

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY

SUMMERHILL

IIAS REVIEW

Editorial

Research Articles

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Ujjwal Kumar Singh & Anupama Roy

The Nationalism Debate and India's Northeast Experience

Udayon Misra

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Summerhill

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Editorial

When entrusted with the opportunity to edit this volume, I had no specific theme in my mind. Thus, with an open-ended theme of ‘crossover’, ‘translation’ and ‘institutions’, I started contacting prospective contributors. The collection of essays, poetry and book reviews that were finally submitted offer a deep critical insight into some very important themes of contemporary times.

One particular consideration for research articles was to bring forth a review of some of the important ideas and institutions. The first article is, therefore, an important reading on Ambedkar’s idea of constitutionalism and Indian/constitutional democracy. In this article, Ujjwal K. Singh and Anupama Roy explore how Ambedkar argued that for a fraternity, where caste hierarchies, which he termed ‘anti-national’ were erased, and equality and liberty could be actualized. This fundamental, revolutionary change was to be achieved through consent and without violence and creating enabling conditions for democracy in India by addressing questions of social and economic change. Udayon Misra contributes a qualitative discussion to the ongoing debates on nationalism by foregrounding the case of the formation of Nagaland in 1963 and the shifts that have taken place in the nature of Indian state when it was faced with assertions of nationalism from the Northeast. He argues that the Thirteenth Amendment to the Indian Constitution in 1962 recognised that land and resources of Nagaland would belong to the Naga people, granting them wide-range of political autonomy and shared sovereignty. This provides a necessary corrective to contemporary narrow debates on nationalism. C.N. Subramaniam’s article explores yet another institution of Eklavya and its contribution to ‘systemic’ change in school education by enunciating a history of its policy interventions and the challenges posed by changing trajectories of the state from the 1980s until recent times and therefore, what remains of its defining moment—the principle of building and testing models for macro level implementation of education at micro levels. Rahamath Tarikare’s article explores a complex question of language of ‘home’ and ‘literary’ expression among Muslims of Karnataka who linguistically choose to speak and write in a variety of mediums—Urdu, Kannada, Navayath Konkani, Tamil, Byary or Moplah. He argues that language, culture and knowledge systems are

all interwoven and therefore it is important to address the problems that, for instance, ‘modern’ English education poses to both home language and the language of the environment. Vaibhav Singh’s exploration of Muktibodh’s writings adds yet another dimension to the role of literature in the contemporary political moment. He argues that Muktibodh’s highly self-critical poetic temperament never shied away to critically examine the role of artists, writers and the educated intellectual class. He always endeavoured to think objectively and argued that the aim of literature is not merely to express the life of middle classes, a proposition that is a hope for the nascent institution of Indian democracy. Anuradha Bhattacharjee’s article evaluates India’s Look East Policy that was formulated in 1991 and explores its relationship with ASEAN countries, especially, bilateral relations with Vietnam. She argues that India will retain its perceptual advantage over China as long as it continues to remain an open and plural democracy. Ranjani Prasad’s article explores a nascent experiment in building archives of ‘Institutional Memory’ at Ambedkar University Delhi and situates it with debates on institutional memory elsewhere in India and abroad. She argues that technology and collective memories provide an important tool through which it is possible to thwart institutional hierarchies and offer counter-narratives to official discourses that can invariably creep into an institutional memory, thereby expanding the possibility of this ‘project’.

The second component of Summerhill explores poetry of three Indian poets—two of these are young poets. The first section of these contributions situates poets in their larger milieu and thereafter present a bi-lingual presentation of their poetry. Three scholars were invited to write these introductions and also provide translation of selected poets for English readers. Shad Naved situates Mritunjay as a ‘public’ and ‘conscious’ poet, a contradiction the poet is in no hurry of resolving. Shad translates three poems from *Syah hashiye*, the latter’s recent collection of poems. Niyati Bhat identifies Nighat Sahiba’s poetic work as bold and humanistic, that has created an uproar in Kashmiri poetry circles dominated by men. Nighat’s three poems that Niyati translates, figure out the poet and the world she inhabits. Shivani Chopra translates some very popular poems of Rajesh Joshi, the renowned Hindi poet

who rose to fame at a time when space and readership for poetry reading was drastically shrinking. She situates Rajesh Joshi in the league of progressive Indian poets who questions ideological moral-commitments at the cost of social transformation.

The third section of Summerhill opens up discussion on some recent books that investigate the project of nation and nationalisms—Maithili movement, contesting nationalisms around untouchability, sedition in a liberal democracy and changing modes of writing history—and open up

investigation into museums, films and visual imaginaries—transformation of *Jhabvala's* novels into films, the museum in South Asia and indigenous literary imaginaries. Put together, these articles, poems and book reviews offer us a critical insight into the history of ideas, institutions and modes of literary expressions.

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B. R. Ambedkar and the Ideas of Constitutionalism and Constitutional Democracy

UJJWAL KUMAR SINGH AND ANUPAMA ROY

In his address at the Poona District Law Library on 22 December 1952, nearly three years after the Indian Constitution had come into effect B. R. Ambedkar underscored the salience of constitutional democracy, and beginning with a minimal description of democracy as ‘a government by discussion’, citing Walter Bagehot, and as ‘a government of the people, by the people and for the people’, citing Abraham Lincoln. Ambedkar goes on, however, to propose a more emphatic statement of what *he* considered a democracy, that is, ‘a form and method of Government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed’.¹ Evidently, for Ambedkar, democracy may be said to exist, when those who were running the government could bring about fundamental changes in the social and economic life of the people, and the people accepted those changes without resorting to bloodshed.²

Indeed, fundamental, revolutionary changes were to be achieved through consent and without violence, and this was at the core of Ambedkar’s idea of democracy. The challenge, however, was putting in place enabling conditions, which would make revolutionary social and economic changes without bloodshed, possible. In a society where unequal social structures, buttressed by ritual and caste hierarchy, were deeply entrenched, and two centuries of colonial subjection had established institutions of government, which governed without representation, unconstrained by constitutionalism and rule of law, the task of devising rules to give institutional form to democratic government, was a humongous task. It was the enormity of this task which Ambedkar referred to when he moved a motion for discussion of the draft Constitution of India in

the Constituent Assembly on 04 November 1948. He made it clear that the structural conditions informed by deep-seated inequalities were not only a threat to democracy in India, but also made democracy ‘only a top dressing on an Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic’. It was important, therefore, to make the ‘unfamiliar’, i.e. democracy, work in Indian conditions, and also to make it durable. The burdens of the past – both recent and remote—the debilitating impact of colonial rule and the ritual authority of the caste system, had made India an unlikely candidate for durable democracy. It was this universal value of equality within the framework of constitutional democracy, which Ambedkar cherished, prompting him to declare in the Constituent Assembly on 25 November 1949, that he came to the Constituent Assembly with ‘no greater aspiration than to safeguard the interests of the Scheduled Castes’. He claimed that he did not have ‘the remotest idea’ that he would be called upon to undertake more responsible functions, and would be elected to the Drafting Committee and subsequently its Chairman. For Ambedkar, his election to the Drafting Committee and its chairpersonship, was the manifestation of the trust and confidence which had been reposed in him, and he saw himself in that role as being an instrument of change, and having the opportunity to serve the entire country.³

It is in response to the predicament of making the top-dressing consonant with the soil, that Ambedkar espoused constitutionalism as a democratic value and as a framework of legitimate political process, which would bring about social change. The idea of India which can be seen as congealing in the Constituent Assembly Debates (December 1946–November 1949), is replete with both the promise

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of a democratic future, but also the realization that the present is burdened with the past, which has the tendency to percolate into the future with tenacity, permeating into people's lives in both quotidian and spectacular ways. In the literature on constitutionalism, constitutions are seen not simply as normative texts, but also as emphatic and historic constituent moments of transformation. In the context of postcolonial constitutionalism in particular, constitutions have been seen as transformative in the sense that they manifest a conscious and meticulous sequestering from the past. This process of sequestering is a central motif of transformative constitutionalism.⁴ Indeed, it is the re-figuration of the relationship with the past, which distinguishes the 'temporal register'⁵ on which constitutions are etched, so much so, that constitutions come to embody the momentous present, from where a vision of a future, emphatically different from the past, may be professed.⁶ In this paper an attempt will be made to examine the components of the 'transformative' as they figure in B.R. Ambedkar's speeches in the Constituent Assembly and other public speeches, to see, how they articulate a vision of constitutionalism and democracy for a nation embarking on a journey towards constitutional democracy.

CONSTITUTIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY

The questions, what is constitutionalism and what is the relationship between constitutions, constitutionalism and democracy, are fraught with contests. The promise of constitutionalism in postcolonial societies was not simply one of self-rule, but also the installation of democratic government in which power was derived from the people and was constrained by the constitution, which embodied popular sovereignty. In other words, power could not be exercised arbitrarily, was bound by higher order rules, norms, and principles, and the rule of law, which had been sought and achieved through persistent struggles for democratization of power. Yet, the project of writing a constitution, which was the culmination of these struggles, also produced the legal and institutional ensemble with specific modes of governance and juridical norms, which are continually subjected to political scrutiny, and are, therefore, contested. The conception of constitution making as a contest over forms of power, is significant since it suggests that the commitment to constitutionalism is not a given, that it may weaken or strengthen over time, and may also become a conduit through which political power is expressed and becomes entrenched.

Studies of comparative constitutionalism have shown that constitution-making has taken place in successive waves.⁷ In the twentieth century, post-colonial, post-World-Wars, and post-conflict constitutions were made

with different outcomes, but the promise of democratic transition and consolidation had marked the birth of all of them. The promise was buttressed by the will of a historical collective to constitute itself into a state founded on a constitution. Constitutions have, therefore, also been seen as embodying 'the will to stateness'.⁸ Constitutionalism in India, as a product of the anti-colonial movement, was also inextricably tied to the nationalist project, which then became the source of the political identities of citizenship and constitutional patriotism.⁹ Yet, as Ambedkar admitted in his speech presenting the draft Constitution to Constituent Assembly for discussion, the constitutional text had borrowed from the Government of India Act of 1935, and continued to be, therefore, concerned overwhelmingly with administrative details and the structure of government:

As to the accusation that the Draft Constitution has produced a good part of the provisions of the Government of India Act 1935, I make no apologies. There is nothing to be ashamed of in borrowing. It involves no plagiarism. Nobody holds any patent rights in the fundamental ideas of a Constitution. What I am sorry about is that the provisions taken from the Government of India Act 1935, relate mostly to the details of administration. I agree administrative details should have no place in the Constitution. I wish very much that the Drafting Committee could see its way to avoid their inclusion in the Constitution.¹⁰

Even as he wishes that administrative details should find no place in constitutional texts, Ambedkar believes that they are necessary, and takes recourse to the Greek historian Grote's articulation of the idea of constitutional morality to outline the 'necessity' which justified their inclusion. According to Ambedkar the diffusion of constitutional morality was essential for the peaceful working and sustenance of a democratic constitution, an important and somewhat disputed and often misunderstood relationship, which will be discussed in the section which follows. It is, however, on the relationship between constitutional morality and the necessity of administrative details in constitutions that we shall turn our attention now. Broadly speaking constitutional morality in Grote (concurred to by Ambedkar) refers to 'a paramount reverence to the forms of the Constitution'.¹¹ Following from this, Ambedkar argues that there exists a close connection between the form of the Constitution and the form of administration, which would require that: 'The form of the administration must be appropriate to and in the same sense as the form of the Constitution'. In addition, he argued, it was, 'perfectly possible to pervert the Constitution, without changing its form by merely changing the form of the administration and to make it inconsistent and opposed to the spirit of the constitution':

It follows that it is only where people are saturated with constitutional morality such as the one described by Grote the historian that one can take the risk of omitting from the Constitution details of administration and leaving it for the Legislature to prescribe them. The question is, can we presume such a diffusion of Constitutional morality? Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated. We must realise that our people have yet to learn it. Democracy in India is only a top-dressing on an Indian soil, which is essentially undemocratic.¹²

Clearly, for Ambedkar, till the time constitutional morality had spread wide and deep among the Indian people and they were saturated with it, the legislatures could not be trusted with prescribing the form of administration. Even though Ambedkar does not elaborate on this, one can read in this his mistrust in the ability of the dominant caste and class to act autonomous of the hierarchically organised social structure marked with ascriptive inequalities, sustained by an unequal distribution of power and resources, entrenched feudal-brahmanical-ritual authority and their collusive dominance with the colonial regime which they expected to replace. Yet, even when the constitutional text was overwhelmed by the logic of government and the desire to establish a strong state, there existed alongside robust commitment to political and socio-economic rights, and adherence to the basic principles of federal design, distribution of powers, an autonomous judiciary, and constitutional innovations to ensure substantive equality through the recognition of diversity. In other words, postcolonial constitutionalism was inscribed in self-rule and shared-rule, which were to be achieved through specific modes of governance, which would usher in democracy within the framework of a republican constitution.

TRANSITION AND CONTRADICTIONS

Vilhena et.al., use the expression ‘aspirational’ to refer to the attempts by India, South Africa and Brazil, to transform their past and present (of colonialism, apartheid, and military regime) through a constitutional process to establish a durable moral order of rights, and the rule of law. If we agree with Vilhena, then the constitutional texts which emerged out of these efforts at transformation, can be seen primarily as normative texts, which lay down a framework for ensuring the ‘ambitious constitutional promises’, especially the universalization of human rights, entrenching thereby transformative constitutionalism in the texts of their own constitutions.¹³ The text of the Objectives Resolution, placed before the Constituent Assembly of India on 13 December 1946, may well be read as ‘aspirational’, or as Jawaharlal Nehru described it ‘in the nature of a pledge’. Indeed, the Objectives Resolution adopted in

the Constituent Assembly as guidelines construed the constitution as a promise and a pledge, and therefore, ‘something higher than the law’. Indeed, if one were to examine the words of the constitution like lawyers, one would ‘produce only a lifeless thing’, since the Resolution laying down the objectives of the Constitution of India was a moment of interlocution, marking the coalescent present. The members of the Constituent Assembly were then standing ‘midway between two eras’ – the old and fast changing old order, ‘yielding place to the new’. The reference by Nehru to a spatial and temporal location of the constituent moment as a promise for change, was followed a few months later by his historic speech on the eve of independence that alluded freedom as marking the end of an age, as the fulfilment of a promise made long ago. Terming the moment ‘a tryst with destiny’, yet again Nehru declares the moment of redemption of a pledge, when the soul of the nation, ‘long suppressed’, will ‘find utterance’.¹⁴

Unlike Nehru, who saw the constituent moment as a movement from one age to another—of assured transition and emphatic break from a colonial past to a future condition of freedom—Ambedkar’s speech in the Constituent Assembly on 25 November 1949, presenting the final draft of the Constitution for its adoption, portrayed the moment as one of contradiction. The contradiction, simply put, was between formal equality in the political domain, amidst a deeply unequal economic structure. This contradiction, if allowed to persist, Ambedkar cautioned, would imperil Indian democracy. The idea that the constituent moment in Ambedkar was not predominantly one of transition, but one which was riddled with contradiction nurtured within it an ethics of transformation. The ethics of transformation which was present at the constituent moment, made postcolonial constitutionalism emblematic of change, and at the same time produced sites of contest which kept alive the imagination and possibility of recreation of new life-worlds. The contradiction in such a reading may be seen as providing the site for constitutional insurgencies,¹⁵ opening up for the teeming multitudes the vocabulary for change, the constitution providing as it were the ‘code of just means’. Yet Ambedkar’s concerns were addressed to both the ‘insurgent’ and those who were entrusted with state power, and it was towards this that he directed his exhortation for constitutional morality and an expansive idea and practice of constitutional democracy.

THE IDEA OF CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY

On 17 December 1946, B.R. Ambedkar was asked by Rajendra Prasad to participate in the discussion which took place after the Objectives Resolution was moved in the Assembly by Nehru. M.R. Jayakar had moved an

amendment to postpone the passing of the resolution since the Muslim League was not present in Assembly. It was thus in a charged atmosphere that Prasad invited Ambedkar to speak on the Resolution. Ambedkar's speech was described by N.V. Gadgil, who was present at the discussion, as 'historic':

His speech was statesmanlike, so devoid of bitterness and so earnestly challenging that the whole of Assembly listened to it in rapt silence. The speech was greeted with tremendous ovation and he was smothered with congratulations in the lobby.¹⁶

Procedurally speaking, the speech led to the postponement of the consideration of the Objectives Resolution till the next session. For the purpose of this paper, however, the response of Ambedkar is important for taking us along the substantial questions of democracy against what he termed the 'pure pedantry' of the Resolution that he found disappointing. Ambedkar saw the Resolution as divided into a 'controversial' first part which spoke of the territorial and institutional organization of governmental power, federal arrangement and popular sovereignty and 'a non-controversial' second part comprising the various rights to equality and freedom, justice, and minority rights. Ambedkar, however, was dismissive as well of the non-controversial part, which he felt read as remnants of the 450-year-old Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen and archaic as 'the silent immaculate premise of our outlook'. Finding it unnecessary to 'proclaim them as forming a part of our creed',¹⁷ Ambedkar would have liked to wrest the rights, out of these archaic and obsolete premises, to articulate them in the form of 'remedies', without which rights were meaningless. Indeed, Ambedkar feared that the complete absence of remedies which recognized that rights and liberties may not be taken away without following the due process of law, while making all rights subject to law and morality, made the Resolution deficient:

Obviously what is law, what is morality will be determined by the Executive of the day and when the Executive may take one view and another Executive may take another view and we do not know what exactly would be the position with regard to fundamental rights if this matter is left to the Executive of the day.¹⁸

Ambedkar's preference for constitutional remedies to assure protection of fundamental freedoms of persons, resonated powerfully in his speech of 9 December 1948, when speaking in the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar described constitutional remedies as 'the very soul of the Constitution and the very heart of it', indeed an Article (Article 32) so important that without it the Constitution would be 'a nullity'. There could be no rights in the absence of remedies:

It is the remedy that makes a right real. If there is no remedy there is no right at all and I am therefore, not prepared to burden the Constitution with a number of pious declarations which may sound as glittering generalities, but for which the Constitution makes no provision by way of a remedy. It is much better to be limited in the scope of our rights and to make them real by enunciating remedies than to have a lot of pious wishes embodied in the Constitution. I am very glad that this House has seen that the remedies that we have provided constitute a fundamental part of this Constitution.¹⁹

In his speech Ambedkar expresses his happiness at the inclusion of constitutional remedies in the Constitution, and concerns himself largely with the legal procedures pertaining to the writs constituting the remedies. He does not make the connection, which he only has hinted at in his Objectives Resolution response to executive decision-making and the possibility of arbitrary action. Indeed, the complex questions of executive power and authority remain absent as the legal question of protection by law takes precedence. Similarly, the ideas of rule of law and equal protection, which were so salient to the questions of social equalities and democracy, remain absent.

Evidently, in his response to the resolution, Ambedkar was animated by concerns not only for the 'ultimate' – the objectives and goals to be achieved, but also the 'difficulty with regard to the beginning'. It was this beginning of 'becoming willing friends' to 'induce every party, and every section of the country' to come together required 'an act of greatest statesmanship for the majority Party even to make concession to the prejudices of people who are not prepared to march together'.²⁰ While the immediate context of Ambedkar's reference to 'willing partnership' was the absence of the Muslim League in the Constituent Assembly, the idea of partnership had resonance with his idea of Indian polity and society, in particular the relationship between minority communities and the dominant majority. It is also in this context that Ambedkar's apprehensions about the uncertainty of executive decisions and mistrust of legislative power, amidst the absence of a thorough protection of people's rights, becomes significant. His desire is for people to march together as willing friends onto the road of the Republic. It is only then that sovereignty can be seen as drawn from the entire people and not the dominant sections.

Two years after his response to the Objectives Resolution, Ambedkar's speech on the occasion of the presentation of the first draft of the Constitution on 4 November 1948 and a year later on 25 November 1949, when the final draft of the Constitution was presented and adopted, reveal two fairly congealed tendencies. The first, resonating with his Objectives Resolution speech, addressed the question of protection of fundamental rights, in particular the rights

of minority communities, and the second, addressed the complex question of the conditions under which democracy, in particular its institutions which were built painstakingly, could be sustained. It was while addressing the second question that Ambedkar elaborated upon the idea of constitutional morality as indispensable for democracy.

On 4 November 1948, Ambedkar articulated his views on the constitutional safeguards for minorities. It is interesting that the safeguards provided to minorities was one of the several criticisms that had been made towards the first draft of the Constitution which had been in the public domain for eight months. Ambedkar considered it wrong for the majority to deny the existence of minorities, and likewise for minorities to perpetuate themselves as such. He concluded, therefore, that in India both the majority (in denying the presence of minorities) and minorities (in their quest for perpetuation) have followed the wrong path. The solution to this problem of denial and separate existence was to think of ways of living together – a solution which was also ultimately important for the holding the state together:

To diehards who have developed a kind of fanaticism against minority protection I would like to say two things. One is that minorities are an explosive force which, if it erupts, can blow up the whole fabric of the state. The history of Europe bears ample and appalling testimony to the fact. The other is that the minorities in India have agreed to place their existence in the hands of the majority.... It is for the majority to realise its duty not to discriminate against minorities. Whether the minorities will continue or vanish will depend upon this habit of the majority. The moment the majority loses the habit of discriminating against the minority, the minorities can have no ground to exist. They will vanish.²¹

In his speech in the Constituent Assembly on 25 November 1949, Ambedkar links up the quest for popular sovereignty in constitutional democracies and its elusiveness to the persistence of the rule by the dominant groups. He questions the idea that in a democracy power rests in the people, which would require that the source of political power and its legitimacy is drawn from the *entire* people. In actual practice, however, while this appears to be an attractive suggestion, it is flawed, since all democracies, Ambedkar reminds us, are governed through political regimes in which power rests in the *overwhelming* majority. In his 25 November 1949 speech, therefore, Ambedkar argues that democracy is about securing to all the people of India justice, equality and freedom, but providing in particular ‘adequate safeguards’ for minorities, backward and tribal areas, the depressed, and other backward classes.²²

TENETS FOR SAFEGUARDING CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY

The vast and erudite scholarship on constitutionalism, coming from diverse historical contexts and ideological traditions, shows multitudinous trajectories of constitutionalism. All of them, however, address a common question, which is – why have constitutions? To varying degrees, the responses may be seen as converging on the need to restrict power – modern states being excessively powerful, constitutions provide the basic and higher order rules which compel those who hold political power to govern according to the principles of rule of law. Constitutions are seen as marking the affirmation of popular sovereignty and the idea that power in democracies lies with the people. Moreover, as higher order, overarching and enduring rules, constitutions are expected to protect democracy from the excessively mercurial character of everyday politics.

Presenting the final draft of the Constitution for the consideration of the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar declared that on 26 January 1950, India would be a democratic country, yet he had apprehensions about the future of constitutional democracy in India:

...What would happen to her democratic constitution? Will she be able to maintain it or will she lose it again. ... It is not that India did not know what is democracy. There was a time when India was studded with republics and even where there were monarchies, they were either elected or limited. They were never absolute. It is not that India did not know Parliaments or Parliamentary procedure. A study of the Buddhist Bhikshu Sanghas discloses that rules of parliamentary procedure were known and observed there.... This democratic system India lost. Will she lose it a second time? It is quite possible that in a country like India—where democracy from its long disuse must be regarded as something quite new—there is a danger of democracy giving place to dictatorship. It is quite possible for this new born democracy to retain its form but give place to dictatorship in fact. If there is a landslide, the danger of the second possibility becoming actuality is much greater.²³

Evidently, the question which animated Ambedkar when the draft Constitution was presented for the first time – pertaining to perversion of the Constitution and the need for constitutional morality – continues to be significant for him a year later. An overriding concern seems to be the ‘loss’ of democracy that the people of India suffered and an estrangement from democratic processes, which would make it an entirely new system. Yet, the danger of democracy sliding into dictatorship, could be mitigated, and Ambedkar ties this up to the question of social and economic change, which was for him imperative for creating enabling conditions for democracy in India. It is

in the pursuit of an answer to these questions that he takes recourse to an ethic of democratic action, which has *four components* of which constitutional morality, as a code of just means, was one.

(a) *Constitutional Morality*

Ambedkar asks a fundamental question – ‘If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, what must we do?’ There are according to him, three things that must be done. The first and foremost was the need to ‘hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving social and economic objectives’. Interestingly, however, holding on to constitutional means, would require the abandonment of ‘the methods of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha’, all of which we must bear in mind, were inextricably part of non-violent political action against the colonial regime. These means, Ambedkar is quick to add, were justifiable when there was (as under colonial rule) no recourse available to constitutional means. We may construe this to mean that these actions were legitimate, when directed against the (colonial) state and its laws, which did not flow from constitutionalism and the rule of law, but were dictated by the logic of rule of colonial difference. Ambedkar claimed:

When there was no way left for constitutional methods for achieving economic and social objectives, there was a great deal of justification for unconstitutional methods. But where constitutional methods are open, there can be no justification for these unconstitutional methods. These methods are nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned, the better for us.²⁴

We may recall here the discussion initiated in the earlier section on the idea of constitutional morality in Ambedkar’s speech of 4 November 1948. In this speech Ambedkar following Grote had stressed the importance of the diffusion of constitutional morality, ‘not merely among the majority of any community but throughout the whole’, as an ‘indispensable condition for a Government at once free and peaceable’.²⁵

What was Constitutional morality, and how could it be achieved? Constitutional morality, as Grote explained it, and Ambedkar quoted him, was,

A paramount reverence for the forms of the Constitution enforcing obedience to authority, which meant working under and within these forms, yet combined with the habit of open speech of action, subject only to defined legal control, and unrestrained censure of those very authorities as to all their public acts, combined too, with a perfect confidence in the bosom of every citizen amidst the bitterness of party contests that the forms of Constitution will not be less sacred in the eyes of his opponents than in his own.²⁶

The ‘unrestrained censure’ of those in authority, was, however subject to legal control, and eventually to the ‘preponderant sacredness of the constitution’. The exhortation to constitutional morality referred to an adherence to a mode of association, which was characterised by freedom and self-restraint, in which self-restraint was ‘a precondition for maintaining freedom under properly constituted conditions’. Indeed, self-restraint was an essential requirement to thwart revolution as a mode of social change, since freedom and democracy could be sustained through ‘constitutional methods’ of achieving the objectives of social and economic change.²⁷ Grote had prescribed, ‘nothing less than unanimity or so overwhelming a majority to be tantamount to unanimity’ on the respect for the forms of the constitution, to make possible the exposure of political authority to the ‘full license of pacific criticism’.²⁸ Following from the assertion that constitutional morality was not natural and had to be cultivated and diffused among the entire citizenry, Grote pointed out that the first creation of constitutional morality in any society ‘must be esteemed as interesting historical fact’. Through the ‘spirit of his reforms – equal, popular, and comprehensive, far beyond previous experiences’, the ruler secures what Grote calls ‘the hearty attachment of the body of citizens’.²⁹ There does not however, exist a ‘self-imposed limit to ambition’ and the means to eliminate beforehand any transgression of the limits must be thought of by the ruler, to avoid the necessity of suppressing it later ‘with all that bloodshed and reaction’, which would also require that the ‘free working of the constitution would be suspended at least, if not irrevocably extinguished’.³⁰ Interestingly, for Grote securing the Constitution and pacific criticism of the ruler, required the security which the ruler provided to ‘call in the positive judgment of the citizens’,³¹ who would guard against ‘momentary ferocious excitement’, against the forms of their own democracy ‘nor against the most sacred restraints of their habitual constitutional morality’.³²

(b) *Politics and Bhakti*

Closely related to constitutional morality is another form of morality, and this in Ambedkar is the second important mode for ensuring the preservation of democracy. Taking recourse this time to John Stuart Mill, Ambedkar cautions against what he called *Bhakti* in politics. Quoting Mill, who asked all those who were interested in the preservation of democracy, not ‘to lay down their liberties at the feet of even a great man or to trust him with powers that enable him to subvert their institutions’, Ambedkar distinguishes between expressing ‘gratefulness’ to those ‘great men’ who have ‘rendered life-long services to the nation’. But gratitude

could not be at the expense of honour, and no nation could remain grateful to the extent of surrendering its liberty. To safeguard the loss of liberty and regression into domestication and servitude, was for Ambedkar especially necessary for a country like India:

For in India, Bhakti or what may be called the path of devotion or hero-worship, plays a part unequalled in magnitude by the part it plays in politics in any other country in the world. Bhakti in religion, may be road to salvation of the soul, but in politics Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship.³³

(c) *Fraternity*

With the articulation of the third mode of preservation of democracy, Ambedkar returns to the fundamental contradiction that he sees in Indian society – a contradiction, which he argued, if unresolved, would imperil Indian democracy. He, therefore, advises that mere political democracy, which is what India has set up with certitude with the Constitution, is not sufficient for democracy. India must strive for social democracy as well, which meant a way of life in which liberty, equality and fraternity, comprised the organizing principles of life, not separately, but as a union of trinity, since the separation of even one component of this trinity, would divest democracy of its substance:

We must make out political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognises liberty, equality, and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate in a trinity. They form a union of trinity, in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality, without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them.³⁴

Making the trinity effective in India was, however, difficult since, argued Ambedkar, there was ‘complete absence of two things in India’ – equality and fraternity. Equality was absent on both the social and economic planes. On the social plane, Indian society was based on the principle of ‘graded inequality’, which meant ‘elevation for some and degradation for others’, and on the economic plane there existed an enormous and unbridgeable hiatus between those who had ‘immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty’. This compelled Ambedkar to remark:

On 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote one value. In our

social and economic life, we shall by reason of our social and economic structure continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long we will so do only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment, or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.³⁵

In a speech delivered a couple of years later at the Poona District Law Library, discussed earlier, Ambedkar yet again underscores the importance of equality, indeed revolutionary but peaceful transformation of society, as essential for sustaining democracy. Ambedkar identifies five pre-conditions for an effective and sustainable democracy: There should be no glaring inequalities in society, there should exist an opposition to make democracy successful, there should be equality in law and administration, there should be observance of constitutional morality, there should be ‘public conscience’. A public conscience, ‘means conscience which becomes agitated at every wrong, no matter who is the sufferer, and it means that everybody, whether he suffers that particular wrong or not, is prepared to join him in order to get him relieved’.³⁶

(d) *Public Conscience*

Here we see Ambedkar’s notion of constitutional morality, characterised by the habit of ‘pacific criticism’ of the state under conditions of self-restraint, meet a different ethic of public action. Unlike constitutional morality, which was directed towards inculcating an attitude of respect and obedience towards constitutional principles and legal provisions which flowed from it, its objective being primarily to ensure the sustenance of the institutional edifice of democracy, public conscience enunciated the need for a moral order animated by human suffering. If reverence for law was given primacy in the moral order of constitutionalism, the moral order spawned by public conscience, demanded a bond of a different kind – one which was founded on a feeling of empathy. The moral order of empathy makes the alleviation of human suffering as a result of injustice its preponderant concern. While articulating the need for public conscience, Ambedkar recognizes the presence of injustice in society. What he emphasizes, however, is the uneven spread of injustice—there are some against whom the impact is small, for some it is great—‘And there are some who are *absolutely crushed* under the burden of injustice’.³⁷ Historical wrongs have occurred because a dominant class has been able to crush some, who have suffered in isolation. But when society is animated by a conscience which is public, it becomes

capable of becoming agitated at the wrongs suffered by another person or group, and eager to join those who have suffered to alleviate their suffering. Interestingly, in the example that Ambedkar sites of public conscience in contemporary times is South Africa and its regime of racial segregation, where he points out 'a large number of young boys and girls belonging to the white race are also joining the struggle of the Indians in South Africa. That is called public conscience'.³⁸ Ambedkar now dexterously raises the public conscience of his audience referring to South Africa in India:

We are talking about South Africa. I have been wondering within myself whether we who are talking so much against segregation and so on do not have South Africa in every village. There is; we have only to go and see. There is South Africa everywhere in the village and yet I have very seldom found anybody not belonging to the Scheduled Class taking up the cause of the Scheduled Class and fighting, and why? Because there is no public conscience.³⁹

It is here perhaps that one can identify the churnings of constitutional insurgency in Ambedkar which has the capacity to accommodate within it successive constituent moments. Yet, even when he talks about public conscience as a measure of the ability of people to act in contexts of extreme injustice, as an essential precondition for democracy, Ambedkar makes it compatible with constitutional morality. This is evident from his averment that the absence of public conscience, would develop a 'revolutionary mentality' which imperils democracy. There would appear, however, in Ambedkar a dissonance at this point between what he considers the essential conditions of democracy and the preservation of constitutional democracy. Yet, the dissonance is not substantial if we were to agree that for Ambedkar the conditions of achieving and sustaining democracy were consistent with its objectives – whereby revolutionary changes could be brought about in the lives of people without bloodshed and democracy would exist only when such changes could indeed be brought about by those entrusted with the task of governing. In such a system, socio-economic inequalities which existed along deeply entrenched caste hierarchies, to even think of a system of fraternity in nationhood was for Ambedkar a great delusion. It was in a fraternity, where caste hierarchies, which Ambedkar termed 'anti-national' were erased, that equality and liberty could be actualized. Without fraternity, they would be no more than coats of paint. These conditions were for Ambedkar, essential and integral to a moral order of democracy in which people could live as equal citizens.

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NOTES

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6. Roy, 2013.
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8. Baxi, 2002.
9. Baxi, 2008.
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20. B.R. Ambedkar's speech in the Constituent Assembly on the Objectives Resolution, CAD, Vol.I-VI, Book no.1 p.101.
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23. Ibid., pp.977-78.
24. Ibid., p.978.
25. Speech in the Constituent Assembly, 4 November 1948, CAD, Vol. VII, Book no.2, p.38.
26. Ibid.
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29. Ibid, p. 132
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., p. 955
33. Speech in the Constituent Assembly, 25 November 1949, CAD, Vol. X-XII, Book no.5, p. 979.
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37. 'English Address at Poona District Law Library, Pune', 22 December 1952, in Narendra Jadhav ed., *Ambedkar Speaks*, Vol.1, 2013, p. 293 (emphasis added).
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The Nationalism Debate and India's Northeast Experience

UDAYON MISRA

The current debate on nationalism has thrown up a lot of cardinal questions about the course and content of Indian nationalism. Polarisation along religious lines, growing intolerance and violence against certain sections of the country's citizens have marked the espousal of a monochromatic and majoritarian nationalism which is totally at odds with what had been envisaged by the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution. Glib generalizations and random definitions have further confused the issue and all those who have reservations about just one version of nationalism and who believe in the plurality and multiplicity of the nation have been at the receiving end of the 'patriots' and 'nationalists'. It is in this context that one would like to refer to India's 'Northeast Experience' which has a completely different story to tell. Not only have all the accepted markers of Indian nationalism been questioned in this region but its very parameters have been forced to expand so as to include communities/nationalities which had never been a part of the freedom/national struggle and whose perceptions of freedom and independent living stood at odds with the very idea of India as seen from the majoritarian viewpoint. Northeast India certainly holds a lesson for all those who rush to use words like 'seditionist' and 'traitor' on those who refuse to accept the idea of a monochromatic nationalism; for it was here that the Indian nation-state received its first major challenges and, in the course of long and protracted struggles, 'traitors' and 'separatists' have eventually become a part of the Indian national firmament. The issues that have been thrown up by the north-eastern region through its countless identity movements aimed at securing an equal and rightful place within the Indian Union, have not only successfully challenged many set perceptions about nation and nationalism but have also resulted in a major learning

experience for the Indian nation-state. These range from certain major questions about the country's federal structure to issues of political and cultural autonomy of small nationalities and a re-look at the entire discourse of the nation and its sovereignty.

First, let me take up the issue of territory and sovereignty which are so central to the idea of nationalism. Seen from this angle, anyone living in India who questions these two defining factors is immediately regarded as a traitor and fifth columnist. Yet, it is significant that just a few months before Independence, on 27-28 June 1947, the Government of India had arrived at an agreement with the Naga National Council which not only kept open the question of territorial sovereignty but also ensured wide ranging powers of autonomy—almost verging on independent rule to a body which was neither fully representative of the different Naga tribes nor was it an elected organization or political party. Here, I would like to throw some light in brief on some of the provisions of what is commonly known as the Hydari Agreement, named after Sir Akbar Hydari, the then Governor of Assam which at that time was made up of almost all the provinces or states which today make up the 'Northeast'. The agreement gave wide-ranging judicial, executive and legislative powers to the Naga National Council. Some of the important terms of the Agreement are as follows: *Judicial*—all cases whether civil or criminal arising between Nagas in the Naga Hills will be disposed of by duly constituted Naga Courts according to Naga customary law or such law as may be introduced with the consent of duly recognized Naga representative organizations—except that where a sentence of transportation or death has been passed there will be a right of appeal to the Governor. *Executive*—a general principle was accepted that what the Naga Council is prepared to pay for, the Naga Council should control.

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This principle will apply equally to the work done as well as the staff. *Legislative*—that no laws passed by the Provincial or Central Legislature which would materially affect the terms of this agreement or the religious practices of the Nagas shall have legal force in the Naga Hills without the consent of the Naga Council. In cases of dispute as to whether any law did so affect this agreement or not the matter would be referred by the Naga Council to the Governor who would then direct that the law in question should not have legal force in the Naga Hills pending the decision of the Central Government. *Land*—that land with all its resources in the Naga Hills should not be alienated to a non-Naga without the consent of the Naga Council. *Taxation*—that the Naga Council will be responsible for the imposition, collection, and expenditure of land revenue and house tax and of such other taxes as may be imposed by the Naga Council. Interestingly, *Clause 9* of the Agreement stated: *Period of Agreement*—“The Governor of Assam as the Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of ten years to ensure the due observance of this agreement; at the end of this period the Naga Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement, regarding the future of Naga people arrived at.”

Thus, apart from the wide-ranging powers given to the Naga National Council (NNC) in the spheres of revenue collection, ownership of land and customary laws, the rather ambiguous Clause 9 also gave the Nagas the option to decide what shape their future relationship with the Indian Union would take after a period of ten years. Although the Hydari Agreement fell through because the NNC under Angami Zapu Phizo read this clause as one granting the Nagas the right to separate from India if they so desired, yet the very signing of such an agreement detailing wide-ranging autonomy for the Naga people is something unique as far as the newly emerging Indian nation-state was concerned. It signalled the acceptance of the existence of a highly autonomous state or region within the Indian Union. It could be argued that the Hydari Agreement was the first such instance of the principle of “shared sovereignty”¹ being attempted. In recent times this idea has been very much in circulation and the debate continues. Irrespective of arguments for or against shared sovereignty, what is significant is that the idea of shared sovereignty has found a place in the nation’s political discourse, all the ultra-nationalist rhetoric notwithstanding. This in itself suggests the expanding parameters of the Indian nation-state.

Meanwhile, the armed insurrection in the then Naga Hills district of Assam continued and in 1960, the Government of India worked out an agreement with a section of the Naga people led by Dr. Imkongliba Ao which sought a

negotiated solution of the Naga issue within the ambit of the Constitution of India. Most of the provisions of the Hydari Agreement relating to wide-scale politico-cultural, executive and judicial autonomy were incorporated in the 1960 Sixteen Point Agreement. But there were two important differences. One was that *power would be delegated to an elected government, like all the other Indian states*. The other (Clause 2) stated that *Nagaland shall be under the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India*.² The clauses of the Sixteen Point Agreement make it clear that the autonomy being granted to Nagaland, especially in the matter of land and its resources set it apart from the other states of the Indian Union and virtually prepared the ground for creating a “nation within a nation” by placing it under the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India.³

The Sixteen Point Agreement was followed by the Thirteenth Amendment of the Indian Constitution (1962) which ushered in the State of Nagaland in the year 1963, a good sixteen years after Independence. But what is significant about the creation of Nagaland is that for the first time in the history of post-independence India it was incorporated in the Constitution that “land and its resources” would belong to the Naga people.⁴ The new Article 371A stated that the Special Provision with respect to the State of Nagaland would read as follows: “Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, (a) no Act of Parliament in respect of the (i) religious or social practices of the Nagas, (ii) Naga customary law and procedure, (iii) administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law, (iv) ownership and transfer of land and its resources,⁵ shall apply to the State of Nagaland, unless the legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides”. Though apparently, no major departure from the unitary spirit of the Constitution had been made while creating a separate culture-political space for a small nationality, yet an important new beginning had been made in the very acknowledgement by the Indian nation-state of the land rights and rights over natural resources of the Naga people and that no changes would be possible without the assent of the Nagaland Assembly. It is indeed significant that for the first time the Constitution recognized the rights of a constituent state and its residents to wide-ranging social and economic rights and makes it binding that any changes that may take place will be dependent on the will of the elected legislature of the new state. This is much in advance of the Sixth Schedule provisions of the Constitution which were eventually nullified to a great extent by the contrary pulls between the District Councils and the elected legislature. The provisions of the 13th Amendment are of great irrelevance in the context of the present, rather acrimonious debate on nationalism marked in certain quarters by intolerance to any views that may seem to run

counter to the monocultural and monochromatic version of nationalism.

What is even more significant for the course of Indian nationalism is that within a year of the formation of the State of Nagaland, a Peace Mission was set up at the initiative of the Council of Naga Baptist Churches and it was headed by Jayprakash Narayan, with the then Assam Chief Minister Bimala Prasad Chaliha and Rev. Michael Scott as members. In what may be termed as the first major civil society intervention in an area of armed conflict, the Peace Mission recognized the 'national' content of the Naga struggle which it referred to as one for self-determination. The Peace Mission's efforts led to the first ceasefire between the Government of India and the NNC. This ceasefire marked a major milestone in the history of Indian nationalism and opened up path for negotiations with non-state actors who questioned the very idea of the Indian nation and were virtually at war with the Indian state.

In this essay I have concentrated primarily on the Naga struggle and its impact on the course and content of Indian nationalism because it was the first major challenge and the most protracted one against the Indian nation-state. A struggle which was initially seen as a secessionist one aimed at breaking up the integrity of the Indian Republic but was not only accepted as a national struggle of the Nagas but negotiations were carried out with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) on foreign soil as demanded by the latter. That the Government of India opted for negotiations with an insurgent group on foreign soil was in itself a sign of the confidence and growing maturity of the Indian democratic process of the nation-state. Today, negotiations on the Naga issue have involved issues ranging from wide-ranging political autonomy to shared sovereignty. How far all these will be worked out is a separate matter. Some serious doubts have been raised about the Naga Framework Agreement because the states neighbouring Nagaland are apprehensive of their boundaries being re-drawn to accommodate the demand for a greater Nagalim. States like Assam and Manipur have voiced their concerns and have made it clear that any change in their boundaries would not be acceptable to the government and people of these states. It remains to be seen how this will be worked out. But the very fact that the Government of India has discussed the issue of a separate flag and a different working relationship with the Nagas (within the ambit of the Constitution of India) is indicative of the long way the Indian nation-state has travelled in all these years following Independence. What is certainly of great importance is that the issues that have been thrown up are of major consequence to the course and content of Indian nationalism. All these are evidently part of the Indian state's 'Northeast Experience'.

Today, there is a concerted effort on the part of some political outfits and organizations to appropriate the north-eastern region into the fold of a mono-cultural nationalism and a certain version of the nation. That this would not be possible is borne out by the fact that the struggle to re-define and expand the parameters of the Indian nationalist discourse began in the north-eastern region much before Independence. We may also take into account Assam's struggle against the Grouping Proposals of the Cabinet Mission and its strong stand in the Constituent Assembly for an equitable distribution of resources among the constituent states of the Indian Union. It is important to remember that Assam was one of the first states where there was a serious debate on the issue of dual citizenship. Despite being an active participant in the freedom struggle, Assam has consistently fought for its separate existence and has time and again raised central issues about the nationalist discourse. It is significant that despite having voted a BJP government into power in 2016, there has been consistent resistance in the state over the past two years against attempts at erode its distinct cultural and historical identity. This was evident during the Namami Brahmaputra Festival held last year wherein attempts were made to show the river Brahmaputra and its civilization as part of the Gangetic-Hindu one. Priests from northern India were brought in to perform *aarti* on the river bank and this was seen as an insult to local culture. The attempt to appropriate the Brahmaputra into the broader pan-Indian grid was seen by many as an attack on the distinct culture and tradition of the region. While it is true that Assam and the Brahmaputra Valley have shared centuries of cultural interaction with the rest of the sub-continent, yet the region has always prided itself on retaining its distinct cultural entity, quite separate from the Hindu "mainstream". Similarly, attempts at bulldozing the region into a mono-cultural brand of nationalism have met with resistance in different quarters. This may be seen as a negative response of the Assamese people towards attempts by the Hindu right to portray Srimanta Sankardeva as yet another "Indian" saint-reformer. Unlike several of the north-eastern states, Assam has prided itself of its long cultural relationship with the rest of the country. But, this has always been on its own terms. Beginning with the momentous struggle against the Grouping Proposals of the Cabinet Mission to the sharp differences between Jawaharlal Nehru and the Assam Chief Minister Gopinath Bardoloi on issues relating to post-1947 refugee rehabilitation and the right over resources of the federating states of the Indian Union, the region has been putting up a consistent fight to preserve its identity—despite being quite insignificant electorally as far as the Indian political process and representation in the Lok Sabha is concerned. This struggle of Assam and the

north-eastern region to be accepted as an equal partner in the Indian federation has certainly helped in re-defining Indian nationalism.

Constraints of space do not permit me to discuss the contributions of states like Manipur and Mizoram towards expanding the parameters of Indian nationalism. But it may suffice to say that several significant questions that these states have raised about the content of Indian nationalism and the nature of the Indian nation-state have certainly led to an overall re-look. It is a lesson for all those who are trying to push through a majoritarian mono-cultural idea of the Indian nation today and are posing a challenge to the plurality and diversity that has always marked the Indian polity. Those who talk of sedition and anti-nationalism whenever there is a talk of alternative nationalism need to remember that several of the small nationalities of the north-eastern region were never a part of the freedom struggle and because of the resistance they put up against the Indian nation-state during the first decades after Independence, that the latter had to finally provide a space within the Constitution to such nationalities. This process still continues. Hence, incorporating the 'Northeast Experience' would mean moving away from set presumptions and ideas about nationalism and the nation-state towards a highly diverse and syncretic position marked by an accommodative Constitution and the rule of law.

NOTES

1. The idea of "shared sovereignty" seems to have gained a lot of attention in recent times. Quite often, this has been suggested as a mechanism to solve disputes between two parties by delineating the areas which each party would control. The NSCN has set up a panel to work on the idea of shared sovereignty and the special relationship of the Nagas with India following the signing of the Framework Agreement in August 2015. The idea of shared sovereignty has come up in preparation for IAS exams and one such question was as follows: "It is said that the doctrine of 'shared sovereignty', one of the demands of Naga rebels, can have unexpected consequences for India. Examine briefly the meaning of 'shared sovereignty' and examine what consequences this demand brings for India". <http://www.insightsonindia.com/2015/09/11/4-> accessed on 15-9-2016. "Shared Sovereignty", by encouraging a "nation within a nation" has also been seen by some as going against the very principle of the Union of States as defined in Article 1 of the Constitution of India.
2. It was only several years later that this clause was made ineffective.
3. The Ministry of External Affairs was initially called *Ministry of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations* and was renamed the *Ministry of External Affairs* in 1948. The ministry was responsible for the administration of Naga Hills, Tuensang Area as per the Indian Emigration Act of 1923 till 1972 when Nagaland was transferred to the Ministry of Home Affairs.
4. Refer *The Constitution (Thirteenth Amendment) Act, 1962*.
5. When the Mizoram Accord was signed in 1986, there was mention about right to land but the "resources" part was omitted.

Pursuing the Elusive Goal of Systemic Change in School Education

C.N. SUBRAMANIAM

(with inputs from Arvind Sardana, Anjali Noronha and Rashmi Paliwal)

Eklavya was founded on the principle of building and testing models of educational change for macro level implementation. This was to be a combination of two opposing principles— of small experiments at local levels by ‘voluntary efforts’ and implementing ‘schemes’ over large geographies with the help of state structures. In other words, this also meant service provision to a small population and systemic change reaching in principle to all parts of a state. The object of this intervention was to create a model for meaningful ‘activity-based, environment-based, inquiry-based’ education. A subtext of democratisation was always present, of involving teachers and students in the process, and decentralisation of planning, decision making, review, financial powers and implementation.

The founders of Eklavya were well aware of the tension between micro level experiment and macro level implementation, between civic voluntarism and state enterprise. The foundation document, significantly entitled ‘Evolving Systems for the introduction and diffusion of Educational innovations -Micro-level Experiments to Macro-level Action,’ (1982) had the following to say:

Perhaps the only meaningful innovations have been the ones tried by certain voluntary groups from time to time. For obvious reasons, these groups have the ability to attract motivated and creative persons and provide them with adequate freedom to experiment and innovate. However, the failure of these voluntary attempts to create a significant dent in the system illustrates the second aspect of the problem, i.e. the identification of structures and processes that can diffuse Micro-Level Innovations, while sustaining quality, into Macro-Level action programmes. In the absence of such structures, all high quality Micro-Level innovations remain scattered and unconnected.... Hence, the utilization of wider existing structures and networks for the purpose of diffusion becomes critical.¹

This was an age when the corporate houses and the market investment in education were kept at bay. So, the ‘structures and networks’ that could be identified were state structures and institutions. The document further held out the hope of a meaningful partnership between state and ‘voluntary’ efforts:

Joint ventures involving voluntary agencies and the Government are suitable set-ups for introducing such innovations. Such combined set-ups provide the academic freedom and flexibility normally absent in rigid Governmental systems, without which it is virtually impossible to create and test innovations. On the other hand, the availability of Government structures and administrative machinery ensures the implementation of such ideas so that they do not remain as mere laboratory endeavors.²

Within the government system special hopes were pinned on school teachers and the possibility of them fuelling the turnaround of the formal education system. Nearly four decades down the line, it may be instructive to reflect on this strategy. This not only means a simplistic account of what was achieved and what was not, but also to interrogate the very idea of ‘systemic change’.

In one of his addresses to the General Council of the ‘First International’, Marx is reported to have posed the following paradox and also suggested a working solution to it:

On the one hand a change of social circumstances was required to establish a proper system of education, on the other hand a proper system of education was required to bring about a change of social circumstances; we must therefore commence where we were.³

Systemic change in education and social order appear to have a Lucknowi relation of ‘*pahle aap*’. The chequered history of Soviet Education after the ‘change of social

* C.N. Subramaniam and Rashmi Paliwal have a background in history. Arvind Sardana and Anjali Noronha have a background in economics. All of them have been associated with Eklavya since 1980’s.

circumstances' seems to reinforce the paradox for the change in education system (certainly in its curricular and pedagogic aspects) did not come easily after the revolution. Indeed, promoters of change like Anatoly Lunacharsky and Nadezhda Krupskaya were greatly disappointed to see themselves marginalised and their pet ideas abandoned. Perhaps a similar fate awaited John Dewey who was invited to design the new education system of a secular and democratic Turkey after Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's revolution. Nearer home the momentous Gandhian Basic Education met with a similar fate in the first decades of independent India.

Eklavya's engagement with 'systemic change' *prior* to 'change of social circumstances' thus merits some serious consideration. The engagement with the larger system was underwritten by the fact that the document cited above was discussed in a meeting called by the Planning Commission of India and attended by several central and state government agencies which agreed to support Eklavya in its efforts. This included funding by Department of Science and Technology and the Madhya Pradesh (MP) government, permission to work with government schools of MP by its education department, logistical support by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and not the least, the University Grant Commission (UGC) sponsoring university academics to work on the project. Thus, at least on the face of it, the presiding forces of the system were endorsing the change.

The idea of micro-level 'field testing' for macro-level implementation required that the 'pilot' schools chosen should not be handpicked for being special but for being normal as any other school. Thus, the student population as well as the teachers covered would represent the broad spectrum of schools in the MP state. This would enable the programme to strike a middle path, tempered by the views and constrictions of both those enthusiastic about the change or lukewarm or downright opposed to it. It was to be a negotiation between these diverse strands. The Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP), was thus tried out in 16 schools in two different blocks of Hoshangabad district and eventually extended to the entire district.

The HSTP, which was to be the flagship of change had been developed through the collaborative efforts of Kishore Bharati, Friends Rural Centre, Delhi University science departments and scientists drawn from other institutions. In fact, this broad-based collaboration of professional scientists was part of the design to ensure broad consensus within the scientific community, another actor in the 'system'. In addition, the two non-government organisations based in Hoshangabad district drew in a cross section of school teachers and college teachers to act as part of the

conceptualising team.

The HSTP was designed as a composite programme, which included changing of text books, class room practices, examination system, teacher training, school follow-up, monthly meeting of teachers, periodic replenishment of science kit and six-monthly meetings of 'Sanchalan Samiti' for review and planning. Systemic change after all could not be piecemeal, but a 'package'. Each of these components were documented and appropriate orders were issued by the government secretariat. During the course of the programme, all these were made part of a comprehensive 'Manual of Administration' duly issued under the sign and seal of the secretary, School Education. Thus, the elements of change were implanted deeply within the system and duly stitched. To further confirm the systemic nature of the change, all schools of a district, whether government or private were to be covered by the programme.

However, like the heart of the giants of fairy tales, the engine that drove the entire package of innovation lay outside the government system, in Eklavya. And this was not by accident or default. It was essential to ensure that the programme did not suffer from the fate of most other government programmes, short-term focussed implementation followed by abandonment of the programme, amnesia and erasure of memories. In the 1980s the bureaucracy had reached the apogee of inefficiency, where every routine bureaucratic job had to be coaxed and done with external push. Nevertheless, the question remained as to how could the change be systemic if its driving force was outside of the system? Conversely, could change work if its engine was located within the system and susceptible to its normal functioning? The programme was actually bogged down by a malfunctioning school system – very high student-teacher ratio almost nearing 80 to 100 students per teacher; poor replenishment of science kit; rapid decline of teaching standards and reduction of the exam system into a farce; middle schools facing the learning deficit of students coming from primary classes. The problem of systemic inefficiency thus could only be partially handled by placing the engine outside of it. This could not address the larger issues like those listed above or those relating to social exclusion based on gender, class, caste and tribe.

A second critical weakness of the programme was the very slow pace of 'scaling'. The programme was seeded in 16 schools in 1972, it was implemented in all schools of Hoshangabad district in 1979, it was further seeded in dozen or so schools in several 'divisions' in 1985-89. Scaling was also to be lateral, into other middle school subjects like the Social Sciences, and into primary and secondary levels. The HSTP was focussed on science in classes vi to viii. Micro-level model building for primary

school curriculum and middle school social sciences had been completed by 1990 and had worked well in the pilot schools. Thus, proposals were drafted for 'state-level' implementation of all the programmes in the early 1990s. The 1990s were also the years when the state experimented with 'decentralisation' in the form of the Panchayati Raj. Faced with the corrosive influence of globalisation, the state had to invoke popular mandate in a number of ways including devolution of limited powers to Panchayati Raj Institutions, generation of mass movements like the Ram Janmabhoomi or Mandal movements. The state governments used this moment to seek popular opinion on curriculum and often found such opinion supporting fairly regressive models. This added a new dimension to 'systemic change'. Popular opinion building through media campaign and participating in networks of middle class opinion builders became a component of the 'system'. In some ways this became synonymous with popular approval and acceptance. Most of these networks, themselves lacking the requisite understanding, fell upon 'what happens elsewhere' especially in the newly emerging elite private schools and in the NCERT (which was the 'national level').

Understandably, the early 1990s marks a watershed that transformed the nature of Indian polity and state. The realm of education witnessed a paradoxical shift. On the one hand the state actively cut down its expenditure and promoted privatisation and on the other hand it became hyper active on two fronts – to bring in children hitherto outside the pale of formal education into the schools on a war footing and promote 'joyful learning' in the class rooms. The education sector was opened up for international funding and hence to international experts and monitoring. All this led to informalisation of teaching profession, privatisation of schools and poorly funded 'schoollets' for the poor and the marginalised and also to transformation of curriculum and class room practices. The spearhead of this transformation was the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP).

While the state government put the proposals for scaling up the middle school science and social science programmes in the back burner, it invited Eklavya to join in the exercise of developing a state level curricular package for primary classes. A collaborative effort of MP State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT), UNICEF and Eklavya, it proved to be an exciting break from the conventional curriculum and also curriculum framing processes. It was meant for the entire state and indeed, was implemented across the state. It was broad based, in that it incorporated the ideas and requirements identified by a diverse resource group of experts and teachers and administrators. It was approved by a Steering Committee consisting of national experts. The resultant curricular

package termed 'Seekhna Sikhana package' took the state school system by a storm and sought to transform the actual classroom practices of teachers. Massive orientation programmes and publication programme accompanied it. But within a couple of years even before the last round of books were ready, a reversal took place. The minister of education and the chief secretary replaced the Director of SCERT in an overnight move and called a halt to the entire programme. The new Director had a brief of dismantling the curricular changes. Eventually the state went back to ante-diluvian primary curriculum and text books.

Within a couple of years, by 2002 the HSTP was closed down along with the social science programme ostensibly on the plea of moving towards a uniform curriculum for the entire state and arguing that an experimental programme could not go on forever in a district or two. One of the main issues cited was the absence of 'popular support' for the programme among local elected representatives.⁴ While it may be debated if this demand for popular support was a ploy or there was a real swell of public opinion against educational innovations, the fact remains that the perceptions of the middle class and its anxieties do have a palpable impact on curricular decisions of the state. Thus, the system which was initially defined as the state institutions and broad spectrum of academic and teaching community dissolves into amorphous 'public opinion'. Sociological imagination will perhaps help us to understand the deeper structures that underly what has been perceived as systemic – working of state bureaucracy, school system, academic community, public opinion – for the similarities between the 'failure' of Early Soviet experiments, Basic Education, HSTP, Lok Jumbish, are too uncanny to be accidental.

As it dawned in the late 1980s and early 1990s that the process of systemic change would not be a happy progression from 'micro to macro,' Eklavya began exploring other dimensions of change. One of the most appealing possibilities was 'idea level expansion' – broadcasting the new pedagogic and curricular ideas among activists across the country. These were also the heady days of the 'Total Literacy Campaigns' another of those ventures of partnership between civil society organisations like Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP), Bharath Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS) and the state. These movements spawned organisations which found school education more attractive and they took to the ideas of Eklavya in a big way. This also created the ground for the DPEP collaboration between civil society organisations and the state departments in both curriculum development and implementation. As in Madhya Pradesh this greatly loosened the stranglehold of convention on curricular matters and spring-time of experiments swept the country. Eklavya and like-minded organisations participated in textbook development and

teacher orientation in several states. The prized resource was of course the large community of school teachers who had experienced new pedagogy and were committed to it. They travelled to different states to participate in workshops for text book development etc.

As the wave of DPEP subsided by 2002 a new process of churning began with the right-wing making inroads into curricular matters in NCERT and Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). Three years later came the National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF) which squarely placed 'constructivism' and 'social constructivism' on national educational agenda. Somehow this seemed to gel with the emerging concern about bringing children of the most deprived and marginal sections to the school. The entire state machinery took up this task in earnest and sought to ensure universalisation of school access. Constructivist ideas about children's own knowledge base and motivation and broadening the goals of education, seemed to replace the older ideas driven by rote learning, drill, examination, detention and punishment. The NCERT and following it, the various state governments got busy producing text books supposedly based on constructivism. Eklavya and like-minded organisations once again found themselves in the midst of busy action assisting various governments in developing new text books to be used in all schools.

Ironically, the spirit of innovation appeared to ebb once the new textbooks were published, and the other components of the 'package' classroom processes, teacher orientation, decentralisation, etc. took a back seat. This meant that the new ideas were seldom implemented on the ground. Of course, a concerted attempt at evaluation reform was tried by replacing the formal examination system with Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE). The Right to Education (RTE) Act had mandated it in place of the older system of terminal examination and the practice of 'failing' students. The Act itself can be seen as an epitome of systemic change. A law ensuring universal and compulsory formal education for eight years, mandating some minimal standards for infrastructure of schools and maximalist standards for quality of teaching was passed some sixty years after Independence. The deadlines for implementing its provisions are still being extended ten years after its passing, and steps have been taken to amend some of the crucial provisions of the Act. Thus, a few years down the line we are witnessing a radical return to the old order. The clamour to narrow down the goals of education, restore rote learning, examination and detention is mounting and has almost been successful in a number of states. This appears to be backed by a consensus across political formations of left, right and the centre, ostensibly concerned by the falling standards of learning

in the school system.

On the one hand, the system appears to have had an uncanny ability to shake off in due course all innovations foisted on it and wipe out their memories. So much so that at the ground level, in ordinary schools, things appear more dismal than ever. On the other hand, there is a rich legacy of well documented ideas, practices, processes, and systems besides a very large and growing number of people and institutions that carry forward the task of educational change with a vision and capability. These interventions take multiple forms, of policy shaping, law making, litigation, curricular changes, text book drafting, teacher orientation, and on-site support in the schools by individuals, individuals situated within the formal school system, in corporate houses or their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, non-government organisations (NGOs) of various kinds etc. These result in continued contention and dialogue and frequently, ephemeral cooperation among the stakeholders. The larger system appears to absorb elements of change while resisting any real difference of substance. For example, the absorption of new text books without accompanying teacher orientation, class room practice or evaluation methods which characterises the NCF 2005 interventions.

There is then also a strange and paradoxical tendency within the state-run education system: towards creating micro worlds of ideal schooling. This began with the 1986 policy decision to create Navodaya schools in every district run by the central government, and various state governments have added their own version of such islands. These ostensibly have both a systemic purpose and a micro service perspective. They are simultaneously supposed to be 'pace setter' or 'model' schools and also to cater to the 'talented' children to be selected by examination. The non-government actors are also constantly pushed towards service delivery in small geographies or niches. However, the fact is that actual 'improvement' does not pass critical muster. It is not possible to really demonstrate 'real improvement in achievement levels'; we always end up arguing that things are not worse off or marginally better, or that we have achieved something not bargained for (i.e. 'children are more articulate' as if this happened because of the intervention). Isolated anecdotes and individual examples are held out as demonstration of change. Thus, the mirage of micro-level effectiveness reinforces macro-level ephemerality of systemic change. The net result appears to be vibrant presence in the world of ideas, policies, in community of people but little on the ground level practice.

There appears to be larger, much larger, sociological historical processes at work which are pushing the 'system' to structure mass education in a particular way and

which use and discard these ‘innovative’ ideas, policies, practices and communities in their stride. Broadly, I would characterise this process as massive inclusion of the marginalised into the formal education system combined with intensive stratification and diversification of schooling. A society going through a massive process of dispossession and marginalisation requires mass schooling to sustain a semblance of equity. At the same time, the unprecedented rise of inequality leads to stratification and segmentation of schooling. This in effect dehomogenises the education system and thus, undermines one of the basic assumptions of our intervention. However, diversification of schools creates spaces where innovative ideas are welcome though not for mass of the children we had hoped to reach.

I would like to conclude this discussion by turning the gaze inwards – into our own naiveté and failings. In hind sight, one may argue that we began with simplistic notions of the ‘system’ and its workings. The group of well-meaning scientists or social scientists hoping to change the way the subjects were taught had probably little understanding of the sociological and even philosophical underpinnings of systems and change. They also understood little of how the state system worked and changed. The state they confronted was not static, but was constantly changing and itself responding to complex changes in society, economy and international settings. The nature of the state itself was undergoing a transformation at the turn of the millennium spurred by neo-liberal pressures. The gaze of the NGOs like Eklavya was often turned away from transformations taking

place within the society: the hardening of competitive caste and communal identities, growing anxieties about employment in neo-liberal world where land and other traditional resources were vaporising, and parental anxieties about children in an age of open access through media, and the pressures they were exerting on the state. Funded neither by the education departments nor by mass subscription, the NGOs remain largely unaccountable both towards the state and the civil society. While this gives the necessary autonomy, it conversely undermines both the legitimacy and the perceptiveness of the NGOs. They can hence only act as limited catalysts of change but not engineer the change. That legitimately lies in the sphere of state and political action of civil society.

NOTES

1. ‘Evolving Systems for the Introduction and Diffusion of Educational Innovations: Micro-level Experiments to Macro-level Action’, Proposal for the creation of an Institute for Educational Research and Innovative Action in Madhya Pradesh, February, 1982, p.8, https://www.eklavya.in/pdfs/Books/HSTP/past_work/documents/evolving_systems_for_the_introduction.pdf (accessed on 27 May 2018).
2. Ibid. p.12.
3. Karl Marx, ‘On General Education’, from the Minutes of the General Council Meetings of August 10 and 17, 1869, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/iwma/documents/1869/education-speech.htm> (accessed on 26 May 2018).
4. For detailed documentation of the closure of the programmes see, Eklavya Foundation New Beginnings, Bhopal, 2005.

Language of Home and Language of Literary Expression – A Discourse

RAHAMATH TARIKERE
(translated by Shakira Jabeen B.)

Choosing the home language as the medium of literary expression is natural to writers anywhere in the world. Could there be a possibility of such a choice being read as unnatural? This paper intends to see the above possibility with a focus on the writers from the Muslim community in Karnataka. Muslims of Karnataka are linguistically different from the Muslims of other states in the South. The Muslims of Kerala and Tamil Nadu speak the official language of the State as home language too. Until recently, the home language of Muslims of Andhra Pradesh and the language of administration of the State were one and the same. However, the multilingual space of Karnataka throws up multiple languages to choose from.

As a religious community the Muslims of Karnataka use either Urdu, Kannada, Navayath Konkani, Tamil, Byary or Moplah as home language. If one can assign a region wise division, then Muslims of Bidar, Gulbarga and Princely state of Mysore (old Mysore) area use Urdu: Muslims of South Canara use Byary and Moplah and the Muslims of Bhatkal region of North Canara Use Navayath Konkani. In the rural areas of Hyderabad and Mumbai Karnataka regions, Kannada is the home language of Muslims. The migrated Labbai Muslims use Tamil as their home language. Muslim writers in Karnataka use one or the other of the above languages for creative writing. In ancient times, writers were recognised by their religious background- Jaina poets, Vaishnava poets, Veerashaiva poets, etc. It is not possible to tag such adjectives to writers in modern times. Besides, 'Muslim' writers, 'Christian' writers etc, are not acceptable adjectives in the literary world. There are

writers who have objected to their grouping under 'Dalith' (Dalit) and 'Muslim' frameworks. The group that's called 'Dalith writers' is more an adjective used due to historical reasons and has grown into a genre today. However, in a society that is divided on the lines of caste, creed and religion, there is a need to know the language that writers choose to express, the experiential world within which they choose to posit their work and the difficulties they face in communication. To understand all this, it is necessary to fathom the socio-religious background which influences the choices they make with language and vocabulary. The term 'Muslim writers' is chosen here as a loose cover term to discuss the role of home language and the language of literary expression and the diversity that prevails under the nomenclature. For some writers, the home language, the language of surrounding environment and the language of literary expression are all the same. The writers of Bidar area who write in Urdu or the Kannada speaking Pinjara Muslim writers can be cited as examples for this mode of choice. For many other writers, their home language, language of the surrounding environment and the language of literary expression are three different things. The moot point is to see the linguistic, literary, cultural possibilities and dilemmas that surface in these two different situations- when the language of literary expression and the home language are the same and different. The language choice made by the Muslim writers of Karnataka falls under four models: (1) writing in the home language, (2) writing in the language of environment, (3) writing in both these languages, and (4) writing only in English.

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WRITING IN THE HOME LANGUAGE

Writers who choose to write in their home language do not face difficulties in communicating shared cultural ethos. Hence, the writers who write in Urdu, Byary and Konkani share a direct communicative connection with the people of their religious community. It is this ability of the writer to communicate his experience and empathy to the reader that makes for an intimate relationship between the two. However, this intimacy has reduced the possibility of the writer being a critical insider. One of the reasons for this situation where a thinking writer decides not to critically evaluate his community is the historical facets of post-partition India. The Muslim community was viewed with suspicion and had to prove its patriotism to the nationalists. The community had to shoulder the collective guilt of the Partition. Muslim writers were, therefore, burdened with a necessity to adopt a defensive stand about their own religion and to write with willing caution about other religions. Post-Ayodhya (1992) and Godhra (2002), communal clashes intensified this difficulty. The writers of Pakistan and Bangladesh do not face such compulsions. But the Christian, Sikh, Hindu and other writers belonging to minority religious communities of those countries might have faced a similar predicament. Fundamentalism coupled with blasphemy laws prevalent in those countries have made their writers feel more insecure. Writers like Sadat Hasan Manto in Pakistan and Taslima Nasreen of Bangladesh faced wrath for their writings. It is not only the writers who face such difficulties, Human Rights activists who think beyond the diktat of religion face similar backlash. But that is a different issue which merits another discussion.

Writers who choose to write in their home language, especially the ones who write in Urdu, have not been able to address the non-Muslim life and its experience in a big way. The monolingual connection between the Muslim writers who write in Urdu and their readers has isolated them into cultural islands. These cultural islands, huddled together, are visible in Urdu schools and universities where there are a large number of Muslim students and teachers. Most Urdu writers of Karnataka lack a give and take relationship with Kannada literature. Their writings have remained unknown to the Kannada writers. Many Urdu poets from Hyderabad Karnataka have made a name at the national level but the Kannada literary world doesn't know them. Their works are not translated into Kannada which leads to mutual anonymity. Though this is a technical reason, there are also other cultural and educational reasons. There is a strong mindset to place 'Kannada' within the paradigm of 'Hindu' in Karnataka. The Gokak agitation of 1982 was, in reality, against the 'mother tongue' status accorded to Sanskrit with an objective to give Kannada a prime place. Unfortunately,

it turned into a narrative against the Muslims who spoke Urdu as home language. The decision of Doordarshan to air news in Urdu leading to communal riots can be cited as another example of tagging official language with the majority community.

The Urdu speaking traditional Muslims have a notion that Kannada is a part of 'Hindu' identity and 'Urdu' is a part of Muslim identity. This polarization is visible in the pictures and paintings of historical figures, Gods and Goddesses displayed on the walls of Urdu and Kannada schools. The pictures of Tipu Sultan and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad are rarely found on the walls of Kannada schools. Some Kannada schools display boards with '*baagilolu Kai mugiduolage baa or Jnana Degulavidu*' meaning 'this is the temple of knowledge, enter with folded hands in reverence'. Such display gives a religious edge to modern schooling which in turn is not inclusive. The Urdu writers generally would have studied in Urdu medium schools. They reside in urban areas. The concentration of Urdu speakers, educated in Urdu medium and the Urdu writers share a strange connection with each other. They huddle together to form an island psyche.

WRITING IN THE LANGUAGE OF ENVIRONMENT

Writers who choose to write in a language spoken outside their home enjoy the possibility of exploring and portraying more universal experiences. Their chosen language can be one of the regional languages or the official language of the state. This choice eliminates the problem of communicating at a cultural level in a language spoken by a community. This makes for a larger readership too and opens up a larger canvas of issues and topics. For example, Nisar Ahmed's poems – '*kurigalu Sir Kurigalu*' (Lambs), '*Raman sattasuddi*' (News about Raman's Death) or Ramzan Darga's '*Pranalike*' (Manifesto) handle issues that are universal. These writers have the responsibility of communicating their people's unique experiences, empathy and trepidations to the people of other languages and religions. The writers have to find ways to translate their cultural world into a language that they don't speak at home. This may even weaken their ability to communicate with their own community.

This predicament of writing in a language that is not spoken at home jeopardise the connection the writers share with their language people. The Tulu, Kodava, Lambani, Marathi and Konkani writers who write in Kannada face this problem. But there is no religious angle to their predicament. D. R. Bendre and Sham Ba Joshi wrote in Kannada though their home language was Marathi. Masthi Venkatesh Iyyengar and D. V. Gundappa

with their Tamil background wrote in Kannada. The recent writers of Konkani background – Girish Karnad, Jayanth Kaikini and Vivek Shanbhag write in Kannada. N. Disoza and Fakir Muhammad Katpadi with their Malayalam background write in Kannada. Their choice does not create a fault line between the readers and the writers. This choice however creates another astonishing possibility—these writers share the unique socio-religious experience of their community with people of other community and culture. Thereby, they act as bridges between the two cultural worlds. Though we publicly proclaim that India is a multi-religious and multi-cultural country, there is a drastic decline in inter-linguistic, inter-religious and inter-cultural communication in recent times. The role played by the Hindu communalists and the Muslim fundamentalists in stoking this divide cannot be ignored. An atmosphere of communal tension enhances a feeling of cultural alienation. The effect of writings that bridge cultures leads to empathy and cultural sensitivity among the readers. This is the education that literature is capable of imparting and the writers who choose to write in Kannada have performed it better than the writers who chose to write in Urdu. This difference can be noticed between the writings of *Tanaha* Timmapuri who wrote in Urdu and Nisar Ahmed who wrote in Kannada. Writers like Nisar Ahmed share an intimate connection with the mainstream Kannada literature and readers. His choice of language for his literary expression enhanced his ability to transmit cultural nuances of his community to others. Poets who have been bridges between culture are—Sanadi, Akbar Ali, Ramzan Darga, Shareefa, Peer Basha and Arif Raja. Prose writers like Boluvar Mohammed Kunhi, Sara Aboobekar, Banu Mushtaq, Abdul Rasheed, Mirza Basheer and others have played a proactive role in connecting two cultures. Though both the genres bridge cultures, there is an interesting difference between the emotionally charged thought process of these poets and explanation of social life in prose by these writers.

The Byary, Konkani and Urdu writers share a stronger connect with their community in comparison with the writers who have chosen to write in Kannada. Hence, the Kannada writers of Muslim community have been more critical of socio-religious issues plaguing the community than the ones who write in Byary, Urdu and Konkani. Religious fundamentalism, patriarchy, illiteracy, militancy, are some important problems that the Muslim community is facing. Within this historical framework, the self-critical role these writers play becomes crucial. Their self-criticism is essential in a society where a certain religion has to share the social space with many other religions and religious communities. Writers who choose to write in a language that is not spoken at home develop camaraderie with writers

and readers of other religious groups. These writers in turn are under pressure to write on subjects that deal with inter-religious issues from a non-religious point of view. As a rebound they have been more ruthless in writing on the problems that are internal to the community than the Urdu writers. Due to the uncompromising critical stand they take, their writings in turn have evoked opposition and have even been banned. This critical insider approach to their own religion pressurises the writers to project themselves as secularists. They address the evils within the community with more vehemence. Compared to poetry that is symbolic, prose tends to explicitly address problems of the community like *talaaq*, polygamy, patriarchy and fundamentalism.

Writers, who belong to this category, are undoubtedly self-exploring, honest and bold. But they face two problems. Their writings that concentrate on the problems of Muslims and Islam constrict the space that is open for a natural and nuanced expression. This is a serious issue where the writings limit the possibility of expanding the social space of the community. The writings of Masti, Shivarama Karantha, Kuvempu, Mirji Annaraya, Rao Bahaddur, Devanooru Mahdeva, Lankesh and others portray the fears and aspirations of their communities. The same spatiality is visible in Vaikom Basheer's writings in Malayalam. His home language and the language of literary expression are the same. Barring a few writers like Abdul Rasheed and B.M. Basheer, most other writers don't seem to concentrate on topics which can spill over to a broader framework. The self-exploratory stand these writers take, subjects their writings to convenient ideological interpretation both by the Right and the Left. This in turn is used by communal forces and mass media to legitimise a biased opinion about Islam and Muslims among the half literate people. There are reports that some of the writings of Sara Abubakar are used to criminalise Islam in the classrooms. Such a reading of her writings has negative fallout among the Muslims. The fundamentalists in the community have branded her as 'anti-religious' and 'community hater'.

When the writers are under an unnatural pressure to prove themselves as non-religious or secular, they end up painting a unilateral view of their community. When writers choose a language other than home language, the cultural distance that is created aids the communal forces to use their writings to stoke more hatred against the community. This is a strange predicament that writers who choose to write in a different language face. At this juncture, it is not wrong to raise a hypothetical question – what if Salman Rushdie had written in Urdu. But the case of Taslima Nasrin who wrote in the language of her people is totally different. Dalith writers, women writers and the African writers who write in English face the same problem.

In comparison with the writers who write in their home

language, the ones who write in the language of their environment are under a pressure to explain the cultural nuances of their community. Though poetry and plays escape this pressure, stories and novels cannot. It is then that such writings take a sociological angle. The glossary of used words and meaning given at the end of prose is an example of such a cultural inevitability. All writers who strive to paint the regional or community based experiential world face this difficulty. The challenges Christian and Muslim writers who write in Kannada face is not a regional issue, but cultural and religious. The other reason for the sociological angle in their writings is that the readership comes from literate middle class concentrated in the urban areas. When compared to the give and take and cultural exchange among the various communities of rural population, there is very little exchange among these people. The Hindu communalists and the Muslim fundamentalists have polarised the urban middle class. When writers write in their home language for readers of the same language, the sociological angle is not necessary. Again, this sociological angle is unnecessary for the folk 'Shahira' singers of Muslim religious background. There are thousands of Muslims who sing ballads and Moharrum songs. They are not under a pressure to impart cultural or religious awareness to their audience through their songs are based on religion and history. This knowledge is a part of their life and is known to the audience prior to the singing itself. They also exhibit a natural accommodative behaviour about other religions and cultural worlds. At the level of oral tradition, there seems to be a greater acceptance of diversity.

The writers who write in Kannada but have Byary, Konkani and Urdu as home languages have to construct the religious and cultural world not only for the readers of other religions but also to the readers of their own community. In their effort to construct this world of theirs for others, they have to address the problem of cultural unfamiliarity. If the writers from coastal areas address north Karnataka readers or if the writers from Kalaburgi address the readers from the coastal region, the problem of unfamiliarity with culture represented in the writings crops up. The reason for this is the regional differences among the Muslims of Karnataka. The lifestyle, language and religious expressions of Pinjara, Navayath, Byary, Moplah and Urdu (Dakhni) speaking Muslims of South Karnataka are not the same. The celebration of Moharrum in a syncretic manner in the North Karnataka is not found in the coastal areas. Urdu speaking Muslims of Karnataka belong to the Hanafi sect. The Byary and the Konkani speaking Muslims belong to the Shafi sect. The economy of North Karnataka Muslims is dependent on agriculture and Muslims of Central and South Karnataka are traders. This diversity among the Muslims of Karnataka gets extended to the political stand they take.

Hence, the concerns and problems that the writers of coastal Karnataka address are unfamiliar to the Muslims of inland and north Karnataka. But the issues addressed in the writings from the coastal region are familiar to the Muslims of Kerala. The Muslims of Kerala and the Muslims of coastal Karnataka share religious, political and cultural affinity. The cultural world of both these people is an admixture of Arab and Malayalam worlds. This is the reason why the writers who write in Byary language have maintained a more intimate contact with the Malayalam writers than the Urdu writers of Karnataka. Vaikom Mohammad Basheer or Shivashnakar Pillai have a greater impact on them than the old Mysore poets like Nisar Ahmed or Ramzan Darga of Bijapur. Sara Aboobaker's translations from Malayalam or Fakir Muhamaed Katpadi's writings on Vaikom have to be viewed under this light. The religious cultural world of the Muslims of the princely state of Mysore and of north Karnataka is built on the foundation of Bahamani and Adilshahi kingdoms which in turn had their roots in the Persian and Urdu traditions. This background has to be contrasted with the Arab-Malayalam cultural roots.

There are two important factors in this discussion on the problems diversity of religion and language pose to literary expression. They are- the possibility of reading any literature of the world without being aware of the civilization, culture, time, place and the possibility of readers constructing and internalising the life experience and socio-cultural world through literature. Chinua Achebe, Kafka, Marquez, Tolstoy, Shakespeare and others transcended their geo-cultural boundaries and became a part of the universal experiential world and shaped the sensibilities of their readers all over the world. Such being the reality, it is not surprising to find diversity among the writers belonging to the same religion but from various regions of Karnataka. But the construct that these unique qualities, diversity and difference are a part of certain socio-religious community, is a myth that has to be destroyed. The literature that sets out to universalise human experiences also exposes the socio-cultural and regional diversity.

This argument about the religious cultural variety and diversity applies to the Urdu and Konkani writers of Karnataka. The Urdu writers share an intimate camaraderie with the pan Indian Urdu writers. The Konkani writers share an intimacy with the Konkani writers of Goa and Maharashtra. It is the language of literary expression they choose that enables them to strike a connection with the writers of neighbouring states. They are not able to do the same with the Kannada writers of their own state. How do we account for this connect with the same language people of the neighbouring states within the paradigm of linguistic states? The Urdu readership of Karnataka needs a mention here. Unlike the North Indian Urdu readership that is a

cross section of all communities, the Karnataka readership of Urdu literature is confined to Muslim community. The truth this discussion unravels is that it is the writer's choice of language and not his religion that decides the readership of his work. This choice of language of literary expression also decides the interpersonal relationship between the writers.

WRITERS WHO WRITE BOTH IN HOME LANGUAGE AS WELL AS IN THE LANGUAGE OF THEIR ENVIRONMENT

Very few Kannada writers have made this choice. Muddanna Manzar, Raghavendra Rao Jujb, Maher Mansoor, Samvartha Sahil write in Kannada and Urdu. Fakir Muhammad Katpadi and others write in Kannada and Byary. There are writers in coastal region who write in Tulu and Kannada. Writers of Hyderabad Karnataka chose to write in Kannada and Urdu as they were the administrative languages too. There is no religious dimension to this choice. When the writers from the Muslim community chose to write in Kannada-Urdu and Kannada-Byary as the language of their literary expression, Kannada is not only the language of environment but also the administrative and official language. To communicate the religious experiences of a community through Kannada is to face the hurdles the language itself poses. Writers have found many strategies to overcome these hurdles-Inter mixing Urdu, Persian and Arabic words with the language of their literary expression. Nisar Ahmed wrote the state song and devotional songs on 'Hindu' Goddesses in Sanskritized Kannada. At some point of time he resorted to mixing Urdu and Persian words with Kannada. For those who have observed his poetic track, this change looks like '*ghar vapasi*' phase triggered by conscious guilt of moving away from the cultural symbols of the community. During this code mixing phase, Nisar Ahmed composed poems like- '*Amma Naanumattu Achaara* (Mother, Rituals and I), '*Nimmodaniddoo Nimmantagaade*' (With you but Unlike you), and '*Savathimakkala haage kaadabeda*' (Spare the Step Child Treatment). They seem like a criticism of the right-wing - a discourse which reflects the cultural stand he takes.

Nisar Ahmed also uses words that have cultural and religious connotations – *namaz*, *jannath*, *talaq*, *iddah*, *vazu* (ablution), *sheerkhurma*, etc. After using these words, meaning is provided within parenthesis to eliminate the linguistic and cultural unfamiliarity. Some writers do not provide meanings in brackets. They create a situation where the readers are compelled to find out the meaning. Devanooru Mahadeva's '*Kusuma baale*' is one such example. Some others switch over to home language by abandoning the language of the environment. Hamza

Malar, Mohammed Kulai, Fakir Muhammad Katpadi and others have been writing in Kannada and their home language- Byary. There are no examples of language shift from Kannada to Urdu. The reasons for this could be that Kannada and Urdu have two different scripts. Generally, the shift seems to be from smaller languages to regional languages or from foreign language to the home language. Many African writers who wrote on the lived experiences and the unique cultural ethos of their communities in Portuguese, French and English abandoned them in favour of their home languages. Ngugi wa Thiango, in his '*The Decolonialised Mind*' has elaborately discussed the problematic relationship between these Afro-European writers who write in European languages and their relationship with their communities. This is the challenge Tamil writers like R. K. Narayan and Hassan Rajarao faced when they chose to write in English for an international readership. They did not consider language choice as a question of identity of their community like Ngugi) did. Muslim writers of Bengali, Tamil and Malayalam do not face this problem of dichotomy between language of experience and language of expression-their home language and the language of expression is the same.

Some writers also chose to translate literature of home language to the language of environment. There have been translations from Tulu, Konkani and Byary to Kannada and from Kannada to these languages. Similarly, Tamil speaking writers like M.G. Krishnamurthy, A.K. Ramanujan, M.N. Srinivas and others have written in English and their writings have been translated into Kannada. This seems like a circumlocutory route to the home language-from a foreign language to a regional language. Translation from Tulu to Kannada involves two local languages. Going by the history of translation, there has been a religious persuasion in translation from foreign language to the regional language. Such a motive is missing in translations from one regional language to the other. Among Dalith writers, there has been an attempt to convert written texts of languages of the community or environment to orality. This mode reminds us of the Dalith writers who composed songs to communicate with their unlettered community. Through orality, the mode of communication is changed without changing the language of communication. This mode is a cultural and political strategy too. We see the same strategy utilised by Konkani and Byary poets who compose and sing their poems which are released as audio albums. This method is reaching the language speakers abroad without the written word. This strategy bypasses script and translation to broaden the reach of communication. Few other writers also chose to write in two scripts to reach the home language speakers and also the speakers of regional language. Shabbir Baidya-the Bhatkal Navayath poet who

writes in Konkani, uses Kannada and Devanagari scripts. Iqbal Sayeed used Devanagari and Nastaliq (Persio-Arabic) scripts for his anthologies. It is perhaps much easier to publish in multiple scripts on the social media. Riyaz Ahmed Bode of Gulbarga is publishing his father's Urdu poems in multiple scripts.

The writers who choose to write of two religions in multiple scripts to portray multi-cultural and multi-lingual worlds face many hurdles. However, this has led to a possibility of reaching the home language and the regional language readers at the same time. Their writings have been culturally enriched by this choice of multi-language and multi-scripts. Look at this Kannada sentence- '*shukravaarada namajannu maadidanu*' (He performed the Friday prayer). '*Shukravaara*' is a Sanskrit word, '*namaz*' is an Arabic word and '*maadidanu*' is a Kannada word. The writers cultivate to express cultural richness and diversity. This comes effortlessly to the bilingual Urdu poets of Urdu-Kannada, Urdu-Telugu, Urdu-Marathi who are followers of oral tradition. The folk tradition of Karnataka has innumerable bilingual 'Shahirs' (composers) who compose Moharrum songs and ballads. Shishunala Shareefa, Channuru Jalasaab, Gurupeera Khadri, Motnahalli Hassan *saab* and other post-mystic poets who call themselves 'shahirs' are multilingual composers. There is no dichotomy between home language and the language of environment in their compositions. Some of them have even syncretised the home language and the other languages in a single composition. But then, this has not been attempted by the writers who are dependent on print.

Pre-modern Karnataka was home to many bilingual poets; who wrote in Dakhani and Persian. Then, the binary was not between home language and the language of the environment. The difference was between home language and the language of administration. Persian was not the home language of these poets but the language of the rulers—same as English was to us. During the Nizam's rule in Hyderabad many writers wrote simultaneously in Kannada and Urdu. Urdu was not only the administrative language but also the language of the Muslims who lived around them. They added Persian-Urdu pen names to their Kannada or Sanskrit first names which in itself is a narrative. The space that held these poets had Kannada and Urdu as people's day today languages and also the languages of mystic poets. The audience of the oral poets were bilingual and possessed a multi-religious and multi-cultural shared sensibility.

WRITING ONLY IN ENGLISH

Not many Muslim writers choose English for their literary expression. The few who do, belong to the middle and

upper middle classes which distance them from the felt experiences of common people. Some write in newspapers on broader cultural issues. The few who attempt to express in English, reflect a cosmopolitan world which is in no way connected with any religion. Their writings lack regional flavour and are primarily read outside Karnataka. I suspect that the readership in Karnataka prefers a classical and reformist approach to literature. I would put such writers under a hybrid variety without local roots.

There are Muslim writers who write academic books and papers in English. Scholars like Sheik Ali, A.M. Pathan, Akhil Ahmed, Muzaffar Assadi, Khiser Khan, Khalid Javeed, Khiser Jahan, Mushtari Begum, Asma Urooj, Arabi, A.M. Khan, Waheeda Sultana, Shakira Jabeen and other academicians, working in universities, colleges and research centres write in English. They are experts from many disciplines of pure science, applied science and social science. Most of them are from Urdu speaking background. They publish their research papers in various national and International journals. Their papers are read for the research content. The language they choose is a non-issue. The scientific papers usually do not address local and cultural issues of the community. Their papers on culture too have a broader framework based on an internationally accepted theoretical frameworks which tends to locate local issues within a broad structure. Sheik Ali is well versed in Urdu too and is bilingual in his writings and speeches. His research on Tipu Sultan does not get the following it deserves—not because of the language he writes in but because of the sensitivity of the subject. The language in which these academicians write is not by choice but a natural continuation of their expertise in their respective areas and is secondary to the content matter of their research. The theoretical scanner applied to creative writers cannot be applied to these academic writings as English continues to be the language of higher education in India.

The role of language in education is also fraught with problems. Education in mother tongue, however desirable it might be, has practical problems under the hegemonic language paradigm we follow. To admit a child in an Urdu medium school is to prepare him to drop out before he reaches higher education. Therefore, Urdu schools are closing down. The closure of Urdu schools or the opportunity to be educated in Urdu upto the lower primary level does not affect Urdu as a home language. This reality has serious ramifications for our understanding of the relationship between language and medium of instruction. Simultaneously, many middle-class Muslims are switching over to English at home. This in turn reduces the readership of Urdu newspapers and literature as they are the main readers of it. The shift to English at home is converting middle class Muslims into readers of English literature.

There is another problem that the Urdu writers will have to face. The language choice that the writers make is one thing, but the choice of language in education and the choice of English for a pan Indian or a global movement has more serious ramifications. English bypasses both home language and the language of the environment. This in turn leads to a reduction in the creation of literature and readership in these languages. Then, there won't be any struggle or need

to represent cultural crisis or its outreach. But then, these struggles, crisis and the possibility of outreach are more important than the creation of rootless English readership and writers. My travel through the length and breadth of India has unravelled one truth- language, culture and knowledge systems are all interwoven. Displacement of any one would result in the collapse of the rest.

Muktibodh: Hope, Resistance and Dystopia

VAIBHAV SINGH

Almost half a century back the renowned Hindi writer Muktibodh wrote a long poem 'Andhere Me'-

*Ab abhiviyakti ke saare khatre uthane hi honge.
Todne hi honge math aurgadhsab.*

(Now we will have to risk our life for freedom of expression
We will have to break all centres of power, strongholds)

These lines were so powerful that it inspired thousands, immediately igniting the spirit of new possibility. The full name of Muktibodh was Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh and he was a Marathi by birth. He was one of the most trusted intellectual voices of our time who wrote poetry, literary criticism, stories and essays. The underlying concern of his writing was how to break the boundaries of middle class narrow-mindedness, pathetic self-absorption and also false utopian thinking. He was the writer of an age when cold war was the dominant international phenomenon and most of the great writers and literary aestheticians were sympathetic to the cause of democracy and socialism. Muktibodh's writing was full of musings and thinking and one question he always asked other fellows – 'What is your politics partner?'

The personal life of Muktibodh was never smooth and all plain sailing. He struggled, grappled to seize hold of mundane cruel reality, tried his nerves to face the world which he never liked. He also changed many jobs, edited many journals also to pull through. Just a few years before his death he managed to find the job of a lecturer in Rajnand Goan, a small town of Madhya Pradesh. He died of illness at a young age of 47. The memory of the tragic death of this great writer and thinker of the twentieth century still jolts the moral conscience of contemporary literary fraternity. A picture of a frail and feeble person,

smoking a half-finished *bidi*, is still deeply ingrained in the minds of general readers. But what has really made him an immortal writer of our time is not mechanized routines, but his truly honest commitment to ideas of progressive change that could knock off the unjust and oppressive architecture of an authoritarian society. His poems were included in *Tarsaptak*, edited by Sachidanand Hiranand Vatsyayan, popularly known as Agyeya, that gave voice to seven young poets who were doing novel experiments in art form and poetic content.

Muktibodh developed a highly self-critical poetic temperament and never shied away to critically examine the role of artists and writers as well. In fact, in his essay *Rachnakar ka Manawatawaad*, he wrote- 'No one can be respectable and one's writing can't be above board just because a person ascribes himself the statues of an artist or writer'.¹ In one of his poems he said that some of the writers are not morally upright and they are 'attached with umbilical cord of the blood guzzling class'.² In England writers had the opportunity to be crowned as Poet Laureate and many famous poets like Alfred Lord Tennyson were appointed to the position of Poet Laureate. They used to write poems in praise of the Royal family - in celebration of court, national occasions and events. In India too, during the medieval age there was a culture of *Darbari-Kavi* during the *Riti-Kal* and before that *Charan-Bhatt* tradition of dependent poets was

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very strong. Historically, independence of mind, freedom of expression and self-respect were not an all-time privilege and poets had to endeavour for it, sometime successfully and at some other times with appalling failure. Writers like Muktibodh were born in a time when poets were not seen as members of an entertaining class which could beguile the masses. Poets could not remain content with their marginalised identity.

A poet was thus being redefined as a person who is not only concerned with literary writings but also understands its role in turbulent times, and is also ready to share bigger social responsibility in a disorderly society which is looking for inspiration to change from the politicians, writers, poets and thinkers identically. They were revered when they sacrificed their self-interests and could come out in open - breaking the boundaries of class orchelon. Writers cannot afford the silence thrust upon them and should see their fate intertwined with social movements going on outside the world of literature as well. Muktibodh was the writer of this time and age and there was a firm belief deep inside his sub-consciousness that meaning of the words is lost when it fails to invigorate the entity of truth. His commitment to truth and progressive vision was not only a formulaic slogan but also a lived experience. In fact, his only collection of poetry *Chand Ka Muh Tedha Hai* could be published when he was on deathbed and one of the equally reputed writers Shamsheer Bahadur Singh wrote preface of this collection. Shamsheer Bahadur Singh wrote with passionate words;

‘Muktibodh suddenly became a phenomenon of Hindi literary scene. It was impossible to turn a blind eye to this phenomenon. His great rigour and struggle, unbreakable adherence to truth, his whole life, all came to central stage of our collective emotions. Now we were witnessing the life and writings of this illustrious poet and thinker with great surprise.’³

There was an interminable intellectual quest in Muktibodh’s writing. Also, a concern to save his creativity from falling prey to exigency of personal advantages.

Muktibodh used many consequential words in his writing - *Vyaktitva-Aantaran* which means transformation of self is also one of them. Such transformation of self is needed for identification with other beings and every writer has to transform himself before preaching the same to others. Muktibodh was equally concerned with the intended destruction of talented minds and always worried about premature decay and destruction of beautiful intelligent minds due to the difficult life-conditions. He expresses anger to such cruelty as a 22-year-old writing an essay in a magazine *Karamveer* with exasperation – ‘I can’t see the destruction of the lives of people who have great qualities and values in a degenerated and corrupted society.’

Muktibodh wrote several poems between 1935 and 1964

and the very chronology of poems denotes his changing sensibility. He started from the romantic school of Hindi poetry, better known as *Chayawaad*, but gradually shifted to Progressive-Marxist school - though he never toed the sectarian party-line and on several issues, he differed with the official line of progressive writings. His magnum opus is a poem titled ‘Andhere Me’. It is a long poem, with irregular stanza structure and unrhymed lines, but is very influential and widely considered to be an intense and challenging read. In this powerfully-worded, profound and fervent poetic expression, he wrote a dystopian text but concluded it with fiery and spirited hope to resist the tyranny of the system. It is quite common in the world of fiction to write dystopian novels and famous novels like George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, Margret Atwood’s *The Handmaids Tale* were written to forewarn about the dangers of autocratic rule hanging upon the future of mankind.

Muktibodh’s poem ‘Andhere Me’ is a marvellous depiction of the rise of opportunism and authoritarianism in post-independent India, where democracy is perpetually threatened, and symbiotic mutually beneficial relationship between politicians, criminals and to an extent intelligentsia has been firmly established. There is a character in this poem ‘I’, a first person singular pronoun, who is full of anxieties and existential fears for being a witness to the barbaric and inhuman acts of the powerful class. This central character of the poem is a perplexed and highly baffled person. In a fit of escapist insanity, he wants to run away from the general state of affairs of society but his conscience repeatedly forces him to deal with untainted truth. He reflects the dilemma of the middle and lower middle classes, and also persistent confusion about his role in a fragile democratic society and in revolutionary call given by social movements. Many historical figures like Gandhi, Tilak have also been used as metaphors of great but aggrieved people. Muktibodh used visual and auditory imagery which are on some occasions very colourful and striking. Vivid descriptions of dramatic unfolding of events, actions and also art of narration of unpredictable incidents have been artistically employed in this poem. The customary boundary between aesthetics and realism collapses here and new sharpened idiom of aesthetics comes into being to help us reflect upon the challenging face of socio-political reality. The virtue of poetic ingenuity doesn’t lie in telling the truth of the obvious world lies in exploring and revealing the truth hidden in the sub-terrain, underground recesses of human mind. Here Muktibodh uses a specific word ‘Antahkaran’ which means ‘inner-world’ and appeals to change it, to make it more human, morally upright and sensitive to other beings. He also interrogates capitalism and warns that its growing power will ultimately jeopardize

the nascent institutions of democracy and undo the gains of freedom struggle. Deep sense of guilt and shame also becomes a part of his poetry and the poet feels as if all the pain, sufferings and torture that common people have been forced to bear with, are actual consequence of his own wrongdoings and impropriety- and that he should not fail to accept his responsibility. He sums up his poem 'Andhere Me' in the following words-

*Khojta hoon pathar pahad samundar
Jahan mil sake mujhe
Meri voh khoi hui
Param abhivyakti anivaar
Aatma sambhava*

(I search mountains, plateau and sea
Wherever I can search for
That I once lost
Free undeterred expressions
That can revive and restore my soul)

One can easily notice that he speaks on behalf of silent majority and with awakened consciousness he looks for *param abhivyakti* which is ultimate and intrepid expression to nurture the roots of this vibrant democracy. In this way, such a long poem can be seen as representing quintessential concern of a middle-class intelligentsia of losing the democracy to gluttonous dictators and its constant quest for courage to speak the truth to those in power.

In the middle of twentieth century, India had a historic opportunity to reconstruct its own world. The recently acquired independence and promulgation of the Constitution had stoked the fire of optimism. Jawaharlal Lal Nehru said in his Independence Day speech in the Constituent Assembly - '... the turning point is past, and history begins anew for us, the history which we shall live and act and others will write about it.'⁴ These passionate words also underline a sense of uncertainty and enthusiasm of treading the new path. An extraordinary surge of this collective hope unleashed an era of subjective creativity and writers like Muktibodh also expressed desire for a new movement and new journey of life. He wrote in one of his poems-

*Mujhe kadam-kadam pe
Chourahe milte hain
Baahen failaye
Ek pair rakhta hoon
To sau rahen phooti hain
Main un sab par se gujarna chahta hoon*

(On every step of my life
I find many intersections

With their open arms
When I set-out on a journey
Hundreds of paths open
And I want to traverse them all.)

Muktibodh's continuous journey on the literary path shows that he was full of exuberance and zeal to ask difficult questions not only to others but also to those who were in the literary circle. He wrote several books like *Kamayani-Ek Punarvichaar*, *Ek Sahityik ki Diary*, *Bharat-Itihass aur Sanskriti*. The last one was written primarily as a textbook for Madhya Pradesh schools but was banned by the state government on frivolous charges of negative portrayal of India's past. Banning of this book perhaps broke Muktibodh's heart. He could never recuperate and finally died after two years. In the first page of this book he remembered the city of Persepolis, famous Persian city which was plundered in 330 BCE by Alexander the Great, the King of ancient Greek kingdom of Macedon. When he burnt the palace of Persepolis, the building of adjoining library with large collection of books was also destroyed. On such a tragic burning of a library, a place to gain wisdom and knowledge, Muktibodh wrote -

*Jal rahi hai library
Persepolis ki
Maine sirf nalish ki
Sirf nalish ki
Andheri jis adalat me*

(Library has been put on fire
Of Persepolis
How helpless I am
Can't do except an indictment
I could only indict
In a court which is full of gloom and murkiness)

Muktibodh was deeply pained to see that a concerted effort was being made to suppress the intellectual stream of knowledge. He was anxious that some brutish and barbaric forces will be unleashed to destroy Indian civilization. Their destructive potential won't only bug the system but will become its defining feature. In his yet another poem, Muktibodh is also critical of doctrinaire and megalomaniac intellectuals who refuse to connect their life and knowledge with common people and rendering their knowledge irrelevant and meaningless. His poem 'Brahmarakshas' symbolises an alienated individual who gains knowledge of all branches and shapes an encyclopaedic mind for himself to feed his fragile ego, but was ultimately rendered futile in an age of unbridled self-interest and hedonism. In the Western literature many adjectives like Kafkaesque, Miltonic, Proustian or Dickensian, etc. have been used

to symbolise the characteristics of famous writers or their works. One can similarly use an adjective Muktibodhiya to represent the dark side of reality which we confront in our daily lives.

In a way, Muktibodh's writings reflect a constant tension going on in the mind of an individual and turns into psychoanalysis of an educated intellectual class. There is a general griping feeling about the poetry of Muktibodh; the 'form' of his poetry is chaotic, enigmatic and usage of words is quite convoluted. Muktibodh has a particular point to convey on this issue and in his own words- 'In today's world the real problem is not the inadequacy of content and excess of poetic form, rather problem is that content abounds and traditional poetic form is not enough to contain it. My main problem is how to organize the diverse nature of content and how to fit it into the formal structure of poetry.'⁵ What he is trying to say is that modern poetry has lost its calm to rigid area of subjects. It is perpetually struggling to voice the defeated and subdued truth. Such truths are innumerable in nature and poetry feels accountable to them. This puts a moral responsibility upon poetry and poets.

Muktibodh also wrote several short stories and the famous film director Mani Kaul made a film on one of his story- 'Satah Se Uttha Aadmi', meaning, arising from the surface. In his story 'Claude Eatherly', Muktibodh showered creative vigour to reveal the hidden truths of life. Claude Eatherly was a pilot in the U. S. Air Force during the second World War and was part of the joint mission which dropped atomic bomb on Hiroshima (Japan) on August 6, 1945. Muktibodh conceived a plot of his story around the life of Claude Eatherly. In this story Claude Eatherly was lodged in a jail and was labelled as insane. He was not even allowed to repent his wrong-doings or war-crimes. Muktibodh used the life of Claude Eatherly to drive home a point that all of us have a cellar in our minds and we throw our most sublime and human ideas and emotions there mercilessly. We wear sophisticated masks which make our lives safe, stunningly deceitful and also successful. Claude Eatherly becomes a metaphor of a grim reality where all the great human virtues are dispatched and murderous selfishness is supported by a system for any petty gains in return. This story touches upon the issues of imperialism in the field of ideas and culture. How the ideas and literature of third world countries are not shared even amongst themselves and how they borrow the pattern of thinking and knowledge from the west alone. A fundamental theme of writers' work is usually self-criticism and self-introspection and Muktibodh used psychoanalytic method of writing and also historical-sociological way of explaining this process.

In Muktibodh's time, literary world was divided between the New Criticism school and the Realist-Marxist school.

The influence of New Criticism was more dominant in American universities. New critics made frontal theoretical attack on any extrinsic approaches to poetry like historical, psychological or sociological and made the poetry a self-referential object. But in larger world, literature and its criticism were closely linked with liberation struggles, movements and idea of social transformation. Literature, especially poetry could not be seen as autonomous, divorced from any relationship with history. In his criticism, Muktibodh repudiated all claims of New Criticism and mostly strengthened the historical-sociological in his texts. One of the brightest products of this critical approach is 'Kamayani: Ek Punarvichaar' which changed the meaning of the metaphorical character of the epic poem Kamayani, written by Jai Shanker Prasad. He always endeavoured to think about the larger issues of society objectively and pressed this point that the aim of literature is not to express the life of middle classes only. It is also a medium to reach at the stage of 'Sabhya-Sameeksha' meaning the critical self-enquiry and criticism of the whole civilization. Such a pronounced objective of literature can be achieved only through the personal integrity of a writer. Personal integrity is not a moralistic probity alone but also a literary principal which can be upheld only in a situation when writer produces objective reflections of reality and if this doesn't happen, disclosure of truth becomes impossible. Reading Muktibodh is always a moment of truth for a reader and his words make our inner world more attuned to inconvenient truths than falsity and self-deceptions.

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2. *Muktibodh Rachnawali*, Part-2, p. 326.
3. 'Chand ka Mukh Tedha Hai', preface written by Shamsher Bahadur Singh.
4. Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Tryst with Destiny', speech delivered in the Constituent Assembly at midnight of 14-15 August 1947.
5. *Muktibodh Rachnawali*, Part-5, p. 91.

Southeast Asian Relations: India and Vietnam

ANURADHA BHATTACHARJEE

With the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it was necessary for India, which was opening up its economy around the same time, to look for new markets. An obvious area to explore was Southeast Asia and its emerging dynamic economy. It was therefore logical that India and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) would begin discussions for a more formal relationship between India and Southeast Asia culminating in India becoming a full dialogue partner of ASEAN. The fact of the matter, however, is that the Look East Policy (LEP) formulated in 1991, could not have taken place earlier for at least two reasons. Before the end of the Cold War, India was seen to be closely allied to the Soviet Union and hence ASEAN countries were reluctant as a group to associate with India.¹ The second important reason was that the Indian economy before 1991 economic reforms was a closed one and had very little attraction for Southeast Asian countries. The opening of the Indian economy was therefore a crucial factor for engaging with the Southeast Asian states.

This preliminary paper aims to look at some of the strengths and weaknesses of the India-Vietnamese relationship with special emphasis on the economic dimension and to make out a case for India to play a more active role in Vietnam. In the final analysis, it would be interesting to calibrate, based on a more extensive study, the extent to which Vietnam has integrated itself with the global economy. This is a particularly interesting point since Vietnam is still ruled by a communist regime.

INDIA-ASEAN RELATIONS

While the main topic of my paper concerns Vietnam, I will try and put it in context within India's broader relations with Southeast Asia as defined in the LEP. Partly prompted

by Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong², the principle objective of the LEP was to actively cooperate with the dynamic economies of the Southeast Asian states so as to expand India's trade and economic cooperation with those countries. As explained by the then Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee at the annual Singapore Lecture in 2002, "[the Southeast Asian] region is one of the focal points of India's foreign policy strategic concerns and economic interests".³ And more recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, articulating India's concerns regarding regional security in the Southeast Asian region at the 14th ASEAN-India Summit, reiterated this view when he said, "In the face of growing traditional and non-traditional challenges, politico-security cooperation is a key emerging pillar of our relationship. Rising export of terror, growing radicalization through ideology of hatred and spread of extreme violence define the landscape of common security threats to our societies. The threat is local, regional and transnational at the same time. Our partnership with ASEAN seeks to craft a response that relies on coordination cooperation and sharing of experiences at multiple levels".⁴ In this new relationship, Vietnam has a special place.

Let me flag here some major developments with ASEAN. India became a sectoral dialogue partner in 1992. In 1995, this was upgraded to full dialogue partnership. Since 2002, India has had annual summits with ASEAN along with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK/South Korea). Apart from trade, India and ASEAN cooperate in a number of other areas such as agriculture, health, science and technology, human resource development and so on. For India, both physical and digital connectivity as well as enhancing science and technology cooperation continue to form the core areas of collaboration with ASEAN nations. There is also scope for further enhancing the defence

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industry collaboration. A major achievement of LEP was the signing of the Indo-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement in August 2009 in Bangkok. The India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) came into force on 1 January 2010. The upgradation of the relationship to a Strategic Partnership in 2012 was perhaps a natural progression to the ground covered since India became a Sectoral Partner of ASEAN in 1992, Dialogue Partner in 1996 and Summit Level Partner in 2002. India-ASEAN trade and investment relations have been growing steadily with ASEAN being India's fourth largest trading partner. Trade has strengthened with the relatively more developed of the Southeast Asian economies like Singapore and Malaysia, followed by Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. And while India does not seem to have integrated its manufacturing sector with Asian production networks like China has, it is seen to be emerging as a gradually growing market for Asian goods. Currently, India's trade with ASEAN is \$70 billion in 2016-17.⁵ However, given ASEAN's economic significance, India still does not figure prominently as a trade partner.⁶ Although the signs are undeniably good, much more still needs to be done.

And then of course, there is the China factor. Indeed, it was largely to counter China's successful push towards closer economic ties with Southeast Asia that India had crafted a few initiatives of its own aimed at greater regional cooperation. For example, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) signed in June 1997, which has its members: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand. The objective of this body was to create an environment for economic development and social progress in the region. It fit the 'Look West' policy of Thailand and ASEAN and the LEP of India. BIMSTEC can be seen as a link organization as it were between Southeast Asia and South Asia. The other organization that links India to South-East Asia is the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) established in November 2000 in Vientiane, Laos.⁷ This group has six members – Cambodia, India, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. They identified four major areas of cooperation – tourism, culture, education and transportation linkage to boost trade and investment in the region. India is also an active participant in several regional forums like the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), East-Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministerial Meeting (ADMM) and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF).

India is thus well linked to Southeast Asia in terms of institutions, an important component of the LEP. India's strength lies in the fact that none of the Southeast Asian states see India as a security threat. Besides, its democracy and legal systems are attractive to Southeast Asian

investors as the fact that English is generally the language of governance and commerce in India. ASEAN states, of course, accept that for the time being, India lacks behind China's resources, has poor infrastructure and its decision-making is cumbersome with a difficult bureaucracy. India also needs to bring its tariffs closer to ASEAN levels so as to make trade with the countries of the region easier. In this new relationship, Vietnam has an important role to play. India and Vietnam closely cooperate in various regional forums such as ASEAN, East Asia Summit, Mekong Ganga Cooperation, Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) besides UN and WTO. Vietnam is also an important pillar amongst India's CLAV partners grouping Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. CLMV's similarities include their primarily agro-based transition economies, high poverty incidence rate, insufficient infrastructure and institutions that are still too weak for a shift to a market economy. CLMVs still face huge challenges in fighting poverty alleviation, narrowing gaps in wealth among the population as also development gaps within the region. Although each country in CLMV faces different development constraints, CLMV as a whole, has a huge potential for future development, which will depend on the individual country's efforts and support from development partners within and outside of the region.⁸

WHY VIETNAM?

Historically speaking, relations with Vietnam can be traced back to ancient times. There is evidence suggesting close ties between India and the kingdom of Champa, which existed between the eighth and nineteenth centuries in some of the areas comprising present day Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. In the modern era, relations have been based on the recognition by both countries of their common struggle against colonial rule. Vietnam has been appreciative of India's support during the National Liberation struggle against the French and later its resistance to the United States. India had recognized the Heng Samarin regime in spite of pressures from the West, China and ASEAN. India was chairman of the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICC). As American involvement grew in Vietnam, India experienced considerable distress over the death and destruction it caused in that country. India earned the ire of the US President Johnson in 1965, when it condemned the US bombing of Vietnam. The US retaliated by delaying PL-480 wheat shipments to India. In 1966, Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi reiterated India's position by calling for an immediate cessation of bombings by the United States and the resolution of the Vietnam conflict within the framework of the Geneva Accords. India did not accept the domino theory of communist expansion and recognized Vietnam's national struggle for independence.

Given these strong views of India, it came as no surprise when India was not included in the second supervisory Commission on Vietnam established in 1973.

Vietnam, in its turn, has also been supportive of India including their position on Kashmir. It had also gone to the extent of supporting the Government of India's internal policies such as its approval of the Indian Emergency imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975, regrettable as it may look in hindsight. However, the Vietnamese were basically underlining their full support for the Government of India given the close political relations that existed between the two countries. Vietnam was also an early supporter of India's candidacy for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, advocated for India's inclusion in the East Asian Summit in 2005 and for a time, helped block Pakistan's inclusion in the ASEAN Regional Forum.⁹ All these have been reflected during continuing contacts at the highest levels between the two countries over the years.

I have already mentioned that Vietnam is fast emerging as a dynamic economic power. It has, for example, achieved high levels of economic development (ranging between 6-7 per cent annual growth rate), per capita income and industrialization while the other CLAV group members still suffer from low per capita income and limited human resources. I believe that would be its greatest strength. Indeed, in some ways, the Vietnamese economy is even more globalized than the Indian economy – Vietnam's trade is 120 per cent of its GDP. However, one of the most important reasons why Vietnam of all countries is best qualified to develop a more multi-faceted relationship with India is because of its geographical location, and geopolitical concerns.

Strategically, Vietnam is important to us since it occupies a strategic location in Southeast Asia, straddling important oil and trade routes and as an immediate neighbour of China. For the present, there is no unanimity among ASEAN countries on how to deal with the rise of China. Indonesia and Malaysia, for example, seek to enmesh China institutionally. That leaves us in effect Vietnam, which too will be cautionary. Nevertheless, given its long acrimonious history with China and the bitter dispute over the maritime border involving the Spratly and Paracel Islands¹⁰—a reflection of China's sovereign claims to the South China Sea as also the strategic value of the archipelago, which straddles some of the world's most important sea lanes,¹¹ they would see a resonance with India's own fears. For the present, however, India does not have the capacity nor the need to venture into any military alliances directed howsoever covertly against China. For one thing, the major countries in the region would not welcome it since they would look upon India as a premature power that will complicate the security situation in the South China Sea

and the Pacific Sea rather than contribute in real terms to any balance of power. Being major powers themselves they would resent, at least at the present moment, India, punching above her strength so to speak. And second, India's natural security environment is South Asia and the Indian Ocean – from the Suez to the Malacca Straits through which most of its trade passes and through which most of its energy supplies come. It is true of course that almost all of India's maritime trade to and from East Asian and Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Philippines Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, China (including Hong Kong), North and South Korea, Japan and the Western seaboard of the USA – passes into or emerges from the Strait of Malacca. However, trade to and from the Malacca Strait Littorals (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore) – which is quite substantive, does not transit the South China Sea at all!

Having said that, some 25 per cent of all India's external (maritime) trade – that is approximately 190 billion dollars-worth of trade, does pass through the South China Sea (including Hong Kong), Japan, Pacific Russia and the Western seaboard of the USA and is certainly susceptible to geopolitical disruptions in the South China Sea. Hence and as stated previously, India at the moment, does not have the capacity or the need to form any ostensible military alliances or to play any kind of a balance of power role in Southeast Asia and by extension, the Indian Ocean. However, it still does not prevent India from putting together the building blocks of a mature security relationship with the countries of Southeast Asia and more specifically, with Vietnam, with whom it shares much strategic congruency.

Finally, observers of the Indian reality believe that a more intense and diversified engagement with Vietnam will help India strengthen its presence in the ASEAN and other regional forums. However, any analysis of the India-Vietnam partnership should not blind us to the fact that the future of the relationship would also depend to an extent on how Vietnam and China continue to behave towards each other. This is because Beijing and Hanoi, despite having territorial disputes in the South China Sea, continue to maintain a robust trade relationship. Despite friction in the relationship, China provided more than one-fifth of Vietnam's FDI inflow in 2010 and has had an average of one Fleet visit annually between 2008 and 2014.¹² Hence it is highly unlikely that Vietnam will undertake any measures that might potentially jeopardize its economic interests with China. In the final analysis, both India and Vietnam conduct far more trade with China than they do with each other. This makes it all the more imperative that India take more proactive measures to accelerate its own economic engagement with Vietnam.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The exceptional circumstances that gave Vietnam international importance in the 1950s, 60s and until mid-1975 do not exist anymore. Vietnam is a poor country with limited resources but it has shown resilience and dynamism so that it could become another East Asia Tiger. It has done well to reach out to ASEAN and nations outside of the region to assist its economic development.

As with other South Asian countries, real economic content has been put into the relationship only after the liberalization of India's economy and India's decision to deliberately craft a policy towards Southeast Asia, first through the LEP and more recently, with the more focused Act East Policy.

Both India and Vietnam are fast growing Asian economies and there is already a large international presence in both countries. Given Government support, the infrastructural quality and cost of human resources, Vietnam has become the centre for manufacturing of a wide range of products such as textile, shoes and so on. The economic dynamism of the country has impressed nations like France and the US which are now returning there in a major way. India's trade with Vietnam too has exceeded official targets. Indian companies, both public sector and private, are working there. Indian investments in Vietnam presently total around \$600 million, one of the largest in any ASEAN country. Sectors such as oil exploration hold out particular promise. Indian foreign oil and gas companies operating successfully in Vietnam include ONGC, Reliance and Essar among others. The award of a US \$1.8 billion Thermal Power Project to India's Tata Power in Vietnam in Vietnam's Soc Trang Province, is seen as an epoch-making shift in the energy relations between the two countries. In addition, there is growing interest among Indian companies in the agricultural, health and pharmaceutical sectors. Identified as one of the national development priorities, the Vietnam health care sector needs a wide variety of medical equipment, particularly for surgery and intensive care units. This market relies almost exclusively on imports. Top foreign suppliers of medical equipment include Germany, Japan and the United States each accounting for about 30 per cent of the market.¹³ Vietnam also imports major parts of its pharmaceutical needs including ingredients for drug production and finished pharmaceutical products. India, on the other hand, is doing very well in the pharmaceutical sector. Clearly, there is scope for Vietnam to constitute an even bigger market for Indian companies in this sector. Yet another area where India could profitably invest in is human resources development. Although French is still a widely taught language in Vietnam, its popularity is on the wane (just like in Laos and Cambodia, two other French

colonies). The recent focus on the English language provides an opportunity for India to set up English language centres in Vietnam (and in Laos and Cambodia). Academic linkages between India and Vietnam are presently limited and this needs to be strengthened with the help of India's institutions. English language skills, in particular, can become an important component for the projection of India's soft power in the Indo-China States. Simultaneously and given the fact that Ho Chi Minh City is attracting a good deal of interest from major IT companies, the Indian presence in IT education in Vietnam could be strengthened if this were to be linked to the teaching of English and soft skills by Indian companies. As a matter of fact, under the Framework of the India-Vietnam Protocol on IT, Vietnam receives Indian assistance for training its manpower in the area of IT and IT enabled services. Indian assistance contributed to the cause of Vietnam's renewal programme (Doi Moi), which began in 1986. The Government is committed to promoting the IT business. New IT companies receive a four-year Income Tax exemption as well as zero per cent Value Added Tax (VAT) for software products and services and zero per cent export tax for software tax. Furthermore, companies that locate their offices in selective software parks receive a subsidized fee for Internet access and much better uptime guarantee. Although the Government still needs to do more to reduce tax rates and create more special enterprise zones and software parks, Indian IT companies can take advantage of the facilities already offered to make an even stronger impact.

While a few of the possibilities have been identified here, China, inarguably, has taken the lead in this instance. India, for the present, is only considered as a smaller trading partner among the Mekong countries, its trade with Vietnam accounting for less than 2 per cent of its total volume. In recent years, however, changes in institutions, growth paths and policies have further drawn economic relations between the two nations closer. And all indications for future growth and development are positive.

CONCLUSIONS

In 2000 when India's Minister for External Affairs visited Vietnam, President Tan Duch Luang expressed the view that "Vietnam treats India with strategic importance". What he meant was that India and Vietnam should develop long-term cooperation strategies. Vietnam is eminently qualified to develop a multi-faceted relationship with India, which could develop into a strategic partnership because of (a) its geographical location, (b) its historical experience and (c) its geopolitical concerns.

India should consider treating Vietnam as a "neighbouring state" that is provide concessions or duty-free access to

Vietnamese products, set up joint ventures for exports to third countries, build infrastructures that would ultimately benefit Indian projects in Vietnam. India is now in a position to provide capital and technology. India should also look to cooperate with third countries such as France, in putting together joint proposals in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and elsewhere.

India's LEP does not have the classical definition of a strategic partnership since there is no military component to it. India's natural security environment is South Asia and the Indian Ocean through which most of its trade and energy resources pass. India does not have the need to project any military power in Southeast Asia including Vietnam. ASEAN welcomes all major powers to the region and is averse to any one power dominating the region. This is a view that should coincide with our own interests. It is precisely for this reason that India is seen as a benign, liberal power and has closer bilateral relationships with individual ASEAN States, more so than China. India will retain this perceptual advantage as long as it continues to remain an open and plural democracy.

NOTES

1. The strategic rift between India and South-East Asia had hardened in the 1980s when Mrs. Indira Gandhi recognized the Vietnam backed the Heng Samrin regime in Cambodia, which had friendly ties with the Soviet Union, over the China backed Khmer Rouge regime, which the Southeast Asian States preferred.
2. Countries like Singapore were quick to grasp both the economic and strategic potential of the end of the Cold War and India's economic liberalization program. Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong played a key role in generating an "India fever" in Singapore.
3. A.B. Vajpayee, 9 April 2002, 'India's Perspectives on ASEAN and the Asia Pacific Region', Indian Ministry of External Affairs website, <http://www.mea.gov.in/sshome.htm> (accessed on 17 November 2007).
4. Opening Statement by Prime Minister at the 14th ASEAN-India Summit (8 September 2016), accessed 13 April 2017, <http://www.mea.gov.in>
5. 'ASEAN-India Relations', <http://mea.gov.in/aseanindia/20-years.htm> (accessed on 12 June 2018).
6. Dr. Mohammed Samir Hussain and Dr. Janatun Begum, 'India-ASEAN Economic and Trade Partnership', 32 October, 2011, <https://igordirgantara.wordpress.com/2011/11/04/india-asean-economic-and-trade-partnership/> (accessed on 12 June 2018).
7. Gupta Shishir, Mekong-Ganga Project signed, boost to ASEAN economic ties', *Hindustan Times*, November 11, 2000.
8. Chap Sotharith, 'Development Strategy for CLMV in the Age of Economic Integration', http://www.eria.org/uploads/media/Research-Project-Report/RPR_FY2007_4_Executive_Summary.pdf (accessed 23 April 2017).
9. Pakistan joined in 2004.
10. Following the 1988 Johnson Reef Clash, which saw Chinese naval frigates sink two Vietnamese ships leaving 64 sailors dead and secure its first six holdings in the Spratlys and which continues to be a point of friction between the two nations.
11. In 2016, only five countries relied on South China Seas for more than 50 per cent of their total trade. These include, in descending order, Vietnam (80 per cent), Indonesia (85 per cent), Thailand (74 per cent), Singapore (60 per cent) and Malaysia (58 per cent). Of these States, only Vietnam and Malaysia are claimants in the South China Sea while India maintains an exclusive economic zone-dispute with China. China, meanwhile, despite grabbing headlines for its island-building activities in the South China Sea and broader assertion of jurisdiction in disputed areas, through its coast guard, relies on the South Sea for 39 per cent of all its trade.
12. Heginbotham, Rabasa and Harold, 2013, p.15.
13. Vietnam's healthcare information and projects are available at the following websites; Vietnam's Ministry of Health (www.moh.gov.vn); the ABB (<http://www.adb.org/Vietnam/projects.asp>).

The Persistence of Memory: Building Archives of ‘Institutional Memory’ at Ambedkar University Delhi

RANJANI PRASAD

Institutions of higher education in post-independence India were developed as secular entities, with a tendency to become more socially inclusive,¹ providing for a distinctive kind of interaction between generations. The social milieu and gender, caste and class disparities do not disappear, but come to be questioned in such settings.² While a university’s interests and identities are structured to encourage collective experiences and memories of inhabiting campus spaces, they also function as a site of knowledge transmission and cultural production, controlling the variant interpretations of the ways in which the institution’s past is perceived. To review the institutionalized cultural production that gives collective memories long term meaning, this paper traces the role of multimedia memory archives within a university community, and the persistence of varied imaginations of the university through the case of the Institutional Memory initiative at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD).

The idea of memory persistence in computer science refers to a state in which memory outlives the process that created it, referring to data elements that are found to be accessible even in the afterlives of structures that created them. An extension of this understanding can be applied in the case of institutional memories, guided by a multidimensional approach to understand the malleable histories, also referred to as ‘social memory studies’.³ Collective memory is said to be sustained through a continuous production of representational forms, particularly in the media age, aiding a flow of memories. Young (1993) introduced the notion of ‘collected memory’, marking memory’s inherently fragmented character, manifesting itself in media objects, memorials and museums.⁴ To discern institutionalized memories and their dissemination, we must also analyse the cognitive processes

that produce past-defining schemata⁵, the interaction between culturally related individuals and the interactions between individuals and institutional forms themselves.

Established in 2008, the foundational work of planning and designing Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University was conducted through consultative meetings with scholars, administrators and experts in the field. The drafted vision for the university reflected a commitment towards interdisciplinarity, innovative administrative and academic processes⁶—through new pedagogies, concurrent appointment of faculty, fee-waivers and earn-while-you-learn schemes, choice-based credit system, cumulative student assessments, amongst other initiatives. University’s various schools, centres and administrative divisions took shape on the first campus at Dwarka since 2010, expanded after its shift to Kashmere Gate campus in 2012, and escalated the ongoing growth in employees, student strength and academic range after the opening of Karampura and Lodhi Road campuses since 2016 and 2017. The initial sensibilities and expectations of board of advisors and administrators are manifested in reports, minutes of meetings, project proposals, pedagogical outlines, recruitment choices, email threads, event posters, photographs and intangible memories. In the spirit of new beginnings, schools and divisions developed their structures, staff, curriculum and projects. Sub-cultures around students and faculty started forming, each school started tending towards certain themes. Festival formats and new modes of collectivizing were developing. Societies, sports committees were forming partly with student initiative and partly with institutional facilitation. To keep a pool of new members of a new university in tune with founding ideals, self-reflection and discursive institution building strategies were encouraged.

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Audio-visual documentation of collective institution building processes were initiated during the initial years of the University itself, when all academic and administrative activities were moving towards structuration and even the experiences of carrying out routine administrative tasks reflect an organisational logic. In this context, experiences are different based on attributes of class, gender, caste, comfort with the English language or even a person's position in the University whether they are students, teaching staff or short-term project assistants. The need for recording aspects and experiences of the ever-changing organisation logic and its multiplicities was considered the starting point for the Ambedkar University Delhi Institutional Memory (AUDIM) initiative, and the collaborative processes through which memories of University building and functioning have been recorded, indicate a trend towards auto-ethnographic methodologies. While auto-ethnography itself is not a definitive framework, it provides the Institutional Memory initiative with a set of qualitative research methods involving self-observation and reflexive investigation, as used in ethnographic studies.⁷

DOCUMENTING COLLECTIVE INSTITUTION BUILDING MEMORIES

Officially approved in 2012, the AUD Institutional Memory Project proposed to preserve memories of the growth, expansion and identity-building processes of an institution through a multimedia collection of oral histories, digital records and audio-visual documentation. Starting with a research assistant and faculty advisor to oversee the activities, the initiative grew to involve cooperation from students, alumni, staff and faculty members, who have recorded memories of their experience at the University; stories of origin and views on its gradual growth and expansion, even personal grievances and candid opinions on functioning. The initiative was imagined as an autonomous and continuous 'project' and was positioned in Centre for Community Knowledge (CCK) since the project's aims and objectives were congruent with the Centre's research methodologies.

During AUD's formative years, the students and faculty created spaces for exchanges and discussions around fee structures, student welfare, medium of instruction and pedagogical methodologies and other concerns at a budding University. Many of these exchanges have been recorded – through group email threads, audio-video recordings of academic events and the 'dream sessions' about the University future, meetings of the first student group 'Forum by Students', creation of an AUD Faculty Association, student productions and extra-curricular activities, first impressions of the university, changing

university organograms, admission prospectuses, estate plans, performances and exhibitions, and other ephemera. While the project served several functional purposes, such as contributing photographs to the annual report, convocation and other institutional exhibits, its significant role lay in being a documentation node for the university, a quasi-student's centre, that developed its character only as cohorts took interest in the practice of documentation.

An Institutional Repository (IR) in a contemporary University is typically a digital archive where the University community's intellectual work is made available for long term use, thus influencing the "full cycle of scholarly communication on campus, from research through publication, collection, and preservation"⁸ and through an organisational commitment to the "stewardship of access and distribution of digital materials".⁹ In the AUDIM model, the aspect of memory documentation was also given primacy in addition to scholarly work, and incorporated from institutional repository models in universities elsewhere. The project development included identifying best practices in digital documentation, archiving and database management for the university through standardised metadata schema for archival descriptions¹⁰ and structures for collecting and disseminating the digital contents of the University's memory.

The spade work of building memory sources was initiated through the help of staff and students. Participation came from different quarters and the undergraduate course on 'Digital Storytelling' conducted by the CCK also facilitated an inflow of interested students. Once the framework with scope for conceptual additions was drawn out, the project steered towards storytelling through videos, and the sanctioned video equipment were utilized to record events and interviews. As a result, the documentation between academic years 2012-2013 and 2017-2018 is rich with photographs and video footage that got categorized into: Classrooms; Academic Events; Sports and Culture; University Organisation and Development; Student Initiatives (political, social and cultural cooperation between students); Life on Campus; Interviews/Oral narratives; Daily Diaries (recordkeeping through group email threads, social media exchanges, and observations).

What also got recorded was the AUD community's responses to the presence of a camera in their midst. The initial reactions were mixed—curiosity and eager participation from the undergraduate students, scepticism of the post-graduate students, confusion of staff, guards and sanitation workers, the apprehension of administrators and the encouragement of the faculty and senior management. With campus expansion, documentation methodologies required consistent and reliable systems to administer the project staff and student support for archiving tasks such as

cataloguing, transcribing and logging of interviews.

Curation, use, circulation and meaning-making of this collection has been encouraged amongst student cohorts. Access to talks is directed through a Youtube channel, AUDIM Project, or on-site access. An Audio-Visual (AV) Team had been formed to organise AV workshops for capacity building amongst students. In 2015, an alumnus from the MA batch developed the idea for an Institutional Memory Festival in consultation with the project staff. The student-led walkthrough and subsequent festival, 'Playback', used space specific anecdotes about histories of the building and environs, campus cultures to revisit AUD's past years. The annual festival became a culmination point for students across cohorts to conduct interviews and represent campus narratives through short films¹¹, photo exhibitions and participation. Yet, there is an absence of integrated efforts to incentivize students' involvement in documentation. The University's ongoing schemes such as earn-while-you-learn¹² have contributed to retaining student support but are contingent on limited project funds. Cultures of self-archiving seems to have seeped in intangible ways nonetheless. Contributions to the documentation process have been varied but consistent from the AUD community and voluntarism has been hugely responsible for sourcing bulk of the audio-visual data. Capturing behind-the-scenes, *vox-populi* and student reactions to ongoing events along with retrospective annotation of the photographs adds layers to existing metadata, thus contributing to the auto-ethnographic agenda of memory documentation.

METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS AND OTHER CHALLENGES

Proliferation of digital libraries and open source database management systems have been instrumental in developing and customizing institutional repositories for more than a decade now. Constituted in 2005, the National Knowledge Commission strongly advocated open access to public-funded research.¹³ In the same year, University Grants Commission developed a policy document on building University-level Institutional Digital Repository in India to facilitate access for student research and other intellectual outputs.¹⁴ Open access to academic research facilitated by agencies such as DELNET and INFLIBNET has aided in modernizing libraries and institutional repositories. At the same time, Institutional Repository initiatives in India have stayed limited to being technical and technologically-enabled spaces for the university community. Experiential or anecdotal narratives of a university community are seldom included with records of archival importance. Although exceptions exist, institutional repositories in general "are not yet based on research data as far as policy

issues, institute-specific subjectivities, and standards are concerned."¹⁵

Pervasive technologies and access to documentation tools and recording devices have presented an array of opportunities for decentralised documentation. The balance of both project documentation and community sourcing will be important for the project to perennially develop in relevance with changes in character and structure, with an ability to respond to institutional needs. Public opinion and access to phone camera, internet and social media will ensure that people's narratives and collective memories around events and people will persist and circulate – even without the patronage to institutional memory initiatives.

There evidently exists an interplay within institutional narratives and the markers of collaborative cultures, particularly evident through unofficial records, audio-visual artefacts and social interactions. During the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) visit in 2014, the University space was revamped and students from School of Culture and Creative Expressions illustrated campus walls with graffiti, one of which was whitewashed a day short of the NAAC visit. The University received highest accreditation but the events leading upto it also raised important disagreements between students, faculty and administration on freedom of expression. Not all the debates, discussions and exchanges can be documented, but some of these conversations present in group emails, social media and interviews have been retained in IM. The default process in building memory narratives of the institution from within is equally a consequence, as much as an agenda of the institutional memory initiative.

Making room for student scepticism and their various critiques and negotiations with the inherent power structures could assist in moving away from essentialist tendencies, that many such projects are susceptible to. Cross-sectional community-led documentation can act as an effective counter to officially sanctioned documentation, offering counter-narratives. The formation of the Student Council in April 2016 initiated in accordance with the Lyngdoh Committee recommendations was an occasion for student groups to articulate their issues with the administration's conceptualisation of a representative body. Despite several discussions, general body meetings and administrative interventions, a few student groups chose to boycott the elections and protest the proceedings and their dissenting voices found space in the institutional memory collection.

The multiplicities of memory narratives also depend on access and accessibility to equipment and to the contents of the institutional memory collection. At AUD, the basic set of rules on booking and use of equipment apply to all

members of the University. Students issuing the camera for their field work are equally entitled to access contents, as also members of the non-teaching staff. So far, access to contents of the collection for reference or duplication is unrestricted for the University community. Access controls pertain primarily to sensitive data, for instance, the annual Psychoanalysis conference.

Milestones like opening of new campuses do find coverage in the collection through limited recordings of official events, inaugural meetings and student festivals. However, the ground work in building a campus culture, negotiations between faculty and administration, the particularities in academic engagements or even the absence of an institutional memory unit to provide documentation assistance in Karampura and Lodhi Road campuses have been under-represented so far. Such insights are only revealed through interviews and collectively-source documentation of life on campus which requires a persistent critical evaluation of the modes and methods of building an institutional memory. Manoff (2015) urges institutions to be attuned to listening in to ‘archival silences’ and contends that digital archives are techno-cultural artefacts and digital technologies introduce a variety of material, social and technological questions of archival access and they “vastly expand the possibilities for both creating and redressing archival silence.” She refers to a certain entanglement of matter and meaning; content and device, human and machine elements that condition “intentions of document creators, the professional practices of librarians and archivists, the structure of archival institutions and the properties of the materials used in the production of digital infrastructure”.¹⁶

The lack of a cross sectional representation of opinions within academic spaces can be attributed to several factors, including resource readiness of the project, differing levels of student voluntarism, organisational bias, and anxieties around misuse of memory documents. Studies in collective social memory have analysed the experiences of information gathering and retaining in groups, the memory deficits and collaborative inhibition that both groups and individuals experience. Without due weightage to the gaps in institutional histories, the exercise of AUDIM becomes selective amnesia and nostalgia and emulates the very instrumental modes of institutional repository building that it currently seeks to criticize.

LIFE AND AFTER LIFE OF RECORDS

Social identities are often carved out of constructed narratives and traditions created to provide members with a sense of community. Pierre Nora reflects on the tendency of groups to manipulate construction of the past,

commemorate, memorialize, forget, omit, eliminate and participate in the phenomenon of ‘collective amnesia’. He points to shifting patterns of communities from the *milieux de mémoire* (worlds of memory) to *lieux de mémoire* (places of memory).¹⁷ Memorialisation of select events and happenings leads to persistence of certain narratives around University histories. Yet, they remain fluid and are constantly guided by inflows of new content, annotations and additions to older content. Place markers of memory are as accidental as they are orchestrated, the ruins of Dara Shikoh Library at Kashmere Gate campus offer one such example. Even though a monument situated in particular time and memory, its space is nevertheless a site of multiple memories. The institution and the campus community’s relationship with the archaeological building is thus varied, from being a site of debate, dissent, and deviance to the gardener’s extended nursery. However, the space encompasses sub-cultures and temporal shifts that act as significant memory triggers in student interviews.

Some of these perspectives have steered documentation efforts towards an anthropology of the university. Abhijit Guha (2010) of Vidyasagar University has attempted to elucidate the tense relationship of the university with its own neighbours since its setting up, and its’ gradual deviation from initial objectives thus tying together the multiple narratives emerging within and outside it’s social, political and cultural context.¹⁸ Student groups at AUD such as Progressive and Democratic Student Community (PDSC) have sustained discussions around English being the only medium of instruction and its implication on social justice since 2013. In effect, these student groups challenge the established narratives of the University as an ‘inclusive and non-hierarchical’ space and throw light on inconsistencies within and outside the classroom, thereby preventing a linear narrative of the University’s character. The vibrancy of student movements on campus is evident in the case of JNU where the faculty and students came together to register their protest through the JNU Nationalism lectures.¹⁹ The JNU Nationalism lectures are circulated through social media but cannot be found on one single webpage of the University. Alternative web pages like Dalit Camera and the Dalit Bahujan Adivasi collective in AUD have utilised audio-visual documentation and social media solidarities to highlight caste-based student discrimination on campus spaces.²⁰ The AUDIM, as it is defined currently, provides scope for such student discussions and dissent to be included in the repository and register its archival significance through decentralising and populating chronicles about the University.

The ever-changing nature and texture of memory calls for a theory of cultural transmission that helps us understand history not only chronologically, but as an

active process of meaning-making through time, “the ongoing work of reconstructive imagination” or mnemo history.²¹ It’s characterisation is more that the transmission of information, or as an assemblage of facts.²² Memories related to institutions will continue to exist in the media, social interactions, official documents and other public mediums while simultaneously creating public narratives about the university, whether institutions exert influence over these narratives or not. Through an institutionalized memory documentation, the attempt is to aggregate the varied dimensions of collectively held memories and experiences. The intrinsic properties of objects of the past influence their power and persistence in subsequent institutional narratives, but they also offer ground for interpretation, construction, reconstruction and contention of established narratives.²³ These contextual and contingent memories are more likely to persist in collective memory than grand institutional histories.

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Mrityunjay: Poems from the Hindi

SHAD NAVED

Poets have distinctive reputations in our cultures. In the genre of biographical anthologies of Urdu poets, called *tazkirâs*, for example, the lives of poets read less like lives and more like reputations. The translator's task is doubly perilous therefore. She must convey not just the sense of words but the poet's reputation. Our poetries are unapologetically public in this sense.

Mrityunjay, as he prefers to be called in poetic-public life, has a reputation as one of the 'young poets' of the present generation of Hindi poets. He has a book of poems published *Syah hashiyeh* [Blackened Margins]¹ in Hindi and several poems in magazines and journals and internet platforms. He is a poet of live recitation; the emotive spell of his recitation is part of his reputation.

What kind of a poet is Mrityunjay? These days it is enough to pass yourself off as a 'poet' without anyone asking what kind. In Hindi, official criticism divides poetic history into various 'eras' or *kâls*. The poet's persona is developed over time in relation to one or the other of these eras. These eras are poetic moods really. Is there a mood of the present? Mrityunjay is a contemporary poet; his freshness, or newness, only time will establish. These translations of selected poems attempt to capture the poet in the present and announce a work in progress.

What are the moods in the poems? Mrityunjay's poems are too public to be lyrical and too conscious of sound to be declarative. This is a contradiction that the poet seems

to look forward to and is in no hurry to resolve. He is a political poet in so far as the words in his poems presume a background. But is that background political? Is myth political? Is memory political? Is forgetting political? We have a poet writing after modernism, but is there also something called after-modernity? How does one remain 'young' after modernism?

In these poems the background is also a landscape that English readers will too easily categorize as vernacular-popular-experiential. The only way to read this landscape is with the poet's careful cues in the finely distinguished registers of north Indian speeches or *bolis*. These are almost never translated because we cannot bear to have more than one English. The so-called bilingual translator stands on two stools provided neither is in motion. Mrityunjay, in contrast, is a poet of several Hindis (which include Urdu). Therein lies a whole biography if we only knew how to read it.

The attempt below is to translate a reputation; all errors of word and sense are the translator's. The Hindi originals are given to spell out the distance between Hindi and English, poet and translator, sound and sense.

NOTE

1. Mrityunjay, *Syah hashiyeh*, selected by Prem Shankar, Allahabad: Jan Sanskriti Manch, 2014.

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नश्वर थी सुंदरता

धीरे-धीरे खड़ी हुई वह लाद साँस की बोरी
चली कुछ कदम रुकी देख कर दुःख की सीनाजोरी
दृश्य खड़े थे उसे नापते आँखों में थीं लहरें
अति-आधुनिक रहस्य-कथा की दृष्टि-गाँठ से पहरे

डर की परत छेद कर निकली बोली सी अनबोली
पिस्टल से ज्यों धीरे-धीरे निकले कोई गोली
नज़रों का था द्वंद्व युद्ध हथियारों से थे चेहरे
कटने के निशान दिखते थे दिल तक गहरे-गहरे

धरती जकड़े पैर पड़ी थी गगन थामता माथा
इस अवगति को गति से ही वह बना रही थी गाथा
एक कदम में तीन लोक चौरासी नरक डगर थी
गोईयापन के रस्ते जूझी सदियों से बेघर थी

चलते-चलते पीछे देखा महाकाव्य थे गति में
भय को थामे दृढ़ता हिम्मत आये-आये मति में
एक कदम था सधा हवा में धीरे-धीरे गिरता
हाथ उठे थे जख्म हरे थे नश्वर थी सुंदरता

वाया '80

(सुविधानुसार जहां-तहां 'पहली बार' जोड़ लें।)

ए सरंगी, कान कटबू? स्वाहा!
चोट घूंसे की ठीक पास नाक के, स्वधा!
अंगूठी कांसे की, नमोस्तुते!

स्वाद बहते खून का खारा, स्वाहा!
हाकी की देशी बहन ठक्की, स्वधा!
चाकूला घाव सरकंडे के कलम का, नमोस्तुते!

दिन अनंत दूधिया उफनाया, स्वाहा!
नंगी पीठ पर चौड़ी पटरी का धमाका, स्वधा!
डूबना ट्यूबवेल के गड्ढे में, नमोस्तुते!

रुकना सांस का पूरे आधे मिनट, स्वाहा!
छटपटाहट बड़े होने की, स्वधा!
परछाइयाँ डर की बेइंतहा, नमोस्तुते!

A Beauty was Born

Slowly she rose with a heave of breath,
She trudged, she stopped, affronted by pain.
Visions sized her up, waves reflecting in eyes,
Keepers as if of the gnarled gaze of very modern mysteries.

Fear's crust she broke, ready to speak but silent,
Like a bullet leaving its pistol in degrees.
Eyes stood in battle, faces were weapons,
The heart stood revealed in the depth of the cuts.

The earth huddled at the feet, the sky held its head.
A legend of her fall she made with all speed.
Three worlds in a dwarf stride and eighty-four hells *en route*.
Sisters on the road and she survived for vagabond centuries.

A little ahead she turned and caught the epics in motion.
Clutching fear, strength and grit almost entered her mind.
A foot stopped in air was slowly coming down:
Hands risen, wounds gaping, a beauty was born.

Via the Eighties

(Add 'the first time' wherever convenient)

'Ho *sarangi!* Slice the ear?' *Heil!*
A bruise socked right beside the nose, *Sieg Heil!*
A ring of bronze, all hail!

Taste of bleed salty, *Heil!*
Hockey's hobo sister *thakki, Sieg Heil!*
The knifed wound of a reed pen, all hail!

The day endlessly whitish boiled over, *Heil!*
On a bare back, a broad-bat explosion, *Sieg Heil!*
Drowning in a tube-well hole, all hail!

Breath stopped for a whole half minute, *Heil!*
Writhing for adulthood, *Sieg Heil!*
Shadows of fear countless, all hail!

आम के बगीचे में हाथ-पैर कटी भरी बोरे में लाश, स्वाहा!
नाड़े से कसी गर्दन, स्वधा!
उबल कर छटपटाती आँख, नमोस्तुते!

हाफ पैंट और शिश्न, स्वाहा!
स्कूल और वयस्क, स्वधा!
कुंठा, हताशा और नफरत, नमोस्तुते!

झपाक से पँचगोइयाँ नाच, स्वाहा!
वीसीआर, टीवी और भोंपू, स्वधा!
मरती गारियों के आखिरी तुमुल कोलाहल पर फिल्मी सोहरों की जीत,
नमोस्तुते!

बांस पर टंगा टोपीदार बल्ब बिजली का, स्वाहा!
मरफ़ी का रेडियो, स्वधा!
आभाषी रामायण, अगरबत्ती की गंध, नमोस्तुते!

नीम का पेड़, स्वाहा!
व्योमकेश बक्शी, स्वधा!
लाल दवा और एक कुवें की मौत, नमोस्तुते!

गाना और मरना, स्वाहा!
दोहरी मुरदा घाट पर बांस और खोपड़ी, स्वधा!
मौत और कबीर की जुगलबंदी, नमोस्तुते!

गंदुमी सी लड़की, स्वाहा!
जाड़े की सुबह पैर की हड्डीपर चिपकती कार्क की पथरीली गेंद, स्वधा!
खिस्सहऊ पंडित, नमोस्तुते!

धोबी मास्टर साब और सम्मान, स्वाहा!
13 मुट्ठी का बैल, स्वधा!
सड़े आलू की बारिश और पीलू, नमोस्तुते!

गुमटियों में शीशा जड़े केश-करतनालय, स्वाहा!
डामर और कोलतार, स्वधा!
चुनावी बिल्ले और पर्चे, धूल जीप की, नमोस्तुते!

In the mango orchard, a headless-limbleless sack-stuffed
corpse, *Heil!*

The neck fastened with drawstring, *Sieg Heil!*
Writhing eyes on boil, all hail!

Short pants and a penis, *Heil!*
School and adults, *Sieg Heil!*
Frustration, dejection and hate, all hail!

Break right into a *Panchguiyan* gyration, *Heil!*
VCR, TV and loudspeakers, *Sieg Heil!*
The victory of playback *sohar* tunes on the final din-
confusion of dying insult-songs, all hail!

A canopied electric bulb on a bamboo pole, *Heil!*
A Murphy radio, *Sieg Heil!*
Virtual *Ramayana*, stick incense, all hail!

The Neem Tree, Heil!
Byomkesh Bakshi, Sieg Heil!
Potassium permanganate solution and
The Death of a Well on film, all hail!

To sing and to die, *Heil!*
Bamboo and skull at the Dohri burning ghat, *Sieg Heil!*
The duet of death and *kabir*, all hail!

A wheatish girl, *Heil!*
Winter morning sticking a stony cork-ball on shin bone,
Sieg Heil!
The storyteller Pandit, all hail!

The teacher from the washerman caste and honour, *Heil!*
An ox of thirteen palm-spans, *Sieg Heil!*
A hail of rotten potatoes and blight, all hail!

Coiffure manufacturers in mirror-studded kiosks, *Heil!*
Pitch and coal tar, *Sieg Heil!*
Electoral badges and pamphlets, Jeep dust, all hail!

ग्राम सभा की जमीन पर भुतहा पीपल, स्वाहा!
चमार के साथ सियार का तुक, स्वधा!
दलितों का कब्रिस्तान, संविधान संविधान, नमोस्तुते!

दक्खिन टोले की मड़ई में, स्वाहा!
मेहनती माजूरिनों का अनवरत रुदन, स्वधा!
अरहर और गन्ने के खेतों का कुंभीपाक, नमोस्तुते!

होली, प्रचंड नीचताएं, स्वाहा!
चूते टिकोरों बीच दहले की पकड़, स्वधा!
मंदिर शिव का, श्राप नंगे पुजारी का, नमोस्तुते!

शौच और लोटा और कुत्ते और पंडित और जनेऊ और बलात्कार और
चीख और खामोशी,
स्वाहा—स्वधा—नमोस्तुते!

सात लड़कियां पिता की खोज में, स्वाहा!
सात भाईयों के भयावह प्रेम में घुटती लड़की, स्वधा!
बाढ़ सरजू की, संसृति सड़ेपन की गंध से बोझिल, नमोस्तुते!

इबारत चाचा का कुनबा, स्वाहा!
मुंह से आग फेंकते बाजीगर उस्मान, स्वधा!
मांस और धनिये की अद्भुत गंध, नमोस्तुते!

शोरोगुल, स्वाहा!
छोटा ताजिया—बड़ा ताजिया व ईदगाह, स्वधा!
दादी का मरसिया हाय हुसैन हम न हुए, नमोस्तुते!

एकता में दुई और खैनी की चोरी और पुलिस बल, स्वाहा!
90 और 90 और 90 और 90, स्वधा!
पलायन, नमोस्तुते!

On the village council grounds a haunted *peepal*, *Heil!*
The rhyme between tanners and scavengers, *Sieg Heil!*
The Dalit cemetery, constitutionality, constitutionality, all
hail!

In a shack in the village south-end, *Heil!*
The non-stop weeping of the wretched hardworking
women, *Sieg Heil!*
The inferno of legume and sugarcane fields, all hail!

Holi and the terrible rascalities, *Heil!*
Chasing the ten in cards amid the oozing green
mangoes, *Sieg Heil!*
A Shiv temple, the naked ascetic's curse, all hail!

Shit, lota and dogs, Brahmins, sacred thread and rape, a
scream and silence,
Heil-Sieg Heil-all hail!

Seven daughters looking for father, *Heil!*
A girl strangled in the grisly love of seven brothers, *Sieg
Heil!*
Floods in the Saryu; Creation laden with the stench of
rottenness, all hail!

Uncle Ibarat's whole clan, *Heil!*
The fire-belching conjurer Usman, *Sieg Heil!*
The astonishing aroma of meat in coriander, all hail!

The hubbub, *Heil!*
The mini model tomb—the big model tomb of Husain,
and the Idgah, *Sieg Heil!*
The grandmother's lament, 'Alas Husain, why not us?',
all hail!

Duality in unity and tobacco stealing and police force,
Heil!
Ninety and ninety and ninety and ninety, *Sieg Heil!*
Exeunt, all hail!

याद की राहगुज़र

धीरे-धीरे, फिर तेज
न जाने कब से बारिश हो रही है
जहां मैं हूँ
सूझता नहीं है साफ रास्ता
कहीं किसी ओर

यह सावन की रात है
काली, गहरी और कीचड़ से भरी हुई,
इतिहास में ऐसी रातों का कोई खास जिक्र नहीं
नेहरू की डिस्कवरी से भी बाहर रही यह
और विनोबा के संत हृदय नवनीत का कीचड़
तो इससे बिल्कुल जुदा ही था
फाइव स्टार झोपड़ियों,
जिनमें आजकल राजकुमार रात बिताते हैं
बताते हैं, यह रात वहां भी नहीं है

अगस्त के महीने में जमी
घुप्प अंधेरी रातों की चर्चा
बाबा किया करते थे, ठेठ देशी ठाट में
कि ऐसी रातों में दिशा-मैदान के लिए भी
दो फुट जमीन नहीं मिलती
गन्धाते रहते हैं रास्ते
कीचड़-कादो से

वे पूरे नब्बे साल लिए
फगुआ धरते हुए रुंधे गले से
दमा की बीमारी की गोद में सर रखे
दादी के गुजरने के बाद
रह गए चटकल बंगाल के किस्से-कारनामे
जिनमें हांडी सिर और बित्ते बराबर कान वाले
सरदार पटेल आते थे
जादू करते थे जिंदा और मुर्दा सबपर,
हल्ला मचाते लोग चुप हो जाते थे।

पर सावन की बे ठारु चिपचिपी कीचड़ का जिक्र
उनके बयान के पीछे हिलकोरता था
ताकता था उचककर
हालांकि वे इस किस्से को
पूरी सफाई से कहने की कोशिश करते थे

Memory Lane

Falling easy, then fast,
No one knows how long it's rained.
From where I am
No clear path strikes
In any direction.

In the rains this night:
Black, deep and full of mud.
Nights such as this hardly mentioned in history.
It was left out of Nehru's *Discovery* even.
And the butter-turned-mud of Vinoba's saintly heart
Was completely unrelated to it.
Five-star hutments,
In which these days princes spend nights,
They say, this night isn't there either.

Frozen in August,
The talk of pitch dark nights,
Grandfather used to say, in pure country fashion,
During such nights to heed nature's call
Not a bit of ground could be found.
The paths stink
With mud, with sludge.

He lived to be a complete ninety.
In a crushed voice holding up the Holi song,
With his head in the lap of an asthmatic cough,
After grandmother's death,
Remained the lays of jute-milled Bengal,
Where the kettle-headed, nine-inch-wide eared
Sardar Patel used to visit,
Entrancing all the living and the dead,
And the clamouring people became silent.

But the talk of the insentient, sticky mud in the rains
Undulated behind his words,
And peeped on tiptoe,
Although he tried
To tell this tale with all sincerity.

पैरों की अंगुलियों में
 बदबूदार कीचड़ से बने घाव को
 गरम तेल से सींचते पिता
 खासे परेशान रहते थे
 खेतों से धान रातोंरात गायब हो जाते, बह जाते
 कीचड़ व अगस्त के राज में
 मनमाने तौर से टूट जाती मेंड़
 आधी रात में, भिनसारे
 पिता फावड़े के साथ
 खड़े होते थे ठीक फावड़े की तरह
 गहरा मारना है फावड़ा
 कीचड़ और सावन और अगस्त और अन्धेरा,
 फावड़ा गहरा मारना है
 धान के लिए हमें यह सब करना पड़ेगा।

चौहत्तर से अब तलक
 उनके साथ खेत नहीं जा पायी बहन
 ले भी नहीं गए कभी
 उसके लिए सावन की बदबूदार रातें
 झूले की तरह थीं
 हालांकि कई बार
 सरककर वह झूले के पटरे से नीचे
 गोबर और कीचड़ में गर्क होती रही

मां अपनी ठठरी समेटे
 दालान से कीचड़ बाहर ढकेलती
 जतन करती
 अगस्त, सावन और कीचड़ के खिलाफ
 उसकी जंग का दस्तावेज कहीं नहीं लिखा गया
 इतिहास में तो बिल्कुल नहीं

पिता बार-बार सुनाते
 जवानी में घर छोड़ने का किस्सा
 फिर लौटना
 बहुगुणा की सरकार में सरकारी मास्टरी
 जेल जाने के किस्से
 'आधी रोटी खायेंगे, सेन्ट्रल जेल को जायेंगे'
 तो सावन था, अगस्त था और
 अन्धेरा बदस्तूर था
 पर चोर दरवाजे कहां नहीं होते
 सबसे कातर आवाज में मां गाती

The toes,
 With a wound made by the stinking mud.
 Father, irrigating it with warm oil,
 Remained quite disturbed.
 The paddy disappeared in the fields overnight, carried off
 During the regime of mud and August.
 The earth mounds broke capriciously
 At midnight. By day-break,
 Father, with a hoe,
 Stood exactly like a hoe.
 The hoe must strike hard.
 The mud and the rains and August and the darkness,
 The hoe must strike hard.
 We must do all this for the paddy.

From 'seventy-four till now
 Sister couldn't accompany him to the fields.
 He too never brought her
 The stinking nights of the rains
 Which were like a swing.
 Although many times
 She flopped from the swing seat,
 Sinking into the dung and mud.

Ma, gathering her rib cage,
 Pushing out the mud from the veranda,
 Made efforts,
 Against August, the rains and the mud:
 Her war was never recorded,
 Not in history at all.

Father often repeated
 The tale of his home-leaving in youth,
 And returning,
 Teaching under Bahuguna's rule,
 The tales of jail-going:
 'On half a roti, in Central Jail we shall be.'
 So, the rains were there, August was there.
 The darkness per usual was there.
 But where can't one find secret doors.
 In her most plaintive voice, Ma sang:

'गज और ग्राह लडत जल भीतर
नाथ हो गज के पिंड छुड़ावा'
मां खड़ी है उसी समय से
अगस्त और सावन और अँधेरे और कीचड़ के बीच

अब लगभग छोड़ चुके हैं खेत जाना पिता
अधिया पर हैं कुल बारह बीघे
जो मालिक नहीं हैं
दक्खिन से आते हैं
उनके घर वैसे ही है
पश्चिम के खिलाफ
डंकल के बीज
डाई, यूरिया, पोटास की कीमत
और रोज-रोज का अपमान पूंजी है
जिससे एक छटांक तिलहन भी नहीं खरीदा जा सकता।

हम तब से डरते हैं
अगस्त और सावन और अँधेरे से
सांप, बिच्छू और कीड़ों से
मस्जिद टूटने पर मां उदास थी
पिता निर्लिप्त ढंग से खुश थे
हम अगस्त के सूखे कुएं में सांप खोज रहे थे
दिसंबर तक चली हमारी खोज
रोज-रोज

मुझे पुलिस की वर्दी
और कीचड़ सने सांप
एक जैसे लगते हैं तभी से
जिस घर में छिपा करते थे हम
बारिश, कीचड़, रात और अँधेरे से बचने के लिए
मुंडेरों पर सांप रहने लगे हैं वहां
निगरानी रखते हैं हरकतों पर
बरकतों पर ऐसी नजर टांकते हैं कि
हरा पेड़ पलभर में टूट हो जाए

उस वक्त भी
मां कीचड़ से बचाने के लिए
गाढ़े लाल आलते में
डुबो देती थी हमारे पैर
और हम बेखटके

'The elephant and crocodile fight 'neath water.
O Lord, come save this elephant.'
Ma is standing since then
In the middle of August, the rains, the darkness, the mud.

Now father has almost stopped going to the fields.
All twelve *bighas* under half-cropping.
Those who aren't owners
Come from the village south-end.
Their houses are like those
Turned against the west.
The Arthur Dunkel seeds,
The cost of dye, urea, potash
And daily humiliation
Are the capital
Which cannot buy even a grain of mustard seed.

We've been afraid of the darkness since:
Of August, the rains, and the darkness
Of snakes, scorpions and stingers.
Ma was sad when the mosque was broken,
Father stoically happy.
We were searching for snakes in August's dry well.
Our search went on till December,
Every day.

To me, police uniforms,
And mud smeared snakes
Appear the same since.
The house in which we hid ourselves
To escape the rain, the mud, the night and the darkness
Snakes live now on the parapets there.
They keep watch on all movement.
On blessings they fasten such a curse
That can blast a green tree in a moment.

Then as now,
To protect us from the mud
In thick red lac-dye
Ma dipped our feet.
And we, carelessly,

रौंदते हुए बड़ लेते थे कीचड़ में।
इतिहास की किसी किताब में नहीं है तो क्या
बचने का रास्ता मां के बिना नहीं मिलेगा
यह हम बहुत पहले से जानते हैं।

ग़ज़ल

सारे बुत मयकदे से आते हैं
शौके मशरिक को पाँव आते हैं

तेजतर हो गयीं बलाएँ ज्यों
दर्द अब रफ़्तगी से जाते हैं

आह ठंडी थी नाले गर्म हुए
देखना क्या दवाएँ लाते हैं

खींचते थे नहीं जो खिंचता था
नाज़ उठता नहीं उठाते हैं

मिरतुनजे अहद की भुलैय्या में
बेहदी की ग़ज़ल उगाते हैं

Trampling on had moved into the mud.
What if no history book mentions it?
The path to survival is not found without her—
This much we know from long before.

Ghazal

All the idols from the tavern proceed
The desire of the east develops feet.

As the misfortunes gather speed
The pains now losses exceed.

The sigh was cold, the complaints heated.
Their medicines will be some remedy indeed!

They drew at it which couldn't be drawn.
To bear unbearable beauty was decreed.

'Mirtunjay' in the labyrinth of time,
Sows the timeless ghazal's seed.

Nighat Sahiba: The Brave New Voice in Kashmiri Poetry

NIYATI BHAT

For centuries, Kashmir has been home to some of the greatest mystic, *sufi* and romantic women poets like Lal Ded, Arnimaal and Habba Khatoon. It is towards the end of the twentieth century that poet Naseem Shafaie lights the path for women poetry that deviated from mysticism or romantic themes to address the condition of Kashmiri women in the contemporary moment and join the ranks of modern Kashmiri poets like Motilal Saqi and Rahman Rahi. The women of Kashmir suffered much through the years of conflict and violence but their voices were muffled in this chaos. Shafaie not only created visibility for the figure of the Kashmiri woman living in a conflict zone but also opened doors for women writers and poets to be heard and recognized in Kashmiri literary circles.

Years later, Nighat Sahiba, a young Kashmiri started writing poems in Urdu. On being encouraged by different listeners and poets, she started writing in Kashmiri as well. This proved to be a turning point for both Kashmiri literature and Nighat who was unsure that this 'living language'¹ had any takers in the literary world. Born and brought up in village Achabal, district Anantnag, her first collection of Kashmiri *ghazals* and *nazms* titled '*Zard Panike Dair*' (A Pile of Autumn Leaves) won her the *Yuva Puraskar* from Sahitya Akademi in 2017. She was also recently felicitated with 2018 Mallika Sengupta Award. Autumn leaves are a dominant metaphor in her work because of their constant presence in her natural surroundings. Dry autumn leaves also represent loss which, according to her, has been ever present in her life in Kashmir. Her work is humanistic in nature with an undiluted voice that has created uproar in Kashmiri poetry circles which are dominated by men in both attendance and participation. Her work is thought provoking and yet, in a close reading,

you will notice that she is a writer in the process of sifting through her thoughts for clarity in a milieu of chaos. She is figuring out the world and herself in the process. Nighat does not like to be identified as a 'woman' poet. She simply wants to be called a poet. To her, the label is akin to being put in a box where you won't be taken seriously. She says in one of our many conversations that categorization is mostly an easy way for men to eliminate the presence of women from intellectual pursuits. And even though she identifies herself as a feminist, she again, prefers to call her work 'humanistic' rather than 'feminist'. In her life and her work, she is constantly navigating the patriarchal society's rough terrain. She writes about the socio-political, religious, gender issues with a fervent versatility in her poems but she strives to stay away from being boxed in a corner with one particular label which is evident from her romantic *ghazals*. Her peers in Kashmiri poetry are quick to label her because that makes it easy for them to assess and measure her. The veteran poets are impressed and the young ones are intimidated by her raw, unhinged poetry. Nighat, although being awarded for her evidently feminist writing, is reluctant of the term. She says, "I am writing about the human condition in Kashmir." Her readers who are primarily Kashmiris are themselves still sceptical of the term, feminism. For Nighat, instead of liberating, the term then becomes restrictive as a poet in Kashmir because of its limited understanding. Nobody called her a feminist before English language interviews termed her work as such. She says, "It creates a negative impression that I cannot write about anything beyond my existence as a woman." Her voice tells me that she intends to break that mould of labels and categorization. She wants to write about gender but not be restricted by gender roles. She has struggled enough with

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gender roles having grown up in rural Kashmir where a girl spends a majority of time in household chores, not reading books. I must note that I, too, am a reluctant translator of her work. Primarily because each repeated reading of her poem reveals a new meaning- her poems transform like a shape shifter- at one moment, it is a woman's life story and the next, it is a sharp critique of the way men ravage lands as is evident in her poem 'For an unknown Afghan Poetess'. While this poem is still a translation in progress, the three poems chosen for this issue are unique because, these particularly bring up many questions about the process of writing itself. Without describing them any further, I will leave the interpretation to the readers. My introduction to Kashmiri poetry like most has been through the oral tradition. Kashmiris grow up listening to Lal Ded verses and Habba Khatoon songs recited by grandparents. But my first interaction with translation occurred with Naseem Shafaie's poems. It is an exciting venture for me personally because reading women in your mother tongue opens up a whole new world of experience. The translation, thus, has become a quest to bring such verses to the world so that the world may also understand a Kashmiri woman's intellectual and emotional dimensions in her own voice. Discovering Nighat's work has been an immensely rewarding experience for me not only because she is writing as a Kashmiri woman; but also because she is writing as a Kashmiri woman who belongs to my generation.

My first interaction with Nighat happened on a rickshaw ride from Kashmiri gate metro station to Ambedkar University on a winter morning in Delhi. Having gotten pleasantries out of the way, we bonded over the fact that we both belonged to the rural Kashmir in Anantnag district. We both exclaimed, "We would have been neighbours if Kashmir had a different history!" She opened up to me with a surprising ease as we talked about the roles that girls like us are expected to fit into. She said something akin to this, "I don't know why women don't understand that they have been conditioned into a certain way of life. You don't HAVE TO clean the house every single day. You have been

conditioned to believe that you are not an ideal woman unless you are fulfilling certain household duties like picking up the broom every single day. I always ask 'Why?' The settled dust can easily be cleaned up twice a week rather than every day. It doesn't make you less of a woman." I nodded in enthusiastic affirmation and understood why her words stick like a fish bone in the throat of most Kashmiris. I understood the depth to which her work is informed by such personal observations when I heard her poems in a private reading the next day. She writes in her poem, 'For an unknown Afghan Poetess', "*Suboh sham angnik banjar putavyin*" ("I have to smooth over the rough terrain of the front yard, day and night"). These lines took me back to our conversation on the rickshaw. She also introduced me to Qurratulain Hyder's *River of Fire* and I sent her poems by Ocean Vuong and Anne Sexton. As I write this, Nighat and I are discussing all the reluctances that come with the feeling that you are the only woman in the world standing on the dais reading your poems. It takes courage to tell your parents that you write poems, it takes courage to step out of your house and into a gathering of men to recite your verses, it takes courage to be a woman in Kashmir and it also takes courage to continue writing with a feeling that you are the only woman in the world of Kashmiri literature. It is an immense burden but we have decided that we will not be the only women writing in the world, be it any language. There is a large gap in terms of space and representation that Nighat Sahiba's verses are filling up. I am hoping that the translations contribute to the same. And a few years from now when a Kashmiri girl is trying to find the courage to step out of the house and recite her verses, she will have Nighat Sahiba's verses for encouragement and more women sitting in the audience, cheering her on. In conclusion, reading Nighat's work reminds me of the eleventh century poet Kshemendra's words, "Poets should write in their own language"² because it is in this 'living language' that Nighat has expressed what it means to be a human being finding the courage to speak frankly in her mother tongue.

سرِ یہہ قلمس

سُلہ سوئٹے ییلہ ووتھ شورپنس
 زوتھ دوہ نیرن ژورپنس
 واول چھنہ ٹھہراں کھورپنس
 لگی پتہ لارن نہ وورپنس
 ژھوپہ کر ہر دج کتھ کاٹہ مہ وون
 بیم لاکھ چھ زگاں پنہ ووتھرن
 کس ژھانڈی، پانوکس راوکھ
 بٹھہ پھر دی گئے ساری وپہ ہاؤک
 بیٹہ یورین صحراون منز
 کس پزاری ہم ہتھ ناؤن منز
 پد پد کس ووتھری ناگہ پوکھ
 اوش قطنن چائین راواثر
 وونہ سرِ یہہ چھہ رتھ کھنڈ دون چشمن
 وونہ چوئے ہا ہتھ رڈرا تھن
 وونہ چھی کینہہ پوش تے موجو دے
 راؤن مشراد، وچھ کیناہ رڈوے
 متہ انتہ گوڈے سہلاب اچھن
 ووتھ نیر وٹکھ نے چھہ خواب اچھن
 وونہ چھم دل، دادیک آگر چھم
 وونہ چھم اکھ سازوزاں رُم رُم
 وونہ چھم ارمان سبز اے
 وونہ چھم پنہ ووتھرن شہجاریے
 وونہ چھم اختا بچہ ز تہ بلمس
 زہد روزنہ باپتھ سرِ یہہ قلمس

Moist Pen

From the sound of rustling leaves in early spring
 You sensed, they would last, at best, four days altogether
 Even the wind can't control a leaf's pace
 Useless for you to chase after it, barefoot
 Shush now, don't tell them of your autumn news!
 These people are on the hunt for fallen leaves.
 Who will search for you when you lose yourself?
 Even your guides have turned their faces away.
 Here, in these sandstorms,
 Who will wait holding the oar for your boat?
 Who will wipe the sprouting springs at every step
 if your tears lose all meaning?
 There is still some water in your eyes.
 There is still a dread of you in rainy nights.
 There are still some flowers safely kept.
 Forget the losses, salvage what you have left.
 Don't flood your eyes so soon
 Get up, go on, tell them,
 My eyes still have dreams living in them.
 My heart, still, is an ocean of pain
 My soul, still, has a song to sing.
 My longings, still, are evergreen.
 My leaves, still, have some shade left in them.
 Sunrays, too, lie here in my lap.
 My pen still has some moisture left
 Quite enough for me to survive.

پچھان

پرس دؤپن
 ژ چھکھ ویشو
 گز بران چھکھ
 گو ان چھکھ
 دو ان چھکھ
 اسان چھکھ

مے دؤپ دپس یہ چھے ژے بزم

مگر دؤپم بلاے دس

پرس دؤپن
 ژ چھکھ چکھن
 کھو ان چھکھ
 کھو ان چھکھ
 کھو ان چھکھ
 کھو ان چھکھ

مے دؤپ دپس یہ چھے ژے بزم

مگر دؤپم بلاے دس

Recognition

Last year, he said to me

You are the Veshaw³

You gush

You sing

You run

You laugh

I wondered if I should tell him
 "This is simply your illusion!"

But then, I said to myself,
 Let it be.

This year, he said to me

You are the devil!

You engulf

You engulf

You engulf

You engulf

I wondered if I should tell him
 "This is simply your illusion!"

But then, I said to myself,
 Let it be.

بیم گم پشندی گری؟

اکھ گراوس سہ
 یس چانو معصوم اتھو بنو
 اکھ گراوس سہ
 یس مانزا اتھو چانو پآ روو
 اکھ گراوس سہ
 یتھ چانو لوسہ ونو، گنیل تھکو متو اتھو
 کٹھ کٹھ کچھ کور
 کمہ تاں رتہ پاپکو خواب وچھتھ
 اکھ گراوس سہ
 یتیمہ چہ بجائی باپت
 دعائے خاں کراں بندرے رآوے
 سے گری
 یتیمہ کس ڈینگ ہاس تاں
 واتاں واتاں شام گوؤے
 اکھ گری چھ یہ سرکار بلڈنگ
 یتیمہ چہ ا کس تنگ کوٹھر اندر
 دروازس کن مدے گنڈتھ
 پزاراں چھکھ ا خری آرامس

Whose Houses are These?

There was once a house
 made by your innocent hands.
 There was once a house
 decorated like a bride
 by your hennaed hands.
 There was once a house
 that your ageing, wrinkled and tired hands
 furnished from room to room.
 There was once a house
 where you dreamt of a distant, pleasant future.
 There was once a house
 for whose prosperity
 praying ferociously
 you lost all sleep.
 It is that very house
 on which evening descends
 before you reach the dining hall.
 One house of yours
 is this government building
 Here, inside one of its narrow cells,
 gazing towards the door,
 your wait for the final rest.

NOTES

1. Raina, Trilokinath, *A History of Kashmiri Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, 2002.
2. Ibid.
3. Veshaw is a tributary of river Jhelum which begins at Kausar Nag Lake in Kulgam District, South Kashmir.

Poetry, Purpose and People: Reflections through Rajesh Joshi's Poetry

SHIVANI CHOPRA

LOOKING THROUGH PAST

The idea of 'poetry for the people' came into existence around 1930, with Progressive Writers Movement (PWM) in India. As India was struggling for its Independence, people from every lingual-cultural community came forward to join this movement of progressive literature. The motive and purpose of this poetical movement was to connect with people at large through poetry and other forms of literature, so that awareness for progressive culture could be created.

Indian National movement had varieties of nationalism- Gandhi, Tagore, Ambedkar and several nationalists had different visions of nationalism. Whereas progressive poetry was inspired by anti-imperialist and socialist worldview and also incorporated Tagore's and Ambedkar's idea of nationalism in later years. In the first half of the twentieth century, colonialism was being condemned and resisted and led to the rise of nationalist struggles in most parts of the colonised world. Tagore's poetry and critical views on nationalism had already started to have a wide impact- despite Gandhi's emergence as the centre of the nationalist movement. Tagore was against the political concept of territorial nationalism and urged for a cultural movement to take cognisance of the diversity embedded in British India. Progressive poetry was inspired by Tagore and began to raise voice against exploitation of oppressed classes and communities identified the idea of nation with masses. If a nation cannot inspire different communities to envision an egalitarian society, it can never stand for her people. With this foregrounding, PWM was beginning to publicize and spread progressive ideas to counter narrow worldview of extant nationalisms. In this backdrop, the tradition of progressive poetry continued post-Independence too and

remained a part of progressive literature. It worked towards formation of a just society by addressing disparities and biases on the basis of class, religion, language, caste, gender or region. In a broad way, progressive poetry attempted to give a voice to the speechless. The entire effort focused on constructing a non-western democratic modern nation-state as an alternative to British imperialist state. India had a challenging task to counter its existing feudal structures, regional-lingual fanaticism and religious-communal fundamentalism.

Breaking established canonical forms of poetry, progressive poetry attempts to reach the masses. With this new content it evolved a new connected language in writing. It countered the notion of art for art sake and depicted untainted and often uncomfortable realities of social life. Progressive poetry also uncovers the misrepresentation of reality by canonical literary structures which are invariably the product of dominant socio-political structures. Thus, the emergence of new discourses in progressive poetry earnestly took up corrective measures and made an effort for constant change and affirmative action. The term 'Progressive' has a wide range of meanings attached to it. It doesn't only question imperialist forces but also colonialism within. To transform these structures of dominance – Gramsci's hegemonies – progressive constantly redefines the notion of progressive thought by giving voice to the subaltern.

Thus, recasting freedom by changing structures of social system has remained a primary poetical goal of progressive poets. Fine poetry, however, can't be reduced to merely a political agenda – though some poets did reduce their poetry to mere sloganeering, and therefore, couldn't establish any literary or artistic goal. Art has its own life

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but it transcends its own era for its expression can remain meaningful for ages, but this can't be done without evolving artistic edge through its form. Form of the poetical structure holds the content of the poetry. This whole process of expression takes place through the vision of the poet and his command over language. Poet's vision does lend a meaningful depth and substance to the expression. But it is the new idiom which any poet invents from the language of his locale that gives expression to poetical structure. The poetical form has the power and capacity to convey meaning of the content in a forceful manner. This art of weaving expression through content and form defines aesthetics of a poetry. It is a poet's gaze which defines and develops aesthetics as a weapon of resistance.

The long progressive movement of poetry started with an ambition for a 'modern' self of a nation which differed from Western-European idea of modernity. Therefore, earlier poets used the term 'progressive' for defining themselves, instead of 'modern'—creating alternative aspirations through literature. They wrote in everyday language and created new idioms, satire and patterns out of it. This language (*zubaan*), Hindustani, gave poetry a new formation. For progressive poets, poetry wasn't just a rhyming scheme of meters and metaphors. Instead, their poetry seeks liberation—through new forms and language of poetic expression. Its free verse signifies freedom in all spheres—be it social, political, economic or individual. It denounces cynicism and decadence that prevails in the Indian society. This new satirical language—the language of literature—became the most powerful medium in providing social critique, establishing diversity and multiplicity of various cultures. Progressive poets strongly believed in tradition and cultures but rejected repressive and obscurantist religious practices.

In the 1980's, when many stalwart poets like Ajneya, Shamsher, Vijayadev Narayan Sahi, Kunwar Narayan, Ashok Vajpayee, Vinod Kumar Shukl, Nagarjun and Trilochan were seen as established, there was a very limited scope for any new poet to make a mark in the existing field. Rajesh Joshi's first collection of poems *Ek Din Bolenge Ped* and his another collection *Do Panktiyon ke Beech Mein* leaves his mark as a different poet amongst readers. For his second anthology of poem she received the famous literary insignia 'Sahitya Akademi Award' in 2002.

Though it wasn't a very favourable phase for Hindi poetry, Rajesh Joshi aspired to make a mark—even as space and readership for poetry reading is drastically shrinking due to widely popularity of prose instead. Rajesh Joshi's passionate and insightful poetry pens some deeper truths with innate simplicity and humour. Breaking myths of reality and moving from one regime of truth to another Rajesh Joshi's poetry sometimes comes as a forewarning.

It makes the readers confront with complexities and frustrations born out of traditional verses, the very project of capitalist modernity. Questioning and pondering over ideological moral-commitments and reluctance for social transformation, his poetry intends to ignite deep introspection. It engages with the cruelties and crisis of imperialist model of modernity.

Poetry doesn't always deliver soothing emotion to comfort the restless mind. This conscious shift in the subject of literary writing has been a deliberate change. This poetry emerges out of a deep unrest and continuation of corrupt colonial bureaucratic structure. Progressive poets like Rajesh Joshi suggest the urgent need for reassessment of the current dispensation and take corrective measures. Though poetry in itself doesn't provide answers to problems generated by a corrupt system, but it jolts and forces us to rethink about the existing structures of power and exploitation and, subsequent use of communal disharmony and rigid notions of one's religion to create rift amongst people. This relegated significant questions of economic inequalities. But progressive poets have continued to pen what comes as a reality check to look beyond existing theories and political practices. Rajesh Joshi belongs to this generation of poets who see through his time even as he still continues to write. Through his poetry one can understand various phases of resistance and protest. His poetry connects us with various forms of marginalities and forces the reader to come out of comforting routinized life.

Translating some of Rajesh Joshi's very popular poems would be an attempt to understand the creative mission of his poetry. In the age of information revolution, this may redefine ways of reading and thinking. It may, perhaps, also enable readers to see through widening individual spaces of a society fragmented by loneliness, anxiety and depression. A crying need for social and economic change, his poetry is relevant to those who believe in the process of affirmative action. Standing up for humanitarianism may sound a bit rhetoric, but the world still faces catastrophes and devastation of wars.

I have chosen four most popular poems of Rajesh Joshi. The first poem 'Etcetera' (*Ityadi*) reflects upon such sections of society—common people, middle class, downtrodden, intellectuals—who can be situated along various categories of the 'margins' of existing power structures. His second poem is titled 'Meerut '87'. This poem is situated around the communal riots of Meerut in 1987. The poem reveals fear, agony and deep anxiety of people experiencing violence. Common people traveling in a train symbolises the nation struggling with provocative assertions of fundamentalism and fanaticism. The third poem 'Will be killed' (*Mare Jayenge*) looks beyond the formal institutions of democracy and unmasks the corrupt regimes of the

powerful. Those who are not compliant or amenable to this system are perennially vulnerable. His last poem 'Those children who are going for work!' is seeking equal rights and shun exploitation of children who constitute

one of the most marginalised sections of underdeveloped industrialised nations. All these poems evoke an intense hope for the future.

इत्यादि

कुछ लोगों के नामों का उल्लेख किया गया था
जिनके औहदे थे
बाकी सब इत्यादि थे

इत्यादि तादाद में हमेशा ही ज़्यादा होते थे
इत्यादि भाव-ताव करके सब्जी खरीदते थे और खाना-वाना
खाकर
खास लोगों के भाषण सुनने जाते थे
इत्यादि हर गोश्टी में उपस्थिति बढ़ाते थे
इत्यादि जुलूस में जाते थे तख्तियाँ उठाते थे नारे लगाते थे
इत्यादि लम्बी लाइनों में लगकर मतदान करते थे
उन्हें लगातार ऐसा भ्रम दिया गया था कि वे ही
इस लोकतंत्र में सरकार बनाते हैं
इत्यादि हमेशा ही आंदोलनों में शामिल होते थे
इसलिए कभी-कभी पुलिस की गोली से मार दिए जाते थे

जब वे पुलिस की गोली से मार दिए जाते थे
तब उनके वो नाम भी हमें बतलाए जाते थे
जो स्कूल में भर्ती करवाते समय रखे गए थे
या जिससे उनमें से कुछ पगार पाते थे
कुछ तो ऐसी घटना में भी इत्यादि ही रह जाते थे

इत्यादि यूँ तो हर जोखिम से डरते थे
लेकिन कभी-कभी वो डरना छोड़ देते थे
तो बाकी सब उनसे डरने लगते थे
इत्यादि ही करने को वो सारे काम करते थे

Et cetera (*Ityadi*)

Names of only few persons were mentioned
Those who had designations;
All others were et cetera

These et ceteras always outnumbered
These et ceteras always bargained to buy vegetables
And after eating their meals
They listen to the speeches of influential persons
Et cetera's attendance added weight to every conference
Et cetera went to processions, held placards, did sloganeering
Et cetera stood in long queues to exercise their right to vote
They were always told that
Only they elected governments in this democracy
Et cetera always joined movements
Therefore, sometimes got killed when police fired

When they get killed by the bullets police fired
Such names were also told to us
That were registered when admitted to school
Or to get salary in that name
Despite all these tragedies, etcetera they remain

Et cetera otherwise were scared of every risk
But sometimes when they stopped getting scared
Then everyone else felt scared
Et cetera nonetheless did all such work

जिनसे देश और दुनिया चलती थी
 हालाँकि उन्हें ऐसा लगता था वो ये सारे काम
 सिर्फ अपना परिवार चलाने को करते हैं
 इत्यादि हर जगह शामिल थे पर उनके नाम कहीं भी
 शामिल नहीं हो पाते थे
 इत्यादि बस कुछ सिरफिरे कवियों की कविता में
 अक्सर दिख जाते थे। (1999)

That ran the affairs of the world
 Although they always felt that they did all this work
 Only to run their families
 Et cetera were present everywhere but their names
 Were never ever included
 However, et ceteras were often noticed
 In the poems of some eccentric poets

मेरठ '87

जब-जब किसी स्टेशन पर रुकती है रेलगाड़ी
 खिड़कियों से झरती हैं आवाज़ें और
 कौंधती हैं बत्तियाँ
 खिड़की से दूर बैठा बूढ़ा पूछता है
 खिड़की के पास बैठे लड़के से
 "कौन-सा स्टेशन है भैया?"

खिड़की से बाहर झाँकता है लड़का
 पढ़ता है स्टेशन का बोर्ड
 कहता है—
 मेरठ।

हर स्टेशन पर पूछता है बूढ़ा
 "कौन-सा स्टेशन है भैया?"
 हर स्टेशन पर बाहर झाँकता है लड़का
 पढ़ता है बोर्ड और कहता है
 मेरठ।

मेरठ!
 मेरठ!
 मेरठ!
 पीली बत्तियों वाली बोगी में
 ठसाठस भरे लोग बुदबुदाते हैं
 मेरठ से कब बाहर निकलेगी
 यह रेलगाड़ी?
 (1987)

Meerut '87

At the railway station whenever any train stops
 Voices poured out of the windows and
 Glint fulminated
 An old man asks sitting far from the window
 A boy sitting close to the window
 "Brother! Which station is this?"

Outside the window a boy peeks
 Reads a board at the station
 He says —
 Meerut

On every station an old man asks
 "Which station is this brother?"
 On every station a boy peeks outside
 Reads a board and says
 Meerut.

Meerut!
 Meerut!
 Meerut!
 In the bogie of yellow lights
 People stuffed inside it burbling
 When will it get out of Meerut
 This Train?

मारे जाएंगे

जो इस पागलपन में शामिल नहीं होंगे,
मारे जाएंगे

कठघरे में खड़े कर दिये जाएंगे
जो विरोध में बोलेंगे
जो सच-सच बोलेंगे, मारे जाएंगे

बर्दाश्त नहीं किया जाएगा कि किसी की कमीज हो
उनकी कमीज से ज्यादा सफ़ेद
कमीज पर जिनके दाग नहीं होंगे, मारे जाएंगे

धकेल दिये जाएंगे कला की दुनिया से बाहर
जो चारण नहीं होंगे
जो गुण नहीं गाएंगे, मारे जाएंगे

धर्म की ध्वजा उठाने जो नहीं जाएंगे जुलूस में
गोलियां भून डालेंगी उन्हें, काफिर करार दिये जाएंगे

सबसे बड़ा अपराध है इस समय निहत्थे और निरपराध होना
जो अपराधी नहीं होंगे, मारे जाएंगे
(1988)

Will be killed (*Maare Jayenge*)

Those who will not join this insanity
Will be killed

Will be forced to stand in the witness box,
those who will speak in protest
Those who will speak unfiltered truth, will be killed

Will not be tolerated if anyone's shirt
Is found whiter than 'Their' shirt
Shirt of those not found stained; will be killed

Will be pushed out of the world of art, those who are not
ballad mongers
Those who will not sing their virtues, will be killed

Raising flag of religion those who will not march in a
procession
Bullets are going to storm them, will be proclaimed
nonconformist (Kafir)

The worst crime at this time is
Not to be a criminal and to be unarmed
Those who are not criminals
Will be killed.

बच्चे काम पर जा रहे हैं

कोहरे से ढँकी सड़क पर बच्चे काम पर जा रहे हैं
सुबह सुबह
बच्चे काम पर जा रहे हैं

हमारे समय की सबसे भयानक पंक्ति है यह
भयानक है इसे विवरण की तरह लिखा जाना
लिखा जाना चाहिए इसे सवाल की तरह
काम पर क्यों जा रहे हैं बच्चे?

क्या अंतरिक्ष में गिर गई हैं सारी गेंदें
क्या दीमकों ने खा लिया हैं
सारी रंग बिरंगी किताबों को
क्या काले पहाड़ के नीचे दब गए हैं सारे खिलौने
क्या किसी भूकंप में ढह गई हैं
सारे मदरसों की इमारतें

क्या सारे मैदान, सारे बगीचे और घरों के आँगन
खत्म हो गए हैं एकाएक

तो फिर बचा ही क्या है इस दुनिया में?
कितना भयानक होता अगर ऐसा होता
भयानक है लेकिन इससे भी ज्यादा यह
कि हैं सारी चीजें हस्बमामूल

पर दुनिया की हज़ारों सड़कों से गुजरते हुए
बच्चे, बहुत छोटे छोटे बच्चे
काम पर जा रहे हैं।
(1990)

Those children who are going for work!

On the road enveloped in fog; children are going for work
Early morning children are going for work
This is the most dreadful line of our times

It is dreadful to write its description
It should have been written as a question
Why children are going for work?

Have all the balls been dropped in the space
Have the termites eaten
All those colourful books
Have all the toys been crushed under the black mountain
Has any earthquake devastated
All the buildings of Mosque

Have all the playgrounds, all the gardens and courtyards of homes
Have been extinct one by one

Then what is left in this world?
How dreadful it would have been if it would have been like this
Dreadful it is but more than that it is
That all the things are a 'habit of a glance'.¹

But passing through a thousand roads of the world
Children, very little innocent children
Are going for work.

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NOTE

1. The poet has used a word *Hasbmamool*, the actual word in Urdu
is *Hasb-a-mamool* (*Nazarkiaadat*).

Book Reviews

Mithilesh Kumar Jha, *Language Politics and Public Sphere in North India: Making of the Maithili Movement*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. xix + 34, Rs. 1195/- (hardbound), ISBN: 9780199479344.

Language Politics and Public Sphere in North India: Making of the Maithili Movement by Mithilesh Kumar Jha is a timely work on Maithili language movement, given the meagre number of books on language movements in India, especially since the last one decade. Most works on language conflicts in India focus solely on the Hindi-Urdu controversy which in turn gets translated as 'communal', given the identification of Urdu as the language of the Muslim community. Jha's work brings a fresh air to the somewhat stale arguments of Hindi-Urdu conflicts focusing on Maithili, which was considered a dialect of Hindi, thereby establishing the heterogeneous languages clubbed as dialects and enumerated under the category of Hindi in the Census of India (2001 Census of Indiagroups 49 languages under Hindi). The work problematizes this overarching image of Hindi as a single language by throwing light on the dialect-language distinctions used largely by scholars debating language movements. For example, Catalanian and Castilian, Bengali and Assamese and further Assamese and Bodo in the Spanish and Indian cases, respectively.

The book is divided into four chapters along with a detailed introduction but somewhat short conclusion. While the first chapter focuses on language enumeration during the British rule and its fallout on construction of communities in India. The second chapter again is a theoretical one titled *Language, History, Nation and the Imaginary of Maithili Identity*, argues that the relationship of nation and language in India have been less explored in India (p. 66), a proposition which is correct if compared to caste, culture and religion but works on language and nation such as Sumathi Ramaswamy's *Passions of the Tongue* (1997) linking Tamil language to the notion of nation, Lisa Mitchell's *Language, Emotion and Politics in South India* (2009) elaborating Telugu and its impact on politics in South India, Chitrlekha Zutshi's *Language of Belonging*

(2003) focuses on Kashmir's language connects language's role in the conceptualization of 'nation'. Some of these are works, which Jha reports as an endnote in chapter two but does not discuss these relevant works in a comparative perspective with his work on Maithili, which could have contributed to understanding the nuances of various language movements in India.

The next two chapters are specifically on the Maithili movement and its different phases. Jha unravels the intricate relationship between cultural associations, print-media and journalistic writings in constructing and developing a 'Maithili-reading public' (p.113) which leads to the rise of a class of 'intellectual elites' responsible for initiating the movement for recognition of Maithili as a language and its inclusion in the Eighth Schedule (also known as the language schedule) of the Indian Constitution. This is not new, considering that in most language movements, it is the middle-class elites who become the forerunners for such movements demanding recognition and at times representation but where Jha's work really contributes is in his analysis of the 'internal contradictions' of the Maithili movement. This scrutiny of contradictions-within, is beautifully and comprehensively pronounced in these chapters. He further illustrates how the politicization of the movement led to the declaration of Maithili as a subject in the examination of the State Service Commission, through judicial intervention and the support of Bhartiya Janata Party to the ongoing Maithili movement. Such arguments may not seem original i.e. language and its role in employability has been debated again and again, but nonetheless integral in any discussion of language movements as the underlying factor of political economy is critical to understanding such movements, and Jha presents this lucidly. In his conclusion, Jha takes up language as a 'conceptual category', he puts forth the two major internal issues of the Maithili movement first, "where one speaks of the Maithili movement and the other for statehood" (p. 257).

Even though, Jha's book is timely it suffers from some shortcomings which deserves mention. First, in

the introduction, Jha claims that the Maithili movement should be studied through the utilization of a theoretical framework of James Scott “weapons of the weak”, criticizing Paul Brass who compares the movement with the Tamil and Telugu language movement necessarily culminating into a territorial recognition of a language. This intrinsic relation between language, identity and territoriality is pivotal in discussions on language movements and the reader expects Jha to elucidate this criticism of Brass’s approach in the conclusion but Jha does not refer to it at all in the end.

Second, Jha does not elaborate how the Maithili movement which he himself claims to have failed to have a mass-base can be seen through the conceptual gaze of ‘weapon of the weak’. Because if we take his initial objective of following Scott’s framework, he should have presented why one should consider the movement as ‘weapon of the weak’ wherein, weak is synonymous to the middle-class intellectuals, suffering from caste hierarchy, failing to arouse mass support for the movement (p. 256). Another aspect which, if had Jha discussed, could have added more value, is on the uniqueness of Maithili movement which succeeded in the inclusion in the Eighth Schedule in 2003 without having been recognised as an official language in any state of India. A trait which is rare as only three languages have been included in the Eighth Schedule without having a separate state are Sanskrit, Sindhi and Maithili, rest all have official language status in one or the other state. Bodo and Manipuri, both of which were also included in the Eighth schedule in 2003 have territorial recognition in Bodoland and Manipur.

But apart from these shortcomings, this book is an essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the Maithili language movement and how language, even in the time of globalization, has the capacity to unite people for a collective cause i.e. recognition of one’s identity by the State and the ‘others’.

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Vivek Sachdeva, *Fiction to Film: Ruth Praver Jhabvala’s The Householder and Heat and Dust*, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, pp. li + 244, ISBN: 9789386689030

“They slaughtered the novel in that film.”- A Reader

An apple isn’t an orange – it is, ipso facto, an apple. Similarly, no matter how vehemently public opinion – or even critical perspectives – (seek to) blur the boundaries between fiction

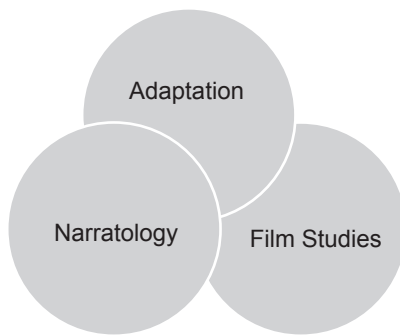
and film, a novel simply cannot *be* a film, and a film cannot *be* a novel. From what they (inherently) are and how they are perceived/received, these two art forms cannot be regarded as same; they may, however, be viewed as co-planar, and speaking mathematically, even similar (though certainly not congruent). After all, both these kinds of storytelling have their distinct individual styles, modes and epistemologies of narrative(s) that are inbuilt in their structural schematics. Thus, despite the oft-quoted complaint that “the directors ruined the novel”, fundamental differences ensure a direct comparison of fiction and film is a false analogy, and creates more problems than it solves (since it is akin to comparing apples and oranges).

How a text is read/seen/decoded, and how the processes of meaning generation operate within fiction and film, have been fecund grounds for contemporary critical enquiries and scholarly exploration. Vivek Sachdeva’s *Fiction to Film* is predicated on the idea that both fiction and film are different mediums of creative expression – though both tell stories in accordance with their specific governing conventions – and operate in the realm of the literary. Sachdeva reiterates that while fiction banks upon verbal/linguistic signs to communicate an idea to its readers, the film relies on a Gestalten interplay of linguistic, pictorial and other sign-systems to get its meaning(s) across to the audience. What words ‘describe’ in a novel, a movie ‘shows’ (using *mise en scène*, *typage*, etc).

Fiction to Film, a comprehensive, encompassing, and well-researched gaze on the changes that a narrative undergoes when a novel is adapted into a film, is one of the first of its kind, especially vis-à-vis the primary texts and research methodology adopted. This cogent and informative book brings to bear a spotlight on Ruth Praver Jhabvala’s *The Householder* and *Heat and Dust* – and their film adaptations by Merchant Ivory Productions. Divided into four chapters and a treasure-trove of an introduction, the study analyses the narrative techniques in Ruth Praver Jhabvala’s novels, and engages in a rigorous comparative study of her fiction and films. The writer delves into the epistemology of the transformations that a novel has to go through (when becoming a film) and locates, identifies and interrogates – rather deftly – the disruptions, deflections and dislocations of texts in the space-time continuum.

Sachdeva’s in-depth study – which theorizes the interface between literature and films – emanates from the vantage point of post-structuralist narrative theory, and is conscious of how each medium depends on a complex lattice of sign-systems to generate, constitute and shape meaning. To represent the thrust areas of this book using Venn diagrams: it focuses on the intersection of adaptation, narratology and film studies.

By operating at the cusp of these three paradigms, *Fiction*



to Film furnishes a critical introduction to the theory of narrative analysis in fiction and films, and introduces the nuances of adaptation. It then discusses novels and films in the light of adaptation studies, tackles dimensions of narrative theory (in relation to fiction and film) and also shows application of narrative theory in these two different mediums of creative expression. Interestingly, Sachdeva deals with Ruth Praver Jhabvala not only as a novelist, but as a screenplay writer too. Moreover, since the novelist and screenplay writer behind the four texts under scrutiny is the same (Jhabvala), Sachdeva's *Fiction to Film* follows a deliberate, scientific methodology that gives the writer further scope for an even more incisive conceptual study as the 'human' factor in the adaptation-narratology-novel/script equation has been resolved: by keeping it constant.

With self-explanatory sub-headings such as "Pride (in Literature) and Prejudice (against Adaptation)", "Challenges of Adaptation" and "Novel, Theatre and Cinema" (to cite just three), *Fiction to Film* boasts of an enlightening introduction which investigates the multifarious dimensions of adaptation, and examines the differences between the verbal and the cinematic narratives. It also brings to bear the historicity and current developments in/of adaptation in the light of intertextuality and translation studies, and lays a comprehensive, eclectic groundwork which would benefit a vast variety of readers, academic or otherwise. This introduction (and some other parts of this text) gets a bit dense in certain areas, but that could be attributed to how complex concepts are being compressed and rearranged in a new syntax for a newer – and perhaps, quite often better – semantic free play.

The first chapter ("Narratology: Fiction and Film") introduces narratology, retraces its trajectory and theorizes narration in fiction and film by deploying ideas of Gerard Genette, Michael Toolan, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Seymour Chatman, Mieke Bal and Edward Branigan. Using reader-friendly divisions such as "An Introduction to Narratology", "Story", "Narration" and "Fabula", it further ideates on, inter alia, analepsis and prolepsis, kinds of Focalization, levels of narration, the kinds of narrators (and their functions) etc, thereby reading literary and cinematic

spaces/narratives/structures vis-à-vis culture. Borrowing – and later reworking – Genette's conceptualization of narratology, the scholar regards narrative (and its comprehension) as being understood by the reader (and not as a pre-existing order imposed on a set of events).

The second chapter ("Ruth Praver Jhabvala") gives a brief biographical introduction to the author and reads her as a novelist and a screen writer. Ruth Praver Jhabvala (1927-2013) was Booker Prize winner and Academy Award winning screenplay writer. While Jhabvala has been lauded by critics outside India for her objective portrayal of Indian middle-class, Sachdeva problematizes this perception by foregrounding how Indian critics are able to discern a rather stereotypical oriental image of India in her creations. The last section of the chapter gives detailed informative account of all the screenplays she wrote for Merchant Ivory Productions.

The next two eponymous chapters focus on the four primary texts: first in their novel avatars, and then as screenplays, keeping the fiction-film-adaptation question in mind. The third Chapter ("The Householder") scrutinizes the novel as the 'narrative of character' as well as 'narrative of space'; whereas the films stands closer to the category of 'narrative of space' than the 'narrative of character'. The novel is about a young man – struggling to find his feet in his personal as well as professional life – journeying towards graduating as a householder, growing in confidence, and becoming comfortable with his sexuality in the process. Through Prem's character, Ruth Praver Jhabvala gives a critique of the institution of marriage in India. The film version, on the other hand, begins where the novel ends. Narrated from the subjective position of Prem in a flashback, it focuses on outer space. It looks at the economic challenges in front of a middle-class newly married man and manifests mother-in-law syndrome in Indian marriages. *Fiction to Film* analyses, among other things, the arrangement of events, the contained 'anachronies' in space-time, and the function of the narrator. As mentioned earlier, Sachdeva also points out that Jhabvala has always viewed and understood Indian society primarily as a European, and her portrayal of Indian society can be regarded as being biased and prejudiced.

Sachdeva's fourth chapter borrows its title from *Heat and Dust*, which won the Booker Prize in 1975, and is known for its twin narrative structure. It engages in an elaborate analysis of both the novel and the film, and discusses the modes of narrations, kinds of narrators, and types of an alepsis present in the texts. *Heat and Dust* the novel is narrated by a woman working on the life of Olivia – her grandfather's first wife in India – and how she also undergoes a similar series of events in her own life. It compares the inter-racial relationship in colonial and post-colonial India. Sachdeva, reading the novel as a spatial

narrative, looks at the arrangement of events in time and space, and argues that the thread of time in *Heat and Dust* is broken and space becomes the take off point for movement from one time-frame to another. The analysis of the film deals with narratology and excavates the changes that have taken place in the narrative structure during the process of adaptation, and also ideates on the representation of the Empire in the film.

One can argue that adaptation, like translation, is also an act of interpretation. Sachdeva propounds that films based on literature deserve to be seen as independent texts, and not as being subservient to their 'original' sources, thereby problematising the idea of what is original. His research concludes with drawing attention to the codes and conventions, strengths and weaknesses, scope and limitation of both novels and films since each art form communicates according to its own creative conventions. *Fiction to Film*, instead of looking at cinematic adaptation in terms of fidelity, looks at them in terms of inter-textuality. Also, since the writer critiques the relationship between the novel and the film as being contoured and driven by intertextuality, rather reductive, not to mention obfuscating, questions of hierarchy, arche, origins, and the contentious 'which text is better?' do not arise in the first place. Such a perspective and conclusion destabilise structures while simultaneously utilizing them: it is, one can say, a manifestation of the post-structuralist streak in Sachdeva.

Fiction to Film is highly recommended not just to those working on Ruth Praver Jhabvala, but to any student or scholar working on film studies, adaptation studies, and narratology – especially if they are interested how culture, reader, and the medium shape the semantics and semiotics of the film-fiction dialectic in contemporary times.

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Saloni Mathur and Kavita Singh (eds), *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2017 (reprint), pp. xiv+269, Rs. 795/-, ISBN: 9781138084636.

No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia, edited by Saloni Mathur and Kavita Singh, brings together an important body of works on museums in India. Though well-established globally, heritage and museums studies are still at a nascent stage in India. Studies on museums in India have traditionally focussed on the technical aspects of

display and logistics, and the politics of museums have only been recently commented upon. This book includes essays that would be on the reading list of anyone interested in the history and politics of museums in India. The volume argues for examining the museum in India, on its own merit—noting its particular formative conditions and its contemporary usage—rather than thinking of it as a variant of the type established in the West. The interesting variety of museum forms discussed here offer much potential for developing theories of museums and heritage. This is a field which is dominated by studies on Western societies and this collection offers an opportunity to develop the field from the point of view of non-Western societies.

The book is divided into four sections, the first three following the chronological trajectory of India's history. The first titled, *Inaugural Formations*, is about the emergence of the museum in colonial India. The second, *National Reorientations*, explores the museum's new role as an institution responsible for preserving and showcasing the national culture in a newly independent India. The third, *Contemporary Engagements*, covers the new museum forms emerging in the last three decades. Each of these three sections includes three essays. The fourth section, *Museum Watching: An Introduction*, has short field notes on thirteen museums from different parts of India (and one from Pakistan).

Part one, *Inaugural Formations*, looks at the history of the museum in colonial India. It begins with Bernard Cohn's well-known work which discusses knowledge production in colonial India, through the processes of collection, classification and preservation of India's material remains. The ambitious surveys covering large regions of the subcontinent were conducted both by individuals and the English East India Company. Loot, following warfare was an additional source of material goods. Both these formed the basis of important collections in colonial India. The second and third essays in this section, by Tapatī Guha-Thakurta and Gyan Prakash respectively, emphasize on the inability of the museum to meet the expected pedagogical role set by the British rulers, and see this gap as the zone where the agency of the colonised Indian visitors is activated. Both also discuss the reception of the museum as a 'wonder house' or *ajab ghar* or *jadoo ghar* by the locals. Guha-Thakurta writes on the close relationship between the history of archaeology and the history of the museum in colonial India. Prakash's essay focuses on the museums and exhibitions on natural history and sciences.

Part two, *National Re-Orientations*, looks at the life of the museum in the newly independent Indian nation. The three essays in this section cover two most important museums of India: the National Museum and the National Gallery of Modern Art, both in New Delhi. Kavita Singh's article is

a study of the National Museum at New Delhi. It discusses the idea of a 'national' museum in the newly independent India, and how this idea is manifested in the display. Singh argues that in the National Museum, 'national' is in name only and the museum is, in fact, a combination of the archaeological and industrial collections of the colonial period with very little attempt to reconfigure the idea of the 'national'. Another article on the National Museum shares the lesser known history of the making of the museum: the role of the American curator, Grace McCann Morley. This essay by Kristy Phillips, discusses the pioneering initiatives by Morley and her lasting impact in the field of museum work in India. The final essay in this section, by Vidya Shivadas, examines the history of the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi and a newly independent India's experiments with modernity both at the local and the global level. Shivadas explores this theme through a discussion of the formation of important collections at the museum, such as that of Amrita Sher-Gil's works.

Part three, *Contemporary Engagements*, discusses the dynamics of the museum in a globalised world and its relationship with political economy of heritage, consumption, and identity politics. Appadurai and Breckenridge's essay, *Museums are Good to Think*, is the first one in this section. The authors argue for reconsidering the museum in the India as a vibrant part of society's public culture and its informal learning space, especially the spheres of leisure, festivals and exhibitions which are heavily influenced by media. For Appadurai and Breckenridge, the interocularity of these spheres affect the Indian public's interaction with the institution of the museum. Mary Hancock's study of Dakshina Chitra, a cultural centre in Chennai, demonstrates the contradictions of heritage industry in a neoliberal context. On the one hand, institutions like Dakshina Chitra are created to save traditions and heritage against the modernising drive of neoliberal economies. On the other hand, these institutions draw upon the entrepreneurial model and produce tradition for consumption, within a neoliberal logic. Mathur and Singh's essay in this section, discusses three ambitious museum projects in India: the Akshardham Cultural Complex in Delhi, the Khalsa Heritage Complex in Anandpur Sahib (Punjab), and the Maitreya Buddha in Kusinagar (Uttar Pradesh). These are grand, multi-media projects, which the authors note, have blurred the boundaries between a shrine, a theme-park and a museum. Mathur and Singh argue that these institutions are a result of rise of identity politics in a globalised world where non-state groups have the resources and the influence to present their cultural claims.

The final section titled, *Museum Watching: An Introduction*, is a collection of short write-ups extracted from a research

project on museums led by the editors. These field notes are produced by research scholars who visited museums across India between the years 2005 and 2009. This section introduces us to thirteen museums in all: twelve from the north, east, south and west of India, and one from Pakistan. It is successful in portraying the diversity of museum practices in India and includes museum projects by different patrons, including the state, non-state actors and individuals. Some of the museums covered in this section include, the Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra in Guwahati, the Lahore Museum in Pakistan, the Hanuman Sangrahalaya, Lucknow, the archaeological museum at the Mahabodhi Complex, Bodhgaya, the Padmanabhapuram Palace Museum in Tamil Nadu and the Stok Palace museum in Ladakh.

This section introduces the readers to the relatively lesser known institutions, which would ordinarily be overlooked in most discussions on museums in India. The research shared in this section also follows a different methodology from the essays in the first three sections: it is an ethnographical study of the museum. The field notes offer insights into the profile of the visitors to a museum, their interaction with the display and the museum space, and what value they ascribe to the museum. This is an important, and, in the Indian context, the least examined aspect of museum studies. Readers of this collection will no doubt want to know more and one hopes that more of this research is published. Many case studies in this section highlight the dynamic interactions between the visitors, the display and the museums space which modify our understanding of the secular and the sacred in the context of museums. They demonstrate that these seemingly distinct spheres (which were the hallmark of the museum in the West) engage in diverse ways in the Indian context. As the editors argue (in the preface), "it is now for art history to recast its frameworks and practices" in light of the museum's varied forms. Indeed, one could push the argument further to say that, museums—because they are a meeting point of local, national and global forces, as shown by this collection—can be the vantage point for studying some of the most important questions of contemporary Indian society.

Put together, the essays in this collection highlight the museum's characteristic as a popular space where *touching*, *spitting* and *praying* were and are carried out irrespective of the museum makers' objectives and desires. The visitors see the museums with wonder (the *ajajib ghar* in the Guha-Thakurta and Prakash); with devotion (Mathur and Singh on Akshardham and the Maitreya Buddha, Mukherjee on the archaeological museum at Bodhgaya, Puri on dioramas in Haridwar); and at leisure (Appadurai and Breckenridge on museum as part of the media spectacle, Jeychandran on Government Museum, Chennai). Accordingly, the

editors' comment that the history of the museum in South Asia shows its distance from the popular sphere appears inconsistent with the overall emphasis of the book. Further, this collection is dominated by Indian case-studies. More studies from other South Asian countries, which share so much in common, yet have diverse histories and societies, would have been a valuable and welcome addition to this book.

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Sumit Sarkar, *Modern Times: India 1880s-1950s*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2014, pp. xiv + 464, Rs. 535 (paperback), ISBN: 9788178243825.

Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, New Delhi: Macmillan, 1983 (reprint 2007), pp. xvi + 486 (paperback), ISBN: 9780333904251.

In the early 1980s', historians were divided into three schools of historiography- the 'Nationalist', the 'Cambridge', and the 'Marxist'. Most historians were proud of their affiliation to and identification with a particular school. The Marxist and the Cambridge school were often in bitter ideological conflict with each other. In this belligerent environment, for a newcomer, history-writing was not only about learning how well you understand the past, it was also figuring out to which school you belonged. Since the last three decades, however, this era of history-writing is coming to an end. Though a number of historians still cling to the above mentioned simplistic but worn-out world view, a majority does not subscribe to it. The era of 'schools' is over.

This broad change in the Indian history-writing may be situated in the intellectual journey of Sumit Sarkar, a renowned historian of modern India. His two books— *Modern India* (1983) and *Modern Times* (2014)— which are situated thirty years apart, are representative of this broad trend in history-writing.

Since 1983, *Modern India* (*MI*) has remained a very well-known textbook on the theme through a Marxist perspective. Sarkar himself had no hesitation in acknowledging this. In his introduction to *MI*, he wrote, 'No historian can be free of bias, and unstated or unconscious bias is most dangerous of all; it is best therefore to baldly state at this point my principal assumptions' (pp.10-11). He stated four assumptions, which suggest influence of an admixture of Nationalism and Marxism in his work.

In contrast, his introduction to *Modern Times* (*MT*) does not make any such claims. Instead he argued,

Much has changed in the world of South Asian history-writing over the last three decades since I wrote a book entitled *Modern India* (1983). The passage of thirty years having rendered that work thoroughly dated, the futility of any attempt to revise it became increasingly clear to me, especially as over this period my own historical perspectives took new and unexpected directions. (p. xi)

In the following section, through examples, I have shown how Sarkar's approach to history-writing has changed from *MI* to *MT*. In *MI*, the first hundred pages offered a rich commentary on the historiography of modern India. While remaining chapters dealt with political history, these pages discussed social and economic history. *MT*, despite Sarkar's calling it a new work, appears to be an extended, revised, and re-worded version of this section of *MI*, with addition of a few new chapters. In both books, the themes discussed are conspicuously similar, only the interpretation and approach has changed. The discussion on 'deindustrialisation' in both the books is one such example. In *MI*, Sarkar had criticised Morris D. On Morris's article which called deindustrialisation a myth, he had called the arguments of Morris 'more conjectural' and 'dubious'. Against the arguments of Morris, he had cited the findings of Amiya Bagchi, who had then provided new data on deindustrialisation, which seemed very convincing. Sarkar also concluded that one has to be mindful of the 'sufferings of artisans', which he believed was caused by deindustrialisation.

In *MT*, on the contrary, a different understanding of deindustrialisation emerges. The confidence with which he wrote on deindustrialisation in *MI* seems to have waned. He finds this subject 'controversial', 'indeed peculiarly difficult to clinch in either direction'. Whether it took place or not is difficult to establish now. In *MT*, Sarkar writes,

[T]here is still sufficient room for debate, for such a large country, about the overall macro-economic trends...it was also indisputable that artisanal occupations, most notably handlooms, had far from vanished, and were in some cases even expanding. (p.207)

On this theme, his evaluation of the worth of some of the studies has also changed. In *MI*, he had dismissed the arguments of Daniel and Alice Thorner, but in *MT* he agrees with them and states that the statistics would not 'bear the burden that had been imposed on them'. On the contrary, Amiya Bagchi's arguments, which were given significant importance in *MI*, appear unimportant in the light of a subsequent critique by Marika Vicziány. In *MI*, Sarkar had unequivocally written in favour of the nationalist understanding of deindustrialisation, but in *MT* he seems to be indecisive. Though he has stated various positions on the deindustrialisation debate, he has kept a critical distance

from scholarship. In his verdict, Sarkar writes, 'in the end the controversy [has] generated more heat than light' (p. 209). In sum, after three decades, when Sarkar has revisited the debate, his approach is more flexible and open-ended.

But not everything has changed in *MT*. For instance, on the question of railways, Sarkar has maintained the core of his arguments. In *MI*, he had argued that the Indian tax-payers bore the burden of the railway construction, as the government had guaranteed to the British capital 'a minimum dividend even if profits were non-existent' (p. 37). In *MT* also he has argued so but there is a lot more. He has raised new questions which do not fit into the debate whether railways were harbingers of growth or tools of colonial exploitation, a debate which the early nationalists had begun. Sarkar's analysis shows, there are other ways of looking at railways. He recognised the ways in which railways might have benefitted the Indian economy. For instance, he mentions the arguments of John Hurd, from a book which had earlier received short shrift from the Marxist historians. Sarkar writes,

Hurd has estimated that the fall in transport costs through railways, as compared with the available data regarding the expenses incurred in transporting goods by pack bullocks, bullock carts, or boats, meant a saving of about 9 per cent of the national income in 1900. (p.182)

In absence of any study which has contradicted Hurd's analysis, Sarkar seems to be in agreement with Hurd. Also, the introduction of railways had unforeseen consequences. Railways, for instance, Sarkar notes were 'indispensable for the development of anti-colonial nationalism'. Gandhi, who had condemned railways as 'one of the worst features of modern civilisation', when he came back to India, travelled third class for a year to experience the woes of ordinary Indians (p.184). Railways also consolidated 'brahmanical and Islamic orthodoxies of rituals and beliefs, notably by making pilgrimages much easier as well as enabling their commercialisation' (p.185). This discussion goes beyond the earlier nationalist debate on railways. One may cite more such examples to show a shift in Sarkar's perspective.

In *MT*, there are also new themes. These include chapter 2 on environmental history, which shows how this subject has become important in the last three decades. The environmental history has not escaped from the influence of nationalism. Sarkar in *MT* has showed that the subject is complex, and the nationalist interpretation has its limitations. For instance, Ramachandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil, in an influential work (*The Fissured Land*, 1992), had argued that during the British rule, India witnessed destruction of its forests, as a massive demand of sleepers to lay down railways had led to deforestation. Against

this Sarkar poses a sober 'counterfactual': 'some of the diverse and contradictory implications would have become manifest even had the railways been built in an India not conquered by the British' (p.179). Another important aspect which was missing in the *MI* was 'culture'. In *MT*, in a chapter called 'society and culture', Sarkar has discussed such important themes as 'language and literature', and 'The Visual and Performing Arts'. This again shows a shift in his perspective. In the 1980s, economic history, as per the classical Marxist orthodoxy, had dominated the research; culture seemed unimportant. On the contrary since 1980s, economic history has lost its charm, and historians have turned to the study of culture—literature, theatre, cinema, and paintings.

Since 1983, several 'isms' and the schools associated with them have lost their stranglehold on history-writing. History-writing is no more guided by politics in the manner in which it used to be. In 1983 when Sumit Sarkar wrote *MI*, nationalism had dominated history-writing. The history of India, the nationalist historians believed, had to be salvaged from imperialism. Historians, it was assumed, had an important role in the nation-building; they would narrate the past in ways that would strengthen the nation. A part of their duty was to discredit the neo-imperialist historiography what came to be called the Cambridge school, which denied the existence of the nation and the Indian nationalism during the late British rule.

However, since the 1980s historians have been rethinking their relationship with nationalism. One work which had immense influence on historians was Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983). Before Anderson's book appeared, 'nationalism' had acquired an ethereal quality. It effortlessly appeared in the writings of historians. Anderson showed that nationalism was a modern shared imagination, a product of history. Historians became aware of 'nationalism' in their writings; it became a subject of enquiry. Though one could differ with Anderson in his interpretation of the history of nationalism, but one could not escape from its impact. Anderson's work and the subsequent scholarship on nationalism dislodged nationalism from its exalted status and reduced it to a 'subject'. Historians began to suppress their nationalist feelings in their writings. In the years which followed, nationalism, to a great extent, disappeared from history-writing. The demise of Marxist influence in history-writing was even more extraordinary.

In the 1980s, the Marxist school had dominated history-writing in India. It was distinguished by its emphasis on 'class-analysis' and material forces. To a Marxist historian, history appeared to be a struggle between classes. Historians uncritically used terms like 'feudalism', 'mode of production', and 'class consciousness' in their writings.

Since the 1980s, however, most historians reinterpreted Marxist paradigm of history-writing. This has happened primarily because of the massive research which appeared in the subsequent decades; in the light of which it became difficult to sustain the simplistic Marxist interpretation of history.

From the early 1980s, when Sarkar wrote *MI*, history-writing has undergone a paradigm shift in India. In the early 1980s, history was a slogan, a revolutionary programme of action, or a narrative filled with excessive pride. With some element of nationalism in it, *MI* was, and has been, called an exercise in the 'Marxist' historiography; no other description will suit it. On the contrary, *MT* will defy any reductionist label; it cannot be identified with any school. The old rivalries between schools and historians have become redundant. History-writing in India has entered into a new phase, whose nature is yet beyond our understanding.

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Vikas Pathak, *Contesting Nationalism: Hinduism, Secularism and Untouchability in Colonial Punjab 1880-1930*, Delhi: PRIMUS BOOKS, 2018, pp. xx + 266, Rs. 1,495/-, ISBN: 9789386552792 (hardbound).

The book seeks to elaborate on the multiple and contending discourse of Indian nationalism, specifically regarding four issues in the context of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Punjab; covering roughly the period up to 1930. These are: (a) Composite Nationalism (b) Religious Nationalism specifically Hindu Nationalism (c) Secular, Citizenship-based Nationalism and (d) Dalit Nationalism. However, as a caution the writer argues: 'these visions present themselves not as watertight compartments, but as fluid entities engaged in constant dialogue with one another for appropriating the nationalist space in favour of their respective brands of nationalism' (p.2). Perhaps this overlapping nature of the discourses makes him comment: 'This rule of thumb makes me argue that the four visions discussed in this work are nationalist and not merely subnational, communitarian ideas. For all were engaged in a battle for hegemony over the cultural cast of the Indian nation'. (Preface, p. xi)

The book is divided into seven chapters: (1) 'Introduction: Exploring Multiple Discourses on Nationalism in India', (2) 'Cultural Contents and Syncretism in Colonial Punjab' (3) 'Composite Moorings of the Nation' (4) 'Regimenting

the Community: Mapping Initial Glimmers of Hindu Nationalism' (5) 'Hindu Nationalism, The Community as Nation' (6) 'Beyond the Community, Towards a Secular Nationalism' (7) 'Glimmers of a 'Dalit' Vision of Nationalism' and (8) Conclusion. While the overall thrust is to conceptualise and clarify the content and emergence of Indian Nationalism, the author tries to keep a keen eye on the consequences of this very significant socio-political articulation given that it played a significant role in enthusing and sustaining the national independence movement.

In the introduction chapter 'Exploring Multiple Discourses on Nationalism in India', the author explains the four discourses in general. Here he makes a distinction between 'Nationalism' and 'Freedom Struggle', defines 'What is Communalism' and finally reviews the existing literature regarding the four conceptions of Nationalism. The second chapter is a discussion on cultural contests and syncretism in colonial Punjab. The reconciliation of different principles, practices of religions, cultures, or schools of thought in a specific socio-political milieu can be a difficult task. The coalescing of Punjab and India could possibly tend to suggest generalisations which could come with limitations and handicaps; to illustrate, while Lajpat Rai is unencumbered to conjecture both for Punjab and India, Gandhi is restricted to India.

In the third chapter titled 'Composite Moorings of the Nation', the author places both Gandhi as well as Lajpat Rai within the notion of composite nationalism albeit with a difference; while Gandhi for the author is supposed to imagine composite nationalism in religious ways, Rai apparently remains in favour of 'secular governance' derived from 'Enlightenment modernity'. However, by 'religion' Gandhi did not mean Hinduism, Islam or the Zoroastrian religion, but 'that religion which underlies all religions.' What remains unclear is that if religion is vast enough to incorporate every opinion then 'how does it differ from being composite?' The author argues that there were two 'parallel discourses' of nationalism as constructed by the Punjab Press in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: (a) composite nationalism and the other (b) religious nationalism. The former stressed on Hindu-Muslim unity not only in the contemporary period but also constructed the theme of Hindu-Muslim harmony in pre-colonial times. The later discourse highlighted the Hindu-Muslim hostility and traced this even in the Indian past thus echoing the colonial historiography. The author in this regard critiques scholars like Kenneth Jones and J.T.F. Jordens who he feels mainly focussed on the discourse of 'community strife' (p. 48). Perhaps the author's focus on the discourse of composite nationalism as constructed in the Punjab Press, restricts his appreciation of the potential

of emerging cleavages such as ‘communal strife’, and so on. This becomes clear when while placing Lajpat Rai within the composite nationalism, he makes a distinction between the younger Lajpat Rai and later leader; with the former being closer to Hindu nationalism and the later a composite one. Discussing Lajpat Rai’s idea of history as it is represented in his works: *Shivaji the Great Patriot* (1896), *A Study of Hindu Nationalism*, (1902), *Young India* (1917), *The Teaching of Patriotism* (1919), ‘The Indian Problem’ (1924), and *The Hindu-Muslim Problem* (1924), the author argues that the last three works clearly show that Lajpat Rai provides a ‘composite alternative to the colonialist reading of Indian history’ (p.60). In this respect Lajpat Rai had argued that the Hindu-Muslim communities were not in strife in the past but it is the colonial state that had created, fostered and nourished ‘a communal consciousness’ and therefore there is tension among these communities in contemporary Punjab. Perhaps he overlooks the past hegemonic position of the Muslim rulers and the hegemonic repercussion of such hegemony. This comes out clearly when the author argues that though Lajpat Rai played an active role in Hindu Mahasabha, he believed that the Sabha’s role must only be confined to ‘balancing of community interests for the construction of a composite nation’ (p.68). His espousal of ‘secular governance’ was based on ‘upholding the principle of fairness as bedrock of community negotiations’ (pp.68-69). Though Lajpat Rai acknowledged the ‘legitimacy of communitarian interests’ but he believed that ‘such interests should be balanced and harmonized’ in the broader interests of national unity. Here he differed from other important leaders of Hindu Mahasabha like Bhai Parmanand who ‘wished to make the Mahasabha a platform for Hindu-centric politics’, while Lajpat Rai stood for confining the role of Sabha to the ‘balancing of community interests’. This temporal polemic can leave conceptual detritus which can surface later; we can see some of this today. The next chapter illustrates this particularly when one is governed by the press for analysis.

The fourth chapter titled ‘Regimenting the Community: Mapping Initial Glimmers of Hindu Nationalism’ the author examines how the discourse of Hindu community identity was constructed by the Punjab Press and the writings of Lal Chand, leading thereby to the process of development of Hindu Nationalism. The questions of riots, access to government jobs, Hindu-Muslim strife in the past as well as in contemporary period, cow-slaughter, Hindi-Urdu controversy, Lekh Ram’s murder, fear of Islam, were raised by the Punjab Press to generate a discourse of community power and it played a significant role in creating a not only local or regional but also pan-Indian Hindu community. Lal Chand’s *Self-Abnegation in Politics* further created an ideology of Hindu Nationalism. In this text Lal

Chand raises various questions: ‘preferential treatment’ to Muslims on the part of the Congress at the cost of Hindu interests; the discourse of unjust and unfair treatment of the Hindu in terms of representation, critique of separate electorates, Land Alienation Act, the language controversy, etc. Lal Chand uses ‘Hindu’ as a synonym for ‘national’. All these issues fostered a Hindu-centric vision of nationalism.

The fifth chapter titled ‘Hindu Nationalism, The Community as Nation’ deals with the views of three ideologues of Hindu nationalism: Bhai Parmanand, Swami Shraddhanand, and Lala Har Dayal. According to the writer, Shraddhanand envisioned nationalism, ‘not on political activity, but on a reconstruction of society by drawing upon what he saw as the cultural and spiritual reserves of the nation’ (p.139). Towards this he envisioned the ‘Gurukul’ system as ideal for imparting education; the aim of which is to build the character of students on Vedic ideals and engender ‘Aryan’ greatness. Shraddhanand was opposed to the Congress till 1919 since he imagined that Congress was following the policy of Muslim appeasement. Although he joined the anti-colonial struggle during the Rowlatt Satyagraha and the non-cooperation movement, his approach to politics remained premised on ‘Hindu’ religio-cultural ethos (p.141). He reverted, according to Pathak, to Hindu nationalism because he perceived ‘pan-Islamist tendencies’ in the Khilafat movement (p.142).

Shraddhanand’s *Hindu Sangathan: Saviour of the Dying Race* published in 1926 provides us an insight into his conception of Hindu nationalism. He believed that the ‘Hindu nation’ has fallen from the golden age of Vedas as a result of the onslaught of Islam and Christianity. Therefore, he envisioned a national education policy based on Vedas as the only retrieval system for Hindus. His stress was on ‘Shuddhi and consolidation of all Hindus regardless of differences of sect and creed’ (p.146). He therefore proposed setting up of a ‘Hindu Rashtra Mandir’ as the first step towards Hindu reorganization (p.147). The author argues that, ‘Shraddhanand’s proposed ‘Hindu Rashtra Mandir’ is, thus, a broad platform for the articulation of Hindu nationalism. It has all the characteristics of Hindu nationalism: the metaphor of the temple, aggression in the form of akharas, the cow as a symbol of Hindu consolidation, and the nation imagined as a goddess’ (p.148).

Bhai Parmanand was another ideologue of Hindu nationalism in Punjab. According to Pathak, Bhai Parmanand’s view that Hindus and Muslims were of ‘two divergent races’ and incapable of evolving into an Indian nation, provides us with a ‘hint of two-nation theory’ (p. 150). For him, Hindu consolidation, reconversion, cow protection and masculinity were crucial issues.

The last intellectual that the author takes up in this chapter is Har Dayal. Though the author admits that Har

Dayal was the most complex personality and it is not easy to put him into any category, yet he tries to club him into the category of 'Hindu nationalist'. But at the same time the author argues that after 1909 'Har Dayal's view began to change' (p.167). But the argument provided by the author regarding pre-1909 views of Har Dayal which puts him into the category of Hindu nationalist, does not seem to be convincing. Perhaps this is the reason why he continues to discuss Har Dayal in his next chapter titled 'Beyond the Community, Towards a Secular Nationalism' wherein the Ghadar movement under Har Dayal 'was not just an anti-colonial, all-community movement, but showed distinct signs of a rational-secular discourse of the nation that tried to move beyond the religious community as a category and attempted critiques of religion itself' (p.167). In this chapter the author has taken up the Ghadar movement for discussion.

Another exponent of secular nationalism that the author dwells at length is the life, ideas and activities of Bhagat Singh. Bhagat Singh not only moved away from communitarian aspect embedded within the earlier visions of nationalism, but also provided a rational-secular critique of religion as an institution. Bhagat Singh and his associates adhered to secularism, scientific temper and reorganization of society on a socialist worldview.

In the last chapter titled 'Glimmers of a 'Dalit' Vision of Nationalism' the author deliberates upon the process of formation of political consciousness among the Dalits. Jotiba Phule's writings *Gulamgiri* (Slavery) by inverting the colonial discourse of Aryan invasion did play a significant role in fostering a critical consciousness among the Dalits of India. Phule's another work *Tritaya Netra* (third eye) not of course mentioned by the scholar, did create a sense of feeling among the Dalits that they can liberate themselves from their low status by means of education. Besides, Phule the anti-brahmanical movement in South India also create a political consciousness among the Dalits of Punjab. Another factor that provided a sense of power to the Dalits was what Sudipta Kaviraj terms as 'enumerative identity' derived from decennial census. The politics of mass mobilization and representative institutions further added a sense of power among the Dalits. In the context of Punjab the vision of Dalit nationalism was articulated through Ad Dharm movement in the 1920's. The leaders of this movement were disappointed with 'composite' as well as with the 'religious' nationalists and were in quest of autonomous and alternative communitarian identity. The early leaders of the Ad Dharm movement were Mangoo Ram, Swami Shudranand, Vasant Raj and Thakur Chand and all of them belonged to Chamar community of Punjab. They were somewhat more 'privileged' within their caste because of financial security derived from leather business

and education received from schools run by Arya Samaj. The movement celebrated Ravi Das as Bhakti saint as their guru since he belonged to Chamar caste. Some of the leaders of Ad Dharm in Punjab did not approve of Mangoo Ram's extreme line and they recognized the liberal aspects of Arya Samaj. Therefore, 'a part of movement' says the author of this book 'broke up to rejoin the Arya Samaj on the plea that the Aryas were accommodative Hindus and, later, it petered out to merge with Ambedkar's Scheduled Caste Federation, with many Ad Dharmis even joining the Congress'.

Overall the book enlarges the frontiers of our knowledge of the complexities of an ancient people trying to emerge in the garb of a new community - modern Punjab. It is worth reading.

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Anushka Singh, *Sedition in Liberal Democracies*, Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 406, Rs. 995/-, ISBN: 9780199481699.

Scholars have made persistent efforts to understand the meaning and concept of freedom of speech in the domains of liberal democracy and the context of law of sedition. This history of western liberal democracy predominantly traces its genealogy in the edifice of enlightenment and debates around western modernity. In this context, the recent book written by Anushka Singh, provides us an interesting window through her empirically grounded research and theoretically nuanced terrain to understand the discursive meaning of freedom of expression and how free expression of colonial subjects as well as right bearing citizens became a site of democratic resistance and also pathways of laws of sedition in western as well as non-western societies. Singh's book is an interesting and innovative addition to the existing body of knowledge in the domains of social sciences and specifically in the domains of juridical and political understanding of pedantic laws including sedition and extra-ordinary laws in a comparative framework. Liberalism is a political theory of modernity and democracy and it offers an interesting terrain to map the nuances of sedition in the liberal democracies. In this particular book Singh has established the normative universality of freedom of expression and how it has unfolded over the centuries and became a site of competing claims as also site of contestations by liberal democratic citizenry on the one hand and neo-liberal authoritarian state on the

other. In order to substantiate these claims the author has provided us multi-layered accounts on the functioning of normative liberal democracies from praxiological approach and has critiqued the positivist understanding of laws of sedition through her field-based hermeneutical and juridico-political research. In her methodological mapping of conundrum between free speech and seditious laws, she has preferred speech act theory over normative analytical methodological mapping (p. 21). She reiterates that 'the appropriate context [of modern Indian state] is informed by a form of government which she refers as a liberal democracy, which claims to be the guarantee of the liberal right to freedom of a speech and expression to all its citizens' (p.20).

Interestingly, Singh further argues that as an ideal as well as evaluative framework, democracy realizes itself politically through a democratic state. This process of realization is, however, fraught, since it involves reconciling conflicting tendencies which inhere in the logic of democracy and the 'state'. A liberal democratic state, it may be said, is a fraught combination of competing tendencies and tradition since it attempts to bring together liberalism and democracy in one hand and imperatives of democracy and the state on the other. It is in the contestation emerging from the convergence of these conflict tendencies, that the category of 'extreme speech' emerges, of which sedition is a kind. Sedition is a form of political speech, and expression against the authority of a government and the state which is forbidden for exceeding the limit of legitimate criticism and therefore not protected by right to freedom of speech and expression. By raising the issue of condition under which speech may be freely exercised or legitimately curbed, sedition, thus, reveals a dilemma within liberal democracy (p. 366). And as a matter of consequence, this dilemma creates a creative tension between precedence of seditious laws and the well beings of rights bearing citizens whose rights are being implicated in the name of hyper securitized state and principles of panopticism.

As far as conceptual and theoretical landscape of the book is concerned, the author has critically engaged with the concept of freedom of expression and how extreme expressions of individuals, groups and communities have created the ontological conditions of emergent authoritarian state in the context of seditious laws and how state has legitimized and derived normative justifications from diverse liberal intellectual traditions within the realms of liberal political philosophies/theories of the West, including in the canonical writings of Jefferson, Rousseau, and J.S. Mill. In this section of the book, Anushka has made an attempt to map the family resemblances between freedom of expression and how freedom of expression can be restricted and controlled if it takes away the rights

of other individuals and groups who constitute the society and particular state—in order to prove the contours of liberal democracy and its promise to provide safeguards to individual's liberty and freedom. The normative political ideals of liberal democracy and the political agency of state thus becomes a site of continuous control that slips into the discourses of political governmentality and as a consequence it (state) devises different forms of strategies through seditious laws to control life of individuals and communities. There have been many kinds of control by state. Liberal democracy is inherently capitalist in nature. Therefore, it creates certain kinds of exclusions where individuals are not treated equally and the principles of political equality are not available to all the citizens in an equal manner. Over here she is taking cognizance of debates on democracy from the perspective of political liberalism and just society and she cites and critically engages with contemporary philosophers and their writings to make a mention of a few, such as Chantal Mouffe and John Rawls. John Rawls talks about political equality based on principles of justice and liberty and Chantal Mouffe talks about democratic paradox where there is always control on the freedom of others and the state plays a very important role in controlling the freedom of others. The author problematizes the discourse of agnostic democracy which is inherently a site of dissent and resistance against any essentialist consensus concerning normative democracy.

In order to provide the theoretical and conceptual insights concerning sedition in liberal democracies, the introductory chapter captures the nuanced understanding of sedition as a law and its important history in the discourses of western liberal democracy as well as colonial and post-colonial Indian democracy. In this chapter, the author offers an interesting and captivating accounts about seditious laws—how these laws have come into being and are used extensively against the rights of individuals/groups and communities across the political ideology- to control freedom of expression and liberty of individuals. According to the author, there are two types of seditious laws. In the first category, there is physical violence involved and the second category is where speech or words or verbal expressions can create harm or threat to the existing state. Therefore, sedition is used by state to control freedom of expression. While proving her argument, she has used the philosophy of language of J.L. Austin and John Searle's works on speech theory and has explained why speech theory needs to be preferred because it allows scope for performative theory action when laws of seditions are used against dissenting/resisting individuals and communities. In another part of her chapter, she invokes Agamben and Michael Foucault where she demonstrates how in certain conditions ordinary becomes extraordinary and

extraordinary becomes ordinary and therefore, state creates canons of governmentality and discourses of political rationality through different forms of extraordinary laws to combat militancy and 'terrorism'.

Singh says that studies on contemporary liberal democracy have shown that violence is integral to the workings of liberal democratic states despite its official denial. However, she has also interrogated the theoretical claims on which liberal democracy has been found and how governmental rationality allows the curtailment of individual liberty for the sake of security of state. Thus, if the concept of state is essentially anachronistic to the principles on which liberal democracies operate, then it is an imperative of the state to supersede other imperatives of liberal democracy to uphold the exceptions through seditious laws within the discourse of liberal democratic rights.

Apart from theoretically condensed debates on legitimacy and illegitimacy of freedom of expression in the domains of liberal democracies, Anushka finds interesting family resemblances between sedition as a law and anti-terror laws as an extension of neo-liberal global state in the name of hyper security. The book is divided into six important chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. The second theme of the book is about comparative framework between Western liberal democracies and practice of sedition in India. She takes up three western countries including England, USA and Australia as a site of advance liberal democracies and advancement in the terms of developmental discourse. She makes interesting comparison about comparative constitutional normative universalism; how it is practiced in the context of free speech, as universal values and how in these specific countries sedition has been practiced in the context of individual liberty on the one hand and threat to the state on the other. According to her, the concept of sedition owes its genesis to English law and most other liberal democracies have been influenced by common law of sedition in England though ironically England is also one of the earliest liberal democracies to have abolished the offence of sedition. The USA which is seen as the strongest liberal democracy in the contemporary world has developed a robust free speech jurisprudence. Despite these strongest free speech principles, USA has retained the laws of sedition. Australian liberal democracy has made one of the earliest and definitive attempts to modify the language of sedition to bring it within the counter terror legislation.

Singh also suggests that there are two particular paradigms to study the existence of sedition as an offence. The first one is conventional paradigm of violence as a physical act and second is a non-conventional paradigm of violence through words. Within the first paradigm, sedition is compared with elite political offence (a) treason

(b) incitement of dissatisfaction/violence/over throw (c) political conspiracies. Within the second paradigm, sedition is compared with four speech crimes; (a) personal libel (b) hate speech (c) blasphemy (d) pornography. In this chapter, the author maintains how ex-colonies like India have similar laws as in England. Seditious laws were used to control the rights of native colonial subjects of India in different forms, particularly when there was a nationalistic struggle against the British Empire. In the post-colonial scenario, India as a free and independent country did not choose to repeal seditious laws from colonial India. Rather, seditious laws have been variedly used on Indian citizens. Therefore, the theory of sedition is also informed by judicial pronouncements that contribute to an idea of sedition as a speech act and identifies what emerges as a crime of sedition within the legal juridical regime of India. Singh has also used the method of deconstruction and normative speech theory to unpack different meanings of seditions in the everyday life of individuals and communities who have been subjected to these laws. In light of the author's critical analysis, we can say that there is a return to Hobbesian Leviathan in disguised forms of sedition and extra-ordinary anti-terror laws in contemporary India.

Chapter five does an empirical mapping of seditious laws in the everyday life of individual, groups and communities from three states of India – Haryana, Maharashtra and Punjab. Regarding the choice of these three states the author states that 'the regions are not chosen as a field sites, in fact they emerged as a field area following the case laws method in which the intertwined dynamics of sedition with socio-political variables lent it a different character' (p. 27). These regions have numerous cases where seditious laws have been imposed on the individuals, communities and classes whenever they resisted state authorities. Next section of the book focuses on how anti-terror laws have been imposed on the Indian citizens including students, peasants and working classes on different pretext. In a shift from colonial to post-colonial India, from sedition that was construed to be resistance by the nationalists and therefore, an honour and a political act, sedition now is considered to be an offence against the nation. She cites diverse cases from different parts of India to substantiate her argument concerning this alarming shift. Yet again, Singh uses speech theory to philosophically articulate this shift from '*Rashtradroh*' to '*Deshadroh*'. In English this is known as a shift from sedition as a political resistance to crime against the nation.

The second last chapter of the book deals with Indian democracy and the moment of contradiction. In this section the author has demonstrated with her dense field-based and archival research, how Indian democracy is being used as a site of state control on the life of people- peasants, students, journalist, activists and minorities. Though the

National Crime Record Bureau shows that in 2014, for the first time, 58 per cent arrests were in relation to sedition and anti-terror laws, while in 2015 a total of 30 cases of sedition were filed all over India and a total of 73 persons were arrested in relation to these cases. Despite this decline in number of cases registered, the number of people arrested for sedition has risen. This data highlights the gap between executive and judicial discourse of sedition in India. While conviction for sedition at the level of higher judiciary is becoming a rarity and use of sedition laws in the domain of executive is veracious. Anushka has shown how sedition and anti-terror laws are being used against a diverse spectrum of Indian masses – wherever for raising slogans or resisting the authoritarian nature of the state (state and/or central regimes) – and have been imposed on people across political ideologies. Therefore, the author notices a juridical shift in the domain of anti-terror laws and Indian democracy that is facing continuous moments of contradictions to deliver justice and the fundamental rights of people in this country.

The conclusive part of the book has been beautifully titled ‘the life of law and contradictions of liberal democracies’ where Anushka makes an insightful comment on the life of law that exist both within and beyond the statues, therefore subject to interpretations. This assertion has been made in the background of journey of laws of sedition. The first concern itself with analysing the language of law of sedition, the second deals with studying judicial dispositions on sedition and the third pertains to interrogating the everyday life of law. The book makes a claim about Indian democracy; how it has not only been controlled but contradicted, about its practice from aspiratory perspectives of marginal people of India.

This book not only offers an interesting reading for the academic fraternity and which is engaged in social sciences and politico-juridical domains, but also for activists and ordinary citizens interested to know the practice of seditious law and extraordinary laws in contemporary India and beyond.

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E.V. Ramakrishnan, *Indigenous Imaginaries: Literature, Region, Modernity*, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2017, pp. xvii + 274, Rs. 775/-, ISBN: 9789386689450.

E.V. Ramarkishnan’s book should be seen in the light of the statement he has made in the third chapter of the book. According to him, translating India to European terms has led to a crisis of representing ourselves which

speaks volumes about the nature and scope of the book. As Indian academics is heavily working under the influence of Western philosophy and paradigm(s) in post-colonial times, the present book by E.V. Ramakrishnan is the result of an author’s search for Indian epistemology. To use A.K. Ramanujan’s phrase, also used by the author in this book, the author is also searching the Indian way of thinking.

The book is a compilation of scholarly essays written and presented by the author in various national/international seminars in India and abroad in which the author argues for redefining the study of literature from the perspective of comparative studies. Divided into three sections, Ramakrishnan explores contestations between Western and Indian epistemologies. He is of the opinion that going back to literature written in regional languages and translation can be potent tools in this search. Besides, the author discusses Bhakti literature, relevance of literature in the age of globalization and identity politics in contemporary India. The author has studied regional literature with special focus on Rabindranath Tagore, Valmiki, Mahatma Gandhi, Mahasweta Devi, Amitav Ghosh, Bhalchandra Nemade, Aga Shahid Ali to name a few, which also indicates the vast range of writers from different regions of India.

The opening chapter traces the history of English discipline in India, introduction of the printing press, its role in spreading Malayalam literature and construction of modernity in India. Prose written in Malayalam did not borrow motifs from the mythology and drifted away from the model of Sanskrit. Printing of literature in Malayalam facilitated the process of Malayalam identity formation. Thus, the author establishes a historical connect between press, modernity and Malayalam identity. Studying regional literature, for the author, is part of the politics to resist hegemonic structures of European countries which have legitimized homogenization of the world. Citing Chinua Achebe, the author makes a very valid point that the adjective ‘universal’ for European mind does not go beyond the boundaries of Europe. Study of regional literature demystifies the Western canon, it also resists their cultural hegemonic position.

Ramakrishnan finds translation studies to be symbiotically related to the study of regional literature in India. The author opines that modern Indian languages came into being in the beginning of the second millennium, which helped in resisting the hegemony of Sanskrit lasting for more than a thousand years in literary and knowledge domains. Since the advent of European colonial forces in India, regional languages have negotiated with the external influence by assimilation and resistance. According to the author, translation, especially translation of epics, has played a very important role in establishing regional languages in different parts of India and also in establishing a dialogic relation between *mārgi* and *desi*. By deviating

from the Sanskrit version, regional languages resisted the Sanskrit canon. The author gives a survey of translations of the Ramayana in various regional languages taking place from the tenth century to the sixteenth century. The author discusses the influence of Persian and Arabic languages of power and authority in shaping the Sufi discourse in north India. Ramakrishnan also discusses the role played by Arabic and Persian languages in liberating people from Sanskrit. He should have also included the role played by Sufi poet like Baba Farid (c. 1175-c.1266), considered to be the first poet of Punjabi, who, despite being a scholar of Arabic, wrote his poetry in the dialect of Punjabi. During the medieval period, Arabic and Persian became the languages of the elite. Issues of power that Prof. Ramakrishnan reads into dominant position of Sanskrit can also be read in relation to Arabic and Persian. In this context, Punjabi Sufi poetry created a space which gave resistance to cultural domination of Persian and Arabic languages. However, the author makes a very insightful comment regarding the promotion of Sanskrit by the British as it suited their Orientalist agenda. The British looked down upon regional languages by calling them dialects and incapable of communicating modern knowledge. Regional languages suffered at the hands of both Orientalists as well as Anglicists.

In the third chapter, the author has studied dialogism in Bhakti poetry, which challenged the monologue of Sanskrit literature. As the “poets of the Bhakti movement spoke from within the domain of lived experiences,” their self was not the result of borrowed paradigm. The author’s position is justified by Sundar Sarukkai’s idea that lived experience constitutes the self that experiences. Self is not the result of reflection on the self as a distant object. Thus, the lived experience of Bhakti poets gave them ethical ground and paradigm to question and resist the dominance of mainstream institutionalized religion and Sanskrit as used in the religious discourse. Bhakti movement is also seen by the author as a voice of the Dalit against oppressive Brahmanical institution.

The fifth chapter in the first section, which deals with identity politics and the discourse of minority in contemporary India, provides theoretical introduction to the chapters in the second section of the book as the next section has chapters dealing with representation of modernity, the Other, imagining India as a nation. Ramakrishnan redefines the term secular and the way it stands relevant even in modernity. His argument is that modernity has failed to do away with religion or pre-modern religious practices; rather modernity has redefined the significance of religion in the social space. Understanding the relation between state powers and religion, his argument is that in some cases state can have clear religious attitude

and people can be secular; and vice-versa as being secular and being atheist are two different categories. In Indian context, one can be religious, yet secular. Ambivalence in the nature of secular modern has resulted in the discourse of minorities- Muslims and Dalits –which has taken different trajectories. To validate the argument, the author studies the case of Kerala and Malayalam literature.

Ramakrishnan opines that Rabindranath Tagore critiques homogenizing modernity of the West. He has situated Tagore in the larger national context and placed him along with other poets from different parts of India such as Kumaran Asan (Malayalam), Muhammad Iqbal (Urdu), Keshavsut (Marathi), Subramania Bharati (Tamil), Bhai Veer Singh (Punjabi), Bhartendu Harishchandra (Hindi) who were negotiating with the colonial modernity. The author is of the opinion that in these poets the pain of being torn into two different worlds can be seen. They introduced the voice of modernity in their writings and have also contributed towards consolidation of their regional identity.

In the writings of Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, the first major Muslim novelist of Kerala, tensions between the secular modern and insider view of a Muslim writer, who “distances himself from the homogenising logic of modernity,” have been explored. Basheer’s *Balyasakhi* (1944), an autobiographical bildungsroman narrative, through the story of Majid, narrates the experiences of the Muslim minority in Kerala; the narrator of *Shabdangal* (1947) is a soldier, who was an orphan and raised by a priest. Imagining nation from the point of view of a soldier or a Muslim immediately after the nation was born was an important artistic device of the writer. *Ntuppuppakkoranendarnnu* (1951) is one of the most significant novels written by the novelist and it discusses the issue of Muslim reform in post-colonial India. Through his study of Balachandra Nemade’s *Kosla*, Ramakrishnan has also narrated the nation from a regional lens.

In the narratives of Amitav Ghosh, Mahasweta Devi and Anand, the author explores the issue of memory in postcolonial Indian fiction. Memory takes various forms as it includes collective memory in its ambit and also the narratives of resistance into which are woven myths and legends of the community. Another aspect of memory and modernity is explored in the comparative study of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s writings and Malayalam fiction. In Marquez’s polyphonic fiction is embedded the culture and history of the society. Kerala’s fiction also confronts colonial modernity while retaining its regional elements. Ramakrishnan establishes geographical, historical and cultural similarities between their writings, despite their different locations. Cosmopolitan nature of Kerala and Keralites, incomplete project of modernity and

contestations between traditions and modernity are the elements that bring Latin American writers close to Kerala writers.

In the last section of the book, the chapter titled 'Hegemony, Ideology and the Idea of Literary', Ramakrishnan discusses the process of Sanskrit being relegated from its position of hegemony. The author studies 'the literary' as a space of "contestations and containments". In the West, the dominance of Latin was challenged by vernaculars as the latter also became the language in which knowledge was being generated and ideas were exchanged. During the British period, according to the author, the dominant position of Sanskrit was challenged by English. What intrigues readers here is that by the time European forces started controlling the administration of the country, the language of administration was not Sanskrit in most parts of the land, but Persian and Arabic. In the next chapter, Ramakrishnan problematizes the concept of canon in the Indian context, given its long oral tradition and linguistic diversity. Regional literature(s) in India is plural and has been influenced by internal conflicts, which are unique to every region. The diverse and varied nature of Indian regional literature(s) also questions unified or homogenous literary historiography in India. He also engages with the issues of power, centre and destabilising the power centres with the help of translation.

The book began with discussing 'telos of translation' and it reaches its end discussing translation and its role in shaping modernist discourse in India. Instead of discussing translation of regional literature into English, the chapter focuses on the contribution of the translation of European poets such as Rilke, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats and Baudelaire in bringing modernist discourse in India. Translations done by poets such as Buddhadeb Bose, Agyeya, Dilip Chitre, Ayyappa Paniker, publishing in various journals, provided Indian readers and young poets a new poetical discourse. Understanding translation as a cultural practice,

Ramakrishnan opines that their translations were also crucial in shaping Indian modernity and modernism in Indian literature, which is different from that of the West. In the last chapter, Ramakrishnan has studied shifting paradigms of literary historiography with special focus on Malayalam literary history. The author believes that literary histories run parallel to national histories- as political and cultural ideologies that intersect the space of historiography as well.

Focusing on Malayalam literary history, the author begins with the publication of *Malayala bhasha chaaritharam* by P. Govind Pillai in 1881. Using Pillai's ideas, Ramakrishnan also problematizes the canon as the history of Malayalam literature that goes back to the oral tradition. He discusses different essentialist and revisionist histories of Malayalam literature written by different authors. The author critically examines histories written and edited volumes produced by P.K. Parmeswaran, V.J. Varghese, M.N. Vijayan. Ramakrishnan argues that the literary historiography of Malayalam literature in the new millennium includes history or histories of women's writings, folk literature, oral literature, tribal literature, peasant literature, subaltern literature and histories of fine arts and performative traditions is also seen as an integral part of the literary sensibility, which indicates that in contemporary times both vertical and horizontal boundaries have been blurred. E.V. Ramakrishnan engages with larger issues of concern in literary studies, literary historiography and translation studies in postcolonial India. In this vast canvas, ranging from Bhakti poetry to modern writings in different languages, the book is a compilation of insightful and relevant essays on regional literature, modernity and nation.

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