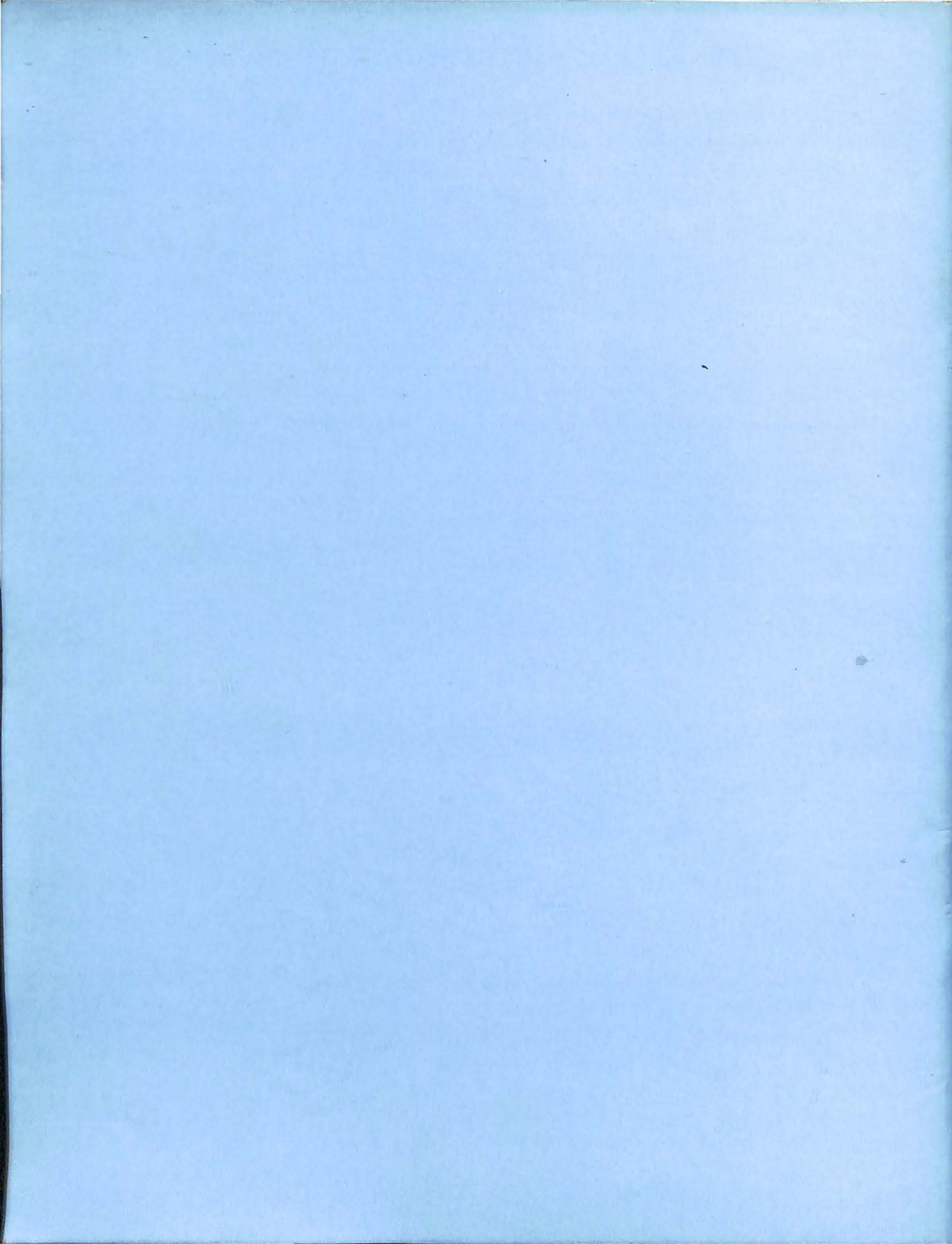

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BOOK REVIEWS

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Vol. XV, No. 2 (Winter 2009)

CONTENTS

Articles

Democracy under conditions of Globalization — 1
D. L. Sheth

Re-Envisioning the University: Questions and Presuppositions — 4
Sasheej Hegde

1857 and the Indian Intelligentsia — 11
Sudhir Chandra

Minding one's own Heritage? — 20
Shereen Ratnagar

Three Literary Meditations on the Problem of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Postcolonial India — 25
Suvir Kaul

Storytelling, Writing and the Novel — 33
Tabish Khair

Aspects of Culture, Religion and Art in the Hill Societies of the North East — 37
Shashi Joshi

Book Reviews

Bob van der Linden, *Moral languages from Colonial Punjab: The Singh Sabha, Arya Samaj and Ahmadiyahs* — 41
Raj Kumar Hans

Mita Biswas, *Representations of a Culture in Indian English Poetry* — 43
Malashri Lal

Asha Sarangi, ed., *Language and Politics in India* — 45
Shreesh Chaudhary

In Memoriam

Meenakshi Mukherjee (1937 – 2009) — 48
Satish C. Aikant

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Democracy under conditions of Globalization

D. L. SHETH

Globalization has challenged the established notions of liberal state and democracy. The autonomy of the liberal state is being increasingly compromised in favor of market forces and the governments of the nation-states are being subjected to new institutions of global governance. These developments have far-reaching implications for the future of democracy, particularly in the Third World.

The proponents of globalization argue that liberal democracy is the only suitable form of governance both for managing the modern state and for mediating the forces of rapid economic and cultural change occurring in all societies of the world today. In this process of political and economic globalization, the Third World societies continue to remain at the receiving end as they were during the Cold War. In fact, their maneuverability is being further reduced in the changed context. Options for the receiving societies are no longer thought of in terms of *delinking* or *opting out* from this process. The best they can do is to adapt to it. More specifically, the issue today is how quickly and uniformly should the countries of the world be made to adopt the institutional structures of liberal democracy, which in their specificities have historically evolved in a small cultural zone of the globe.

Thus, under globalization, adopting and working the institutions of modern representative democracy has suddenly become politically a deeply unsettling experience for the receiving societies of today. These societies, for different historical reasons—especially of colonization and westernization—were already experiencing difficulties in adapting the modern political institutions to their own history and political-cultural traditions. Now, they are pushed, often even coerced, to adopt a given form of (liberal) democracy and to make as clean a break as possible with their own political and cultural pasts. Thus, ironically, at the end of the Cold War when democracy appeared to have acquired a new potential for its wider acceptance in different parts of the world, it was culturally parochialized and politically hegemonized by the new triumphalist doctrine of Globalization.

The result is: a particular form of liberal democracy has been made a mandatory part of the larger package of globalization. It is aimed at achieving higher levels of integration of the world economy and market, rather than deepening processes of democracy. This has brought about an abrupt shift in the discourse on democracy. The idea that democratization is a locally adaptive horizontal process, influencing the forms of governance, decision-making structures, and the consciousness of people within a particular society by making them widely participative and directly accountable to all those whose consent and participation they claim is being replaced by a one-size-fit-all kind of a top-down package. Even worse, the idea that every society may devise institutional forms of democracy taking into account its own political history and cultural ethos and, in the process, may choose its own pace of change is considered retrogressive for global-democracy.

For its success, the project of global economic and political homogenization, depends not on creating democratically representative institutions of global decision making and accountability. It, on the contrary, relies on building mechanisms of coercive hegemonic power of the world capitalist system. It is not accidental that global power is now ensconced in the veto-based Security Council of the United Nations, with all other agencies and offices of the United Nations vastly diminished in power and stature.

It will, however, be a mistake to identify the center of

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global power today with one nation-state enjoying military supremacy in the world, that is, the United States of America or with some specific countries of the West or the North. The hegemonic power for realizing global homogenization is exercised through a variety of transnational institutions: ranging from military organization like NATO to financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the W. T. O and the multinational corporations. And the political-cultural base of this new global power system lies in the various metropolitan centres of the North as well as of the South.

This project of global homogenization has brought about a sharp divide—linguistic, cultural, and economic—between the metropolitan and the vernacular, the macro institutions of governance and the people and communities they seek to govern—both at the global level and within the national societies all over the world. All forms of governance other than market-wedded liberal democracy, particularly the local-communitarian ones, are deemed suspect by the metropolitan elite—bankers, businessmen, technocrats, managers. They are perceived as asymmetric and structurally incongruent vis-a-vis the macro institutions governing global economy and market.

In this process of establishing hegemonic economic and political-power structure every non-liberal and 'non-democratic' nation-state is expected to make the transition to a market-friendly liberal-democratic state. The global power system however would support a technocratic-authoritarian regime that is prepared to 'integrate' its economy with the new world economic system. But it can not tolerate an unobliging liberal democratic state insisting on defending its sovereignty in articulation of its own policies aimed at achieving internal political cohesion, economic distribution, and social justice.

The global agencies thus look upon liberal democracy in instrumental terms—as an instrument for sustaining and managing the world capitalist economy. In brief, liberal democracy is now made to function as market democracy so that the receiving countries create political-institutional guarantees for mobile international capital and ensure pliability of their governments to demands of the world economic system.

The new, post-Cold War global power structure comprises on the one hand of a few economically rich and militarily powerful democracies such as the G-7 countries and of transnational organizations like NATO, WTO and multinational corporations, on the other. Both these wings of global power, work in tandem to sustain the larger world-capitalist system. The power is exercized through mounting, whenever and wherever necessary, military interventions—ostensibly under U. N. auspices—and through maintaining its monopoly on weapon transfers, technological know-how and on world markets.

By maintaining oligopolistic and unimpeded access to world resources, the world economic system ensures expansion of metropolitan life and metropolitan culture the world over—a political culture that privileges the consumer over the citizen. This is how the world capitalist system can establish its power base globally, that is, by subordinating the idea of citizenship to that of consumership, which, unlike citizenship, is not confined territorially and is at the same time available to global political and market manipulations. The primacy of consumer identity for individuals residing in the metropolitan centres of the world is considered more conducive to maintaining the hegemony of the world capitalist system globally and that of the metropolitan classes within the respective nation-states. It can only be expected that the political governance of different nation-states, when structured in the universal terms of liberal democracy as a market democracy, shall weaken, if not erase, the idea of national citizenship in favor of global consumership.

The post-Cold War project of globalization thus has changed the idea of liberal democracy into that of a neo-liberal market democracy. Consequently, democracy is no longer viewed as essentially a participatory process of decision making. Even more, the idea of popular sovereignty is seen as a roadblock to the expansion of market democracy. In effect, in its new incarnation as market democracy, liberal democracy has become a means of establishing political and cultural hegemony of a metropolitan elite in society. Such hegemony, can ensure, it is believed, cultural, political, and economic homogenization of the world. But such a project of homogenization, aimed at bringing about market democracies everywhere, has put the state, particularly in the multiethnic societies of the Third World, in a dilemma, namely, one of securing its liberal institutions from the forces of social and cultural destabilization caused by the state's own interventionist project of homogenization and, at the same time, creating a stable national-cultural basis for its rule over the society. The result is the revival of old politics of ethno-lingual and ethno-religious nationalisms in these societies.

Yet it is believed that the neo-liberal model of the market democracy is most suitable for the governance of the Third World societies. Afflicted as they are simultaneously by intense ethnic as well as class divisions these societies, it is believed, are not manageable globally

by any other model of governance. It is thought so probably for two reasons. First, this new version of liberal democracy, easily affords an instrumental view of the state—the state as the vehicle for reaching private ends. Second, the neo-liberal state, being ideologically and institutionally impervious to the recognition of cultural differences is considered an ideal form of governance. Such a state is expected to encourage not only social deracination of its populations, but to commit them to new forms of economic activities stretching across national boundaries.

In sum, *under globalization, democracy has ceased to be the primary condition of power for a liberal state. The liberal state now has to justify itself in terms of its new reason for existence, i. e. , liberalization and globalization.* This change in the character of the liberal state has produced a dissonance in its functioning, between its institutional norms of democracy and policy processes by which it seeks to implement its new programmes of economic liberalization and globalization. Thus, when criteria of democratic governance conflict with the new economic policies of the State, the latter acquire primacy over the former. The democratic aspirations of people, when expressed through opposition to policies of globalization and through self-rule politics of local communities, are seen by the state and the new metropolitan elite as anti-national and undemocratic. Even the idea of security transcends the people and the communities and gets situated in the institutions of the state that have to be secured externally from other states and internally from its own people.

Thus what was theorized as the liberal democratic state has, in reality, become a liberal economic and national-security state—i. e. , a neo-liberal state. The democratic aspect of such a state has been condensed at the stratospheric heights of its macro institutions. All other organizations and sociocultural and territorial entities in the society are placed beneath the state which in turn uses its coercive power in the aid of the national metropolitan economy which is now linked to the global power structure. As a result, democracy as a local/national organizational culture and political practice is losing its relevance for the new market theory of the liberal state.

In practice, this process of creating a vertically integrated political structure nationally for the state and its integration with the world economy globally does not seem to succeed in realizing its goal of creating a nationally deracinated population and a global consumer society. Instead, it tends to facilitate establishment of hegemonic power of an ethnic or ethno-religious majorities over politics and culture. In this process, the majority principle of representation is being overtaken by majoritarian ethnic politics, and the market principle of competition turned into ethnic competition for the economic and cultural resources in the society, often resulting in the monopolistic hold of an ethnic majority over these resources. Furthermore, when representation becomes integral to the process of ethnic competition, the guardianship role of the democratic state—especially vis-a-vis minorities and weaker sections in the society—becomes seriously eroded. The ethnic majority's politics of hegemony then acquire a democratic sanction.

In a culturally heterogeneous society, a regime controlled or supported by an ethnic majority may indeed acquire a degree of political stability, and the state maintain its formal democratic character. But such stability of the regime and the democratic character of the state, acquired through the support (electoral or otherwise) of the ethnic majority, always remains tenuous. For, usually, the ethnic majority fails to reflect the identity and interests of all its constituents. In actual life, within itself, it is rarely homogeneous or an invariant political majority. In this politics of establishing ethnic hegemony the liberal state is deprived of the immunities it enjoyed vis-a-vis the incursions and assaults from a political ethnic majority on the democratic norms and procedures that protected its liberal character. The minorities, marginalized and alienated by ethno-majoriterian politics then turn to insurgency and terrorism. Working under conditions of globalization, liberal democracy thus becomes a battleground for ethnicities.

Conclusion

Thus the universal promise of the liberal state—national integration within societies and institutional integration and homogenization globally—seems to be going awry, both for the globalizers and for the metropolitan elites of the receiving countries who have been in a great hurry to integrate their societies with the global market. It is not surprising that the globalizers now anticipate as inevitable the global clash of civilizations. In the meanwhile, the liberal state in the receiving societies is being torn apart by religious fundamentalism, majoritarian ethnic chauvinism, political insurgencies and terrorism by ethno religious as well as marginalized communities.

Re-Envisioning the University: Questions and Presuppositions

SASHEEJ HEGDE

The question that I want to pursue in this paper concerns the idea of university, what it ought to be and what it can be; and I do so from within a certain reflective mode issuing from the following thought of the philosopher Wittgenstein: "The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose" (1968: 50e). It is certainly neither reproach nor irony that I am attempting to communicate here though. Rather, the effort is directed at gaining a measure of the considerations that we could be bringing to a reformulation of the university idea particularly in the circumstances in which we find ourselves today. It is important, I think, to distinguish between a principle that is coextensive with the whole field of academic knowledge (the principle, say, of university autonomy and public accountability, as indeed academic freedom) and its privileged place of presentation, namely, the university institution. Allow me therefore a sequential elaboration, and further thematic discussion of the ground here being pursued, namely, the university institution as such (or more emphatically, the very idea of university).

I. Beyond the Utilitarian/Non-Utilitarian Dyad

In a commentary entitled "The Concept of a University", which appeared some years ago in the *Philosophy* journal, D. W. Hamlyn (1996) proposed that one of the central aims of the university institution (and one of its enduring achievements at least since they were first set up in the Middle Ages) rested in what he called its enlargement of knowledge: "If learning is to be pursued and if knowledge is to be enlarged there have to be institutions like universities, which have the double role of pushing back the frontiers of knowledge and of enabling future generations to carry on that process" (1996: 216). Surely, in our day and times, this has come under some pressure, but that is not quite the point that I want to press here. Far from addressing the historical efficacy and applicability of this conception, allow me to stay with the terms of the assessment being suggested.

Hamlyn's commentary is directed above all at advancing the thesis that the university can - and ought to - have a genuine affinity for, and important links with, the enlargement of knowledge. But having said so, he is also concerned to point out that indeed "while institutions of which this is true may be seen as universities and may be given the *rights* which follow from that [awarding degrees, for instance, setting its own standards of assessment, the right to some form of self-government, including over financial arrangements, and academic freedom] and while they fulfil various other *functions* [such as providing economic benefits for society and preparing individuals for future employment] they are in a real sense not what a university ought to be" (1996: 217). Clearly, Hamlyn is inserting a hard idea (or ideal) of university, and yet reiterates that it is possible to accept this idea/ideal without accepting the details of its embodiment. In other words; while no elucidation of the concept of a university can answer all questions on that score, it is "desirable to set out, on the presumption that the enlargement of knowledge is a good, what sort of institutions can make that possible over time, and thereby establish what a university as an ideal must be" (ibid.).

To be sure, one might be charitably disposed to interpret the thesis here being advanced as a gloss on the contemporary drift of universities. But the thrust of Hamlyn's argument is, I think, evident: that "universities are not simply educational institutions" (1996: 218). Interestingly though, Hamlyn is pressing for more, and in what follows I shall quote him at some length before homing in our theme gaining a measure of the considerations that we could be bringing to a reformulation of the university idea particularly in the

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circumstances in which we find ourselves today:

> On the other hand, it also seems clear that a university should offer to students a decent range of subjects to study, and that this may affect the furtherance of knowledge as well. An institution concerned with one subject, say theology, would not make a respectable university, since it does not offer a broad enough perspective on knowledge, although it might make an admirable part of a university. But institutions like Imperial College, London, or the London School of Economics – single faculty institutions – would make excellent universities, if it was decided to make them such. Moreover, such purely technological institutions ought to be barred from university status only if the technology involves no background of theory. We should remember that the medieval universities were, in one sense, extremely utilitarian in conception, and often in a specialized way. The 19th century revolt against this was sometimes, but not always, anti-utilitarian, even if insistent on the place in higher education of liberal arts and sciences. Our present concerns with university education have a different background. The fact remains that whatever branches of knowledge a university concentrates on, and for whatever reason, the overriding consideration ought to be the furtherance of knowledge both now and in the future (ibid.).

On a benign interpretation of the formulation anchoring Hamlyn, the long passage that we have just cited offers a wholesome conception of the university institution. It is not necessary for a university institution to be a non-utilitarian one, although historically both utilitarian and non-utilitarian considerations have overseen the growth of universities. In fact, for Hamlyn himself, it is one of the functions of universities to extend the frontiers of knowledge, but this "has to be squared with the aim of providing a higher education for those coming from schools or, in many cases, from other points of origin in later life" (1996: 206). According to him, this "compromise" has very often been an uneasy one "and has often not even existed" (ibid. : 207), albeit being a modern innovation wrought upon the structure of medieval universities, and it is crucial to a university that "some compromise on this point should be arrived at" (ibid. : 206).

Significantly, such concerns as voiced by Hamlyn and others (Michael Oakeshott [1990], or even John Henry Newman [1873/1982] for instance) are far from being a fanciful hypothesis about education or learning generally; they embody specific claims about the exemplary status of the university institution: the university as a place in which the various conversations go on, and which imparts the manners of the conversations (education really as 'cultivation'). [1] It would be easy, of course, to indulge in such concerns by insisting on the ideal of academic freedom and intellectual integrity; nor is the question essentially whether university education should or should not be utilitarian (in fact, I am inclined to affirm that while universities may or may not be utilitarian, it is not intrinsic to their being so that they have to be *either* utilitarian *or* non-utilitarian). The point necessarily is about opening up all claims about exemplary status of the university institution and engaging simultaneously with the self-understanding of learning processes organized in university form.

Readings (1996) is concerned precisely to take on this imperative, forcing home the point that the university today has lost its idea, but an idea that was never strictly or exclusively the property of the university in the first place. According to him, what distinguishes higher education in the contemporary period is that what was formerly regarded as the University of Reason, and then as the University of Culture, has today been supplanted by the University of Excellence; and, what is more, that this supplantation is bound up with the transformation of the role of the nation-state in building the social compact. This is of course an extremely schematic, even reductive, account of a work rich on facts and frameworks. Readings models are derived mostly from Britain, the United States and France, with these settings emblematizing the shift from the cultural mission of universities to the question of "excellence" (the paradigmatic term governing the process of redefinition to which universities in the West, and one might add, India too, have been subjected). The notion of excellence, as Readings renders it, involves a change with respect to the previous values of reason and culture and marks the abandonment of any attempt to determine institutions of higher education in terms peculiar to that institution. The presumption here, clearly, is that the development of universities has occurred in tandem with that of the nation-state – the culture that universities reproduced was the national culture constructed along with the institutions of the modern state – but since the nation-state is on the decline in an increasingly transnational global economy, this development has implications for universities. From this vantage point, the conclusion is that the current fierce debate on the status of the university misses the point, failing as it does to think the university in a transnational framework. Of course, everything depends on just how that transnational framework is construed - and I do not intend to get into it here – but we must ask: is this not also the argument of those who insist that spending for the university (as for so many other social services) must be reduced in the years to come, asserting that any opposition to such cuts fails precisely to think the university in a transnational framework of the global economy, which can only be negotiated successfully by a country that lives within its means?[2]

In perspective is the nature of the relationship between the university and the future. Indeed, from the perspective of the changes affecting the university institution as such, the question would have to be not only whether the university has a future, but also what sort of university the future has or holds in store. On this question, there are those – like Weber (1999), but also Derrida (2001) – who would orient the future campus not in terms of disciplines but consciously breaking disciplinary boundaries, the supposition here being that the greater the specialization of knowledge, the more advanced the level of research, the longer and more venerable the scholarly tradition, the easier it is to ignore discordant facts. The contention is that specialization and disciplinary isolation pose a danger for those new disciplines such as cultural studies or social policy (or new fields like film studies, diaspora, dalit studies) which have been either affirmed or established precisely to remedy the situation. Disciplinary boundaries allow renewed understandings to belong to someone else's story. Given that a scholar cannot be an expert in everything, this must seem reasonable enough. But it is that extra valuation that is given to interdisciplinary (or cross-disciplinary) talk – namely, that if certain constellations of facts are able to enter scholarly consciousness deeply enough, they threaten not only the venerable narratives, but also the entrenched academic disciplines that (re)produce them – which must be queried. This is a topic that can or ought to concern the idea of university, and in what follows I shall be elaborating on this by placing in perspective what I had termed earlier on as the question of the self-understanding of learning processes organized in university form.

II. Institutional Restructuring and the Demands of Knowledge

When one looks at public higher education as it has evolved over the past 100 – 150 years, one notices an important affinity between the organizational form of the modern university and the work of the various disciplines. This is important because it is crucial to an account of what determines learning processes within institutional forms (and, in consequence, to an account of the formation of disciplines). But it is not so obvious, and, what is more, not many are willing to recognize this. For instance, the historian and sociologist Wallerstein has argued the world of knowledge is being transformed from "a centrifugal model to a centripetal model" (2000: 31) – a development which for him has been a concomitant of two movements, the growth within the natural sciences (and mathematics) of what is called the 'sciences of complexity' and within the humanities (philosophy, literary studies) of what has come to be called cultural studies'. As he formulates it:

> From circa 1850 to circa 1970, the world university system had separate faculties of the natural sciences and of humanities pulling epistemologically in opposite directions, with the social sciences located in-between and being pulled apart by these two strong forces. Today, we have scientists of complexity using language more consonant with the discourse of social science (the arrow of time) and advocates of cultural studies doing the same (social-rootedness of values and aesthetic judgments). Both these groups are growing in strength. The model is becoming centripetal in the sense that the two extremes (science and humanities) are moving in the direction of the in-between centre (social science), and to some degree on the centre' s terms (ibid.).

Indeed, if one sees it thus, one will acquiesce in complicating the admittedly eccentric terminology of 'two cultures' – the methodological 'divorce' between science and philosophy/humanities translating into a division, internal to the social sciences, between 'nomothetic' and 'idiographic' camps or schools - and hope, as Wallerstein does, that in the ensuing confusion and endless variation "social scientists can help to clarify the issues and thereby promote a new synthesis which would reunite the epistemological bases of the new structures of knowledge" (Wallerstein ibid. : 32).[3]

Presumably because these thoughts have been used for formulating several important theses concerning the social sciences, the institutional restructuring suggested to reflect the new centripetal situation of knowledge have accordingly ranged widely. Thus, responding to the idea of multidisciplinarity and the challenge of institutional restructuring suggested in Wallerstein et al. (1996), the senior Indian sociologist T. N. Madan has noted that the institutional restructuring recommended by Wallerstein et al. – such as "expansion of institutions, within or allied to the universities, which would bring together scholars [from different disciplines to] work in common around specified urgent themes"; "establishment of integrated research programs within university structures that cut across traditional lines"; "joint appointment of professors"; and "joint work for graduate students" (Wallerstein et al. 1996: 103-05) – have been attempted in India "whether deliberate[ly] or fortuitous[ly]"; and gives the examples of the Delhi School of Economics, the Jawaharlal Nehru University, and the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences (Kolkata). He stresses the importance of evaluating the successes and failures of these experiments, but notes that "the more significant questions in this regard are intellectual rather than

administrative" (2001: IV). One cannot agree more, although the challenge is to determine more precise *intellectual* protocols for evaluating these institutional restructurings.[4]

The problem, of course, is not limited to social science, but involves other disciplines as well. Accordingly, the lamentations of university teachers and science administrators about falling standards of science teaching and research, as indeed the paucity of students aspiring for research careers in the pure sciences and mathematics.[5] They complain bitterly about the eccentricity of the ways of academia, of how disciplinary categories have constrained the ways of knowledge, asking how the boundaries that define disciplines are "today organizationally very strong at the very same time that they have lost most of their historic intellectual justification" (Wallerstein 2000: 33). On the face of it, these are mere cavils at institutional functioning, but they are also directed at the disciplinary edifice of the university institution as such; and therein obtain a host of questions.

Without doubt, the work of disciplines – as indeed broad zones of intellectual concern that we designate as either 'social science' or 'humanities' and even 'science' – are of interest less as the site where strains of given practices of knowledge have sought to query their foundations, than as the theatre in which the structure of knowledge about a certain domain and its relation to the institutional contexts configuring it can be staged as questions. Note, one is not implying that the current arrangements of disciplinarity do not leave a lot to be desired; and yet, however much we are justified in wanting to abandon current forms of intellectual corsetry, my own feeling is that this is a project on which we must embark with extreme care. In fact, in a lecture titled 'The Idea of the University: Learning Processes' delivered in 1986, Habermas expressed his fears that the self-understanding of learning processes organized in university form could no longer be grounded in a vision of the scientific process itself. Where hitherto the scientific and scholarly disciplines had represented a medium for both professional preparation and training in the scientific mode of thought, the sheer multiplicity of disciplines and the concomitant differentiation of the specific fields had made it impossible for "the totalizing power of either an all-encompassing philosophical fundamental science or even a reflective form of material critique of science and scholarship that would emerge from the disciplines themselves" (Habermas 1989: 123). Habermas referred to the fact that, while it may be valuable to address the idea of the university and what remains of that idea, "the corporative self-understanding of the university would be in trouble if it were anchored in something like a normative ideal, for ideas come and go" (ibid.). He was explicitly thinking of the exemplary status often accorded to the university institution - the university as more than just educational institutions, but also embodying institutionally and anchoring motivationally an ideal form of life – but what seemed to worry him even more was the role that such an idea could play in the self-understanding of learning processes organized in university form. He warned that, as ever, the university which was gaining in functional specificity within specialized fields of knowledge would have to discard what was once called its idea, indeed the basis of its claim to exemplary status.

Habermas was by no means in favour of a radical reformism, though. He recognized that even as the university form of organized scientific and scholarly learning through disciplines would not require a normative model – recall that the German sense of '*Wissenschaft*', meaning any organized branch of knowledge and including the humanities and social sciences as well as the physical or natural sciences, incorporates "such rich connotations that there is no simple equivalent for it in English and French" (Habermas 1989: 109) – a certain corporative consciousness in the self-interpretations of the purveyors of university knowledge would be expected. This is indeed a critical reminder of the idea of university, of the learning processes organized in university form, which often the pervasive questioning of the disciplinary edifice of the university institution as such loses a focus on. At this point, we must ask: does the important innovation that universities represent lie in the kinds of things that they take as their reference, namely, the bundling of teaching *and* research (and where – I am afraid I cannot resist the point - the unity of research and teaching consists essentially in forsaking the devaluation of the teaching function inherent in creating special research institutes or professorships)? If so, how are we to think the form of the modern university, especially the three-fold division of the scientific disciplines into the natural sciences, the social sciences and the humanities? Alternatively, in terms of the self-understanding of learning processes organized in university form, how do we address the question posed by Habermas – for one – "is the university form of organized scientific and scholarly learning processes dependent even today on a *bundling* of functions that requires if not a normative model still a certain commonality in the self-interpretations of the members of the university – the residue of a corporative consciousness?"(ibid. : 103).

The question nevertheless may be confusing, since it

is natural for many to claim that it is no longer possible to anchor ideas in this way. We have therefore to explain the substance of the thesis in a different way, one that need not make for a messy dialogue of disciplines, to say the least, or substantivize a whole terrain in terms of the totalizing conditions of modern knowledge.[6] In fact, I think people debating interdisciplinarity within institutional structures have been less clear than they might have been on this issue, leading both to some unnecessarily extravagant claims and to some irrelevant 'refutations'.

Again, this seems to be not so much an argument as a statement of the position to be established. We need to be looking further. One could understand the picture underlying the argument about the self-understanding of learning processes organized in university form as consisting of two parts. The first part holds that the university institution converts what is not an end in itself into something that is an end for the educational system as a whole – 'reason', culture and/or 'excellence' where the university as a form situates its object. I have already alluded to some fragments of this picture in the preceding section, although we could partake of a further thought here. The fragments of this picture do not see the general notion of university form as having any importance; for them, the important change lies in what universities take their concepts and relations to be. This goes along with construing modern universities as not simply educational institutions, a step made possible by further classifying universities as institutions overseeing the object of the furtherance of knowledge. Solely on these grounds perhaps, it is very much a challenge to determine whether, insofar as the modern university probably never had a premonition of what would become of it, its evolution cannot be reasonably viewed as the result of implementing an *a priori* idea.

The second alludes to the fact that the university's bundling of functions – the combination, specifically, of teaching *and* research – gives us no reason to be recasting the institutional edifice, but does give us a reason to be eschewing its formalization as a normative model. Accordingly, on this view, we are not conferring a new currency to the institutional edifice of the university, but rather forming a new belief about what the university's form really is. Indeed, to the extent that the university institution both provokes a claim to autonomy and right and is entrenched by them, the relations reiterating the university institution as such would appear to be individualized through a discourse of 'purpose', ascribed to the institution as attribute or internal content rather than social effect. If this means reifying the university institution as such, so be it, although of course we must guard against the egoism of institutions.

III. A Short Line on Academic Freedom

I think the whole discussion about 'academic freedom' is somewhat flawed in this light. While being 'agent-centered' – focusing as it does on the politics of liberal education and given over to claims about curriculum and improving education generally – the debate has tended to confuse the consequences of positive facts about institutional conduct with the consequences of negative facts about the same; for example, between what comes about because institutions act in a certain way and what comes about because they do not act this way or that.[7]

The perception underscoring various strands of liberal learning that concern with contemporary political and social issues is the very opposite of education clearly is untenable and would need to be altered, although it is an intrinsic requirement of socio-political engagement and discourse, within the university or outside, that norms of civility and argumentative soundness be rigidly upheld. Of course there can be variations on this stance. Ronald Dworkin, for instance, has argued that, although academic freedom is not a simple derivation from the right to free speech, it nevertheless expresses the ideal of ethical individualism that animates liberal political morality. In this view, the local practices of American universities are embodiments (albeit imperfect ones) of political first principles. Richard Rorty, on the other hand, forgoes any appeal to first principles and, consistent with his pragmatism, asserts that institutions do not need "foundations". Dworkin and Rorty, however, both take for granted the principle that the ideal of the university can be realized only in a liberal political culture that is much like their own. 8 Nothing in what I have said above in the preceding sections presupposes this delimitation, however. A sharply contrasting focus comes from Edward Said, who defends the ideal of freedom of inquiry by reference to the historical experience of universities in many parts of the world, including the countries of the Middle East. For him, there is no single paradigm of the university as a social institution; they are as diverse as the societies that harbour them. Yet, as Said usefully reminds us, this does not mean that universities are obliged to articulate the cultures in which they find themselves. On the contrary, intellectual freedom demands that people in the academy be ready to risk their identities as practitioners of particular cultures in order to understand the cultures of others.

Of course, there is a riposte to all this. But it is also the point where, maybe, a truer engagement could begin. Exactly what it comes to – just what line is being drawn

between the self-understanding of learning processes organized in university form and the work of disciplines internal to that form, as indeed the question of academic freedom – is clearly sensitive to details of one's account of disciplinary practices and the individuation of their contents through distinct trajectories and historical circumstances. The main challenge, I think, concerns its generalization across the university institution as such. It is to be noted that the double constraint – the university as functionally specific and yet differentiated (across schools, faculties and disciplines; between administration, teaching and research; between utilitarian and non-utilitarian self-definitions of purpose and functioning) – articulates itself differently in different national situations. Indeed, it constitutes something like a general law of the reproduction of universities in their modern incarnation. But here too, as our foregoing reflection has tried to disclose, the question of the predicates being brought to bear on a re-envisioning of the university institution as such comes up.

Even as we cannot take for granted that there still is a single, unifying idea effectively informing the institution of the university, we cannot lose sight of its locus of exclusivity either, what for us has consisted in the self-understanding of learning processes organized in university form (and which any restructuring exercise of the university institution as such would have to submit itself to). Obviously, the present choice of a principled pragmatism as opposed to (shall we say) corporate takeover has overseen a rationalization of disciplines that has rendered more precarious than ever the ability of the university to function as a source of critical knowledge.

Notes

1. Note the echo here, distinctively Kantian. For a taste of the flavour of Kant in this context, see the lectures reproduced in his *On History* (1963). Obviously, Hamlyn's thoughts seem to articulate into this register. In Oakeshott (1990), of course, the reflections come to acquire a tenor that is distinctive. For him, universities as places of education have three essential characteristics: they are serious; they are places of study; and they are detached, apart from the rest of the society. It follows, on this register, that concern with contemporary political and social issues is the very opposite of education.
2. I am drawing this question, including its specific syntax, from Weber (1999). The piece was serendipitously accessed from the web following a Google search with the entry 'Samuel Weber'. The essay, among other things, works with and problematizes Readings.
3. See also Machlup (1982 passim). For another perspective on the (non-)relationship between the natural and human sciences, see Marcus (2002) and Moore (2002).
4. For a recent attempt – but one that combines and often conflates the intellectual and administrative parameters of institutional assessment – see the report edited by Partha Chatterjee (2002). Some of the institutions that Madan has named are surveyed here. For another perspective, see Sethi (2001).
5. I am afraid I am unable to supply the references here, although of course we have the protracted locutions of Mazlish (1998) to contend with. See also the reports anchored by the Knowledge Commission under Sam Pitroda, as also the Yashpal Committee on rejuvenating Indian universities. Doubtless, the question of institutional identity and location is important, with the problems of research and researchers within the university set-up not always overlapping with those of research establishments or research institutes.
6. Incidentally, Vinay Lal (2002) has thrown in a consideration about interdisciplinarity as well, pointing out that "all but those who have a Jurassic mentality, or a personal sense of entitlement which makes them view their own discipline as a fiefdom, have in principle embraced interdisciplinarity" and that "interdisciplinarity, for all its virtues, is scarcely the way of freeing academic disciplines from their constraints and limitations that it is made out to be" (2002: 148). He even goes on to add that interdisciplinarity "serves as a perfect pretext for market expansion" and often is directed at "some notion of convergence, or the elimination of substantive dissenting views" (ibid. : 148, 149).
7. On the politics of liberal education and associated questions, see the special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* (1990). Some of the contributions to *Seminar* (2003) also reproduce this measure, although Bhargava (2003) bucks this trend.
8. See the essays by these scholars in Menand (1996). Several of the other contributors in this collection address the question of whether universities can be justified as expressing a distinctive ethical and intellectual culture, and, if so, how that culture might itself be defended. Note my allusions here are drawn from a review of Menand's collection by Gray (1997).

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1857 and the Indian Intelligentsia

SUDHIR CHANDRA

Received historiographic wisdom has ossified the belief that Indians educated in English, the intelligentsia who ushered in New India, were for the first fifty years categorical in their condemnation of 1857. They condemned it as a mutiny of disgruntled soldiers and as a last desperate attempt by dispossessed, backward looking feudal interests to get rid of the British. Only after Savarkar's dissenting intervention did they tend to move from their settled adverse verdict towards a positive view of 1857.

This paper seeks to examine the historical basis of received historiographic wisdom about the attitude of the emergent Indian intelligentsia towards 1857. It shows that what is seen as the attitude of the intelligentsia during the first fifty years was something more multivalent than can be expressed by a categorical term like condemnation. That multivalence was obscured, though not altogether obliterated, rather swiftly by a dominant note that sounded clearly condemnatory.

This change was brought about by the increasing political and, equally importantly, cognitive control that the ruling dispensation exercised over the new intelligentsia. Political control made loyalty to the British connection an essential constituent of the emerging political consciousness. Cognitive control inured the intelligentsia to what may roughly be described as a modernist teleology, one in which India's regeneration could be conceived of solely in relation to the British connection. Loyalty, given this inuring, was not only a pragmatic stance but also a pre-requisite for the country's progress. Because the modernist teleology survived the political disappearance of the colonial presence, the pre-Savarkar image of 1857 continued well into Independence. In fact, that teleology virtually foreclosed all but one 'rational' way of viewing 1857. Consequently, for all the significant shifts within it, the dominant historiographic view of 1857 even during its centenary celebrations carried the marks of the first fifty years.

There is admittedly a grain of truth in the belief about the new intelligentsia's initial unqualified hostility to 1857. To begin with the beginning, we may recall by way of illustration the reaction of the *Hindoo Patriot*, an independent, fearless and well-informed weekly from Calcutta.[1] Writing in the very moment of the outbreak in Meerut and Delhi, the weekly eloquently remarked that the 'rebels' were 'as brutal and unprincipled a body of ruffians as ever disgraced a uniform or stained the bright polish of a soldier's sword with the blood of murder. Straightaway convinced that 'the country is thrown backward by the present disturbances', it recommended the rebels for 'signal chastisement'.[2]

A decade later, with Pax Britannica firmly in place, scholar-statesman Raja Rajendralala Mitra (1824-91) looked back in righteous anger on 1857 as 'a war of anarchy against established Government'. It was a war in which 'Nana Sahibs and Azimoollas and the other monsters of inequity' had 'brought into foul play' 'some of the worst passions of the human mind'.[3]

By the late 1870s, this hostility had developed into a nationalist narrative of 'the dark days of the Indian Mutiny'. The narrative found powerful articulation in a speech by Surendranath Banerji (1848-1924). Addressing a mammoth public meeting in Calcutta, the nationalist master orator said:

> It was essentially a military revolt, with which the people at large had no sympathy, and from which they sedulously kept themselves aloof. . . . When the hour came, they manfully stood by their English rulers, and rendered them important services. . . . Deo Narain Singh does not live, but we invoke his shade to bear witness to his trials and sufferings, his gigantic

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exertions to crush out the seeds of rebellion and restore peace and order. But for the memorable services of that great man, the last vestige of British power would, in the days of the Mutiny, have disappeared from the sacred and ancient city of the Hindoos. Those were days when loyalty displayed itself to the greatest advantage, and was appreciated most.[4]

The image the narrative projected of 1857 was not confined to the emerging nationalist political discourse. It had begun to enter the general consciousness of the new intelligentsia and to form part of their commonsense. This is evidenced in the *Yamalok ki Yatra,* a literary work written in 1880 by a budding twenty-one year-old Radhacharan Goswami (1859-1923), who would later be counted among the pioneers of modern Hindi literature. As its title suggests, the work describes the journey of its 'enlightened' young protagonist to the kingdom of Yama, the God of Death. Of the various hells and heavens catalogued in this fantasy along with the deeds they are earmarked to punish or reward, a particularly fearsome hell is reserved for those who in 1857 had revolted against our mighty government'.

Young Radhacharan was seeking in *Yamalok ki Yatra* to tackle an issue that was tearing him apart from inside even as it was splitting contemporary Indian society: the conflict over the new and the old. Distinguishing things that deserve to be punished from those that must be rewarded, the journey to Yamalok was a literary device to chart a course between the new and the old for India's journey into a desirable future. Much in *Yamlok ki Yatra* was unresolved, even contradictory. But its verdict on 1857 was unequivocally damning.[5]

I would like to focus on the shaping of the after-life of 1857 among the new Indian intelligentsia during the pre-Savarkar years and also venture to make a larger point about the cognitive near-closure that facilitated the persistence of that after-life even during the post-Savarkar half-century.

There can be no better illustrations of that persistence than Nehru's proclaimed view and, subsequently, the observations made during the centenary year of 1857. A representative *par excellence* of the Indian intelligentsia, and a scholar in his own right, Nehru believed that 1857 'was much more than a military mutiny'. It 'spread rapidly and assumed the character of a popular rebellion and a war of Indian independence. ' Nonetheless, in Nehru's studied opinion, 'Essentially it was a feudal outburst, headed by feudal chiefs and their followers and aided by the widespread anti-foreign sentiment. . . . It brought out all the inherent weaknesses of the old regime which was making its last despairing effort to drive out foreign rule.

Nehru was ready here with modernity's dirge for the old order. 'The feudal chiefs', he wrote, 'had already played their role in history and there was no place for them in the future. ' 'Nationalism of the modern type', he continued, 'was yet to come; India had still to go through much sorrow and travail before she learnt the lesson which would give her real freedom. ' 1857 could be 'a popular rebellion'. It could even be 'a war of Indian independence'. But it could not have ushered in freedom. As the modernist teleology, voiced by Nehru, would have it: 'Not by fighting for a lost cause, the feudal order, would freedom come.[6]

An equally telling illustration is the centenary year of 1857. Centenary celebrations are, by definition, occasions for whipping up enthusiasm. In any case, considering that the euphoria of 1947 had not spent itself entirely by 1957, whipping up enthusiasm for the 'first war of national independence' should not have been difficult in its centenary year. What in the event happened is emblematized in R. C. Majumdar's brave 'revolt' on behalf of academic objectivity, as also in the official historian S. N. Sen's tepid *Eighteen Fifty-Seven.*

Also telling, by a reverse process, is the fate of S.B. Chaudhuri. In the centenary year and subsequently as well, Chaudhuri questioned the very assumptions of received historiographic wisdom. Knowing the cognitive potential of his intervention, he sanguinely dedicated his *Theories of the Indian Mutiny (1857-59)* to 'all the historians of the Mutiny in the hope of a new and deeper understanding'. Far from entering popular consciousness, Chaudhuri remains a marginal presence even in the world of scholarship.

With this prelude, I should like to return to the beginning, when the *Hindoo Patriot* was condemning the rebels and giving reasons why their defeat was foredoomed. Precisely then, the *Friend of India,* a prominent Anglo-Indian weekly, was calling the *Hindoo Patriot* 'the organ of the sepoys', and demanding the forfeiture of its licence. In the beginning, at least, going by the *Friend*'s angry reaction, the *Patriot*'s – and the educated Indians' – response to 1857 was more complex than its flat description as pro-British would suggest. It carried resonances and emphases that we may try to tease out.

The *Hindoo Patriot* was indeed not 'an organ of the sepoys. ' That scurrilous Anglo-Indian labelling was an effect more of the panic that had possessed the paranoid European community in India – especially the non-official Europeans – than of what actually appeared in the *Patriot.* More than what Indians of the class represented by the *Patriot* did or said, it was panic that made the Anglo-Indians see danger all around. It was in panic that they lumped together all Indians as bloodthirsty rebels. Their

anger was not confined to the 'Pandys'. It implicated the English-educated Indians *en masse*. Popularizing the fearful stereotype, the London *Times* described Nana Saheb as 'the true barbaric ideal', the 'type of the revolt'. It represented him as the symbol of 'Young Asia' in that he revealed 'what we are to expect from communicating European arts and accomplishments to Hindoos without our religion or our manly character. ' Quoting the *Times*, the *Friend of India* sealed the stereotype with the approval of Indian experience as it observed:

> There is the whole truth. The sleek, polished, educated native who speaks English like Englishmen, and quotes Milton and Shakespeare, is a savage, with a cruelty such as savages never feel. That, the conviction of the Anglo-Indians, is at last the conviction of Great Britain.[7]

It was panic that made the Europeans in Calcutta, the heavily guarded capital city, hear the advance of murderous mutineers in the crackers fired at a suburban wedding.[8] Forming themselves into the Indian Reform League, they hatched quixotic plans of seizing the government and shipping the pusillanimous Canning 'home'. Even in relatively quiet Bombay, they believed that 'political discussion has for many months past been rife throughout the Presidency and the state of public feeling thereby evinced is in the last degree unsatisfactory', and insisted that 'the young men of our colleges' were 'nearly the most disloyal'.[9] Specific charges of conspiracy were made against Jagannath Sankersett, the harmless business magnate and president of the loyal Bombay Association. Suspicion, the *Patriot* reported, had become 'another name for conviction.'[10]

Yet, there was in that suspicion a slender basis of truth, enough to appear amplified as sedition in the febrile Anglo-Indian and British imagination. As if confirming the equation between the English-educated and the Pandys, the *Rast Goftar* wrote that 'subjects will be rebels from principle when rulers are tyrants from policy.'[11] It is noteworthy that, to counter the flood of Anglo-Indian attacks on Indians following the outbreak of 1857, the *Rast Goftar* converted itself in January 1858 from a Gujarati into an Anglo-Guajarati weekly.[12] It did not hesitate to implicate the non-official Europeans and charged them with having done 'all that lay in them to convert the present Military, into a national revolt.'[13] Reflecting similar courage, and also resentment about having been led on through disinformation, the *Hindoo Patriot* lamented that while the atrocities attributed to the rebels were either gross exaggerations or 'unreal creations of morbid imaginations, the retributive excesses were sad realities.'[14]

Sentiments so sympathetic to the rebels took a few months to form. But even the early reaction, notwithstanding its loyalty to the British and condemnation of the rebels, was not uncritical of the alien dispensation. A remarkably lucid exposition of this reaction came from the *Hindoo Patriot* less than a month after the May outbreak. It was in the context of Bengal. But reading 'Bengali', *a la* Gokhale,[15] as a metonym for the Indian intelligentsia, it is actually an articulation of the position – material and ideational – of the emerging Indian intelligentsia. In an article entitled 'The Sepoy Mutiny and its action upon the people of Bengal', the *Patriot* began with a rationale for their loyalty to the ruling dispensation:

> The Bengallees never aspired to the glory of leading armies to battle or the martyrdom of the forlorn hope. Their pursuits and their triumphs are entirely civil. A strong and versatile intellect enables them to think deeply and to think foresightedly. They are aware that the British rule is the best suited to their quiet and intellectual tastes; that under it they might achieve the greatest amount of prosperity compatible with their position as a conquered race. They are in hopes that by lawful and constitutional appeals to the good sense and justice of the English people sitting by representatives in a sovereign Council or Parliament, they, when the fitting moment arrives, will rise yet further in the scale of equality with their foreign rulers and divide with them the honor and the responsibility of administering the affairs of the largest and the most well-established empire in Asia.

Against such people, whose temperament and interests combined to make them loyal, it was insinuated, the *Patriot* complained, that they 'sympathise with the mutineers. That they are disaffected towards the Government. That they ought not to be trusted. ' This 'venom' came from two sources. The *Patriot* described the first as the 'birth-rights men' and the other was the bureaucracy.[16] The birth-rights men were the 'placeless' Europeans who, by virtue of belonging to the ruling race, claimed special rights and exemptions as against the subject 'natives'. The rights these 'exemptionists' claimed included the right to carry arms, to be above whatever laws were promulgated to regulate freedom of expression, and, when they committed crimes, the right to be tried by European, never by 'native', magistrates. They claimed their 'rights of impunity'[17] also because, as they saw things, India could be 'retained under English rule much more easily by the aid of a truly loyal [European] adventurer class than through the imaginary affections of the natives.'[18] The country, 'won as it was by the sword of the adventurer, can only be kept by the same sort of stuff.'[19] The adventurers, therefore, demanded that they be treated with dignity, organized into a 'Garde Nationale', and 'allowed some voice' in the

government instead of being 'shut out from the only places in the public service which are associated with profit and distinction.'[20]

Turning to the second source of venom, and risking almost certain official reprisal, the *Hindoo Patriot* wrote:

> The bureaucracy who find in the growth of intelligence and property among the natives of the country the greatest danger to their absurd claims to social pre-eminence are not unwilling to bring them into discredit. To attain this end means are selected with no other scruple than as to efficacy.[21]

The loyal Indians' only hope, in the circumstances, lay in the 'Government'.[22] Whatever remained of 'Government' after counting the powerful bureaucracy out, was the governor-general with a handful of close advisers. That 'Government' had already exposed its weakness, on the eve of the May outbreak, by its capitulation to the European violence against the 'miscalled' Black Act, which had sought to empower 'native' magistrates to try Europeans. Post-outbreak, that weakness would increase, making life difficult for Indians in general and exceptionally stressful for the independent-minded loyalists of the *Hindoo Patriot* and *Rast Goftar* variety.

Ironically, the rectitude that moved them to defy all risks and speak up in those abnormal times, also pitted them against the same skeletal 'Government' which, they knew, did possess, for all its weaknesses, an inner core of strength and sense of justice. Summing up the sequence of developments, the *Patriot* wrote in the first quarter of 1858:

> Indeed the rebellion was a godsend to them. The Anti-Black-Acts-ites were not slow to take advantage of these, and in a moment of Hindu humiliation endeavoured to create for themselves a political superiority. From this desire alone sprung up the institution of the Volunteer Guards. Having succeeded – what wonder they should? – in producing a panic in Calcutta, these believers in race antagonism went and offered their services ostensibly for the defence of the city, but really for the repression and coercion of native freedom. The government at first refused their request and then in a moment of listless impatience yielded to the clamour. And capitally did these brave warriors protect the city, in so much that they were well nigh successful in getting up a riot and outbreak here, when the legislature interfered and curbed their power. . . . They are at the present moment running amuck of everything native, and have entered into a regular crusade against the Hindu race.[23]

By the very normality of human diffidence in the face of the kind of terror the Europeans let loose in 1857-58, the courageous sense of vocation displayed by a *Hindoo Patriot* or *Rast Goftar* could only have been rare. That makes their testimony particularly valuable, for it can be presumed to articulate what many among the new intelligentsia must have felt and thought even as they were constrained into silence and, worse, sycophancy.

In June 1857, the *Patriot* was ready to 'proclaim' that the call for revenge was 'just'; except that it questioned 'the equity of avenging the murdered and outraged of Meerut, Delhi and Allahabad in Calcutta'.[24] But by September of the same year, it was beginning to see, and attack, the reality of revenge, which was criminality masquerading as patriotism. Citing the *Bengal Hurkaru* as an example of what the call for revenge meant to the Anglo-Indians, the *Patriot* wrote:

> If Europeans emulate, nay exceed the sepoy murderers of Meerut and Cawnpore. . . [*Bengal Hurkaru*] would not touch their head, but would encourage their butchery. If European troops massacre in cold blood – not people whom a false religion teaches its followers to regard as enemies – but their faithful and unsuspecting comrades, and their wives, such massacre should go unpunished.

The *Patriot* dismissed the Anglo-Indian valorization of revenge as a patriotic obligation. Itself accused, in those frenzied times, of want of 'patriotism' – patriotism vis-ë-vis the Empire – the *Patriot* countered that it was no 'patriotism that is not based on philanthropy'. There could, therefore, be no justification for the Anglo-Indians' 'intense patriotism', 'which would wage a war with civilization and humanity'.[25]

Still, however, save for its outbursts against the 'system of terror', or 'drunken European anarchy', unleashed in Calcutta by the European volunteers, the *Patriot*'s criticism was at a generalized normative level. But by March 1858, the weekly had seen much in Bengal26 and learnt enough about the war zone to have a concrete basis for its painful disillusionment with the British. 'If', it wrote, 'as many of our English contemporaries pretend, the rebellion has brought out some new phases of native character in India, it has added not a little to *our* knowledge of the character of our British fellow-subjects.'[27]

Of the many articles it carried on this discovery of British character and administration, each saturated with righteous sarcasm, I have chosen one to indicate a marked shift in the attitude of the English-educated Indians towards their alien rulers and their rebellious fellow-subjects. Entitled 'The Position of the European', the article refers to a document, 'a veritable state paper', to expose the rulers and empathetically reach out to the rebels. The contents of the document, the *Patriot* warns the reader at the outset, 'are like unto nothing that they have seen or heard of since Menu published his penal code, or, at least, since a Roman Emperor commanded his subjects to worship his mule. ' It is a 'perwannah', issued in Urdu, 'from that exalted seat of wisdom and justice, the Cantonment Joint Magistrate of Agra. ' Then

follows, in English translation, the text of the document. It reads:

> Whereas it has been ascertained by statements made by diverse saheblogues, that Hindoostanees, on meeting them in the public thoroughfares, do not salute them, or stop their horses or conveyances in token of respect when such saheblogues are passing by; and whereas such conduct is highly unbecoming and may be counted as impertinence on the part of Hindoostanees: Be it therefore notified, under order of the Officer commanding the station, that every Hindoostanee driving in a carriage, riding, or walking within the limits of the Cantonment, must salute every Saheblogue of rank and every Gorah whom he may meet on his way, and if riding or driving in a carriage must take to one side of the road so as to allow such Saheb or Gorah to move on; a non-compliance with the order rendering the offender liable to arrest and punishment. And be this Notification proclaimed by beat of drum daily for an entire month and weekly for the three following months, and let a copy hereof be forwarded to the Magistrate of Agra, that its purport may be known in the city of Agra.

In a rhetorical move to impress upon its readers the ominous significance of the document, the *Patriot* begs them to believe that 'the foregoing is a genuine order passed by a British officer holding the office of a magistrate under the Government of India. ' It adds: 'The strictest obedience is enforced to it; and that not always by the aid of the police. ' Itself extra-legal, the order is enforced in extra-legal ways as well. The horror is not confined to Agra: 'Similar orders have been passed in other parts of the North Western Provinces. '

Bad as they are, the *Patriot* is upset not so much by the 'intense meanness or wretched puerility' of the 'rescript'. It is most upset by what the rescript shows of those dark, hitherto hidden aspects of British character which the rebellion has brought out into open. More so because those aspects run across the board, characterizing not just the 'Have-Nots' but also the 'Haves' among the British:

> We had . . . hitherto believed that they were a haughty race, but never deficient in self-respect. We knew that there was a class among Englishmen, as among other nations, who, destitute of every claim to social consideration, sigh for that state of lawlessness in which alone their importance is recognised. . . . We knew also that a better class of Englishmen hold fast to the faith that the European as such is a superior being to the Indian as such. But we did not know that there existed in the classes which fill the highest grades of the civil and military services of the Government of India the consciousness that they were excluded from the benefits of all conventional rules of civility and politeness except such as could be enforced by 'fine and imprisonment'.

The *Patriot* ends with 'one thing more' that the rebellion has taught. The weekly had not so far believed 'a great part of the accounts given of atrocities committed in India during the mutinies. ' Now it would. Having seen the 'delirious love of blood or rather a reputation for blood-thirstiness which has thrown so many official minds in Upper India out of order' and, as its sequel, the lowering of 'official morality in the rest of the continent. Acceptance of the reality of the atrocities it had earlier not accepted brings with it a thought for the sufferers of those atrocities. The *Patriot* is obliged to conclude: 'Any land may produce rebels, but a land where men like the authors of this order hold power can alone breed such rebels as executed Nana Sahib's commands.'[28]

So forthright an acknowledgment of the naturalness of the rebels' resistance and disapproval of the arbitrary power they were resisting is more than simple sympathy for the victims of atrocities. Its intensity manifests, though the *Patriot* does not say so explicitly, a sense of rapport with those victims, an identification with them as fellow-sufferers, as *people of India* under common subjection. The quick shift from condemnation to such empathetic reaching out to the rebels, and further to disillusionment with, even alienation from, the British was, indeed, a function of the unfolding of the rebellion. But, even if brought to the surface by it, the fellowship of suffering as a subject people was independent of the experience of 1857.

A phrase in an article in the *Hindoo Patriot* may help us understand this. Reacting to the *Westminster Review*'s view 'that the people of India have no existence save "in the brains of Mr. Bright"', the *Patriot* expatiated upon, *a la* Comte, the 'positivity' of 'the national existence of the people of India. ' It was a view that offered a convenient political and psychological basis for the Empire. That the *Patriot* needed to contest this view is significant. Obviously it hurt to have one's very existence, national existence as a people, denied. What is not obvious is the depth and acuteness of the hurt. That comes out particularly poignantly in one of the arguments the *Patriot* employed to counter the *Westminster Review*, and even more so in the mode of its articulation. It invoked 'the fact of national suffering' to prove the reality of 'the national existence of the people of India. ' Reflecting the pathos of a people's identity resting on their shared suffering, the *Patriot*'s usual bantering tone gives way to acute anguish for the brief moment that it needs to make this particular point.[29] The poignancy of 'the fact of national suffering' suggests the already evolved emotive power of the sentiment of being Indian. It offers a clue to understanding the easy shift from condemnation to fellow feeling during 1857-58.

The rapport was deepened by the realization that, unlike the atrocities suffered by the rebels, the atrocities attributed to them were largely invented by Anglo-Indian

'atrocity-mongers'. 'The assiduity of industrious truth-seekers and truth-speakers', the *Patriot* asserted, 'has discovered that the stories of massacres aggravated by violation and outrage upon British women and children in the North Western Provinces, so industriously circulated during the mutinies, are in a great measure inventions.'[30]

It is the shift towards empathy for the rebels and disenchantment with the British that lends complexity to the otherwise loyalist response to 1857 of English-educated Indians. These seemingly contradictory constituents of that complex response are the same as the fusion of patriotism and loyalism that for long years defined the very character of Indian national consciousness. The *Rast Goftar*, having earlier in January 1858 invoked Burke to make the point about subjects being rebels from principle when rulers are tyrants from policy, could thus later in the month quote the much admired Scottish missionary, Dr Wilson, to declare that the 'educated natives':

> know as much of the power and resources of Britain and the advantages to be derived from its benign administration in India . . . as makes them desire the continuance and prosperity of that administration.[31]

After peace and order had been established, and especially in response to the Queen's Proclamation, which seemed to snub the 'birth-rights men', a quick reverse shift occurred. With the increase in the political and cognitive control that the British exercised over them, English-educated Indians now tended to recall 1857 the way it was seen immediately in the moment of its outbreak. The citations given above from Rajendralala Mitra, Surendranath Banerji and Radhacharan Goswami bear ample testimony to this. Yet, even as the pre-Savarkar nationalist narrative of the Mutiny was gaining dominance, the empathy felt for 1857 was not completely obliterated. It was driven underground, into the sub-conscious. Generally kept out of discursive writings, public speeches and pronouncements of political formations during the decades of 'constitutional' agitation, the sub-conscious unexpectedly found elaborate expression in a major work of fiction in 1898. This was in the third volume of Govardhanram Madhavram Tripathi's (1858-1907) Gujarati classic, *Sarasvatichandra* (1887-1901).

Govardhanram, as a witness, is a historian's delight. Possessed of a formidable intellect, which he had systematically cultivated with wide-ranging readings and acute observation, he was a passionate but critical patriot. His overriding 'aspiration' was to 'produce, or see produced . . . a people who shall be higher and stronger . . . who shall be better able to look and manage for themselves than does the present generation of my educated and uneducated countrymen. ' 'What kind of nation that should be', he noted in the privacy of his diary, 'and how the spark should be kindled for that organic flame: these were, and are, the problems before my mind. I lay down this as, for the present, the only fixed objective before me, and my studies will be my "skirmishers" and "support". . . .'[32]

Govardhanram's insistence on study was part of his conviction that 'seeing must precede acting'. Wary of good intentions not backed by proper understanding, he warned against 'the evil consequences which we may inflict on our country by our well-meaning follies. ' Consequently, he wanted his 'thoughts and opinions' to be given 'public or permanent currency' only after adequate 'external research and internal deliberation'. His ideal was a level of objectivity that entitled him to talk of 'my judgment against myself'. Backed by study and introspection, he wished to be a *sakshi*, a witness who could record things like a *sthitprajna*, with detachment, equanimity and clarity.[33]

An epic of the times that took the self-styled *sakshi* seventeen years and a little under two thousand pages to finish, the four-volume *Sarasvatichandra* offers precisely such a testimony. To provide a spark for the organic flame, and to transform his people from the 'pigmies' they were into 'giants', which is what their rulers were,[34] Govardhanram had initially planned a series of essays. But on 'second thoughts' he 'discovered' that 'the reading class in Gujarat were, for various reasons, difficult to reach through abstruse or discursive matter, and the illustrations of real or ideal life would be the best medium, best in the sense of being attractive and impressive. ' So he decided to offer both the real and the ideal 'in flesh and blood under the guise of fiction' in order to 'supply the ordinary reader with subtler moulds and finer casts for the formation of his inner self.'[35] *Sarasvatichandra*, thus, contains testimony not just about the unhappy actuality of the Indian people, but also about their dreams of future greatness.[36]

The third volume of the novel is, among other things, a meditation on the meaning of British rule. Covering the entire nineteenth century, from the Subsidiary Alliance System to the present of the novel's appearance, it records the unbearable humiliation of subjection even as it recognizes the inexorability of the loss of freedom. In the process it offers a daring treatment of 1857.

The defeat of the 'rebels' is here an occasion for profound grief. It is described as the widowing of 'Rajputi'. To appreciate the anguish packed into this expression, we have to recall what a powerful metaphor

Rajputi had become in the emerging Hindu-Indian nationalist discourse of the period. Obliterating the image of the Rajputs as marauders – 'baragis' and 'ghanims' – the new Hindu-Indian nationalist remembrance valorized, and was overwhelmed by, Rajput valour and chivalry. A metaphor for Indian spirit, Rajputi was now a source of nostalgia, pride and hope. Even the exponents of what, mistakenly, is isolated as economic and secular Indian nationalism – eminent figures like R. C. Dutt (1848-1909) and M. G. Ranade (1842-1901) – had used their most stirring prose to elaborate on this metaphor. It is in this context that we must appreciate the affective power of Rajputi being widowed in 1857.

The meditation on British rule in the third volume of *Sarasvatichandra* shows 1857 to have been the last decisive blow to Indian freedom. It suggests that the first blow came in the form of the Subsidiary Alliance System. But not many at the time had the clarity or prescience to understand that. Instead, the princes who fell into the trap and joined the System believed that they had got a good bargain. But the defeat of 1857 removed not only those illusions but also the possibility of a similar fight.[37]

There is, further, a telling reflection on the term 'rebel' as used for the 'antagonists' of 1857. Commenting on the term, a wise Brahman says wistfully: 'If only a successful united struggle could be waged against the British, there would remain no need for using the term rebel. ' The comment is an unveiled reminder that, no matter what the rulers' logic, the vanquished of 1857 deserve, of their own people at least, a different and more honourable remembrance.

Much of this meditation revolves around three generations of rulers in a model Indian State, evocatively named Ratnanagari. But what it seeks to present is an enlightened Indian point of view. This is achieved by engaging two young, English-educated patriots from 'British' India in a series of animated, even contentious, dialogues with the best representatives of 'Native' India. The dialogues for the most part remain inconclusive. But they help the two sides discover, and feel bound in, a community of interests as against their alien rulers. This is put rather starkly by Vidyachatur, the sagacious Dewan of the model State, as he winds up the first round of discussion with the visiting patriots: 'The substance of what I have said is that the houses of us all are mortgaged to the [alien] government. If this realisation can dissolve our mutual discord, and we can manage our own affairs, we will be able to stand up to the government.'[38]

The foregoing is but one aspect, rather neatly abstracted, of a complex meditation. In fact, the meditation is marked by that internally irreconcilable wholeness which seems to have defined the new Indian intelligentsia. It is haunted by subjection, and it hails the same subjection as the instrument and the beginning of the country's future greatness.[39] Thus it echoes in its fullness the *Hindoo Patriot* and the *Rast Goftar* kind of paradoxical response to 1857. This happens after forty years of a selective silencing in which the pro-1857 half of the response had been eclipsed by the loyalist half. With a creative writer's abilities, and with the *sakshi*'s resolve to sense even the unsaid and the barely felt, Govardhanram had voiced the intelligentsia's subconscious. And offered intimations of the Savarkarite intervention.

He could do this because, fortunately for us, he was unaware of the riskiness of his enterprise. He soon discovered what he had done. Emanating from Ahmedabad, the capital city of Gujarat, a 'strong rumour' began circulating that Govardhanram had been arrested for sedition in Bombay. The rumour travelled to Nadiad where his wife, mother and sister spent an agonizing two days before Govardhanram telegraphed them that all was well.

It is possible that the rumour was occasioned by an adverse official assessment of the third volume of the novel. I have not done the kind of detective research that can settle the point one way or the other. Worthwhile as that research will be, it is sufficient for our present enquiry that, with or without basis in actual official reaction, there was much in the novel's third volume to lend credence to the rumour that its author had been arrested for sedition. Even in the relatively calm dying years of the century, so different from the frenzied 1857-58, *Sarasvatichandra* could invite a seditious reading.

Also important for our purpose is the novelist's response to the rumour. It set him thinking. 'Was it a mistake', he asked his *Scrap Book*, 'to have written a book which has so disturbed the peace and happiness of my family? What is my duty? To boldly write such a book for my people or secure the peace of my family against such contingency?'[40] He could expose himself to whatever danger he chose, but he could not do that to his loved ones. It did not matter that he stood self-acquitted in his *Scrap Book*. 'My book', he was convinced, 'is not only loyal, but my innermost soul feels that it is written for and must tend to the welfare of both the rulers and the ruled.'[41]

The indivisibility of loyalty and patriotism, the conjunction of the welfare of the rulers and the ruled, this was for the emerging intelligentsia a genuine belief and also a sentiment intended to placate the rulers.[42] In as much as it was a belief, there operated a cognitive limit to what could be *thought* against the rulers. In as much as it meant placating the rulers, it involved limits to what could be *said* against them. The significance of

Sarasvatichandra lies in laying bare what the intelligentsia had virtually stopped saying about 1857 without ceasing to carry, deep down, traces of the tabooed unsaid.[43]

The *Hindoo Patriot* and the *Rast Goftar* cannot be the only contemporary sources that offer the kind of testimony about 1857 that they do. Nor is *Sarasvatichandra* a one-off exception in the following decades. Maybe there is need to search for similar material. More crucially, there is need to read the relevant material in ways not dominated by the modernist teleology that, paradigmatically, did to Nehru's evaluation of 1857 what it did. Examining seriously an all but forgotten aspect of the world-view of progressive public figures like Ranade, K. T. Telang (1850-93) and Behramji Malabari (1853-1912) may facilitate such alternative readings. They accepted modernization, but questioned the assumption that pre-colonial India was incorrigibly feudal and without its own resources of transformation. Indians, as Malabari put it, needed to realize that 'the rigid pressure of British rule' had arrested 'the spontaneous tendency towards growth and improvement which was going on in Hindu society as long as it was left to itself.'[44]

True, that alternative cognitive mode could not become the dominant mode of the thinking of even Ranade, Telang and Malabari themselves. But at least they retained the awareness of internal possibilities of development. Subjection to the British, as Ranade's or Telang's treatment of Maratha polity will show, was not for them a necessary historical condition for the country's development along modern lines. Reflecting the loss of that awareness by the time the country awaited independence, Nehru was convinced that 1857, although a war of *Indian* independence, could not have ushered in freedom. Cognitive freedom, of which glimpses can be found in Chaudhuri's *Theories of the Indian Mutiny*, is required for rethinking 1857, and much else.

Notes

1. Edited by Harish Chandra Mookerji (1824-63), who came to be popularly known as 'Hindoo Patriot', the weekly's galaxy of contributors included Ram Gopal Ghosh (1815-68), Girish Chandra Ghosh (1829-69), Kissory Chand Mitra (1822-73), Dr Rajendralala Mitra, Dwarkanath Mitter (1833-74), and Joy Kishen Mukerji (1808-88).
2. *Hindoo Patriot*, 4 June 1857.
3. R. J. Mitter, ed. , *Speeches of Raja Rajendralala Mitra*, Calcutta, 1892, p. 7.
4. *Report of the Proceedings of a Public Meeting on the Vernacular Press Act*, Calcutta, 1878, col. i, p. 6.
5. *Yamalok ki Yatra*, Mirzapur, 1888, p. 15.
6. *The Discovery of India*, Calcutta : The Signet Press,, 1946, p. 279
7. *Friend of India*, 22 October 1857.
8. *Hindoo Patriot*, 11 June 1857. Never missing an opportunity to expose and ridicule the non-official Europeans, the *Patriot* wrote in its issue of 28 May 1857: 'Within the last fortnight, the gun-smiths have been deluged with custom, and their fortunes have been as effectually made as if the dreaded loot of Calcutta had been poured into their laps. ' As to what the Europeans would do with the weapons, it continued: 'Some have achieved the feat of offering for the militia, others have got themselves sworn in as special constables – a feint with many to throw off the responsibility of defending their wives and their daughters and run off on the smallest alarm to a place where numbers would at least lessen the chances of their being taken off like game. '
9. *Bombay Standard*, quoted in *Rast Goftar*, 28 February 1858.
10. *Hindoo Patriot*, 17 December 1857. The *Patriot* reports in this issue the arrest of the young Raja of Patchete in Burdwan on flimsy charges of treason. Earlier, in its issue of 4 June 1857, the *Patriot* had described how ground was prepared for what it called the charge of 'imaginary treason': 'A Benagallee gentleman, a most estimable member of the public service, is met by some alarmists in a railway carriage. The alarmists talked their nonsense, and submitted it for the opinion of the Baboo. An opinion was passed more discriminating than pleasing. Conversation was pressed with the purpose on one side of drawing from the other language that at the present time might be construed into treasonable language. '
11. *Rast Goftar*, 3 January 1858.
12. Prominent Parsi leaders and scholars, viz. , Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), S. S. Bengali (1831-93), K. N. Kabraji (1842-1904), Naoroji Fardunji (1817-85), A. F. Moos (1827-95), and K. R. Cama (1831-1909) – all except one of them grown up enough in 1857 to know what was going on – wrote for this weekly from Bombay. Naoroji, Bengali and Kabraji were, in fact, its first three editors. It may be noted that, oblivious to the *Rast Goftar*'s coverage of 1857, R. C. Majumdar used Naoroji in support of his temporally undifferentiated, blanket assertion that all prominent contemporary Indian statesmen dismissed 1857 as a mere mutiny. Equally significant is the rebuttal of this assertion by the otherwise brilliant and well-informed S. B. Chaudhuri. Equally oblivious of the *Rast Goftar*, Chaudhuri writes: 'Ö the eminent Indian statesman [Naoroji, who was 32 in 1857] was neither a contemporary observer nor a historian of repute. ' *Theories of the Indian Mutiny (1857-59): A Study of the Views of an Eminent Historian on the Subject*, Calcutta: The World Press Private Ltd. , 1965, pp. 19-20. In fact, Chaudhuri sees nothing happening in the post-1858 decades to warrant a swift shift in attitude – perceptible attitude. He writes, again in Naoroji's context: 'But nothing tangible possibly could have happened during the short period 1857-1882 which will account for this sudden fluctuation in Indian attitudeÖ. ' *Ibid.*, p. 21.
13. *Ibid.* , 31 January 1858.
14. *Hindoo Patriot*, 8 May, 19 August 1858.
15. Evidently inspired by 'When Paris sneezes, the whole of France catches cold', Gokhale is reputed to have said: 'What Bengal thinks today, the whole of India thinks tomorrow. ' Or was it a famous contemporary of Gokhale's who said it? Or is it, as it must be, apocryphal?
16. *Hindoo Patriot*, 4 June 1857.
17. *Ibid.*

18. *Englishman*, 4 June 1857.
19. *Ibid.*, 20 June 1857.
20. *Bengal Hurkaru*, 27 May, 26 June 1857.
21. *Hindoo Patriot*, 4 June 1857.
22. 'The Sepoy Mutiny and its action upon the people of Bengal' ends thus: 'The security of honest men lies in the fact that the Government has proved unimpressionable alike by the terrors [the birth-rights men and the bureaucracy] they raise and the means they use. ' *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, 11 March 1858.
24. *Ibid.*, 11 June 1857.
25. *Ibid.*, 3 September 1857.
26. Summing up, in a later issue, the goings on in Bengal, the *Patriot* wrote: 'It would have been a miracle indeed if, in times like these, Bengal had been spared the horrors of political executions or the absurdities of state trials. The facility with which the rigors of but a slightly mitigated form of martial law were introduced in this peaceful province and the indifference with which that measure was viewed were the results alike of that crass ignorance of local politics which distinguishes the Indian press and the abject state in which a distant though great danger had thrown the minds of "the public". Conceive rebellion in Ireland, and a suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in England, and not an English politician or newspaper offering a remark on the proceeding, and you have the sort of thing that the Government, the politicians and the newspapers of Bengal did last year. ' *Ibid.*, 10 June 1858.
27. *Ibid.*, 18 March 1858.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, 4 March 1858.
30. *Ibid.*, 19 August 1858.
31. *Rast Goftar*, 31 January 1858.
32. Kantilal C. Pandya, Ramprasad P. Bakshi and Sanmukhlal J. Pandya, eds., *Govardhanram Madshavram Tripathi's Scrap Book 1888-1894*, Bombay: M. N. Tripathi & Sons, 1959, p. 29. The *Scrap Book* for the years 1894-1904, edited by the same team, appeared in the same year. That for the last years, 1904-06, was edited by Kantilal C. Pandya alone, and it appeared a year earlier in 1958. Hereafter referred to as *Scrap Book*.
33. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 104; vol. II, pp. 9, 69-70, 190; vol. III, p. 1.
34. *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 158-9.
35. Govardhanram Madhavram Tripathi, *Sarasvatichandra*, Bombay, 1968, vol. I, Preface (in English), pp. 7-8.
36. See the English Preface to the concluding volume of *Sarasvatichandra* for statements such as this one: 'The writer of a novel may, however, be allowed to indulge in dreams of future days according to his own lights even where the forecast of any future at all must fall short of the exacting tests of scientific or philosophical criticsÖ. Some of the fictions here offered of what in part are only our hero's visions to-day, may indeed become facts in some practical fashion to-morrow. ' Pp. 5-10.
37. Mallaraj, the young heir apparent of Ratnanagari, is the only character in *Sarasvatichandra* who, though not clearly knowing why, despairs of Indian freedom after the Subsidiary Alliance System. 'The State', he tells himself for he dare not tell his elders, 'has today been fettered and Rajputi has been widowedÖ. Just as we protect women, the English will now protect us. ' The widowing of Rajputi here, however, does not carry the hopelessness it does following the defeat of 1857.
38. See *Sasrasvatichandra*, vol. II, pp. 176 ff.
39. Here is one of several similar entries in the *Scrap Book* to show how, caught in an impossible web, Govardhanram moved in circles as he groped for a possible way out: 'India is under foreign control and the foreigner is the kindliest of all foreigners available. To get rid of the foreigner by force or fraud is an idea associated with all the incidents that remind us of his rule being foreign. The idea naturally haunts our uneducated instincts; to the educated instincts the idea is both foolish and fallacious. It is foolish because it is not practicable, and because any experiments founded upon it would send the country from the frying pan into the fire. It is a fallacious idea because the distinction between a native and a foreigner is only transient, and the distinction is not a guarantee of the native being a better ruler than the foreigner in such a mass of heterogeneous people as make up my country. The proper problem is not the absolute eviction of the foreigner, but of his accommodation to the native elementÖ. In India the sovereign is enlightened, and yet has an interest in the country. Two things have to be done. This interest has to be made to cease to be foreign; and while it is foreign, we want natives who will guard against the civic temptations to which the foreigner is exposed by his position, people who will enable native interests to grow and develop without any hindrance from the adverse interests of the rulers, who will in fact watch over the real interests and develop the future welfare of the country. . . . And it is possible to do this both loyally and patriotically. ' *Scrap Book*, vol. I, pp. 149-50.
40. *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 158-9.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
42. I have discussed this in *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992.
43. I say 'virtually stopped' on purpose. We have, around the turn of the century, occasional balanced accounts of 1857, like in R. C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1903, vol. II, pp. 221 ff.
44. *Indian Spectator*, 24 March 1895.

Minding one's own Heritage?

SHEREEN RATNAGAR

The "Western appropriation", as Liverani puts it, of ancient western Asia and Egypt is a phenomenon whose consequences have been becoming clear over the last two decades. Perhaps this is an appropriate time to discuss the subject; in the new spirit of eagerness (amongst individual archaeologists and institutions) to open more doors to scholars from the affluent nations, Indian archaeology—the Harappan past in particular—may face a fate similar to that of Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Early Egypt and early Mesopotamia (Sumer, Babylonia, and Assyria), occupy a special place in world history. There were two streams of thinking which gave early Mesopotamia special importance in the Western academia. One stream was the Babylonian–Assyrian background to Old Testament narratives. After all, Abraham was instructed by God to leave Ur of the Chaldees and to migrate, with his family and flock, towards the land of Canaan. The story of the great Flood, the story of the infant Moses, the erotic Song of Songs, the names of demons of the night, and other cultural elements in the Old Testament have parallels in Sumerian/Akkadian literature. The Book of Kings and other sections of the Old Testament refer to Assyrian military assaults on Israel and Judah, and to Babylonian oppression after the attack by Nabuchadrezzar on Jerusalem. Here was an evil land, where the Tower of Babel had stood, a land that God had cursed, and Israelite prophets had doomed to destruction and desolation. So it is understandable that this land had a fascination for people who knew the Bible.

The early German cuneiform scholar, Friedrich Delitzsch, claimed in the late nineteenth century that Europeans must "toil and trouble in distant, inhospitable, and danger-ridden lands . . . to dig the rubbish heaps of forgotten centuries", because it was these lands, especially Mesopotamia, that would provide the historical and cultural background to the study of the Old Testament. While it appeared problematic to some people in Europe that the stories of the Bible were in fact the old tradition of other peoples in other lands, there were some other Europeans who saw the parallels as giving an authenticity to the Hebrew text. Also, in borrowing Mesopotamian material, the Judaic religion was simultaneously transforming it. For Delitzsch, Israel and Judah were part of the civilization of greater Mesopotamia, which the Twelve Tribes had carried into the land of Canaan (Larsen 1987).

There is also a second stream, an academic one, which views the Bronze and early Iron Ages of the two fertile river valleys as the ultimate fountain head of European civilization. These river valley civilizations had seen, since 3000 BC, the precocious development of monarchies, writing, city life, and technologies of crafting various stones and metals. Here had flowered literatures and institutions such as legal codes and libraries. The entrance to the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago has a carving executed under the direction of James Henry Breasted (1865–1935), that shows an Egyptian handing over to a half-dressed Westerner, the gift of writing (ibid.: Fig. 14.1). Around the Egyptian scribe are figures such as Assyrian and Persian kings, around the Westerner, Herodotus, Caesar, a crusader, and an archaeologist holding a vase. Breasted wrote in 1933, ". . . the civilizations of the Near Orient are like the keystone of the arch, with prehistoric man on one side and civilized Europe on the other." (ibid.: 231).

This idea had been further developed by V. Gordon Childe. In his much-read *What Happened in History*, a magisterial account of the growth of the ancient world, he stated the following in the context of the trend for cultures to merge into one another,

If our own culture can claim to be in the mainstream, it is only

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because our cultural tradition has captured and made tributary a larger volume of once parallel traditions. While in historical times the main stream flows from Mesopotamia and Egypt through Greece and Rome, Byzantium and Islam, to Atlantic Europe and America, it has been repeatedly swollen by the diversion into it of currents from Indian, Chinese, Mexican, and Peruvian civilizations, and from countless barbarisms and savageries. (p. 29)

Clearly, one of Childe's interests was the origins of Western civilization—just as for Marx and for Max Weber, the central issue was the growth of capitalism in the West. Childe perceived that the elite-centred and import-dependent economies of the early river valley civilizations were inherently limited (ibid.: 147-8), and it was their links with the Minoan and Mycenaean civilization which gave the connection with classical Greece. But Greece, with its sense of individual liberty and democratic polities posed a contrast to what was conceived as the stagnant and superstitious totalitarian monarchies of bronze age Mesopotamia and Egypt. Until late in his career, Childe interpreted the origins of civilization in Europe as the product of cultural influences from western Asia.

This was (in very general terms) the kind of scholarly thinking behind such titles as *History Begins at Sumer* (S.N. Kramer, 1958). A.L. Oppenheim however broke the tradition and gave the subtitle, *Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, to his path-breaking book (1964); while he did not deny the Old Testament connection with this fountainhead of Western civilization, he also referred to inputs from Greece and Ionia, and to contributions in the Old Testament tradition from "genuinely Palestinian" as well as "general Near Eastern" elements (ibid.: 5). Even so, a title, *Ancestor of the West: Writing, Reasoning, and Religion in Mesopotamia* (ed J. Bottero et al.), appeared as late as 2000.

This academic tradition was, thus, not broken in spite of the publication of Renfrew's *Before Civilization* in 1976. Renfrew had studied the implications of the improved mode of dating by taking radiocarbon samples from stratified archaeological deposits, and found that Europe did not really lag behind the "Near East" or derive its technologies or cultures and craft traditions only from western Asia and Egypt.

The point of my short piece, however, is to ask what the insistence on the glory of Mesopotamia as the fountainhead of the West implied for archaeological studies.

The archaeology of Mesopotamia began in the early nineteenth century and the imperatives of imperialism were never completely dissociated from the archaeology. The agent of the East India Company, Claudius James Rich, stationed in Baghdad, engaged in one of the earliest excavations at the city of Babylon. Later in the century, Austen Henry Layard, an adventurer who travelled amongst the tribes of the eastern Ottoman empire, excavated at Nineveh and Nimrud. He had been preceded at Nineveh by the Frenchman, Paul-Emile Botta. Layard's interest was in digging until he found an art object or large artifact (pushing the earth to one side in the process), and in finding as many art objects as he could with the minimum expenditure and in the shortest possible time. (He was assisted by Hormuzd Rassam, an Iraqi from Mosul and a scholar in his own right.) Some of the Assyrian palace reliefs that today stand in the British Museum come from Layard's "excavations."[1] Significantly, reliefs were discovered by Layard depicting the Assyrian siege of the Hebrew town of Lachish, an event narrated in the Bible: these finds raised excitement as "proof" of the existence of some actors in the narratives of the Old Testament.

Cultural appropriation in the later nineteenth century was moored in British interests in the oil potential of the region (oil had been discovered in south-west Iran in the 1880s) and the need to make secure the land route to India. The British agents T.E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell became active in the early twentieth century, securing potential allies for the British against Ottoman rule. Gertrude Bell, born to a rich family, was the first woman to read history at Oxford. In her travels in the eastern Ottoman realm she picked up Persian, Arabic, and Turkish. She was remembered as a chain smoker who rode camels and dined with sheikhs in their tents. Digging was a veneer for her active intelligence work. Bell worked to get the sons of the Sharif of Mecca placed on the thrones of Transjordan and Iraq, and Faisal I became "constitutional monarch" of Iraq in 1921. As this person had no past connection with Iraq, it is almost inevitable that fierce uprisings followed.

As adviser to Faisal, Gertrude Bell set up the Iraqi Antiquities Service, and was its first Director. Her institutional legacy includes, besides, the British School of Archaeology in Iraq. Until about 1940, little archaeology was practised by Iraqis themselves, and to regulate and monitor the digging of several foreign teams, Bell set up, in 1924, a sound antiquities law, among other things requiring of each team a professional photographer and a qualified architect, and an epigraphist. Each find was to be numbered and registered as belonging to the government of Iraq (to which some Europeans objected). When artifacts turned up in pairs, however, the active country was allowed to keep one of the two. It is said that the system worked well because of the integrity of the archaeologists of those times. Gertrude Bell died

young, in 1926, and is buried in Baghdad.

Bell's one-room museum in the king's palace was re-located and re-built by the Baathist government of Iraq (the "kings" had been deposed by a military revolt), and was a delightful place to visit, spacious, airy, and well lit. By the 1970s, emphasis began to be laid by the Iraqi authorities on the restoration of buildings that were being excavated at the important sites. Sites such as Babylon were given large-scale restorations. Even though Iraqi archaeologists were active in the field after 1940, scores of European teams continued to dig various sites. The Department's journal, *Sumer*, had an Arabic and an English section. The BSAI brought out *Iraq*, an annual, from London.

It appears that there remained a strong impetus to relate archaeological discoveries to the Old Testament. For instance, Leonard Woolley's discovery at Ur of a "royal cemetery" with an unbelievable wealth of artifacts crafted in gold, silver, electrum, shell, and semi-precious stones did not obscure the discovery of a water-laid deposit at that site, interpreted by Woolley as evidence of Noah's Flood!

Actually, the story of the Flood has great relevance to the beginnings of archaeology in Iraq. The Old Testament is a collection of narratives (myth, legend, folk-tale, saga). It was put into writing at various times between 1,200 and 200 BC, in Hebrew. In its extant form it has seen the hands of at least four redactors. Much of the narrative derives, however, from a vast body of oral literature that was current in the Mesopotamian world. Oral narratives about Gilgamesh in the Aramaic language—Aramaic had succeeded Akkadian as the most commonly spoken language of western Asia in the first millennium BC—were probably the immediate source of the Biblical tale of the flood. In the late nineteenth century, a young assistant called George Smith, engaged by the British Museum to piece together clay tablets that were being dug up in Nineveh and Nimrud, identified a tablet fragment as narrating the story of a dove being set free from a boat (ark). Obviously, this was from an Assyrian version of the story of Noah's flood. *The Telegraph* gave Smith a grant to travel to Iraq to search for the entire narrative tablet. He did so, and succeeded! So the "flood stratum" at Ur was only part of this propensity to relate discoveries to the text of the Bible.

Much later in the day, sustained French excavations at the town of Mari produced tablets that named individuals and pastoral groups in ways distinctly similar to some ethnonyms and personal names found in the Old Testament. But the name *Habiru* for second-millennium pastoral nomads living in tents does not "prove" that "the Hebrews" of the Bible had important links with Mari! Similar literalist interpretations (fanned by the Western media including the BBC) of material that was unearthed at Ebla in northern Syria in the 1970s, were later read in a more sober academic light.

For a graphic illustration of early approaches in the West, Larsen refers us to the carved relief above the entrance to the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, mentioned above. It was conceived by James Henry Breasted, pioneer of Egyptology in America. The Egyptian with a reed and papyrus is accompanied, among others, by figures of Mesopotamians and Persians. On the side of the Western man are Caesar, a crusader (!), and an archaeologist. Quite different and to my mind truly ill-mannered, however, was the conception of the façade of that stupendous museum, the Cairo Museum, built in 1902 by the French, in the French style—a Museum that sees absolutely thousands of visitors every day and requires of the student at least a week to take in all its displays. The Egyptian Antiquities Service, incidentally, was directed by Frenchmen for a good 94 years, says Donald Reid. Almost inevitably, the façade of this building has an inscription in Latin, and female figures in wet-look drapery flank the inscription. Neither in the Pharaonic period nor in the eighteenth century had Egyptian women dressed in such garments! The Khedive of the time is named on the facade. And the date of the building is inscribed, *Anno Hegirae MCCCXVIII*.[2]

There is another ironic aspect to all this. The Assyrians and Babylonians appear in poor light in the Old Testament, as aggressive and cruel, deporting defeated populations and settling them elsewhere to labour on state projects. Their reliefs depict prisoners of war (children and women included) walking in columns behind Assyrian soldiers. Royal inscriptions too desribe the aftermath of successful battles. And there was also the Orientalist perceptions of the European administrators and scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ascribing an essentially retrograde character to Arab and Persian society: the despotism of the rulers, the tradition and superstition, and social stagnation. So how was the "background to the Bible" to be reconciled with such societies? How could such societies, despised by the Europeans, be descendants of the "cradle of civilization"?

Zainab Bahrani, the feisty scholar of Iraqi descent at Columbia University, puts her finger on the dilemma: the West appropriated the ancient Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians, denying them any contribution to, or historic link with, Islamic Iraq. It was Europe that was the heir to this wonderful past of antiquity, in Western thought. So much so, says Bahrani, that an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum (in 1992)

about 'The Royal City of Susa', made *no* mention, in the maps or signage, of the countries of Iraq and Iran.

It has often been said that the coming of Western archaeology to western Asia was a boon, because in Islamic countries there is no interest in the pagan cultures of the pre-Islamic past. I wonder if this assumption will stand up to sustained scrutiny. Was there not Hormuzd Rassam in Mosul? Or do we shrug him off as a Chaldean Christian? Donald M. Reid mentions at least four Egyptians who in the nineteenth century were engrossed in what we call "Egyptology."[3] Significantly, says Reid, when one of them, Ali Mubarak, founded a school in the early nineteenth century for training local people in Egyptology, it was the French archaeologist Mariette who, feeling threatened, had the school closed down—by the simple expedient of refusing to hire its graduates!

As is well known, after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Iraq Museum was broken into and thousands of antiquities have disappeared or have been destroyed. The looting of the Iraq Museum continued for about five days until the Director of the British Museum made a call to Blair in London, and an American military contingent then arrived to guard the building. The ancient sites too were targeted by pilferers. The top two or three metres of several mounds have been stripped away, we are told. The American troops created a military station complete with helipad actually on the site of Babylon, in all ignorance of what that site was. This remained a military station for about two years. In February 2010, the Chilcot Inquiry into the British invasion of Iraq devoted time to the failure to protect the cultural property of that land. Evidence was presented by the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (formerly the British School of Archaeology in Iraq), among others.

But were the failures to protect the Iraqi heritage part of a larger underlying problem? I think we need to give adequate weightage to the fact that Iraqi archaeology began and remained under the umbrella of an assumed superiority–not to mention dominance—of Western countries. Roger Matthews condemns those Western archaeologists who go and dig in Iraq without making any attempt to explain to local residents what they are doing and who do not read Arabic—so that they are not completely abreast with the research being done by Iraqis. And if this land is really accepted as the fountainhead of world civilization, why is ancient Mesopotamia not taught in a more serious fashion in the schools and to the public at large, asks Matthews.

I am reminded of a bitter experience in 1991. I had written to several Mesopotamian archaeologists about protesting the destruction of Iraq in the First Gulf War. Of the two responses I received, one was a copy of a letter sent to *The Independent* newspaper which was signed by the who's who of British archaeology in Mesopotamia. This letter requested the British armed forces and their allies to create a *cordon sanitaire* around the Iraq Museum, so that none of its precious content would be damaged by bombs. In the letter there was not even a token expression of regret at the loss of Iraqi lives.

None of this is totally irrelevant to us in South Asia. We would not object if someone from a distant land claimed that the Harappan past, or the peninsular megalithic culture, is the heritage of the whole world and not just of India/Pakistan. Neither would it be in the least objectionable if archaeologists from other countries came to India to excavate particular sites, provided they show adequate expertise and respect for the rules of the ASI. It is also perfectly acceptable for any world body to fund and direct the conservation and restoration of a site or building of historic value, provided it is done in consultation with experts and local people.[4] Let us note that American and European archaeologists have, for political reasons, practically lost their ability to conduct field work in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Their rescue excavations may have passed their peak after the spurt of small dam constructions in northern Syria and northeastern Turkey. India may thus become a new hunting ground for them.

Should we welcome this? The question needs to be debated in our universities. So far, the signs are not good. A foreign institution has been making annual pay-outs to individual archaeologists or departments to dig or explore particular Harappan sites: is archaeology a suitable domain for outsourcing? A European university given permission to *explore* around the Harappan site of Lothal has taken the liberty not just to excavate large trenches, but, as far as I can make out, to dump the earth from those trenches on the mound itself. We also need to debate the kind of policy we should adopt in relation to individuals or bodies who wish to put a foot into the portals of one or other archaeology department in order to set up a "world class" institute for Indus heritage. Will this necessarily be good for the subject other than pave the way for up-to-date technological resources?

If we refer back to the archaeology of Mesopotamia, we could suggest that this field of study has not been a simple gainer from colonial and neo-colonial intervention. It remains antiquarianist in many respects, e.g., research papers until recently being devoted to tablet collections in this museum or the cylinder seals of that private collection—what coherence do such collections have? what meaning, divorced as they are from their contexts in the archaeological record? Such archaeology, besides, has little wider relevance. Students taught the

unique character of the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh are rarely referred to later times, to the imperial library of the Sassanians, or to the Translation Movement and *Beit al-Hikma* of Mansur and his successors, Caliphs of the newly-constructed Baghdad of the ninth century.

Perhaps it is now time for national archaeological bodies to wake up; to not only take cognizance of the potential of their sites in both their immediate and wider contexts, but also to be clearly aware of the ramifications of any international collaborative venture that may be contemplated. It is time to mind one's heritage, national and global, in the interest of unbiased knowledge.

Notes

1. A few Assyrian reliefs on display in the Chhatrapati Shivaji Vastu Sangrahalaya in Mumbai are pieces that were diverted off the Basra-London sea route, and also remind us that early archaeology was in part a looting of the antiquities of diverse countries.
2. Personal communication from Donald E. Reid.
3. Donald M. Reid, in a lecture delivered in Washington. Personal communication with the author.
4. UNESCO's "conservation" of Mohenjo-daro did nothing to lower the water table and keep the bricks water-proof. Its limestone spur along the Indus banks, ostensibly to protect the site against a major flood, has itself damaged Harappan-period sites. And the local residents of Mohenjo-daro told me in 1998 that there has been no major flood in living memory that has threatened the site.

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Three Literary Meditations on the Problem of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Postcolonial India

SUVIR KAUL

> If we had a keen vision and a feeling for all human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is the quickest of us walk about well wadded in stupidity.
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> George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

Violence on a mass scale: have we ever known difference, ever known our selves, without the corrosive and shaping effects of such violence? How could it be otherwise, for here is a partial and selective list of the numbers killed by mass violence in the 20th century: killed by the Nazis, 15 to 25 million; killed by Stalin, 20 million (or is it 30?); killed during World War II, 55 million; dead during the Partition of India, perhaps 1 million; killed during the Vietnam War, 2 to 3 million; killed by the Pol Pot regime, 1.6 million; massacred in Rwanda in 1994-95, perhaps a million; still dying in Sudan in the last two decades, 1.9 million and counting. Each of these statistics, and others like them, are contentious, but debates about their accuracy scarcely qualify the stunning impact of the numbers themselves. In sum, in the 20th century two hundred million people were eliminated—murdered or starved—in order to serve political ends of one kind or another. What might follow such a statement of numbers, stated without explanatory details, without political and historical framing? Only an impasse, I suspect, a conceptual blockage as the mind struggles to comprehend such enormity, one which features human bodies but only in their absence, in their diminishing into the massed numbers at hand.

What if we were to work with smaller numbers: take Iraq for instance. If over a million Iraqis and others are dead because of this war (as the UK-based Opinion Research Business estimated in January 2008[1]), or 95,412-104,103, as Iraq Body Count, an organization that scrupulously checks on each death (and thus suggests itself that its numbers probably understate deaths), are we better able to comprehend what that means?[2] Or a much smaller number—is 5344 dead US soldiers a number comprehensible enough for us to, as the colloquialism goes, bend our minds around?[3] Where does the contemplation of these numbers lead us? What byways of thought and syntax allow us to both register such numbers and to incorporate them into a political or human calculus? Or can we only note these numbers without dwelling on them, that is, only register them by reifying them into abstractions insulated from any acts of empathy or imagination that insist on a fundamental continuity between them and us—wherever or whoever the "they" are and wherever or whoever the "us"? (In any case, is it possible to empathise with large numbers of the dead?) Is there anything in these numbers then but the threat that any attempt to enliven them will overwhelm thought itself, will produce an aporia from which the mind can emerge only via a detour into indifference?

So far we speak only of the dead, dispersed into statistics, as we begin to think about their power to shape our ideas of difference and of ourselves. We need to factor in dislocations of an equally massive volume—millions of people wrenched from the contexts they know of as home and transported into slavery and indentured labour in lands far away; millions of others moved by economic opportunity or despair, yet others forced away from land and place by the dictates of states or local powers. And what of those forced to stay, denied a desired mobility and possibility by borders, provinces, nations? Does not such sequestration precipitate modes of being and of

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understanding as circumscribed by political circumstance as those that follow upon mass death or dislocation? If the record of mass violence in the twentieth century is at the same time a record of the self-interest that motivates groups, states and nations, then its social and cultural import is comprehensive enough for it to become one of the defining axes of modernity itself, and of the making of individuals and collectivities across the globe. The insistent use of, and more general knowledge about, techniques of mass destruction—from weapons to crematoria to work camps—produces a steady drumbeat of death and deprivation against which those who live define themselves, either in triumph or in abject fear, or more likely via a combination of feelings: "There but for the grace of . . . (and you can fill in the blank here—my religion, my class, my gender, my race) go I."

In our accounts of self-making, both psychoanalytic and materialist conceptions have emphasised the mirror-circuits of alterity, the process in which the self achieves definition in an engaged intimacy, a particular identification, with that which is not the self (the other). Appropriately, gender, race, class and sexuality have been the analytical foci that trace the precipitation of individual and collective identities, and which make clear the ways in which we live in difference. There are of course other axes of self-definition, nation and religion being the most prominent. Similarly, in thinking of the place of violence on a mass scale in the making of the modern world, we might want to make visible its power to mould identities and behaviour. The stories we tell of the destruction of societies or peoples, or the everyday sense we have of mass death and demolition in our own moment, are crucial to the psychic and cultural determinants of our subjectivity. Here, the operations of alterity might be understood as the mirror-play of self and statistical others, those who, in the past or in the present, are subject to mass violence. Shadowing the experiential difficulties enforced by the power of national, class, gender, racial, and sexual differences lies another modality of difference, one that sets existence itself against the deathly record of those subject to mass violence.

This is perhaps an odd preamble to an essay entitled "Three Literary Meditations on the Problem of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Postcolonial India," except that I wish to suggest that it is precisely such memories of orchestrated mass violence that inform literary articulations of the urgencies and difficulties of Hindu-Muslim relations in India (I should state that my focus will be on avowedly secular representations of the causes and effects of such violence). In practice, such secular, determinedly non-partisan writing does not much explore what we might style the benevolent forms of secular ideology. Literary texts rarely remain content to explore the lived possibilities of the socio-cultural ideal that is "Sarvadharma sambhav," the unofficial credo of Indian constitutionalism. Rather, these literary texts derive their creative energies from an often fearful engagement with the miseries precipitated by communal violence. While there is no gainsaying the power of individual acts of violence to disrupt lives and everyday rhythms, the civilian and state forms of mass violence have the capacity not only to dislocate and to destroy, but to fundamentally alienate entire communities from the land and labour that historical practice had made their own. In so far as who we are is so often a product of where we come from and whether or not we have an unquestionable right to claim that space as home, the aftershocks of communal violence shake not only lives but community memories, just as surely as they render unstable community futures.

This concern with alienated belonging informs the three literary texts I read here: a novel by Amitav Ghosh, a short story by Swayam Prakash, and a poem by Agha Shahid Ali, all of which grapple with the power of sustained or occasional episodes of violence on the subcontinent to forge national or subnational identities. Each text features a different form of violence: Ghosh's novel contemplates riots; Prakash's story points to the damage done to an individual by a staged quarrel and a beating, when it is made clear that the beating is a pointed message designed to enforce social and religious subordination; Shahid Ali's poem is an impassioned lover's lament for a syncretic cultural and psychic existence destroyed by militant activism and state-sponsored violence.

I will begin with a gripping moment in Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines*: the narrator, a boy in Calcutta, is one of several terrified schoolboys cowering in their school bus as it careens away from a mob of rioters. The day is January 10, 1964, and trouble on the streets has caused their school to be shut down early, and now the bus, on the route home, comes under attack. In the face of rioters, the bus driver abandons his route and drives to safety, but the boys no longer know where they are, and the narrator's fear extends to all around him: "The streets had turned themselves inside out: our city had turned against us."[4] What follows is an extraordinary passage, a meditation on fear that is dense with psychological, cultural and geo-political insight:

> That particular fear has a texture you can neither forget nor describe. It is like the fear of the victims of an earthquake, of people who have lost faith in the stillness of the earth. And yet it is not the same. It is without analogy, for it is not comparable

> to the fear of nature, which is the most universal of human fears, nor to the fear of the violence of the state, which is the commonest of modern fears. It is a fear that comes of the knowledge that normalcy is utterly contingent, that the spaces that surround one, the streets that one inhabits, can become, suddenly and without warning, as hostile as a desert in a flash flood. It is this that sets apart the thousand million people who inhabit the subcontinent from the rest of the world—not language, not food, not music—it is the special quality of loneliness that grows out of the fear of the war between oneself and one's image in the mirror. (204)

For those familiar with the novel, or indeed with the subcontinent, it will be clear that this riot—the war between oneself and one's image in the mirror—is one between Hindus and Muslims. In this section of the novel, Ghosh points to many instances of mirroring: the riots that break out in Calcutta, pitting the majority Hindu community against the Muslim minority echo anti-Hindu riots in Khulna and Dhaka in Muslim-majority East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Each of these riots is sparked by events in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, 1200 miles away, but the simultaneous effect they have in Calcutta and Dhaka—cities in two different nations—confirm just how closely these cities remain bound to each other. In 1947, maps drawn to enforce the partition of British India into the independent nations of Pakistan and India divided colonial Bengal into two parts, ostensibly to free each part into separate national sovereignties. But in 1964, in their common response to events elsewhere, Calcutta and Dhaka seem to the narrator to be "inverted image(s) of the other, locked into an irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set us free—our looking-glass border" (233).

Ghosh's novel explores many of the paradoxes of modern state-formation, and the role of violence and trauma within it, touched upon here, particularly those exemplified in the creation of Pakistan and India in 1947 (and of Bangladesh in 1971). But before I move on to those paradoxes, I want to call attention to another passage in the novel in which the narrator meditates upon the "logic" of a riot, or rather, of rioting as an ironic assertion of people's collectivity:

> the madness of a riot is a pathological inversion, but also therefore a reminder, of that indivisible sanity that binds people to each other independently of their governments. And that prior, independent relationship is the natural enemy of government, for it is in the logic of states that to exist at all they must claim the monopoly of all relationships between peoples.
>
> The theatre of war, where generals meet, is the stage on which states disport themselves: they have no use for memories of riots. (230)

This is, to me, a breath-taking formulation: riots as perverse, inverted reminders of the bonds of people independent of the government, prior that is, to the mediation of the apparatus of the modern state. In this reading, a Hindu-Muslim riot in Calcutta or Dhaka is violence that, rather than deny collectivity, in fact confirms commonality; this idea returns us to the notion of the "looking-glass" divide—the violent enactment of difference that confirms only similarity.

The sheer counter-intuitive power of Ghosh's formulation should not cause us to forget, however, that riots are experienced, and for the most part understood, as orchestrated, directed, motivated violence. Social scientists and journalists who have studied and reported on the recurring riots that have been a feature of life in the subcontinent have produced compelling analyses of the ways in which riots, like pogroms, are sanctioned, prepared for, and otherwise made part of larger political and socio-economic agendas. The model of the riot that emerges is less that of the conflagration sparked-off by a carelessly thrown match as that of the deliberate stock-piling of flammable materials in wait for the opportune moment when a lit match can do the most damage.[5] Riots are often occasions when lands and properties can be annexed, business competitors destroyed, minority or lower-caste populations "taught a lesson" or reminded of their subordination, or a polarized political climate created so that caste or religion-based 'voting blocs' can emerge in democratic elections that follow. Riots, that is, are instrumental and purposive; it is another matter that they are uncontrolled, unpredictable and cannot be calibrated. Often, the state is not exempt from the partisan deployment of violence that marks riots; the state and its various organs of public security—the police and the judiciary—do after all represent the accrued, institutionalized authority of social and economic elites, and act in the perceived best interests of these elites.

Ghosh's phrasing does not of course suggest that riots just happen or are incomprehensible as social phenomena; he does however emphasize that the riots he writes about, and perhaps riots in the subcontinent more generally, are imbricated in the modern history of India and Pakistan, and in the making of Indians and Pakistanis, Muslims and Hindus. The specific history that Hindu-Muslim riots repeat messily on the street and in neighborhoods is that which is meant to have been resolved politically in the creation of the independent nations of India and Pakistan. It is also true of course that in spite of, or more likely, because of, this history, crucial subnational and national identities—Hindus and Muslims, Indians and Pakistanis—on the subcontinent seem unable or unwilling to align themselves into the singular existences mandated by Partition.

This thumbnail sketch of political and identitarian complexity might remind us of the powerful reasons why Muslim lives in India are lived under the long shadow of Partition, as it were. Even as Muslims have been enormously successful members of India's political, cultural, military, intellectual, educational, and business elites, Muslims at large are held to be both 'responsible' for Partition and themselves evidence that its equation of religion and homeland represents a failed ideological project (this is true even when there is not accompanying attempt to de-legitimize the sovereign states of Pakistan or Bangladesh). Every right-wing Hindu political party has its own coercive version of the conditions under which Muslim citizens of India must perform their citizenship, whether this is articulated as a benevolent vision of a tolerant Hindu Mother India welcoming all into her embrace or a more forthright and aggressive argument for India as a Hindu Rashtra, home only to those who will live within that ideal. For right-wing Hindu politicians and priests in India, constitutional secularism is a mistaken mandate—that they are in this no different from the theocratic visions of any other form of religious fundamentalism, whether Christian, Muslim, or Jewish, hardly requires saying.

It is important to note here that the Partition of British India is of course understood very differently in Pakistan, not as the end result of a monumental colonial plot, nor as a national tragedy, but in fact as the inauguration and realization of national possibility. Whatever else Hindu right-wing ideologues might say about the culpability of the Muslim League in the making of Partition, they have no theoretical problem with the founding of Pakistan as an Islamic state, putatively home to the Muslims of the subcontinent, precisely because this model of the nation allows them to bolster their claim that India is necessarily the homeland of Hindus. And for many Muslims in India, Partition is kept alive in its fearful local reiterations: each time there is rioting, or police action, against communities of Muslims, or political parties build entire campaigns around efforts to remind Muslims of their subordinate place in India, the events of 1947, and the idea of Pakistan as the Muslim homeland, are invoked. Swayam Prakash's short story "Partition" makes the same point, but does so at the level of an individual, Kurban bhai. Now a shopkeeper in a small northern Indian town, he was a student at the time of Partition and independence. Following upon the decisions of well-known Muslims, with whom he identifies, to stay in India, he struggles to find a livelihood, till by dint of hard work and honesty, he establishes a small shop. He prospers and becomes the center of a culturally secular, syncretic literary community and begins to participate in the civic life of the town. This charmed circle is disrupted one day when a Hindu cart-driver, on commission from his employer, a politically-connected lawyer, deliberately stages a fight with him, beats him and calls him, not Kurban bhai, as he is known to all, but "Miyan," converting the term into a pointed insult. The police do nothing to help, and the lawyer's political and judicial connections ensure that even Kurban bhai's Hindu friends rally around only weakly.

Kurban Bhai's life is turned upside down, and his thoughts return to the axes of identity and belonging confirmed in Partition that he had denied all his life:

> these people consider us to be a liability even though we earn our bread through hard work. Why didn't I migrate to Pakistan? I could have lived in abject poverty without abuses being hurled at me. Shame on me! Shame on my existence! Shame on such a life! Allah! Ya Allah![6]

And later, in anger against not just a history but a nationalist historiography that he now understands to be complacent, he bursts out:

> What rotten stuff do you teach in the name of history? You were saying that Partition happened. Don't talk in the past tense. It's not over yet. It's happening—each moment, each hour. (116)

The story ends with Kurban bhai, now alienated from his literary friends, joining other Muslims in Friday prayer. Accompanying this conclusion is the author's appeal to his reader: "The ending of this story is not a happy one," he writes. "I do not want you to read it. But if you read it through, please consider whether the story could have read differently. A good ending? If yes, how? (116).

The appeal Swayam Prakash, the author of the story and a Hindu, makes to his readers is one that is reiterated in a variety of secular media in India: how do well-meaning Hindu and Muslim citizens arrive at a happy or "good ending" to stories of shared but easily polarized lives? This is not simply a matter of good will and noble intentions, of making sure that bullying Hindu lawyers and politicians do not play the religion card against Muslims whose public presence they find unacceptable. This short story allows us to understand some of the historical and ideological difficulties that frame Muslim lives in India, and which complicate an avowedly secular and humanist text like this one. The story makes clear that the reason Kurban bhai begins to bother both aggressive Hindus and some of his fellow Muslims is because of the company he keeps: "lecturers, professors, journalists," all attracted to his store because it had become a "venue for discussions and debates" (112). He stops attending Friday prayers, though he keeps up his contributions to the madarsa, and then begins to attend

political meetings, which leads "his Muslim brethren" to warn him that "Politics in not meant for us. . . . If you want us to live in peace, don't get embroiled in these matters. . . . Now, if we have to live here, what's the point of messing around . . . ?" (114).

For the unnamed narrator of the story, who is one of those "lecturers, professors, journalists," Kurban bhai's road to civic participation and political belonging comes via a shared literary culture, one that moves him away from the parochial rituals of faith and into an engagement with the composite culture around him. But equally, in the imagination of the story, the only recourse Kurban bhai has after he is insulted and attacked as a Muslim is in the renewed practice of his religion: he returns to his fellow Muslims and to Friday prayer. To be sure, the story does make clear that the lawyer-politician who arranges to humiliate him and deny him judicial redress is powerful enough to make certain that even those who wish to help Kurban bhai can do nothing, and thus reminds us about the crucial role of state apparatuses. Only when Kurban bhai recognizes, as do his friends, that he can expect no support from the police or the judiciary does he give up on his painstaking efforts to rebuild the sense of citizenship and national belonging that had been so traumatically disrupted by the events of Partition. Swayam Prakash's short story insists upon the important role that the state must play in allowing minority citizens their rights; when state institutions are compromised, or worse, when they actively abet majoritarian agendas and help generate a palpable sense that minorities must live on terms dictated by majority interests (often masquerading as "national" interests), then citizens turn to the parochial forms of religion.

That said, it is also clear that the story itself can imagine no denouement other than to return the Muslim subject—the would be political citizen—to an insular religious identity. It is unlikely that a story about a Hindu citizen subject to coercion and humiliation would end with him turning to the rituals of his faith, and even if that was the case, it is entirely unlikely that the narrator of such a story would offer such an ending to his readers as a challenge to the making of the nation, or as an instance of the endlessly repeated traumas of Partition. But here, even in this instance of the secular Indian (and Hindu) imagination, the Muslim citizen is understood as suspended uneasily between public cultural and political participation and an atavistic return to a sectarian identity; alienated from his supposedly progressive friends, denied by the institutions of civic authority, Kurban bhai can only turn to the masjid. Perhaps the questions the author poses to his readers: "The ending of this story is not a happy one. . . . I do not want you to read it. But if you read it through, please consider whether the story could have read differently. A good ending? If yes, how?" mark not just the failure of civic activism but the limits of the secular artistic imagination, which grapples with religious difference but does not always know how quite to escape its polarizing divides.

I began this essay by calling attention to Amitav Ghosh's meditation on the fact that, seventeen years after Partition, an event in Srinagar, in the extreme north of India, causes identical responses in Calcutta and Dhaka, emphasizing links that were meant to be severed by the independence of Pakistan and India. Before 1947, violence between groups mobilized as Hindus and Muslims was understood as internecine; in 1964, riots are still internecine, except that they mirror each other on either side of a national frontier. This legacy of violence in the making of national and subnational identities in India and Pakistan is one—and this will be my last instance of the afterlife of Partition in the subcontinent—that defines the politics and now the culture, of Kashmir. I will not retell here the complicated history that allowed, shortly after Independence, Jammu and Kashmir, a princely state with its own treaty-based relations with colonial Britain, to become a pawn in the larger political and territorial ambitions of India and Pakistan. By the end of 1948, Kashmir was bifurcated—one part to the northwest under the control of Pakistan, which Pakistanis call "Azad (Free) Kashmir" and the Indian government understands as "POK" ("Pakistan Occupied Kashmir); the other, adjoining the provinces of Jammu and Ladakh, part of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmir was and is one of the few administratively defined provinces in India which has a predominantly Muslim majority, and this, put together with the fact that it adjoins Pakistan, makes it the focus of political and military contention. For obvious reasons, Kashmir became important to nationalist self-definition in both Pakistan and India: for the former, a territorially adjacent Muslim-majority province was necessarily a part of a Muslim homeland, for the latter, Kashmir's particular history and culture allowed it to be part of India, and living proof that India is a secular nation.

For a great many Kashmiris, both Hindu and Muslim, their daily lives suggested a mosaic of Islamic and Hindu customs; or perhaps more accurately, folk practices had not been rigidly bifurcated via religious proscriptions of one form or another. Even at the level of religious idiom, Kashmiris (and there are well-known instances of such syncretism elsewhere in India) shared the legacy of several saintly figures: a Sufi teacher, Sheikh Noor-ud-din is Nund Rishi to Hindus, a Hindu religious mystic, Lalleshwari is revered as Lalla Ded (Grandmother Lalla)

throughout the valley, where her spiritual epigrams and aphorisms have become part of everyday speech. Such syncretism itself is of course now held hostage by religious fundamentalism and polarization, and by twenty years of great violence. The last two decades of political despair have resulted in the exodus of most of the Hindus who live in Kashmir (4000 still remain), and the suspension of most democratic processes, even as there is now an "elected" government in place. Sadly, in these years Kashmir has been defined more by violence than by any other feature of collective life—estimates suggest that 70000 people have died, victimized by the army, the local police, the central paramilitary forces, as well as by those militants who fight in their name.

Violence of this magnitude warps people as well as institutions, and leaves little untouched. This is not the place for an accounting of the brutalizing effects of violence in Kashmir, but it is an opportunity to examine—in keeping with the rest of this essay—how a contemporary poet represents the despoiling power of internecine strife in the making and unmaking of Kashmiris. I speak now of Agha Shahid Ali whose wonderful collection of poems *The Country Without a Post Office* (1997) mourns a people and a city bereft. It understands Srinagar as a city under siege, in which life still pulsates towards a different future, but a future which can only be limned in the idiom of poetry. In "A Pastoral" (the future and the past can only be imagined as pastoral) he writes to a Hindu friend:

We shall meet again, in Srinagar,
by the gates of the Villa of Peace,
our hands blossoming into fists
till the soldiers return the keys
and disappear. Again we'll enter
our last world, the first that vanished
in our absence from the broken city.

The poet imagines their return, and writes:

The glass map of our country,

still on the wall, will tear us to lace—
We'll go past our ancestors, up the staircase,
holding their wills against our hearts. Their wish
was we return—forever!—and inherit (Quick, the bird
will say) that to which we belong, not like this—
to get news of our death after the world's.[7]

A glass map as a mirror of forgotten selves renews the past into the future, beyond the blood-letting of the present: this is the historical vision that guides Shahid Ali's poems in this volume. But this poetic hope is not one that informs the volume as a whole. The overwhelming tone is of great sadness, of all that has been lost, of all that cannot perhaps be regained, of lovers that now know each other with a despairing honesty now sharpened into enmity. For instance, in the opening poem, "Farewell," the force of contemporary events transforms the benign and familiar tropology of love songs: the lover-poet pining for his absent beloved, the lover's recognition of the distance that separates them, the lover's sense of his beloved's alienation. Here, the lover-poet mourns, but does so with the awareness that it is not only love that has soured once the beloved has gone—in the absence of the (Hindu) beloved, the state (here the army) has declared open season on all who remain in Srinagar:

At a certain point I lost track of you.
They make a desolation and call it peace.
When you left even the stones were buried:
The defenceless would have no weapons.

The quotation from Tacitus, on the spread of the Pax Romana in Britain—"They make a desolation and call it a peace"—makes a startling link between contemporary Srinagar and the older mode of imperial pacification. This allusion, and a single, brief mention of military power, of the passing of "Army convoys all night like desert caravans," are the only directly political references in the poem. Srinagar now knows the peace of the desert, and only glimmering shadows remind the poet of what once was:

In the lake the arms of temples and mosques are locked
in each other's reflections.

Have you soaked saffron to pour on them when they are
found like this centuries later in this country
I have stitched to your shadow?

These images set the stage for a moving meditation on community and its disruption by one who remains in Srinagar rueful about another who is home no more. We do not hear why the absent beloved leaves; indeed there is nothing to suggest that this absence is not voluntary ("When you left," and "In your absence" are the only two phrases that indicate the absence). Indeed political

references are eschewed in favour of an exploration of personal loss, of the loss of self, as the poet dwells on the dynamic, changing relationship between himself and his lost beloved:

> At a certain point I lost track of you.
> You needed me. You needed to perfect me:
> In your absence you polished me into the Enemy,
> Your history gets in the way of my memory.
> I am everything you lost. You can't forgive me.
> I am everything you lost. Your perfect enemy,
> Your memory gets in the way of my memory:

The stark simplicity of these lines refuses any detail about what constitutes "history" or "memory," but these terms define the modalities of being in the poem. The repetitive, even obsessive circularity of these lines sharpen the paradoxes of melancholic self-constitution forced upon Kashmiris in these times of violence and retribution: the "I" and the "You"—the twin markers of a sundered collectivity—still cleave, no longer as lovers, but, even more closely, as enemies. The poet speaks not only about, but *to*, the absent beloved—who else is there who will hear?

And yet it is the absent one who we are told has "polished" the poet "into the Enemy." This tone of resentment is a reminder that this is not only a poem of romantic loss—though that is its primary idiom—but a poem saturated with the political differences known in Srinagar in the '90s, and one whose paradoxes and ironic turns are sharpened to a fine point. If the absent beloved is in fact the Kashmiri pandit, then their dislocation is here figured as a species of defection, one that robs Kashmiri muslims of community protections against the violence of a sectarian state ("When you left even the stones were buried:/ The defenceless would have no weapons."). Ironically, this enmity itself is figured as a metaphoric extension of past ties, of intertwined memories:

> My memory keeps getting in the way of your history.
> There is nothing to forgive. You won't forgive me.
> I hid my pain even from myself; I revealed my pain only to myself.
> There is nothing to forgive. You can't forgive me.
> If only somehow you could have been mine,
> what would not have been possible in the world?[8]

The declarative sentences in these verses switch subject and object, the "I" and the "You," in trying to stabilize a grammar of the un-broken self. Forgiveness becomes key, both in the poet's plaintive and repeated assertion "There is nothing to forgive" and in his immediate awareness that his beloved will not and cannot forgive. Written in a time when the situation in Kashmir allowed no optimism, this poem, even as it memorializes a syncretic culture and identity, is unable to intuit a synthesis of any kind between its key terms: memory, history, forgiveness, the "I" and the "You." The only closure available is that provided by the terms of elegiac longing: "If only somehow you could have been mine,/ what would not have been possible in the world?" Such longing for a past before violence, before division, before the enforced logic of partitions, seeks to imagine possibilities and identities resistant to the power of mass violence to sculpt modes of being in the world. Its tones and affect—deeply infused with desire, yet despairing—can be fruitfully counterposed to the vexed rationality of Swayam Prakash's question: "The ending of this story is not a happy one". . . . "I do not want you to read it. But if you read it through, please consider whether the story could have read differently. A good ending? If yes, how? (116).

The internal fissures and historical divides within the subcontinent remind us that civil society is a fragile order always under pressure, that it is a compact constantly requiring renewal. Agencies of the state as well as mobilized groups among the civilian population seem only too often to teeter on the brink of violence, seeking reasons to move against a group, a community, a people. On each occasion a particular fear is invoked to justify such actions, that of the enemy without, but, even more compellingly, the enemy "within," the neighbor who is, to all intents and purposes, like any other such neighbor, indeed not unlike oneself, but who must now be the object of great suspicion. This is the paranoia that underlies generalized conditions of personal and collective suspicion, as it does public and state actions in "defence" of the "way of life" or the nation. As we know, the idea of the nation under threat is powerful and fungible, and most often invoked and manipulated to serve interests more local, and more sectarian, than claimed by the idea of the nation itself. Equally, the material and psychic toll of these processes of retributive communal violence plays a disproportionate role in shaping modes of national and subnational being and belonging. Literary texts are the repository of the overlapping and discordant vocabularies of nationalism, communalism, and individual belonging and action. The three I have called attention to here are themselves different—and differently secular—ways of exploring the difficult and

persistent histories of communal violence and dislocation in India. If their idiom is that of dislocation, loss, and polarized being, it is because they know too well the burdens of the past; if they also insist upon the great urgency of reconciliation, it is because they demand of us the need to imagine different futures.

Notes

1. http://www.opinion.co.uk/Newsroom_details.aspx?NewsId=120 (accessed on February 18, 2010).
2. http://www.iraqbodycount.org/ (accessed on February 18, 2010).
3. http://militarytimes.com/valor/index.php (accessed on February 18, 2010).
4. Amitav Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1988, 203.
5. I will not list the great many studies of riots we have available; one powerful reminder of the "structured" nature of riots is *The Delhi Riots: Three Days in the Life of a Nation*, eds. Uma Chakravarti and Nandita Haksar (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1987), which is a record of the anti-Sikh pogrom in Delhi (between November 1 and 3, 1984) that followed upon the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The editors understand these riots to have been instrumental in the "making of a new minority" (the Sikhs) and as a power-play in the consolidation of Congress Party and Hindu-majoritarian politics after the death of Mrs Gandhi.
6. Swayam Prakash, "Partition," trans. A. Asaduddin, in *Image and Representation: Stories of Muslim Lives in India*, eds. Mushirul Hasan and M. Asaduddin, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, 115.
7. Agha Shahid Ali, "A Pastoral," in *A Country Without a Post Office*, New York: Norton, 1997, 44-45.
8. Readers of Momin Khan Momin will recognize Shahid Ali's silent paraphrase of two lines from Momin's "Asar Us Ko Zarā Nahīñ Hotā": "Tum hamāre kisī tarah na hue/ Varna duniya mein kya nahīñ hotā" (available at http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/urdutech/ghazalreader/momin01.html, accessed on March 12, 2010. I am grateful to Rubab Qureshi for this reference.

Storytelling, Writing and the Novel

TABISH KHAIR

"Don't you know you're not supposed to be here?" the British 'Hon. Sec'y' of Gezira Club (Cairo) had barked at Edward Said when, as a boy, Said took a shortcut across the club premises in the assurance that his father was a member of the club.[1] When young Edward began to explain, he was brusquely silenced with the order, "Don't answer back, boy. Just get out, and do it quickly. Arabs aren't allowed here, and you're an Arab!"

This is an almost typical experience of the colonised qua the colonised, and it can be textually encountered in various forms, ranging from the anecdotal (as in the Indian writer R K Narayan's retelling of a school inspector in India who would only accept European examples of geography) to the physically abusive (such as M. K. Gandhi being thrown out of a railway compartment in South Africa). The space of Gezira Club as an Arab-free colonial zone obviously existed more in the minds of people like the 'Hon. Sec'y' and on the paper that such minds spawned. As a place, it was so contiguous with its vicinity that an Arab boy could walk in and out of it, or could do so if not policed by the gaze of the 'Hon. Sec'y'. Talking of Orientalist texts, Said was later to write that "such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe."[2] In some ways, the space of Gezira Club, as experienced by young Edward, was as much the creation of texts and the language of certain mindsets as the various barbwire spaces of Palestine-Israel are today. They were, like what Said described as 'Orientalism' later on, not simply or even necessarily 'wrong'; they were closer to limitations, simplifications and, at times, distortions of the complex possibilities of places. One can argue that much of the oeuvre of Edward Said returns us again and again to this conflict between space and place, and that one of Said's main concerns was the recovery of places while not denying – as some postcolonial theory does – the uses of spatial demarcation (e.g. the Palestinian 'nation-state').

However, 'limitations, simplifications and, at times, distortions' of the complexity of places are not a feature of Orientalism, or even simply imperialism. They are a feature of any dominant discourse. The dominance of a discourse can be measured less by its 'truth-quotient', if there is any such thing, and more by its ability to structure ("explain", "describe", "record") reality in its own terms, as Michel Foucault has indicated in various contexts. This is not to claim that discourses are 'fairy tales', and hence any one is as good or as bad as any other; but it is to underline the base of power on which a dominant discourse depends and at the same time, dialectically if you will, creates.

Today, when 'multicultural' and/or postcolonial literatures have come to be accepted at least in the publishing world and Anglophone academia, a certain relation of 'post-colonial' reality has started assuming the contours of a discourse. Some of it unconsciously shares the enabling discursive elements of Orientalism, as understood by Said: the depiction of the non-European Other in terms of lack or negativity. But even the kinds of literature that do not subscribe, consciously or unconsciously, to such a notion of Otherness have to address the relationship between exoticism and the need/drive to transcend one's own space.

After all, to narrate/read the 'post-colonial' is always to engage with that which is not just 'colonial'; to narrate/read the 'non-European' is always to engage with that which is not just 'European'. The process requires an effort to transcend one's own space, particularly so on the part of the 'Western' or 'Global' readership of postcolonial literatures: this can also be the discursive spaces of a preferred language of writing, as in the case of Anglophone literatures. However, this bid to transcend can very easily lapse into exoticism on the part of the writer, the reader, the critic or all three.

I would like to argue that the two – exoticism and

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'transcendence', so to say – are different and illustrate that with reference to some recent 'postcolonial' fiction. Put simply, exoticism (negative or positive in its connotations) constructs the 'other' space in a way that does not disrupt, inconvenience or question the space of the self. It is this that Graham Huggan, for instance, critiques in his reference to the awards culture of Booker etc., as "prizing otherness." However, the actual Other – irreducible to the self in its alterity, while demanding a response from the self, as Emmanuel Levinas puts it – is occluded, reduced to a negativised/simplified Otherness in such attempts. In this sense 'exoticism' is an easy way out of the problems of 'transcendence', which always calls the self into question. Levinas would add that this calling of the self into question is a necessary condition to the irreducible presence and inescapable recognition of Otherness/alterity. Actually, Levinas goes further: he adds that it is not the self that calls itself into question in the face of the Other; the self is called into question by the Other. But I shall return to this later on.

To begin with, let us look, first, at the privileging of story-telling that is so much a part of postcolonialist orthodoxy and has been accepted by general critics too (who, however, sometimes echo a strand of Orientalism in seeing postcolonial authors as 'story-tellers' rather than 'novelists'). A glance at the blurbs of recent fiction indicates that there is too much storytelling and too little of anything else in the global book market: Monica Ali, Yann Martell, post-Satanic Rushdie, Khaled Hosseini etc. It appears that today the highest compliment critics can pay a novelist is to describe her as a great storyteller. Where would that have left Proust, Joyce or Camus?

Historically speaking, it is doubtful that novelists with intricate 'stories' between their covers were primarily storytellers. Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-2) are not easy to read stories, or even meant to be read simply as stories. In *Dead Souls* (1842), Gogol does not turn the very 'marketable' idea of selling the 'dead' into a thriller or a thigh-slapper. Zola's *The Ladies Paradise* (1883) is not simply an entertaining 'Dallas'. But look at any of the novels being currently placed on the front shelves of the large bookstores, promoted by book clubs, overloaded with advances and awarded prizes like the Booker, and you come across (sometimes excellent) storytelling, and little else. Where are the novels experimenting with narration, style, ideas, conventions, newness? They are being written, but they are not visible – and not winning the Booker either.

There was a time when storytelling needed to be championed. After all, storytelling is the proletariat of novel-writing, just as basic, as essential, as likely to be dismissed by the cerebral classes. And yet an excessive celebration of storytelling is problematic. There are at least two major objections to this predominance of storytelling in the art of novel-writing today: the first one relates to the genre, and the second to the world around it.

To take the generic objection first, at least those of us who write in English have no excuse to ignore the name of the genre. It is true that every once in a while a critic or a novelist tries to define the genre, usually by highlighting one of the many elements that go into it: plot, story, language, characterisation, individualism, print, whatever. But the genre defines itself also in terms of novel-ness: by definition, a novel (at least in English, where it is not a 'roman') is something new. Hence, one can argue that the premium should be not on storytelling – which is an age-old art – or any other component of the novel, but on experimentation and contestation in the novel as a whole.

I am not arguing in favour of newness for the sake of newness. I am aware that the novel grew to strength with the rise of industrial capitalism and that newness remains one of the gods of capitalism. Like all gods, it is capable of much mischief. And yet, to take newness out of the novel – at least as self-aware contestation, re-questioning, experimentation – is to take the novel out of this world.

My other – worldly – objection relates to the ways in which storytelling (unlike the narrative of a novel) operates. Storytelling is a collective art. It depends on large areas of agreement. This is what explains, partly, all those novels by 'coloured' writers that finally tell us about the confusion of Third World immigrants in the West, or about Indian or Muslim women contending against (Eastern) patriarchy in London or New York, thus echoing Orientalist tropes. It is not that such stories do not exist, but they are told more often because that is how 'Western' readers see 'Eastern' women and men. What about other stories – for example, that of Indian women with professional degrees and work experience who marry into the US or Europe and are turned into housewives for years or forever, because their visa do not permit them to work? I know more Eastern women turned into housewives by the 'West' than Eastern women who are being civilised into modernity by contact with the West, but I am still to read about the former in prize-winning novels.

Even promising 'bestsellers', like Ali's *Brick Lane*, Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and Marina Lewycka's *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* display this 'consumerist' bias in favour of stories that are already visible, 'shared' stories. This explains why the stories of *Brick Lane*, published at a time when visa, custom and 'anti-terror' restrictions had begun to impact even on privileged commuters from the East, culminates in this scene: Two

Bangladeshi women, middle-aged immigrants, decide to go skating. But you cannot skate in a sari, says one. Oh yes, you can. You can do anything in England, replies the other.

There is no suggestion of irony in this narrative. And while I will gladly concede that some women can do things in London that they cannot do in, say, Kabul, the fact remains that some women can also do things in Jakarta, Delhi or Karachi that they are not allowed or able to do in London or Copenhagen. Way back in 1987, Ravinder Randhawa, a pioneer of modern South Asian writing in England, had published a hilarious, gendered novel, *A Wicked Old Woman*, playing with exactly these possibilities and prohibitions: its protagonist was an immigrant woman who pretended to be old in order to wrangle more personal space within England. Of course, the novel never became a bestseller.

If literature, as is often claimed, is meant to challenge and question, then it appears that many eulogised recent novels depend on questioning the 'other', not the reading 'self' in the West. *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*, an admirable work of humour in many ways, nevertheless depends of stereotyped perceptions of Communism and the conflict between 'new' and 'old' East Europe. It also offers fair dollops of complacency to us in the West, constantly highlighting the rational, democratic, tolerant aspects of England. Similarly, Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, another promising first novel, does something remarkable – and unnoticed by critics. Praised as a "masterful story" of Afghanistan, it keeps us in Afghanistan until the first years of Soviet control and invasion, then it skips the Mujahideen phase and returns us to Afghanistan only once the Taliban are in place. Would it be possible for a writer to narrate the Mujahideen – those equivalents of the "founding fathers" of America, according to one US president – and still write a bestseller? Or have we become incapable – at least in the supermarkets of literature – of reading novels that make us question our own roles and assumptions, our own complicity in the horrors of the world?

We are increasingly told stories that can be pulled off the shelves of our age's discursive supermarkets and do not have to be retrieved from some remote corner-shop; they are stories that encourage us not to think too much. Perhaps that is why even excellent first novels, like Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, and Booker-winners like Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, tend to be so lenient about nomenclature, mixing up Hindu and Muslim names with no narrative justification, not even that of the 'unreliable narrator' claimed by Rushdie when critics accused his *Midnight's Children* of historical errors. After all, what's in a name, as long as the brand – in these two cases 'India' – is apt?

What is 'an interesting story': something 'all of us' find 'interesting' or 'share'? By these supermarket standards, Proust's stories were not worth telling, and Joyce was not capable of telling his stories well. Come to think of it, even Shakespeare, though not a novelist, hardly ever told an original story or told it 'well': consider Hamlet, that moronic ditherer!

Interestingly, such is the hold of 'storytelling' on global and postcolonial writing that even highly intelligent writers fail to see its implications. For instance, Arundhati Roy *The God of Small Things*, a Booker winner and an excellent first novel, was obviously written (and read) as championing small stories, submerged secrets, repressed memories, subaltern experiences. This was stressed not only by the title of the novel and its structure and narratives but also, very clearly, by an apt quotation from John Berger right at the start: "Never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one." But then, in its unconscious kowtowing to the myth of storytelling, it goes on to contain lines like this one:

> It didn't matter that the story had begun, because kathakali discovered long ago that the secret of the Great Stories is that they *have* no secrets. The Great Stories are the ones you have heard and want to hear again. The ones you can enter anywhere and inhabit comfortably. They don't deceive you with thrills and trick endings. They don't surprise you with the unforeseen. That are familiar as the house you live inÖIn the Great Stories you know who lives, who dies, who finds love, who doesn't. And yet you want to know again.[3]

There is something deeply and disturbingly contradictory in a novelistic discourse that begins with the Berger quotation – with its deep suspicion of meta narratives – and then goes on to celebrate storytelling, because it is seen as oral and subaltern, quite unconscious of the fact that it is also highly hegemonic. After all, the kathakali act replays one of the two main epics of Hinduism in this case, and a story that works because its endings etc are known is above all hegemonic. In fact, as I have argued, for a narrative to be celebrated as storytelling, it has to draw upon hegemonic and dominant narrative strands and tropes. If it draws upon 'lesser' or 'subaltern' ones, it will not be heard or read as a 'great story.'

In the 'postcolonial' context, this means that certain aspects of colonial narratives are repeated again and again, consciously or not, with or without irony. Some I have already listed. But there are others: for instance, the centrality of the colonial bridge. Again and again – in different ways from Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* to Roy's *The God of Small Things*, the postcolonial novel returns to the cultural bridge of colonisation, Anglophone colonisation in the case of India, at the expense of so many other bridges. Similarly, when it celebrates 'hybridity', it

usually sees this hybridity in Anglophone terms: hence, an Indian who speaks English is a hybrid, but a Tamil who speaks Marathi is largely left un-narrated in his specificity (or even implicitly reduced to a kind of mono-cultural denseness). Similarly, there is often an undue stress on 'English' as a language, almost (as in Jeet Thayil's excellent poetry collection, *English*) the only "nation" available to the writer. The celebration of 'creoles' complicates but does not change this equation, as the creoles being celebrated are always English-based (in the Anglophone context), and hence return us to the fecundity myth of colonisation. This leaves out the condition of other kinds of postcolonial writers, whose relationship to English is different. In all these cases the *'space'* of discourses (also those contained in a particular language) tends to push into a specific *place* of enunciation in such a way as to make the *place* visible in terms that reduce its alterity – either by making it transparent or by making it exotic (that is, 'different' but only in terms permitted by the dominant discourses, in the sense in which Ziauddin Sardar talks about the "double victimisation" of Pocahontas in the successful Disney animation film).

The problem, it appears, has to do with negotiating similarity and difference. Writing across cultures, which have already been narrated by Orientalism and associated colonial discourses, post-colonial authors can either copy or reverse the narratives of the past. This is more so if what is required or expected of them is 'great storytelling': the registers of 'greatness' in 'storytelling' are already over-determined by the past. Both options, however, lead to a privileging of the colonial bridge, a re-usage of Orientalist narratives. Both are ways in which 'exoticism' – a construction of the Other by the self – returns in the garb of a postcolonial narrative. Such a return might question the 'Other', but it does not question the 'self': for instance, one can argue that Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* is a *great* (and greatly disturbing) novel for readers from a Muslim background, but it is a largely soft and comfortable one for most non-Muslim Western readers. As stated earlier, exoticism constructs the 'Other' space in a way that does not really disrupt, inconvenience or question the place of the self, or does not do so to the same extent.

On the other hand, perhaps, the attempt to transcend the self, even when it echoes some exotic narratives, can be used to bounce back from the space of otherness to question the self. Perhaps that is why a text like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), despite its colonial connotations and despite the prevalence of 'universal' readings that it elicits, is not a soft text.[4] For it does not just tell a 'great story'; it gets all tangled up in its attempt to tell and not to tell the stories that could not be told then, the stories that became just a civilised lie of imperialism. It does not manage to present the half-visible, but it does – unlike soft fiction – record the deeply disturbing existence of that which was "not supposed to be here." It does not just use language as something transparent, which it never is, but as something whose limits have to be pressed beyond what it says to what it does not say and sometimes cannot say.

Notes

1. Edward Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir*. London: Granta Books, 2000 (1999). p.44.
2. Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. London: Penguin Books, 1995 (1978). p. 94.
3. Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*. London: Harper Collins, 1997, p.229.
4. I have borrowed the term 'soft fiction' (as implicitly opposed to 'hard fiction') from the French writer and critic, Dr Sebastien Doubinsky.

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Aspects of Culture, Religion and Art in the Hill Societies of the North East

SHASHI JOSHI

Much before one can speak of the art of the North East and its relation to religion it is imperative to deconstruct the very terms, the 'North-East', 'art' and 'religion'. Above all the category of 'tribe' that leads to a hierarchy of evaluation in the cultural realm needs unpacking.

The disciplines of history, sociology and anthropology in India are predominantly the inheritance of western concepts and categories. The very term North-East is a misnomer: a glossing over the separate states with their varied characters. Each state has its identity and unique set of issues.

The notion of the 'tribe' is equally problematic: it began with the basic distinction of the knower (the colonial state and anthropologists) and the known (the tribal other). The former claimed the exclusive monopoly of power and rational faculty of knowledge to represent the tribal 'other' in an authentic, accurate, and legitimate manner. The most common way of constructing the tribal 'other' was to counter-pose the 'civilized' and 'cultured' to the 'wild', 'savage' and 'barbaric' tribals. Furer-Haimendorf actually titled a book as "Himalayan Barbary". Thus the category of tribe was constructed by the colonial state to subsume societal diversities for administrative and political expediency through the process of enumeration and classification.

Just as the question "Can the Subaltern Speak ?" is an ironic comment on those who claimed to speak on behalf of the subalterns, the question of "Can the 'tribal' speak?" is finally being answered by the so-called 'tribals' themselves. Whether the beliefs, arts and artefacts of the 'tribe' are celebrated for their beauty or placed low in the hierarchy as the 'lesser' decorative arts, the human agency of the tribal 'other' is denied. The material objects of the people become part of museums as exotic productions of the 'other' while the prescription of better integration and management by the state from colonial times till today reinforces the view of the 'tribals' as backward people. The 'law and order' approach pushes artistic pursuits to the margins as Art in life requires ease with one's life-world and a sense of self-esteem.

The Indian state since 1947, despite seeking to appear as concerned with ground realities and empathetic to the people's sentiments has retained much of the colonial politico-administrative edifice and reproduces certain discursive practices. Consequently, it continues to shape and condition the politics of 'tribal' identities.

It has been argued that this was the trend set by Verrier Elwin's studies and his privileging the integration role of the state.1 Though, it must be said that while Elwin used the term 'tribe' in his academic writing, his relationship with the north-eastern people won him affection and respect. For him the various people living in these parts were Nagas, Manipuris, Khasis or Mishimis and so on, not 'tribes' in the anthropological sense. As he wrote in the introduction to his anthology on the Nagas: "My main interest, as it always has been, was in people. . . ."[2]

Religion is again another problematic term and not at all an apt description for many belief systems that exist in the Indian sub-continent not to speak of the states in this region. The concept of religion has doctrinal implications and scriptures in the western sense of the term that hardly describes the world-views and cosmic conceptions of many practices that abound in the entire country.

The hill societies of the North East had a rich oral tradition of cosmography and creation myths. For instance the *Ahom Buranji* opens with a creation myth that presents a cosmological view of the Tai-Ahom world. The Ahom creator had a pair of golden spiders to erect eight pillars in eight corners of the earth. The spiders connected the Ahom mountains by a rope to a pillar on Mount Meru of Hindu mythology. As the spiders labored on the connective web, the Ahom Buranji reads, "They

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went quickly backward and forward, like a woman in her looms".[3] The fabric of the Ahom universe was interwoven by the webs of Tai-Ahom and Hindu myths.

And this is the significant fact about art and culture – it is never static and adapts itself to cultural encounters between various people and societies. Old cosmologies dissolve and new cognitive cultural maps evolve. A telling example of this evolution is demonstrated by a local informant who described the Lushai life-world to a colonial official in the early years of the twentieth century. His was a hybrid depiction of the soul's journey beyond the grave in Lushai cosmography. In pre-Christian Lushai worldview, the passage to afterlife was the monopoly of *Pu Pawla*. After missionary contact, *Isua* – Jesus also found place on the route map to provide security for the newly opened highway to the Christian village. Amidst changes, as Imperial Surveyors opened new routes in the Lushai hills, the dead people's village (mithikhua) still remained intact. The dreaded *Pu Pawla* was replaced by *Seitana* or Satan, an equally dreaded figure.[4]

Thus different ways of seeing the world are often fused and a hybrid culture emerges. Art and lifestyles reflect this hybridity (the work of a Naga artist, Temsuyanger Longkumer, bears witness to this cultural process.) For art is not constituted by the objects of material culture though it is expressed in their creation and crafting; it is quintessentially ways of seeing and living that are expressed in the aesthetic pursuits of a people, whether in objects or in festivals and rituals.[5]

An excellent example of how religious conversion is not an obliteration of people's culture but a negotiation and accommodation that spawns new interpretations of reconciliation between earlier belief systems and new doctrines is to be found in the way Ao Christian scholars appropriate their past and how they legitimize their traditional beliefs in the light of Christianity. The Ao beliefs were not constricted by rituals alone but were the very basis of their existence. As O. Alem writes: "The Ao Nagas do not have a proper word for religion . . . To them religion means, living in spontaneous awareness of, an encounter with, acknowledgement of, and obedience to the active reality of the presence of God, 'the wholly other'".[6] Thus, Christian theologians attempt to find ways in which the Christian message with its dependence on written texts is made compatible with the Ao worldview.[7] For example, there is the Ao myth about Lijaba, one of the functional names of God as the word derives from the concept of world maker. There are several Ao myths which identify Lijaba's pivotal place in Ao religion and the concept of God and ecology, the Supreme Being's relationship to human beings and creation are interwoven together. Christian theologians draw important theological significance from the story of Lijaba in consonance with the Christian idea of incarnation of God in the form of man: "The Lijaba's visit to earth corresponds in some degree with the incarnate Christ and His surpassing act or revelation of truth".[8]

In the interpretation of Ao Christian theologians every Ao symbol, every Ao reference to the divine and supernatural is made compatible with Christianity. Christian meaning is read into all expressions of ancient belief. As Imchen says, "Ceremonies, rites and sacrifices are the carriers of tradition and medium of religious expression. Ceremonies make individuals conscious of themselves as a group affirming their belief in common symbols."[9]

Most importantly, the north-eastern region has a triple heritage of belief systems and practices: the various shades of Buddhist, Hindu and Christian faiths. Besides the Hindus and Buddhists Christianity is a major force with 70% of the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos having accepted the faith while Nagaland, is a Christian majority society at 87.47 % of the people.[10] As a scholar puts it, "The North East represents a sort of ethnological transition zone between India and neighbouring China, Tibet, Burma and Bangladesh."[11] All these facets require critical reflection from the diverse disciplinary and methodological horizons of scholars on the study of the interface of art and culture with religions in its broadest sense.

"Tribal" Art

The colony of India confronted European revulsion to its indigenous art as the western critics saw it as a 'monstrosity' both, because of the differing criteria of beauty and the role of the erotic in ancient 'Indian' art. The term 'ancient Indian' is, of course, an aesthetic of a male high culture that streamlined diversity by ignoring marginal traditions in India just as the classical canon of dominant western art marginalized art in the colonies.

Non-European art – in Asia and Africa generally – and in India particularly, defied all concepts laid down by European artists and art historians. The western canon, which purported itself to be universal was, of course, culturally determined by western history as all literary and artistic productions intrinsically are.[12]

Similarly, the derogatory term of 'savage' was invariably used for 'tribal'[13] art and took no cognizance of the unique traditions with its own cultural rules that the people of various tribes possessed. By the time that Elwin engaged himself with art in the North-East the term 'savage' – the Johnsonian term of contempt for the inhabitants of the South Seas - had been eased out from

the vocabulary of the Western world. And yet, the anthropological term of 'primitive' art was still current for the African and Native American arts. For the arts of the North-East scorn and criticism was according to Elwin, still widely prevalent. He quoted various European anthropologists to show that they spoke of an "utter lack of an artistic sense in the tribes on this frontier" and dismissed their ideas of art as "limited to elementary patterns on the loom and to the rough conventional designs which were generally imitations of imports from Tibet."[14]

Elwin was deeply annoyed at the terminology of referring to 'backward tribes' which were to be 'uplifted', as this was in common currency in India during his time. "Naturally therefore 'psychological demoralization' results from contact with the outside world', said Elwin, and "a sense of inferiority in the face of the commercial products of 'civilization'". Consequently, he continued, "people hide their own products . . . and girls in entrancing dress and ornaments drape themselves completely in white bed-sheets from the shops in order to look modern."[15] He rued the fact that some Mishmi girls covered their own beautifully designed blouses with jackets of black mill cloth and turned their exquisitely woven garments into inner-wear and substituted their gorgeous ornaments with cheap plastic hairclips and ear-rings.[16]

The sense of inferiority that Elwin spoke of in the North-East was equally true of the whole of India as a matter of fact. All those who had anything to do with producing, consuming, and appreciating art began to disown their own art as 'low' and occidental orientations were at a premium. The impact of westernization on Indian artists has been studied by Partha Mitter.[17] There were critical and hostile commentaries on Asian-so called Oriental- arts and cultures including what was labelled 'tribal' culture and this led to the valorization of the colonized people's 'own' remembered or imagined past. This was one side of the story.

The process of self-denunciation of Indian art and the adoption and internalization of colonial and Christian puritanical concepts of art was the other part of the story. In regard to the arts of the North-East an insensitive and boorish attitude was expressed by most Indians who encountered tribal life, society and religion. It was this that Elwin set out to rectify by sensitizing the country to the unique qualities of the North-East by embedding its artistic tradition in its broad cultural history, and the social and cultural contexts of its religion.

As late as 2001, Mitter remarked upon the curious silence in Indian art history about the rich treasure of tribal art among art historians. He writes: "Their arts, as part of social rituals, have an ephemeral character and are therefore considered to be merely functional."18 Thus they are treated as the sole preserve of anthropologists.

The European Renaissance established a hierarchy of the arts in which the applied arts – regarded as the 'minor arts', which Elwin often referred to as "utilitarian", were seen to be inferior to the fine arts such as sculpture and painting. Such an evaluation is also prevalent in Indian society, and it reflects the position of the tribal people which despite all special policies is nowhere near the top of the art ladder. Yet the spectacular range of artistic production in the North-East epitomise a sense of rhythm and structure, animation and stylization that Gombrich has emphasized in the decorative arts.[19]

Dominant Hindu society over millennia was a source of pressure upon the tribes to conform to its classical canon in all spheres including that of art. Yet, until the colonial period most of the tribes were able to preserve their own artistic traditions. From the 19th century however, land was increasingly exploited for economic ends and the term 'tribes' came into usage as part of an overall Raj strategy of political control.[20] In the 1940s, Verrier Elwin drew attention to the rich but rapidly disappearing art of tribal India. By 1947-48 Elwin was the leading sociologist-anthropologist and policy maker for the North-East with the full backing of Nehru's government.

Elwin tried to be fair and even-handed in his commentaries on religion's impact on the people's natural genius in the domain of art and living cultures. However, both he and Nehru finally found only Buddhism acceptable to them. Elwin very early in his study of tribal art expressed discomfort and even chagrin with evangelical Christianity. He was equally, if not more, angrily critical of the Hindu attitude towards the tribal culture.

Tribal religion in the North-East as everywhere else in Elwin's view is "associated with a social ethic that unites the people. Religion also lends its sanction to the origin of the arts". Most myths of origin attributed artistic pursuits to women to whom they were said to have been revealed. For example the Sun-Moon God revealed the art of weaving to the women of the Boris tribe of Siang; or the revelation came from Nature as a divine force and the spider weaving its web was the source from which the women learnt how to weave. Men too learnt from the spider's web to span rivers with suspension bridges of cane. Similarly, the Kaman Mishmis believed that the origin of the art of weaving was when their God taught it to a young girl – and she became the first weaver in the tribe.

All the sociological writing on the North-East in which

Elwin described the beliefs and practices, the taboos and traditions of the various people of the region are not to be understood as 'superstitions' – which is another damning term – but can be seen as enmeshed in a world view and a comprehensive belief system that governs life and death and the world beyond this one. To call it 'religion' in the western sense of doctrinal faith would be a misnomer for it is a way of life that seeks its specific way of comprehending life on the earth and its relation to the cosmos. When these beliefs and world view weakens the art weakens too. Elwin was highly critical of the influence of missionaries as he saw it as "highly destructive of folk art that was closely associated with "pagan" ideas. Thus Elwin argued the people's love of colour and beauty, the tasteful objects they crafted and clothes that were woven, the epiphany of song and dance – all were intrinsic to their way of life and were the treasures he sought to encourage and preserve.[21]

Finally, we must also take note of the young who belong to the people here but want to look forward and not get trapped in a time warp of nostalgia. They think that it is 'outsiders' with a romantic view of the special culture of these societies with the self-view of being the last bulwark against full-scale commercialization and loss of traditional values.

As one of them writes, "Anthropologists observed the disappearance of 'authentic traditional culture' with disgust, often pointing their anger towards colonialism and modernity. However, this model is no longer formative in contemporary research objectives. This view promulgated the notion that any revival of culture would inevitably be less 'authentic', due to the 'initial loss'. For example, travellers to Nagaland express that they want to capture the 'real culture' of the Nagas before it gives way to change. It must be stressed that while Naga culture has definitely evolved, is it less real than, say, a hundred years ago?"[22]

The critique of anthropological methods of the 1970s and 80s observe how cultural criticism in the 21st century must address the challenge to "cultural homogeneous nation-states; transnational communication and visual media in new modalities, which arguably are effecting transitions as profound in modes of rationality and cognition as those earlier from orality to literacy; and the new technosciences, which provide both novel technologies affecting masses of people as well as new concepts and metaphors for the way we act in the world."[23]

Notes

1. Kham Khan Suan, 'Politics of Identities in the Language of the 'Tribe', Unpublished paper, p.2.
2. Verrier Elwin, ed., *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century,* OUP, 1969.
3. *Ahom Buranji,* translated into English by Golap Chandra Barua, ed.1930 (reprinted 1985), Guwahati, Assam:Spectrum Publications, p.2.
4. J.Shakespear, *The Lushai-Kuki Clans,* London :Macmillan & Co, 1912, p.62.
5. A good example of the metamorphosis and yet continued symbolism of a culture can be seen in the description of the Hornbill Festival of Nagaland. (Circulated paper, by Arkotong Longkumer, The Hornbill Festival: Cultural Representation and consumption amongst the Nagas of Nagaland.)
6. O. Alem Ao, Tsungremology, Ao Naga Christian Theology, CTC, Aolijen, Mokukchung, 1994, p.2.
7. Lanusangla Tzudir, 'Representing Traditional Ao Naga Religion in the Christian Present', Unpublished paper.
8. Panger Imchen, *Ancient Ao Naga Religion and Culture,* New Delhi: Har Anand Publication, 1993, p. 172.
9. Ibid. p.10.
10. A.N.M. Irshad Ali and Indranoshee Das, *Studiesof Tribes and Tribals,* 1(2): 141-148
11. Ibid. p.142.
12. Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European reactions to Indian Art,* Oxford, 1977.
13. The label of 'tribal' also needs to be problematised as the aesthetic of the art practiced were denigrated as 'tribal' as opposed to 'civilized'.
14. Verrier Elwin, *The Art of the North-East Frontier of India,*(Henceforth *ANEF*) North-East Frontier Agency, Shillong, 1959, Introduction, p.1.
15. Ibid. p.11.
16. Ibid.,p.12.
17. Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922:Occidental Orientations,* Oxford, 1994.
18. Partha Mitter, *Indian Art : Oxford History of Art,* OUP, 2001, *p. 157.*
19. E.H. Gombrich, *A Sense of Order,* London, 1979, p.12.
20. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization,* Minneapolis, 1996.
21. Elwin, *ANEF,* p.12.
22. Arkotong Longkumer, op cit. p.4.
23. Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique:An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences,* The University of Chicago Press,1999, p.xvi.

Book Reviews

Bob van der Linden, *Moral languages from Colonial Punjab: The Singh Sabha, Arya Samaj and Ahmadiyahs* New Delhi: Manohar: New Delhi, 2008, Pp. 268, Rs 670.00, ISBN 81-7304-759-6

The monograph under review is undoubtedly one of the best few to appear so far on the social and intellectual history of Punjab covering a crucial period of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is the time when interface between the western and 'Indian' ideas, what Bob van der Linden calls 'the interaction between two dynamic civilizations: the regional one and the British imported version of European civilization' (p. 19), reaches a critical point when the three religious traditions (the author prefers to use the term 'traditional morality' for 'religion', p. 9), viz., 'Hindu', 'Islam' and 'Sikh', try to come terms with each other in Punjab through what is known as a 'polemical war' between their respective elitist organisations of the Singh Sabha, Arya Samaj and Ahmadiyahs as they also confront aggressive Protestant Christianity to resituate their traditions in the fast changing world under the aegis of 'Pax Britannica' and western hegemony. Despite the book's preoccupation with 'secularism, religion, tradition, the colonial state, public sphere, secularization, religious nationalism' this is 'largely an exercise in historiography' (p. 11). It follows the idea that in 'the newly emerging liberal public sphere, dominant state institutions and practices continuously interacted and competed and often overlapped with' voluntary organizations like Singh Sabha, Arya Samaj, and Ahmadiyahs to evolve a 'modern hierarchical colonial culture' (20-21). To van der Linden 'the important feature of the liberal public sphere in South Asia remains the passionate moral commitment to community and tradition in the context of a powerful centralized representative governmental state' which was an outcome of reform movements' response to the 'British civilizing mission' (22). The author takes the confrontation between indigenous traditions and western science and Christianity as most crucial to modern South Asian history as 'the relationship between social and intellectual history' remains fundamental to this book (27). He argues that the Protestant missionary activity heavily influenced the Punjabi mind and identities as these reformers belonging to three movements came to define themselves through 'moral languages' by creating 'bodies of moral knowledge' (17). The meticulous and careful historian is conscious of Eurocentric pitfall (11) and tries his best to maintain a balance but does not fail to slip, as we should see, as if location and cultural moorings cannot be so easily transcended.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part in two chapters describes the 'social process' of the making of a public sphere in the last quarter of the nineteenth century Punjab under the Pax Britannica. The importance of the contextual background of the British Empire is emphasised as the penetration of the Anglo-Indian colonial state into the rural society left deep impact on the structure of Punjabi society as well as on the minds of its inhabitants. The second part entitled 'the Intellectual Texture' in 4 chapters including 'Conclusion' is focussed on the redefinition of Punjabi traditions through the examples of the Singh Sabha, Arya Samaj, and Ahmadiyah moral languages. The use of western science and rationality by reformers for contesting and competing with the Christian morality did not necessarily meant the complete rejection of the traditional world. Indeed it remained highly patriarchal strengthening the identities of communities in which women had a subordinate position and the traditional authoritative sacred symbols came to be used by the reformers for their political goals.

Van der Linden goes along Harjot Oberoi's argument (in *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 1994) that the religious boundaries in the rural Punjab were extremely fluid as 'standards of behaviour, categories of thought, conceptions of time, notions of purity and impurity and of the sacred and profane were not marked by great differences' (50). But it was the colonial state and

reformers who attacked the popular culture. While the state in Punjab persecuted the freely moving nomads, pedlars and herdsmen in order to control and discipline them the reformers launched their attacks on popular religiosity. Both were engaged in imposing some moral order. Van der Linden makes an interesting observation that in line with the evangelical revivalist movement that sought to advance a notion of muscular Christianity, the British had reached the Punjab as conquerors and rulers in the mid-nineteenth century, not as traders as was the case with the coastal subcontinent (69-70). The church and state together violated the traditional world in Punjab invoking militant response from Punjabi traditions that left behind a 'disturbing legacy for Punjabi society' (75). Since the author does not look closely enough into such earlier linkages, he fails to see the pre-colonial history of such militancy in the very development of the Sikh tradition in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Van der Linden goes into details in chapter 3 how the three reform movements came to enmesh tradition, rationality and reform and argues that the rational organization of knowledge lay at the basis of their moral languages. He is careful not to deny 'rational criticism' in the pre-colonial India but highlights the sharing of values between the rulers and the ruled in making the Anglo-Indian state and liberal public sphere. These values were 'the rational organization of knowledge; the authority of science; criticism of traditional society; education as most significant feature underlying both the British civilizing mission and Indian moral languages; the importance of the human will; and a moral duty towards community and society; modern voluntary institutions and practices; and literal interpretation of scriptures' (133). He situates 'the Singh Sabha, Arya Samaj, and Ahmadiyah moral languages within the complex world of opportunities, constraints and motivations they shared in different degrees with other groups within non-western secularizing traditions' (170). The choice of different vernacular languages in specific scripts, Punjabi in Gurmukhi, Hindi in Devnagari and Urdu in Nastaliq for the writing of the history of one's own community by three movements strengthened the sectarian identities (171). In the chapter entitled 'Community, Government and Social Consciousness', van der Linden discusses how reformers propagated their moral languages that incorporated traditional sacred symbols and patriotisms in a rhetorical fashion to mobilize followers through identity politics. Interesting is his discussion on 'conversion and social mobilization' as conversion by the Christian missionaries became 'pivotal to the stirring of Punjabi minds' (204). The close linkage between conversion and caste was very significant. Here the dalits as untouchables assumed such a significance that had never before been accorded to them. This had forced the Arya Samajis to invent the *shuddhi* movement which in turn became 'a causal factor in the increase of Hindu-Muslim antagonism' (214). In comparison to the West, he argues, 'in South Asia the main feature of the public sphere was not citizenship, rule by law or a distinction between a private and public domain' and that it is only 'electoral politics' that 'became the unchallenged legitimate source of a public sphere' (216).

The comparative perspective van der Linden uses obviously has the strength of illuminating some of the shaded and darker points which remain such if looked from within. And he is even aware of the problems involved while comparing nineteenth century social reform in Punjab with what happened in Europe during the Protestant Reformation and to him the comparison solely remains 'illuminating in contrast' because in the eyes of the stalwart Protestant British, both Catholicism and Hinduism encouraged effeminacy in men'. He picks up, as an instance, 'the British Orientalist myth of Sikhism in decay' in this regard. This is a problem area for him. Since he has not gone to the historical depths of the problematic of 'Sikhism in decay' he takes it as a 'myth' when actually it was 'real'. The reviewer has been able to see this 'reality' of the process of 'Brahmanisation of Sikhism' that set in with the establishment of Ranjit Singh's rule. Moreover, his analogy may not stand the test only if he could be aware that independent of the European Renaissance and Reformation, the Indian subcontinent had its own reformative agenda during the 15th-17th centuries when bhakti and sufi movements, which were anti-Brahmanical and egalitarian in nature, along with economic changes, brought about such social transformation that it resulted in the formation of a new religious tradition in Sikhism.

The second weak point of the book is a heavy reliance on western sources and very little use of a huge body of references available in vernacular languages. One wonders how one can discuss the creation of 'moral languages' without using any native language or linguistic discourse. To give one example, one can just think of the vast material left behind by Giani Ditt Singh, the pillar of the Singh Sabha movement, who was a poet, polemicist, journalist, orator, missionary and writer of about 50 books. One would surely get a different vocabulary, idiom and diction for those ideas. The author is conscious of his vast readership as he winds up his 'conclusion' with a section on the 'Moral Languages in Diaspora and World History' asserting that 'the continuing search for identity confirms the need for moral

languages among Indian migrants after all these years' (235).

Even though the topic under discussion is excitingly promising and Bob van der Linden does a scholarly job at addressing the crucial issues, and his contribution lies in raising the questions with the force of comparative perspective and opening the field for further investigation, one needs the facility for vernacular languages as much as with the European languages to deal with nuances of language and grammar of ideas of the colonized, especially those who rebelled against the mainstream traditions. One hopes the young scholars get motivated by the scholarly vigour of van der Linden. His work is a must read for anyone working on and interested in the social and intellectual history of the subcontinent.

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Mita Biswas, *Representations of a Culture in Indian English Poetry*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced study, 2009. Pp. 255, Rs. 470

It takes a certain kind of courage—and perhaps determination—to offer a book on Indian English poetry that leans towards "representations of a culture." Add to that the playful audacity of the book jacket featuring a cup of richly brewed coffee, enticingly aromatic in the imagination of the beholder. You are "hooked" by this invitation to ponder over a history of poetry never attempted before in quite the same way—chronological but laced with contemporaneity, informative yet narratorial, liberal with quotations but not catalogue-like. In other words, a reader's scepticism about the impossibility of the task at hand dissolves as one turns the pages of Mita Biswas's confident compendium. And while sipping that "virtual" coffee, one muses over the analysis of favourite lines by favoured poets.

Biswas gives a sharp historical account of early Indian English poetry in the works of Henry Derozio, Toru Dutt and Rabindranath Tagore, departing somewhat from a usual criticism that the early poets were dissociated from "mass culture" in India by their belonging to a privileged class. Usefully, Mita Biswas draws attention to the manner in which they sought a "possible union between east and west." (22). Biswas goes on to illustrate successfully that the contrapuntal pull of the English language and the Indian ethos did not, always, work to delink the English poet from his or her "roots". In the case of Derozio there were strong patriotic statements, and Tagore's *Gitanjali* carried the core of his nationalism. It is helpful to be reminded of lines such as the following:

"O! Lovely is my native land
With all its skies of cloudless nights."... (26)
-Henry Derozio

The emotions of an "Indian culture" are expressed in the language of the English educated poet, claims Mita Biswas and it is a point worth pondering over when one discusses form and content in the poetry of "The Pioneers" as she calls them.

However, in her reading of Toru Dutt's *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan,* Mita Biswas repeats an error in interpretation that has become quite common. Biswas and others have upheld this volume of poetry as proof of Toru Dutt's Indianization after her immersion into French, mostly on the basis of Edmund Gosse's prefatorial remarks. Gosse knew too little Indian mythology to be taken seriously on the matter of authenticity in Toru's rendering. In fact, Toru recreates the stories from the memory of her mother's oral narratives; she does not "translate" from a single, known source. Moreover, Toru's personal reflections freely intermingle with the tales. As an example, the opening stanza of the poem titled "Sita" is quoted below:

Three happy children in a darkened room!
What do they gaze on with wide open eyes?
A dense forest, where no sunbeam pries
And in its centre a cleared spot...

Even today readers wonder about these references This is not Sita's story but Toru's, the three children being she, sister Aru and brother Abju. By the time the poem was written the siblings were dead, and Toru the poet is overwhelmed by memories of childhood when familiar myths were narrated at bedtime by their mother, Kshetramohini. Sita is seen through the prism of the Dutt family's experience of ill heath and lost lives. The mythology is personalized and the "culture" that Biswas is seeking lies in the seamless amalgam of the west and the east, the community and the individual. In a postmodern way, one could even call it the "technologies of the self."

The notion of "Indian culture" that this book uses as a rubric should not be homogenized or even confined to the geographical boundaries of the nation state. If the early writers used their English education and elite upbringing as an "approach" to India, their viewpoint had a sustained validity: Tagore, Michael Madhusudan

Dutt, Manmohan Ghose, Sarojini Naidu would be easy examples to cite.

Interestingly, a similar trend is visible once again in diasporic and multilocated poets of the present generation whom Mita Biswas discusses in the later chapter titled "The New Voices"—Agha Shahid Ali, Imtiaz Dharker and Sudeep Sen being prominent examples. What has changed is the idealism of the pre-colonial nation, and the dependency on English poetic forms. Today's writers are deliciously experimental with form as well as language. The angst about "home" or "belonging" has turned into a celebration of willful displacements. The poets are eternal travellers, and interestingly, the "postcard" or the "postmark" are signs that appear in the major works by each of these internationally acclaimed writers. Mita Biswas painstakingly explains the inadequacy of the English word "culture" in comparison with the resonance of some Indian terms: "'Marg' referred to cultures pervading the entire subcontinent horizontally, with the 'desi' being the vertical, local, changing features of one's cultural identity" (178). If one were to add AK Ramanujan's terms "akam" and "puram" and U. R. Ananthamurthy's theories of "*Manyamathu* - House tongue, *Bidimathu* - Street tongue, and *Attarmathu*-Upstairs tongue", the picture of Indian multiculturalism stands firmly validated. Where do the Indian English writers contribute to this brave new world of mixed vocabulary? Sensibly, one should see English as one among the many languages of India and bury the old notion of its "foreign" and "western" identity. Mita Biswas's liberal quotations from poems carry home this conviction.

Biswas however separates two categories of "new poets" : the women and the gay—a cardinal error of categorization in my view because such labels dilute the more significant matter of new poetry reflecting a global India. Lakshmi Kannan, Sunita Jain, Eunice de Souza are positioning the woman's perspective but the context is not just the woman's world. As a parallel, when Hoshang Merchant begins his frank note with the words "As everyone knows by now, I, homosexual." (212), he is reflecting on the social censure rather than his personal choice. The "new voices" in this chapter (and many cited here are mature writers and not "new") are bound by the common thread of breaking traditional taboos and cruising into new territories of language and theme. The point is adequately made and illustrated. Sadly , many "new voices" of the millennium have not found admittance in Biswas' repertoire: Temsula Ao, Jeet Thayil, Priya Surukkai Chabria, Mamang Dai, Desmond L. Kharmawphlang and Robin S. Ngangom to name just a few at the risk of leaving unnamed many other gifted poets one hears periodically.

The transition from Mita Biswas's account of "The Pioneers" to "The New Voices" is made through "The Moderns" as she calls them. In this chapter one will find many familiar names, the poets whose well-thumbed volumes we turned over while sipping coffee, meditating on life's puzzles, soothing a disappointment or simply savouring the play of the English language. Nissim Ezekiel, Jayanta Mahapatra, AK Ramanujan, Arun Koltkar, Keki N. Daruwalla, Kamala Das, Dom Moraes, Eunice de Souza, Saleem Peeradina—are so many witnesses to the troubled emotions of the 1960s-1980s when, in Biswas's terms, Indian culture was in a state of flux. The idealism of the pioneering poets had dissolved into the disenchanted reality of post independent India. Transitions, often painful and bewildering were bringing unexpected developments everywhere. The poets had captured the invisible tensions of the changing, evolving, self contradicting nation grappling with identity formation.

Among those wonderful poets who touched the chords of a troubled society, Keki N. Daruwalla has a long history of enduring poetic excellence. Biswas reminds us of his first volume *Under Orion* (1970) and the later award wining collection *The Keeper of the Dead* (1982). Poet, historian, anthologist, short story writer, and recently, a novelist (*For Pepper and Christ*, 2009), Daruwalla's consummate art lies in his rich imagery and his meticulous attention to the rhythms of the English language. Ezekiel and Kolatkar and a few others will be remembered for crafting the language anew but several others will just remain the exponents of a culture but not innovators in poetry. On the whole, "the Moderns" traversed a "double journey", says Mita Biswas, one of exploring the self, the other of an ironic incursion into social change.

Let me conclude with a few general observations about the virtues of Biswas's book. As a critical study of Indian English poetry, it is a timely piece of research that sets out information in a systematic manner. While teachers and students would find it useful, critics of cultural studies may question its chronological order, categories and the assumption that Indian English poetry is guided by a determinable "culture". Nonetheless, my admiration for the book remains unstinted. Only after the foundational material is known can the nuances be teased apart. This thoughtful and sound assessment of Indian English poetry deserves a venerable place in English Studies in India.

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Asha Sarangi, ed., *Language and Politics in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009, Pp. xvi+431, hb. Rs.795.

Next only to religion, language has caused loss of more lives, property and man-hours than any other issue in India. Close to a hundred lives were lost in one day in Madras in mid-1960s when police fired upon rioting anti-Hindi protesters[1]. Since and before then, similar incidents have recurred in Tamil Nadu and in other places.

Language & Politics in India (henceforth mentioned as *LPI)* is a must-read for scholars interested in the formation of India as a nation. It is a collection of already published eleven articles preceded by a 40-page introduction. There are articles on the language of and in the Constitution; languages in Kashmir, U P, Bihar; on the language of rural versus urban elite; on the demise of languages; on the reorganization of states; on language movements; on the big cities' confusion between local loyalties and global ambitions; and, on the emergence of a popular language for cinema, but its absence in radio and television.

One wishes that the book had articles on the fate of "Three-language formula", language in education, etc. In that sense, the book is not exhaustive. Yet it shows why and how language has been a stumbling block in the emergence of India as a strong and united nation.

Even after 62 years of independence, Hindi of the official radio news, the principal channel of broadcast by the government, is seen as a joke[2]. Language of popular Hindi films, on the other hand, has acquired national level comprehensibility. Why this dichotomy? David Lelyveld[3] says they differ because one is "the language of the state" and the other is the "language of the market" (p. 363). The latter made it possible for a film to be produced by a Gujarati producer in Bombay, starring a Bengali hero and a Tamilian heroine, both speaking Hindustani dialogue written by a Punjabi" (p. 364).

Not so for radio. Language controversy there is quite old. Several committees and individuals tried to find a nationally acceptable non-English language for official broadcasts. In 1938, Lionel Fielden, the British chief of AIR, invited Rajendra Prasad, Abul Kalam Azad, Zakir Husain, Tara Chand, Abdul Haq, and Narendra Dev, three Hindu and three Muslim leaders, to speak on the subject. The issue moved no closer to resolution. Another chief of AIR, Ahmadshah Bokhari Patras, got two literary figures from Lahore, Sachchidanand Hiranand Vatsyayan 'Agyeya" and C H Hasrat, to make an 8,000 word dictionary that would constitute the vocabulary of broadcast Hindustani. But Muslim League rubbished its work. After partition, AIR could not resist being named Akashvani in Hindi; neither could it shed a Sanskritised Hindi comprehensible to few. A special Urdu service was ordered for the Muslims.

This pattern has repeated itself with unerring deviation. Granville Austin's article "Language and the Constitution: The Half- Hearted Compromise" shows how India lost a historic opportunity to forge a cohesive nation out of warring ethnic and regional groups. Members of the Constituent Assembly failed to see, Austin says, that "India was . . . a land of linguistic minorities, where no one language was spoken by a majority of the population. . ." (p.68). As a result of this insensitivity, no matter how many times and how many committees or sub-committees Constituent Assembly members met in, they could not lay aside their partisan agenda and could not think of the good of the nation. Finally, Hindi in Devanagari script was made the official language with a provision to replace English in the next fifteen years.

Such attitudes rendered many languages a death blow. Even those with centuries old literary traditions were given short shrift. Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Braj, Coorgi, Dogari, Konkani, Ladakhi, Maithili, Magahi, Rajasthani, Tulu, etc were reduced to the position of dialects of another language. Maithili, with a far older history of written literature than Hindi's, was declared a dialect of Hindi4. Similarly, Tulu, with an old literary tradition, became a dialect of Kannada.

Linguistic reorganization of states did not help either, though Schwartzberg claims that that is one issue that has been successfully resolved5. Some major regional languages, of course, consolidated and extended their territories, but most others were condemned to a second class status in their own home. No local language in Bihar and Eastern U P was a language any longer. In spite of a rich linguistic diversity in Jammu & Kashmir, Urdu, without a native speaker in the state, was made its official language6. People of Ladakh, speaking Ladakhi or Bodhi, could more easily have learnt Chinese. Urdu was made the second official language in U P and Bihar, causing communal riots[7]. Some languages lost the homogeneity of their speech communities. Sindhi came to be written in two scripts, Santhali in three, and Konkani in four. Many scripts, such as Kaithi, Modi, Sancheti, Tirhuta or Mithilakshara no longer had any users. Local languages in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, North-Eastern States and in the Himalayas, in particular in J & K and Himachal Pradesh, had few users and fewer learners. Anvita Abbi says all of these languages are endangered now[8].

Language has always served as a force in creating group identities. Politicians have, therefore, exploited language issues to promote their agenda. Many North

Indian politicians have promoted the cause of Hindi/ Urdu, against English, while doing all within their powers to kill the local language movements. Sonntag and Sheth show how imposition of Urdu/Hindi in Bihar, J & K, and U P has adversely affected the local languages[9].

Though there is no specific article on this subject, the language riots of the mid-1960s began in Delhi and other cities of the North India, when mobs supporting Hindi began blackening signboards and number plates on motor vehicles, etc. It had more violent reactions in the South. It changed the temper of many of the otherwise liberal cities. Bombay was reminded of its Maratha roots and was changed into Mumbai, Calcutta to Kolkata, Madras to Chennai, Bangalore to Bengaluru, Trivandrum to Thiruvananthapuram, etc. Many other cities also took new spelling of their names. Many people, not so clever as their leaders, died supporting such superficial agenda. Tamil Nadu still pays monthly pension to its "language martyrs".

In the North, there is little opposition to English today. But in the South, the feeling of regional loyalty, woken up once, grew with time. Janaki Nayar's article presents an account of this confusion in Bangalore, considered today the BPO centre of the world, and yet mired in parochial politics[10].

A national language has been considered essential for a nation. This is how most nations emerged during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries in Europe. Sanskrit was seen as that language for India. But there were those that pressed for English, Persian or even Hindustani. Sumati Ramasamy's article tells the story of the restoration of Sanskrit to the status of national language[11]. Sanskrit Commission, created in 1955-56, made several suggestions for the use of Sanskrit, as national language, or official language, or additional official language, etc. "Sanskrit was spoken by so few", the Official Language Commission remarked, "that any suggestion to make it the national medium for communication" would amount to "mere escapism".

Finally, Sanskrit was listed among languages in the Eighth Schedule. Its words appeared in the monograms of government organizations. News broadcasts began to be made in Sanskrit. It appeared on the curriculum of Central Board of Secondary Education and on those of many state boards. Besides, the government of India created Sanskrit Advisory Committee and Central Sanskrit Institute, etc. Sanskrit staged a come back at the national level even without an official status.

Interestingly, only one contributor to the volume is a linguist, others are either political scientists or historians of modern India. *LPI* has some factual inaccuracies. Richard Burghart, for instance, is cited as saying that "calling oneself a Maithil is to denote being a Maithil Brahman"[12]. I wonder if Lal Das, who wrote *Mithila Bhasha Ramayan,* and many other non-Brahmin poets and writers of Maithili today would agree with this observation, or if all the non-Brahmin parliamentarians from Mithilanchal who pressed for inclusion of Maithili in the Eighth Schedule would do so. It is true that more Brahmins than others have written in Maithili, but that is true of many other modern Indian languages.

Ramaswamy says Sanskrit had "essentially functioned as a prestigious language of high ritual, scholasticism, and elite culture. . ." (p.105). This may not be the whole truth. Sanskrit has functioned as the link language from the remote islands of the Philippines to the cities on the Nile. Buddhists still used it as the preferred language of discourse, though Buddha gave it no special status. Even Muhammad Ghori's first coins and some of the early mosques in India had inscriptions in Sanskrit. . . .

Similarly, the demand for the creation of new states has not ended yet, though the book claims otherwise (p. 180). Speakers of Maithili and Bodo, and those in Western U P are demanding creation of linguistic states. Since these articles were written, three new states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand, all of them using Hindi as their official language, have been created. People in Telengana of the Andhra Pradesh region are asking for another state for themselves. Yet, regardless of these minor lapses, the book is a good record of contemporary documents and debates on linguistic issues in India.

Notes

1. Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "The Riots in Tamilnad: Problems and Prospects of India's Language Crisis" *Asian Survey*, Vol. 5, No. 8 (Aug., 1965), pp. 399-407.
2. The following became a standard joke in the 1970s against the kind of language used in the A.I.R. news bulletins in Hindi: "ab samaachaar mein Hindi suniye," "Now listen to Hindi in the news." Lachman M Khubchandani, "Language Demography and Language in Education" in C. J. Daswani, ed., *Language Education in Multilingual India* (2001), New Delhi: UNESCO, p.43
3. David Lelyveld, "Talking the National Language : Hindi/ Urdu/Hindustani in Indian Broadcasting and Cinema", pp.351-67
4. See Shreesh Chaudhary, *Foreigners and Foreign Languages: A Sociolinguistic History* (2009), New Delhi: Cambridge University Press/Foundation Books, pp. 130-235.
5. Joseph E. Schwartzberg, "Factors in the Linguistic Reorganization of Indian States," in *LPI*, p.182.
6. K. Warikoo, "Language and Politics in Jammu & Kashmir : Issues & Perspectives" in *LPI*, pp. 243-266.

7. Selma K Sonntag, "The Political Saliency of Language in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh," in *LPI*, pp. 221-242.
8. Anvita Abbi, "Vanishing Diversities and Submerging Identities : An Indian Case" in *LPI*, pp. 299-311 Also see Rajaram Mehrotra,"Endangered Languages in India" in *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (1999), p. 140.
9. D. L. Sheth, "The Great Language Debate" in *LPI*, pp. 267-297. Selma K. Sonntag, "The Political Saliency of Language in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh" in *LPI*, pp. 221-242.
10. Janaki Nayar, "Language and the Right to the City", in *LPI*, pp. 368-415.
11. "Sanskrit for the Nation" in *LPI*, pp. 93-138.
12. *LPI*, p.7.
13. See Shreesh Chaudhary, *Foreigners and Foreign Languages: A Sociolinguistic History*, p.166. See also , Syed Asad Ali (2000) *Influence of Islam on Hindi Literature*, (2000), Delhi : Idarah-e-Adabiyat – e – Delli, p.13.

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In Memoriam
Meenakshi Mukherjee (1937 – 2009)

SATISH C. AIKANT

The Day: 17 September 2009. Venue: India International Centre, New Delhi. The occasion was the launch and a panel discussion on Meenakshi Mukherjee's latest book *A Man for all Seasons: The Many Lives of R. C. Dutt*, an intellectual biography of historian Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909). In a tragic irony the event turned out to be a memorial service for Meenakshi Mukherjee. Romila Thapar, Sudhir Chandra, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya and Harish Trivedi did address the work but ended up paying warm tributes to her. A day earlier while on her way to Delhi for the book launch she succumbed to a massive heart attack at the Hyderabad airport. The tragic news that quickly spread shocked and benumbed her friends, admirers and former students the world over. She was 72. Howsoever one may resist using clichés there is perhaps no other word to describe the loss which has left a huge 'void' in the lives touched by her. She had been feeling distraught and lonely after the death of her equally distinguished husband Sujit Mukherjee, some years ago, but had pulled herself together and transmuted her grief into profound scholarly outpouring.

How does one describe, succinctly, the variegated life and concerns of Meenakshi Mukherjee? She was an academic, a teacher, cultural critic, translator, and a builder of institutions with lasting impact. Her first major work *The Twice-Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of the Indian English Fiction* (1971) was one of the earliest attempts to come to terms with Indian Writing in English as a literary phenomenon, which set the critical agenda for literary studies in India. Along with K. R. Srinivas Iyengar and C. D. Narasimhaiah she helped consolidate the discipline which would make room for literatures from Indian languages. It was an earnest appeal to open up the canon and expand the literary space. To begin with it was a lonely crusade amidst resistance from smug and stiff English departments. But the subsequent diversification of English studies over the years vindicated her prescience. She always felt that the rich literatures in various Indian languages needed the attention of scholars and readers, and that the Indian Writing in English could not be separated from the contexts in which it had been created and canonized. Therefore she pleaded for translations of texts from Indian languages into English. She was the founder editor of a quarterly journal *Vagartha* (1973-1979), which published Indian literature in translation.

Her book *Realism and Reality: the Novel and Society in India* (1985) explores conceptual frameworks for reading texts in Indian languages. It is a comprehensive study of the currents of Indian literature emerging through complex patterns of culture and society in India. *Interrogating Post-Colonialism: Theory, Text and Context*, which she co-edited with Harish Trivedi, and was published by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, in 1996 (rpt. 2000, 2006), looked at the field of postcolonial studies from diverse perspectives and locations. Her book *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English* won her the Sahitya Akademi award in 2003. *Elusive Terrain: Culture and Literary Memory* (2008) is lovingly dedicated to the memory of Sujit Mukherjee 'who always read the first draft.' She also wrote in Bangla and her book *Upanyase Ateet: Itihas o Kalpa-itihas* (2003) looks at the use of history and imagined history in fiction.

Prior to joining Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, where she had her longest teaching spell, Meenakshi Mukherjee taught in Patna, Pune and Hyderabad. She had been a visiting professor in several universities outside India, including University of Texas at Austin, University of Chicago, University of California at Berkeley, Macquarie University, University of Canberra and Flinders University. In 2007-08 she was a Fellow of the Institute of Advanced Study, Berlin. She was the International Chairperson of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS) in 2001-2004 and the Chairperson of its Indian chapter (IACLALS) in 1993-2005. It was at her initiative that the ACLALS triennial conference was organized in Hyderabad in 2004 attended by academic stalwarts such

as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Aijaz Ahmad and Ashish Nandy.

I had the good fortune of meeting Meenakshi Mukherjeee at various seminars and at social occasions, and found her most accessible. When I was working on a Festchrift for the late Professor C. D. Narasimhaih she readily agreed to contribute to the volume. She was, indeed, a formidable scholar, but never forbidding, when one approached her for any counsel. Her humility, elegance in simplicity, and unpretentious behaviour are a rarity to come by. Yet she was also quick to deflate overbearing egos. One recalls her brush with author Vikram Chandra who she charged with 'exoticising' the East for the consumption of a primarily western audience. But she harboured no rancour in her heart. She was a quintessential intellectual, except that she would not have liked using the word 'intellectual' for herself. She has bequeathed us a rich legacy through which we shall cherish her memories.