgers in USA. From using local heroes and models to advertise their products to changing the design, products and services of their brand, the multinational companies themselves become hybridized rather than hybridizing the local culture as much. Once again, one must clarify that the very presence of a McDonalds may be a symbol of hybridization, but the fact that it has to evolve its own strategies and products substantiates that the corporate cannot survive globally without acknowledging deep-rooted cultural differences. If identity were to be observed vis-à-vis consumption, globalization would not imply homogenization but rather 'glocalization' and cultural intermingling, as Robertson puts it.[1] Thirdly, and most importantly, if consumption of a transnational or multinational brand such as Coca Cola has a direct bearing on the identity of the consumer and creates a homogenizing effect, consumption of all brands and products acquired as a result of global trade should be observed similarly. The post 9/11 image of Osama bin Laden on Al Jazeera channel, telecast worldwide through tie-ups with international corporations such as AOL-Warner, CNN, CNBC, Reuters and ABC, should be read as an example of homogeneity and not aggressive measures of a terrorist protesting against capitalism. Laden himself, sporting a microphone, a stylish Timex sports watch, a Russian combat dress and an AK-47 that must have travelled half the world to reach the regresses of a cave in Afghanistan (Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* 4-6), should belong to the same third-world identity of a 'homogenized consumer' and not be categorized as a terrorist. It seems unfair to cast Coca Cola as an agent of homogenization and AK-47 as that of fanaticism, when they are both attained through the system of global "trade". The example given may sound too incongruent but products and brands can only be observed as factors affecting life-style and not as codes of identity. It may also be mentioned here that the image of Laden as

both a consumer of diverse goods which can be read as symbols of globalization and a terroristic force against the tyrannies of American capitalism, bears testimony to the fact that identity is not a manifestation of consumption alone. It would be too simplistic to assume that Laden would be naïve enough to be sporting articles acquired through global trade when making a statement against international capitalism perpetrated by America, without a specific agenda. A deconstruction of Laden's image brings out a duality in the identity of the terrorist as both a consumer of goods of international trade, as well as a force of resistance against capitalism. One may also read Laden's image as a symbol of resistance by the employment of the means of the colonizer. The multiple interpretations of the image suggest that the identity of the third world, even in a fanatic/terroristic form, is hybridized but not by a global standard of hybridity.

Like global capitalism, America is also perceived as an important player in writing third-world identity. The politics of representation is somehow always linked with the west and its hegemonic practices. Where colonial occupation is seen as a direct form of imperialism, the development of multinational capitalism and hybridization are seen as indirect forms of Americanization. It is no surprise that third-world identity and culture are generally perceived to be threatened under the impact of 'westernization' or 'Americanization' through hybridization, movement or capitalistic liaison in the world today. Can it be concluded then, that it is America or the west that holds the reins? Is identity an American construct in the world today?

In the current context and the jargon of neocolonialism, America is perceived as a colonizer and the third world as the colonized. In a Saidean manner it can be said that third-world identity is facing the same orientalism at the hands of America as the colonized other did under European control. The othering of the east as inferior is enabled to discursively create an unshakeable position of superiority for the western self. The American system of othering as a discursive practice can be observed in its literature. Through its films and media, America reinforces a strong international belief in eastern

ignorance and western knowledge in contrast with it. Whether it is the projection of the bombing of Iraq and Afghanistan as a difficult but important task in international interest that America has to undertake as part of the 'White Man's burden' (Kipling 280), or the Hollywood films demonstrating the east as the inferior other: illiterate, primitive, violent and aimless, America does it all. On the cultural front, America creates its self through narcissistic accounts of prowess compared to a world of the doomed other. Like the European colonizer, America seems to be out to subjugate the world with the sword (military power) in one hand and the book (media) in the other. Interestingly, rather than resisting the American discourse of eastern inferiority, the third-world intentionally or unintentionally reiterates it. Talking in terms of cinema alone, third world countries re-exoticize themselves in the attempt to earn international profits. Ang Lee's Chinese international blockbuster *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* once again "orientalize[s]" Chinese culture and history to suit American sensibilities (Ritzer 86). Similarly Indian entries to the Oscars continue to reflect a sense of mysticism with films like Amol Palekar's *Paheli*. It is because of this discursive representation that America continues to locate "slumdog millionaires" (Boyle) in India. By creating and strengthening a discourse of American superiority and indispensability in world systems, the USA seems to claim the sole rights to write the identity of the third world.

Politically it may be right to observe that America holds a position of enviable superiority today. With its stronghold in the area of creating and disseminating knowledge, America claims a powerful position by Foucauldian principles. Along with a strong political position in international space, America also commands a ruling position in areas of economy and technology. With its claims to superiority in these spheres, one may hastily deduce that third-world identity is an American design. In terms of economy, America seemingly controls the functioning of the international market scenario. With the World Bank, the WTO and the IMF in America, the dynamics of international economy are ostensibly in the hands of the American entrepreneur. With the largest number of

transnational corporations (TNCs) based in North America (Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* 103), it is evident that world economy is controlled largely by the U.S.A. It has been demonstrated before that economy bears a direct effect on identity and that supply dominates demand in the world today. In such a situation, American economic policy creates demand by flooding third-world markets first with loans from the World Bank and then with supplies that can be bought with them. Based on such a supply-demand function, one may erroneously conclude that the third world is the sedated consumer of American production, demanding only what has been offered and playing the part of an unobtrusive object at the hands of American whims. The inversion of the economic principle of demand and supply and the increasing significance of production can be read as a means of creating passive identity. It may be concluded that third-world identity is a direct consequence of third-world consumption, which is controlled and manipulated by the American corporate dynamic. But a patient observation of the parameters of American supremacy contest the absolute authority granted to it.

The American corporate system is dependent on the third world for cheap intellectual labour. The third-world slave working in the coffee plantations could be cast as an essentialist symbol of colonial subjugation but the white collared third-world employee in the first world holds an ambivalent position in the hierarchical order. On the one hand he/she is the agent of forwarding first-world profit, but on the other hand he/she is also the 'job snatcher' in the first-world employee market who is taking away the means of first-world sustenance (Chanda 291). On the one hand, the third world is the developing world trying to catch up with the first-world progress while on the other, it is the intellectual labour reaping the benefits of the system of outsourcing and predating on the western employee. The ambivalence of the self and the other could never be as complete. The first world is both the controller of trade and capitalism in the position of entrepreneurship and also the victim in the game of outsourcing. Similarly, the third world is both the labour/slave but also the base of western development. These ambivalent hierarchies

make the concept of third-world identity all the more slippery and hard to fix.

However, it must be stated that globalization only affects hierarchies to the extent of theoretical rhetoric. Globalization is evidently a means to promote corporate growth which translates as American growth as the US commands a stronghold in the corporate sector. This is illustrated by the debt-trap which strangulates third-world economies, the ever widening wealth gap between the rich and the poor, the imbalanced rates of development observed both internationally and intra-nationally, and contrastingly, the growing fiscal reserves of transnational corporations. Added to this, the audaciously dictatorial attitude of the USA in matters of international politics and economics, and the inarguable discursive superiority of the west as opposed to the east, problematizes the concept of globalization a great deal. The empowerment of the third world is restricted to the extent of superficial participation alone, while the actual authority still rests indisputably with the first world entrepreneur.

Along with global capitalism and America, the Internet is observed as another designer of identity. The Internet provides a seemingly equal space to all 'netizens' who can migrate from site to site and from time zone to time zone without any formalities or stipulations, changing as many identities as possible. From politics to religion, from education to love, from environment to crime and from trade to terrorism, the World Wide Web creates a virtual image of the world in imitation, deleting all those restrictions which challenge the flow of globalization in the real space. However, it is interesting to note that the virtual world with its virtual dynamic manages to create reality effects in the real world. The Internet is the backbone of world development today and the capital of the communication industry. With the Internet and its allied services, the world runs its business today. From employing labour across the globe to selling products off the net, from delivering on lightening fast communication highways to facilitating execution of power–both governmental and terroristic–the Internet is the greatest tool of globalizing the world. The identity that the World Wide Web offers to all its users is neutral.

These users can code their identity as they please, and can migrate across identity borders as and when they want. The euphoria of globalization can be realized only on the World Wide Web. But precisely because of this fluidity and the absolute lack of authority on the Internet, the identities remain virtual like the space on which they are created. The lack of tangibility in identity matters on the Internet makes it only a reflection of identity as it may aspire to be, but not a reality. Further, the Internet is a common platform of contesting authorities and only works as a medium of expression. To be able to create an identity it has to have a voice of its own too. If the discourse of American supremacy is spread through the World Wide Web–the greatest symbol of euphoric globalization–anti-globalizers also find a voice in the same medium. Like Achebe and Raja Rao appropriated English language and used it to create counter-narratives, anti-Americans and anti-globalizers also express their opinions through the Internet. The Internet offers only a compressed virtual image of what the world expresses in all its heterogeneity, but it does not express an ideology of its own. The World Wide Web truly exemplifies globalization and offers much freedom to the construction of identity in global terms, but its virtual nature is self refuting, and in the absence of a certain authority, identity is not entirely an Internet phenomenon either.

In a world where everything from trade, culture, environment, education and media to terrorism, war, disease and crises are globalized, identity cannot be any different. A globalizing view may be suggestive of a global identity of 'third-space dwellers' working towards symbiotic trade development and profit generation through methods which necessitate cultural homogenization and subscription to common consumptive ethics that determine a globally hybridized identity. Anything differing from that globally acceptable hybridized form may be seen as a polar opposite, a threat to development, an anti-establishment force: be it an agent of aggressive resistance or an expression of nativity. In the world of real interaction, however, hybridization remains a heterogeneous global phenomenon. Third-world identity must not be defined as a 'homogenously hybridized' category but as a fluid and ambivalent concept susceptible to

influence and differing in reaction or response. Even if people consume the same products, wear the same kind of clothes, work with international companies, maintain cosmopolitan linkages and live an array of lives on the virtual planes of the Internet, they remain different, at times even antagonistic. It can be said, then, that third-world identity is not constructed by any one power-group in isolation. It reflects an amalgamation of diverse influences including those of globalization and hybridization on the one hand, and ethnification and nationalization on the other.

Hybridity, as well as ethnicity, are at once homogenous and differentiated. Hybridity can be homogenous in microcosmic terms of the functioning of the mall culture and differentiated at the global level of appropriation of global consumerism. Similarly, ethnicity can be homogenous in terms of terrorist attempts at fanaticism and differentiated in terms of revival cultures that function through the appropriation of ethnicity to international tastes. The carnival of the world is such that identities are articulated on cue and the multi-affiliated personalities of the populace take on characters and hierarchical positions as per the shifting loci of the world order. The multiple ambivalences of situations and peoples allows for a diverse set of identities that can be imbibed. Third-world identity is once again an inconclusive term and one cannot really ascertain a clear line of authority with regard to its definition. It is more layered and relative than ever before and resists any final definition, or even a partial closure, of the process that it is. Between the cosmopolitanism of the world markets and the active migration culture, the jingoistic attempts at establishing unique ethnic identities and the jargon of global oneness and equality, third-world identity–in all possible meanings of the term–signifies a range of identities performed at will. The polarity of identities is visible in the interactions of various communities, and so is their homogeneity.

It must be mentioned that the classical discourses about the third world still hold strong. Despite the euphoric assertions of globalization, differences are still highlighted with a sense of discrimination and contempt. The discourse of globalization

underlines the ostensible claim of inclusivity and dilution of differences to bring the world together. The celebratory claims to equality by those such as the United Colours of Benetton may show the 'white' and the 'black' embracing each other, but media representations continue to be evocative of discursive differences. Discourses about the third world are still rampant and voiced through Hollywood films, international news, blogs and even Play-Station games, especially after 9/11. Discursive images are still popular: Islamic terrorists, women as veiled–and hence oppressed–Indian call-centre capability, Chinese markets selling cheap products and Big Brother America watching all and controlling the actions of the inmates of his house of globalization.

The world may have come to a point where difference is expected, but it is still discursively branded. Anti-globalization movements and anti-establishment efforts reflect a resistance to discursive categorization which is still prevalent in the era of globalization. We need to understand that we live in a world in which identity can never be singularly defined. The search for a defined and recognizable identity is a primordial urge in human beings. In a world that challenges any and all efforts at even a partial or temporal signification, this urge is heightened. It is important to understand that identity is not a homogenous and/or timeless construct, both for the self and the other. Identity is a loosely bound and constantly mutating space of recognition, affiliation and differentiation. It is further susceptible to influences of experience and constantly developing difference. Any such difference must not be tolerated but rather accepted as a facet of the organic identification process. Finally, it is time to stop branding difference as acceptable or unacceptable. What is required is the rejection of any such discourse that begins by categorizing people and segregating on the basis of essentialist definitions. In the age of globalization, only a global acceptance of difference can prove productive.

Notes

1 Robertson explains the concept of 'glocalization' in his essay 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Heterogeneity-Homogeneity' as the appropriation of global culture to blend in the local. This hybridization of culture does not refer to homogenization of cultures worldwide, but rather creating local forms of global culture which satisfy local demands while incorporating global systems.

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JASKIRAN TIWANA

The Dark Side of Globalization: A Study of Lives on the Margins

The frenetic pace of globalization or global capitalism has caused unequal changes all over the world, especially for the marginalized. Multinational corporations (MNCs) have been able to spread their influence to every corner of the globe.[1] Penetrating the remotest areas of the developing third world, they have left local, rural communities struggling for survival. The massive acquisition of land belonging to farmers, tribals, Dalits and other marginalized sections by these corporations, consequently, results in resistance from these local communities in different parts of the country (in this case, India). Their resistance against proposed projects of multinational corporations as a means of safeguarding their land and livelihood is a clear example of the postcolonial politics at work. The marginalized are voicing their anger against the excesses of globalization. The forcible acquisition of land by multinational corporations is leading

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to a backlash. This paper attempts to analyze the impact of globalization on the marginalized communities and their ensuing struggles for survival in the changed social milieu. Amidst the rapid changes brought about by global capitalism in the social, economic, cultural and ecological spheres of the third world, women have been the greater sufferers. Significantly, they have resisted and fought back from their specific contextual positions. Highlighting the importance of human agency as a catalyst for change, the repercussions of globalization for third-world societies and the various ways in which the marginalized resist the dominant power structures, will be explored in this paper.

"Day by day, river by river, forest by forest, mountain by mountain, missile by missile, bomb by bomb – almost without our knowing it, we are being broken", writes Arundhati Roy in her evocative essay, "The Greater Common Good".[2] The complicity between the ruling elites of third-world countries and the forces of Western power—the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO and the multinational corporations—has resulted in the forcible confiscation of land belonging to farmers, tribals, Dalits and the poor. Under the aegis of globalization, natural resources of the country (India)—its land, its rivers, its forests—are being taken away from the native communities and redistributed to multinational corporations. Those who live on the margins are being further marginalized. Their source of livelihood is being taken away under the garb of profit making, employment generating initiatives which are proclaimed to be in the interests of the country. Under the facade of 'development' and 'growth', whole populations are being deprived of their means of survival.

One of the significant resistance struggles is that of C.K. Janu, a woman tribal leader in Kerala, who is leading a resistance movement of the tribals against the Government of Kerala for forcibly confiscating their forest land and evicting them from their natural home, their Mother Forest. Over the years, the movement has gathered momentum and become a struggle, not just for the retrieval of the community's forest lands but also for its cultural identity that has been threatened by the eviction of tribals from their natural

home. These people are not followers of any particular religion. Instead, they revere and respect nature which is the source of their livelihood as well as identity. In 2001, Janu led a historic struggle of the landless people of Kerala by putting up huts in front of the Secretariat Complex of the Government of Kerala in the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram, demanding 2.25 lakh hectares of land (5 hectares each for the 45,000 displaced families). This agitation continued for about 48 days culminating in the Government signing an agreement on 16 October 2001, whereby it was decided that the tribals be given 42,000 hectares of land. Again, in 2003, protesting against the inaction of the Government in fulfilling the promises made in the agreement, the tribals led by Janu encroached upon a forest reserve in Muthanga in Wayanad District of Kerala and established a tribal settlement. On the 19th of February, 2003, the police indiscriminately opened fire on the agitating tribals, resulting in the death of one and injuries to hundreds of others, including women and children. Following this incident, Janu was imprisoned for illegally occupying the government forest reserve. Even so, she has continued her heroic struggle, engaging in peaceful demonstrations and sit-in strikes in the hope of getting justice for her community. Janu's story is one among many other similar stories unfolding in the country in the present times. The self-narrative of C.K. Janu, aptly titled, *Mother Forest*, is her real life account of the struggle waged by her community against the expropriation of their forest land by the Government of Kerala.

The famous Narmada Bachao Andolan is another such movement that has much written and said about it. Arundhati Roy maintains:

> Big Dams are to a Nation's 'Development' what Nuclear Bombs are to its Military Arsenal. They're both weapons of mass destruction. They're both weapons Governments use to control their own people. Both Twentieth Century emblems that mark a point in time when human intelligence has outstripped its own instinct for survival. They're both malignant indications of civilization turning upon itself. They represent the severing of the link, not just the link – the understanding – between human beings and the planet they live on. ("The Greater Common Good")

With painstaking detail, she goes on to dismantle the entire myth of big dams and multi-purpose projects, proclaiming them to be money-spinning gimmicks of the Western powers. The huge numbers of people, mainly the poor, tribals and Dalits, that these projects displace add up to a shocking figure. The number of people displaced by big dams alone in India in the last fifty years is put at an unofficial estimate of 33 million whereas the number of people displaced by the thousands of other Development Projects is pegged at a mindboggling 50 million (Roy). She further explains, "[t]he dam-building industry in the First World is in trouble and out of work. So it's exported to the Third World in the name of Development Aid, along with their other waste like old weapons, superannuated aircraft carriers and banned pesticides."

Human rights activist, Binayak Sen, also criticizes the extensive policy of acquisition of natural and common property resources by the Indian State. In an acceptance speech given by him in South Korea on receiving the Gwangju Prize for Human Rights, which was published as an article, "The Not-So-Shining India", he speaks about the confiscation and privatization of the common property resources–the forests, the rivers and the land upon which the tribals of India have always depended for survival. He states:

> The doctrine of eminent domain vests ultimate ownership of all land and natural resources in the state. Under cover of eminent domain, vast tracts of land, forest and water reserves are being handed over to the Indian affiliates of international finance capital....It is well recognized now that the tsunami-like flow of capital around the world is a source of tremendous tragedy for many communities around the world which do not fit into the ideologically straitjacketed confines of the 'market economy'. (9)

Another instance of local communities rising up against globalization's excesses is the Adivasis of Plachimada, Kerala. The latter were arrested at a mass rally at Plachimada on 4 August 2002, for protesting against Coca Cola's misuse of the village's common water resources for its water-bottling plant. According to Vandana Shiva, "[i]t [Coca Cola] had been drawing 15 lakh litres of water per day, which dried up the aquifers over a two year period and polluted the water. Water scarcity has hit the local adivasi and

dalit community the hardest" (68). Not to suffer in silence, the Adivasi women of Plachimada got together to fight this "hydro-piracy" (71) and staged a dharna in front of the Coca-Cola factory. On 21 September 2003, a huge rally was organized to give a final note of warning to the Company. This local movement by Adivasi women created support both at the national and global levels, thus pressurizing the Chief Minister of Kerala to order the closure of the Coke plant on 17 February 2004 (71).

Other such struggles taking place in the country in the present times include the resistance of the local farmers, fishermen and tribals of Jagatsinghpur district of Orissa against the proposed setting up of $12 billion steel plant by the South Korean multi-national steel giant POSCO (Pohang Iron and Steel Company) which will take away their land and livelihood besides devastating the local environment and ecology; the Dongria Kondh tribe of Niyamgiri hills of Orissa trying desperately to prevent Vedanta's aluminium refinery and bauxite mining project from taking shape; the forcible acquiring of tribal land by Videocon group in Jangir Champa, a small district in central Chhattisgarh, where it plans to set up thirty-six thermal power plants (the largest cluster of power projects anywhere in the country); the failed Tata Nano project in Singur in West Bengal that was resisted by local farmers. There are many such proposed projects on the anvil in India which are facing resistance from local communities and activists.

Such resistance struggles undermine the 'growth' and 'development' agenda of the neoliberals and progressives. The promise of globalization seems to have been broken as the trickle-down effects of endless growth and development have not actually reached the lowest on the economic ladder. Rather than creating a level playing field for all, globalization has widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Social mobility is claimed to be one major consequence of global capitalism but what of the social marginalization that also occurs simultaneously? The neoliberals would argue that everything comes at a price, that if one wants development, one has to be ready to face the consequences. But how much is this price really? How much is one part of the population

deprived of so that another lesser, but more privileged, part of the population enjoys a life of fulfillment and luxury? This brings me to the next set of questions: if change is inevitable, then who is responsible for protecting the interests of those living on the margins? Or will they always be left to fend for themselves?

The disconcerting issue, then, is that in these times of huge technological advance and social upheaval, the lives on the margins are the most vulnerable. Their only sources of livelihood are their lands and forests on which they rely completely for survival. If these are also taken away, hunger, starvation and death stare them in the face. The compensations promised by the authorities end up being more illusion than reality. This is clearly the 'dark side of globalization' that the capitalists and development endorsers rarely like to talk about. This is the grim reality that weakens the entire capitalist logic of bringing wealth to nations and bridging the rich-poor divide. Globalization is then not a panacea for all ills; rather it has resulted in more economic hardship and more cultural complexity than ever. The 'civilizational advance' has been at the cost of millions of lives which have been lost in the murky waters of exploitation and profit.

Vandana Shiva asserts that "globalization is a political project and it needs a political response" (121). Arundhati Roy recommends "fighting specific wars in specific ways". The resistance movements of the groups and communities living on the margins have therefore challenged the excesses of globalization, highlighting the importance of collective public action. They have proved that through these democratic struggles they can defy the powers that be and get at least some justice for their people. Their resistance against the forces of globalization at various junctures from their specific local-bound positions is an example of the 'local' standing up against the 'global'. This oppositional politics is then a kind of "grassroots globalization" that is challenging the dynamics of local as well as global power structures (Appadurai, qtd. in Nagar 278). It highlights the importance of human agency in bringing about change and in challenging the arbitrariness of the global market economy. In other words, the participation of the people living on the margins in

resistance movements and collective public action, such as demonstrations, fasts, sit-in strikes to make their voices heard, is extremely important as it draws attention to the human factor that has either been ignored or overlooked in most studies related to the discourse of globalization.

In these struggles, active participation of women assumes significance wherein they have managed to create a space for themselves to negotiate in and with the power structures. They have rallied themselves in new organizational forms, in community networks which have helped them in challenging unjust and oppressive power structures. Their coming together as collective wholes and groups has given them the much-needed confidence to take their struggles forward. Prominent examples of such collective public action, where women have been proactive and led from the front, are: the Chipko Movement that started in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand in 1974 to prevent the cutting down of trees and to reclaim the traditional forest rights of the local people, and the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) of Gujarat that was started in 1972 and has been led by Ela Bhatt to provide employment to poor rural women. The latter is an example of women organizing themselves in small enterprises which draw on "personal networks" as well as "formal religious and cultural associations" (Rowbotham and Mitter 9).

This is then the "grassroots participation" that is defining women's situation in the developing world out of which are emerging "certain possibilities of political mobilization and ideals of alternative economic organizations" (10). Instead of being mere spectators, women are now active participants in the processes that are bringing about change. Rowbotham and Mitter maintain that in earlier writings on women and development, there was a general "tendency to view women as the passive recipients of change, and as victims of forces they do not generate or control" but that has now undergone a sea change (4). Poor women are now organizing themselves in different ways to "respond to the present restructuring of the economy" that is providing "vital clues for understanding changing social and political patterns" (4). Through these struggles, women also resist the

dominant patriarchal structures that continue to oppress them. Globalization is a masculine process and is not gender-neutral. There are inherent patriarchal tendencies within this process because it victimizes and marginalizes women. A few facts would be in place to support the above argument: women form 70 percent of the world's poor and the majority of the world's refugees. They also comprise almost 80 percent of the displaced persons of the third world. Women own less than one-hundredth of the world's property but are the worst hit by the effects of war, domestic violence and religious persecution. Women do two-thirds of the world's work but earn less than one-tenth of its income (Mohanty 234-5). Globalization also entails a biased division of labour, resulting in the 'feminization of poverty' as women currently make up a majority of the world's poor. Commercial exploitation of forests for timber and clearing of forest land for agriculture affects women's real incomes directly as gathered items from forests and village commons are reduced. Also, the extra amount of time needed for gathering fuel and fodder reduces the time available to women for crop cultivation and production and affects their crop incomes. This is especially true of communities where women are the primary cultivators due to men migrating elsewhere in search of better incomes (Agarwal, in Menon 121).

In the global-capitalist system, poor third-world women have been given a position at the bottom of the economic ladder. Throughout its history, capitalism has largely kept women out of mainstream economics, undervaluing and even devaluing their work. Measuring economic productivity in terms of the GNP or Gross National Product, women's labour or work done in the household has been considered to be of no value to the national economy. In fact, it is not considered 'work' at all; it is merely a duty that a woman has to perform for her family as well as society. In India, women (except middle class working women) have not been considered as productive workers by planning commissions. It was only as recently as 1993 that an attempt was made to redefine work in women's context (Menon 15). Erroneously, capitalism only considers wage labour to be of value. Women's subsistence work

is not credited and is kept out of mainstream remunerative statistics. Also, with the subsistence economy of women being replaced by the profit-based economy of men under global capitalism, the situation of women has become more precarious. Another disturbing phenomenon is that of feminism being very cleverly co-opted by the global-capitalist system in its 'development' project. Women fighting for sustainability, peace and justice are made to believe that their interests collide with those of the progressive, liberal, development endorsers who work for the emancipation of women by including them in the workforce. This is a skillfully created perception that is a façade for the more unsavory reality that it hides. As opposed to a small percentage of educated, professional, mostly middle-class women who are employed in well-paying, respectable professions, the majority of third-world women slug it out in workshops/sweatshops or are employed in lowly-paid construction work. In the latter case, they are discriminated not only in terms of less wage-rate but also in their easy dispensability when not required. Some of them work as domestic workers in rich and middle-class households where they are vulnerable to exploitation. Many are unsuspecting victims of human trafficking or enter into prostitution for sheer survival. This attempt at inclusion of feminism into the global-capitalist system is a dangerous trend as issues vital to feminists like the unbiased division of labour and social and economic security of women are conflated with the paradigm of 'progress' which actually works to marginalize them.

The strategies of resistance that are used by the marginalized communities are peaceful, non-violent, and in conjunction with the democratic ideals of the State. This activism is not only an indication of the state of health of a democracy but is also crucial to understanding the reality that the forces of globalization can be challenged. The much-claimed inevitability of this phenomenon of globalization is, after all, not a universal truth or a believable fact. It is rather an actuality that can be subjected to doubt and skepticism. It is a result of human actions and an outcome of certain decisions that were made many decades ago. The Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944 had led to the creation of three global institutions, namely,

the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) which were created to establish a stable framework to repair the post-war global economy. The World Bank was to "revive the war-damaged European economies by making loans at below-normal bank rates", the IMF "to maintain currency stability" and the WTO to help in the "development of world trade" (Adam 10). However, since their inception, these intergovernmental institutions have "changed their original mandate beyond recognition" (Adam 11). They have instead become convenient tools of neo-imperialism that Western powers use to exercise their domination over the developing countries of the third world. The history of these global institutions is a history of neo-colonialist exploitation.

The Draconian 'structural adjustment programmes' that these institutions shove upon the developing countries in return for aid and loans is the economic colonialism of the present times. The structural adjustment requires that only mono-cultural cash crops are exported and goods are imported from industrial donor countries; that import quotas are abolished and tariffs are reduced to a minimum; that the value of the recipient country's currency is lowered to make its exports more attractive to the lender country and that the country's internal spending on welfare services and subsidies for food and agricultural production are reduced (Adam 12). This economic colonialism has hit the communities living on the margins in developing countries, particularly the women. This is because women tend to be responsible for the family's health and well-being and remain malnutritioned as they eat only after feeding their families. Also, in the new global labour market that is based on temporary, low-paid, flexible work, it has become increasingly difficult for poor as well as lower middle-class households to rely on a single (usually male) breadwinner. Women have been forced to step in to support their families by working outside their homes in insecure, part-time, low-paid jobs. They are also employed in smaller units/firms, workshops/sweatshops as outsourced labour where there is a total absence of or negligible social security cover for them. Furthermore, they are beset with the burden of household

duties that are considered as part of their traditional role as homemakers. Women, therefore, end up coping with the triple demands of their domestic responsibilities, insecure outside work, and at times community participation.

According to Haleh Afshar, the contradictory effects of globalization have both empowered and disempowered women (5). As the processes of global capitalism become more deeply embedded than ever, they have resulted in making the situation of women in the developing world more complex. Ironically, along with much vulnerability, globalization has also thrown up many possibilities. These are the possibilities of voicing resistance against injustice, forced deprivation and marginalization to reclaim one's social space. The activism of women as well as other marginalized sections against the excesses of globalization underscores the importance of collective human participation. Rowbotham and Mitter assert:

> The question of human agency is of particular significance in a period when teleological theories of historical and progressive evolution have been confuted both analytically and by actual events. (5)

The preponderance of global capitalism has set all other ideological theories and systems aside, becoming thereby, the dominant discourse of the present times. All other alternatives have paled into insignificance and seem currently unviable in the face of an all-encompassing free market economy. As the era of post-globalization dawns, it becomes a challenge for the entire humanity to envisage a more equal, humane and just future for the humankind. Till such time as there emerges another universalist philosophy or economic ideology to replace it, the struggles of the marginalized to get justice will be the only alternative democratic ideals which would pose any challenge to the juggernaut of global capitalism.

Notes

[1] In this paper, the terms, 'globalization' and 'global capitalism' have been used interchangeably.

[2] There is no pagination of Roy's article, "The Greater Common Good" as it has been taken directly from the official website of NBA (Narmada Bachao Andolan). <http://www.narmada.org/gcg/gcg.html>

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PRIYANKA THAKUR

Challenging the Dominant Discourses of Kashmir: Recovering Voices of Community in Rahul Pandita's *Our Moon Has Blood Clots* and Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator*

The valley of Kashmir stands on the margins where it continues to be the centre of conflict between two nations – India and Pakistan. The chequered history of Kashmir witnessed various foreign onslaughts which were resisted by the people of Kashmir. The Mughal invasion in 1586 and the Afghan rule in the second half of the eighteenth century added to the history of oppression in Kashmir. The sufferings of Kashmiris were no less under the Sikh rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The imposition of exorbitant tax was a common way of oppression used by both Afghan and Sikh Governors. The Sikh rule lasted for twenty-seven years, and on 16

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March 1846, the British sold the Kashmir valley to the Dogra king, Gulab Singh, who was also the Prime Minister of the Sikh Government in Lahore and had betrayed the Government by helping the British. He went far beyond his predecessors in the acts of unjustifiable taxation and extortion. The Dogras considered only Jammu as their home, and Kashmir as the conquered country. In the 1930s, Sheikh Abdullah became the spokesman of Kashmiris, who represented, in significant terms, all the oppressed people of the valley, irrespective of their religion. He was determined to win autonomy and freedom from the Dogra rule. The last Dogra king, Maharaja Hari Singh, had to face resistance in the form of Quit Kashmir movement spearheaded by Sheikh Abdullah.

When India won freedom from the British rule on 15 August 1947, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was given the choice to join either India or Pakistan. But Maharaja Hari Singh wanted Jammu and Kashmir to be an independent state. While he was still delaying his decision about choice of accession, the armed tribesmen from Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province invaded Kashmir in the month of October. The Maharaja turned to New Delhi for help and gave up his dream of an independent state. He signed the Instrument of Accession on 26 October 1947 in return for Indian support against the invaders. The Indian army entered Kashmir and the whole situation escalated into the first Indo-Pak war, with Pakistan disputing the accession. The war ended on 1 January 1949 with the call for ceasefire given by the United Nations. Both the countries also agreed to its call for plebiscite and the withdrawal of troops behind the ceasefire line, leaving two-thirds of Kashmir under Indian control. The state of Jammu and Kashmir was given an autonomous status under the Article 370 of the Indian Constitution in 1950. Nehru reiterated his commitment to the plebiscite many times, and in one of his statements, said: "Kashmir is not a thing to be bandied between India and Pakistan, but has a soul of its own and individuality of its own" (Ali 130-31).

But there has been no plebiscite. Sumantra Bose, in his book *The Challenge in Kashmir,* has listed three reasons cited by the Indian state. The most important contention is that Kashmir is "an

integral part of India" (28) and that the people of Jammu and Kashmir have "freely ratified the moral and legal validity of accession to India in free, competitive elections. . ." (28). If this is the 'truth', the question then arises what led to the armed insurgency against the Indian state in 1989? The armed insurgency of 1989 made the demand of self-determination loud and clear. The Muslim United Front called the elections of 1987, won by National Conference and Congress alliance, "rigged" (Kak, *Until My Freedom* 292) and expressed its loss of faith in Indian democracy. The infuriated members of the Muslim United Front, who demanded an Islamic Kashmir, were imprisoned, and in 1989 spearheaded the armed resistance against Indian rule. According to Sumantra Bose, Kashmiris were expected to be loyal to the Indian state and their democratic aspirations were ignored, which resulted in "*mass Kashmiri alienation*" and "*total and violent rejection of the Indian state*" (40). The people of Kashmir, who "developed a renewed commitment to the idea of 'self-determination' by the late 1980s sincerely believe that they have given India's democracy more than its fair share of chances" (Bose 51). The insurgency intensified in 1990s and the vacuum created by the loss of faith in secular National Conference attracted many extremists. Many Pakistan-sponsored militant Islamic groups also proliferated and the Indian militarization became fiercer. The counter-insurgency actions of the Indian state fuelled the fire in Kashmir. Crackdowns on villages and firings by Indian army and para-military forces on peaceful demonstrations intensified the armed resistance. The support for *azadi* (freedom) became louder and more explicit. Young men from hundreds of homes crossed over into Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir or *Azad* Kashmir to receive arms and training in insurrection. Pakistan came out in support of secession. Equally, on the receiving end, were the frightened Kashmiri Pandits who were forced, by the circumstance and many unexplained killings of the members of their community, to leave the valley. The forced exile in the refugee camps of Jammu created a sense of identity crisis among them.

In the clamour of reports of increasing violence, allegations

and counter-allegations, people who live outside Kashmir seem to have lost sight of what actually happened to the ordinary people of Kashmir. Gowhar Fazili in his essay "Kashmiri Marginalities: The Construction, Nature and Response" has presented three "dominant discourses" (213) about the Kashmir conflict, that is, the Indian, the Pakistani and the Kashmiri. These discourses are "consumed through various media" (Fazili 213) by those who are not directly affected by the conflict in Kashmir. Discourses are ways of talking about and acting towards an idea or group of people, which depend on inclusion and exclusion of certain statements. A discourse can be described as a "strongly bounded area of social knowledge, a system of statements within which world can be known" (Ashcroft 70). The Indian discourse explains the Kashmiri alienation as a consequence of external interference (Fazili 214) and quotes various "indicators of Indian legitimacy and control in Kashmir" (Fazili 213) such as the Instrument of Accession and elections and development in the state. It excludes the right of Kashmiris to assert their political stand. The Pakistani discourse stresses the Muslim connection (Fazili 214) between Kashmir and Pakistan, and highlights the denial of plebiscite by the Indian state. No space has been given to the ongoing struggle of the Kashmiris against the Indian state for the last many years, mostly independent of Pakistan.

The Kashmiri discourse, which "imagines itself to be at the centre of the current political struggle" (Fazili 214), traces the history of Kashmiri resistance against the foreign occupation and the various atrocities Kashmiris experienced under the foreign regime. It sees the post-independence elections as "rigged" (Fazili 215), and the "failure of India to make progress on the various agreements" (Fazili 215) as an extension of the oppressive past. This discourse also incorporates the repression of Kashmiri people after the mass uprising for freedom. While explaining the dominant Kashmiri discourse, Fazili asserts that there are multiple identities within the Kashmir valley:

> While the Kashmiri self is torn between commitments to multiple, overlapping and contradictory identities and intersects (like people anywhere else), the fact of being born in a territory where the conflict around its disputed nature has raged, in

varying degrees, for over sixty years, complicates and intensifies concern for some identities at the cost of others. (216)

These multiple identities respond to the dominant Kashmiri discourse depending on their location "within the crosscutting mesh of identities and experiences. . ." (Fazili 217). The dominant Kashmiri discourse, according to Fazili, has a bias towards "Muslim majoritarian identity" (217). That is why many groups from within have rejected it on the basis of regional or religious affiliations. For example, the Kashmiri Pandits feel marginalized in this discourse, which they feel represents only the Muslims of the valley.

There is a need to take back authority from these three dominant discourses and listen to all the local narratives existing within Kashmir. It is important to counter not only the Indian and the Pakistani discourses but also bring out fissures in the dominant Kashmiri discourse. No one particular voice, in the case of dominant Kashmiri discourse, can carry the complete story. The Kashmiri discourse needs to include other voices coming from within Kashmir. This paper analyses local narratives coming from the two communities of Kashmir—Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims. The paper does not discuss and analyse the narratives of other identities, like the Buddhists and the Sikhs, but it does not obviate their role in deciding the fate of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and also the presence of their unfortunate share of tragedies. The focus remains on the voices from the period of armed insurgency, presented in the works of Mirza Waheed and Rahul Pandita. These writers share their lived experiences of those turbulent years through their works. Rahul Pandita belongs to a family of Kashmiri Pandits who fled the valley in 1990 amidst political turmoil. This fleeing of Pandits has been described through various terms—exodus, displacement, ethnic cleansing and migration. Different arguments have also been cited to explain this incident. One of the arguments calls the exodus an organized departure that was facilitated by Governor Jagmohan to aid the Indian army smoothly unleash its lethal force on Kashmiri Muslims. Another argument lays the blame squarely on the threats issued by the militants to the Kashmiri Pandits that forced them to leave the valley. Mirza Waheed witnessed the peak years of the

insurgency and the military crackdowns as a teenager before leaving the valley for higher studies.

The fragments that were rendered invisible in the shadow of various dominant discourses about the Kashmir conflict have started telling their own stories. This phenomenon has been rightly articulated by Pankaj Mishra, who states: "Life under political oppression has begun to yield . . . a rich intellectual and artistic harvest" (Ali 6). The predicament of the two communities of the valley—Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits—is what these artistic endeavours are trying to engage with. The question that the paper deals with is the manner in which the state apparatuses, both ideological and repressive, bruise the everyday lives of Kashmiris. The paper also explores the condition of the Kashmiri Pandits living in the refugee camps of Jammu and outside the state of Jammu and Kashmir described in the work of a Kashmiri Pandit. These voices from Kashmir are in no way homogeneous and are clearly taking different positions. The two texts I discuss in this context are Mirza Waheed's novel *The Collaborator* (2011) and Rahul Pandita's memoir *Our Moon Has Blood Clots: The Exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits* (2013).

In an interview with Amrita Ghosh, Waheed refers to the "Nineties in Kashmir as a dark decade" ("Author"). He recalls growing up as a teenager in Srinagar of the "dark decade" and witnessing violence, torture, repression and images like "dead bodies lying on the street" ("Author"). Then he goes on to share his idea of weaving these memories of Srinagar into the fabric of his novel:

> One of the questions that possessed you at that time was that if this was happening in Srinagar, in this urban setting, what must it be like in the so-called wilderness, in the mountains. [. . .] I did pick up real events . . . I either referred to them indirectly in the novel or I may have dramatized a couple of small ones, but what I didn't want to do was rewrite or dramatize that entire period because it would be a non-fiction fact-based book. . . . The main setting is completely invented, the village is completely fictional and then real people walk into the novel and real events are there sometimes on the borders or they are in the middle of it.

Waheed has set his novel in a remote village, Nowgam, which is very close to the Line of Control and therefore always under the gaze of Pakistan. Set in this border village, *The Collaborator* has a narrative told from the perspective of a Kashmiri Muslim who also belongs to the Gujjar community of Kashmir. In the year 1993, the nameless nineteen-year-old protagonist starts telling his story in first person narration. The novel is divided in to three sections—"Now and Then . . .", "Then . . .", and "Now . . ." . As it is clear from the titles of the section, the novel oscillates between the present and the past. In the first section, the protagonist traces the changes since the arrival of echoes of freedom, in his village. He recollects how his four friends crossed the border to get training in arms without telling him anything. And now, the village wears a deserted look and only the protagonist's family is left in the village. The second section describes the military presence in the village as a reaction to the departure of the protagonist's friends. In the last section, the protagonist elaborates on his relationship with his employer, Captain Kadian of the Indian army.

The only family left in the village is that of the village headman, the protagonist's father. The protagonist wishes to join his friends who have crossed the Line of Control to get training in arms but ends up being a "collaborator" of a Captain in the Indian army instead. He is employed by the Captain, who is depicted inebriated in most of the conversations, to collect ID cards and weapons of the corpses of "'militants' or 'freedom fighters', depending on which side of history you're on" (Shamsie), scattered in a nearby valley after crossing a stream. In this stream, these friends used to enjoy and laze around in the sun of friendship. Now when he gets down into the stream, he only sees "fearsome, mutilated, underwater apparitions" (Kak 13) of his friends. The dead people of this valley had crossed the Line of Control for going under training in arms in Pakistan and were shot down by the Indian army men while crossing back. The dead young boys are the only companions the protagonist is left with in the novel. The protagonist misses and remembers his best friends—"Hussain the singer, Gul the dandy, Ashfaq the wise, and Mohammed with is faithful dog" (Chatterjee). While doing his

job, the protagonist always dreads finding one of his friends in the valley of corpses.

The protagonist wants an end to all this turmoil. Throughout the novel, he struggles with the thoughts of freedom and the Indian and Pakistani version of the situation in Kashmir. The presence of this struggle shows how a Kashmiri feels lost in the clash of discourses constructed by these two nations. The protagonist also wonders about the existence of "pasture of dead boys" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 15), created by the Pakistani army, as a mirror image for the Indian army's valley of dead. Both the countries have dehumanized Kashmiri people by taking away their literal and metaphorical voices. The strategies of Pakistan in dealing with Kashmiri people are in no way different from those of India. It exposes the dominant Pakistani discourse that speaks of the close connection between Pakistan and Kashmir. Pakistan is an equal participant in the bloodshed and is referred to as a country "which is never at rest and will never let anyone else rest in peace either" (Waheed, *Collaborator*152). The response of the protagonist to the dominant Indian and Pakistani discourses can be heard in his words towards the end of the novel: "[T]o hell with India, to hell with Pakistan, to hell with jihad" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 300). It seems that the protagonist stands only as a human being, without any other affinity, because he is only worried about the people suffering within his intimate circle of family and friends.

Humanity is the biggest casualty in a conflict zone like Kashmir. Not only the living but also the dead experience oppression. In the novel, the Indian army captain tells the protagonist that the media wants to film foreign militants and that he can make any Kashmiri "look like Afghan" because "the dead don't speak" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 9). To end the life of a Kashmiri is but one aspect of the oppression because death has its own story here. The dead Kashmiri continues to suffer in death even when he is used to pacify the lens of the media. It also shows that the discourse based on external threats can be used to rationalize and veil internal repression like "catch and kill" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 7) policy in the novel. In the Foucauldian framework, this accumulation and circulation of

discourses is important for the functioning of power. The discourse based on external threat in Kashmir is sustained by the Indian state through various channels. While the Captain keeps this discourse alive by presenting Kashmiris as foreigners, the Governor, in his speech to the people of Nowgam, repeats the role of "external forces" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 231) without actually naming Pakistan.

Dissemination and reinforcement of such discourses add to the power of the Indian state in Kashmir. The Captain in the novel considers India analogous to Foucault's "'micro-physics' of power" (Hall 50), a "giant, a colossus with countless arms and limbs, and tongues, and claws and hands and mouths" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 278). Power operates at various levels with a class of 'collaborators' like the captain in the novel. The protagonist is also an unwilling collaborator because in spite of working for the captain, his mind embodies a conflict between the captain's commands and the voices of his own people. This comparison of India to a giant is in contrast to the image that saturates the speech made by the Governor in the novel in front of people of Nowgam. The Governor uses the image of "Bharat Mata" or "Mother India" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 230-31) with Kashmir as her head. Kashmir is repeatedly called a sacred part of the "holy Indian vision" a part which is "intrinsic and indivisible" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 233). The villagers are expected to accept the identity constructed for them by the Indian state and no deviation is allowed. Their own identity as Kashmiris is not recognized. This imposition of identity through such repetitions is an attempt to ossify the identity of Kashmiri people.

To prevent any kind of deviation, strategies such as curfews and crackdowns are employed by the Indian State. The echo of freedom in the village is followed by a curfew, which is declared through an announcement:

> The area is declared under curfew, day and night.
> No one will venture out of their houses.
> Anyone violating this order will be dealt severely.
> *This is a government order. Do not panic.* (Waheed, *Collaborator* 177)

The announcement is made by an "alien voice" (177) that does not

belong to the valley. It is the voice of the Indian army which wants to take over the lives of Kashmiri people. The Kashmiris do not consider themselves an "integral part" of India as stressed by the dominant Indian discourse. This alienation gets deeper when the Indian army takes away Farooq, Gul's elder brother, and keeps him under detention where he is tortured. When he is released, he comes back home broken, physically and psychologically. He only speaks in a feeble voice and silently lifts his shirt up to show marks of torture on his body. The detention camps are places with inhumane conditions where the inhabitants are broken physically and mentally. Farooq is once again taken back to the camp and beheaded. This incident is followed by the army crackdown: "The punishment for nurturing militants is a crackdown" (Hardy). The army orders all the villagers to come out of their homes and gather in a nearby field.

In the last chapter, "Right of Death and Power over Life", of *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault explains that juridical power operates through prohibition and punishment and culminates in the "privilege to seize hold of life" (136). Any deviation from the identity constructed by the Indian state for Kashmiris is prohibited. Nowgam and its people pay the price of deviation. The death of Farooq is a "brutal blow" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 202) that suppresses the expectancy of freedom and "thrill of being part of something momentous [freedom]" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 200). The people of Nowgam can only be a part of the design made by the Indian state and any new expectation will only be punished.

The army crackdown leaves the village deserted but the headman, with his family, stays back to look after the village he had set up with hard work years ago and nurtures a "fantasy of a still-functioning village" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 6). But nothing remains functional in the village. There are incidents of brutality on the part of both the Indian army and the militants who slice off the nose, ears and tongue of an old Gujjar couple, Shaban Khatana and his wife, who are believed to have collaborated with India. The novel is interspersed with different "collaborators"—forced, willing, unwilling and imagined. The Gujjar couple is

perceived as "collaborator" in the imagination of the militants. Captain Kadian can be seen as both willing and unwilling collaborator of the Indian state. As a willing collaborator in the functioning of the juridical power of the Indian State, he performs his "job" but all the same, he wishes to end his "job" soon and go home. The protagonist is a forced collaborator and calls himself an "official scavenger of a murderous army" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 72). Each set of collaborator is engaged in a "job", again imagined, real or forced.

Captain Kadian becomes not only the employer of the protagonist but also his new company, albeit a forced one. Kadian is, most of times, cursing Pakistan and Kashmir in an inebriated state. He tells the protagonist that his only job is to clear the village of "anti-national" elements (Waheed, *Collaborator* 278). The use of the word 'anti-national' stresses the fact that the Indian state does not want to address the aspirations of Kashmiri people. Mirza Waheed is putting up a question as to how someone comes to a point where killing as many people as possible becomes a job? How does brutality become banal? A perpetrator has to objectify his victim to the state of absolute loss of identity. Achille Mbembe says:

[T]he ultimate expression of sovereignty [of the Indian State in Kashmir] resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die. . . .To exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to deny life as the deployment and manifestation of power. (11-12)

What are the effects of such dehumanizing actions on human beings living under such conditions? On the one hand, there is valley of the dead in the novel and on the other, the living people in Nowgam lose the right to live a normal life, and face dehumanizing conditions under crackdowns and curfews. One has to talk about its psychological impact as well. In the novel, amidst curfew, crackdown and violence, the villagers turn to tranquillizers for some comfort:

I had only recently discovered that our quirky medicine man [Sadiq Chechi] had

put the whole village on Alprax and Calmpose—turns out that after Farooq's beheading he had been liberally handing out tranquillizers to the sleepless, anxious people in the village, which was just about everyone. (Waheed, *Collaborator* 248)

Normal life gets suspended; in fact a normal life is denied to the people of Nowgam. The atmosphere in Nowgam becomes so heavy with the repressive means that the villagers start taking help of tranquilizers. The protagonist also narrates an incident where a six-year-old plays a beheading game with his younger sister. The protagonist's mother, who was once full of tales and *qissas* (long stories), about her childhood and youth and her own father's adventures, falls silent after the first boy of the village crosses the Line of Control. She becomes quieter after the crackdown and is always worried about her son's return whenever he goes out (Waheed, *Collaborator* 240). Loss of stories can be read as loss of identity because it is through repetition of who we are and where we came from that we strengthen our identity. But these stories cease when some other stories take their place. According to Charles Taylor, identity means a person's understanding of "who they are" (25) and is "partly shaped by recognition or its absence" (25). Non-recognition of "who" for the people of Nowgam, suppresses their individuality and imposes on them a false identity.

Nobody takes the responsibility of human rights violations, like beheading of Farooq, and their impact on other lives. Captain Kadian calls human right violations by the Indian army "some procedural error, some silly, logistical, technical mistake" in a "business" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 265). What is hidden behind these 'mistakes' is the "perception of the existence of the Other as . . . threat" whose "biophysical elimination" (Mbembe 16-17) strengthens the presence of the Indian army in Kashmir. Here the novel brings out the idea of fake encounters:

We did it because we had to make it to papers over the weekend.....there was word from some quarters ... show some results. Breakthrough. Success. Who checks if the infiltrators are foreign or not before we shoot them. (Waheed, *Collaborator* 95)

It is important to note the use of words like "breakthrough" and

"success" are used by the Indian state through the ideological apparatus of media to present the problem from its perspective only. To keep the discourse of external interference in Kashmir in circulation, the media time and again proves it through the news of such fake "breakthroughs". Through the reiteration of certain statements, a "regime of truth", to use Foucault's words (qtd. in Hall 49), is created, which defines Kashmir to the world.

Not only physical torture but the "honour" of Kashmiris also comes under erasure in the novel. On 26th January, the Governor distributes blankets and the protagonist observes a "deathly shame" (Waheed, *Collaborator* 237) on his father's face. The *ghairat*—honour—which no Kashmiri wants to compromise in the novel, thus gets hurt. In another incident in the novel, around twelve women come from a village which had been in curfew for more than three months and ask for milk from Noor Khan for their children:

> [T]here is nothing left in my bosom", a woman lifted her pheran up to reveal two shriveled, wrinkled, darkened breast over a sunken, hollow looking stomach. (Waheed, *Collaborator* 181)

They say that they have eaten everything that was in store, and now they have eaten up their *ghairat* too. These women are like the living dead because the conditions under curfew do not let life function normally. We can see curfew as a way to control the conduct of Kashmiris, to take away all the resources of life and to prevent the flow of life. The power over life of these Kashmiri mothers is not about directly taking their own lives and those of their children. It is rather about leaving someone to die by cutting off all the resources. The Indian state operates through different power designs in Nowgam. It can create its "valley of dead" by direct deduction of life by regulating lives through curfews.

It was not only the *ghairat* of the Muslims but that of the Pandits as well, that hurt them deeply, because they were forced to migrate and displaced from their roots in the valley. According to Simon Weil: "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul" (qtd. in Said 183). The sense of being rootless creates doubts and anxieties about the question of

identity. *Our Moon Has Blood Clots* is an account of the plight of Kashmiri Pandits who had to leave their homes in the 1990s. Rahul Pandita has also given an insight into the social-political turbulence of the period. Pandita recounts how the terrified and defenseless Pandit families were transformed into permanent refugees. He has given a detailed account of the victims and the violence, the fear and the massacre that forced Pandit families to leave their homes in the valley. Pandita states: "I have made it my mission to talk about the 'other story' of Kashmir" (Pandita 220). This 'other story' of the displaced Kashmiri Pandit is a mini narrative, which needs to be given space in the question of Kashmir. It has been kept out not only by the Indian and the Pakistani discourse but also by the dominant Kashmiri discourse which, as Gowhar Fazili explains, is biased towards Muslim majority in the valley.

Rahul Pandita states clearly that they "had been forced to leave the land where . . . [their] ancestors had lived for thousands of years" (2). The memoir clearly stands out as a voice countering the dominant Kashmiri discourse that only discusses the victimization of Kashmiri Muslims. The other story of Pandits adds a new perspective to the whole situation. The memoir focuses on the mass exodus of the Kashmiri Pandit community. Rahul Pandita says that he and his family were forced into exile, first from the valley to Jammu and subsequently to Delhi. Like the other displaced, they became unsettled, unable to find out why they had been targeted, not just by "armed terrorists who took pride in killings" (Pandita 115) but by "the common man on the street [who] participated in some of these heinous murders as well" (Pandita 115). It implies that *Kashmiriyat*, the idea of religious syncretism and co-existence, could not survive in these violent circumstances. The concept of co-existence fell weak when it was needed the most. The dominant Kashmiri discourse is silent about the failure of *Kashmiriyat* in the years of insurgency when the trust between the two communities died.

In reply to the dominant Kashmiri discourse, Pandita's memoir shares the sufferings of the Kashmiri Pandits. When this discourse is about the atrocities of the foreign rulers in Kashmir, it tends to

overlook what the Pandits went through in the valley. The memoir brings out life in poor and inadequate refugee camps and rented accommodation in Jammu, with insufficient money and no jobs: "[There was] no money and there was total uncertainty about our future" (Pandita 99). The children lost access to schools, and the Pandits were treated as fair game by all those who could profit from their helplessness. Delineating the conditions of Kashmiri Pandits in the camps, Pandita writes:

> It was a pathetic existence. Many fell ill with diseases that were hitherto unknown to the community. In the first year alone, many elderly people died of sunstroke, and snake and scorpion bites. Children became infected with fungal disease, and scabies became rampant in the unhygienic camps. Doctors reported hundreds of cases of stress induced diabetes. Heart disease and hypertension made their way in our lives. Many fell into depression. There were severe privacy issues as well. Young couples were forced to live in small enclosures with parents. (Pandita 130)

The lives of Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu were reduced to a space, which was neither inside nor outside. They were inside their state and their country but they were treated like outsiders. The binary distinction of inside/outside failed in this situation as the Pandits were abandoned in their own country. It was like living in a "zone of indistinction", to use Giorgio Agamben's words (qtd. in Downey 110). They lived in uncertainty with no assurance and help coming from any side. To live in a refugee camp was like living on the margins socially, culturally, economically and politically. The whole community was cut off from its cultural roots and these rootless people faced economic challenges and lived in a "limbo-like state" (Downey 109). The life of the entire community was "exposed to death" (Downey 112) in the refugee camps and denied resources to live a proper life. It is important to question the failure of law and order in the valley which was reflected in the absence of any kind of effort to prevent the mass exodus of the Pandits and their geographical marginalization.

The *ghairat* of Kashmiri Pandits, received a setback when they had to register their names for the Ration Cards, which was like a "document of citizenship, identifying one as migrant and

enabling government employees to collect salaries, or cash relief of five hundred rupees in the case of the non salaried families" (Pandita 122). As this document required a photograph of the male head of family with his wife, there were times when the husband and wife would get their photographs clicked separately with other migrant labourers to get more money. One can read the crisis of identity in such instances where one has to adopt the identity of someone else to survive. Survival becomes the only important thing in life in such conditions. It often forces people to compromise their identity, especially with children and old parents dying in the family. To accept the identity of a migrant was to forget the fact that their exodus was not voluntary. Talking about the condition of his own family, Pandita writes:

> For days we slept on newspaper sheets spread on the floor [of a cheap *dharamshala*]. On a small kerosene stove, Ma [mother] cooked and we ate hoping that the power wouldn't go off, leaving us drenched in sweat. It was so hot we couldn't sleep at night. (Pandita 106)

These extreme conditions were new to all the Kashmiri Pandits who had lived in the cool lap of the valley for so many years. Away from their home and living in camps and *dharmashalas*, the Pandits were gradually getting fixed in the new identity mould of being a refugee/migrant. Once, Pandita writes, his family was offered food by a man in the *dharamshala* because he was told that the Pandita's family was that of *sharanaarthis* (refugees). This incident inflicted a "deadly psychological blow" (Pandita 107) on his mother. The sudden change in the identity because of the circumstances is bound to be painful, especially when others also start fixing you in the new mould. Pandita also writes about how difficult it became for his mother to accept the changed conditions when she moved to Delhi:

> Ma would go for walks in the neighbourhood park in Delhi. Ma had got into habit of telling anyone who would listen . . . a statement that reminded her of who she was . . . "our home in Kashmir had twenty two rooms". (Pandita 10)

The feeling of homelessness, and a desire to go back, created an

image of home in her mind that escaped the limitations, which she and her family suffered as a displaced community. This particular kind of constructed memory of a "house with twenty two rooms" helped her remember the days in the valley. According to Edward Said: "Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past" (177). The same can be said about Kashmiri Pandits who sometimes call themselves "exile[s] in own country" (Pandita 100). These people want to give meaning to their lives and reconstitute their identity. Pandita's mother also attempted to reconstitute her identity as a Kashimiri Pandit because recognition of one's identity is a "vital human need" (Taylor 26). The mother of the protagonist in *The Collaborator* becomes quiet amidst the entire crisis, which represents the loss of the voice of the Kashmiris. Similary, Pandita's mother also lost her voice, and he gradually forgot how his mother's voice sounded. This can be interpreted as a loss of identity on both sides.

The memoir also sheds light on the attitude of people of Jammu—who were the co-religionists of the Pandits—towards the Kashmiri Pandits living in camps and small rented accommodation:

> Though they [Jammuites] benefitted economically because of us [Pandits], they developed antipathy towards us. For them, we were outsiders. Within months, invectives had been invented for us. . . . This was mainstream India for us. Our own Hindu brothers . . . were turning our oppressors as well. (Pandita 123)

Kashmiri Pandits felt marginalized not only in the valley but also in Jammu. Both regional and religious affiliations failed them and it led to an identity crisis in the community. In the valley, they were treated as agents of the Indian state and in Jammu their roots in the valley overshadowed their Indianness. They were relegated to a space which was devoid of any kind of political representation. Pandita describes his exile as a "permanent exile" (7) with no hope of return. On celebrations and mournings, the other migrants could go back to their real home but he could not do that. He could own a house anywhere else in the world, "but not in Kashmir valley where his family came from" (Pandita 7). The eternal sense of homelessness brings with it a never ending search for identity. The

identity will always yearn for the fragments which were left behind in the valley.

Pandita has also reacted to the stance of media and intellectuals on the Kashmir problem. He feels that the story of his community has been marginalized and only Kashmiri Muslims are shown as victims:

> Another problem is the apathy of the media and a majority of India's intellectual class who refuse to even acknowledge the suffering of the Pandits. No campaigns were ever run for us; no fellowship or grants given for research on exodus. For the media, the Kashmir issue has remained largely black and white—here are people who were victims of brutalization at the hands of the Indian state. But the media has failed to see, and has largely ignored the fact that the same people also victimized another people. (Pandita 220)

Pandits find themselves absent from every discourse about Kashmir. There are certain media reports that support the dominant Kashmiri discourse by raising concern about the various human rights violations in the valley. But these reports have not discussed the presence of religious tension which was somewhere, along with other factors, responsible for the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. From reports about Kashmiri Muslims getting arms training in Pakistan to the reports about their victimhood, the media has always kept them at the centre. As an agent of violence or as a victim of violence, Kashmiri Muslims have always been under the gaze of the media. Additionally, the "other story" of Kashmiri Pandits was rarely covered by the media.

The memoir also has a place for the story of Pandits who went back to the valley but felt and remained neglected. There are no basic facilities in the settlements aided by the Prime Minister's package for Pandit refugees but:

> . . . the real problem arises, [when] . . . they face acute harassment from Muslim colleagues [at their workplaces]. "They treat us like pariahs," said one female teacher. . . . Many women face harassment while commuting to their workplace. (Pandita 247-48)

According to the memoir, many in Kashmir clearly resented the

return of the Pandit employees under the package of the Government. The distance between the two communities has widened. The communal fissure is not the only reason that can explain this resentment because now there is an economic aspect attached to the whole problem. The return of the Pandits in the valley for jobs has created economic insecurity in the Kashmiri Muslims. They want to leave their jobs but are helpless, as they will be left with no other source of income except a little relief amount their families get in Jammu. Once again, it is only survival that is important for Kashmiri Pandits.

Rahul Pandita has written his side of the story of Kashmiri Pandits and their victimhood. But this side of story should not generate "passionate hostility" (Said 178) towards others "who may be in the same predicament" (Said 178). This attempt by Pandita is only half the truth; the other half is lying with the stories narrated by the Kashmiri Muslims. A similar observation can be made about Waheed's *The Collaborator*, which again is only half the story. Both the stories are important and neither of them is truer than the other. Both these sides, with equal share of victimhood and sufferings, should not be compared. Neither side should try to put its loss and sufferings above the trauma faced by the other side.

The crisis with Kashmir is that every group competes with others for the coveted status of the 'real' victim. It makes difficult the possibility of future reconciliation. There is a clear picture that shows that people from either side are living in denial. That would never help the process of reconciliation. Both sides have to confess they have lied and concealed the complete truth. This honest confession could begin the much needed reconciliation between the two communities and start the process of healing each others' wounds.

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SHEETAL KAPOOR

Construction of the Sign of the Indian Woman with Reference to Madhur Bhandarkar's *Fashion*

This production by automatic means has radically affected our psychology of the image ...In spite of any objections our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually re-presented set before us, that is to say, in time and space.

Bazin 7

Cinema is an important tool of mass media, and Indian Cinema, celebrating 100 years, has held a complete sway over the psyche of the Indian audience, often mirroring and reflecting the hopes, aspirations, ideological beliefs and value systems of the people.

With respect to the Indian woman, there are certain stereotypical attributes prescribed by the society, and corroborated by cinema,

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and these have come to constitute the so-called 'essence' of a woman. The Hindi celluloid has been capturing this very essence of the Indian woman and simultaneously creating an image approximating to an 'ideal'. When such an 'ideal' or construct is maintained and remains unchallenged with the passage of time, it acquires a rigidity and force that makes it seem natural and credible. The images of women created through discourse via films/ literature are internalized by both men and women in the society over a period of time. These societal images establish the parameters according to which a woman is perceived. They are constructed through even stronger stereotypes that are deeply entrenched in the human psyche, or the Collective Unconscious which Carl Jung calls archetypes (Coster 1). Archetypes reinforce such images which present women in poor light, highlighting their inferior status in society and their subservience to men, further consolidating patriarchal power and hegemony over them. In the light of these ideas, the present research paper examines *Fashion*, a 2008 film by Madhur Bhandarkar.

The narrative of the film proceeds in a lucid style with the protagonist Meghna Mathur, played by Priyanka Chopra, narrating her story in the background. Meghna is a small-town girl who aspires to be a supermodel. To realise her dreams she moves to a metropolitan city—Mumbai—where she struggles to realize her ambition. But in the process, she loses her boyfriend, has an illicit relationship with her married employer, undergoes abortion, is raped at a rave party and returns home a mental wreck requiring psychiatric help. With family support and clinical treatment, she again sets off for Mumbai to make a comeback. Though many acquaintances deny her help, a few close friends help her regain her position. She, in turn, tries to help a former rival model Shonali, played by Kangana Ranaut, get over her addiction to drugs but unlike herself, an unfortunate Shonali succumbs to the rigours of the life she had been leading in the big city.

What is *Fashion* all about? Is it just an insider's story, lifting the veil from over the glitzy world of fashion and revealing to the spectators the murky world beneath? In the words of Barthes,

"How does meaning get into the image? Where does it end? And if it ends, what is there beyond?"(*Image Music Text* 32). Is "the relationship of signifieds to signifiers" in the film simply one of 'recording' or is there also a social construction of reality, consolidating a truth (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 44)?

The signifier in the present context is a young girl, Meghna Mathur, and at this level of signification there is an arbitrariness about what she stands for – an ambitious daughter of a middle-class couple, a small town girl, a fashion model or a professional Indian woman. Though people from a common socio-cultural background take the signifier to stand for a particular signified, Saussurean semioticians "emphasize that there is no necessary, intrinsic, direct or inevitable relationship between the signifier and the signified" (Chandler). Roland Barthes refers to the literal message of the image as a non-coded message, a denotation. What is the signifier, the first order of signification, or the denoted image of the Indian woman that a spectator reads in *Fashion*? The protagonist, Meghna, is portrayed as embracing one of the several new professions that a liberalized and globalized economy of 21st century India is making available. This denoted image being non-coded, according to Roland Barthes, is not at all difficult to decipher. *Fashion* clearly shows how comfortable the new Indian woman has become regarding her 'body'. In a country where *purdah* system still exists, the film unveils this new avatar of the Indian woman who makes an exhibition of herself and makes a living out of this display, whose struggle in life revolves around being hailed as 'super' among the models. This new woman has no qualms about posing for lingerie advertisements. Her day is consumed by painting and polishing her body and getting herself photographed, quite unlike a Meena Kumari in *Bhabhi ki Choodiyan*, whose itinerary for the day included washing, cleaning, cooking, and looking after other members of the family.

In keeping with the theme of *Fashion*, there is an exuberance of scenes wherein women are shown wearing fashionable attires walking down the ramp, dressing-undressing in the green rooms and even posing for a lingerie advertisement. When they are not

modelling, they are captured smoking, drinking, posing as 'eye-candies' at parties or making love to people from their own profession. The literal message of the film is that the 21st century Indian woman is using her freedom to lead a hedonistic lifestyle– smoking, drinking, partying, indulging in amours, and so on. Meghna's meteoric rise to fame is not due to her calibre and talent but because of the liaison with the owner of the brand, Panache. The house that she lives in has also been gifted to her by Abhijeet Sarin, the owner of Panache. Even when she is humiliated by a fashion designer, she leans on Abhijeet's shoulder for support.

The spectator grasps these images at an objective level of perception because there is 'a naturalness' and 'an innocence' in these mechanically captured images (Barthes, *Mythologies* 10;94). The lives, the appearance and the style of fashion divas are captured with such detail and precision that the spectator identifies them as objective truths. Further, the presence of Bhandarkar, the Director of *Fashion*, at a fashion show in the film, conversing with the models, eliciting information for his upcoming film on fashion lends a touch of realism to the film. Watching him share screen space with the cast lends a sense of indisputable credibility to the film. It is imperative to the portrayal of realism in cinema that "if there is a plot it comes out of the immediacy of a life: that it serves to show up a social problem rather than offer an escape from it" (McKibbin). Lending this touch of realism, Bhandarkar incorporates a real life incident of wardrobe malfunction through the character of Shonali Gujaral in the film, which is reminiscent of Indian model Carol Gracias, whose episode was accorded wide media coverage a few years ago. Not only this, Shonali Gujaral finds close resemblance with Gitanjali Nagpal, a famous model of the 1990s, who was discovered by the media living a life of squalor on the streets of Delhi owing to her drug addiction. At the literal level, incorporation of such authentic details and the 'naturalness' acts as a mask to conceal the construction of meaning of the text and the image.

The linguistic message of the film, comprising of the dialogues and the songs, plays an important role in elucidating the images on

the screen. As regards the symbolic message, "the linguistic message no longer guides identification but interpretation, constituting a kind of vice which holds the connoted meanings from proliferating, whether towards excessively individual regions (it limits, that is to say, the projective power of the image) or towards dysphoric values" (Barthes 39). The linguistic message of the film, that is the text, guides the spectator towards certain preferred meanings over others. Through the function of 'anchorage' and 'relay', the linguistic message directs the audience towards a pre-determined reading of the film. There is a maze of meanings circulating in the film and on a closer examination one might speculate alternative readings of the film like a love story gone awry, apathetic attitude of people in a metropolitan and the rigours of professional life in a metro. The dialogues and background score of the film perform the function of anchorage and relay. As Roland Barthes puts it,

> [T]he anchorage may be ideological and indeed that is its principal function; the text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle dispatching, it remote controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance (*Image Music Text* 40).

A close reading of a few dialogues of the film would reveal how the anchorage works its way to direct the mind of the audience towards preferred meanings of the film:

"*Meghna itna soch mat... jitna kam sochogi utna zyaada kamaogi.*"[1]

Deliberately stunting a woman's capacity to think is lent credence in a sequence when a hard-up Meghna reluctantly gives her approbation for the lingerie advertisement. Seeing her unease and discomfort at the skin-show, Janet, one of her colleagues asks her to relax and offers her a smoke which Meghna refuses. Janet even tells Meghna, "*Meghna itna soch mat...jitna kam sochogi utna zyada kamaogi.*"

"*Aage peeche dolne ka...*"[2]

Fashion showcases how it is a usual feature to invite young, gorgeous models to a party to add to the glamour quotient and spice

it up. Meghna wakes up to this truth as she is paid to pose as 'eye candy'. Janet even tells her that such parties are not to make contacts but to give "big big smiles" as she tells her "*Aage peeche dolne ka*" and to just pose for photos with the invited male guests. The film thus highlights how women are treated as mere commodities that have their specific 'use-value' in the world. Luce Irigaray, the famous feminist critic in her book *This Sex Which Is Not One* states, "woman is traditionally a use-value for man, an exchange value among men; in other words, a commodity" (31-32). Drawing upon the theory of capital and commodity, as propounded by Karl Marx in *Das Kapital*, Irigaray reveals how women are exchanged among men in a way akin to any commodity. Irigaray appropriates the Marxist notion of 'use-value' and 'exchange-value', the two major attributes of a commodity, and relates them with women. Use-value of a commodity is associated with "the physical properties of the commodity" that is, "the material uses to which the object can actually be put, the human needs it fulfils." (qtd. in Felluga, "Marxism"). The exchange value of a commodity, on the other hand, is "the proportion in which values-in-use of one sort are exchanged for those of another sort" (Marx). Using these very attributes of a commodity, Irigaray, in the essay "Women on the Market", highlights how women in society are rendered as objects of exchange among men which further results in the institutionalization of their subjection and economic exploitation. As evident from the film, their use value is determined by how they provide voyeuristic pleasure to the onlookers. Their exchange value can be estimated from the way they pose as eye-candies in parties and get paid, as per their relative value, in proportion to the experience each one has in the glamour world.

"Wait...tumne socha-darling you are a model...akal istemal karne ki zaroorat nahi hai...ok. spare me the horror"[3]

These remarks hint at how everyone inarguably accepts the supremacy of men as decision makers, as Vinay Khosla, another fashion designer remarks while reprimanding Meghna for fiddling with one of his creations. A hyper-tense Vinay keeps on venting his

ire on Meghna while the others are mere onlookers. In the same sequence, when Meghna tries to justify herself and says "*maine socha*", his reaction and the reply is, "*Wait ...tumne socha...darling you are a model ...akal istemal karne ki koi zaroorat nahi hai...ok...spare me the horror.*"

"Bik bhi jaogi na agar tab bhi ye outfit nahi khareed sakti ho tum"[44] "

Of special importance is the dialogue '*bik bhi jaogi*' for it shows that all that a woman earns by making an exhibit of herself is not enough to buy the very thing she is modelling for. Secondly, it binds the status of a commodity with the woman. Why must she sell herself? Is she a saleable commodity? Would Vinay Khosla have used the same terminology while reprimanding a male model?

"Jismon ka hai ye jalwa..." (Background score)

The song literally means charisma, power of the body to attract people. The song is played in the background each time the models walk down the ramp and insinuates how female body is the centre of attraction. By its repetitive rendering, it subliminally impacts the psyche of the audience.

The anchorage ensures that when the audience sees a model, whether it is Shonali Gujaral or Meghna Mathur, posing confidently in front of numerous camerapersons and spectators, they are unable to connect with them as images of power and strength because the text guides it to certain preferred interpretations of their character. As the spectators receive images in the context of the dialogues above, they would tend to interpret women as easygoing, mindless people who are always seeking men, who do not think over much, indeed, who believe that too much wisdom could be a negative quality among womenkind.

At the level of connotation, which is the second order of signification, "meanings move toward the subjective interpretation of the sign" (Seiler). In this order, the "simple motivated meaning meets a whole range of cultural meanings that derive not from the sign itself but from the way society uses and values" the signifier

and the signified (Seiler). When the image of Meghna Mathur moves from the level of signifier to that of the signified, the filmic text moves towards a coherence, a meaning and a definition of the Indian woman. Here she no longer remains only a fashion model but is symbolic of the essence of the contemporary Indian woman as she goes about pursuing her career. She comes across as a woman who is incapable of handling her career and life in a metropolitan city. She requires the support of men to sustain herself in the professional and personal world. She thus strengthens the stereotypical image of woman as the 'weaker sex'. She becomes the representative of the oppressed lot who acquiesces to her position in the professional world without charging her oppressors or striking vengeance on them. She simply resolves to work harder to maintain her foothold in the professional world. The narrative of the film proceeds so as to portray that the people who control the fashion industry, the 'bourgeoisie', as represented by Abhijeet Sarin, Vinay Khosla and others, occupy an unchallenged position in the society. There is no change in the attitudes or modes of conduct of this class. The audience is expected to take them as they are and not question their supremacy. They are a given in the whole scheme of economic and personal relationships. There is an acceptance of the stand and stance of the employers and the employed as they stand in the oppressor-oppressed relationship. Simone de Beauvoir says

> There are oppressed peoples such as slaves and many women who exist in a childlike world in which values, customs, gods, and laws are given to them without being freely chosen. Their situation is defined not by the possibility of transcendence, but by the enforcement of external institutions and power structures. Because of the power exerted upon them, their limitations cannot, in many circumstances, be transcended because they are not even known. Their situation, in other words, appears to be the natural order of the world. Thus the slave and the woman are mystified into believing that their lot is assigned to them by nature ("Simone de Beauvoir", Encyclopaedia of Philosophy).

Even though Meghna Mathur is pushed into becoming a mental wreck she seeks no damages and holds no one responsible for her situation.

When the "sign" of Meghna Mathur is in its second order of signification, she becomes a symbol of a professional Indian woman as viewed by the society. There is a construction of subjectivity, whereby the Indian woman acquires a cultural identity as shaped by the filmic text and the portrayal of Meghna Mathur. By becoming the second order signifier, the "sign" that Meghna Mathur stands for is "a conveyor of cultural meaning" (Seiler).

The filmic text, *Fashion*, upholds and perpetuates stereotypical images of women. A woman who believes in prioritising her interests and leading an unfettered existence is not hailed in the 21st century Indian context. It is only when Meghna has learnt from her mistakes—the hard way—when she is shown as living for others and is more pliant, that she ultimately wins the applause of everyone. A disciplined and regimented woman signified by Meghna Mathur realises and remembers the importance of the feminine virtues of self-abnegation and self-control and is made to stand for the essence of the true Indian woman.

The audience watching the film does not come devoid of subjectivity. This subjectivity, in turn, is coloured by the viewer's social and cultural conditioning. Thus, what an audience understands in a film are not objective truths but "an ensemble of assumptions and pre-suppositions about the 'real'" (Zavarzadeh x). So while a part of the male audience, already coming to the theatre with pre-conceived notions of male superiority would further find a consolidation and strengthening of their views, they would also take adequate cues from *Fashion,* to uphold the patriarchal ideology and perpetuate such beliefs that find an echo in the film. Having allowed their mental faculties to be governed by what they see on screen, the spectators undergo the dual process of passively admitting and accepting the images, specifically of women, that the film offers. At the same time, these images reinforce, without challenging the homogeneity that cinema perpetuates, the stereotypes it offers. By depicting women as constantly engaged in the frivolous pursuits of beauty and glamour, the dominant patriarchal world not only wants to annihilate the danger that women would pose to them but also stifle

any intellectual pursuits that could possibly ameliorate women's condition in the society, thus empowering them.

Notes

1 "Meghna do not think too much: the less you think, the more you earn".

2 "Act like a coquette".

3 "Wait...you thought...darling you are a model...do not use your brain...ok...spare me the horror."

4 "Even if you sell yourself, you will not be able to afford such an outfit."

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BHUPINDER BRAR

Final Moments

1.

Nothing much moves or changes in those final moments
Birds perched on electricity wires don't fly away in panic
No cracks appear suddenly in the walls of three storied houses
The milling crowds on the roads don't stop on hearing a siren
The cosmos keeps turning on its axis as before

It is just that a small patch of earth
On which you had built your life
Begins to give way bit by bit

You don't fall with a thud in your final moments
You just sink, making no sound at all
Like a pebble would when tossed into water.

2.

It does not have to be
That you are lying in a freshly dug grave
And the earth begins to fall

No, you don't have to be buried
When the breathing stops
It is enough that the wind blows no longer
And all conversations stop.

3.

When the last moment arrives
It does not have to be
That curtains drop
And lights fade out one after the other

It is often as bright and blaring as any other day
The last moment arrives
And all you hear is a faint voice
Telling you to let go
For there are no hopes left
Of doing something,
Of making a difference.

The Bathroom Mirror

For years it hung there quietly on the wall
And then one sudden night
The mirror went senile.

Now it has visions
It sees uncanny things in the dim light:

Pa's reading glasses, frame broken in the middle
Ma's small damp towel hung on a hook
And Grandpa's lips, quivering in prayer

Has it broken through barriers of Time, this mirror?
Or does it cook up clever stories just to scare me?

It starts muttering inaudible things
The moment I enter, then it gets louder
And insists that I listen to all its weird tales.

It tells me: I will still see you
Even after you are gone for years
I will tell your grownup son
You were such a worried man
Thoughts rushed through your head
As you took a hurried bath
And how you fell one day
Gripping chest tightly in your hands.

To be honest with you,
It really frightens me, this mirror
Although my father had bought it
As an ordinary mirror
From an ordinary shop.

The shopkeeper left this world years ago
But his son still runs the shop in Hall Bazar.

In Silent Rain

As it begins to rain quietly
On a silent night
There is a discreet, faint knock
On your third-floor door.

Make up your mind, then,
For it is not something
That hasn't happened before.

You will need to tiptoe
Down two flights of stairs,
And then push open the creaky iron gate
So deftly that you don't disturb the dozing guard

Once on the road
You will walk as if in sleep
Until the end of town is reached
Where there are no twinkling lights
But only pitch darkness

As you stand there in that darkness
Drenched in rain to your bones
May be then, just then,
You will feel an uncanny touch
On your throbbing temples
And begin to hear a voice
Whispering promises of togetherness,
In your next life.

Many Years Later

He always came by the local train
As he walked, he looked beaten, tired by the day
He wore evening shadows
Around his shoulders like a shawl
He took measured steps as he climbed the stairs
Behind the door at the end of the flight
She waited to hear the sound of those steps.

They hoped and prayed
Their lives will be done
Just like that
Without fuss or suspense.

Years later, in a manner,
That is the way life goes on
Most things are just the same
Evening shadows wrapped around like a shawl
Measured steps, the knock, the opening of the door
Her gesture to step in
As she looks at the floor

Yes, a lot indeed is the same
A lot, but not him whose knock
She waits to hear on the door.

(All translated from Hindi by the author)

The Uselessness of People

1920s heaped snow underneath
a fireplace consumed weakened, gray wood logs
cornered
beneath an unalloyed white ground
buried autumn leaves; unkempt
some fragments held years on clenched mud.
On solitary evenings, noised cafes and people
made acquaintance over rainfall on rooftops.

That summer afternoon a patient
lay in motionless slumber on a
hospital table. Unsung. Only drift,
his rapid eye movement during a dream.
The radio played a song of mourning
its static encompassed grieving for them
that remained alone. Aforesaid night
the wind drew swifter decibels.
In such aloofness of vacant houses, empty tables,
unoccupied beds, seasons grew in years.
Cities created tomorrow's history textbooks.

(debated, fringed, existentialist, dismantled subaltern)

As smoke envelopes fell over open terraces
passion escaped irises of eyelids, mine
from corners of the eye, subterfuge
though the sun set before; smudges unconsumed.
Vacancy engulfed cobblestone street markets
a Spring day in sold wares and exchanged paper-notes.
Roads, vociferous, ravenous on starving land
long, excruciatingly painful pressed footsteps.
Long walks of conversation with trees
no friends nor acquaintances; woe or joy.
Those people, phone calls,
incessant indulgence of words
all unnecessary. Blanketed wisp vacuity
leftover.

Antisocial

The city is breathing
photographs being taken
splashed on whirlpools
of social networks

they identify themselves
in groups

i walk by lone art lanes
of worn-out museums
whose walls speak to me of untold tales
and in its story -
i live a little
die a little
replenish

beside the lake
like a breath of rebellion

the clear distinction
of they and i -
un-capitalized

what vulnerability will
they understand
(those many?)
and speak of emptiness profound
and its beauty
of star lit nights - -

they are too occupied
in being part of the crowd

i -
the bystander
unknown.

Love, In Verse

i carry you privy
in every inhale and exhale.
(on those staircases of vivid nights
i imagined to be curled in your arms
thick, blanketed fog of black
could not wipe your flame within dark)
in a world of broken tables, worn-out paint,
decayed walls : you grew like a tender sapling
inside a cup that existed sans its handle beside the window.
(i still held you, breathed you on evenings sublime

when sunlight diminished, high tide up-roared
you were a cracked piece of sunlight sky)
like the gaiety of rousing autumn leaves,
accumulating snow and scattered spring
your summer flourished in me.
(a nearness there be, in this distance
umbrella-like, your amour held)
i live with you every moment : on silent
pillow covers, a night-lamp's passion out pour,
pages of books and patient stationery; the
smells of boiling water even.
(its transparency of aroused heat
like your body, kissed)
on unoccupied seats, i draw your shadow
beside, to trespass these lonelier hours
you burn within every fragment
and i, alongside.
(yet a house of white fences and paint
hold stories layered
in your fingers, an artists
my life partook art)
those colours of stormed discrepancy : purple
of its lightning and gray of its cloudiness
they hold your embodiment, though none like i.
(on patched windows, i felt your
footsteps come through long, elongated passages
and have held you close)
i carry you privy
in every inhale and exhale.

SURBHI GOEL

Diabetic Love

Like caramelized sugar, some memories:
Stick to my teeth
As time goes by
Oozing sweetness mixed with pain
Filling my mouth with
Forgotten terms and conditions
Filling my mouth with
Compliments and broken promises
Neat sensation of holding hands for the first time ever
Watching a film together.

A total recall also evokes
A time spent in vacillating - waiting for the time of breaking up,
A moment of mania, a moment of respite
And then the time for the insulin shot: next love.

Vertical desire

whisssspering, sleeeepwalking, hypnogogic
de- pinioning the lurid expectations:
imagined, nurtured and solidified image

slow light peels away layers of deadness
revealing the zone where from all the life arises -
the will to be /becoming

tired of surrendering to the imminent
portioned soul
accumulated in all parts of the body
assembles
a gentle polite protest
claims its place and time - a new revolution is inaugurated (every split second).

***'Uski Roti'/* my absentia**

"his shadow has left indelible marks on this newly washed soul
he is unaware of the chiaroscuro, he writes about only the composition,
has forgotten to recognize his own thoughts.

Afraid to lose himself in my warmth, embrace
he will rather manifest, as all humans have done, another eternal separation
which will last till all my hair turn grey and eyes vacated of all tears...
these vacant eyes, still tow the rainbow
not on borrowed time, but a promise."

he will not recognize, even refuse to see it
for him it is but a forgettable dream

but she is the very colour of the rainbow, that he makes and breaks every day.
Will he ever know, how she traced every footstep, and captured it in her very being
his walk and indifference that left her at that corner?
she waits there for him to realize, he is missing the very thing he goes out in search of, every day.

He leaves behind the real, in a fit of madness, to look for the shadow.

She is split in many halves - waiting for her soul to return from wilderness
which goes searching after him, everyday
relentlessly, unceasingly : loyally, lovingly.

"lonely bones have learned to count every second of time,
splice it in many parts, devour it with the wind.
sweat, stale longing and hope I eat,
while holding the freshly cooked food for you in my hands."

Mani Kaul inaugurated new wave in Indian Cinema with his 1969 film ***Uski Roti.*** *I saw the film sometime in the 1980s; a scene from the film left a lasting trace in my vision field. I saw the film again, in 2012, after the demise of the filmmaker. The film elicited a spontaneous response from me - it was, as if, a film made for me, for every person, who has a live memory of a forgotten moment of timelessness.*

"Mother walked away"

when mother died, I too died with her,
that's why this crisis - for the first time
in an entire life - I feel defeated, empty, lost.

No matter how much
want

cannot
get over
go elsewhere
be myself
be another
not be
die
live
love
lust
feel alive

I cannot smile any more, I crack up.

I also know, that I will perish, when I expire.

How is it that I never knew this profound 'connect' ?
I am a mountain of contradictions.

How is it that I could never know what a connection my mother was/has been?
she rooted me to a culture
she rooted me to a life
she rooted me into feelings, desires, fears

she made me, she unmade me
she gave me an immense confidence in myself
she gave me absolute lack of any footing, any roots.

How is it that one person's demise can topple all that you are?
I decide, decimate, decide again, decimate
I crumble, I cry, ceaselessly
I wash my face and start anew
repeat, repeat, repeat

Mother walked away, perhaps, to instruct me on some home truths. She passed on one morning: unbidden, unprovoked, and unannounced.

Review Article

Narrating History as *Katha*: Reading Anna Whitelock's *Elizabeth's Bedfellows: An Intimate History of the Queen's Court*[1]

Itihas (iti+ha+as) or history, in Indian wisdom-traditions, has been a multivalent term loaded with multiple meanings: (a) narratives inherited from tradition, especially the narratives narrating the past in order to instruct and inspire us to understand the path of *dharma* (moral duty), *artha* (political economy), *kama* (desire), *moksha* (freedom); (b) narratives of heroism, (c) tradition (d) historical evidence where any work that employs many narratives or stories and is descriptive is also called *itihas-prabandhana*, or history/ historical writing.[2] In this sense, the essential element of *katha* or story-telling (narration) can hardly be separated from the act of history-writing in Indian contexts. It is also worth mentioning that the aim of history/historiography, that is "itihas" and "itihas-lekhan" in Indian tradition, is primarily to impart wisdom about the world and the *purusharthas* (the cardinal principles of life) through "stories or narratives or kathas". Interestingly, the etymological journey of the word "history" and "story" begins from Indo-European roots – "weid" (to see) which also gives rise to Sanskrit- "veda (to see or

to know)". From "weid" arises "widtor" which gets transformed into "histor (wise or learned) or histoire".[3] The Sanskrit/Hindi equivalent of "history" is "itihasa" which means "narratives or *katha* of (a) how it/something happened in time (b) narratives or *katha* of past or time imparting knowledge of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*—that includes all other ethical freedoms—social, political, economic and cultural (*Apte*, 173-74). It is in this sense, for example, that such narratives or *akhyanas/kathas* like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, Bankim's *Ananda Math*, Premchand's *Godan*, Renu's *Maila Anchal*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Mahashweta Devi's *Draupadi*, Qurraitulain Haider's *Aag Ka Dariya (The River of Fire)*, Rahi Masum Raza's *Aadha Gaon*, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and so on, may be considered works of *itihasa* or history (from the new historicist perspective) as they offer us *akhyanas/kathas/* narratives or stories of the above-mentioned four primary principles or (*purusharthas*) of life.

Thus, in Indian tradition, history (*itihasa*) and story (*katha* or *akhyana*), both etymologically and epistemologically, have a common objective which enables us to see/ understand/know any aspect of truth in time. Surprisingly, this incontrovertible correlation between the new historicist notion of history as a plotted narrative and Indian notion of "itihasa" has largely been ignored in the field of contemporary theory. For example, Hayden White, an eminent new historicist critic, in his book, *Metahistory*[4] treats the "historical work as a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse" (xi-xii), the content of which is as much invented or imagined as can be found. In this way, history-writing/telling, which is but a kind of narrative-writing/telling, comes close to *katha* or *akhyana* tradition of India.

It is in this sense that Anna Whitelock's book, *Elizabeth's Bedfellows: An Intimate History of the Queen's Court*, foregrounds and addresses, through the mode of "katha", the hitherto least-known aspects of life and times of, perhaps, the mightiest woman the world has ever seen—Queen Elizabeth I, whose charisma and power gave the country and its Protestant church a

national identity and the Age a name—the Elizabethan Age (1558-1601), ushering in an era of British colonialism, imperialism and empire-building: for example, the formidable East India Company that set up its first factory at Surat in India in 1600 had the full military and strategic support of the Queen. Because of her exceptional qualities of head and heart, she remained the subtext of the works of many an illustrious writer of her age—Edmund Spenser (who allegorized her as the "Faerie Queene"), Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Thomas Lodge, Ben Jonson, Francis Bacon, John Donne and others.

Reading *Elizabeth's Bedfellows* as *itihasa/katha*:

It is in this context of narrativizing history/histories in the Indian mode of *itihasa*, using *katha/akhyana* as emplotment-strategies, that Anna Whitelock's engaging narrative, *Elizabeth's Bedfellows: An Intimate History of the Queen's Court*, gains significance. Whitelock structures her narrative or *katha* of Elizabeth's life and times into about sixty-three (sixty two plus an epilogue) racy, loopy and engaging chapters (each *upakatha* is, on average, of about five page-length) which may well be considered as "upakathas" or "narratemes" – all eventually dissolving into the outer frame/grand narrative or *maha-akhyana* of the Queen.

Whitelock's fascinatingly writer-ly narrative enables a reader to learn with aesthetic relish (*rasa*) how, after the death of her mother (Anne Boleyn), Elizabeth—who was declared an illegitimate child and might have been subjected to an incestuous rape/sexual assault by her stepfather Thomas Seymore, and involved in a host of provoking and provocative sexual relationships—transformed her body into the body politic, the very state of England. Whitelock writes: "the experience of 1547-48 with her stepfather had taught Elizabeth that her sexual reputation was an important political currency and the ladies who attended on her were the key custodians of her honour (6)." As the first woman Head of State, she was also proclaimed as the Supreme Governor of the Church of England in 1559, and it became the law of the land that anyone "writing, teaching or preaching that Elizabeth should be subject to the authority of a

foreign power (including the Pope) would lose all his or her property and moveable possessions", and "repeated offences would be judged high treason and incur the death penalty" (16).

To substantiate how headstrong and ruthless Elizabeth could be, mention may be made of the fact that in order to teach the protesting Irish Catholics a fitting lesson, she, in 1582, ordered a brutal assault on Ireland resorting to wholesale massacre and "scorched-earth-tactics" that starved more than 30,000 Irish people. Whitelock, in her book, also highlights how cleverly Elizabeth affiliated her sexual politics to the cultural/national politics of the day, an example of which would be the dizzying rise (and later fall) of Robert Dudley—one time keeper of the royal stables and then her lover—to the position of Earl of Leicester. The burden of keeping the sexual reputation of Elizabeth intact, despite her steamy affair with Dudley, befell the women of her bedchamber, especially Kate Ashley who looked after the Queen with motherly affection. Whitelock comments: "The Queen and Dudley were spending all their days together, dancing, feasting and hunting throughout the summer progress of 1560", and the story that "Elizabeth was pregnant had spread across the country that year" (44). The chapter, with overtly erotic overtones, "Carnal Copulation" (51-59), deals with Elizabeth's sexual relationship with Dudley.

Whitelock also narrates the many conspiracies that were hatched, either by the Catholics or the agents of King Philip of Spain, to assassinate the Queen—rendering the Court a hotbed of intrigues and murderous plots—an image that was frequently used by such dramatists as Thomas Norton, Thomas Sackville, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Webster and others. In fact, Whitelock points out rightly that the first English tragedy—Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc* or *The Tragedy of Ferrex and Porrex* (1562)—was staged before the Queen to remind her that her realm was "thrown into chaos by an unresolved succession" and it sought to "spur her to marry and produce an heir" (60). Even when her face was scarred because of the attack of smallpox, Whitelock interestingly tells us: "an official narrative of Elizabeth's immaculate beauty and perfect complex was adopted, embellished in poems, plays and state-

controlled portraits" (71). Thus, Elizabeth could deconstruct her "beauty" in a way which could amplify her power and "protect the Queen from accusations of promiscuity which might have been levelled against her if people confused her smallpox scars with those of the great pox, syphilis, which was seen as the product of sexual immorality"(71). Whitelock's *katha*/narrative weaves a magical spell around even such insignificant details as "Toothache" (169-172), "Amorous Potions" (173-79) and "Secret Son?" (241-43) about Arthur Dudley. Whitelock quotes Elizabeth's famous speech delivered by her after the defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588) which enables a reader to understand the significance of Elizabeth's iconization as the source of the national imaginary: "Although I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, I have the heart and stomach of a King, and a King of England too—and take foul scorn that Parma... or any other Prince of Europe to invade the borders of my realm" (249). By 1588, the Colony of Virginia had been established, thereby laying the foundation of an empire. She had an uncanny knack of countering a damaging gossip or rumour through her commitment to duty: "I am too much burdened with cares to turn my attention to marriage, for Love is usually the offspring of leisure, and as I am so beset by duties, I have not been able to think of Love. As therefore, nothing has yet urged me to marry, I have not been able to mediate on this man or that man" (252).

Those, such as Deryck and Robert Garner, who spread rumours about her affairs with Dudley and her illegitimate children, "stood in the pillory for their indiscretions" (253). Whitelock also cites examples culled from contemporary literary texts to reveal how Elizabeth's "body" and sexuality were being inscribed into them. George Puttanham (*The Art of English Poesie*, 1589), Edmund Spenser (*The Faerie Queene*,1590), Thomas Lodge (*Scillaes Metamorphosis*, 1589) and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1599), are instances of an older, sexually voracious Queen/ Empress who is "forced to plead for the attentions of her younger male lover" (277). All in all, the Queen, one of the mightiest women that ever walked on this planet, lived and died a virgin.

In the Epilogue, Whitelock discusses how the person and persona of Elizabeth offered what may be considered the grist to the global culture-industry. Such a spectacularly protean personality as Elizabeth duly attracted the attention of Hollywood and many films: Bette Davis's *Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex (1939)*, *The Virgin Queen* (1955), Glenda Jackson's *Elizabeth R* (1971), Judy Dench's *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth* (1998) and *Elizabeth, The Golden Age* (2010) focus on the mystique of her life and loves.

Needless to say, the *katha*, *kathan*, and *kathanak* (narrative, narration and its emplotment) of Whitelock's text resonate with the beauty of tone and tenor embedded in the very timbre and texture of *katha*. One may ask the question: "When will our historians start writing/telling *itihasa* as delectable *kathas*—full of *rasa* (aesthetic relish or experience) and *auchitya* (propriety), taking a cue from Whitelock, in order to inculcate in our youth the much-needed historical sense which is the understanding of the temporal and the timeless together, as even Eliot would say?

Notes

1 Whitelock, Anna. *Elizabeth's Bedfellows: An Intimate History of the Queen's Court,* London: Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. 462, Rs. 599. Subsequently cited as EB with page numbers in parentheses.

2 Apte, Waman Shivaram. *Sanskarit-Hindi Kosh,* Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1997, p. 174. Subsequently cited as Apte with page number in parentheses.

3 *The New Book of Knowledge,* Vol. II, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin, 1981, 1548.

4 White, Hayden. *Metahistory,* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973. Further cited as M with page numbers in parentheses.

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You Have to Scream with your Mouth Shut

Review of Ismat Chughtai's *A Chughtai Quartet* (Translated from the Urdu by Tahira Naqvi), New Delhi: Women Unlimited, pp. 331, Rs. 400.

Deserted, cheated, and violated—these are the women who form the mélange of Chughtai's female characters in *A Chughtai Quartet*. But beneath the hurt and silence lies a spirit that breaks free to find its final redemption. Chughtai's women cannot be silent for long, and like the writer herself, they soon find their voices to diminish their insecurities.

A Chughtai Quartet contains four novellas, which quintessentially cover the lives of women, who in the words of the translator, "seek and find agency in the exercise of an obdurate will that cannot be bent." The Quartet spans Ismat Chughtai's literary career from 1939 to 1971, spanning a period from the inception of her writing to the last years of her life. Chughtai's works predominantly revolve around women and their identity in a world that essentially believes that women must be faceless and voiceless extensions of their male counterparts. She endows her women with a "special kind of supremacy" even though they can be visualized as creatures bent double under the yoke of societal expectations. In doing so, Chughtai demystifies several of the stereotypes associated with the subjugated woman, both in Muslim and Hindu households.

Chughtai wrote essentially to ruffle feathers. Geeta Patel in her essay on the writer, "An Uncivil Woman: Chughtai", collected

in The Annual of Urdu Studies, says that people who knew her "attested to her remarkable obstinate demand to disturb the civil, to disrupt the ideas that constituted civility, to upend the notions that gave force to how women ought to be". Her women, oppressed as they may be, debunk the labels attached to them and find a liberated voice. In *The Heart Breaks Free*, Aunt Qudsia, married at the age of fifteen, is deserted by her husband for a white woman. In typical servility, she declares that she would be willing to live as a maid of the memsahib where she would typically "eat left-overs and wear their cast-offs." But by the end of the story, we surprisingly discover that Aunt Qudsia elopes with Shabir, her gentle but apparently ineffectual brother-in-law, thus turning the story on its head. A foil to Aunt Qudsia is Bua, also without a husband, who lives freely and enjoys the same rights as men, much to the chagrin of other women. Bua does not subscribe to the harsh belief that a woman is the pivot around which all virtues are expected to turn. She lives with a complete sense of irreverence to norms and refuses to take medications [read laxatives] administered by the family quack. Incidentally, these "elixirs" were believed to cure tenuous "mental conditions" of women of her ilk.

The social and cultural collage that forms the backdrop of Chughtai's writing helps in understanding the writers' preoccupation with the female voice. Chughtai was incensed by social evils that were born out of a deep patriarchal predisposition. Even though she came from a liberal Muslim family, she was forced to write in secret because of the opposition from her Muslim relatives. Indeed, all of Chughtai's extended family threatened to ostracize her father when he decided to send his daughters to a boarding school. Thus it is that Chughtai's women break free from imposed hierarchies and overpowering customs. In *The Wild One*, when Asha commits Sati, it is not an act of adherence to an age-old tradition, but an audacious protest against the separation of two people in love. In dramatic style, Asha dies on the pyre of Puran strewn with "dried out flowers that danced on his chest like a bed of tulips."

Chughtai's women do not always break free in perceptible terms. In the final novella of the quartet, *Wild Pigeons*—which reminds

one of Jhumpa Lahiri's short story, *A Temporary Matter*—Abida, the female protagonist makes peace through her reticence. She silently ingests her husband Majid's infidelity and surprisingly decides to keep the baby that he has fathered with a prostitute. Chughtai bestows Abida with a strange poise and patience that Majid finds impossible to comprehend. He is trapped in his guilt and even meets with an untimely death. The character of Abida leaves a most enduring image of a woman, who despite the collapse of her marriage owing to infidelity, can still afford to say to Majid, "There is no place for anyone except you in my heart . . . I've hated you, loved you, been angry with you, felt sympathy for you, just you."

A Chughtai Quartet brings the persistent characters and themes of the author back into memory. Strong women reeling under severe social constraints manage to break the manacles unfairly put on their feet. At times her women seem to be paper thin in their conviction and irresolute in their judgement, but this follows from the patriarchal numbness that society has induced into them. However, even though they appear to be tragic and cheerless at times, they repulse unfair patriarchal embargoes by taking life-altering decisions, and living their moments of ecstasy. For example, in *Obsession*, when Chandni repulses Suraj to have a romantic relationship with Chandar, she crosses the threshold of social expectations and does not stoop to his lusty overtures even though Suraj is the "Master" of the household. Similarly, in *Wild Pigeons,* Abida decides to accept the baby that her husband has fathered through an adulterous relationship.

Even though the writer lavishes most of her attention on her female characters, some of her male characters nevertheless deserve mention for becoming the mouthpieces against male domination. In *Obsession*, Chandar castigates Usha Rani for serving Suraj like a slave. He rebukes her in unambiguous terms, saying: "You are not a woman, you're the crushed corpse of society's customs." A little later, he even calls her a "bondmaid." In *The Heart Breaks Free*, Uncle Shabir, unimpressive as he appears to be, takes a bold decision of marrying Aunt Qudsia despite unbending opposition from the family. Puran, the lover of Asha in *The Wild*

One, merits attention and pity. He loves Asha intensely but has to forfeit her as his relationship affects "family pride". We discredit him for his inability to make a courageous pronouncement of a life with Asha, but we can give him recognition for loving her most ardently and never giving up.

Translations are tricky affairs generally, and at several instances it appears that Naqvi's sentences are trite and pedestrian. Perhaps sometimes, the spirit of the original gets lost in translation. In *The Wild One*, Naqvi uses such sentences when she says: "If you grind something and dust it off, does it disappear?" or "There is only one way life ends, with death." Such sentences take away much of the intensity of the Urdu original. There are also instances of sparkle in the form of engaging facts and lucid language. In *The Heart Breaks Free*, there appears to be an interesting resemblance between Radha Bai, alias Zehra Bibi, who falls in love with Ghazi Mian, the Sufi Saint, and Mary Magdalene, an important figure mentioned twelve times in the four Gospels. While Radha washed Ghazi's tomb with her tears and swept the floor everyday with her hair, Mary washed Jesus's feet with her tears, then wiped them with her long tresses and anointed them with perfume.

Chughtai employs subtle comparisons and uses powerful language. Some memorable lines come from *Obsession*: "Her ashes would permeate the air and fly from one lifetime to another." Or in another instance from *The Heart Breaks Free*, a statement aptly describes Aunt Qudsia: "And Aunt Qudsia, at the age of twenty-six, was fading away like a forgotten remark." Again, from the same novella: "Then everyone forgot everything because forgetting is profitable; your conscience does not torment you." In *The Wild One*: "Roofs swung like soggy beards from the weight of the poles and bamboo rafters." Chughtai had a way with words and through them, she brought out effectively both the physical description of the milieu as well as the emotional portrayal of deeply entrenched feelings.

Even though *A Chughtai Quartet* sags at several places and even becomes a trifle melodramatic, the fiery spirit of the writer cannot evade the eyes of a keen reader. Women confined within

the citadels of their homes revolt against those very walls which theoretically, give them sanctuary. Little epiphanies and interesting characters dot the skyline and make for an interesting read. *The Heart Breaks Free* and *Wild Pigeons* are especially illuminating stories which give insights into the female psyche during periods of struggle and endurance. Reading *A Chughtai Quartet* deepens the realization that although most women will internalize patriarchal expectations, they will not endure them forever. Understanding the position of women in the times of Ismat Chughtai becomes an important watershed that can help in a larger understanding of Indian women and their issues over the ages.

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Money Knows the Price but not the Value of Everything

Review of Michael J. Sandel's *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets,* Penguin, 2013, pp. 256, Rs. 499.

Propositions are held true or false as per their applicability within a particular time frame and discursive setup; that is to say, that which is true is so because our perception of its truth and validity is mediated by its relevance and acceptance in a specific milieu. Michael Sandel, a renowned Harvard don, has tested his ideas both for and against the tide of time. So, while he gives capitalism-induced commodification much leverage so as to allow it to assert its inevitability, and even a forceful appeal, his chief philosophical concern throughout his academic career has remained the deciphering of market-codes vis-a-vis their mutually altering and even disfiguring relation with moral or ethical norms of civil society.

What distinguishes a 'market economy' from a 'market society'? A 'market economy' comprises "prices, wages, interest rates, stocks and bonds, banks and credit, prices and expenditure", as Paul Samuelson, the *avant-garde* Nobel Laureate from America, saw it. This is the kind of ideal that prominent economists like Jagdish Bhagwati had envisaged as the panacea to India's economic riddles—a market economy led by pragmatic assortment and establishment of markets and liberal state policies. But why should an economist like Sandel oppose the trade-off between market forces and human values? Is that not supposed to be one of the

most fundamental principles of a capitalist setup—a superstructure that spurts with labour and production, and buries underneath all concerns of moral and ethical basis? Well, Mr. Sandel sure seems to have still retained his lessons in the moral sciences in an age where, ironically, even morality is up for sale.

This is precisely Sandel's concern, and understandably so, for an academic who in his previous bestseller, *Justice* (2010), had sought to interrogate and analyze a plethora of vexing moral issues that humans face in the contemporary world. With *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*, he spirals onto the intricate nexus of reifying markets, interventionist economic principles and fallible humanistic tenets to not simply condemn but actually examine and lay bare the changing facets of commercial norms vis-a-vis human life. Sandel sardonically gives examples to enunciate his resentment at the way morals and *moolah* have joined hands in today's overly materialist world where humans are largely incentive-driven and conscience-parched. The kinds of incentives Sandel must have brooded over while espousing this argument are not very different in essence from what Steven D. Levitt sees as an essential cycle of provision or satisfaction of needs between people through a mutual understanding of exchange--of objects, actions and even emotions. Yet, this is where the converging thoughts of the two stalwarts of economics end; for Sandel condescendingly deems incentives as basically being on sale and being available at particular respective prices, whereas Levitt views a far more personal angle to the scheme. For Levitt, economics is incipient not in our money but in our thoughts and emotions when it comes to establishing profiting relations with one-another.

But how does Sandel establish his discontent with a fast-monetizing world, where 'market economy' is slowly transforming itself into a 'market society', a society wherein almost every sphere, every aspect of life is up for grabs in the market space? How does he trace the gradual penetration of economy into mainstream society and its ethical superstructure? Well, Sandel speaks of upgraded prison cells in the United States, which are the privilege of those

few 'lesser culpable' ones who are able to slip in some money (and yes, legally!) to the jail authorities; wombs of poor women are sold in return for money, so that the buyers can inject in their future progenies some concrete or imagined advantages; permits are sold to polluting bodies, even nations, in return for money which is, then, interestingly, utilized for bringing into effect measures to prevent pollution; school-children are paid in return for reading books; environmental hazards are ignored by the concerned if money is pumped in to obfuscate the damage, to mention just a few of the myriad aspects of our lives and lifestyle that come under the purview of a reifying, self-promoting (and yet, self-negating, for all its artificial brilliance) market ideology.

In effect, Sandel endeavours a sharp indictment of the onset of morally-effacing, objectifying social values. This is a society, in Sandel's opinion, which, to use Oscar Wilde's premonitory consciousness, knows the price of everything but the value of nothing. He laments the concretization of the abstract object that is no longer a desire in itself, but has turned from a mediator to an ever-receding desire of a subject who, like the Derridean signifier, moves from one desire to another, and savours the object as simply a 'thing' (not in any of the Heideggerian senses), which is devoid of any romantic evasiveness. This is a society that seldom hesitates to market either its labour power or its crude, relentless productivity; and Sandel's socialist, ethically-pregnant thought unfailingly quenches our post-postmodern needs to dig up our old, cherished values of balanced scorecards that clearly demarcate the home from the world; those rose-tinted beliefs in the existence of certain sacred tenets/objects and relations that are beyond the reach of silver coins. Sandel's resistance to pervasive market forces seeks to keep our faiths intact.

Yet, I should also voice my apprehensions in relation to Sandel's overall take on the market and its manipulative intelligence. Yes, Sandel does object to the practice of markets to expel "non-market values worth caring about". Well, I do not really see personal relations being at the helm of most economic exchanges in any case, and this makes it quite sensible to make available as much as

possible in return for money which, then, may even be contingent in forging formal, mutually-advancing and mutually-satisfying relations. The debilitating effect of prices, as Sandel sees it, actually hardly does much harm, except in very close relationships or situations that demand humane endeavours rather than monetary maneuvers; and there are not many of them, if we look at it practically, that really require a human touch. But, in a general sense, a demonetized and non-incentivized economic and market system really loses both flexibility and expansibility, and a stasis, even in the strictest of economic terms, is bound to translate into our general ill-coordinated social behaviour.

The solutions lie not in harking back to the pristine, old-world values but in discriminating voluntary market behaviour, even in the crudest of forms, for this is the hallmark of conscious activity and human freedom from corrupting, crippling effects of money on human morals and choices. The all-pervasive limbo that, according to Sandel, we have thrust on ourselves and that, in his opinion, seems to be eating into our cultural setup, is really just a mirage that is trying too hard to reiterate assertions on value systems and moralizing, eventually promising to outweigh money that has been the toast of philosophers since Aristotle.

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