



Cross-Fertilizing Roots and Routes

Identities, Social Creativity,
Cultural Regeneration
and Planetary Realizations

Edited by
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*For Swami Shri Gyanswaroop Sanand (G.D. Agarwal), S. Jeyapragasam,
Navjyoti Singh, Sumoni Jhodia and Medha Patkar*

*Dedicated and Creative nurturer of many cross-fertilizing pathways
of roots and routes*

FOREWORD

Cross-Fertilizing Roots and Routes refuses to look at locally rooted ethnicity, and mutation and transformation of such ethnicity in an ever narrowing world, as antithetical categories and prisoners of a politics and culture of violence, power mongering and hostage taking. Ananta Kumar Giri, the editor of the volume, has posed ethnicity as a cross border zone for a confluence of roots and routes, hosting a politics and culture of hospitality, and trans local, planetary realizations. He has explored the possibility of cross-fertilization and cognitive permeability of roots and routes, and ceaseless transmutation of one into the other through transversal communication, pregnant with compassion. In his cosmopoesis, it is possible to be at home in exile and remain rooted en route, and to make the unfamiliar familiar, far near. In this border crossing project, ethnification may well become a route to inclusion and mondialization rather than exclusion and violence. Tradition and modernity need not remain domains, hermetically closed to each other, but meet in open dialogue, for innovative journeys, to be undertaken together, to a radiant future. It is possible for human beings to undertake such a cross border movement, as Piet Strydom argues in his essay in the book, by drawing on their biologically evolved first nature, capable of perceiving the whole, for dealing with the fragmentation and conflict, burgeoning in their second, socially conditioned nature. This is a feasible venture, as suggested in the essay of Marcus Bussey in the volume, because of a growing self awareness in the cosmic reality about its essential and primordial indivisibility

in the midst of diversity, a self awareness attained through an evolution from photo synthesis, through logo synthesis, to theo synthesis. The mystical Sufi, *Vachana*, Baul tradition has crossed borders by undertaking a journey to a Utopia, using symbols to break through barriers of understanding between the phenomenal and the noumenal, sacred and profane, which separate the root from the route. This approach to border crossing abjures the idealistic Hegelian position of one root and one route, and proposes a multiplicity of roots and routes, which nevertheless are interconnected, being simultaneously implicated in several time places or space times of pluriverses and multiverses. Once the temporality of space and spatiality of time is acknowledged, the local and trans local can be in conversation, instead of being in collision. The monogenic colonial and the hybrid post colonial, instead of being locked in intransigent opposition to each other, as absolute, universal entities, as subject and object, can evolve a co creative relationship. In such miscegenation, the mirror neuronal empathy of one person feeling like the other, a neo humanist, holistic perception of human and non human categories relating to one another, come together. Such transversal communication transcending boundaries, à la Giri, as Zazie Bowen tells us in her essay, helps overcome the conflict of primordial rootedness and constructed situational nodes of movement on routes, caused by self idolatry and subjugation–domination relations. In this communication, the identities are no longer fixed and rooted in a state of being, but are in a dynamic flux, ceaselessly mutating, transforming and in a state of becoming. This process of decentering beyond the point of origin, is demonstrated by a performance of hyphenated identities, assumed or ascribed, in transgendered bodies, digital avatars or human genome projects. Such performed, creative identities, moving away from the centre, partake of the character of a verb rather than a noun, to speak after Giri. For Giri, this walk across borders is perilous and full of terror and bliss but incredibly fecund and needs to be undertaken with humility and zest.

The fundamental question to be addressed with regard to the above quest is whether border crossing has been undertaken in the interest of the communities of the planet earth, and if not, what is the role of transversal communication or planetary realizations to promote the interest of humanity. Truly speaking, unlike employment seekers, ecological refugees or violently displaced immigrants, a minority of the post industrial, knowledge intensive, ideology producing predatory states and false associations or *granfalloon*s, have not only been crossing but also

violating the borders provided by nature and culture constantly. They have acquired a major competitive advantage with the internationalization of production and consumption, banking, financial, insurance, real estate services, transport and telecommunications, 24 hour global trading in securities, de-territorialization of cultures. They have shifted manufacturing industries to lower labour cost areas in third world cities, forcing them to perform back office functions in low rise factories. They have transformed the older booty capitalism of mercantilist expansion to a later capitalist invasion of mines, plantations and infrastructural industries.¹ They have been radically simplifying and subjecting the complex processes of nature to assembly line production, for easy packaging and marketing, ignoring the rhythm of eco biomes. They are destroying the security, provided by a variety of nature's yields in food, medicine, tuber, roots, greens, vegetables, obtained from multi tier forestry and poly culture in agriculture. They are crossing borders defined by nature to create input intensive, transgenic products through mono culture. Thereby, they are destroying the option for the people at large to fall back on alternatives in case of a blight in a natural or manmade calamity. They have created a relation of proto Colonial exchange. In this exchange, there is no equal to and fro movement along the route. Instead, there is an unequal flow of knowledge and resources between the Global North and the Global South, and, within the South, between the urban and the rural, the hills and the plains. There is no independence to buy and sell between the core buyers in the capital rich countries and the periphery sellers of raw material. The production of raw material is being imposed as a compulsion and it is not being taken as a free decision.

Simultaneously, these border crossers have created a Society of Spectacle driven by the Consciousness Industry and harnessed it to their corporate interests. The tidal bore of information is obliterating borders of ethnicity. It has trivialized and reduced culture to an epiphenomenon of structures, with rationality regarding means, irrationality with reference to the ends of human existence. Opposition to the imperialism of instrumental reason is being misinterpreted now as Luddite technophobia. People and human relations are being treated as objectifiable processes, and autonomous moral objectors are being treated as unstable. Capital has expanded into mass media to produce images as products rather than accessories to the promotion of products. In consequence, the psychic is being merged in the economic. Language and signs are being distanced further and further from their referents. Exchange value is being divorced

from use value and the worker is being alienated from the fruits of his labour. The information highway is infested with insurmountable borders of electronic toll barriers, dividing the integrated and connected few and the isolated and unconnected many. With information flowing from and to everyone in all directions, the dichotomy of the sender and the receiver has been dissolved, creating a world internally integrated, but closed against all comers, including people of the book and the screen. Surveillance states and agencies have been invading private spaces. The financialization of the globe has uprooted and reduced the community knowledge custodians to native informants along the route of knowledge production and transmission. They are playing a subordinate role in an alien script and carrying an unsolicited collective responsibility to service a post Industrial economy, instead of possessing rights to a share of its proceeds. They are being objectified and occluded by the international regime of digital and intellectual control. Instead of being represented, they are re-represented. They have been domesticated into the willed autobiography of the West, or, of its neo colonial, corporate agents, masquerading as disinterested history. The native community informants are being reconstituted, for epistemic exploitation, across the indivisible borders, in the Age of Informatics. After the ensuing bio cultural holocaust, they are being disfranchised to be reduced to objects in trans national cultural studies.²

The global community, united by greed, which has steered this neo colonial expansion has assumed the hegemonic position of actor, spectator, judge and jury. It has taken over the task of articulating and completing the many ethnic communities across the world, whom it treats as unregenerate, lifeless, lacking appropriate speech, representing a superseded stage in history.³ The source text of colonized cultures is being devoured along the route in the target texts of represented cultures, foisted by the colonizer community, through interpretations and readings, on the original context of ethnic communities. The ethnic and linguistic minorities, the aged, young and unemployed are being excluded from signification by the colonizer community through the repressive operation of the economy of the sign, in a procession of simulacra. The violence involved in this global operation has been compounded by violence, incited by the state, by dividing ethnic communities in artificial racial, denominational and sectarian categories, external to human essence. Shias and Kurds in Iraq, Bahai in Iran, Maronites in Labanon, Copts in Egypt, democratic idealists in the Arab world, Inuit or Sami in the Arctic, Tuareg

nomads in the Sahara, indigenous tribes in sub Saharan Africa, Oceania, North or Latin America, Australia, have been persecuted or marginalized by the majority of the invading minority of settlers. In North America, the tribes have been systematically dispossessed by the U.S Bureau of Indian Affairs through dispersal and attachment to other communities and usurpation of their land. Even the tribal in post independence India, despite being treated as a privileged category in the Constitution, unlike these indigenous groups, has been systematically deprived of his ecological and territorial identity in state sponsored industrialization. He/she is facing an ecological rather than biological extinction. Along the route taken by the leaders of the global economy and states, values of guardianship, invitation and obligation to ancestors, posterity and spirit, associated with community roots in forests and hills, have been systematically disparaged and destroyed. In the Intellectual Property Right discourse carried across the neo colonial routes by these invasive forces, the connection maintained by ethnic communities among intellectual, physical, natural and spiritual elements, in their creative ideas and expressions, has been eroded. Along with this, the ecological knowledge and languages of biomes lived and practiced by them has perished, giving way to abstract classifications and inappropriate applications.⁴ The mega developmentalist, corporate assault to mine forests, grab land, capture waters, destroy languages of local communities has incited them to fight. In India, the Sardari fight for the roots, *Mool ki larai*, in the early nineteenth century, Kol insurrection in the late nineteenth century, Birsait movement for recovering ancestral tenurial system of *Khuntkatti* and *Manki Munda*, the Santhal *Hul* and Gunda Dhur's *Bhumkal* in late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the continuing Santhal, Chuar, Kol, Ho, Oraon and Munda struggle to preserve the psychic world of deities personifying nature and presiding over Gandha Mardan or Niyamgiri hills in Odisha or the Damin-i-koh in Chota Nagpur and Jungle Mahal, have brought into focus the conflict between the homologic manner of knowing and harvesting the nutritive, therapeutic and generative forces of nature and the hegemonic manner of exploiting them.⁵ This illustrates the violence discussed in the present volume (Giri), in crossing border for establishing subjugation domination relationships.

The transversal communication across ethnic divides has to address and combat this inexorable movement towards homogenization of seeds, crops and organisms, extinction of species, end of birth, death of death,

loss of languages and destruction of habitats, by propagating a multiplicity of roots and routes, specific to different hill sides and sun shines. The task of border crossers, in such a situation, is to turn globalization on its head, to move from globalization from the top to globalization from below, to cater to the bottom rather than the apex of the demographic pyramid. This stupendous task cannot, however, be accomplished without refreshing the perennial roots of a sound philosophy of cooperative, life sustaining and life enhancing partnership, to counter the ephemeral success of the destructive philosophy of predatory, exploitative globalization.

This volume has offered this counter philosophy. In his introductory essay, Giri has made a plea for a movement from the politics and culture of hostage taking to the politics and culture of hospitality; from an obsession with *svadhharma* or one's own occupational and functional niches, to *sahadhurma* or a collaborative journey of diverse ethnic groups, with different roots, along a shared route, to a common goal of well being and bounty. The movement is proposed from ethnicity as violent self assertion of power, to ethnicity as a cross border zone for local and trans local interaction. A planetary realization has been projected, in perceptive commentaries on this proposal, for catalyzing cognitive fluidity, permeability, transmutation of roots into routes, using cosmopoesis, compassion and transversal communication. The feasibility of this project has been examined, in a many dimensioned discourse for improving the human condition, by being at home in exile, relating to the world at home, moving from closure to openness, exclusion to inclusion, linearity to multi linearity, singularity to plurality.

This discourse is a counter argument to the propagation of the objective validity of pure subjectivity that has accompanied the Europeanization of the planet over the last 300 years. The Subject has been seen as the *Ego Cogito* of Descartes, the Monad of Leibniz, Transcendental Ego of Kant, the Absolute Spirit of Hegel, *Homo Economicus* of Marx, Freedom of Schelling. The theme of the progressive self realization of the Subject has been appropriated by the Westernizing man as the Subject of History, conceptualizing, representing, objectifying the life of beings, through technological progress. As against this entelechy of the technological civilization, charged with an absolute telos to proceed to the truth, a contrary tradition has been nurtured, in consonance with the theme of this volume, of proceeding from what has been thought, to what is yet to be thought. It has been pointed out that Europe itself has been

left behind along the route by the Europeanization of the planet, initiated by it, and it requires the help of non European, specially, the Indian traditions, to exorcise its own internal otherness and recover its sanity. The original unity of being and thought has been described as *dasein* or de distancing from the world. This unity has been broken through the withdrawal of the being from the Being. The unity can be recovered only by repossessing the mutuality of the being and the Being, through a journey backwards to the mighty and uncanny beginning of the tradition, for a journey forwards to its recapitulation and recreation. The journey can be undertaken not merely by travelling along the Silk, Spice, Nomadic, Slave, Maritime, Steppe or Buddhist routes of the past, but by building, dwelling and thinking through the pristine, non conceptual, non representational tradition of thought. This becomes possible only by moving from the concept of knowing and believing, which constructs an unknowing and non-believing other, to the concept of understanding and letting the other be. Thereby, a hermeneutic of a Global We is substituted for that of the Self and the Other. A fusion of horizons results from the circular, hermeneutic movement between the past and present, part and whole, Occident and Orient, Subject and Object, Self and the Other. The human being then gets carried by a historical movement, as both Subject and Object, engaged in no mere reproduction but creative production, of transforming the past into a greater future. It is possible to take this route for winning back, refreshing and regenerating the roots, the way closest to recovery of self hood being also the longest way back.⁶

Such a philosophy for border crossing is rational and in harmony with the laws of nature. In the world conceived as a living organism, there is a ceaseless cross border communication and fusion. The thermohaline current chugs around the globe from North Atlantic, like a giant conveyer belt, taking thousand years to travel the route, storing memories of weather and temperature that may surface long later to cause atmospheric changes. Coiled in the human cell, the DNA double helix string contains three billion chemical bases on which genes are located, like discrete cities along major highways, storing and transmitting information to maintain and duplicate life. Matter and energy mutate and transform into each other, because of the matter wave nature of the quantum particle, creating uncertainty. Virtual cross border relationships are being created along a cyber space connected by information super highways. Affective computing is enabling artificial intelligence to read biological clues and recognize emotions. There is an ongoing overlap of organic biotech with

inorganic silicon infotech. The route is being charted from a micro to a cell based, biologic or bionomic world, lines being blurred between living things and computers. The electro dynamic model of energy transmission with impulses generating centres, relay points, increments and losses in transit and resistances and transformations in the circuit has been compared with the history of things in time. The linguistic and cultural variations in mythology, folklore, arts and sciences of humanity have sprouted all over the world as parallel and coordinate phenomena, like a forest fire in its leaping action, bringing unconnected centres into blazing activity, rather than as part of diffusion of a slow, glacial and cumulative drift.⁷ The early days of under communication among ethnic communities in the world have been fecund in producing variations. Despite such apparent variations, the elements of human creativity have converged to make a meaningful whole, like a shared patrimony. These could be read, not like a novel or a news paper article, line after line, left to right, but like an orchestral score, as a whole page, rather than stave after stave.⁸ The convergence of media, ease of communication and the glut of information are being used today by a few to homogenize human culture and society, and, at the same time, to create insuperable barriers of understanding among ethnic communities. It is possible, to use the same means of communication, to reverse this engulfing tide of divisive misinformation and recreate a shared, interethnic, global conversation and strategy of resistance and recuperation. This can help in the recovery of the holistic language of yore, addressed to the shared, bio neurological essence of humanity, and banish the shadow of suicidal nihilism, stalking humanity.

In Indian philosophy, shared by different persuasions, the foundation for such a holistic language and conversation has already been laid. The journey from the roots through the routes and back has been seen as a closely integrated process, replicated in the pneumatic human body and the universe; in philosophical formulations about the relation of the parts with the whole; in creative arts, psychic processes of rectification of consciousness; and, in the cyclic flow in elements of creation and procreation. The procession and recession of the spokes of the wheel of order and time, *dharmacakra* and *kālacakra*, from the centre to the felly and back, the evolution and devolution of creation, the expansion and contraction of the universe, the emanation of the soul from and its resolution in the over soul, the to and fro exchange between the micro cosmic individual cell and the macro cosmic world have been seen as analogous in the Vedic *Sūtrātaman* theory, the *Paśupaśāvimokṣaṇa* theory

of Pāśupata Śaivism, the *Piṇḍabrāhmanḍavāda* of medieval *Tantra*. A circular movement from the outer periphery to the centre and back, a psychic ascent and descent of consciousness, to reach the moment of the most rapturous balance, have been sought in *Yoga*, dance, music, architecture and sculpture. In temple designs, which intertwine organic and inorganic forms, a rotary cycle of waters is imagined through a constant flow of sap in the plants, rain in the sky, honey in the flower, milk in the cow, blood and semen in the body. Interpenetration, simultaneity and ambiguity, the fluency of being and becoming is shown as a ceaseless operation in the constant mutation of floral, faunal and geometric forms in Indian art. It emulates the flight of swallows in and out of a barn, as every form is metamorphosed into every other. Classical Indian literature is replete with the theme of a ceaseless journey from parochial obsession with individual and earthly glory, to immersion in supernal consciousness and self oblivion. The struggles and victories, failures and hatreds of a Pyrrhic war culminate in complete renunciation and the final journey of *Mahāprasthāna* in Mahābhārata, and, in the renunciation and self immolation of Sītā in Rāmāyana. In Kalidasa's *Meghadūtam*, the cloud moves from the ephemeral glitter of earthly splendour in *Pūrvamegha* to the imperishable beauty of Alakapuri in *Uttaramegha*. In *Kumārasambhavam*, Pārvatī attains Śiva by undertaking a journey from her beautiful form to her ascetic form. Goethe describes the transition from physical to ethereal union in Kalidasa's *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* in the following words, 'Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms, and the fruit of its decline, Wouldst thou the earth and heaven in one sole single name combine, I name thee O Śakuntalā, and all at once is said'.⁹ In Buddhism, the tree in the Sanchi stupa I pillar symbolically shows ascent from the ground to the summit of contingent being. In *Māradharaṇa*, conquest of Mara, Siddhartha Gautama undertakes the internal journey to Buddhahood, by conquering *rati*, *prīti* and *trṣṇā*, attachment, desire and thirst, in a quantum leap of consciousness, to compress millions of years of human development, in a few years of his life. His journey from *Samsāra* to *Nirvāṇa* is like the way of the bird in the air, leaving no trace, or of 'waters smoothing stone, wind moulding snow drift, pear swelling to one kind of perfection, crystal to another'. He postpones his *Nirvāṇa*, even after attaining *Sambodhi*, to redeem the benighted. He lives close to civilization but not in it, and combines world flux and extinction in his career, suggesting the statement, *yaḥ kleśaḥ sā bodhi, yaḥ samsāraḥ tan nirvāṇam*. 'Enlightenment is through suffering. Liberation is through the world'. In

Yoga, the poisonous waters of *retas* or surging body fluid, are purged, to inundate the body with ambrosial essence of waters through *tapas* or the fire of penance. Analogies have been sought between the therapeutic operation of the systolic and diastolic expansion and contraction of breath, enacted in the body of a Yogi, and the equinoctial and solstitial movements in the universe. A process of *samkoca*, *vikāsa* and *kṣobhana*, expansion and contraction, in an oscillating movement, of *prāṇa*, the life breath, has been intuitively detected in the universe, as radiating into *nāma* and *rūpa*, name and form. Rectification of Soma by Agni, water by fire, in the *Agnisomāya paśu*, the creature made of fire and water, is a process that imitates nature in its own manner of operation. In Sāṅkhya, the process is described as one, described by Patañjali in *Yogasūtra*, of breaking the barriers to let the water into the field, the change in form taking place through infilling of nature, *Jātyaparināmah prakṛtyāpurāt*. This is perceived as a *conincidentum oppositorum*, union of opposites, representing a psycho somatic process in the pneumatic body of the Yogi as well as the universe. Such a coincidence of opposites is seen between *śunya* and *pūrṇa*, *śunya* and *aśunya*, void and plenum, in Vedānta, Nagarjuna's Mādhyamikasūtra, and Algebraic Zero. Brahman in Indian philosophy is undifferentiated, *rasaghana*, a mass of flavour, the pristine stuff of consciousness, which is differentiated through *dhvani*s or audible sound. One and many, immanence and transcendence are not contradictions in terms, but obverse and reverse of the same coin. They underlie *Ṛta*, the ethical order, perceived in the harmony of the spheres, in which elements are held together without coming into collision or breaking up. This is the bivalent truth in *Isāvāṅsyopaniṣad*, *tadejati tannejati, taddure tadan-tike*. That moves, that moves not. That is far, that is near. This anticipates Giri's aspiration to make the far near and unfamiliar familiar. A fusion of noumenal and phenomenal, parts and the whole, beings and the Being is implicit in the back and forth journey from the roots through the routes, in the entire range of Indian philosophy.

The holocaust of the Second World War produced successful experiments in non adversarial relationships among professed enemies during the war. The Franco-German Cultural Council, Foundation for German Polish Cooperation, Czech German Committee of Historians, Polish Russian Commission to investigate the murder of 15,000 Polish officers by Soviets in Katyn in 1940, the post Apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa were some such experiments. However, articulations about the fusion of micro and macro horizons, origins, tracks

and destinations, are found embedded in concepts of indigenous and tribal people, living in close proximity to nature, in hills and forests, extreme and fragile environments, the world over. Their life rhythms are connected with the rhythm of their work in managing natural resources through different seasons; making arts and conducting rituals in festivals and rites of passage; and, with handling self governance and dispute resolution mechanisms. The stalk of the crane, descent of Ancestors and Gods, personified as mountains and rivers, hum of the forest, beat of the drum, pattern of the leaves surrounding them on their route, link them with their roots, names, clans, life here and hereafter. The Nguni Bantu concept of *Ubuntu* in South Africa recognizes the interdependence of all human beings. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, *Ainthinai* or the five fold ecological categorization of the biosphere is based on a ceaseless interaction of nature and culture. The patterns of rock art, painted by healing San trance dancers, are borrowed from patterns of lichen, mud cracks, *kokerboom* (aloe tree) branches, tortoise carapace, strewn over the grasslands. A sacramental and genealogical affiliation and kinship unites the Bushman hunter and the hunted eland. The Cree Canadian concept of *Wakotawin*, the Anata Andina concept of *Ayni*, the Maori concept of *Whenua* speak of the reciprocity and mutuality of nature and culture, people and their land. These provide foundation for spiritual healing and renewal, cleansing and reconciliation, confession and repentance in inter ethnic interaction. In this manner, the indigenous and tribal people relate to their habitat differently from the bio pirates and land sharks who see the community habitat and the subaltern body as objects for mining and exploitation.¹⁰

This volume has unfolded the hermeneutic process of going out to return home. In History of Philosophy, this process unveils the truth, described as *Alatheia* in Greek, *Rta* in the *Vedas* and *Aša* in the *Avesta*. In the *Vedas*, it is enacted through an interaction of Agni and Soma, of Indra killing Vṛtra to bring forth the sun and release the waters.¹¹ A History of Form looks for archetypal proportions and rhythms, inherent in the structure of the universe, underlying causal variations, seemingly created by accident in the stress of the world's evolution. The same form acquires different expressive values for different people and different periods of civilization. The elements of form are universal, while the elements of expression are temporary.¹² A History of Art charts a continuous movement from the universal and typical to the singular and particular, from the potential to the actual, the past being reproduced retroactively by the present, every present having a different past.¹³ In a History of Language,

the constant individual re-readings, retellings of the human narrative in *parole*, in a journey from the collective *langue*, are visible to a gaze from the Panoptic Tower, not accessible to a person on the ground.¹⁴ In media history, the mode of simultaneous awareness of a complex group of causes and effect becomes opaque, through a visual enclosure of a non-visual, audile, tactile space, in an age of fragmented, lineal awareness, produced and enhanced by the Gutenberg galaxy.¹⁵ In a history of textual interpretation, the sub texts, latent behind the text, are revealed through a constant process of integration and dispersion.¹⁶ The beginning of the journey is completed rather than depleted by its recapitulation along the route. It is possible to think ahead by thinking back, to proceed from what has been thought, to what remains to be thought, from the truth of beings, to the truth of the Being. In this manner, it is possible to turn globalization from a challenge into a opportunity, in which all times and places can hold one another's hand, and engage in a cross pollination of ideas and initiatives, instead of being involved in argument and ratiocination, bitter and inconclusive, for reducing human misery and averting species extinction.

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PREFACE

Identities and creativities are perennial challenges with humanity. I had a chance to explore some of these issues when I was invited to present a key note address to a seminar on the theme of ‘Ethnicity and Globalization’, 4–5 December 2013 at Lady Keane College, Shillong, India. I then nurtured further collaborative reflections by inviting some friends and co-travellers to reflect upon the theme of cross-fertilization of roots and routes explored in my Address and subsequently elaborated in my essay on this theme. This led to a special issue on *Social Alternatives* in 2017 edited by me and kindly hosted by my friend Dr. Marcus Bussey who is a contributor to this issue and to this volume as well. The volume grows out of this and includes now many friends and co-travellers.

As this work is now coming out, I express my gratitude to all friends who have made this possible. I thank Dr. Saji Verghese and Professor Sujata Miri for inviting me to the Shillong seminar and Dr. Marcus Bussey for hosting our special issue in *Social Alternatives*. I thank Sara Crowley Vigneau and Connie, L. at Palgrave Macmillan for their kind nurturance of this book project. I am grateful to Dr. Kalyan Kumar Chakraborty for his Foreword to this volume and to Professor Jonathan O. Chimakonam for his Afterword to this volume. I thank Vishnu Varatharajan for his kind help in working with this book project and taking care of many tasks and details of editing.

It is with gratitude that we dedicate this journey of ours with roots and routes to Swami Shri Gyanswaroop Sanand (G. D. Agarwal), S. Jeyapragasam, Navjyoti Singh, Sumoni Jhodia and Medha Patkar. Swami Sanand initially known as Professor G. D. Agarwal was a great lover of Nature, the Ganges and the Himalayas and he fought to keep the Ganges flow without obstruction. He undertook a fast unto death to realize this but the Government did not care to heed and he sacrificed his life in the cause. Professor S. Jeyapragasam was a dedicated co-walker with Gandhi and an inspiring activist and scholar. He taught Gandhian studies at Madurai Kamraj University and for political reasons he was asked to leave and in a Gandhian spirit he took it with equanimity and nurtured many roots and routes of activism and scholarship. He actively took part in CESSCI—Center for Socio-Cultural Interaction, a centre of action and reflection established by Ekta Parishad and in his essay in our volume Paul Schwatzenhuber, one of the co-travellers of Jeyapragasam, tells us more about his vision and life. Navjyoti Singh was a dedicated seeker and scholar who explored deep layers of Indic thought and wisdom. He founded the Center for Exact Humanities at IIIT, Hyderabad and nurtured many deep explorations of roots of identity, wisdom and alternative futures. He hosted groups engaged in cultural regeneration in his Center. I had first met Navjyoti in the badminton field of NISTADS (National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies) in New Delhi in 1990 where I had just joined as a research associate for three months. During our last meeting in 2011 when I visited his Center I also met a creative cultural group from Raghurajpur near Puri, Odisha which is engaged in cultural regeneration of local arts and crafts. Navjyoti creatively crossed boundaries of action and reflections and inspired many fellow seekers.

Sumoni Jhodia is an inspiring leader from Kashipur, Rayagada, Odisha. Sumoni has taken part in tribal women struggle for dignity and freedom. Sumoni has been fighting for alternative development for tribal people and has been opposing the extractive and export oriented model of development in tribal areas. She worked closely with the members of Agragami especially with their leaders Achyut and Vidya Das and started what Vidya Das calls a civil disobedience movement to gain control over access to minor forest produces. She leads *Ama Sanghathana*, an organization of women to produce and market minor produces. When International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) started coffee production in her area she told the officials in a meeting: ‘You are introducing coffee here but we will not be allowed to sell it. So are we supposed to eat it? I am

drinking coffee for the first time in my life in this meeting and it will be the last time'. After this IFAD left its plan of coffee plantation and introduced agro-forestry in the area. Medha Patkar is a courageous and compassionate Satyagrahi of our times who have been fighting against violence of displacement and other forms of structural dispossession with courage and *karuna*. Medha Patkar has led the Narmada Bachao Andolana and has started a school in these areas known as *Jeevanashalas*. Medha Tai has striven to preserve the roots of living in the face of onslaught of state and market. She founded the National Alliance of People's Movements of India and is a rallying point for resistance and alternative futures in these dark times of violence and terror.

These five seekers and travellers of our world have explored creatively the issues of roots and routes of self, society and history specifically and broadly and in dedicating this work to these nine jewels we not only offer our personal tribute but what many of us collectively owe to these dedicated nurturers of roots and routes.

I hope this work helps us in going beyond traps of closed rootedness and rootless and routing and help us creatively embody roots and routes in our lives and move towards creating a cross-fertilizing garden of roots and routes in our thoughts and practice. I offer the following poem of mine *Just Identity* as part of this rethinking, re-imagination and cultivation of a new practice of dialogue and responsibility:

Just Identity:

A Journey of Dialogue and Responsibility

Non-identity identity
 What is this?
 Does it not destroy our identity?
 Should not we have a just identity?
 Yes it is a new invitation for
 Rethinking and a new blossoming
 Just is a journey
 A journey of dialogue and responsibility.

I also offer the following lines from Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* to prepare for despair, joy, creativity and courage entailed in our cross-fertilizing journey with roots and routes:

A wanderer on forlorn despairing routes
Along the roads of sound a frustrate voice
Forsaken cries to a forgotten bliss [..]
Even grief has joy hidden beneath its roots
For nothing is truly vain the One has made
In our defeated heart God's strength survives
And victory's star still lights our desperate road. (Sri Aurobindo 1993: 194)

Chennai, India
First Day of Ramadan and
Bandung Day, April 24, 2020

Ananta Kumar Giri

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CHAPTER 1

Cross-Fertilizing Roots and Routes: An Introduction and an Invitation

Ananta Kumar Giri

Roots and routes are perennial challenges and invitations of humanity and this volume explores many dimensions of these challenges as they relate to construction and production of identity, ethnicity and social creativity. The book begins with the Part I of the book entitled, “Cross-Fertilizing Roots and Routes: Self, Social Creativity and Reconstitution of Identities.” In his opening essay to this part as well as the whole volume, “Cross-Fertilizing Roots and Routes: Ethnicity, Sociocultural Regeneration and Planetary Realizations,” Giri argues how there is a cross-fertilization of roots and routes in the construction and production of ethnicity and identity. Giri explores the challenges of social creativity and cultural regeneration taking place in our world today. In his subsequent essay, “Earth and World: Roots and Routes,” Fred Dallmayr creatively engages with some of these issues further. This is followed by Piet Strydom’s essay, “First and Second Nature.” As a variation on Ananta Kumar Giri’s proposed theme of “roots and routes,” Strydom explores the conceptual couple of first and second nature. He takes first

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nature as referring to the natural historical and evolutionary origin of the current version of the human species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, and second nature to the characteristically human sociocultural world that emerged on that basis. His argument is unfolded in three parts. In the first, the phylogeny of the human species is traced back to its microbiological and cognitive forms. The point is that all contemporary humans not only share the same arch-mother biologically known as “Mitochondrial Eve,” but have in common also the same cognitively fluid mind characterized by a uniquely human meta-representational or reflexive capacity—both features that allow them in principle to transcend their many and varied ethnic, communal and sociocultural differences. Employing the concept of weak naturalism, he secondly explores the enabling yet fraught relation between nature and the sociocultural world, the focus being particularly on the inherent ambivalence of the sociocultural world due to its being caught between natural determination and sociocultural creativity. The point of this argument is to underscore the need for learning that is constantly and urgently required to overcome imposed natural limits so as to open up emancipatory sociocultural potentials and realizable possibilities. Against this background, Strydom engages in the final part with Giri’s poser by reflecting on his assumptions and central concepts. Noting that Giri’s account remains confined to the sociocultural context to the neglect of its rootedness in nature, Strydom critically disambiguates his use of the concepts of religion and togetherness to suggest ways of mitigating and overcoming typical problems plaguing the contemporary sociocultural world.

Strydom’s essay is followed by Marcus Bussey’s who in his essay “Cosmopoiesis: Navigating the Strangeness of Planetary Realizations” invites us to cultivate new paths of relationships in the place of existing stories and practices of separation. As Bussey argues: “Separation lies at the heart of our old story. It is comfortable and reassuring yet it comes at a heavy cost. Relationship offers us new possibilities for re-enchanting and healing this world.” This calls for a new pilgrimage in thinking and ways of living and a new journey with roots and routes of self, society, culture and the world as cultivated in the introductory essay to the volume by Giri. For Bussey, “Giri’s reflection is an invitation to this kind of pilgrimage. It is a meditation on what needs to occur, the kinds of emotional and intellectual resources available to us as we make this transition. We need, as he argues, to think in terms of roots and routes in ordered to ensure both a sense of our collective journey and also of the uniqueness of local ethnicities and cultures.” In his chapter, Bussey picks

up on these thoughts by looking at the multiple routes available to us through the lens of evolutionary models that frame roots in the macrohistorical domain. Bussey's essay is followed by Ivan Marquez's who in his essay "Understanding "Roots and Routes" from a Post-Kantian Tradition of Critique." Engaging with the introductory essay of the volume by Giri, Marquez argues that "Giri's interrelated notions of roots and routes come into play as post-Kantian regulative ideas creating the possibility to understand notions of self, ethnicity, and nation in non-totalizing and non-essentialist terms." Furthermore, as Marquez interprets, "roots and routes are interrelated because roots are always made of multiple strands and these strands connect to routes leading to other roots with other stands that connect to other routes, leading to a planetary interconnecting, interrelating, and intercommunicating web." Marquez's essay is followed by Zazie Bowen's who in her essay "Transversal Communication and Boundaries of Identification" relates the journey of roots and routes to pathways of transversal communication. Engaging with the introductory essay of the volume and the problematic, Bowen explores ways of negotiating "the tendencies for geographically grounded ethnic, patriotic and other identifications to become part of the machinations of an all too destructive 'domination-marginalization' paradigm, resulting in homogenizing state violence on one hand, and violent uprisings by marginalized ethnic/identity groups on the other?" Bowen here discusses the introductory essay by Giri in relation to the anthropological works of Frederik Barth and Andreas Wimmer, and the thoughts and philosophies of his chapter considers some of the ideas of Shri P. R. Sarkar and Jeremy Rifkin. Bowen invites us to realize that the corrective to domination-subjugation paradigms is transversal communication as suggested by Giri. For Bowen, "In a similar vein, Sarkar proposes the development of rational thinking through education coupled with reverential devotion for the underlying principle of humanity (shared longing for the peace, or wellbeing of self expression). Enlargement of this devotional sentiment for humanity to include all inanimate as well as animate existence involves moving outward in an ever-expanding understanding of vast inter-relationships."

Bowen's essay is followed by Marta Botta's who in her essay "Deconstructing and Reconstructing Identity: A Transformational Transcontinental Journey" presents her own journey of identity formation in a transcontinental context. Through a brave exercise of self-disclosure, she provides an account of a lived experience—her own individual journey as

a refugee through several continents. This autobiographical account illustrates the challenges to identity formation in today's transmodern world. Botta illustrates how through five phases of her individual journey she developed characteristics of cultural citizenship with an increasing ability to shake off the bonds and limitations of her past as well as her present cultural conditioning. Through immersion in her new environment she found not only a new geographical location but also an "emotional community" distinguished by shared ethics, feelings, impressions, rituals, and solidarity, that Maffessoli (1996) calls the ethos of *Gemeinschafts* of the tribe. As a speaker of several languages, Botta also observed how speech is unique to the speaker and their background, and how it carries many important dimensions inherent to the formation of the individual's identity. By living in a new cultural environment and learning a second language a unique multidimensional identity is formed that is characterized by greater confidence in navigating the complex societies of the transmodern era.

Botta's essay is followed by Paul Schwartzenruber's who in his essay "There Is a Thread That You Follow: Identity, Journey and Destiny" writes in a personal tone about the quest to understand human identity in the course of human life as a thread that winds among personal narratives, cultural routes, and interpersonal encounters. Using a poem by William Stafford, Schwartzenruber tells the story of his own cross-cultural journey to India from Canada later in life, his surprising friendship with Dr. S. Jeyapragasam and then the loss of that friendship. He weaves together Aristotle's reflections on friendship and virtue, Hannah Arendt's account of isolation and solitude and Giorgio Agamben's of the openness of the human journey.

With these we come to the second part of our book, "Cross-Fertilizing Roots and Routes: New Possibilities with Philosophy, History, Anthropology and Literature." This begins with Olatunji A. Oyeshille's essay, "Reconciling the Self with the Other: An Existentialist Perspective On the Management of Ethnic Conflicts in Africa" in which Oyeshille discusses the organization of nation-states in postcolonial Africa that brings problems to nation-states as nation-states are based upon artificial boundaries. He then traces roots of ethnic problems to colonialism and its accompanying violence and boundary-making. He then brings an existential perspective to bear upon the problems of ethnic conflicts where it calls upon to realize one's own authentic subjectivity in relation to the subjectivity of others leading toward creation of authentic and dignified

intersubjective relations. Oyeshille discusses the works of Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Martin Buber in this regard and invites us to rethink the related problems of self and other, roots and routes from such rich traditions of existentialism.

Oyeshille's essay is followed by Barry H. Rodrigue's who in his essay "Migration, Myth and History: A Cross-Border Case Study" proposes that a deep study of cross-boundary migrations can help remedy the superficial stereotyping that haunts trans-nation dynamics. He provides a case study of French-Canadian migration across the eastern borderlands of Canada and the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His hypothesis is that, once such revision of the historical record is made, larger society then has an ability to heal cultural antagonisms. Rodrigue's essay is followed by Dettlef Briesen's essay, "From the Danger of the Routes to the Alleged Certainty About the Roots: The Journey to India from the Early Eighteenth to the Late Nineteenth Centuries." In his essay, Briesen is concerned with the question of how roots change in relation to routes, i.e., how the way people travel influences how they perceive themselves and their surroundings. Empirically, he draws on exemplary reports by Europeans on their journey to India, once before and once after the great technical and military changes since the mid-nineteenth century: The early travelogues document extremely perilous ventures in which the focus was simply on the sheer survival of the traveller. Reflections on one's own or other people's identities hardly ever occurred. The second group of travelogues, written from the middle of the nineteenth century onward, documents a belief in the superiority of the European traveller based on civilisational or racist categories. It takes place within the framework of the superior civil and military contemporary infrastructure, which was only available to people from Europe. This (apparent) superiority creates the space in which experiences of difference or stereotypes about them can now be expressed. Whereas before the mid-nineteenth century the routes were the focus of narratives, the emphasis is now shifting to the roots.

Briesen's essay is followed by N. K. Das's essay, "Indigeneity, Cultural Memory and Hybrid Identity: Politics of 'Belonging' among Zomi- Chin-Kuki People of India- Myanmar Borderlands" in which Das discusses the predicaments of allied "tribes" such as Zomi, Chin, Mizo, and Kuki who have been traumatized by their bifurcation between three countries. Focusing on the insight of rootedness in the border, new anthropological studies have problematised power, culture, and memory in relation

to border identity. Accordingly, this article provides a narrative of ethnic rootedness, with support of rich folklore and cultural memory endured by the Zomi people, and their present concern for transnational reunification of “Zomi” ethnicity through the demand for “Zogam” (Zomi Homeland). The struggles of these tribes are elucidated by juxtaposing the themes of indigeneity, borderland, memory, and belonging over borderland. Indeed, the Chin, Zomi, and Kuki tribes have a thriving tradition of common origin myth and cultural memory of their settlement in Chinglung, which has helped them harness the assertions about belonging and indigeneity. It has also helped various Zomi tribes to define and essentialize the Zominess. The article provides a narrative of collective origin, with support of rich folklore and cultural memory endured by the Zomi people, and elucidates their present concern for transnational “Zomi” solidarity/ethnicity through the demand of Zomi Homeland. Indeed, employing ethnic disposition of common roots and identical language use, vastly diversified Zomi tribes are trying to redefine and essentialize the Zominess of their community through a deep perception of indigeneity. The article also discusses how these people have experienced both continuities and ruptures in social formation and how a prolonged trend of grouping/regrouping has led to hybrid identity formations. Further, the article also briefly discusses the Zomi people’s reinterpretation of indigenous faith and their ‘search of roots’ in terms of a revived Jewish affinity which has led to a syncretic religious amalgamation involving indigenous faith, Christianity, and Judaism.

Das’s essay is followed by Peter Heehs’ essay on postcolonial identity and the predicament of spiral of violence, “Rethinking Post-colonial Identity: Caught in the Spiral of Violence.” Heehs tells us about the challenges to violence and conflicts that post-colonial societies face. But Heehs also problematizes the concept of the postcolonial and challenges all concerned to be responsible for our present predicament as well as search for transformations. Heehs thus begins by writing: “A central assumption of postcolonial studies that the problems faced by formerly colonized nations are direct results of the colonial experience: it’s all the fault of the British, the French, the Dutch, the Portuguese. No one would deny that colonizing nations stripped the wealth of their colonies and imposed on them alien institutions and practices. These have had a lasting effect on the development of the new nations. But at what point do these nations become responsible for their own destinies? After fifty years, a

hundred, a thousand?” Heehs discusses the challenge of violence in post-colonial societies such as the Caribbean by referring to the 2014 Booker Prizing winning novel *A Brief History of Seven Killings* by Marlon James. But for Heehs, “Violence is a feature of the post-postcolonial experience not only in the Caribbean but also in Africa and Asia. The threat or reality of violence is never far off in the recent literature of South Africa, Nigeria, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia.” In his essay, Heehs examines how this theme of violence plays out in two twenty-first-century Indian novels, *The Point of Return* by Siddhartha Deb (2002) and *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai (2006). For Heehs, “Like Campbell and James, Deb and Desai deal not with the oppressions of the past but the conflicts and violence of the present.” Heehs tells us that “if there is a theme that unites these two novels, it is hatred, and the violence that hatred breeds.”

The violence and hatred emerges from a closed sense of ethnic identity and production of hatred toward others around such constructed oppositions of self and other. Heehs here challenges us to understand the illusions of ethnic identity especially with regard to North–East of India where Deb’s and Desai’s novels are based. As Heehs writes:

Identity politics of the blood-and-soil variety are based on the premise that a given ethnic group has lived in its homeland forever and therefore has the right to decide what other groups can live there and the conditions under which they will live. This sort of nativism is on the rise throughout the world today. In almost every case, the founding premise is wrong. The northeast part of India has always been a crossroads of many different cultures. Today the region is home to Bengalis, Biharis, Nepalis, Tibetans, Sikkimese, Bhutanese, Ahoms, Khasis, Nagas, Manipuris, Chins, and other groups. None of them can lay claim to perpetual occupation. Most came from somewhere else.

Heehs discusses the spiral of violence and destruction in which characters in these novels are caught in ethnic violence directed against the so-called outsiders by the so-called native people in Shillong and Darjeeling, the primary location of these novels. Some of this arises out of the feeling of injustice and exploitation by the local population thus directing their violence and anger against the settled outsiders many of whom are equally helpless like the attackers. Transforming this requires addressing issues of social and economic injustice which ethnic mobilizations do not take up in a structural way, i.e., attacking structural roots of inequality and exploitation which has made both the local people as

well as the settled people from outside victims. It also calls for change of mind. Here what Heehs writes sympathetically and with a spiritual touch deserves our careful consideration:

To deal with the causes of social injustice is an external way of extirpating the roots of violence. More important are the changes that must come about in the minds and hearts of participants. Neither Deb nor Desai provide much help in this direction. Their response, after all, was to get out. Yet in their closing scenes they seem to offer traces of hope. Looking back on his hometown, his point of return and re-departure, Deb reflects: "I want it to be home for everyone who lives there, for everyone to have a place in it that cannot be lost or stolen." But how Shillong will reach this positive outcome "is no longer my concern" (227). Desai provides a cinematic conclusion that at least hints at the possibility of a kinder world:

The five peaks of Kanchenjunga turned golden with the kind of luminous light that made you feel, if briefly, that truth was apparent. All you needed to do was to reach out and pluck it (324).

Heehs concludes again with the theme of responsibility with which he began which has a greater significance for our journey with cross-fertilizing roots and routes:

Our authors did not propose a positive solution, but honest readers of *The Point of Return* and *The Inheritance of Loss* will be forced to conclude if Indians are ever to free themselves from the spiral of hatred and violence, they will have to do it on their own.

Heehs' essay is followed by Meera Chakravorty's essay, "In Search of Territory: Women's Existential Traverse through Varied Routes." For Chakravorty, in human history, one of the most powerful ideas has been that of the route/root related to territory capable of explaining a woman's past, present, and future; her discontent and ingenuity, pain, and pleasure while taking the journey of life. Like time and space, territory is used both as a domain of existence in the present and as regeneration in future or to put it otherwise in its memory and reality. A woman's participation in both has been unique. As memory it has passed through historical stages in which the struggle of a woman continue though fractured several times, and though incomplete, the expression of these journeys are found in various genres. The nature of the journey has always been through many routes as sensitive as it is inseparable from the fluctuating conditions of

women's lives. However, sometimes traversing to a given territory there is an imagination of a possible secure and infallible way of remaining with it. It is hard to imagine a way of life that is distanced from this. Such imagination is not only reassuring; it energizes her selfhood by prompting her to think that she has the will power and determination to thwart any alienation which may cause obstructions. The other dimension of the legend of the travel that has always consoled her facilitating her imagination of someplace she can take resort to, is a kind of solace that situates her in the social milieu. It can be followed later in this article how women tried to devise plans to explain how comforting it is to be in such territories and didn't find it hard to explain how real-life situations often are condemnable in real territories.

Chakravorty's essay is followed by Rajsekhar Basu's "Helpless Women, Benevolent Trading Groups and the Nationalist Rhetoric: The Myriad Responses over Kunti's Cry in a far off Alien Land in Early Twentieth Century India." In his essay describes the plight and struggle for dignity on the part of Kunti, a labor migrant from Bihar in Fiji as she was subjected to sexual assault in her labor field. Basu's essay is followed by Sulagna Mohanty and Santosh Biswal's essay "Crossing the Border: A Postcolonial Discourse of Double Consciousness and Multiple Solidarities with reference to the texts *Brick Lane* and *The Mistress of Spices*." In their essay, Mohanty and Biswal explore the double consciousness and multiple solidarities of the protagonists in the texts *The Mistress of Spices* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and *Bricklane* by Monica Ali. The authors try to analyze how these texts articulate how these transnational women break the perceived social, cultural, and sexual norms. The authors explore how the protagonists of these texts discover their sexuality and womanhood while seeking new vistas and new identities. Similarly, the authors have observed that the cinematic adaptations of these texts, too, maintain the very essence of the "third world woman's identity" by dealing with the trauma and turbulence of Indian Tilo and Bangladeshi Nazneen. Thus, the authors seek to highlight the evolvement of these cosmopolitan women who finally obtain physical, psychological, sexual, and spiritual liberation and reassert their identities as individuals. Their essay is followed by Rebecca Diane Whittington's essay "Roots and Routes: The Novels of Su Tamilselvi and Kanmani Gunasekaran" who also explores the challenges faced by women protagonists and their striving for creativity and resilience in the work of novels. Whittington discusses the novels of Su Tamilselvi and Kanmani Gunasekaran. Whittington's essay is

followed by Abhijeet Paul's essay "The Roots and Routes of Morning: Performing Craft and Community in Migrant Cultures in India." Paul's essay is followed by Santosh Kumar Biswal's essay, "Cinematic Representation of Disability from Pity to Human Rights in India: Investigating the Changing Roots and Routes." In his essay, Biswal shows us how India is a home to many disabled people and their stories remain largely unheard and uncared for. But cinema presents routes of their lives and stories. Cinema is a route for building disability identity and socio-cultural regeneration. The chapter attempts to make the readers understand the roots of disability and the routes of cinematic representations for disability culture and sociocultural regeneration through various models of disability. Biswal's essay is followed by Abdulkadir Osman Farah's essay, "Transnational Communities: The Quest for Development and South-South Connections." This essay proposes the idea that transnational communities often form transformative societal networks that transnationally combine political and social situations, condition and activities with possibilities. Thus these transnational communities and networks help us making creative links between roots and routes. This contrasts earlier categorization of such communities as dispersed community, struggling with assimilation in host societies; preoccupied with the nostalgic of return; long-distance nationalists (Anderson 1998) as nationalist movement. Farah urges us to realize transnational communities not just as reflection of established categories on diverse forms of transnationalism which gives primacy to State or state-centered transnationalism. Instead Farah conceptualizes and describes the work of community transnationalism which "often processes and weaves together otherwise contradicting social, economic and political issues- that characterize and even transform not just a north-south but also a south-south transnational connections."

The volume concludes with the afterword by Jonathan O. Chimakonam in which Chimakonam insightfully discusses the challenges of rising and risen politics of hatred around closed roots of identity. As Chimakonam tells us:

With the significant rise in right-winged ideologies, such as the emergence of Donald Trump as President of the US, BREXIT in the UK, and considerable gains of conservative parties in Europe that oppose immigration, entrench islamophobia, and advocate some form of Euroscepticism [...]; it is clear that there is a desire to reach back to roots. And by roots, I mean a desire to retain a purified version of individual cultures. However, this

desire shows a misguided ethnocentric commitment. The danger of ethnocentric commitments often is that it assumes that a certain ethnic group is better than another, which inadvertently weakens the possibility of border crossing, bridging of cultural gaps, and cross-fertilization of cultures.

In this context Chimakonam finds helpful that the book and its main authors argue for creative identity formation and cross-fertilization of roots and routes. He also finds the paths of nonviolence cultivated in this book helpful. As he writes:

Perhaps the most challenging notion put forward in this book is the proposal of non-violence especially in the face of brutality and aggression. The focus on how we may quell inter-ethnic tensions stems from our pursuit for strategies that have proven to resolve human differences in time past. Clearly, a non-violent approach adopted by the global icons like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, and Nelson Mandela proved to be helpful. A look at proponents of non-violence such as Thoreau, Tolstoy, and Gandhi lends us some credence to this philosophy and shows that if applied judiciously in today's context of hate, we are likely to come out successful.

In the context of growing violence in our contemporary world around issues of closed rooted identities and rootless globalism, the book pleads for cultivating creative non-violent relationship between identities, differences, identity and difference and roots and routes. This is possibly the most important contribution of *Cross-Fertilizing Roots and Routes*.

Thus our volume explores different dimensions and challenges of cross-fertilization of roots and routes which hopefully would help us come to terms with challenges of identitarian closure in our contemporary world and forge new pathways of identity formation, social creativity, cultural regeneration, and planetary realizations.

PART I

Cross-Fertilizing Roots and Routes: Self,
Social Creativity and Reconstitution
of Identities



CHAPTER 2

Cross-Fertilizing Roots and Routes: Ethnicity, Sociocultural Regeneration, and Planetary Realizations

Ananta Kumar Giri

INTRODUCTION AND INVITATION

Ethnicity is a continued challenge for us for creative rethinking and envisioning and practicing shared lives.¹ As Alain Touraine, the deep sociological thinker of our times, urges us to realize: “We are now living

This builds on my Keynote Address to the seminar on “Ethnicity and Globalization,” Lady Keane College, Shillong, December 4, December 4–5, 2013. I am grateful to Dr. Saji Verghese for his kind invitation and to Professor Sujata Miri and other participants for their comments and interest. This builds upon my introductory essay to a discussion symposium I co-nurtured with Dr. Marcus Bussey of University of Sunshine Coast for the journal *Social Alternatives* in 2017. An updated version is also coming out in *Man in India* and I thank its editor, Dr. Sumahan Banejee, for his kind interest and encouragement.

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through the undermining of national communities and strengthening of ethnic communities” (Touraine 2007). This process is a multidimensional process of resistance, struggle, creativity, destruction, and transformation which calls for deeper probing of and meditative co-walking with our existing conceptual categories and modes of engagement. As ethnicity cannot be understood either as a static category or in isolation from other categories and realities such as nationality and citizenship, as T. K. Oommen (1997) argues, we also need to understand the limits of these categories themselves as well as the inner and mutual transformations that these are going through both internally as well as in their interrelationship. All these categories and lifeworlds have a complex relationship to tradition, modernity, postmodernity, and emergent modernity called transmodernity where as Enrique Dussel (2017: 226–227) argues “unsuspected cultural richness” rises up like the flame of fire of those fathoms buried under the sea of ashes from hundreds of years of colonialism.” Transmodernity refers to “a process of rebirth, searching for new paths for future development.” If the reality and production of ethnicity is linked to both modernity and colonialism leading to what Oommen (1997) calls *ethnification*, transmodernity challenges us to understand both historical and contemporaneous processes of deconstruction and reconstruction, resistance and creativity anew. While *ethnification* is a process of marginalization, ethnicity is not just produced at the disjuncture of home and the world as Oommen argues. Contra Oommen, we do not become an *ethnie* when we leave our home and come to a foreign land. Ethnicity is an aspect of both home and the world and understanding it as a dynamic process as well as the related categories and histories of nationality and citizenship challenges us to understand ethnicity as well as nationality and citizenship not only as nouns but also as verbs (cf. Giri 2012, 2013). As verbs they embody multiple and multi-dimensional processes of genesis, ongoing dynamics, and reconstitution. Oommen’s phrase *ethnification* points to the verb dimension of the category of ethnicity. At the same time, to these categories of nation, ethnicity, and citizenship we need to add the category of soul—self, social as well as cultural—as well as creativity. We need to bring to our existing discursive and practical landscape dynamics of generativity and regeneration of soul, culture, and society. Today ethnic mobilization as it is engaged in struggle with other ethnic groups and the state, is also engaged in a process of sociocultural regeneration as it fights against both the dominant logic of state and market in favor of more autonomy, control over local resources and sometimes creation of

new states. Many a time there is a mimetic reproduction of state violence in ethnic mobilization but slowly violent ethnic mobilizations are being forced to realize and learn, as Rene Girard tells us that “the sacrificial system [of violence] is virtually worn out” (quoted in Fleming 2004: 111). This challenges us to realize the limits of violence and absolutism and calls for the difficult journey of non-violent resistance and transformation in a world where violence presents itself as the tempting easy option for both the state as well as non-state actors (Bass 2013; Daniels 1996; Volkam 2006).

ETHNICITY, CULTURAL RIGHTS, AND CULTURAL REGENERATION: IN BETWEEN ROOT AND ROUTES

Ethnicity is linked to both territory and culture. The struggle for ethnicity in the modern and contemporary world is a struggle for plural, economic, and cultural regeneration and transformation. Ethnicity as it emerges in between culture and location is linked to our need for roots which are invariably multiple (Cf. Weil 1952: 99). Here what Simon Weil (1952: 99) writes in her *Need for Roots* deserves our careful consideration:

To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define. A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular measures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future. This participation is a natural one, in the sense that it is automatically brought about by place, conditions of birth, profession and social surrounding. Every human being needs to have multiple roots [...]²

But our need for roots many a time leads to ethnocentric and exclusionary patriotism. Weil calls this self-idolatry. Today both ethnic and national patriotism in their dominant formation reproduces a logic of self-idolatry.³

But overcoming this self-idolatry challenges us to realize that there are routes in all our roots. But being with routes does not necessarily produce rootless histories and modernities. Here our locations are not only bounded locales but are also translocal. Our locations are “an itinerary rather than a bounded site—a series of encounters and translations,” as anthropologist James Clifford (1988) tells us in his important work, *The Predicament of Culture*. Clifford here brings our attention to

the fieldwork of anthropologist and novelist Amitava Ghosh in Egypt where fieldwork “is less a matter of localized dwelling and more a series of travel encounters. Everyone is on the move, and has been for centuries, dwelling-on-travel. Moreover when travel becomes the kind of norm, dwelling demands explanation. Why with what degree of freedom do people stay at home” (ibid.). Anthropologist Timo Kaartinen in his work with Banda Eli, a coastal village in Indonesia, also writes: “[..] the Banda Eli discourse about the past carries two inter-related ideas of social existence in time. In one sense, expressed in songs of travel, society consists of the past and present horizons of lived experience. These horizons come into relief in the circumstances of separation, alterity and alienation created by overseas travel. In another sense society is a place in which social and cosmic relationships are concretized in an external form. Songs of travel thus represent an openness to transforming events while stories of place represent society as an objective, somewhat final outcome of past events” (Kaartinen 2010: 28).⁴

Understanding self, ethnicity, and nation emerging at the cross-roads of roots and routes where routes are not only territorial but also maritime calls for new modes of engagement and understanding, a border-crossing between philosophy and anthropology (cf. Duara 2015). Both philosophy and anthropology are even now deeply parochial disciplines and are still Eurocentric in their methods and worldviews. But here anthropologists not only need to embody deep philosophical reflection but also footwork. Both philosopher and anthropologists need to embody a creative trigonometry of philosophical, historical and footwork engagement (Giri 2012).⁵ As J. N. Mohanty would challenge us, engagement with both footwork and histories would help us realize how our lifeworlds including ethnic lifeworlds are not only closed within themselves but are in communication with each other. But this history of communication can be more creatively cultivated with what Mohanty building on Husserl calls “apperceptive attribution” and “analogizing apperception”: “The gap between the far and the near is closed by analogizing apperception of the far, ‘as if, it were near [...] The relativity of the lifeworld is to be overcome by making what it is strange, foreign, unfamiliar gradually familiar” (Mohanty 2001).

What is to be noted is that this process of communication, cross-cultural, and interethnic, is not only a matter of state and social system but more crucially of actors. For both Alain Touraine and Jurgen Habermas, such processes call for communicative transformations from all concerned

including the so-called marginalized ethnicities and cultural groups in which creative selves and actors play an important role. As Habermas tells us, “Yet cultural rights do not just mean more ‘difference,’ and more independence for cultural groups and their leaders [...] They cannot benefit from a morality of equal inclusion without themselves making this morality their own” (2006: 205). At the same time, there is a lingering universalism in Touraine and Habermas which can be creatively transformed into transmodern and transversal processes as suggested in Dussel’s pathways of the transmodern where we build upon resources and possibilities in tradition, modernity, and postmodernity to build creative self and institutions in our present-day world.

When we are talking about ethnicity and culture, we need to be on the guard against what James Clifford writes about the propensity of culture to assert “holism and aesthetic form, its tendency to privilege value, hierarchy and historical continuity in notions of ‘common life’.” It is in this context Trouillot’s (2004) calls to say goodbye to culture and accepting the new duty that arises out of it deserves our careful consideration.

BEYOND CULTURALIST HOLISM AND ETHNIC ABSOLUTISM

In his work on Gorkhaland movement, Swatosiddha Sarkar (2013) offers us a critical contemporary example of the limits of singular and holistic ethnic representation. As Sarkar writes, “Peace initiatives framed by the state with the vision of homogenizing the actually existing differences between the ‘us’ and ‘them’ run the risk of submerging the rebel voice and reinstate the same hegemonic structure which in fact breed the problem [...] An alternative thus could be suggested following a policy that recognizes the different stake holders of ethnic cause” (2013). Even in the case of ULFA, Nani Mahanta tells us:

Organizations like ULFA never bothered to look into the issues of governance and day-to-day problems that the people of the state used to confront on a daily basis. Struggle for land, forest and water have acquired a new dimension after the emergence of a peasant-based movement known as Krushak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) in 2005 under the leadership of RTI activist Akhil Gogoi. [...] Movements centering on people’s issues have become more popular and sustainable in comparison to the armed groups who have perennially neglected these issues for a dream of independent sovereign homeland. (2013)

At the same time, Mahanta makes a startling observation:

At a time when other organizations have taken a bold stand against the immigrants, ULFA has tried to broaden the Assamese nationality by incorporating the immigrants from Bangladesh into the framework of the people of Assam.⁶

Both these works on ethnic mobilizations point to the limits of looking at them solely in terms of fixed roots and struggle for power and point to the need for ethnic mobilizations to be open to others in a spirit of hospitality and care.

CREATING CULTURES, SPACES, AND POLITICS OF HOSPITALITY

As ULFA realized the need to incorporate the immigrants from Bangladesh into the framework of Assam, in Assam itself, even in small areas such as Bodoland, ethnic groups are at each other's throats. The whole North-East of India has become a cauldron of ethnic violence and annihilation and State is not the only agent of killing here. This highlights the need to create a culture, space, and politics of dignity and respect, one of hospitality. Here we need to realize that we are not helpless between the binary choice of citizenship and total non-existence as an immigrant. Here Seyla Benhabib (2004) argues that nation-states can offer a variety of creative policies and opportunities to the immigrants. They may not be given full citizenship for political and other constraints but they can be given other rights such as the right to vote in local elections.⁷ Similarly ethnic groups can also provide different ranges of rights and hospitality to members of other ethnic groups instead of subjecting them to torture and torment or killing them. So far nation-state and ethnic groups are used to a politics of taking hostage and now they need to practice a politics and spirituality of hospitality (Derrida 2006).

As our political imagination and practice has a deeper religious and theological root, as the complex trajectory of political theology tells us, we need here alternative political theologies and spiritualities which can transform our politics of hostage-taking into a politics and spirituality of hospitality. In Judeo Christian tradition the parable of the Good Samaritan and the command to love ones neighbor as oneself needs to be practiced creatively now (see Ricouer 1994; Vattimo 1999).⁸ The

Bhagavad Gita talks about *swadharma* (dharma of the self) and the need to protect one's *swadharma* from *paradharma* (*dharma* of others). But what is *swadharma*, what is *paradharma*? So far in conventional religion, politics, and interpretative exercise these have been given a literal and group-linked categorical meaning. But *swadharma* is not only one's socially given religious identity, it is the dharma of one's being, the path of unfoldment and duty that one seeks and needs to follow. One needs to nurture and protect one's unique *dharma* and mode of self-realization from those forces which are not intrinsically significant for one's self-realization. So for the Hindus, *swadhama* is not only Hinduism and Islam is *paradharma*. This is a very superficial rendering of *swadharma* and *paradharma* at the level of caste, religion, and gender, as many deep co-walkers with these themes such as Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi would urge us to realize.⁹

As we realize the deeper spiritual meaning and challenge of existing categories coming from our culture and religions, we also need to create new categories of reality, living, conviviality and realization (see Illich 1973). In case of the existing discourse of self and other, *swadharma* and *paradharma*, which has been thrown up into antagonistic battles, we need to create a new category of *saha* (together) and *sahadharma* (*dharma* of togetherness)¹⁰ which is an integral part of the other important concern in the Bhagavad Gita, *lokasamgraha* which means gathering of people not only in a political sense of rights and citizenship but also a spiritual gathering of mutual care and world nurturance and world maintenance.¹¹ We need a new culture, political theology, and spiritual ecology which nurtures spaces of togetherness.¹² Language and common natural resources constitute our arenas of *sahadharma* which includes both conflicts and cooperations, and it calls of a new politics and spirituality of *sadhana* and struggle, compassion, and confrontation.¹³ In the field of languages, today there is a deathlike move toward monolinguism. But our mother languages, be it Tamil or Odia, nurture the soul, imagination and dignity and of all those who speak this language and not only Tamil Hindus or Odia Hindus though they may be numerically dominant. Today as our mother languages are being marginalized all of us have a duty, a *dharma* to nurture and protect this space of *sahadharma*. Here Hindus, Muslims, and Christians can all strive together. Similarly as our living environment is being destroyed and our natural resources are getting depleted, protecting and cultivating this is a matter of a new *sahadharma*. This is related to protecting and recovering our commons

which also calls for a new mode of being with self, other, and the world (Taylor and Reid 2010).¹⁴ This in turn calls for a new politics, ethics and epistemology of conviviality and cross-fertilization where we take pleasure in each other's presence rather than withdrawing ourselves, feeling threatened, and threatening others (Appadurai 2006).

CULTURAL REGENERATION AND PLANETARY REALIZATIONS

Dynamics of top-down and unilateral globalization puts cultures under threat and as a response, they are engaged in varieties of movements of cultural regeneration. One important aspect of this cultural regeneration is regeneration of knowledge, one's knowledge tradition (de Sousa Santos 2007, 2014). Modernity has led to the killing of different knowledge traditions what de Sousa Santos calls epistemicide. But we see a slow movement of regeneration of knowledges of our soil and soul in varieties of indigenous movements. In the North-East of India where tribals were converted to Christianity, there is a movement for indigenization of Christianity into one's soil (Frynkenberg 2010). Religious and spiritual movements such as Donyi Polo in Arunachala Pradesh create new spaces of cultural regeneration from one's soil.

Ethnic groups are not only bounded sociocultural groups as the classic work of Frederic Barth tells us, space of ethnicity is also a space of knowledge about local community, geography, and biodiversity. Ethnic politics unfortunately is confined mostly to sociopolitical issues of struggle for and distribution of power but it now needs to be part of a new politics of preservation of knowledge such as biodiversity. In many parts of the world, ethnic knowledge and language is being used in education. For example, in Odisha, in the Srujan program, knowledge of the local community on various important issues is being used, and as Mahendra Kumar Mishra (2015) tells us, this has made a difference to the lives of tribals. Similarly in Chiapas region of Mexico, both the Zapatista movement as well as initiatives such as University de Tierra (University of the Earth) use local language and knowledge in education.¹⁵ As part of cultural regeneration, now there is a movement for regeneration of local history and local museums. Local histories are sometimes used to fight against each other settling scores with each other but now we need a creative engagement with histories and ethnic life worlds where our languages, myths, concepts, and preoccupations can become nomadic and bridges of translations and not just remain fixed and fixated (Das 2007,

2011).¹⁶ These become part of creative and critical memory works which involve both work and meditation with our roots and routes and their complex dynamics of cross-fertilization.¹⁷

Such dynamics of cultural creativity and regeneration take us back to our roots but also bring our roots to dance with routes in history and the contemporary world. Such cross-fertilization of roots and routes create an alternative globalization what philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy calls *mondialization*. For Nancy (2007), while globalization is “uniformity produced by a global economic and technological logic[...] leading toward the opposite of an inhabitable world, to the *un-world*,” *mondialization* involves authentic world-forming what Nancy calls creation of the world. Cultural creativity and regeneration is at the heart of such alternative creations of the world (see Villa-Vicencio et al. 2015).

Planetary realization refers to such processes of realization of potential of self, culture and society. For Chitta Ranjan Das (2004), it also involves the generation of people’s power in place of the power of the state to which we can also add the power of the market. We see glimpses of cultural regeneration and planetary realizations in movements such as Ekta Parishad, a Gandhian movement in contemporary India which is also transnational as it nurtures and is supported by any activists and volunteers from Europe and other parts of the world. Ekta Parishad brings together people from different ethnic groups in their struggle over land, water, and forest but it is dreaming and fighting for a new world, to create the world as a family as suggested in this primordial aspiration from India, *vasaudheiva kutumbakam* (let the whole world become a family).¹⁸

NOTES

1. To help in this journey we can here walk and mediate with the following paragraphs of thoughts:

The Asian maritime networks of the pre-colonial era ... involved a wide variety of merchant communities at different points who did not speak the same languages or trade in the same currencies [] In many ways, contemporary Asian regional interdependence resembles the maritime Asian trade networks, because of the separation of political, economic and military levels and power [...] Although the actual products flowing through the Asian maritime networks were miniscule compared to today’s figures, the cultural flows they enabled—packaged in Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism,

Islam—were nothing short of world-transforming. [...] Nonetheless, the older Asian models of cultural circulation without state domination of identity presents us with a historical resource to explore new possibilities. (Duara 2015: 277)

But origin always meets us from the future. (Heidegger 1971: 10)

Modern Societies are replete with notions of ethnicity, cultural / religious identity which are often valorized in recent times to the point of unreason, plunging ethnically different communities into conflict situations. This new awareness of one's distinct ethnic identity often plays a horrendous role in our present-day world; for, your 'difference' is made a special privilege which you would proceed to deny to others who differ from you in terms of clan, creed or color. Remember the Hutus and Tutsis of Rwanda, Burundi who massacred each other in millions, not to mention on the ethnic cleansing that proceed, say from Kosovo to Kashmir. (Sharma 2014)

2. To this, we can add Gandhi's emphasis on roots. As Chatterjee interprets Gandhi's path:

The world was interested in the fruits, not the root. For the tree itself, however, the chief concern should be not the fruit, but the root. It was in the depth of one's being that the individual had to concentrate. He had to nurse it with the water of his labour and suffering. The root was his chief concern. (Chatterjee 2005: 98)

In a related way, Wangari Maathai, the inspiring fighter for ecology and the Noble Peace Prize winner, tells us also about the significance of roots in the dynamics of nature as well as for the preservation and efflorescence of both biodiversity and cultural diversity. Maathai tells us that while she was growing up, her mother told us never to cut the fig tree. Later on when she studied biology, she realized that:

[...] there was a connection between the fig tree's root system and the underground water reservoirs. The roots burrowed deep into the ground, breaking through the surface soil and diving into the underground water table. The water traveled up along the routes until it hit a depression or weak place in the ground and gushed out as a spring. Indeed, wherever these trees stood, there were likely to be streams. (Maathai 2008: 46)

But colonial rule struck at the root of this ecosystem. Maathai tells us that the colonial government in Kenya “decided to encroach into the forest and establish commercial plantation of the nonnative trees [...] The eliminated local plants and animals, destroying the natural ecosystem that helped gather and retain rainwater” (ibid.: 39). But Maathai also tells us how colonization of Kenya and the wider Africa not only struck at the roots of the natural eco system, it also struck at the roots of cultural vitality and dignity of people as it also destroyed roots of mother languages of peoples.

3. For Simon Weil:

Our patriotism comes straight from the Romans. [...] The word pagan, which applied to Rome, really possesses the significance charged with horror which the early Christian controversialists gave it. The Romans really were an atheistic and idolatrous people, not idolatrous with regard to images made of stone or bronze, but idolatrous with regard to themselves. It is this idolatry of self which they have bequeathed to us in the form of patriotism.

4. Kaartinen writes that “songs of travel represent an openness to transforming events.” Here we can refer to an interesting anthropological reflection on the travels of the poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore by anthropologist Ravindra K. Jain (2010). Jain tells us how in his travels, Tagore experiences an “unbearable softness of being” and goes beyond his identity as a self-confident man. This comes out in his letter to his intimate friend and admirer, the Argentinian Victoria Occampo from the sea:

It will be a difficult for you to fully realize what an immense burden of loneliness I carry about me, the burden that has specially been imposed upon me by my sudden extraordinary fame. [...] My market price has been high and my personal value has been obscured. This value I seek to realize with an aching desire which constantly pursues me. This can be had only from a woman’s love and I have been hoping for a long time that I do deserve it. (quoted in Jain 2010: 16)

Jain suggests that travel creates a condition for a new realization of poetics of manhood in Tagore which is not one of macho manhood as originally suggested in the work of Michel Herzfeld but a manhood of softness and vulnerability. Such a narration of vulnerability and transformative yearning for intimacy we find in many songs of travel with the sea on the part of those who leave home for faraway land. We find such a

narration in the sea travelogue of Chitta Ranjan Das, a creative thinker and writer from Odisha, in his letters from the sea to his younger brother. In his first letter he writes:

Today you all would be remembering me. Also Mother. [...] As much as you are pulling me in the rope of relational affection from your side my heart is equally getting shaken from this side. There is a sorrow in this shakiness but if our heart was made of stone, life would have been so unbearable! I have always gained assurance from this shakiness of heart. (Das 1999: 2; my translation from the original Odia)

5. I make a distinction between fieldwork and footwork. Fieldwork does involve footwork but colonialist fieldwork was done riding on the horse backs and now present-day fieldworkers rarely go to the field as they assign this to their research assistants and even when they go they rarely walk together with people as a way experiencing life and knowing about it. Footwork involves such practices of being and knowing (Giri 2012).
6. Dr. N. K. Das, a contributor to this volume and a long standing deep scholar of ethnic movements in the North East India here comments that this is not the stand of the whole of faction-ridden ULFA but only the stand of the Paresh Baruah section of ULFA which has got shelter in Bangladesh.
7. We can see here that these rights emerge from what Hannah Arendt long ago had termed the right to have rights.
8. Here Chris Fleming interprets René Girard's perspective on the Biblical tradition, "The uniqueness of Bible was that it effectively enacted a subversion of the sacred from *within*." It proclaimed "the innocence of victims of violence, beginning with Abel and Joseph, continuing through to prophets such as Jeremiah and Zachariah and the singers of penitential psalms, concluding finally, with Jesus Christ" (Fleming 2004: 114).
9. Both Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi walked and mediated with Bhagavad Gita. In his *Essays on Gita*, Sri Aurobindo urges us to realize that *swadharma* here does not mean the so-called *dharma* of caste and organized religion but the path of evolution of soul imbued as it is by God Consciousness or Brahmic Consciousness. As Sri Aurobindo writes: "The 'God seeker' begins with established social and religious rule in the community and 'lifts it up by imbuing it with 'Brahmic Consciousness'" (quoted in Chatterjee 2009: 165). Similarly, in Gandhi, the *dharma* in Gita is a much deeper call for one's righteous conduct in the world, for example following a path of non-violence in the midst of battles of life including inner battles (see Desai 1946).

It is in this context, it is also helpful to meditate on the following interpretation of *svadharma* offered by philosopher Tara Chatterjea:

But Krishna gives a twist, so that many modern thinkers feel that, in the Gita, *varnadharma* is seen in such a way, that the moral duties of this person are determined more by his specific nature than by his identity as the member of a class. (2008: 113)

10. *Sahadharma* emerges from what Martin Heidegger calls “midpoint of relationships.” This is suggested in the concluding lines of Rigveda where there is a call for Samagahadhwa, Sambadadhwa. For Daya Krishna, this path of togetherness is the call of the future and the God to come is a God of togetherness. In his words:

Rta and *Satya* provide the cosmic foundation of the universe and may be apprehended by *tapasa* or disciplined “seeking” or *sadhana* and realized through them. The Sukta 10.191, the last *Sukta* of the *Rgveda*, suggests that this is not, and cannot be, something on the part of an individual alone, but is rather the “collective” enterprise of all “humankind” and names the “god” of this *Sukta* “Somjnanam” emphasizing the “Togetherness” of all “Being” and spelling it out as *Sam Gachbhadhwam*, *Sam Vadadyam*, *Sambho Manasi Jayatam*, *Deva Bhagam Jathapurve Sanjanatam Upasate*. (Krishna 2006: 8)

11. Here what Fred Dallmayr writes bringing Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger and the idea of *loka-samgraha* from Bhagvad Gita deserves our careful consideration as it also presents us a glimpse and pathways of *sahadharma*:

As an antidote to the spread of “worldlessness” in our time, Hannah Arendt recommended the restoration of a “public realm” in which people would actively participate and be mutually connected. Digging beneath this public forum, Heidegger unearthed the deeper source of connectedness in the experience of “care” (*Sorge*, *c ura*) in its different dimensions. From the angle of human “being-in-the-world,” care penetrates into all dimensions of this correlation—in the sense that existence is called upon to care about “world” and its constituent features (fellow-beings, nature, Cosmos). Differently put: There cannot be, for Heidegger, an isolated “self-care” (*c ura sui*) without care for the world—that includes care for world maintenance (without which *Dasein* cannot

exist). In this latter concern, is work does not stand alone. In the Indian tradition, especially the *Bhagavad Gita*, we find an emphasis on a basic ethical and ontological obligation: the caring attention to “world maintenance” or loka-samgraha. According to the Gita, such attention needs to be cultivated, nurtured and practiced in order for human life to be sustainable and meaningful. (Dallmayr 2016: 51–52)

12. We can read the Betsy Taylor and Herbert Reid’s important book, *Recovering the Commons: Democracy, Place and Global Justice Movement*, from this perspective of *sahadharma* (Taylor and Reid 2010).
13. From a cultural historical perspective what T. R. S. Sharma writes about the interaction between Sanskrit and Tamil in Indian linguistic universes deserve our attention:

When the northern Sanskrit culture encountered the southern cultures such as Tamil and Kannada, how did these cultures interact with each other? The interface between Sanskrit and Tamil, to take Tamil first, provides a contested cultural space wherein we envisage a constant, continuing recording—a recording that confers on each other mutual, albeit fluid, identities. While reading the classical Tamil texts, my emphasis will be on the intricate, subtle civilizational process involved in the encounter. The present-day reader who is more used to seeing conflicts between different cultures would really be hard put to finding them in these texts. On the contrary, what these texts record, register does not smack of any deep hostility or resistance to Sanskrit, as one is prone to expect when Tamil confronted Sanskrit. The encounter very often resulted in quiet and prevalent forms of negotiation, readjustment, and an excursive poetics of culture—as seen, for instance, in the *bhakti* hymns of the later periods. (Sharma 2014: ix)

14. For Taylor and Reid (2010), we need folded ontology in place of flat ontology of modernity.
15. University of Earth is an initiative of a local priest in San Cristobal of La Cassas in the Chiapas which creates a learning environment using local means and needs.
16. Here what Ayesha Jalal writes in her recent work on Pakistan also provides us a glimpse of difficult work of cultural regeneration and cosmopolitanization:

The burgeoning of a popular culture in the midst of State-sponsored Islamization and terrorism is a remarkable feat for Pakistan. It draws on rich and vibrant poetic, musical, and artistic traditions that are well manifested in the country's diverse regional and sub-regional settings [...] If military dictatorships have not stunted the creative impulse, the unending waves of terror and counter terror are being resisted through imaginative recourse to local, regional, as well as transnational idioms of a cosmopolitan humanism that celebrates rather than eliminates the fact of difference. [...] But the misery and human degradation that has sprung from the effects of external wars on Pakistani soil have been an equally powerful factor in raising the popular interest in the rich cultural repertoire of the mystical traditions of the country. (Jalal 2014: 393, 394, 395)

17. The following poem by the author explores these pathways of memory works, route works and route works as well as meditations:

Roots and Routes: Memory Works and Meditations

Roots and Routes
 Routes within Roots
 Roots with Routes
 Multiple Roots and Multiple Routes
 Crisscrossing With Love
 Care and *Karuna*
 Crisscrossing and Cross-firing
 Root work and Route Work
 Footwork and Memory Work
 Weaving threads
 Amidst threats
 Dancing in front of terror
 Dancing with terrorists
 Meditating with threat
 Meditating with threads
 Meditating with Roots and Routes
 Root Meditation
 Route Meditation
 Memory Work as Meditating with Earth
 Dancing with Soul, Cultures and Cosmos

[UNPAR Guest House, Bandung February 13, 2015 9 AM]

18. One of the animating songs of Ekta Parishad is:

Jai Jagat, Jai Jagat, Jai Jagat Pukareja..

Which means victory to the world, victory to the world

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Earth and World: Roots and Routes

Fred Dallmayr

As has often been noted, things are falling apart in our time. This applies to the rupture of family relations, the gulf between the rich and the poor, and the rift between nation-states and between the global “West” and the “rest.” All these forms of division are pregnant with the possibility of violence and destruction. This prospect is intensified by another rift

Regarding the “Roots and Routes” issue, the political context has to some extent changed in recent times, at least in America. When I wrote my piece on the topic, I assumed that the two terms were mutually compatible in their difference and were “cross-fertilizing” each other. This seemed to me quite sensible. But now the emphasis (by Donald Trump) is so one-sidedly on ethnic “roots” that the dimension of “routes” is seen as purely derivative from “roots.” Sharply stated this means that “spirit” is reduced to ethnicity or race. Here I cannot at all agree. Trump has even urged some people whose spirit or spiritual goals differ from their ethnicity, that they should leave the country. This is an ethnic fundamentalism which has already brought much misery to the world.

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which, in a way, underpins all others: the rift in the experience of temporality, more precisely, in the experience of past and future. Seen as a mode of permanent revolution, (Western) modernity has unleashed a process of relentless innovation, while sidelining or even obliterating traditional ways of life. In response to this process, modernity has also triggered a longing for locally grounded stability and the retrieval of past memories. Thus, in both the West and much of the “rest,” modern human life is caught in the pull of seemingly infinite strivings and the counterpull of finite backgrounds and historically nurtured origins. In a concise manner, Indian anthropologist and social theorist Ananta Kumar Giri has captured the gist of this counterpoint in the formula “roots and routes.”

As Giri points out, modernity involves a process of steady innovation, searching for “new paths of future development.” At the same time, we witness also a process that T.K. Oommen has called “ethnification” and Alain Touraine a “strengthening of ethnic communities.” What is significant and pathbreaking in Giri’s approach is his unwillingness to allow the counterpoint of orientations to decay into dualism or antithesis. This effort is evident already in his title “Cross-Fertilizing Roots and Routes.” Regarding the meaning of “roots,” Giri invokes the beautiful comments of Simone Weil in her book *Need for Roots*: “To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. [...] A human being has roots by virtue of his/her real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular measures of the past and certain expectations for the future.” As he makes clear right away (entirely in Weil’s spirit), rootedness has nothing in common with ethnocentrism, exclusionary patriotism, and (what Weil herself called) “self-idolatry.” Unfortunately, he complains, too often ethnic and national patriotism reproduces today “a logic of self-idolatry.”

To prevent rootedness from lapsing into self-enclosure, recourse must be taken to the counterpull of openness and innovation—a counterpull which, however, should not be equated with a leap into a vacuous no-man’s land or abstract universalism. Rather, what openness means is the willingness to undergo a journey or learning experience, that is, to venture into exploratory “routes.” Following anthropologist James Clifford, Giri describes “routes” as translocal itineraries involving a “series of encounters and translations” bypassing the lure of “rootless histories and modernities.” Capturing the central aspect of counterpoint, he speaks sensibly of “the cross-roads of roots and routes,” a cross-roads bringing into view

“new modes of engagement and understanding” or, in Enrique Dussel’s words, a “transmodernity” pregnant with “unsuspected cultural richness.” As Giri recognizes, the itineraries demanded in our time are difficult, challenging and full of risks because violent derailments are nearly overwhelming. Drawing in part on Valentine Daniels’ book *Charred Lullabies*, subtitled *Chapters in an Anthropology of Violence*, he speaks of “the difficult journey of non-violent resistance and transformation in a world where violence presents itself as the tempting easy option for both the State as well as non-state actors.”

The danger of violence—of tensional relations derailing into violent ruptures—is present everywhere in the world today: from tribal conflicts in Africa to Sunni-Shia rifts in the Muslim world to hostilities between populations in Western and Eastern Ukraine. Giri refers to the dismal conditions in Assam, especially in Bodoland, where “ethnic groups are at each other’s throat.” In fact, beyond Assam, the whole North-East of India (he says) has become “cauldron of ethnic violence and annihilation and the State is not the only agent of killing there.” The solution is not the forced imposition of unity and homogeneity by the State on heterogeneous groups or populations. On the contrary: homogenizing peace initiatives framed by the State to integrate differences risk precisely to “reinstale the hegemonic structure” which is breeding the problem. Hence, the importance of “cross-roads,” of attempts at “cross-fertilizing” roots and routes. In Giri’s words: The widespread experience of violence highlights the need “to create a culture, space and politics of dignity and respect, one of hospitality.” This need must be learned by both State and non-state actors because both can be, and have been, agents of “terror”: “So far nation-states and ethnical groups are used to a politics of taking hostage, and now they need to practice a politics and spirituality of hospitality.”

One of the most unusual and admirable qualities of Giri’s writings is his ability to draw lessons and inspiration from both non-Western and Western texts or traditions and from the “border-crossing” between philosophy and anthropology. Referring to phenomenologist J.N. Mohanty, he notes that our lifeworlds (including ethnic lifeworlds) are “not closed within themselves but are in communication with each other”—an aspect which can be illuminated by the notion of “analogizing apperception” developed by Mohanty’s mentor Edmund Husserl: “The gap between the far and the near is closed by analogizing apperception of the far as if it were near.... [Thus] the relativity of the lifeworld

is to be overcome by making what is strange, foreign, unfamiliar gradually familiar.” Another way of elucidating the bridging of the “gap” (in recent Western philosophy) can be found in Jean-Luc Nancy’s notion of “mondialisation.” In opposition to the “uniformity” produced by a globalizing economic and technological logic, Nancy sees “mondialisation” as an authentic process of world formation respecting both cultural diversity and the “cross-fertilization” of differences.

As an aside, Giri in this context also refers briefly to Martin Heidegger’s search for a “midpoint of relationships.” Actually, this search can be seen as a central feature of Heidegger’s entire work. It certainly undergirds his discussion of the relation between “earth” and “world”—which can be seen as an analogue to the interplay between “roots” and “routes.” In Heidegger’s presentation, the terms “world” and “earth” refer basically to the difference between openness and sheltering, between revealment and concealment, between the disclosure of future possibilities of life and the reticence of finite origins. As in Giri’s case, what is important to note, however, is that difference is not equivalent to dualism or antithesis, but rather serves as a synonym for counterpoint or differential entwinement. In Heidegger’s words, difference here establishes a counterpoint which is a kind of “midpoint” between world and earth, but not in the sense of a stark antagonism. Hence, world is not simply openness and earth not simply closure; rather, there is mutual conditioning and interpenetration: “World provides the clearing for the paths of the guiding directions of life”; but these directions rely on “something not mastered, concealed and sheltered.” Similarly, earth is not simply closed but “opens itself up in and through self-sheltering.”¹ It is in the interplay of earth and world that, for Heidegger, the pathways of human life—Giri’s “itineraries”—are to be found. A similar thought is also at work in his discussion of temporality and history—where past and future are not split asunder into the “dead hand” of a mummified tradition, on the one hand, and radical futuristic “projects,” on the other, but remain linked in a differential entwinement (*Herkunft/Zukunft*).²

As helpful as these forays into Western philosophy may be, the most illuminating and inspiring insights in Giri’s writings derive from Indian or South Asian spirituality. An important source—perhaps *the* key source—in this respect is the Bhagavad Gita with its emphasis on “*dharma*” seen as the proper, ethical path of human life. As he points out, an important distinction here is between *svadharma* (dharma or normative code of self) and *paradharma* (code of others). Literally construed, *svadharma*

means a “dharma of one’s being, the path of one’s unfolding and the duty one seeks and needs to follow.” Thus, in India, *svadharma* would be a code for Hindus and *paradharma* a code for Muslims. This, however, would be a “superficial rendering” because in their nature dharmas are also relational. To make this point clear, and to prevent merely antagonistic construal, Giri observes, “we need to create a new category of *sabadharma* (dharma of togetherness).” In fact, we need “a new culture, political theology and spiritual ecology which nurtures spaces of togetherness.” In this space of *sabadharma*, all religious, cultural, and ethnic groups would be able to travel and “strive together.” This space is similar to what Herbert Reid and Betsy Taylor have called a new or “recovered commons” which brings together self, other, and the world.³ In contemporary India, Giri finds an adumbration of such a commons in a movement called *Ekta Parishad* which, uniting people from different backgrounds, is striving to create the world as a large family, in accordance with the classical Indian motto “*vasaudheva kutumbakam*” (let the world become a family). This is certainly a teaching for all times, but especially and most urgently for our time.

NOTES

1. See Martin Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” in *Holzwege*, 4th ed. (Frankfurt-Main: Klosterman, 1963), pp. 43–44; “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in David F. Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 176–177. For a fuller discussion of these issues see my “Mindfulness and Art: Naturing Nature,” in *Mindfulness and Letting Be: On Engaged Thinking and Acting* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), pp. 71–86.
2. On these issues see Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodor Kisiel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992); also my “Mindfulness and History: The Future of the Past,” in *Mindfulness and Letting Be*, pp. 87–97.
3. Herbert Reid and Betsy Taylor, *Recovering the Commons* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010). Giri also points to the concluding lines of the *Rigveda* and their call for *san gacchadhvam* and *sam vadadhvam*, intimating that the “God to come” will be a “God of togetherness.”



First and Second Nature

Piet Strydom

INTRODUCTION

The figure of thought Ananta Kumar Giri introduces in his poser, namely “roots and routes”, adumbrated by Fred Dallmayr in his response by the addition of the Heideggerian conceptual pair “earth and world”, is truly thought-provoking. Inspired partly by Gandhi and partly by Simone Weil, Giri indicates a direction of interpretation for his figure by mentioning conceptual pairs put forward by other authors. Among them are “tradition and modernity”, “home and world”, “near and far” and “closed and open”. The dialectic captured by these different yet closely aligned formulas allows him to do two things: first, offering a penetrating diagnosis of the currently fraught situation, particularly in parts of India but of course by no means only there, which is characterized by a pronounced willingness to resort to force and violence perpetrated by a variety of agents; and, second, suggesting ways of constructively interpreting and practically ameliorating this situation. The key component of his proposal turns on a single vital idea which is expressed in a variety of different ways:

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“dynamic process”, “cross-fertilization”, “border-crossing”, “bridging”, “translation” and “communication”.

How could one possibly disagree with this? Fault could hardly be found with the formal structure of Giri’s argument, while much of the substance is convincing. But there is nonetheless something striking about his development of this dynamic figure of thought. Were one to probe where expansion or deepening could be instructive, it would in my view be found in the confinement of the argument to sociocultural parameters and, hence, the corresponding lack of attention to nature, despite some references to “natural resources” and the “environment”. The rootedness of the sociocultural world in nature and the implications and consequences thereof which show up in the routes humans pursue are never contemplated. The same limitation is to be observed also in Dallmayr’s response to Giri’s poser. It is at this juncture, therefore, that I propose to introduce yet another figure of thought which takes up the same metaproblematic as those mentioned above but embeds it considerably deeper, namely: first and second nature.

This conceptual pair invokes the relation between nature and the socio-cultural world which can no longer be ignored, given our appreciation today that the human form of life is an integral part of nature. Awareness has to be maintained of our acute contemporary ecological consciousness, but even more important is that the evolutionary descent of anatomically modern humans, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, their reflexive cognitively fluid species mind and their naturally rooted sociocultural form of life must throughout be taken into account. To compensate for any vestiges of sociologicistic, culturalist or idealistic tendencies, I thus introduce a weak-naturalistic cognitive perspective¹ to offer some brief suggestions as to the relation between first and second nature. It is weak rather than strong naturalistic since it maintains a complementary acknowledgement: that the sociocultural world exists in its own right as far as it stretches rather than being amenable to a *reductio ad absurdum* to nature, on the one hand; and that nature is by no means inconsequential root of all the routes pursued in the sociocultural world, on the other. And the perspective is cognitive in the sense that the focus is on the intelligible or understandable elements, components or structures that evolve and become embodied in the mind—irrespective of whether in the head, in social institutions and systems or in culture and meta-culture; and irrespective of whether being of an intellectual-instrumental, social-normative or subjective-aesthetic nature. Furthermore, considering that a particular concern of Giri’s is to contribute to the improvement of our ability “to

understand...multiple and multi-dimensional processes of genesis, ongoing dynamics and reconstitution”, this intervention is simultaneously calculated to support and strengthen social science’s formal grasp of its object and its methodology and, thereby, to enhance its critical capacity and practical efficacy.²

I

An elucidation of roots in the case of humans and their form of life is inadequate as long as it remains confined to ethnicity, community or, more generally, to the sociocultural world, including even the meta-cultural dimension of the latter, to the neglect of the natural historical processes or evolution that brought them into being in the first instance. Humans and their characteristic mind are products of nature, as is also their unique sociocultural form of life which itself presupposes both the workings of nature and of the mind. Having started some six million years ago, the process of hominization took 4.2 million years for at least three different human species to appear, which in turn were eventually all superseded by *Homo sapiens* a mere 130,000 years ago. This still leaves anatomically modern humanity, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, that made its definitive appearance during the Paleolithic period between 60,000 and 30,000 years ago when the process of encephalization, the increase in the size of the brain, which had previously culminated in *Homo Neanderthalis* and *Homo sapiens*, remarkably became further enhanced by the acquisition of a meta-level capacity enabling meta-representation or reflexivity and cognitive fluidity (Mithen 1998; Sperber 2000; Stringer 2012; Wilson 2012; Dunbar 2014).

Two aspect of human evolution, more specifically of phylogenesis in the sense of the evolution of the form of the human species, are crucial for an adequate grasp of their roots and routes. One is the very core of the microbiological form of the human species, the other the form of the mind of the human species.

First, having inherited the mitochondria or life-giving oxygen-processing mechanism in our cells which is passed on to their offspring only by women, all the humans alive at present are descendants of the formally identified, closest direct ancestor in the female line. However pronounced ethnic, communal and sociocultural differences may be, therefore, it has thus been demonstrated that all of us, including every contemporary person, have one and the same arch-mother, in biology

known as “Mitochondrial Eve” (Cann et al. 1987; Dennett 1996; Stringer 2012). This evolutionary fact, cutting as it does much deeper than ethnic, communal and sociocultural conditions, sheds light on the phenomenon of the roots of humans and their form of life that is in need of being made explicit, diffused and appropriated generally. According to a well-known proverb regarding consanguinity, blood is thicker than water, but what has become apparent in the last almost three decades is that at a still deeper level mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) is actually thicker than blood.

The second evolutionary fact is equally important but it has a bearing on the variety of routes taken by humans and, hence, the diversity of the sociocultural forms of life they create and maintain. Whereas the enlarged brain of *Homo sapiens* had been accompanied by a mind consisting of a number of distinct, unconnected cognitive domains, intelligences or modules (social, physical, biological, technical and incipient musical-linguistic), the development of language and linguistic communication contributed to a fundamental architectonic modification with astonishing consequences. This enhancement of the brain marks the emergence of an overarching meta-level module which, as suggested earlier, enabled a remarkable new capacity. The outcome was the cognitively fluid mind of *Homo sapiens sapiens* which is characterized by the flexible interrelation of once sharply separated modules (Mithen 1998; Cross 2001). And this reconfiguration of the mind furthermore involved a re- or meta-representational or reflexive ability that allowed the mind to pass from actuality to potentiality, from the immanent to the transcendent (Sperber 2000; Stringer 2012; Dunbar 2014). Since the occurrence of this remarkable spurt, we humans are able to see virtually all connections, the whole context as it were, both what is in the world and the world itself, and increasingly to sense the transcendental and regulative principles³ which make it all possible. This transcendental stratum not only allows us to create a human sociocultural world, but also to repair whatever breaks down, whether in context-specific interpersonal relations or between diverse human worlds and their entailments and preconditions. It is on the basis of this remarkable enhancement of the mind that art, religion and deliberate technological innovation originally emerged some 40,000 years ago—what in palaeontology, archaeology and evolutionary biology are variously called “the Middle/Upper Paleolithic transition”, “our Great Leap Forward”, “the big bang of human culture”, “the cultural explosion”, “the creative explosion” or “the Human Revolution” (e.g. Mithen 1998; Diamond 2005; Wilson 2012; Stringer 2012).

Without the reflexive, cognitively fluid mind these unique human achievements would all remain inconceivable. Today, consequently, we are in principle able to appreciate the whole of human sociocultural diversity as well as its rootedness in nature rather than short-sightedly fixing on the ethnic, social and cultural differences composing the diversity while persisting in an unsustainable relation to nature.

A big question mark hangs over contemporary humanity, however. Against the foil of the two basic facts regarding human evolution or phylogeny reviewed above, the enormous discrepancy between what we humans evolutionarily are and who we socio-culturally take ourselves to be stands out rather graphically—like a sore thumb, as the saying goes. Despite the unity mitochondrial DNA lends the human species and despite the reflexive, cognitively fluid, human mind’s unique capacity to appreciate the naturally rooted double status of the world which simultaneously contains and transcends itself, contemporary humanity nevertheless seems unequal to the task of inferring the whole of diversity beyond the differences comprising the diversity and of working towards realizing an ecologically sustainable sociocultural arrangement fitting to it.

II

We humans belong to both nature and the sociocultural world. An explanation for the conspicuous contradiction between the innate capacity and the sociocultural incapacity of contemporary humanity has to be sought, therefore, in the relation between first and second nature. This proposal is in accord with a weak-naturalistic stance (Habermas 1999, 2005, 2007; Strydom 2002, 2013, 2015b, 2019) which not only accepts that there is continuity between nature and the human sociocultural world, but simultaneously insists that the sociocultural world together with its transcendental structure must be acknowledged in its own right. Ontological primacy is ascribed to nature, yet for everyday action and social science the sociocultural dimension serves as the priority epistemological perspective.

To grasp the meaning of first nature, one has to appreciate with Darwin that nature is not just a force, *physis* (φύσις) or *ornatura naturans*, but also a law (Peirce 1998). Not only does it lie behind the spontaneous springing forth of things, including humans, but it is also an inheritance by—in parent-like manner—giving its offspring a general resemblance of

itself. It affords the offspring a variety of opportunities, while simultaneously imposing certain limits and restrictions on them. The process of hominization which brought humans and the human world into being is thus complemented by different natural processes that generally shape and give form to the sociocultural world. Among the latter are ecological (Jackendoff 2004; Kaufmann and Clément 2007) as well as coordination (Piaget 1983) processes. The former category includes group membership, alliance formation, cooperation, competition, play, rivalry, dominance, subordination and conflict, and the latter processes such as attending, comparing, relating, combining, ordering, interacting, evaluating and judging. As in the case of our *Homo* ancestors as well as contemporary primates, these processes provide humans and their form of life with elementary social and practical forms which are categorically graspable. Unlike primates who are equipped to grasp such forms only pre-verbally (Maestripieri 2012; Conein 2012), humans are able to grasp and even formulate them to a high degree of explicitness in the linguistic medium. Humans therefore possess the unique ability as well as the necessary means to identify the natural causal roots of these elementary forms and both to extrapolate them by inferring their transcendental structure and to construct corresponding sociocultural forms which—in felicitous cases—become emancipated from and surpass nature in certain significant respects. Concepts such as truth, right, justice, truthfulness and authenticity stand for the transcendental structure, while sociocultural forms such as scientific practice, democratic and human rights practices and, finally, responsive and responsible selfhood practices are in the best case scenario free from nature by going beyond certain of its constraints which are retarding and even debilitating from a sociocultural standpoint.

Second nature refers to the sociocultural world as a second or quasi-reality that arises from first nature, builds on it and potentially stretches beyond the limits and restrictions given with its handed-down resemblance. The concept has a protracted, albeit somewhat submerged, history in the tradition of Critical Theory, stretching from Lukács (1971) and Adorno (1970) to Apel (1979) and Habermas (2005)⁴ where it has been understood as pinpointing the inherently ambivalent and even contradictory nature of society and culture. The defining feature of the internally fraught sociocultural world can be made more intelligible still, however, with reference to the elementary social forms that ontologically and cognitively secure continuity between first and second nature. For example, group membership is a natural or innate property shared

by primates, archaic *Homo sapiens* and *Homo sapiens sapiens*, but in the case of the latter in-group and inter-group cooperation is a socio-culturally learned achievement going beyond the basic form provided by natural mechanisms and intuitive experiential cognition. In reality, however, the second nature of *Homo sapiens sapiens*, despite its characteristic form-giving transcendental structure and openness to the reflexive and cognitively fluid mind, is often marred and distorted by the intrusion and even dominance of natural mechanisms and intuitive experiential cognition in a domain that could and at this stage should have extracted itself from such interfering regularities of first nature. Instead of arrangements that possess legitimacy and, hence, are justifiable in accordance with the taken-for-granted transcendental foundations of the sociocultural world, familiar objectionable and thus criticizable phenomena such as antagonistic particularisms, murderous identities, humiliating domination, injurious conflict and destructive war come to predominate together with their erosive and disintegrative consequences.

Here the crucial point of the above argument emerges. It should be obvious that it is actually these ambivalent and contradictory forms at the juncture of first and second nature that represent the proper object of social science—but, of course, a social science possessing a critical capacity and thus able and willing to make a practical contribution by simultaneously extrapolating the possibilities and opportunities opened by first nature and going beyond the debilitating constraints it harbours and so often linger on in sociocultural forms of life. By unearthing, explaining and critiquing the retention in the sociocultural world of the limits and restrictions of appropriated elementary forms rooted in and originally made available by first nature, and by disclosing worthwhile routes to explore beyond such limits and restrictions, such a social science is well placed to help cultivate a general sense of the transcendental structure of the sociocultural world and the realizability of a justifiable and thus legitimate selection of its potentials under specific historical conditions. In social life, such a sense of transcendental foundations—for instance, ideas such as truth, right, justice and authenticity, to mention but a few—allows not just a slow process along the arrow of time of drawing the elementary forms deriving from first nature towards their sociocultural destiny. Under problematic or crisis conditions, especially ones steeped in communication, both ordinary everyday interaction and issue-centred contesting discourse, it could also exert a powerful incursive and hence potentially transformative impact against the arrow of time. Emancipation

from unmodified or hardly modified natural forms retained in some reified version in personality structures, social institutions and cultural models—reified forms generating particularisms, deformed identities, domination, conflict and war—depends on and demands precisely the transformative counterfactual force of such incursive intervention and impact.⁵

It is at the juncture of limiting natural social forms and emancipation from their constraints in favour of realizing a human sociocultural world that the phenomenon of learning in its deepest sense resides. If there were a law to be found in social science, a law that points toward its most profound responsibility and task, then it must be this: “The broad history of evolution of learning seems to have been a slow pushing back of genetic determination to levels of a higher logical type” (Bateson 1972: 278).

III

It is notable that Giri implicitly assumes a cognitive type of position, at least in so far as he places knowledge centre stage and, still more revealingly, profusely uses the structural concept of “category” in a way that does not restrict it to scientific thinking alone, but understands it broadly as also playing a vital role in lending form and shape to social life. He celebrates local knowledge, “knowledge about local community, geography and biodiversity”, but it is of course the case that the categories underpinning such knowledge—in fact different cognitive domains—have a relation to a universal meta-level. The “cross-fertilization” of the local aspects among themselves and between them and the meta-level is enabled by the reflexivity and cognitive fluidity of the mind, in the sociocultural form of life particularly through the medium of communication. Where Giri takes a critical stance on the contemporary situation and world, he obviously presupposes our reflexive and fluid cognitive capacity together with the relevant categories and the meta-level transcendental structure informing them. To “say goodbye to culture”, as he phrases it, in the sense of taking leave of a particularistic substantive culture, for instance, is tantamount to having recourse through reflexivity and cognitive fluidity to meta-culture, to the transcendental foundations of the sociocultural world⁶—the relevant concepts, numbers, logical relations and informational redundancies. When Giri demands “new categories of reality, living and realization” and corresponding “new modes of engagement and understanding”, he does have precisely such recourse:

mobilizing the reflexivity and cognitive fluidity of *Homo sapiens sapiens*' mind, and appealing to and making inferences from the universal, macro- and meta-level cognitive order of society. One could imagine that to reach from out of a rooted, historically specific situation through such “cross-fertilization”, “border-crossing”, “translation” or “communication” towards opening up routes is nothing less than to participate in what Giri calls “transmodern and transversal processes” yet leaves largely unanalysed.

The amelioration of the divided world and currently fraught situations undoubtedly requires multidimensional, cross-fertilizing, transmodern and transversal processes, but whether a renewed embrace of religion and the concomitant cultivation of togetherness is the answer, as Giri proposes, is doubtful. Or, at least, it gives rise to a question about the conceptual problems plaguing both the notions of “religion” and “togetherness”. Like many others, these concepts are opaque or, on closer inspection, at minimum ambiguous. They require to be disambiguated theoretically for the purpose of the kind of argument Giri develops—and, indeed, such disambiguation is exactly what is required to make sense also of transmodern and transversal processes, which I leave by the wayside for the moment. Something like the meta-theoretical concept of “immanent transcendence” (Habermas 1991; Strydom 2011, 2018) would be helpful here in allowing a crucial theoretical distinction to be introduced in a justifiable way—the distinction between immanent, situational cultural models and the meta-cultural cognitive order of situation—or context-transcendent principles and presuppositions. In addition, it is necessary further to appreciate that, on the transcendent side, the cognitive order is comprised of three distinct yet interrelated validity domains—namely, the principles constituting and governing theoretical-instrumental, social-normative and finally subjective-aesthetic orientations, practices, institutional arrangements and cultural models. Given this two-row/three-column scheme, the question is: where do religion and togetherness fit in? Some conceptual analysis could help in clarifying this question.

Religion in Its Place

If one regards meta-culture cognitively as embracing a theoretical-instrumental, a social-normative and finally a—both individual and collective—subjective-aesthetic domain, all of which become activated and

realised in immanent social life through the intermediary of cultural models, then it is possible to take two steps toward clarifying religion's location quite precisely. Along the lines of "the Golden Rule", religion is most often simply assumed to concern a cultural universal which falls in the social-normative domain, but this is actually wide of the mark. Historically, religion might well have helped in the articulation of ideas such as equality, dignity and solidarity forming part of the normative foundations of society, and in future its inexhaustible semantic potential or surplus of meaning might continue in assisting further refinement. But this does not mean that religion can without more ado be equated with universal morality. Quite the contrary, since when one considers religion not in disembodied terms but rather from the more comprehensive perspective of its being a medium for the reproduction of such normative magnitudes, that is, when one regards religion as a cultural model which gives effect to normative principles in concrete social life, then a different light is shed on it. Far from the normative domain, religion in fact belongs in the subjective-aesthetic domain, which is in turn rooted in the evolutionarily acquired human cognitive endowment,⁷ from where it brings certain normative principles in some way into play. In this capacity, it serves on the one hand as a motivating force for a large number of individuals—but by no means all—to cultivate a unique and strong identity or faith enabling committed engagement in a variety of practices; and, on the other hand, as ideational material for many communities—but by no means all—to form and maintain a collective identity. The fact that religion is squarely located in the subjective-aesthetic domain accounts for why, despite its espousal of normative principles, it seems inherently unable to avoid being hitched to some particularism or another. Serving as an integrative cultural model, religion as group or collective identity requires confessionalization, or the acquisition of a particular faith, as well as communalization which more often than not is accompanied by a series of negative consequences. Historical and contemporary evidence attests that, as a rule, cultures of faith or conviction to different degrees exhibit tendencies toward exclusionary, discriminatory, violent and even murderous practices which render any invocation of or appeal to normative principles utterly hollow.

Now, Giri indeed wants to avoid the substantive "group-linked categorical meaning" attaching to "conventional religion", but his account nevertheless tends in three directions that betray the vestiges of a religio-centric view which threatens to perpetuate some of the milder negative

features we know from the history of religion. These tendencies are: first, assimilating the normative component of the transcendental foundations of society to religion; second, identifying religion with cognitive fluidity *per se*; and, third, begging the question of individual and collective subjective-aesthetic forces other than religion.

As regards the assimilation of the normative component of the transcendental foundations of society to religion, first, our cognitively fluid mind does not tolerate such a conflation. Two demands are exacted. The first is that we observe the distinction between the social-normative and subjective-aesthetic domains as dictated by their distinct conceptual structures—right, justice, freedom, equality and solidarity in the former case and truthfulness, authenticity and appropriateness in the latter. The second demand is that we appreciate the constant practical effort required to bridge the tension-laden gap between these two distinct domains. Such practical activity requires keeping in check the intrusion of those distorting impacts emanating from first nature that show up in assertions of self and collective identity which fracture the effectiveness of normative principles. Here social science has its critical and disclosing task cut out for it, as suggested above—that is to say, critically explaining the offending elementary form mediating between first and second nature and disclosing potentialities, if not realisable possibilities, beyond its distorting effects.

As regards the identification of religion with cognitive fluidity *per se*, second, there is no equivalence between the two. While religion had originally been made possible by the emergence of the cognitively fluid mind, cognitive fluidity as a transversal force is broader than religion and thus does not admit of being narrowed down or reduced to it. Cognitive fluidity spans and flexibly interweaves all three domains—the theoretical-instrumental, the social-normative and the subjective-aesthetic—comprising the transcendental structure of the human form of life, whereas religion is located in the subjective-aesthetic and makes only partial forays into the social-normative domain. The religious sense, moreover, has a sensor that is specifically trained on the mysterious and the mystical which hampers cognitive fluidity due to its concomitant tendency to dissolve essential distinctions in impenetrable mysteries. Considering that religion, not unlike poetry, capitalizes on the inexhaustible semantic potential of words, the limitless infinity of rational, irrational and transcendental numbers, the vanishing infinitesimal nature of complex fractal objects and the intangible diffuseness and ineffability of superfluous yet

necessary informational redundancies, it probably plays a by no means negligible role in preserving a sense of the unconditioned and indeterminate. Yet the reproduction of an awe of this kind is not to be confused with the transversal operation of the cognitively fluid mind. It is precisely because of its disregard for this unique mode of operation of the mind that Atran's (1996: 217) discusses religion under the title of "cognitive 'pathogenesis'" and Mithen (1998: 201) characterizes religious thought as "a mix-up of knowledge about different types of entities in the real world".

As regards begging the question of individual and collective subjective-aesthetic forces other than religion, third, the latter is undoubtedly a source of strength in various respects for millions upon millions of people, yet it is by no means the only source. It is the case that there are millions upon millions of others who draw on different sources than religion. One of the most learned people of his time and the producer of a most impressive oeuvre, Max Weber, for example confessed that he was "religiously unmusical" (Gerth and Mills 1970: 25), implying that he depended on a different source or sources for conative-volitional and emotional-motivational strength. And it is particularly relevant that recently, in addressing Indian religious leaders seeking to advance harmony in their troubled land, the Dalai Lama should be emphatic about the importance of "secularism" (Aljazeera Network 2014). By contrast with Giri who seems dismissive of secularism, he circumscribes it acutely as "respect for other religions and for non-believers", thus indicating a perspective beyond and broader than religion. One does not have to denounce religion or deny its adherents a role in public and political discourse essential to the creation and organization of the human sociocultural form of life to acknowledge that what is most urgently needed today for justifiable sociocultural and planetary realizations is not a religious morality, but rather a political normative culture and order which allows the democratic, cosmopolitan and ecological developments necessary for human and societal advancement.⁸ Such a normative culture presents the individual with a rich source of possible reference points for self-cultivation and subject-formation through cultural models other than religion. It embraces a range of counterfactual principles, the core ones of which for instance Rainer Forst and the Frankfurt excellence cluster, "The Formation of Normative Orders", make into central objects of investigation. Forst (2011: 20, 43) proceeds from "the principle of justification" which not only implies "reciprocity" and "generality", but also depends squarely

on the principle of “the right to justification” (Forst 2007), while the “triad of ideals” provide the research cluster with its focal themes of “transnational justice, democracy and peace” (Forst and Günther 2011: 28). The relevance and implications that this catalogue of meta-cultural principles possesses for individual self-cultivation and subject-formation hardly need further elaboration. But what does bear restatement is that these normative principles represent a source for conative-volitional and emotional-motivational development which does not coincide with religion. For many, of course, religion does serve as a source of motivation in their adherence to these normative principles. But that the latter is an independent source for conative-volitional and emotional-motivational development which does not coincide with religion is borne out by the fact that millions upon millions of people around the globe depend for their self-cultivation and subject-formation on these meta-cultural principles rather than on religion. And today, to be sure, nothing is more urgent than the cultivation and formation of a subject suited to a possible world society governed by the range of normative principles necessary and appropriate for the inclusion of every individual human being.

Disambiguating Togetherness

On closer inspection it seems as though, after all, the key requirement for Giri is less religion than a “new category of...togetherness” which he associates with a number of “shared commons” such as threatened mother tongues, natural resources and the environment. For by appealing to these commons he effectively grants that there is a level of reference that is more general than religion: people with different and even mutually antagonistic religions have natural resources and the environment in common, and this is the case even with mother tongues as well. But a conceptual problem comparable to that plaguing the concept of religion lurks also in the notion of togetherness which he associates with these various commons. At the outset, therefore, account should be taken of the fact that it is similarly burdened with ambiguity.

Two distinct yet mutually implicated dimensions are relevant here. On analytical reflection, it becomes clear that such palpable magnitudes occupying the substantive level as mother tongues, natural resources and the environment invoke aspects of the transcendental structure of the sociocultural world or, differently, presuppose inferences made from the concepts of the cognitive order of society occupying the meta-level: for

example, drawing upon the ideas of a free, autonomous, equal, just and dignified human existence in unique language communities, and of the objective teleology of organic cycles serving as support system of all life on planet Earth with the goal-state of which humans need to identify. From this it follows that togetherness is by no means confined to collective concerns that admit of description in the hot vocabulary of emotion, motivation, face-to-face relations, social norms, consensus and sharing—however important these may be at the micro- and meso-level. Rather, togetherness is always already more deeply at work in the form of the transcendental foundations of the naturally rooted sociocultural world which every normal, sane person takes for granted and constantly—even if mostly tacitly—draws upon inferentially.⁹ To disambiguate the concept of togetherness sharply and clearly, then, one could ask: Does it connote belonging in the immanent sense of those present having ties that bind them, or inclusion in the transcendent sense of a meta-cultural cognitive principle that affirms their immanent being together as one that is nevertheless universally open to others, the potential admission of others and respect for the dignity and rights even of those who do not belong? In terms of the immanent-transcendence scheme, in other words, togetherness connotes either belonging or inclusion¹⁰—that is, belonging as a concrete inner-worldly phenomenon and inclusion as a meta-level principle in terms of which the validity of the actual organization of the world of social relations as well as the society–nature relation can be assessed and judged.

The most basic shared commons, if the all too tendential a word “shared” can still be used here, the one that has the potential of holding together all the different versions of the sociocultural world without forcing them into a uniform straitjacket, is the set of transcendental foundations, the cognitive order of society, plus the reflexive and cognitively fluid capacity to make proper inferential use of the societal design principles it houses. Having arisen from and remaining rooted in nature yet also going well beyond it, this complex and it alone provides the necessary resources for opening novel routes: repairing the broken relations characterizing our contemporary world, and working towards the attainment of the kind of world projected by the concept of “mondialization”¹¹—an interpersonally well-organized, global, cosmopolitan being in a cared-for, planetary, biosocial ecosphere. Whatever role religious and, for that matter, secular orientations and claims might play in these processes of blazing novel trails or routes and realizing them in a diverse sociocultural

mosaic, they would be able to do so only by recourse to the resources held in common by all the members of *Homo sapiens sapiens*—both our common evolutionarily acquired cognitive endowment and our common meta-cultural principles or reason.

CONCLUSION

The creation and repair of an adequate human world, to conclude, basically requires two things: first, that the cognitive fluidity characteristic of our species' mind, while remaining rooted in nature, be freed from the superfluous tentacles of first nature that through the intermediary of frozen personality structures, practices, institutional arrangements and cultural models tend to stymie its reflexive and flexible use; and, second, that the transcendental structure of our sociocultural form of life, the cognitive order containing the design principles of society, having emerged from and gone beyond nature, be made epistemically explicit, culturally embodied and institutionally secure to a sufficient degree for it to be generally understood and effectively activated.

NOTES

1. I offer more detailed backing for the current argument in Strydom (2013, 2015b, 2019).
2. For a general account slanted toward critical theory, see Strydom (2011).
3. From a sociological perspective, I have proposed to conceive of this transcendental structure of society as “the cognitive order of society”, most recently in Strydom (2015a, 2019, In press). While it had been made possible by the attainment of the unique form of the human species' mind between 60,000 and 30,000 years ago, it is the emergent outcome over millennia of human activities and collective practices of all kinds. It is composed of intelligible meta-cultural elements that emerged as the concurrent implications of activities and practices and are linguistically available as semantic-pragmatic forms for such activities and practices. The mode of intelligibility of these cognitive elements ranges from the sharply defined to the vaguely sensed. In their guise as linguistic articulated concepts and pragmatic forms, over time some of these elements became explicitly recognized as the necessary principles that delineate a given area of activity and regulate the activities and practices taking place in it; others became consolidated as magnitudes that are felt as the pressure either to enumerate and calculate or to be logical; and, finally,

still others became vaguely or diffusely sensed as necessary and unavoidable taken-for-granted assumptions. Among the explicitly recognized are such principles as truth, right, justice, truthfulness, authenticity and so forth; among those signifying pressure are, for example, the principle of number and the principle of non-contradiction; and among those sensed as essential yet difficult or even impossible to pin down exactly are all types of redundant—that is, superfluous yet necessary—information that does not belong to a message but is nevertheless required to accompany a message to secure its proper or adequate reception and understanding, which includes all manner of contextual references, implications and invocations. What Jackendoff (2007: 354) calls “the conceptual foundations of social organization” is indeed an apt identification of the major part of the cognitive order of society but, beyond this cognitively secured semantic-pragmatic (compare also Habermas 1979) aspect, this order also embraces mathematical (e.g. Clegg 2003; Dantzig 2007) and logical (e.g. Hegel 2010; Peirce 1992, 1998; Husserl 1969) foundations as well as an informational redundancy aspect (Shannon and Weaver 1949; Van Peursen et al. 1968).

4. As for the third generation, the various uncertainties and shifts in Honneth’s (1992, 2003, 2008) theory of recognition are indices of his unwitting grappling with the very problem of first and second nature.
5. In correspondence dating from the early twentieth century, two outstanding minds, Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud (1996), reflected instructively on this very set of issues—they asked: “why war?”
6. Let us remind ourselves that classical authors like Marx, Simmel and Durkheim each in his own way acknowledged these formal, meta-cultural, cognitive structures. For example, laying the foundation of the left-Hegelian tradition’s core principle of a historically accumulated rational potential that induces reflexivity and corresponding action, Marx (1974: 85; Strydom 2018) ascribes to production what applies to any and every meta-level reflexive idea: “*Production in general* is an abstraction, but a rational abstraction in so far as it really brings out and fixes the common element...Still, this *general* category, this common element sifted out by comparison, is itself segmented many times over and splits into different determinations”. Simmel (1992: 537) submits: “The cognitive understanding, without which no human society is possible at all, rests on a small number of general – even if not abstractly conscious – rules which we call the logical. They form the unavoidable and necessary minimum of that which all those who want to relate to one another simply must recognise” (my translation). As is well-known, Durkheim (1976: 17) under the influence of Kant undertook to investigate the origin of what he refers to

- as “the necessity of the categories...[or]...reason...[as]...the condition of all common action”.
7. From the standpoint of the evolutionary inheritance of the individual, the meta-cultural subjective-aesthetic domain is rooted in the human cognitive endowment, more specifically in its endeutic (needs: location, rank, belonging-inclusion, well-being), alterocentric (ethos, group membership, collective identity, ethical self-cultivation), autonomous (self-reflexive, self-exploration, self-discovery, self-identity/faith, self-expression, self-realization) and conative-volitional (desire, aspiration, emotion, intuition, motivation, will, action, praxis) dimensions.
 8. This is the kind of argument Habermas (2001, 2005, 2006) has sought to put forward from the beginning of his career up to his more recent writings on the post-national constellation, a constitution for a pluralistic cosmopolitan world society and on religion. At the core of his position is an insistence on “the generic distinction (which is not meant in a pejorative sense) between the secular discourse that claims to be accessible to all people and the religious discourse that is dependent upon the truths of revelation”—a distinction that entails “respect” between the different parties as well as “good reasons to be willing to learn” from each other, including “from[semantically rich] religious traditions” (2006: 42).
 9. Summarizing the position of critical theorists from Horkheimer to Habermas, Honneth (2007: 39) for example writes as follows: “...the turn to the liberating praxis of cooperation does not ensue from affective bonding, feelings of togetherness or agreement, but rather from rational insight”, the idea of a “rational generality” or universalistic principle. Compare endnote 6 above.
 10. Badiou (2007: 106) also draws a distinction between belonging and inclusion on the basis of his “presentation/representation couple”, where the former designates the structural level and the latter the meta-structural level. This notion of a presentation/representation couple obviously approximates the conceptual pair encapsulated by critical theory’s immanent-transcendence scheme.
 11. To my knowledge, Michael Freitag (2007: 272) deserves the credit for the sociologically meaningful concept of “mondialization”: “I reserve the concept of mondialization to designate a process which aims at a reorganization of the normative and identitary (cultural and political) structures that govern collective life at the world level, in response to the enlarging field of collective experience and the solidarities that result from a common confrontation with the new problems stemming from globalization. Here it is a matter of trying to lay the foundations for a social organization that would follow the worldwide realization of *considered* human finalities, such as the growth of justice, well-being and freedom amidst the recognition of a self-same human dignity”. While

the cosmopolitan is implied in this statement, one could—and indeed should—add also the ecological in the sense of a sustainable continuation of the human form of life as an integral part of nature.

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Cosmopoesis: Navigating the Strangeness of Planetary Realizations

Marcus Bussey

The world is becoming strange to itself! This strangeness is the result of two inter-related states: the first is the surprise of becoming increasingly self-aware of our human embeddedness in the evolutionary unfolding of the Cosmos. The second arises from the terror that this new consciousness evokes in many today. This book of reflections on roots and routes is an important step towards articulating the multiple nature of this strangeness. In the Hebrew story of Adam and Eve and their awakening, they are surprised to find themselves naked. That story points to a similar surprise and terror as Adam and Eve stepped out into the strange world of the ‘natural’. To cope with this strangeness and surprise, human beings awoke to culture and so the Western story of the struggle between culture and nature was born. We live that ancient story today.

Separation is a key element in that narrative. Today, paradoxically, our surprise and terror is born of the growing awareness of relation.

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Separation lies at the heart of our old story. It is comfortable and reassuring yet it comes at a heavy cost. Relationship offers us new possibilities for re-enchanting and healing this world. Yet it also births new responsibilities. Relational consciousness lies at the heart of Dussel's reading of the transmodern condition that Giri evokes in the opening chapter to this book. This condition of transmodernity is premised, Giri tell us, on 'a process of rebirth, [a] searching for new paths for future development'. Just as Adam and Eve are born into culture, and thus become human, we are experiencing a rebirth into the relational awareness that preceded that awakening. And what do we become? What possible futures lie before us? The array of ethnic, nationalist and transnationalist violences afflicting the world community today are all attempts to answer these questions. The point is that we are on the cusp of a new human paradigm, or what Thomas Berry (1990) would call a new story. This 'new normal' (Wann 2010) of course, by virtue of being open and unknown, challenges the traditional, the known and the vested interests of those both comforted and made comfortable by business as usual reality. This transition is material, cultural and ontological. Those of us seizing the moment—the *cape diem* of awakening—are now pilgrims whose work it is to move forward simply because it is time to do so! Byung-Chul Han captures this movement as a pulse between two forms—it is indeterminate but deeply significant. It is a sacred act, a prayer:

The path of a pilgrimage ... is not an empty space between two places that is to be traversed as quickly as possible. Rather, it constitutes the very goal to be reached. Being-on-one's-way here is altogether meaningful. The walking means doing penance, healing or gratefulness. It is a prayer. (2017: 37)

Giri's reflection is an invitation to this kind of pilgrimage. It is a meditation on what needs to occur, the kinds of emotional and intellectual resources available to us as we make this transition. We need, as he argues, to think in terms of roots and routes in ordered to ensure both a sense of our collective journey and also of the uniqueness of local ethnicities and cultures. This chapter picks up on these thoughts by looking at the multiple routes available to us through the lens of evolutionary models that frame roots in the macrohistorical domain (Galtung and Inayatullah 1997). Evolutionary stories are part of what Wann (2010) calls the programming of the 'software' of our civilization. He suggests that we need to 'reprogram' our civilization. It seems to me such reprogramming,

which I have argued is a form of cultural hacking (Bussey 2017b), must be based on common-sensical, ethical and spiritually pragmatic footings and both account for and enable the multiple within the unity of human and cosmic experience (Bussey 2014b).

Taking inspiration from the transmodern observation of physicist Michio Kaku, that we live in a participatory universe and that ‘the universe does have a point: *to produce sentient creatures like us who can observe it so that it exists*’ (2005: 351) the approach I take is to explore the concept of cosmopoesis, which is a mimetic extrapolation of Maturana and Varela’s (1980) notion of autopoiesis. Cosmopoesis refers to the generative, reflexive nature, of our unfolding Cosmos. In this reading, the Cosmos knows itself through its creations. This is a form of extended knowing, a relational consciousness that is living. This is a strange idea, but it is rich in possibilities. The Cosmos is our home (Selvamony 2015), and ultimately the root of all our roots and the setting for all our routes. The multitude of ‘humankind’, to use a phrase from Timothy Morton (2017), find voice in this cosmic setting. This voice calls us to deepen our roots by accepting the deeply nonhuman, other than human relations we have with the organic and elemental dimensions of Being. Such roots produce alternate routes for us to follow; new pilgrimages to undertake. Such a call is, as I noted at the outset, both surprising and terrifying. The self-generation, the Cosmopoesis, that unfolds is a human tale of becoming and awakening.

This reflection works with this cosmopoetic insight by exploring how this narrative has been framed by four thinkers, Eric Chaisson, Ray Kurzweil, Henryk Skolimowski and Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar and then moves on to suggest a Neohumanist evolutionary model to understand the strangeness of the transformation that this book is grappling with (Bussey 2009a).

MACRO PERSPECTIVES ON STRANGENESS

Modernist ethnic and nationalist self-interest seek to universalize the local; transmodernist interests seek translocal dialogical spaces from which this new, or neo-human paradigm can emerge. Casting this process, as Giri and Dussel do, within the narrative structure of rebirth and anchoring it within the discourse of relational consciousness, opens this reflection to a series of co-creative developments that are occurring simultaneously in various fields. Strangeness comes when systems face discontinuity and

narratives collapse (Rushkoff 2013)—imploding and leaving a sense of disorientation. Han helps here, noting that ‘When life loses all rhythm, temporal disturbances occur’ (2017: 33). Shifting temporalities generate shifting relational spaces, and so, transformed spaces emerge when relational regimes change (Bussey 2017c). The result is a surprise of some kind. For instance, in the cosmology of Eric Chaisson (2006) (Fig. 5.1) we find a map of evolution that moves from the physical to the cultural. Each shift in his evolutionary narrative comes as a surprise. The discontinuity, however, is obscured by the elegance of the system he proposes. For Chaisson, each shift involves a new level of complexity preceded by a tipping point that inaugurates a new set of relationships in the ordering and utilization of energy. His macro-evolutionary narrative captures much that is understood about the world today. Yet it does not really help us to understand how or why each step occurred. What we are told is that across each epoch energy is being generated and released and increases in complexity as a result. This process is a property inherent to energy systems and moves us from the simple to the complex in a kind of dance.

Techno philosopher, Futurist and inventor Ray Kurzweil (Fig. 5.2) takes technology as his benchmark for evolution and posits a series of epochs with some similarities to Chaisson’s work. He sees systems generating tipping points in which new levels of complexity trigger shifts in consciousness. His focus on technology helps us understand how complexity around capacity leads to these tipping points, but he leaves the question of the inner workings of consciousness untouched. He offers us insights into ‘cultures of technology’ to understand and anticipate future

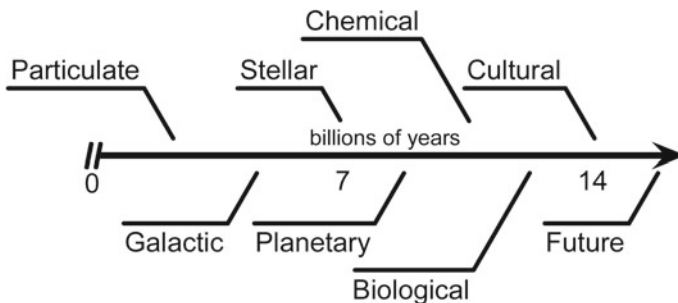


Fig. 5.1 Chaisson’s cosmic evolution (https://www.cfa.harvard.edu/~ejchaisson/cosmic_evolution/docs/splash.html)

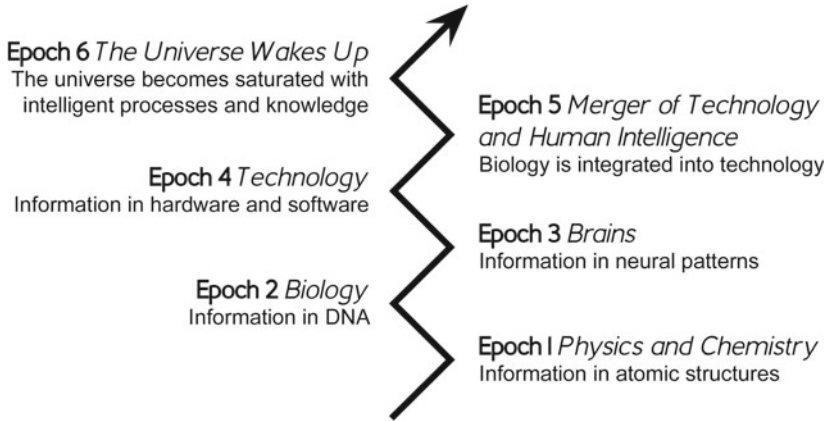


Fig. 5.2 Kurzweil's six epochs (http://rossdawsonblog.com/weblog/archives/2009/08/finding_good_im.html)

trajectories. We can see that strangeness here correlates with novel sets of relationships within technological systems. This strangeness spawns creativity and the capacity to think oxymoronically as, for example, in Kurzweil's (1999) best seller *The Age of Spiritual Machines*.

To understand the conditions around which transformation occurs, Kurzweil talks about the importance of timing. For him anticipatory consciousness—a future capability—is both empirically and intuitively informed, and timing is like catching a wave (Kurzweil 2006). Yet the clarity of the narrative, as in Chaisson, only emerges ‘retro-actively’ as we observe it to narrate it.

These stages are useful in understanding how the narratives of becoming are being expressed in the domains of cosmology and technology. Strangeness comes as new levels of complexity and reflexivity emerge in the process of Cosmopoesis. The eco-philosopher Henryk Skolimowski (2010: 4–10), however, reduces this narrative to four steps (Fig. 5.3). In so doing Skolimowski offers a bridge between western science and eastern, particularly Vedic, understandings of reality. Taking Light (1) as his starting point in the Big Bang he moves through various plays on ‘synthesis’ in which consciousness is ordered around (2) the synthesis of light (photo-synthesis) in the creation and maintenance of

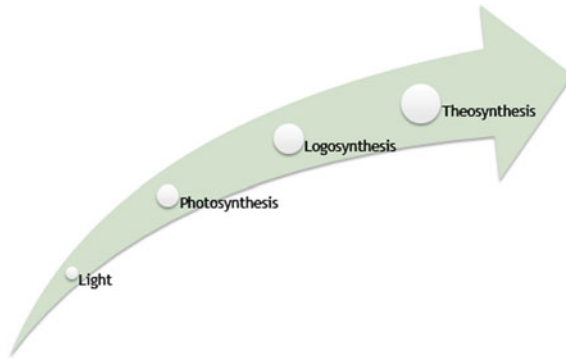


Fig. 5.3 Skolimowski's model (<http://www.liberamenteservo.it/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=4044>)

life, (3) The synthesis of words (logo-synthesis) in the creation and maintenance of consciousness and (4) The synthesis of consciousness as we make our way towards the divinity (theo-synthesis) from which we came. This is a process of 'becoming conscious' in which the co-creativity of the Cosmos-human drama is enacted cosmopoetically. For Skolimowski, self-realisation is the driver behind transformation: "Evolution" he notes "made various experiments in order to see which were the best ways leading to more intensive life, more versatile life, to the life of increased self-realisation" (ibid.: 6).

To move from this insight, in which consciousness as a self-organizing principle of inflected complexity is the driver of transformation, to our final example of this evolutionary narrative is a small step. Indian Guru and philosopher Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (2006) articulates a Tantric evolutionary approach, based on the ancient 'Brahma Chakra' cycle (Fig. 5.4). For Sarkar the individual and the collective are engaged in a dance of self-realization. This involves two stages. The first stage, called *saincara* in Sanskrit, witnesses consciousness exploding into form via the material universe. The second stage, called *pratisaincara*, involves the materiality of the physical world becoming increasingly self-aware. Thus, we have the physical dormant world creating the context out of which life emerges. Life then becomes more complex and ultimately self-aware in the sense that Skolimowski understands it.

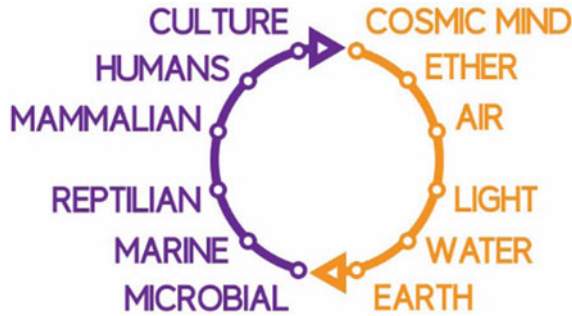


Fig. 5.4 Sarkar's Brahma Chakra

Ultimately for Sarkar this is a co-creative process in which personal self-realization is dependent on the individual's relationship to the whole (1982). At the social level, self-realization becomes co-realization as the individual comes to understand their relationship with both their local and cosmic communities as the basis of their becoming. This awareness demands of them a spiritual pragmatism and a critical spirituality (Bussey 2000, 2014b) in which self and other co-create the quality relationships necessary for long term co-realizations. For both Sarkar and Skolimowski the transition from stage to stage is built into the ontological nature of their models which are never entirely physical. For both of them, form and consciousness co-evolve. The driver is a longing to know oneself. It is expressed poetically in Sarkar's words as a 'longing for the Great'. This Cosmopoesis of becoming is driven by a spiritual urge, not simply by energy relationships as suggested by Chaisson and Kurtzweil. Longing itself is a quality of aesthetics and calls new forms into being, as form and consciousness constantly experiment in the quest to return, a pilgrimage again, to the Source of their creativity. This means that cosmopoesis, and evolution itself, are process oriented and anticipatory in nature as longing always anticipates the yet-to-be: an horizon event that calls us into action (Bussey 2017a).

Of course, self-awareness is clearly present in both Chaisson's and Kurtzweil's work, but it is cultural and cognitive in nature. Absent also from their models is any notion that rebirth might be immanent. Theirs are purely linear models in keeping with the modernist myth of progress. What is interesting, however, is that Skolimowski's model is implicitly

cyclical and Sarkar's model explicitly cyclical rather than linear. The West prefers the linear even when faced with the non-linearity of post-normal science (Ravetz 2011). For both Skolimowski and Sarkar the kind of human being involved in this journey is a physically, socially and spiritually driven entity with new levels of humanity being expressed through increasingly relational consciousness. It is possible within such models, as the result of their cyclical forms, to posit rebirth and a new Renaissance in consciousness. For Chaisson, increasing levels of complexity in energy regimes are the driver, whilst Kurzweil is more specific, identifying capability, ultimately expressed via technological affordances, as the key evolutionary principle. Each thinker, in these examples, frames evolution according to their epistemological and cultural lens. Each gives us insights into the evolutionary processes Giri is pointing to when he discusses the nature of roots and routes.

ROOTS AND ROUTES

How to grapple with these two interwoven terms therefore depends on where one places oneself in relation to the macro-perspectives offered above. There is not much room in the models of Chaisson and Kurzweil for exploring the nuances that Giri proposes around rebirth, hospitality, dharma and 'a new politics and spirituality of *sadbhava* and struggle, compassion and confrontation'. The world historian David Christian (2004), who draws heavily on Chaisson, proposes 'collective learning' as the vehicle by which we come to understand ourselves. Collective learning creates the cultural space for the struggles that Giri is sensitive to. Collective learning has both roots and routes. However, it does not carry the richness or possibilities of a concept such as *dharma*. Dharma pertains, as Giri notes, to one's unique mode of expression. Yet it also has collective implications. It offers a layered sense making (Bussey 2011) that is deeply mythic in nature, draws together a set of epistemological insights into what drives the constant experimentation that is the defining feature of a cosmopoetic worldview, whilst suggesting a relational system of tolerance, inclusivity and right action in the world of form. Thus, it embraces the roots of Indian Vedic and Tantric culture, whilst offering a set of relational routes into the future.

DHARMA: UNIVERSAL AND LOCAL

This expression is universal: the *dharma* of human beings is to test limits, to critique the given logic of the day-to-day and reveal alternatives immanent to each moment (Bussey 2009c). Thus, we are all filled with an inner yearning to expand our potential, to reach out of any given present into possible futures. Yet dharma is also specific, the dharma of a particular human being or group is to realize this universal urge *in the local*. This consciousness of one's *dharma* is essential, yet it is not given by a theology, or ideology or even a culture to determine what one's *dharma* is. This awareness arises out of interaction with one's world and also out of one's inner capacity to reflect and meditate on the nature of Being. This is a meditative *sadhana*¹ of co-realization as Giri acknowledges.

So, when we turn to the play between roots and routes we are faced with the tensions around belonging (as in roots) and becoming (as in routes). This requires us to think of reality as a set of nested systems in which awareness is expressed according to the layer. Thus, both socio-sentimental and geo-sentimental consciousness sees only those of one's group, territory or species as related, whilst a humanist consciousness expands relationship to include all of humanity (Morton 2017; Sarkar 1982).

Beyond this, we find the new or neo-humanity that is co-arising in the present era. This neo-humanity calls for an awareness of our *cosmic connection*. At the Cosmic level our roots are one and indivisible; as Carl Sagan (2000) notes, we are all recycled star dust. Interestingly, for Skolimowski we are beings of light and for Sarkar we are beings of Cosmic consciousness.² All, in their own way, point to this underlying unity behind the diversity of forms. But this does not help us in a world where roots are geopolitically and ethnically defined. In such a world, difference is more important than sameness (Bussey 2018). Sameness, in such a world, is to be read as an attempt to gloss and numb the pain of separation.³

CHALLENGING PARAMETERS

The strangeness that comes out of a recognition of Cosmic sameness, and the Cosmopoesis this implies, is too much for many. It challenges fundamental identity parameters. It sponsors the array of ethnic and specist fundamentalisms tearing at the world today. So, challenge them we must. The local identification of self with a language, a culture, an ethnic group

allows us to situate ourselves in a way we can manage. Such categories as mother tongue and culture offer us the comfort of the Mother's embrace. Yet, as we grow to adulthood, we must thank our mothers and move on to wider horizons beyond the lap of the local. This moving on is filled with risk and suspense, as the route is indeterminate. It is not a denial of who we are at the local, it is an evolution to ever broader identity horizons which involve, as Giri notes, a search for "new categories of reality, living and realization". In this process the Cosmic rediscovers the local in all its richness and uniqueness.

Today the world stands on the edge of a great homogenisation in the face of hegemonic tendencies. Yet such tendencies deny the human instinct for the unique. Such a reorientation in consciousness fosters cultural resilience in the face of the hegemonic. It calls forth a love of the multiple. Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy stresses this point and argues that human consciousness is always local and unique in its expression. Thus, she notes, "where consciousness co-arises with form, it is, in every instance, particular" (2007: 41).

A NEOHUMANIST EVOLUTIONARY MODEL

Evolutionary and macrohistorical explanations presume some kind of pressure that sets the condition for a 'next step'. Each step is strange to the one that precedes it and a surprise to those who enter it. The human capacity to narrate the shift, to make sense of it, is never up to the task. To witness, bear testimony to this emergent co-arising is accompanied by a surplus that cannot be articulated (see for details Frank 1995). So, we grope towards an articulation using metaphor and evocative, poetic language. This is so because, as Derrida observes, we are not able to comprehend the nature of the 'enlightenment to come' (2005: 147), yet there is pattern to work with. This is what Chaisson, Kurzweil, Skolimowski and Sarkar are all looking for: *pattern*. How we see pattern is determined by our own cultural and epistemological lens. As both a futurist and world historian I have the opportunity to look—even collect—patterns (Bussey 2009b). When the object of study is the evolution of consciousness in culture then an interesting pattern emerges. This is a Neohumanist pattern that helps us understand how rebirth is occurring, even whilst we paradoxically continue to both die and evolve. Indeed, the pilgrim must die to their roots, follow new routes, in order to achieve their spiritual task of re-enchanting the world.

HUMAN EVOLUTION IS HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

What we see in the early stages of human evolution is human consciousness embedded in the natural world. Cultures of fire and community exist in this phase to increase the security of the group. Human existence is aligned to the seasons, it is nomadic and vulnerable. Memory is collective and life is short. This phase is the Palaeolithic—it is the *longue durée* of Indigenous being when the collective defined the human being. I think of this as Collective 1. This phase was followed by the Neolithic Revolution and the invention of agriculture and the emergence of settled communities. In this new strange world humans discovered their ability to manipulate nature in the form of agriculture. This ability was premised on the separation of human culture from nature. The agricultural social world was, however, still insecure—now there were other human beings as predators and agriculture was always vulnerable to the shifting moods of climate—so more complex cultures emerged as a way to build security into the system, yet because humans build patterns they also create institutions to maintain them and with these came organized religion. The result of all this is that forms came to dominate lives and to ingest our dreams and to edit and delete the possibilities immanent in the formless world of inner being (Jaynes 2000; Thompson 2004).

Community at this stage resembled the hive with a few priests and leaders, think of Odysseus and Tiresias, of Arjun and Rama, of the thinkers and actors of the Axial Age, experiencing a sense of individuality and agency. I think of this period as **Collective 2**. It is characterized by an increasing divide between humanity and the natural world. Ultimately, Collective 2 gave way to ever increasing complexity taking forms we recognize as the early civilizations. These civilizations emerged at different times (there is no temporal correlation here) along rivers in Eurasia, China, Sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Meso-America. This period of the early civilizations, I think of as Civilization 1. In turn, over time Civilization 1 became more complex, hierarchies abounded as did specialization. Now kingdoms, city states and empires came into their own as dominant cultural and economic hubs and creative engines.

Increasingly in these complex societies, individuals mattered, they consumed, they created, they celebrated. In this world nature is that which lies outside the city walls, it is increasingly seen as other. The growth of individualism heralded the emergence of a strange new stage, first given voice and form in the works of European Humanists that lead

ultimately to the Industrial Age of Modernity. I think of this period as Individual 1 and Civilization 2. This process evolved into our own period, where hyper-individuality and capitalism dominate. Everything is commodified and identity, from the personal on FaceBook to the national hallmarks of citizenship (think flags and anthems), is a marketable product.

Relationship is purely transactional and defined in terms of the nation state (citizenship) and set juridical systems (rights). The individual of Civilization 2 is the radical monad of Deleuzian (1993) philosophy, and alienation the shared experience of all. Identity is premised on national and economic roots and one's place in the global hierarchies of identity and affluence. This is increasingly a voyeuristic society struggling to make sense of a heavily mediated reality and ever anxious, as the signs of unsustainability are growing along with our sense of powerlessness (Rifkin 2013; Slaughter 2010).

Yet this route, for all its pain (past, present and into the future), has paid dividends. The expansion of individual consciousness coupled with the remarkable increases in our reflective capacity, scientific knowledge and technological prowess are converging, as in the four evolutionary models presented earlier, around a new paradigm. One in which individuality is mediated through relational awareness and civilization integrates relational consciousness and a Neohumanist vision into its pattern. I think of this emergent reality as Civilization 3 and see it premised on a nested individuality in which relational consciousness is the central element from which meaning and purpose arise. This strange relationally alive individual is what I think of as representing Individual 2.

COSMOPOESIS

This evolutionary narrative offers us two strands. The first centres around identity. Up until the modern period identity was understood in collective terms with only those at the top of the social hierarchy appearing to act as individuals. This is characterized as Collective 1 and then Collective 2. Collective 1 represents the pre-agricultural experience of humanity, in which human beings were embedded in the relational nets of both nature and their communities. Collective 2 comes after humanity began to settle into agricultural communities. Collective 2 is characterized by increasing separation from nature and also by an increasing sense of individual value. Ultimately, this awareness took form in Humanism which

began the reorientation of humanity towards the primacy of the individual and the equal value of human life. Humanism ushered in the birth of the modern period of Individual 1. Thus, we find that collectivities give way to a hyper-individuality and the linking of this experience with systems of production. The complexity and speed of the contemporaneous is pointing to new possibilities for humanity. A Neohumanism is heralded in which relationship, not separation, is the hallmark of identity. As this is in some ways a return to Collective 1 consciousness it can be considered as a kind of rebirth, or renaissance. Yet it is a qualitatively different form of consciousness in which a sense of individual agency incorporates a deep sense of connection to the Cosmos and all its forms.

The second stand in this narrative works with pattern. As culture becomes complex it can be characterized as Civilization 1, 2 or 3. Each civilizational stage has its own unique operating system. With the benefit of hindsight, we can state that human consciousness emerged from the cultural world of hunter gatherers, changed gear with agriculture which generated enough surplus for Civilization 1 to emerge. Civilization 1 characterizes complex agrarian societies (Christian 2008). For the majority, this form of social order was still largely collective, but it was tightly ordered by tradition and hierarchical social structures such as church and state.⁴ As identity shifted from the collective to the individual a new civilizational form emerged, Civilization 2, in which industrial processes ordered reality and capital mediated relationship. This was a strange new world of incredible opportunity and suffering in equal portion. We have not had time to really get past the strangeness when a new civilizational paradigm, Civilization 3, is upon us. This is what Giri is referring to in his poser.

Figure 5.5 captures this narrative of consciousness and suggests that Civilization 3 could be characterized as relational. Telling the story this way, with reference to the degree of awareness of connection to the world around us, generates quite a different story to the conventional story of Progress (Wright 2006). The dotted line charts the level of relational awareness exhibited in the indigenous, the agricultural, the industrial and the relational worlds I have sketched. We see it falling and then rising. The work of Civilization 3 is to explore this new relational zone of being. The neohumanism of such a space will include the spiritual alongside the sciences, arts, politics and economics of a relational era as spirituality is founded on an awareness of our relatedness to all things.

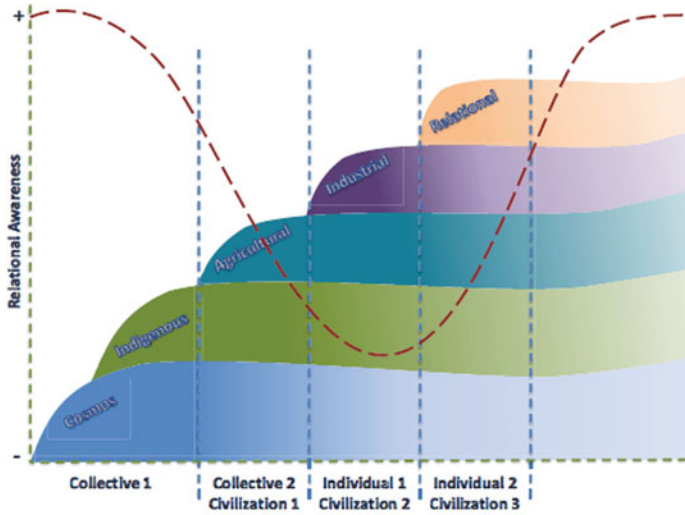


Fig. 5.5 Story of consciousness

CONCLUSION

So, if the purpose of the universe is to generate a reflexive consciousness to better know itself, the journey I have sketched here is one possible way to understand what is happening in our world today and to make sense of the struggles we face when confronted by the strangeness, pain and resistance encountered when being forced by pressure of circumstance to become increasingly aware and responsive to relational being. In a sense, we are being invited to return home as dusty pilgrims on the road, to our Mother's lap, after having experienced the world as a rich and extraordinary place where form and spirit are playing together. The new cultural resources that enable this transition are evoked via an exploration of roots and routes. The macrohistorical narrative offered here is just one small strand in the great work of head, heart and hands that lies before us.

NOTES

1. Sadhana can simply mean 'meditation' but it really refers to the effort one makes in the world to achieve a sense of unity, balance and excellence.

2. It is clear from their models that both Chaisson and Kurzweil would also hold as true the assertion that we are all recycled star dust.
3. On the play of culture around identity and agency see Bussey (2014a).
4. Interestingly in this period as we domesticated crops and animals we too domesticated ourselves.

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Understanding “Roots and Routes” from a Post-Kantian Tradition of Critique

Ivan Marquez

INTRODUCTION

In his introductory essay to this volume, Ananta Kumar Giri employs the notions of roots and routes to show possibilities to address problems of politics, culture, and society stemming from nationalist and ethnic self-assertion within a globalized and transmodern world. Specifically, he is interested in avoiding the common pitfalls of violence and absolutism in the processes of political, social, and cultural mobilization predicated upon ideas of ethnicity and nation.

Giri's appeals to the notions of roots and routes partly in an attempt to complicate the facile holistic and absolutist conceptions of culture and ethnicity that tend to accompany resistance movements of groups or communities.

At face value, roots and routes appear to be opposite things. On the one hand, the notion of roots suggests dwelling in a particular space and in a particular time, each, respectively, defined with reference to a specific

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place and to a specific line of historicity. On the other hand, the notion of routes suggests nomadic movement, transience, and lack of roots, or at least a moving away from roots. Furthermore, while the notion of roots seems to insinuate a grounding in being and belonging, the notion of routes seems to insinuate becoming, communication, and connectivity between ways of being.

One of Giri's main philosophical aims in this essay is to show—*pace* common sense—how roots and routes are interrelated, specifically, “that there are routes in all our roots. But being with routes does not necessarily produce rootless histories and modernities” and, on this basis, he aims to show furthermore how we can understand “self, ethnicity and nation at the cross-roads of roots and routes.”

ROOTS AND ROUTES AND THE POST-KANTIAN TRADITION OF CRITIQUE

Immanuel Kant's Copernican revolution in philosophy marked the beginning of a new awareness about the relationship between form and content in human understanding. According to Kant, the world did not reveal itself to humans as a given but instead was shaped by the concepts that humans used to give form to the content of their experience. Consequently, the world as we know it is constituted by an act of co-creation between subject and object.

Since Kant's Copernican revolution, we have lived in a post-Kantian era where philosophy's task has shifted from a search for knowledge of absolute, universal Truth based of fixed ideas and sensory givens to a critical task of analyzing how we come to know what we know and uncovering the value-laden concepts and regulative ideas behind our pictures of the world and our self-understandings.

The last two hundred years have seen multiple post-Kantian efforts at critique of the world we have created. For instance, Ludwig Feuerbach showed how the Christian notion of God could be seen as a projection of human hopes, wants, fears, and values. Karl Marx showed how capitalism produces and reproduces a world according to its image and that capitalist ideology is a validating reflection of that world. Friedrich Nietzsche showed how knowledge could be seen as a historical human creation advancing particular willful forces with the help of certain concepts that are nothing but value-carrying metaphors and tropes constituted within a differential binary logic, his more specific critical efforts amounting to

a genealogical critique of Socratic and Christian and Modern bourgeois values. The later Ludwig Wittgenstein showed how language could be seen as a system of conventions—a language game—that creates a framework for human interaction embedded in a form of life. And, finally, Michael Foucault took the critique one step further by showing how knowledge not only is value-laden but corresponds to the working of agonistic networks of power.

Still the post-Kantian critiques have tended to be Eurocentric in character, telling one univocal narrative about the history of knowledge and the history of being. It is not until the current decolonial moment that Europe has been provincialized, European modernity has been linked to conquest, and Western philosophy has been historicized from a plurality of points of origin.

The decolonial moment has brought with it the proliferation of histories, a reaffirmation of local and non-hegemonic histories, and the hybridization and syncretism of human practices. The local asserts itself against the global, the particular against the universal, and the contingent against the absolute. Still, as Giri seems to suggest, in our current world, the local, particular, and contingent tend to assert itself *against* other locales, particulars, and contingencies according to an agonistics that is as totalizing, essentialist, and intransigent as the global, universal, and absolute have been.

It is my contention that here is where Giri’s interrelated notions of roots and routes come into play as post-Kantian regulative ideas creating the possibility to understand notions of self, ethnicity, and nation in non-totalizing and non-essentialist terms. For Giri, roots and routes are interrelated because roots are always made of multiple strands and these strands connect to routes leading to other roots with other strands that connect to other routes, leading to a planetary interconnecting, interrelating, and intercommunicating web.

Several things seem to follow from Giri’s way of looking at things. First, traditions are not solid and monolithic but instead they are woven together by multiple strands. Second, traditionalism and cosmopolitanism are interdependent. Third, hybridity and syncretism are the norm instead of the exception. Fourth, identity, be it individual or collective, is constituted within a process of constant transaction with the individual or collective Other. Fifth, place and motion are not mutually exclusive as a location can be “an itinerary rather than a bounded site.” Sixth, roots are not the sole house of being and routes are not the sole path of becoming as one can also be *en route* and become in situ.

ROOTS AND ROUTES IN SPACE-TIME: THE
SPATIALITY OF TIME, THE TEMPORALITY OF SPACE,
AND THE DYNAMICS OF BEING-BECOMING

I think that it is profitable to think of routes and routes as Kantian regulative ideas, especially, as transcendental notions that help us organize experience, memory, and identity in space-time. In particular, I suggest that we see them as intentional objects which are real but not physically real, that is, not real like a plant root is real or like a road is real.

Time can be thought of as absolute or relative, as circular/cyclical or linear, and as continuous or progressive. And time is defined relative to change in a defined space. This opens the door to the spatiality of time and to the temporality of space. Out of this comes the conception of a multiplicity of space-time places and, furthermore, of pluriverses and of a multiverse.

Within this schema, roots and routes can be seen as features of these space-time places which can be specified in relation to the spatiality of time and the temporality of space in possible worlds that sometimes interact and sometimes remain separate, thus, allowing us to move away from the simplistic notion of one universe, one time, one space, one history, one globalization, one mundialization toward a notion of multiverses, many time-space places, many histories, many globalizations, and many mundializations. Also, to make it bear on the issue at hand, it allows us to describe self, ethnicity, and nation at the intersection of a multiplicity of these space-time places within these possible worlds.

More specifically, based on this, roots can be primarily related to the spatiality of time and routes can be primarily related to the temporality of space, although strictly speaking both notions are mutually implicated as picking out two aspects of the dynamics of being-becoming at the intentional level.

ROOTS AND ROUTES AS RELATIVE-RELATIONAL
MULTIDIMENSIONAL INTENTIONAL POSITIONS OF BEING
AND BECOMING, IMMANENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE

According to one common metanarrative, European Modernity is a form of humanism which historicized the Christian notion of transcendence and eschatology by means of an absolutist but progressive notion of

linear-historical time, ultimately in the form of a Universal History. The narrative of Universal History imposed a normative account of the historical development of Humankind with one valid root and one valid route of development. From a single space-time and through a single process of becoming, humanity actualizes in Earthly existence its universal potential essence, achieving its pre-destined state of fullness of being, signaling the end of History.

Giri’s understanding of roots and routes presents us with a different scenario. There are multiple roots and multiple routes, multiple space-times places, and an unbounded human potentiality to be actualized by diverse dynamic processes of being-becoming. Sometimes individuals or collectivities will look backwards and sometimes they will look forwards in space and in time to find themselves anew. Sometimes they will walk forwards and sometimes they will walk backwards. Sometimes they will reach outwards and sometimes they will delve inwards. And the planes of immanence and transcendence as well as the states of being and becoming will be defined not in absolute and universal terms but relative to their particular movements in these four dimensions and in the space-time places that they help define within a diversity of possible world they inhabit, oftentimes, simultaneously. What look like roots from one intentional position will look like routes from another intentional position and vice versa.

Political, social, economic, and cultural movements will ignore these philosophical insights at their own peril.

CONCLUSION

One good measure of the value of a philosophical notion is its richness and fecundity, that is, its power to illuminate many things in interesting ways and to suggest and clarify possibilities previously unseen or only seen through a glass darkly. Given these criteria of value, I believe that the notions of roots and routes as Giri understands them are philosophically valuable and have much potential as regulative ideas. I hope that my kaleidoscopic reflections on this have helped to further elucidate what these two notions could mean and how they could be used to address the challenges of our times and to hold the present in thought.



Transversal Communication and Boundaries of Identification

Zazie Bowen

Ananta Kumar Giri's poser to this volume engages with one of our most profound human problems: how do we negotiate the tendencies for geographically grounded ethnic, patriotic and other identifications to become part of the machinations of an all too destructive 'domination–marginalization' paradigm, resulting in homogenizing state violence on one hand, and violent uprisings by marginalized ethnic/identity groups on the other? This chapter situates Giri's work in relation to the anthropological works of Frederik Barth and Andreas Wimmer, then summarizes Giri's solution to the above problem. In dialogue with Giri's poser, this chapter considers some of the ideas of Shri P.R. Sarkar and of Jeremy Rifkin.

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SHIFTING ANTHROPOLOGICAL NOTIONS OF ETHNICITY

Frederik Barth (1998) challenged anthropology's comparative interest in ethnic groups which, 'rests on the premise that cultural variation is discontinuous: that aggregates of people share a common culture and interconnected differences distinguishing each discrete culture from all others' (Barth 1998: 9). Rather than the typical anthropological launching point of enquiry—developing taxonomies of cultural/social traits—Barth focused on the ontology of ethnic *boundaries*. How do ethnic boundaries persist despite a flow of persons across them? And how are stable social relations maintained across such boundaries, often based precisely on the distinctions of dichotomized ethnic status (Barth 1998: 9–10)? He concluded that ethnicity is a social *process* that involves perpetual active work of inclusion and exclusion to establish each person and group's self-articulation and identification by others. The problem that focused Barth's interest in boundaries was, why do social interactions that one assumes would foment a homogenized collective identity actually intensify multiple, divided ethnic identities (Barth 1998: 10)?

Wimmer (2008) sought to develop Barth's ideas of ethnicity as boundary-making by constructing a model of the mechanisms involved. Wimmer's model aimed to account for the wide variety of ethnic boundary-making forms and effects, and to transcend debates between *primordialists* who regard ethnicity as *essential* (acquired through birth as a deeply-rooted, subjectively-felt reality) and *constructivists* who regard ethnicity as *situational*. Constructivists highlight the ways individuals' self-identity with different ethnic categories depending on the logic of a situation and their own calculations of predicted benefits/losses (Wimmer 2008: 971). For instance, a person born in one place but possessing citizenship in another may fluidly highlight one or another identity at a particular moment, simultaneously downplaying another part of their coexisting identity. Wimmer's model regards the diverse features of ethnic boundary-making and preservation as the result of negotiations shaped by the characteristics of the 'social field', which itself consists of three characteristics: institutional frameworks (class, gender, villages, ethnicity, etc.); actors' positions in hierarchies of power; and the structure of political alliances. Wimmer proposes four factors that underlie variation: (i) the degrees of political salience of ethnic boundaries (ii) social closure and exclusion along ethnic lines (iii) cultural differentiation between groups (iv) stability over time. The model leads from the macrostructural level to the agency of individuals and aggregates and back to the macrostructural level—as a dynamic process theory (Wimmer 2008: 973).

THE PROBLEM WITH BOUNDED IDENTITY MODELS: GIRI'S APPROACH

Like Barth and Wimmer, Giri recognizes both the deep rootedness of human identification with ethnicity, and that ethnicity and nationalism are open-ended constructivist processes. Giri also shares their project of redirecting anthropological focus from ontological ethnic differences to the interactions between social aggregates. However, where Wimmer offers an explanatory model, Giri seeks conceptual solutions to inter-ethnic domination—subjugation paradigms, present in notions of ethnic diversity. He also highlights the pitfalls and problems with one of the most common correctives to ethnic, or communal identities—submerging them into universalizing/homogenizing projects that seek to encompass and integrate multiple ethnic identities within a broader identity.

Cosmopolitanism for instance, is often celebrated as the disintegration of provincial identities into a common or universal inter-ethnic metropolitan identity. Yet cosmopolitanism is rightly contested by Fojas (2005) who notes how it is regarded by some as an outgrowth of an imperialism... which colonized every metropolis around the world and maintained its metropole privilege as the ultimate point of cultural reference... seeing in every horizon of difference, new peripheries of its own centrality (Fojas 2005: 5).

Cosmopolitanism and other globalizing regimes have also frequently been associated with a cognitive disposition of rootlessness. In some respects concurring with Cohen (1992) and Tarrow (2005), Giri's notion of rootedness replaces abstract (apparently rootless) internationalism with their notions of 'rooted cosmopolitans' who grow out of local settings, draw on local, domestic resources *and* are actors in transnational contentions. The special characteristics of rooted cosmopolitans are their relational links to their own societies, other countries and international institutions (Tarrow 2005) and reflexivity about these interconnections.

And yet, while highlighting rootedness, Giri raises the alert to its two associated risks or pitfalls: a narrowing self-idolatry, and enactment of inter-ethnic domination—subjugation (to uphold or expand the interest claims of rooted identity). These two familiar conditions continually reappear in the pages of our history and within most of our contemporary world news stories.

Giri proposes radical *communication transformations* as a corrective to the problem where a dominant rooted ethnic identity propagates and imposes its own paradigmatic understandings of the world as a *universal* ideal or universal representation of social order. The corresponding suppression or submerging of non-dominant ethnicities' differing paradigms (and their own accompanying claims regarding utilization of space and resources) inevitably spawns subsequent reactionary ethnic mobilization to seek political and social recognition, to be included in the conversations around governance and utilization of economic resources—as evident in ethnic struggles the world over.

Giri's communication transformation, involves (i) studying ethnicity as a history of communication and (ii) the notion of 'transversal communication'. The analogy of a forest tree illustrates the idea of ethnicity as a history of communication. A forest tree appears to be a fixed species in a rooted locale. Yet this superficial view masks the tree's total genealogical reliance on constant movement, cross-fertilizations, symbiotic interactions and communications with other mobile micro and macro-organisms in the present and over millennia. Without these myriad communications with other species and elements, the tree does not and would not exist. Similarly each ethnic identity appears enclosed and usually situated in a rooted geographic locale at a given moment in history, and yet is the result of an entire history and ongoing present of movement, interactions, communications and cross-fertilizations with other ethnic identities.

The notion of 'transversal' communication (distinct from 'universal' communication) further refines the conception of this inter-ethnicity communication process. Frequently, a communicated narrative or paradigm is referred to as 'universal' when actually it is nothing more than the narrative imposed on others by the social group with the most dominance. Transversal communication by contrast, emphasizes the inclusive cross-fertilizations of histories, experiences and communicated narrative perspectives of *all* discrete ethnicities combined shaping an emergent cultural paradigm: a planetary narrative. Giri's notion of transversal communication intersects with emerging discourses of cosmopolitics (Pheng and Robins 1998), which deconstruct old paradigms of liberal 'tolerance', and examine the politics and interplay of dominant and non-dominant cosmologies, thereby 'closing the gap' between supposedly bounded identities.

Giri reminds us that the work of generating conceptual alternatives to existing cultural holism and ethnic absolutism models has profound

social implications. It is not simply an academic exercise. There are few locales on our planet where conflicts between ethnic absolutes are not continuing to provoke trauma. At stake is whether or not we remain caught in a false binary between imposed higher level homogenizing projects that submerge the diversity of human expressions in favour of an imposed homogenization, or the other side of the binary, ethnic absolutism. While the former inflicts State violence upon diverse historically marginalized social groups (obliterating languages and epistemes), the latter (ethnic absolutism) instigates increasing intra-community division and identity-specification in the pursuit of ever-more fine-grained absolute ethnic identity in response to land and resource claims. These in turn continue to provoke intra-communal hostility, division, trauma and harm. Giri's reference to ULFA is one among many at different scales that illustrate this.

The frame of *transversal communication*—attentiveness to the embodied messages communicated by *all* participants in our planetary conversation—is an idea good to think with, and to act with.

IN DIALOGUE WITH SARKAR AND RIFKIN

Sarkar's Neo-Humanism

How do Giri's ideas dialogue with Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar's (1982) project of neo-humanism? Neo-humanism is a praxis as well as a theory of expanding the circumference of human identification. Sarkar contrasts two impetuses in individual and social cognition: rational and sentimental. 'Rationality' here, refers to hearing something, then analysing its positive and negative sides, weighing its pros and cons. If the positive (i.e. most conducive for human welfare), is predominant then rationality would decide in its favour. No decision is final, for rational deliberation is required anew at each step in movement ahead (1982: 16). In Sarkar's terms, rational decisions must have practical social value, and maintain an adjustment with time and place (what is practical in one context is not so in another). In Sarkar's terms, For Sarkar, rational thinking is the incremental smashing of dogmas, with 'dogma' referred to as a circumference drawn around one's thinking, beyond which one will not venture. Smashing of dogmas involves continually breaking those mental parameters, challenging and expanding conception to ever broader perspectives. In this deliberative way of moving, speed is sacrificed to the process

of judicious discrimination between proper and improper at each point (1982: 16).

The second form of cognitive impetus is sentiment. Sentiment does not involve discriminating, or weighing pros and cons. Here rather, the mind runs after what it has an attraction and attachment for. Under the propulsion of sentiment, a person or group may act with propriety and induce greater welfare, or equally, a person or people may act undesirably from start to finish. The momentum of sentiment is greater than that of rational impetus, but sentiment carries greater risks of speedy momentum without discrimination. Sentiments can whip a crowd, or individual to perform extraordinary acts for good or ill (1982: 17).

Sarkar identifies two key sentiments propelling individuals and social groups: geo-sentiment and socio-sentiment. Geo-sentiments (that grow out of love for the indigenous soil of a place) may encompass different scales, from home, to locality, to nation, or to a religious holy land. From them other sentiments emerge such as geo-economics, geo-patriotism, geo-religion (1982: 4). Socio-sentiments too range between narrow and expanded expressions, from an individual's innate sentiment to fulfil the desires of the self, expanding incrementally to encompass sentimental identification with kin group, ethnic group, religious or national group, all the way to identification with everyone who inhabits human frame—humanism (Sarkar 1982: 5). This is the expansion of the sentiment of *atmasukha tattva*, the principle of each individual seeking his or her own happiness, to *sama-samaj tattva*, the intimate knowing and appreciation that this sentiment, this longing for happiness is shared equally by every member of our society. Sarkar's 'neo-humanism' expands the sentiment of humanism beyond subjective identification with and concern for the welfare of humankind to include sentiment for all entities of the biosphere as intercommunicating, interacting and inseparable parts of a unified whole. He nominates this kind of sentiment, 'devotional sentiment'—the expansion of all forms of self-identification, to their final merger in an awareness of a common underlying consciousness-energy.

For Sarkar, sentiment is an inevitable and indispensable cognitive impetus, and cannot be suppressed. Sentiments carries greater propulsion than deliberative rationality and have the capacity to effect profound change either beneficially or detrimentally. 'Socio-sentiment has caused much bloodshed and created enormous division and mutual distrust among human groups, separating one group from another' (Sarkar 1982: 5).

The path of neo-humanism is the transmutation of limited sentiments into ‘devotional sentiment’, coupled with pragmatic practice of rational thinking. Some may metaphorically refer to this as the marriage of heart and mind. A new rationality that aims to reconcile traditional dilemmas between individual and collective, scientific and mystic, spiritual and material, structure and agency (Inayatullah 2001: 2).

Giri’s corrective to domination-subjugation paradigms is transversal communication. In a similar vein, Sarkar proposes the development of rational thinking through education coupled with reverential devotion for the underlying principle of humanity (shared longing for the peace, or wellbeing of self expression). Enlargement of this devotional sentiment for humanity to include all inanimate as well as animate existence involves moving outward in an ever-expanding understanding of vast inter-relationships. It also means moving inward from the imperfect world of contemporary humanism towards an appreciation of the unit assembling bodies, the original primordial phase that comprise the smaller and still smaller particles that maintain structural unity—the existence in intra-atomic world, whose essence Sarkar nominates as pure consciousness-energy (Sarkar 1987: 50–51). Neo-humanism consists of this inseparable link between rationality as critical deconstruction of intellectual delimitations on apperception; and devotional sentiment, deep heart feeling of empathy extending inclusively beyond human beings to the underlying principle of consciousness—energy that connects everything.

Rifkin on Empathy

Rifkin’s propositions (2009) align with Sarkar’s interpretation of human progress as an incremental expansion of identification, or *empathy*. He also corroborates Giri’s ideas of the role of communications in transforming the range and breadth of identity boundaries. Rifkin foregrounds empathy, which he argues is wrongly overlooked as a driver in the fields of economics, education and governance in lopsided favour of theories of competition and self-interest (Rifkin 2009: 1). He references neuroscience investigations into mirror neurons (human soft-wiring to experience another’s plight as if we were experiencing it) to highlight emphasize the deeply embodied evolutionary propulsion of empathy. Rifkin defines empathy as the innate ability to show solidarity with others

with whom we share life and the fragility of demise on this planet (Rifkin 2009: 14).

His model of civilizational history centres on the expansion of empathic identification from empathy based on blood ties, to empathy based on religious ties, to empathy based on nationhood ties. For Rifkin, empathy based on blood-ties is functionally connected with voice/song/story in hunter-gatherer societies. Through these media of word, song, stories, mirror neurons innately connect social group members. Empathy based on religious ties is functionally related to the development of script in hydraulic agricultural civilizations. Empathy based on nationhood ties is functionally linked with mass media in industrial civilizations. Our imagined community in Anderson's terms is innately developed through our shared engagement with mass media (Anderson 1983).

Each convergence of communication-mode—energy resource-mode (song/story—hunter-gatherer economy; script—hydraulic economy; mass media—industrial economy) operates efficiently until an entropy of that mode of convergence begins to occur, compelling new energy-communication economies which in turn dissemble and reorder older empathic social identifications. For Rifkin, we are today experiencing industrial-era fossil-fuel-energy entropy drawing us to the cusp of a new constellation of energy resource mode, communication modes and social organization. The energy-resource regimes that fuelled industrial era nation-state organization are breaking down in favour of emerging distributed digitalized networks of peer-to-peer energy distribution, which are in turn converging with new forms of empathic social organization. Rifkin nominates this emerging paradigm as biosphere empathy (Rifkin 2009: 20–26) functionally related with an interconnected, yet distributed economy in which digitization is a primary communication mode.

In Dialogue: Giri, Sarkar and Rifkin

Giri, Sarkar and Rifkin, respectively, recognize 'rootedness' (Giri), 'sentiment' (Sarkar), and 'empathic-identification' (Rifkin) as a powerful inherent force instantiating and propelling individual and collective existence and movement. As well, all three authors note the potential and currently evident hazards of this force inherent in identity, related

to self-idolatry, inter-ethnic regimes of domination and subordination, oppression, and social entropy.

In response, Giri proposes radical communication transformation—transversal communication that listens to and responds to all participants in a planetary narrative, generating an identity of *sahadharma*, dharma of togetherness. Sarkar proposes study/education/pedagogy inspired by neo-humanist approaches to break dogmas and expand the circumference of sentimental/empathic identification from *atmasukha tattva* (the individual self's pursuit of pleasure/happiness) to *sama-samaj tattva* (the pursuit of happiness equally for all members of society) (Sarkar 1982: 36–37). It inseparably links rational thinking (breaking down dogmas of limits on our thinking) with 'devotional' sentiment extended outward for all animate and inanimate aspects of our shared biosphere and inward towards the underlying principle of personal existence, consciousness (Sarkar 1982: 3–4).

For Rifkin, transforming the current limitations of our empathic identification is an inevitable result of the entropy of our current energy-communications infrastructures with symptoms of the change already evident in increased peer-to-peer energy and communication production-distribution networks, and other biosphere empathic phenomena (Rifkin 2009: 26).

This chapter commenced with the problem of the binary: rooted ethnic identity versus rootless universal identity, where both parts of this binary have contributed to the ongoing traumas of our social world. In brief, the risks of rooted ethnic identity are self-idolatry and perpetuation of inter-ethnic domination-subjugation. The risks of rootless universal identity are that far too often, the ideas, institutions and regimes that pose as universal camouflage the claims and hegemonic paradigm of a particular dominant interest group, making other perspectives invisible, or absent.

The contribution of Giri highlighted in this chapter is transversal communication as his response to the above dilemma. In promoting such a planetary narrative, Giri references de Sousa Santos' work on justice against 'epistemicide' where social justice rests on cognitive justice through an ecology of knowledge—not just widening access to Western epistemes, but overcoming the mono-cultural condition where diverse forms of knowledge are rendered invisible (de Sousa Santos 2016). The ideas of Sarkar and Rifkin further enliven this dialogue, emphasizing education/study and empathy to effect these transformations.

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Deconstructing and Reconstructing Identity: A Transformational Transcontinental Journey

Marta Botta

In the past hundred years most societies in the world experienced more substantial changes than ever before. With an ever-increasing pace of change in a relatively short time span agricultural communities developed into industrial and later into more complex post-industrial societies. A major driver of this transformation was technological advancement enabling previously unimaginable ease of transportation around the globe, both of goods and people. The ensuing globalisation encouraged people to travel and translocate for various reasons. Some of them would move for work, some others for health reasons, yet others were forced to migrate because of wars or famine. In past agricultural societies, that lasted thousands of years, it was necessary for survival to stay in one place and cultivate the surrounding land, however, the workforce of the twenty-first century can be transient, globally mobile or even outsourced to other countries. Although continental mass migrations were taking place

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throughout history current transcontinental migrations are on a different scale and with a larger impact.

As every movement and group consists of individuals this development has major impact on a personal level on those involved. However, this chapter is downscaling sociological considerations to a more focused psychological aspect by focusing on a case study of one such individual in the context of construction of a multiple identity. I decided to present my own journey through life in an autobiographical account illustrating the challenges to identity formation in today's transmodern world. I believe that my journey through several countries as a refugee will facilitate understanding of the continuum of deconstruction and reconstruction of identity.

THE STORY

Phase 1: The Underground Rebel

I grew up in the communist regime of former Czechoslovakia. As a free-thinking creative individual, I found it difficult to adjust to the constraints of a regime that was determined not only to force individual citizens to uniformity, but also infiltrate their mind and destroy their very soul in an attempt to achieve full control and indoctrinate each individual and the country as a whole. In those days (in my teens and early twenties) I identified myself as artist. I belonged to a group of underground artists who may have been viewed as rebels from the outside, but in reality, they were only individuals who possessed integrity and were merely trying to hold onto their truth and survive in a very constrained reality. At some stage my situation became precarious and I was forced to get married just to escape prison (but that is another long story). Eventually, after some failed attempts I finally managed to escape to Sweden where my identity had to change. I became a poor refugee needing help. I also commenced on a lifelong journey of marginalisation, becoming an outsider, as nobody could comprehend the hardships I have been through, or my motivation to risk my own life to gain freedom by throwing away my family, security, and social networks.

Phase 2: The Artist

There were some brief periods in the 10 years from my mid-twenties to mid-thirties where I associated with groups of Czech artists political

refugees and later with artists of other nationalities in various locations where I lived in Sweden, England, Germany and New Zealand. I was a practising artist and was involved in professional circles and distinguished myself with my creative arts (winning awards). These were rare times when my identity was allowed to determine itself as a singular entity without the weight of the past and was based solely on present merits.

Phase 3: The Healer

Post-traumatic stress that was not dealt with coupled with years of a hectic lifestyle took a toll on my health. Unable to continue what I was doing for health reasons and unsuccessful attempts at getting help through mainstream medicine pushed me into exploring alternative healing modalities. Eventually I educated myself and started working with natural healing. This was a move which gave me great satisfaction, however, I was judged and not understood by those whom I associated with previously. This naturally led to a reconstruction of my identity on a different platform. The shift necessitated a formation of a new circle of friends and associates.

Phase 4: The Carer

My late thirties were characterised by other major shifts. I gave birth to a daughter with a disability and since being a single parent was such an overwhelming job, I had to give up my previous identity and a very rewarding career path to form a new identity. From then on, I only had time and energy to associate with other parents of children with disabilities and my former friends and colleagues subtly disappeared when I had no time to socialise. However, these fair-weather friends were rapidly replaced by a new circle of compassionate caring and sharing individuals comprised of other parents, teachers and support workers. On one level this identity was well defined and integrated externally into the social fabric, on the other level there was a gap internally that was asking to be filled.

Phase 5: The Scholar

I have always had an active mind, and caring for somebody fulltime on the physical and emotional levels was not entirely satisfying. It left a void for intellectual fulfilment that was craving to be filled. So, I developed the system to enable me to study at a university, which I was unable to do in my younger years because of political persecution. Studying at graduate

and later postgraduate levels was extremely hard under my circumstances. I was still struggling with ongoing health issues and caring for an individual who was totally dependent on me. The only way I was able to study was because most of my courses could be completed by distance education and most of my assignments would be done in bed on a laptop at night when my child was asleep. Finishing my degree led to an unusual situation where I was living a ‘double life’. Most of those friends who associated with me through my daughter had no idea that I’m a freelance academic, and most of my friends from the university, or those who listen to me presenting at international conferences had no clue that I was actually a fulltime carer. This split identity required a very fine balancing act. Apart from different business cards presented at different occasions there is a different wardrobe and different language/slang I have to use from time to time. I have no problem with integrating my multiple identities, but I know from experience that others would find it hard, so I preferred to expose only the appropriate side of my identity in any given situations.

THE PHASES OF IDENTITY DECONSTRUCTION AND RE-CONSTRUCTION

The identity of the first 20 years of my life was well established and firmly grounded in the spatial context. However, phase 2 of my life had to endure a drastic deconstruction of this entity largely because of circumstances that were out of my control. Since I could not continue along the same trajectory I had to ‘reinvent’ myself both internally as well as in my external relationships. Because I was moving between countries and cultures with divergent political systems this process was extremely complex and delicate. Part of the progression was ethnification (Oommen 1997) with the resulting trauma of marginalisation leading to low self-esteem. The difference between me and them was obvious, the gap between the past and present was vast. I was growing up in circumstances where people were not only prevented from traveling and thinking for themselves, but also had to endure extremely difficult economic circumstances. So, when I went to a supermarket in Sweden to buy myself a tub of yoghurt and was faced by at least 15 varieties I was unable to choose and had an emotional meltdown in the middle of the shop.

One of the reasons for this extreme psychological reaction could have been the ‘paradox of choice’ (Schwartz 2003). As Schwartz (2003) points out, increased choices don’t necessarily make people happier. In fact, they

can be a source of much confusion and unhappiness. In my case my ‘paradox of choice’ was coupled with my ‘survivor guilt’. I left behind all my friends who were still in danger and in miserable conditions. One of them, a good friend of mine, had a newborn baby. Because of her own malnutrition she could not produce enough breast milk and the growing baby was a big feeder. Because of this the mother had to supplement her milk with bottled milk. Since some days she did not have enough money for milk she was diluting the milk until it was almost blue instead of white, probably being of very little nutritional value to the baby. And here I was, in a shop full of goods and had money to buy things. Personally, I loved yoghurt, but in my country, there was such a shortage for many years that I could only buy yoghurt on rare occasions. By the way, there were only 2 varieties of yoghurt ever available in Czechoslovakia: one was plain and the other one was a strawberry yoghurt. There was no problem with choices there. One day I was very frustrated, and I asked the shop keeper why there was no yoghurt in the shop. I was told that if I came at 6.30am when the shop opened, I would probably be able to buy one of the 20 tubs which arrive each morning. They are usually bought by workers for lunches before they leave for work. However, I worked at night and did not shop until after 8.00am, by which time most shops were just about empty, missing out on yogurt as well as some other goods, such as meat. Although I have never been a big meat eater, I did feel for the housewives who had to line up from 4am in the morning in front of butchers just to get meat on the table for dinner for their hard-working husbands. So, it is understandable that the almost unlimited freedom of choice and of movement, such as I experienced in Sweden, can be overwhelming for someone who grew up in the environment of limitations and scarcity. The brain’s capacity to process a sudden influx of large amount of information is limited (Marois and Ivanoff 2005), thus this psychological trauma must be so much more pronounced for those who migrate to cities from small villages or from 3rd world countries.

Another aspect that needed to be deconstructed in phase 1 and 2 of my migration was my fear of the police. This was a major part of my PTSD. In the first years in Sweden I instinctively hid behind trees and gates when I saw a policeman (or anybody in uniform) approaching. This was totally irrational, and I could not control it. After years of hiding from authorities it was logical as it became part of my DNA. Years of retraining my brain was required to learn to respond normally to such encounters. The retraining of my psyche was part of the reconstruction of

my new identity. Under the new social circumstances I longed to achieve successful socialisation with ‘a high degree of symmetry between objective and subjective reality’ (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 163).

Reconstruction of my identity within the context of the new social order also required ‘habitualisation’ to accomplish successful communication. Initially, in phase 3 of my journey I could speak the English language quite well but was unfamiliar with the finer nuances of social interaction. When I was living in New Zealand, I was frequently greeted by people asking, ‘how are you?’ I took this question literally and responded with the description of the physical condition I happened to be on that particular day. I was very surprised when the person who asked the question did not bother to hear me out and turned away from me before I could finish my answer. Later I understood that the question was not a sign of genuine concern for my health and wellbeing. It was merely a social code, and as such, could be only understood as being a result of habitualisation that I needed to attain to interact successfully and efficiently in that particular society, so that my actions are not a source of astonishment to others (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

In the fourth phase of my journey in Australia I felt sufficiently integrated in society to attempt closer relationships. I acquired many friends whom I cared for. Whenever they had troubles, I tried to give them advice from my own experience or if that was not sufficient to point them in the right direction to get help. This came to me naturally, as this is how I functioned most of my life. However, my genuine concern was not received well some of the time and I was told that in English society (where most of the original immigrants came from, including many of my friends) such behaviour is considered ‘interfering’ and rude. Apparently, you don’t give advice unless they asked for it. In Slavonic countries, on the other hand it is considered rude and insensitive to ignore other peoples’ troubles and pretend that everything is fine. From the sociolinguistic perspective the above are good examples how language is socially determined and that speech cannot be understood without considering the person who speaks it, as noted by Bourdieu (1977). Applied linguistics also acknowledges the importance of identity in learning a second language, which in my case was quite complex. Some aspects of this complexity are studied by identity theorist, who are investigating in what way race, gender, class and sexual orientation impacts language learning (Norton 2013).

The current fifth phase of my identity formation was characterised by greater confidence in navigating my multi-layered individuality and I started to have a diminishing need to ‘fit in’ to mainstream society. A great deal of institutionalisation was also taking place in this phase, and more successfully than ever before. Through continuing education, a new ‘tribe’ was found, and the university was providing the training grounds for secondary socialisation. In this process, habitualisation was facilitated by learning new customs, and ‘rules of the game’ through mutual observation that culminates in institutionalisation of social processes (Berger and Luckmann 1966). I found that the collective imagination developed at the university helped me to become a part of the local ‘emotional community’ distinguished by shared ethics, feelings, impressions, rituals and solidarity, encapsulated in Maffessoli’s (1996) ethos of *Gemeinschafts* of the tribe that acts as a glue holding together diverse elements of a society.

At the same pace as I developed *gemeinschaft* in Australia a sense of belonging to Europe started to diminish. I found that my old friends and family from my home town were locked in a bubble, with very little change in habits of individual development. I have been developing internally at a rapid rate (no doubt forced by circumstances), but they remained largely where they were, both internally and externally. This led to a situation where it was very comforting to come back to my roots. On one hand, I felt very much at home in my old environment recalling childhood memories; on the other hand, my current state of mind marked by decades of habituation to another culture and political system caused my friends to mistrust me and misunderstand my motivations. I created a new epistemology involving new politics, changed ethics and a whole new reality that left those who did not follow my path out of my tribe. This development was more pronounced when I returned to Europe after being away for more than 10 years. In reflection, I realised that by going back to my roots and then putting my roots in the context of my routes I accomplished a regeneration of my identity, something Nancy (2007) calls ‘mondialisation’. However, there was a price to pay for that. As they say, ‘home is where the heart is’, and I find myself in the situation where I belong to one world based on my roots and to another because of my routes. This causes a dilemma where my heart is split—I belong to both worlds, yet I’m not able to be totally and meaningfully integrated to neither. Although I physically live in one location my internal identity is ‘translocal’—a series of encounters and translations—as described by Clifford (1988).

FOUR CHALLENGES TO TRANSLOCAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Translocal identity, as a function of post-modernity is a complex phenomenon. The complexity is mirrored in the challenges encountered in its construction. These challenges can be grouped into four categories: ‘cultural homelessness, commodified experience, the search for new reference groups and communities coupled with mistrust of new authorities, and the appreciation of flexibility in identities and roles’ (Rubin 2000, 35). The feeling of ‘cultural homelessness’ can spring from ‘universalism’ as defined by Touraine’s (2009). In post-modern times cross-cultural and inter-ethnic communication is enabled not only by the ease and affordability of travel but also by social media encouraging global friendships. Although this new paradigm can be viewed as commodification of communication leading to quantity over quality, it can facilitate understanding between cultures and aids in the development of an open-minded and inclusive global mindset. This newly acquired mindset is urging me to facilitate sustainable futures by creating, ‘new spaces for a range of ontological engagements beyond the narrow set of possibilities posed by Modernity’ (Marcus Bussey 2017).

The above shift in the locus of my consciousness from inner to outer dimensions moulded me into a cultural citizen with an increasing ability to shake off the bonds and limitations of my past, and even present culture. It also allowed me the freedom to associate with a large number of people from all walks of life and nationalities, thus becoming part of an emerging earth culture, as defined by Bussey (2018). This part of my new identity is a source of much fulfilment.

Giddens (1991) postulates that the ‘phenomenal’ stage of our life is increasingly global. This new global identity, however, has negative as well as positive aspects. One of the negative aspects is having too many ‘Facebook friends’ and not enough face to face friends. This problem is wide spread in society these days (Giddens 1991), but in my case it is compounded with a difficulty in finding close likeminded ‘real life’ friends in my immediate environment who would be on my wavelength as a result of the sharing of similar histories: roots and routes. Misunderstandings can thus surface even within my newly found tribe, and ‘othering’ does occur occasionally, as some people can find my views strange, and my motivations suspicious. This problem is further complicated by the ‘split heart’ phenomenon that is common to most migrants

who left their country of birth as adults. Moreover, due to the negative experiences I encountered in early life with politicians, police and other authority figures makes me naturally cautious and mistrustful of authorities in general. This type of obstacle to integration is described by Rubin (2000) in her third category of challenges to the construction of identity. As a consequence of this inherent mistrust, I find it easy to appreciate flexible identities and role instability in society (fourth category of Rubin). Being in the underground by circumstances from an early age led to inner resilience and appreciation of others who found themselves in a situation of underdogs or outcasts. In line with my inner identity formation, the world around me is also changing, and it is noticeable that compassionate attitudes to the less integrated members of society are becoming more wide spread, as gender issues, sexual identity and racism are being addressed by the media and to a lesser extent by politicians. Later, as my circumstances changed, I still found myself on the fringes despite my best effort to integrate to mainstream society. It made me question how much of my perceived social isolation is actually due to external circumstances, and whether it may be the outcome of an inherent personality trait.

CLA ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY FORMATION EMBEDDED IN A MACROHISTORY CONTEXT

Identity formation has vertical and horizontal dimensions. The horizontal dimensions involving routes have been detailed in the previous sections. The tool of choice for a vertical analysis is the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA). This method takes analysis beyond the obvious horizontal dimension to deeper and marginal levels (Inayatullah 1998). The CLA of identity transformation will provide two scenarios: one covering my past identity and the other one the present. These scenarios will be deconstructed on four different levels—litany, system/social drivers, worldview and myths/metaphors, leading through ever deepening layers, offering understanding of various layers of the transformational journey.

The socio-historical background of each individual has a major impact on their personal journey (Berger and Luckmann 1966). As revealed by Table 8.1, the transformation of my individuality was following a largely positive trajectory, despite enormous obstacles along the way. From a fearful person with no power over life's circumstances (and on the background of an unsuccessful suicide attempt), there is a steady development of strength and individual agency. This agency is based on acquired

Table 8.1 Causal Layered Analysis of identity transformation

<i>Layers</i>	<i>Past identity</i>	<i>Present identity</i>
Litany	Dissident living in fear underground artist living on the fringes	Futurist (fringes of academia) multi-talented individual successfully integrated
Social causes	Suppressive regime total social control hostile institutions scarcity	Society with social and democratic values socially serious attempts at multiculturalism acceptance of differences (to a certain extent)
Worldview	Anarchism, fatalism and atheism a free thinker	Integrating Eastern & Western religious and philosophical concepts
Myth/metaphor	The world is out to get you- better hide and don't trust anybody	Phoenix rising from the ashes Joan of Arc (a self-motivated and misunderstood individual on a mission)

knowledge, and on resilience developed by fighting life's adversities. In addition, a positive attitude had to be consciously cultivated through the study of various religious philosophies to become a foundation of a more optimistic worldview. Considering that most of the friends from my youth either suicided, spent years in prison, or were otherwise scarred for life, I managed to rise from the ashes and create a good life for myself.

However, in spite of apparent self-confidence and success, there is still an underlying 'imposter syndrome' and to an extent a feeling of not belonging, whether I happen to be in my country of birth or my adopted new home in Australia. I often wonder about two things: where would I be in life considering my hard-working nature, enthusiasm for experimentation and self-motivation, if I was actually born in Australia and received all the same opportunities from the very beginning as everybody else? Nevertheless, my situation in life was marked by disadvantage. Because of the political background of my family in Czechoslovakia I was not allowed to study, to have decent job or go to university when I was young. So, I did not manage to finish my undergraduate studies until I was in my late 50s, and I gained my doctorate at 63, therefore my academic career can only be a relatively short one. I managed to catch up with my peers to a certain extent and overcome lots of obstacles, including English being my second language, but a gap of three decades between myself and recent

graduates is very hard to bridge. I feel I still have a long way to go to feel equal in many respects. The self-perception of not belonging and lower social standing probably can't be totally eliminated within the first generation of a migrant family. It may take another generation to feel more rooted in a new country.

The second thing I'm wondering about is whether I would still be living on the fringes of society if I was born in Australia, because of my own predisposition rather than due to external circumstances. After all some of my friends and family living under communism simply kept quiet and complied with what was expected of them, even if just on the surface, and they were well integrated into their social environment. They never understood why I would risk my own life and disturb their calm existence (as they were also harassed by the police because of me) in a desperate attempt to live my own truth.

The transformation of my identity was played out against the background of a widespread social change affecting most countries on the planet since the 1960s. My changed identity reflected transformational movements towards more integration, social justice and environmental protection. This emerging phase in the evolution of humankind has been analysed by a number of scholars through the past decades, and in my work I identify it as the birth of neo-collectivist consciousness (Botta 2016). This new consciousness is actually a fusion of evolutionary advantages of both collectivism and individualism. From a macrohistory perspective it represents a higher stage of evolution and is characterised by maturity and a strong moral core demonstrated in the protection of nature as well as those who are weak and unable to look after themselves. As a function of a changed global consciousness, cooperation rather than competition prevails and individuals feel personal responsibility as caretakers of the planet to preserve and regenerate it for future generations.

The description of neo-collectivist consciousness as the next evolutionary stage is in concord with other macrohistorians' theories about the future (Galtung and Inayatullah 1997), whether it comes about through Sorokin's power of love or Rifkin's technological advancement. As individuals acknowledge, but transcend their roots and embark on a common route towards more sustainable futures they will need to establish new politics, different ethics and an epistemology of conviviality and cross-fertilisation (Appadurai 2006). The personal journey of worldview and

identity transformation detailed in this essay is an example of how this can be done on a personal level.

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There Is a Thread That You Follow: Identity, Journey and Destiny

Paul Schwartzentruber

QUESTIONS FOR THE JOURNEY

Is identity to be conceived as destiny or discovery, or as some degree of mixture of both? Is the journey of identity a predetermined path or an eventful unfolding? How is it that the journey can seem both full of surprise to ourselves and simultaneously, of puzzlement to others? Is it only in retrospect that one can imagine that identity, this identity we hold so intimate, was shaped by destiny, or chance or was simply happenstance? To ask such questions we can walk and meditate with the metaphor of ‘thread’ offered by William Stafford (1998) in his poem, *The Way it Is*:

There is a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn’t change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can’t get lost.

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Tragedies happen; people get hurt
 or die; and you suffer and get old.
 Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
 You don't ever let go of the thread. (1998, 42)

The metaphor of the 'thread' only expands the questioning: how is it that 'my' journey weaves its way, haphazardly it seems, but not without profound effect, among the monuments of 'time's unfolding' in evolution, biological process, human history and culture? How is that my course, my journey seems both so remarkably singular and so remarkably common? How is that others may see it and remark, but never really understand its whys and wherefores? How can identity be considered an achievement or an actuality when it is also always a process still unfolding? Is identity ever complete or completely actualized? Could it possibly ever be complete? Despite and through all these questions, Stafford affirms, this is 'the way it is' for, of course, the journey you perceive *is* you perceived, and after all, whether by destiny's design or countless acts of spontaneous will, 'you don't ever let go of the thread'. What such a thread, visible only to us, might be, and what our 'clinging' to it might mean—these are the questions to which I want to return but only after reflecting on this in a way that is more concrete, more personal.

The poet generalizes from her/his experience, speaking with some illuminating purchase about human life in general; the philosopher likewise, although attracted like a moth to universals, does well to turn back from ideas to the *example*, as Giorgio Agamben argues:

In any context where it exerts its force, the example is characterized by the fact that it holds for all cases of the same type, and, at the same time, it is included among these. It is one singularity among others, which, however, stands for each of them and serves for all. (2013, III)

In advocating this method of reflection by example or 'paradigm' (Duran-taye 2009, 200–246), Agamben is concerned that we not reduce our lives or (allow others to reduce our lives) to mere fixed identities explained by abstract ideas (e.g. being Canadian or Indian, male or female, scholar or farmer) but that we claim for ourselves the status of 'a singularity without identity, a common and absolutely exposed singularity' (2013, XV, 645). This, in turn, embodies a vision of human existence as an irresolvable '*possibility or potentiality*' which insists that:

There is no essence, no historical or spiritual vocation, no biological destiny that humans must enact or realize. (2013, XI, 43)

Agamben's radical challenge to traditional claims of destiny, vocation or essence and indeed identity is itself, in fact, a refusal to resolve or to foreclose the human being on the level of the concept or even as what is actualized in any one time or place. There is nothing about the human being that is as fixed as identity often implies, Agamben argues, rather there is only a reality that is better described as perpetually 'open' (Agamben 2003).

I want to return to this metaphors of singularity and openness, but in the spirit of Agamben's exemplary method, I want to begin first with the narrative of my own life—at least so far as I have been able to articulate it (Butler 2005, 78). I want to use it, in all humility, as an example/paradigm to think about identity, journey and destiny, particularly in a cross-cultural sense and as an emergent dialogue of 'roots and routes'. More particularly, I want to speak of that particular strand of my life (whether it was the result of pure karma or pure happenstance, I have no idea) which sent me from Canada to India and wound my way thence into a deep friendship with Dr. S. Jeyapragasam, a man from whom I learned *how singularity could be woven integrally into the weft of a life of self-giving and self-sacrifice*. My life can be considered to be exemplary in this regard *only* because I had the good fortune to be welcomed into the open space of a dialogue with him. Finally it was because of this self-same Jpji (as he was called by all), that our mutual dialogue took place within a horizon always haunted by the ghost (or ghosts) of Gandhi to whose thought and practice of nonviolence he had dedicated his life.

THE UNSETTLING OF ALL CONTEXTS: FROM CANADA TO INDIA THROUGH LIMINAL SPACE AND INTO PRIVILEGE

When one enters the liminal space between cultures, the loose collection of identities one has accumulated for social interaction in one's own culture are suddenly transformed into tokens of uncertain value. In that space, the question arises over and over again, for what can these 'bits' of myself be exchanged and how? That I *had* thought of myself as a Canadian, a male of a certain age, an intellectual and a dissident of sorts, a person committed to social change through some spiritual praxis—all of these tokens of my identity, seemed suddenly detached from my present

reality. (This is after all what makes the liminal space between cultures both so liberating and so frightening.) Although I also quickly came to realize that certain aspects of my cultural identity were deeply embedded in my very perception and evaluation of the world and my place in it (Donald 2001), these cruder masques of identity seemed more and more detached from it. I might grasp at them in moments of insecurity (of which there were many) but they rarely helped and often acted in ways I could not anticipate. Thus, I was confused and disconcerted by how the tokens were interpreted in the new system of exchange that was India: why should a *westerner* be such an unquestionably honoured guest? Why should a *man*, for that matter, eat in the living room while the family watched in reverent silence and the women cooked in the kitchen? What I had dissented from in the west and rejected with deepest cynicism—the web of ideology around the claims of science, technology and capitalism—were still held in an odd awe here (in what seemed to me a remarkable innocence) and literacy in them was constantly sought after as though a magical elixir (Baudrillard 2005, 80 ff.). Finally, my attempt to redefine myself as a spiritual dissident from the worst of the Judaeo-Christian heritage was only puzzling here (I was a Christian *tout court*) and, for the most part, my advocacy of social change carried no ‘radical’ valence whatsoever (hadn’t Gandhi after all suggested some such thing long, long ago?).

These are gross generalizations, I hasten to add, shaped primarily by my crudest and most awkward self-perception as I entered the unknown and vast complexity of contemporary India. But they were the intimate skin through which I received and perceived India. At the same time, what I experienced was also shaped externally in a very peculiar and particular way since I was travelling as a guest of Ekta Parishad, a grass-roots organization which worked mostly in rural India and with tribal peoples (adivasis). Thus my interpreting guides were latter day Gandhian activists, many of whom (though not all) had engaged extensively with westerners before and shared these literacies with them. Nevertheless, they shaped my view of the cities—Delhi, Bhopal, Agra, Chennai, Kochi and Madurai—as places where ordinary people suffered untold indignities and injustices and where the true culture of traditional India could only be still discovered in cracks and crevices like the roadside dhaba or the intimate family gathering. Moreover, they took me to remote villages and tribal settlements where ‘who I was’ in terms of any of my identity markers was almost utterly dissolved. There, in turn, I discovered with

shock, daily life was carried on in such a straightforward manner and yet with such a direct integrity that I hadn't imagined possible. There one could and did gather fallen sal leaves, for example, and make plates from them on which dhal and a bit of rice could be offered to guests of honour. In fact, *that* was the honourable thing to do and constituted a seamless part of one's life and livelihood (notions of job and career had not darkened any horizon here). Yet here too—especially here—one could feel the noose of industrialization and extractivism tightening and I saw many of the same people dispossessed of land and livelihood living miserably in rude shelters on the edges of cities slaving, women and men together, as day labourers on various inexplicable and nefarious construction projects which the state both sanctioned and supported.

Rajagopal, the founder of Ekta Parishad, who worked among such people all his life, interpreted this scarred and hidden face of globalization for me, as he had done for many visiting westerners, and hoped thereby to effect what he called a 'globalization of the heart'. This vision, through which I came gradually to perceive and interpret what I was experiencing in India began to work slowly but inexorably on my deeper levels of embedded cultural perception. It began to dissolve into incoherence my liberal-socialism and its vision of social justice (as a simplistic righting of wrongs), as well as my spiritualized individual self-conception (with its embedded and unacknowledged privileges). It also began to erode, slowly but surely, over the five years that I worked as a volunteer with Ekta Parishad, the deeper claims of privilege and the privileged view of which I had been barely aware before then. On the basis of *what*, I asked myself and still ask myself, is my identity as a Canadian established? On the basis of what claim to 'identity', in fact, does it entitle me to fly in and out of the lives of such people, or enable me merely to observe but never suffer their experience? Now, for the first time, I saw my prized mobility as privileged escape and immoral avoidance. Even the rationalization that what I was doing was 'helping' someone failed to assuage my newly awoken conscience.

As I tried intellectually and emotionally to unravel the disturbing privileges of this identity into which I had been born (innocently enough it seemed) and yet also to sort out my own culpability for it (which seemed to me more and more inescapable), I discovered that in my own country an awakening of momentous proportions had meanwhile occurred. Thanks to the clear and cogent self-articulation of indigenous peoples in the aftermath of the intergenerational harm inflicted

upon them by Canada's residential school system, new voices emerged telling a very different national story (Manuel and Derrickson 2015). My 'Canadian' identity was revealed to be based on a string of falsities, a mythology of colonization in whose deceitful privileges I was still embedded. Overnight, it seemed to me, my self-understanding shifted from being a *citizen* of Canada, a place which had been mythologized as a place of fairness and inclusiveness (Saul 2008), to being a *settler* embedded in a still virulent system of 'settler colonialism...that is such an overwhelming, violent, and dishonest reality in Canada and in so many other places' (Simpson 2017, 7). My identity appeared to me to be not a result of the 'luck' of my birth but rather as the result of those privileges and benefits accruing from my ancestors' theft of land, their refusal to return it and the continual denial of its proper connection of belonging to the original peoples. Thus the identity of 'settler' was no mere metaphor: it was my embodied reality in relation to an ongoing injustice (Tuck and Yang 2012).

Although it had dimensions far greater than my particular feelings of guilt and responsibility, this realization constituted for me, at least to begin with, a very personal problem. 'Confronting huge forces like colonialism', as one Indigenous author has argued, 'is a personal and in some ways, a mundane process...looking at it this way does give a proper focus to the effort of decolonializing' (Alfred, 25). The 'little difference' which I *could* make, began with me and meant at least owning up to the identity of settler, owning up to what it had meant for me in terms of privilege—and then beginning a process of giving up that privilege, repudiating in a personal way. My naïve notion of fixing the injustices out there in the world collapsed with the realization that I was an active participant in them. Decolonializing for me, had to begin with unlearning and with an ethical reorientation of the most fundamental kind. Thus, while this identity of 'settler' spoke the truth in many ways about the concrete reality of my life and echoed the ethical crisis of what I experienced about myself in India, I realized that it could only be a placeholder. I mean to say that it held the starting point for the journey of self-reflection which unfolded from that identity and ethical crisis. It was in *that liminal space* that I first encountered my friend Jpji.

THE LIMINALITY OF ENCOUNTER AND DIALOGUE: S. JEYAPRAGASAM AND THE NONVIOLENCE OF THE HEART

My first memory of our encounter was marked by an unquestioning welcome into an unconditional dialogue.

I imagine him still, as I first met him on that late afternoon in the haze and heat of Madurai, sitting on a white plastic chair, in a neatly pressed white, short-sleeved shirt and lungi, his shirt pocket sagging with pens, his legs crossed under him and his bare feet dangling. He is smiling so broadly and warmly that his eyes are almost squeezed shut. Behind him, on the white board is sketched out a complex diagram of arrows and words, in both Tamil and English. ‘I am trying to identify all the elements of a holistic view of nonviolence’, he explains to me quietly, his face still beaming from the excitement of what he appears to be in the process of just now discovering. ‘What do you think’, he asks me in a soft voice, waving me to sit opposite him in the empty white plastic chair, ‘What is still missing?’ I knew immediately that I have found a kindred spirit across a great cultural divide, someone who was reaching out in the sacredness of that friendship which Aristotle called a ‘friendship of the good’ (Aristotle 2001; NE 8.3).

Few people in the west have thought about friendship as deeply as Aristotle had, in part because he extended its possibilities into the ethical domain. Thus Aristotle speaks of a ‘higher’ friendship based on virtue (NE 8.3 and 8.4). He further recognizes that such a virtuous friend can become ‘an other self’ (NE 9.4) and finally that such friendship becomes complete in a shared, active engagement ‘only when we make him/her our own, and she/he makes us their own’ (NE 9.9/Perälä 2016, 310). For Aristotle, long ago, as for Jpji that afternoon, this *activity* of friendship had to do with ‘*koinōnein logōn kai dianoias*/sharing in reasoning and discussion’ (NE 9.9). My time with Jpji over the next eleven years was almost entirely preoccupied with this shared dialogue. We read, spoke and wrote together endlessly on a variety of his projects (and he had many on the go) and all the while he continually and gently explained to me what Gandhi had meant by such ideas as *aparigraha* (non-possession) and how that ‘non-grasping’ formed the basis for *satyagraha* (truth-force or ‘grasping the true’). ‘You should write and reflect about this’, he suggested with his broad smile, ‘what it could mean for you and in your

country'. And that happened countless times over the years I visited him or by email when I had returned to Canada. In effect, he was asking me to carry the dialogue with Gandhi back to my culture and my country, to enculturate it there. And also to carry it more deeply into my dialogue with myself as a Canadian.

A few years later he would confide to me about that first afternoon encounter, 'I saw you were suffering'. We were sitting then on a dusty downtown side street under large banyan trees by the rickshaw stand in front of his favourite tea shop. 'But you know, great works can come out of suffering'. 'Great works' was what JP's life work was about, not only performing them himself but above all inspiring others to perform them. 'Great works' was really the whole point of the 'sharing in discussion and reading', reaching out to others with what he believed was a truly holistic vision of life, the vision of nonviolence. JP was not just a 'Gandhian' in the loose way that iconic metaphor is still tossed around in India. He embodied, like a true disciple, the values, sympathies and beliefs in human self-transformation that Gandhi himself had embodied. Indeed, as I came to realize over time, he was one of last ripples from that great wave of magnificent, seismic disturbance that Gandhi had wrought in the ocean of India. In that very concrete way, his friendship, his kindness and his love became for me the vital instructive work of a teacher and mentor.

From Jpji, I learned above all that 'great works' are always works of self-giving; what made him such a singular person in fact, was the very nature and extent of this own self-giving. By the time I met him, JP had been working independently for several years after retiring as a Professor of Gandhian Studies at Madurai Kamaraj University. He was using his retirement pension and donations to fund the English/Tamil journal he published called *Ahimsa/Nonviolence* (with some 500 worldwide subscriptions) and also running weekend programmes in holistic nonviolence for local people through what he called 'The Betsy Institute for Nonviolence'. He had rented a small office on the second floor of doctor's house in the city where he, along with two young women and his sister-in-law, Anandhi, worked on the journal and an array of other translation and teaching projects. On the weekend, he would come to CESCI, The Centre for Socio-Cultural Interaction (<https://www.cesci.ch/en/cesci-center/the-center>), a local ashram near Madurai, to teach his classes. I often saw him sitting on the porch of his room between classes with a line of people waiting to eagerly chat with him. Eventually, over

the time I knew him, both projects merged into a new form, The International Gandhian Institute for Nonviolence and Peace (<http://www.iginp.com>). Rajagopal was the convenor of that organization, but JPji was the heart and soul. He had transformed himself and the professorial role into the practice of popular education and he was bringing all his skills along with a very compassionate heart to bear on that practice.

Over time, I learned that I was only a recent addition to Jpji's circle of friendship, his 'sharing in reasoning and discussion'. This work of collaboration arose from JP's spontaneous way of working by encouraging those around him to rise to what he called 'excellence'. There was nothing elitist to this notion of excellence; it applied equally to foreign scholars who visited him and the remarkable cucumber farmer who attended his weekend classes bearing gifts of his produce. He had a large number of ex-students who continued to work devotedly with him, calling and dropping by throughout the course of the day to report on various projects he had passed on to them. He also had come to know many Europeans and North Americans who had passed through and developed long-lasting friendships. It was not just the fact that these people submitted articles for the journal or volunteered to attend the workshops, or worked on translations into Tamil and back again to English or went to the Tuesday night inter-religious prayer service that he had begun in 1983, it was that in all of these things his quiet enthusiasm, encouragement and friendship was the catalyst for a great chain of collaboration that stretched around the globe and was open equally to everyone. 'Integral process' he wrote, 'is based on the assumption that we are all part of one another and we all inherit a common heritage' (Jeyapragasam 2015). For JP, that process meant a commitment on the part of each of us, a commitment to realize a series of small but powerful acts towards each other:

Holistic knowledge (truth), forgiving and forgetting, justice, setting right the past mistakes, compensatory action, penance, rightful action, healing the wounds, transformation practices are all tools for the integral process. This is the way for human survival and excellence in the Nuclear Age. (Jeyapragasam 2015)

This kind of commitment to integral process and its mutuality then, demanded overcoming the merely personal (in all its limited and limiting senses) and somehow reintegrating one's energy in service of a larger

vision. Gandhi had written extensively of his own struggles with overcoming the personal or what he called ‘self-purification’ (*atmashuddhi*). Such *atmashuddhi*, as Ajay Skaria argues, is actually a pre-ethical act, ‘the sacrifice that must precede self-sacrifice’ (Skaria, 202–203, 231). In this sense, purifying the self is never an end in itself, rather for Gandhi it involved crossing a threshold, a threshold from a merely individual identity into what seems at first an unknown realm of mutuality and mutual integrity. There is an hidden irony here, of course, for, as others have recognized, it is only by letting go of the claim of the common identifiers of individuality (the nation, the role, the personality etc.,) to which we so desperately cling, that one may begin to enter into a space of true singularity, a space where we become able to give and receive what is true and beneficial to each other. This was in fact, for Gandhi, the reason that reducing oneself to a cipher (*shunyata*) was ‘the highest effort a man or woman is capable of making...the only effort worth making’ (CW 33, 452 Letter to Basil Matthews. June 8, 1927). But it also, he believed, awakens us from ‘our trance’ with the ‘politics of power’ and allows us to engage for the first time in ‘real politics’ (Skaria, 237–238). This ‘politics of power’ makes me think not only of our most recent politics of the spectacle and the resentment of the ‘mimic men’ (Mishra 2017, 169–170) but also of the greater reaches of the politics of neo-liberalism and globalization which, being based on the ‘principle of dispossession’ had so little concern for either truth or benefit (Harvey 2003, 159). What Gandhi might have meant by ‘real politics’, by contrast, is something closer to the mutual benefit of a friendship in virtuous activity and that, he felt, could only be achieved as a result of a process of deep decolonization and self-purification.

To entice someone, especially someone from my culture and with my background, to venture across that pre-ethical threshold is perhaps the most complex of tasks, one that can only be accomplished by means of vision and perhaps also through love. I was prepared by my experiences in both India and Canada to begin unlearning but I had no idea where it would lead nor what it would demand of me.

It was in this frame of spirit, that I heard Jp’s gentle voice of friendship: ‘You are a great writer’, he said to me during one of those conversations with conviction and gleam in his eye. ‘I think you must continue to write for the good of humanity’. JP could say those kinds of things without sensing the least exaggeration. It was not so much flattery (the useful lie) as an affirmation of belief and a pointing to something beyond the

self. He really believed that each of us had a role to play and an arduous path of commitment to follow for the good of the whole. Once, when I had emailed him from the darkness of February in Canada and must have sounded despondent, he answered:

Dear Paulji,

Yours letter always brings me joy and inspiration. I am glad your spirit is up. We are born as humans since we are blessed. We need to move forward using this birth as an opportunity for our onward journey even under impossible circumstances.

with gratitude, regards and prayers,

Yours sincerely,

S. Jeyapragasam

I only learned much later, and from others close to him, about some of ‘the impossible circumstances’ he himself had endured. He had been forced out of his post at the University most unfairly by political pressure from the government for some things he had written. That set him on the path to the journal *Ahimsa* and the popular education work. Then, his son had been found inexplicably dead in a University residence. The family mourned for three years and he threw himself into his work more joyfully than ever, as if to say that the sadness of loss simply could not be allowed to be the final word. From his little office he created yet another forum for discussion and debate to honour his son, The *Rajarajan Institute for Holistic Science*. Later still, when his wife’s struggles with mental illness became more intense in later life, he took her with him to the office everyday, gave her work to do and encouraged her with great patience and love. He knew how to take on such struggles and transform them as the ‘opportunity for our onward journey.’ But his nature was also intrinsically joyful and positive. I never heard a harsh word or the least criticism of anyone. In the small Gandhian universe of Madurai there were some personal jealousies, as I heard, about his simple way of life and simple practice of nonviolence, but he rose above even those. Once, when there was a flare up of anger against him, he simply absented himself from an important local Gandhian conference. ‘I do not wish to give offence’, he told me. It was not just that, it was also his ‘great work’, his vision of acting for the good of others: ‘From self-actualization’, he wrote, ‘we need to move to selfless actualization for all. That would open a new era of human excellence and superhuman evolution. However there is always

the danger of giving up' (Jeyapragasam 2015). *Selfless* actualization for all, that is the ethical act properly speaking.

There was of course always the danger of giving up because the good was rarely visible or affirmed in the world around us except when it was enacted or embodied by someone. That explains also why the 'vow' was such an important part of Gandhi's practice: in distinction from a 'principle' which subsisted in transhuman realm of universals or imperatives and might or might not be applied, the vow was secured by a concrete life commitment and was a commitment *of one's life* to embody and enact the good (Skaria, 224). In an intriguing parallel, Agamben also wants to affirm the political import of such a renewed conception of embodied life or what he calls 'form of life': the human being, he insists 'always preserves its character as a real possibility, which is to say that it always puts its very living at stake' (Agamben 2016, 208). To 'preserve our character as a real possibility'—what can this mean but that our life is 'realized' only when, over and over again, we act by putting 'our very living ...at stake'. To return to Stafford's metaphor, I may pick up the thread and follow it now, today, or in this circumstance but I have to enact that again tomorrow and the day after that. Each time 'my living is at stake' because identity is not carried inside us like a talisman but is enacted and re-enacted. The 'thread' I hold reflects the fact that 'I' am always only 'a real possibility'. The form of our life is expressed and embodied in each of our actions and yet they, over and over again, form and inform our life.

In Jppi's life, this form-of-life had an always surprising singularity, its unlikelihood which reflected its having just pulled back from the 'danger of giving up'. Once when I visited him on the second floor of his family home (after he had given up the rented office and merged it into his own dwelling), he told me proudly, that his father had been a villager. 'He came to Madurai and opened a store, and after many years of saving, he himself built this house. This is his inheritance to me'. But there was more, I thought, and it constituted a kind of counter-story to that one: his father had also given him the name 'Jeyapragasam' in tribute to the radical Marxist and then Gandhian leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, who led a revolt against Indira Gandhi's despotism in the seventies. And that naming planted the seed of something in the young man, a seed which, however, he would nurture in his own way. In a turn-about which was quite unlikely in caste-conscious Tamil society, JP shifted from this youthful activism when he found himself drawn to study, and not just Gandhi, but the complex tradition of the early, Tamil philosopher-poets

like Ramanuja. Ramanuja had a complex of vision called *Vishishtadvaita*—‘*advaita*’ or oneness with difference’ (<https://www.iep.utm.edu/ramanuja/#SSH2c.iii>). Thus, he affirmed the differences of world in their reality and significance while recognizing that they were in process and that this difference was not yet the ultimate state of oneness in Brahmin. This precarious balance allowed Ramanuja to assert that the differences in the world were real (not illusions) but that unity was and would be the ultimate reality.

And so the shopkeeper’s son became a custodian of the deeper layers of his people’s spiritual traditions. And then, in a final act of risk, he put those traditions in service of the radical social change envisaged by Gandhi, the Gandhi who said simply and clearly ‘Truth is God’. JP saw in Ramanuja’s affirmation and appreciation of our differences held within a unity of all things as an important theological premise to Gandhi’s nonviolent activism which involved ‘a surrender to the other—without subordination’ (Skaria, 10). For Jpji this surrender was daily praxis: ‘We need each other Paulji. We must learn from one another’, he often repeated to me. He followed the path of study to the university and then to a career of teaching where he hoped to influence many with this holistic vision. He told me once that his father could not at first understand this choice of career. ‘He was a practical man, and he asked me, “what will you build by doing this work?” I told him I would build something that would take a long time to be completed. I told him that when it was completed it would become like a large banyan tree with many branches reaching down to the ground, all connected. I think then, he understood’. It is this great banyan tree which I see before my mind’s eye as I now remember my friend and teacher, Jeyapragasam. It is the image of shade offered to anyone, of shelter that is given unconditionally, of selfless actualization for all.

THE JOURNEY IN QUESTION: LONELINESS AND SOLITUDE

When my friend Jpji died suddenly in 2018 of a heart attack, I found that I had entered yet another state of liminality. Although my experiences in India had been ended by a sudden and debilitating bout of tuberculosis in 2012, I had continued to reflect on them deeply and, with his help, to gradually reorient myself through ‘our dialogue and reasoning’ together. But now, suddenly the thread I had been following seemed to slip from

my hands. Losing my ‘own’ colleague and my dialogue with him left me feeling truly isolated and indeed uncertain about my own identity.

In fact, I think I found myself slipping between the states of ‘loneliness’ and ‘solitude’ described by Hannah Arendt at the end of her magisterial study, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. I want to expand the focus of my reflection by turning briefly to her descriptions of those experiences which straddle the personal sphere and the political one.

Arendt concludes her lengthy reflection on the origins of totalitarianism by asking herself ‘what kind of basic experience of living together’ was possible for human beings under a form of government ‘whose essence is terror and whose principle of activity is the logicity of ideological thinking’ (Arendt 1966, 474). She finds the roots of this in the experiences of ‘isolation’ and ‘impotence’” as well as the ‘uprootedness and superfluousness’ characteristic of human life under industrialization in the early part of the century. She then goes on to add that what was new about totalitarianism was the fact that it was not content with the isolation of people in the political or public realm, ‘it aimed to destroy private life as well’:

It bases itself on loneliness, on the experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of man [sic]. (475)

It is this vulnerability of loneliness, pushed into the private and intimate worlds (combined with terror in the public realm), which opens people to the ‘logicity of ideological thinking’ on which both Hitler and Stalin depended, Arendt argues, in an analysis that seems still frighteningly appropriate again in our time of resurgent, fascist ideologies of race. Then, as if to underline the utter inhumanity of such *bio-politics* as Foucault latter named them (Foucault 2008, 12), she goes on to note that there is a complex pathos to loneliness as such, and apart from this political use of it: loneliness is ‘both contrary to the basic requirements of the human condition *and one of the fundamental experiences of every human life*’ (emphasis mine). On the latter, she notes, stoically

... we have only to remind ourselves that one day we shall have to leave this common world which will go on as before and for whose continuity we are superfluous in order to realize loneliness, the experience of being abandoned by everything and everybody. (476)

Friends of a colleague who dies, I suggest, may also experience some such complementary form of loneliness both empathetically and vicariously and so, to a certain extent, reach across this separation caused by death. I felt shaken to the core by my friend's death and especially by the absence of his voice, the memory of which still echoes in my imagination and reminds me of a form of his presence that lingers still. Nevertheless, I wished my resulting loneliness to bear witness to the original loneliness he must have experienced in dying. We all die in the aloneness of our own body but we do not necessarily die alone. By contrast, someone who dies without friends of the heart and mind must experience an utter social aloneness surrounded only by the incomprehension of others, as did Tolstoy's character Ivan Ilych.

Arendt goes on to set her analysis of loneliness into even bolder relief by contrasting it with a lyrical description of its lookalike, solitude. Her account of solitude recalls Aristotle's insights into friendship and builds on them. Paradoxically, Arendt seems to be saying, *solitude, rooted in the experience of dialogue, may be the only solace and the only response to our human experience of loneliness*. In solitude, she writes I am 'by myself', together with my self and therefore two-in-one, whereas in loneliness I am actually one, deserted by all others" (476). In fact, she explains

all thinking is done in solitude and is a dialogue between me and myself; but this dialogue of the two-in-one does not lose contact with the world of my fellow men [sic] because they are represented in the self with whom I lead the dialogue of thought. (476)

This solitude, the inner dialogue—unlike the barren 'logicality of ideology'—remains inherently open the world and, indeed can find its true completion only by going out of itself again into the world. As Arendt explains:

The problem of solitude is that this two-in-one needs the others in order to become one again: one unchangeable individual whose identity can never be mistaken for any other. For the confirmation of my identity I depend entirely upon other people; and it is the great saving grace of companionship for solitary men [sic] that it makes them 'whole' again, saves them from the dialogue of thought in which one remains always equivocal, restores the identity which makes them speak with the single voice of one unexchangeable person. (476)

Going out into the world of others again is necessary, Arendt argues, because the two-in-one of our inner dialogue of thought is such that, while in it, ‘one remains always equivocal’ in one’s identity. We may understand this to mean, I think, both ‘two-sided’ and ‘unresolved’ and thus as not having a definitive form. Whereas when we enter into an *outer* dialogue with another again we become, *ipso facto*, ‘one unchangeable individual whose identity can never be mistaken for any other’. Thus thought cannot be a final state for human beings *but must lead to dialogue and therein to the perception of ourselves as having a distinctive identity*. Indeed, for Arendt, it is the very going-out-of-oneself as an isolated monad which makes us “whole again...saves [us]...restores the identity which makes [us]...speak with the single voice of one unexchangeable person”. Not only do we *need* friends in the Aristotelean sense, we become who we are or, at the least, recover who we are only after the fact of our dialogue with friends, a dialogue in which we see ourselves reflected in their eyes and hear ourselves speaking to them “with the single voice of one unexchangeable person”.

IDENTITY LOST: ENDINGS THAT BEGIN AGAIN

Arendt’s profound insights here still leave some questions deeply unresolved. For example, what becomes of the solitude of thought? Does it simply vanish, flowing out into and washing back from the dialogue with the other as identity? In other words, does the identity we have achieved in that dialogue undo our solitude and its integrity? Or is there perhaps a way in which identity once achieved itself dissolves only to be reformed again out of the solitude? And among all of these forays into friendship, all of these identities created, is it perhaps more true to say that we, in a deeper sense, subsist in the solitude, continually giving birth to identities but tied definitively to none of them? This view would accord with the ‘itinerant and non-teleological view of moving through life’ which is espoused in the one of ancient great ethical texts of Daoism, *The Zhuangzi* (Ziporyn 2009). This ethic has been called ‘genuine pretending’ by recent scholars: one accepts the temporary, real obligations of the roles and identities but one does not dissolve oneself completely into such forms or cling to them (Moeller and D’Ambrosio 2017, 184–185). This is a view which also has an odd affinity with Stafford’s vision of the thread and our unfolding with it. I want to conclude by attempting to draw out some of

the implications of that possibility by referring to Agamben's concepts of potentiality and singularity mentioned above.

Arendt frames her argument in the context of her understanding of thought, or the life of the mind, but it could just as easily be framed in the linguistic terms developed by Wittgenstein and later Giorgio Agamben. If it were, it would emerge more clearly as an argument about identity as that which is realized in the embodiment or the enaction of the speech act. It would be an act of giving form, in the common speech of a particular dialogue, to the 'voice of one unexchangeable individual' and to identity as that which can be known only by others and with them. We ourselves may catch a glimpse of this, our identity, and hear, for a moment, our own unexchangeable voice only, it seems, as it is reflected in eyes or echoed in the hearing of the other. However, even after having tasted such momentary glimpses of identity, we might recognize that Arendt's solitude of thought and Agamben's singularity without identity 'always preserves its character as a real possibility'.

Such singularity remains, that is to say, in the energy (*energeia*, *potentia*) which abides in the vibrant solitude of thought or in the irresolvable singularity of possibility that we continue to be/become. As long as we hold on it, this is a possibility that *has not been exhausted* or completely exchanged itself for the proffered identities or the constructed subjectivities much less for the 'logicality of ideological thinking'. We may well experience the all-too-human loneliness of loss and death; we may well go 'among the things that change', where 'people get hurt or die' and where we too 'get old and die' but we do not need to get lost among them, or to 'let go of the thread' which continues to unfold before us as long as we remain open *to it*. To let go of the thread in this sense would be to harden and contract around something that is lesser and more ephemeral. It would also be to abandon and to lose touch with the vibrant and creative potentiality that we are, and the fulsome solitude of our continuing *anthropogenesis* (Agamben 2016, 208), our continual and ongoing becoming human. That, and not any momentary flicker of individual identity, is the thread we may chose to follow.

On some deep level I suspect, as I reflect on the life of my friend Jayapragasam, that the act of spurning the claims of identity either as biopolitical discipline or even as self-achievement in effect means remaining open to what we are becoming may yet become. It might be, in that sense, an act of unlearning and resistance which allows us to cross the threshold into true forms of 'selfless actualization' or the realm which

Gandhi called ‘real politics’. That open is the vibrant and living space in which I will attempt to carry on my dialogue with him.

Having returned the vision I learned from the living witness Jeyapragasam himself, I want to give the final words to my friend who said all of this so much more directly and profoundly

Life is a mystery, challenge, risk and ever expanding complexity. We are called upon to move forward, to set right things and also carry others with us in the endless journey / pilgrimage / adventure. However we should also be prepared for failures, defeat and setbacks in our endless journey. Integral aspects and visions of co-creations may be very important. Individual humans are bound to perish but still they can facilitate the marching ahead of humanity. Let us do our best with our human body, which has no parallel as far as we know, before we lose it. (Jeyapragasam 2015)

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PART II

Cross-Fertilizing Roots and Routes: New
Possibilities with Philosophy, History,
Anthropology and Literature



Reconciling the Self with the Other: An Existentialist Perspective on the Management of Ethnic Conflicts in Africa

Olatunji A. Oyeshille

INTRODUCTION

Nation states we may call them, but recent ethnic conflicts in most parts of African states clearly reflect that these states are far from attaining the nationhood status. Unending postulations regarding reasons and solutions to the unending crisis in African states seem to have had no lasting effects. One major reason this has been the case is that theoreticians on political conflicts in Africa have ignored the role of the human consciousness or the human *Cognito*, the I or the Self, in human social organisation. This role can be discerned in the various attempts by the existentialist thinkers to situate the *Cognito* or the authentic individual in interpersonal relationship.

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Contrary to the popularly held opinion that existentialist ethics promotes only the individuals selfish desires, existentialist ethics provides a good framework for the achievement of the common good. It therefore encompasses a viable framework for resolving conflicts at various levels. It is perhaps Fredrick Nietzsche that can be said to provide an extreme individualist ethics. But a thorough perusal of Nietzsche's works shows that he was reacting against the unjust moral and religious dispositions of his time, by emphasising the need to save the individual from the overwhelming influence of society in order to promote the vital element in man—the will to power. Our attempt in this work is to extrapolate certain elements in the works of some existentialist philosophers like Hiedegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Buber and Marcel as means of resolving ethnic conflicts in Asia.

The Nature of Ethnic Conflicts in Africa

There is no controversy as to who an African is. But when we move away from this general tag it becomes very unsettling to determine who a Nigerian or Sudanese or Cote D'Ivoirean or a Zambian is. Let us recall the case of Abduraham Shugaba in Nigeria's second republic who was deported from Nigeria allegedly for not being a citizen of Nigeria. The case of one time president of Zambia, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, who in the nick of another election was declared a citizen of Malawi and the case of AlHassan Quatara of Côte d'Ivoire who once held the position of Prime Minister but was declared a foreigner lately are a few instances of the problem and politics of ethnic dramatisation in Africa. Colonial and Military incursion into the African body politic have fuelled the flames of ethnicity, to the extent that the concept, 'ethnicity' has come to be identified with the ignoble, backwardness, conflict and underdevelopment.

Let us note that ethnicity is as primordial as human evolution since people are born into specific cultures within certain political and geographical space. But why has this concept been used in such a way that it has become an albatross in our path to development, causing large-scale decimation of human lives and the dissipation of economic and other resources? Conflicts, we should also note, are an ever-present human phenomenon that has to be managed at all levels. The problematic inherent here is simply due to the ways ethnic conflicts have been managed, which we believe are highly inadequate because they leave the human element out, by focusing primarily on political, legal and economic structures.

We cannot controvert the fact that ethnic conflicts have resulted in gross underdevelopment in most parts of the African continent. Looking at Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan, one can only visualise horror in the face of ethnic conflicts. Nigeria too is not extricated from this scenario considering the country's civil war between 1967 and 1970, and the various skirmishes among various ethnic groups in Nigeria in recent times. A glance at Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola and Cote D'Ivoire, to mention a few instances, show that ethnicity itself is the springboard for human and material destruction. The Hutus and Tutsis spread within Rwanda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo, have been engaged in conflicts which, within the last few decades have resulted in millions of deaths. Yet there seems to be no end to such conflicts. Peace talks and negotiations based on political solutions seem to always fail. In this kind of situation development can only exist in the imagination of the people not in actual experience.

Apart from deaths and wanton destruction of life and property there has been stagnation in terms of human resources development as well as material development. The education of children in particular has suffered. Scientific and technological advancement has also been truncated in most cases. The Sudanese case is a typical example. The war between Khartoum Muslim/Arab led government and Southern Christian/Animist black led by John Garrang went on for as many as twenty one years, with the southern part of Sudan experiencing no development in both human and material spheres. The list of such stagnation in Africa cannot be exhausted.

We then ask: What are causes for ethnic conflicts? Scholars of various shades of opinion have come up with different reasons for ethnic conflicts. Two major factors have been adduced for these conflicts. These are the control of political power and struggle over economic resources. The two are related in the sense that in a multi-ethnic state, the ethnic group that controls the political power invariably controls the economic resources, whether or not the resources are found within the region of the dominating unit. The problems of control of political power and lopsided distribution of economic resources subsequently lead to marginalisation of some groups or outright cheating of other groups in the authoritarian allocation of resources. This trend is noticeable in Liberia, Somalia, Nigeria, Sudan, Congo, Rwanda and Burundi (see Nnoli 1980; Ekeh 1975; Summer 1959).

The likelihood of conflicts in a multi-ethnic society where there is injustice in the allocation of resources and the sharing of political power is on the high side and this often leads to ethnocentrism, which is a tendency to project one's own group as the centre of everything desirable while neglecting other groups. Such ethnocentrism often leads to deep-rooted prejudice on the part of the domineering and dominated groups. G W Allport in his book *The Nature of Prejudice* has outlined five types of features that are likely to be displayed by a prejudiced person towards another. These are:

- One, negative remarks. This means that the person speaks disparagingly about the group he dislikes.
- Two, avoidance. This means that a prejudiced person tries to shun anyone who does not belong to his group.
- Three, discrimination. This means that a prejudiced person often excludes members of the maligned group from certain of employment, places of residence or social privileges.
- Four, physical attack. The prejudiced person often becomes a party of violence, which is designed to intimidate the people he has come to hate.
- Five, extermination. The prejudiced person often participates in lynchings, massacres or extermination programmes (*Awake!* September 8, 2004: 5).

These features can be said to have featured in the Nazi's attack on the Jews in Germany in the mid-twentieth century, the conflict in Yugoslavia and the current crisis in Burundi, Cote D'Ivoire and Sudanese Dafour region where as at March 2005, 70,000 people had been killed and 2 million people displaced.

Apart from the reasons stated above, colonialism and its consequences have been taken as another major factor responsible for the present ethnic-crisis situation in most parts of Africa. Let us have a further insight into the problem of colonialism in Africa, starting our analysis with the Nigerian socio-political situation.

THE NIGERIAN SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION

As an appraisal of the socio-political situation in Nigeria may only be appropriate more in descriptive rather than in evaluative terms as the Nigerian polity seems to be an enigmatic phenomenon. This is not only due to the complex nature of the various nationalities within Nigerian nation, but also because of the ever anomalous hydra-headed socio-political problems which seem to be unamenable to easy and lasting solutions since the formal independence of the country in 1960. The following accounts will show how the problems of the Nigerian nation are an epitome of the general African predicament, a continent in dire need of sustainable development.

Nigeria is a country with multi-faceted socio-political problems. The problems range from ethnicity, class-stratification, corruption and religious violence to unmitigated poverty, which has compounded the plight of the common man. These problems did not just emerge overnight. They have their history in the forced amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates by Lord Lugard in 1914, the unholy that subsequently metamorphed into the Nigeria state. This has made it difficult to experience sustainable development in Nigeria in the sense of, 'expanding and adaptive capacity of the society in satisfying the material and cultural needs of its members' (Irele 1993: 15).

The Nigerian nation is often construed to be made up of Northern Muslims and Southern Christians. However there are traditional believers who apart from being in the majority belong either to the Islamic or Christian religions. British imperialists used the missionaries and British trade companies to penetrate into the different nationalities of Nigeria. The result of this is what Chief Obafemi Awolowo describes thus: 'Nigeria, as a geopolitical entity is an artificial creation of British Imperialism'. Nigeria, as the most populous black nation, has three major ethnic groups, namely: the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and the Yoruba. There are about 250 other smaller ethnic groups such as the Tivs, Idoma, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Urbobo, Nupes and Junkuns. There is also a multiplicity of languages running into hundreds.

Given the above configuration of the Nigerian State, we can only talk of factions, if appropriate at all, under the guise of North and South. Muslims and Christians. But in recent these classifications do not hold rigidly as Nigerians have interpenetrated themselves and intermingled in terms of marriage, economic preoccupations (trade), religion, political

and socio-cultural ties. However, politicians (whether in military uniform or civilian robes) play up these artificial divisions for political reasons, especially when there are hotly contested national issues.

Before delving into the analysis of the recent socio-political situation in Nigeria, we want to look at some of the contentions of some ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian entity. It is interesting to note that the three major groups (Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba) who most often than not pretend to represent the interest of the minority groups are propelled by their urge to dominate and further the interest of their kinsmen within the polity. For instance the Hausa/Fulani believe that they are not only more in population but also that they are lagging behind the Igbo and Yoruba in terms of educational development and commerce. So they do everything possible to control the political machinery and determine who rules the nation. The Igbo's, on their part, believe that the Nigeria-Biafra civil war (1967–1970) brought untold hardship to their kinsmen and that most parts of the Eastern region are underdeveloped. Added to this is the inability of the Igbos to rise to the position of head of state or president of the country. This is a development they see as punishment for their role in the civil war.

In the case of the Yoruba they believe that the federation has not been fair to them in the allocation of federal resources and that the Federal Character Principle works against their interest as many of their qualified hands are not either appointed or in some cases admitted into higher institutions since they have more qualified candidates than their federal quota allows. They are also recently embittered by the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election, which one of their kinsmen Chief M K O Abiola, won. Hence they question the basis of their remaining in the Nigeria nation.

The minority groups also have their grievances. The most prominent is the agitation in the Niger-Delta over the control of petroleum resources. Their basic argument is that this zone, which produces about 90% of the nation's wealth, has been neglected. Apart from this, there is massive environmental degradation as a result of the activities of the foreign oil prospecting companies such as Shell. Hence, agitations by the Ogoni, the Ijaw and even the Urhobo youths are a manifestation of injustice of the Nigerian State. Apart from the issue of natural resources, there have been other conflicts among various groups, particularly over land. In this regard we can talk about Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ijaw (South-South) skirmishes Tiv versus Junkuns (North), Ife versus Modakeke (South West), Aguleri

versus Omuleri (South East) conflicts. All these are a pointer to the fact that the people have not really seen the need to put behind them their differences and live together as one people. This has even resulted in the call for a Sovereign National Conference which some Nigerians leaders see as something inimical to the corporate existence of the nation.

Having identified the major contentions and the relative positions of the various groups that make up the Nigerian polity, we want to refocus on the current attempts at engendering a stable social order, especially from the inception of new democratic government in 1999.

At his swearing-in on May 29, 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo raised the hope of Nigerians, especially through his promise to restore the country's glory. On October 1 1999, the president in his speech emphasised the essential ingredients of national development. According to him, social progress which we all yearn for requires more than the construction of roads, building of schools, supply of electricity, water, etc. For all these social amenities to be sustainable, they need a moral foundation. This presupposes that a society is as good as the quality of its moral underpinnings (Oladipo 2000b: 64).

What the above implies is that there is need for an ethical basis for addressing the multi-faceted problems of the Nigerian nation. But almost four years after President Obasanjo made this determined speech little or no progress has been made. The reasons for these are obvious. According to Oladipo, where the moral underpinning is strong and resilient the society survives and thrives but where it is weak and fragile, the society's capacity for social progress becomes impaired. There is no doubt that Nigeria is more of an example of the latter phenomenon than the former (Oladipo 2000b: 65).

The campaign for a national rebirth by President Obasanjo seems not to have addressed the problem of social relationships which Nigerians have established among themselves over the years. The fact is that the predominant social relationships, especially at the level of governance (Federal-State-Local governments), have been authoritarian, oppressive and exploitative (*ibid.*). These kinds of relationships have rather produced different kinds of social pathologies which do not support the ingredients of social progress. The effects of these have made corruption rampant, while ethnic and other social conflicts abound. This situation has invariably restricted the functions of government purely to that of crisis management to the exclusion of the pursuit of public good.

Let us, for instance, take the issue of ethnicity which has resulted in many conflicts and agitations. There have been clashes between the Igbos and Hausas, the Yoruba and Hausas, the Ijaw and Itsekiris to mention a few. These conflicts and agitations have also resulted in the formation of ethnic militia and pressure groups such as Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC) in the South West, the Egbesu boys, and Niger-Delta youths (South-South), Afenifere (South-West) Ohaneze Ndigbo (South-East), Arewa People's Congress (APC) in the North, among others. These groups have pursued issues ranging from power shift, the Sharia Islamic legal system, oil derivation, the offshore/onshore oil dichotomy, the National Identity Card registration, privatisation policy of the government to the convocation of a sovereign national conference.

This ethnic configuration has resulted in the weakening of the federal government. According to Odugbemi, ethnic identity has resulted in a low level allegiance to state authority. Several people and groups are overtly challenging the state authority through all sorts of Militias (2001: 69). It has become the case that issues of national interest are no longer considered on their merits but on how they affect the ethnic groups. A good case is the attitude of Nigerians to the annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election which was purported to have been won by Chief M.K.O. Abiola from the South-West of the country. According to Oguejiofor, the North did not support a revisit of the June 12, 1993 election simply because it controls the presidency. But this could have been the attitude of others lacking a sense of community. This is because:

The other sections of Nigeria did not see their interest attacked by the cancellation of the election, while for most Yoruba who mounted serious protest, it was doubtful whether they would have done so if the candidate who won the election were not of Yoruba extraction. (Oguejiofor 2000: 3)

There is no doubt then that the problem of ethnic cleavages has been a major obstacle to democracy, progress and development in Africa. But since it is difficult to reverse our ethnic alignments and configurations, we must try as much as possible to engender a sense of community based on the principle of common good and collective survival.

At the receiving end is the common man who is the recipient of all the by-products of antagonisms resulting from our socio-political configuration. Life indeed for the common man in Nigeria is becoming burdensome due to his inability to have the essential things of life. In this

situation, corruption has almost become a way of life. This is why the call for the restructuring of our body polity from the ethical and communal perspectives becomes imperative. According to Oladipo:

What is required for the renewal of hope in Nigeria as a viable modern state is the establishment of an appropriate political framework for mutual co-operation among the various nationalities in the country. (2000a: 4).

Apart from this, there is the need to restructure our social institutions in such a way that they will be an effective vanguard in the promotion of civic values of tolerance, dialogue, understanding, compassion, justice and equity (Oladipo 2000a: 4).

Our overview of the Nigerian political situation should not be seen as patently negative. While criticising the inadequacies of some of the policy measures of the Nigerian government, for instance, the recent increase in the prices of petroleum products, one should appreciate the fact that the government means well for its people. However, the measures for achieving its goals may not on all occasions be appropriate and realistic.

The Obasanjo administration, for instance, set up the Human Right Violation Panel known as Oputa panel to look into human right abuses in Nigeria. While the panel was desirable, it is not clear why government has not enforced the findings of the panel, by compensating those victimised and punishing those found guilty. We believe that mere reconciliation may not provide the desired antidote against human right violations in the future.

The effort of the Obasanjo administration should also be seen as part of the attempt to unite and rehabilitate an ailing nation. The major problem of the administration seems to be the task of pleasing incompatible associates that make up the Nigerian polity. The reason is simply that what pleases a section of the country may be displeasing to the other.

The analysis of the socio-political problems of the Nigerian nation presented above reinforces the need for citizens in Nigeria in particular and those of other African countries in general to look beyond what differentiates them as a people to embrace those values that emphasise our common humanity. The viable option in this regard then is to go back to the communal basis of the African socio-political organisation and embrace the communal values therein. The globalisation trend is a basis for communal values because man cannot negotiate his security, happiness and well-being in an isolated manner.

COLONIALISM AND ETHNICITY IN AFRICA

It is an undeniable fact that colonialism brought into Africa new political and economic relationships. For instance Freund correctly submitted that:

Colonialism largely destroyed the fundamental rhythm of pre-capitalist social and economic life without fully advancing a new self-sustained process of accumulation. (Freund 1998: 204)

The point here is that colonialism brought in capitalism in an explosive dimension thereby creating a new class of haves and have-nots especially through the extraction of wealth that went overseas. Coupled with the new political configuration which the colonialists put in place, the stage was rivalry and conflicts among the people of the colonies. Sadly enough, the political parties that emerged after independence in most African states were autocratic and in no time most of the states became one-party states in the guise of protecting African communal kinship value system which to many leaders of these new African states is averse to opposition. In this way, oppositions and labour forces that fought for independence were silenced or completely banned. For instance, this occurred in Ghana in 1961 and in Tanzania in 1964 (Freund 1998: 214). From this trend Freund opined further that this background to African political economy brought two major developmental crisis, namely: ‘the problematic relationship between the state and the mass of people and the deteriorating condition of the economy in the large majority of African countries’ (Freund 1998: 247).

Many other distinguished scholars have addressed the problem of ethnicity, federalism and power-sharing within states in Africa so as to avoid the incessant conflicts within the polity brought about largely by colonial configuration (see Ake 1996; Adekanye 1998; Suberu 1993; Horowitz 1993; Campbell 1997; Ekeh 2004; Osaghae 1992a, 1992b).

According to Adekanye (1998) Power-sharing is highly preferable to the majoritarian principle especially in deeply ethnically divided societies as we have in Africa. This is understandably useful, according to Adekanye, given the four basic characteristics of power-sharing according to Arend Lijphart (1985). These are:

Executive power-sharing among representatives of all significant groups; considerable internal autonomy for groups that wish it; proportional representation and proportional allocation of civil service positions and public

funds; and the possibility of minority veto on vital questions. (Lijphart cited from Adekanye 1998: 26)

Although these characteristic features of power-sharing are desirable, they may not work well in states with acute socio-economic inequalities. In other words, following Lemarchand (1993), there is hardly any power-sharing arrangement that can survive the stresses and strains generated by profound socio-economic inequalities (see Adekanye 1998: 33). These socio-economic inequalities, for instance, have been responsible for the conflicts between the Tutsi and Hutus in Rwanda. There is much tension with regard to which group controls political power since this is a sure avenue to enjoying certain privileges.

The post-colonial situation, according to Ake (1996), has not fared better due to the fact that political independence only brought some changes in the composition of state managers while the lop-sidedness of the state character remained the same as it was under colonialism. This no doubt intensified ethnic struggles within most African states. In fact, the state continued to be totalistic in scope, constituting a statist economy. It presented itself as an apparatus of violence with narrow social base. It also relied on coercion rather than authority for compliance (Ake 1996: 3).

While many scholars are not under any illusion as to the obtrusive nature of ethnicity in African socio-political dispensation, a few others have attempted to trivialise the potency of ethnicity by seeing it as a purely invented phenomenon and therefore a myth which has been perpetuated most by colonialism (see Anderson 1983; Appiah 1992; Owolabi 2003).

According to Owolabi (2003: 6) if we accept the arguments of Anderson (1983) and Appiah (1992), and he thinks we should accept them, that identities are neither primordial nor natural but deliberately invented, then there is an urgent need for a de-construction of ethnicity because of its overall negative effect in Africa. The forging of national identity is more desirable than the sustenance of the fiction of ethnicity because, according to Owolabi (2003) the nation state is the only form of legal and legitimate identity and also because it is the most effective structure that can ensure the desired development in Africa.

The problematics that readily come to mind with this kind of position on the de-construction of ethnicity are: Is it really possible to de-construct ethnicity? Is it possible for a Yoruba, an Igbo or a Hausa to see himself or herself first as a Nigerian before seeing himself or herself as Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa? What kind of nation state are we talking about? Is

it possible to gloss over ethnicity in the quest for nation state, since in the first instance, the concept of nation state presupposes diverse ethnic groups who have come to accept certain values that bind them together as people with a common destiny? Perhaps what we need to strive for is a nation state that gives adequate recognition to ethnic groups and which also incorporates the principle of justice in organising the diverse groups within the different nation states in Africa.

It is on the basis of the above that we want to agree with Owolabi (2003: 21) that there is a need for national-integration in order to avoid the evils of ethnicity and this integration can only be achieved if we resolve the problem of injustice, especially the problem of consistent marginalisation of some groups within a polity. In fact:

The legitimacy, survival and integration of a nation state depends on how far the state as a legal institution can perform its primary role of distributing benefits and burdens among groups justifiably without any group feeling justifiably aggrieved. (Owolabi 2003: 22)

AN EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Our focus in the foregoing has been on the political dimension to the crisis of ethnicity. However, this focus is too narrow. This is because it leaves out certain ontological and moral dimensions to resolution of conflicts, which are provided by some existentialists such as Heidegger, Sartre, Buber, Marcel and Merleau-Ponty. But our application of the positions of these philosophers can only be properly appreciated within the general existentialist framework. What, then, does existentialist philosophy purport to achieve?

Existentialism is concerned with man and his existence. It is a philosophy that takes off from the individual's standpoint and it is opposed to any objective, rationalistic and system building approach in providing solutions to the problems of the absurdities of life in which man is enmeshed. To many existentialists the individual is supposed to live an authentic life by playing the role of an actor rather than that of a spectator in the issues of life and existence. Although existentialism has its ancestry in the works of the Sophists who claim that 'Man is the measure of all things' and Socrates who insisted that 'Man know thyself', existentialist doctrines are better appreciated through the works of Kierkegaard,

Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Jaspers, Buber, Marcel, Dostoevsky, among others.

The African situation fits in correctly into the existentialist project for two related reasons. The first is that individuals and ethnic groups are self-centred perhaps in pursuit of a natural inclination to the law of self preservation and a spurious authenticity. This factor is similar to the existentialist project of individuality and subjectivity in which the '*Cogito*', 'self', 'I', '*pour-soi*' or '*Dasein*' is given a prime of place in the world. The second reason is that individuals and ethnic groups in Africa pursue their goals to the exclusion of the general welfare of others. This factor is at variance with the tenet of existentialism in the sense that there is an inbuilt regulator of human freedom, which is found in inter-subjectivity. In other words, when we pursue the concept of individual freedom to its logical conclusion, it would be discerned that it allows for the freedom of others in spite of impressions to the contrary. This is found, for example, in Sartre's statement that "when I choose for myself, I also choose for others" and in Heidegger's claim that: "Dasein is not only a being-in-the-world, he is also a being-with-others" (Unah 1996: 60). Our attempt will therefore consist in addressing the self-centredness of ethnic groups in Africa, using the existentialist framework.

What are the features of existentialism as a philosophy of life? These consist of: the individual and his systems, intentionality, being and absurdity, the nature and significance of choice; the role of extreme experiences; and the nature of communication (MacIntyre 1967: 14).

As regards the individual and his systems, the concept of the individual for Kierkegaard, for example, is contrasted both with the concepts of the stereotype and the mass. This has made some thinkers to see the existentialists as disappointed rationalists. The existentialists reject any conceptual system that is all embracing for all the facts about man. Dostoevsky stresses the unpredictable character of the universe and sees the individual appearing face to face with pure contingency. Hence, he rejects any rationalist system about man (MacIntyre 1967: 147).

Most existentialists, save Kierkegaard, make use of phenomenology to answer questions relating to beliefs, emotion, the act of will and so on. The phenomenologists, while explaining emotions and beliefs in naturalistic terms, emphasise the element of intentionality in emotions and beliefs. They emphasise that emotion or belief always has an object. For instance, in hatred, there is something hated. Most existentialists after

Husserl, particularly Heidegger and Sartre, made use of the doctrine of intentionality.

Another uniting feature among the existentialists is the emphasis placed on 'being and absurdity'. They all believe that men vainly aspire to comprehend being. They also deny the principle of sufficient reason. To them, there is no ultimate explanation of why things are as they are and not otherwise.

Freedom and choice are central concepts to all existentialist philosophers as well. Choice to them is central to human nature. To say that 'existence precedes essence', which is the motto of the existentialists, popularised by Sartre, implies that men do not have any fixed nature that determines or restricts their choices. On the contrary, it is their choices that bring whatever nature they have into being. This, of course, is not static.

The existentialist thesis on freedom and choice involves three separate contentions:

The first is that choice is ubiquitous. All my actions imply choices. Even when I do not choose explicitly, as I may do in majority of cases, my action bears witness to an implicit choice. The second contention is that although in many of my actions, my choices are governed by criteria, the criteria which I employ are themselves chosen and there are no rational grounds for such choices. The third is that no causal explanation of my actions can be given. (MacIntyre 1967: 149)

The use of anxiety, dread and death is also prominent in the work of the existentialists. Kierkegaard, for example, argued that in certain psychologically defined moments, truths about human nature are grasped. Such moments include when we are experiencing dread. This dread is of nothing in particular and nothing or void is interpreted as original sin by Kierkegaard. Heidegger sees it as an ontological constituent of the universe, while Sartre sees it as a confrontation with the facts of freedom, of our future yet to be made (MacIntyre 1967: 149).

In pursuing their notion of freedom, authenticity and individual autonomy the existentialists frown at any form of social conformism. Man, to them, is the creator of all values and should always try to actualise his 'will to power' by becoming a 'superman'. In all, there is a form of relativism of values in the existentialist system because each man is to determine his own value irrespective of the ideals of the community in

which the individual finds himself. Heidegger, Sartre and Camus express the relativism of human value in their different senses of authenticity.

Sartre, for instance, maintains that authenticity can only be achieved when an individual performs actions not because the society approves it or because they accord with some universal moral norms, but because they are necessary for the survival and the existence of that individual. Camus links authenticity with how to overcome the absurdity of human life. He believes that one achieves authenticity when one adopts the attitude of revolt towards absurdity, when one refuses to commit suicide or tries to escape any discomfiture and when one shows adequate solidarity towards human suffering (Unah 1996: 42–43).

Accordingly, Heidegger identifies three factors which define authenticity. These are: (1) finding oneself in a situation which one freely chooses (2) understanding the situation, and (3) expressing this situation in an authentic (genuine) language. On the other hand, inauthentic existence also has three factors namely: (1) ambiguity concerning the situation and one's relation to it, (2) lack of understanding, or mere curiosity about one's situation and (3) expression of that curiosity in terms of facile inauthentic speech (Stewart and Michunas 1974: 70).

At the first interpretation what directly bears pointing out is a relativistic, subjective philosophy devoid of objectivism and consideration for the well-being of others. After all, Heidegger would urge that the *Dasein* (being-there) should be authentic; Nietzsche will stress the 'Will to power' and the transcending of values; Kierkegaard would enjoin us to be actors in the drama of life by transcending our present stage and making appropriate choices; and Sartre would assert that the 'Other is hell'. However, a thorough interpretation of the existentialist system would show that it accommodates others and can be used as the basis for achieving political order especially in African multi-ethnic societies. This is what we attempt to achieve in this work.

RESOLVING ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN AFRICA THROUGH THE EXISTENTIAL FRAMEWORK

In this section we attempt to extrapolate certain inbuilt mechanisms within the existential framework that can create a veritable basis for resolving ethnic conflicts in Africa. The existential approach to resolving ethnic conflicts is reinforced by the fact that: We do not speak of conflict

or crisis merely in the abstract; conflict, crisis and turbulence are the products of concrete human situations (Unah 2000: 237). To further clarify the above position, Unah notes that

Generally, conflicts do not occur in a Robinson Crusoe situation. They occur fundamentally from social relatedness. Consequently, insofar as we are human beings living in a human society, conflicts cannot but occur. (Unah 2000: 237)

The statements above reveal a fundamental axiom about human existence—the inevitability of conflict especially at the interpersonal level. Consequently, where diverse groups of people live, conflict is bound to be present. The fundamental issue then is how we can manage such crisis such that they do not degenerate thereby leading men back to the hypothetical Hobbesian state of nature in which life is ‘solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short’. We attempt here to use Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Buber and Marcel as existential philosophers within whose work we can arrive at solutions to the ethnic problems facing Africa. We are therefore going to use the ‘notion of intersubjectivity’ entrenched in existentialist ethic to provide solution to the problem we perceive in Africa as ‘I’s lack of consideration for the other’.

Our discourse on the existentialist approach to conflict management would be appreciated when we pose the question: ‘How to individuals and minority ethnic groups especially, survive in a multicultural society?’ (Jamieson 2004: 374). This question is important for many reasons, especially the growing complexity of modern societies in which only few people still live in a world that comprises only their own kind and their own set of cultural values and customs (Jamieson 2004: 373). In other words, with increasing contact of various cultures and ethnic groups in particular nation states, with diverse set of values, they are bound to the numerous antagonistic tendencies which often result in conflict. In this process too, not only will marginalised ethnic groups want to leave a nation state in which it is being oppressed, it will also seek its own self-determination by bringing into prominence the issue of self-identity.

The need for self-determination in a sphere of oppression becomes necessary when we consider the fact that:

Within the context of existence, individuals live their lives. The self that wants to determine the content of its everyday existence continuously and

tenaciously reflect on the presence and absence of freedom. (Kiros 1987: 56)

However, much as individual and ethnic groups would want to determine their own life course, mutual isolation from other groups is not possible because at the end of the day as Kiros suggests: The identity of individuals in general and the identity of a nation in particular is grounded upon the quest for a community (Kiros 1987: 57).

We should note then that the notion of community presupposes that we don't simply gloss over those negative factors in our intergroup relations but we also manage and resolve them such that they do not continue to lead to destructive frictions because of the negativity of such destructive frictions. As Kiros notes again: 'Human beings engaged in war are forgetful of the uncuttable human ties that constitute human bonds, brotherhood and sisterhood, love and solidarity' (Kiros 1987: 60). It is because of the need to sustain human solidarity that we now attempt to provide some methods of managing ethnic conflicts and relations in multi-ethnic Africa that we draw some insights from the works of some existentialist philosophers.

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) a German Existentialist, through his seminal work *Being and Time* (Sein and Zeit) 1927, provides a veritable framework through which the *Dasein*, literally 'Being-there', which also encompasses the individuality of being, could achieve its project of authenticity by coping with certain facticities of life especially the being of others. Heidegger, although re-emphasises over and over again why the *Dasein* should be authentic nevertheless allows for the consideration for others in interpersonal relation which is also a basis for multi-ethnic harmony.

According to Jim Unah, a leading authority on Heidegger, 'the *Dasein* is not only a being-in-the-world, he is also a being-with-others' (Unah 1996: 60). The import of this is that not only is man constituted by his projects and his relations with the things which he makes use of, he is also related to others because, in the first instance, others are also beings-in-the-world just in the same manner like himself. The implication of this for us, given our present ethnic predicament, is that, whether as an individual or group saddled with particular projects and peculiar means of achieving them, we are related to others who are also beings-in-the-world. Heidegger underscores this point when he notes that when a man appears on the scene of existence, he is immediately aware not only of objects, but

of other human beings as well. In other words, our own existence is necessarily tied to the existence of others. Therefore in terms of survival, the individual must pursue his goals and projects such as will make possible the survival goal of others. Once existence also depends on recognition by others.

The interdependency of the *Dasein* with others is poignantly expressed thus:

The awareness of the being of others is part of the awareness of our own being, and implied in it as the teacher implies the pupil, and the taxi-car implies both the driver and the passenger. We discover ourselves as existing with other people and our being as being with others. (Unah 1996: 60)

As *Daseins*, both at the individual and ethnic group levels, survival is only possible if and only if we recognise the importance of others not as mere objects standing in the way of achieving our goal of survival, but as ends in themselves who are not only important but also inevitable and inescapable in the realisation of our goal of survival and freedom.

Jean-Paul Sartre [1905–1980], the French existentialist philosopher whose life and works have passed through phases—such as an unrepentant affirmation of individual autonomy especially in *Being and Nothingness*, *Existentialism is a Humanism to Critique of Dialectical Reason* where he affirmed group solidarity via his turning to Marxism—has within the framework of existentialism those ingredients necessary for the accommodation of the ‘self and others’, thereby making it possible for us to apply his thoughts to the resolution of group conflicts. A thorough perusal of his work will lead to such conclusions as ‘the I owes its existence to others’ because according to Sartre, even though individual’s autonomy is defined through his freedom of choice, when as an individual ‘I choose, I also choose for the rest of mankind’.

According to Lowen (1999/2000), Sartre’s earlier ethics was not totally relativistic as many people are wont to believe. It was also not radically individualistic because right from the beginning he could not ignore the power of circumstances and the socio-political character of human existence. In fact, Sartre saw clearly the relation of freedom to ‘others’ and to the world—the role others play in promoting a person’s self awareness, that is, our dependence upon one another (Lowen 1999/2000:

60). To clearly see Sartre's preparedness to establish what we call inter-human relationship let us look at Sartre's preoccupation in *Being and Nothingness*.

Sartre is not only concerned with existence as having primacy over essence, he is mainly concerned with modes of existence. According to him, there are two kinds of entity on existence, 'beings in themselves' and 'being-for-themselves'. Beings-in-themselves' (singular: being-in-itself or *en-soi*) are non-conscious things. They possess essence since they exist independently of any observer. They constitute the inanimate objects in the world. On the other hand, 'being-for-themselves' (singular: being-for-itself or *pour-soi*) are conscious beings and it is their consciousness that renders them different from other things and their relations to one another (Sartre 1958: ix).

Sartre identifies the being-for-itself with being of consciousness. The chief characteristic of the being-for-itself is its activity. It is incapable of being acted on from without, and it consists in and is exhausted by its own intentional meaning conferring acts. On the other hand, being-in-itself or being of things is characterised in terms of a complete incapacity for any relationship to itself. It is in Sartre's metaphorical language 'Opaque', and it coincides exactly with itself. All that can strictly be said about it is that it is (Olafson 1967: 290–291).

Our analysis of Sartre's two modes of existence is instructive here because of the attribute assigned to the 'being-for-itself' which is its ability to work towards the achievement of its goal of survival primarily. In achieving its goal however it has to contend with the existence of others. And this shows that in human society we are for others just as we are for ourselves. Accordingly, Sartre believes that:

Consciousness is its own foundation but it remains contingent in order that, there may be a consciousness rather than an infinity of pure and simple in-itself. (Sartre 1958: 82)

The import of the above is that as conscious beings we cannot avoid depending on other beings for our livelihood. This is because our consciousness has to be anchored to something outside of itself through which it realises its project of self-transcending. This can be linked to what Heidegger and Sartre describe as 'facticity of existence'. According to Sartre, the notion of facticity of human existence means that certain facts are given about us as human beings. These facts include our being born

by certain parents, the environment in which we are born, the people we live with and so forth. Sartre writes that this structure of the world sometimes forces us to conceal our freedom (which Sartre would also refer to as bad faith or inauthentic existence) and subjectivity and to believe that there is a kind of causal determinism for every action we take.

What is important, given the above analysis, is that we cannot gloss over the existence of others. The existence of the other mind, for instance, is used by Sartre to give room for the individual to transcend his subjectivity, at least to make room for inter-subjectivity. The reason is that if one cannot transcend one's subjectivity, then one would not be able to accommodate others within the world. This existence of others is arrived at through man's subjectivity, which Sartre identifies with the notion of shame. According to Sartre:

Shame is shame of oneself before the other. These two structures are inseparable. I need the other to realize fully the structures of my being. The 'for-itself' refers to the "for-others". (Sartre 1958: 195 and 222).

The above shows that through the concept of shame, I am being watched by somebody. The person who watches me is feeling like myself as being watched by somebody else. It is obvious, therefore, that Sartre's subjectivism adequately provides for the existence of other consciousness in the world. Sartre believes that the self must first be for the others as a precondition for having consciousness of himself and others as being for him. What all these show is that as individuals and groups we have our various latent and manifest identities; we cannot overlook the importance of others and we must be prepared to accommodate them, because it is when we accommodate them that they will also accommodate us. This also lends weight to human solidarity in spite of the subjectivity embedded in Sartre's existentialism. This is so because a man who discovers himself through the cogito also discovers the others as the condition of his own existence.

This means that no matter what, the existence of others is based on the subjectivity of the individual. And since I choose what is favourable to me through my subjectivity, I must also choose the same for others because I do not live in isolation from others. The existence of others indirectly establishes my own existence and therefore subjectivity because the other and I are linked together in some activities. Thus:

I cannot obtain any truth whatsoever about myself except through the mediation of another. The other is indispensable to my existence and equally so to any knowledge I can have of myself. Under these conditions, the intimate discovery of myself is at the same time the revelation of the other as a freedom which confronts me... We find ourselves in a world of inter-subjectivity. It is in this world that man has to decide what he is and what others are. (Sartre 1976: 155)

The above passage from Sartre's work *Existentialism is a Humanism* is an attempt to show that existentialism provides a veritable ontological and ethical foundation for group solidarity and understanding which is lacking in contemporary multi-ethnic Africa. Similar lines of thought is present in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 1960. In this work, Sartre attempts to locate individual freedom within the group. In fact, Sartre tends to subsume Existentialism under Marxism at this point: The main thrust of this work is a conscious effort by Sartre to give up the attempt to present and prove human freedom by reference to the concrete fact that we each experience our own freedom in anguish. He seems to have given up the presentation of the 'being-for-itself' as a conscious of himself in the world (Warnock 1970: 128). On the contrary, emphasis is placed on historical determinism based on economic relations. The agent of change in history is no longer the individual but the group. The problem is not that which arises from the nature of human consciousness but a conflict which results from class antagonism in society because of scarcity of goods.

Let us note that in spite of all the amendments done to Sartre's views in *Being and Nothingness* as reflected in some of his later works, Sartre is still concerned with the problem of how human beings can have with each other the relations they ought to have. If we grant that this is the case, then there is no radical break as such from Sartre's doctrine in *Being and Nothingness* and his latter views. What we have, on the contrary, is the modification of the views in *Being and Nothingness* which is the affirmation of group freedom of which the individual is an inextricable part.

Accordingly, Lowen describes Sartre this way:

He urged that our lives will have meaning by human beings loving and supporting each other in this world, and working together to create their common humanity by constructing societies that fulfill the needs of all. True humanism, Sartre added, should take these needs as its starting point and never deviate from them. True humanism can be built only upon the

mutual recognition by men and women of their human needs and of their right to their satisfaction. (Lowen 1999/2000: 60)

We can glean from Sartre's position above that there is need for human solidarity irrespective of our differences. Likewise when we look at the ethnic configuration of most African states, we easily discern the need for symbiotism since no ethnic group possesses all it takes to be self-sufficient. Nigeria, for instance, the ethnic region where oil resources abound, does not produce hydro-electrical resources. Hence, the need for interdependency at various levels.

Taking off from a psycho-analytic perspective, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) talks about the unification of the 'phenomenal field' in interpersonal relationship (Low 1996: 382). It is this phenomenal field that enables an individual to unify his experiences with that of the others. The reason for this is that there is a unity in the phenomenal field to which both the world and the individual's lived body contribute. We can use this as the basis for addressing the problem of agreement and consensus among various ethnic groups on the basis that rational agreement is based on our ontological attachment to the world.

According to Merleau-Ponty:

Rational agreement is possible for human beings because their experiences open to and intersect in a shared phenomenal field. Rationality is nothing other than this blending of lived bodily profiles, of mine within me as I actively open upon the world together. (Low 1996: 382)

The import of the above, according to Ponty, is that the possibility of rational agreement, which is necessary in ethnic relations, rests ultimately on the structure of the human body and the simple fact about the human body is that 'it is similar in all members of the human species and that these bodies open upon one sole world in a similar way' (Low 1996: 382). What we have in Merleau-Ponty is then the establishment of interpersonal and intergroup relationship predicated on the notion of the body—a body that has the same ontologically shared experience of the world like any other body. We can say therefore that our bodies provide the possibility of rational agreement and universality on which we can manage our differences. Although, we concede that there are differences in individual and group orientations that inevitably lead to conflicts, these

conflicts can be managed on the realisation that the human beings constituting the various ethnic groups have the same biological make-up that serves as the basis for their social engagement in a shared world.

Buber's work *I and Thou* (1937) (Ich und Du 1923), which is the most popular of his work, provides another veritable basis for addressing conflicts that emanate from interpersonal and inter-ethnic relations. Living between 1878 and 1965, he applied his philosophical disquisition to bringing about understanding between the Jews and Arabs and subsequently advocated a bi-national state (Rader 1980: 348). As far as he was concerned there could be an alternative position to individualism and collectivism, and this he attempts to establish in the I and thou through the elements of the interhuman.

The underlying assumption of the I and Thou of Buber is that one is a proper human being as one sees himself in relation with other human beings. Although most existentialist theories will aver that one consciousness tries to capture the consciousness of the other and make him an object, this kind of approach cannot rule out the reality of the interhuman (Buber 1980: 351). The reason for this can be put thus: 'The essential thing is not that one makes the other his object, but the fact that he is not fully able to do so' (Buber 1980: 351).

It is therefore only in partnership that my being can be perceived as an existing whole. This line of thinking is co-terminous with that of Heidegger's *Dasein*, Sartre's *Pour-soi* and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenal field.

In order to establish his thesis of the interhuman, Buber recognises two major forms of relationship in society. These are the '*I Thou*' relation and the '*I-It*' relation. The latter '*I-it*' relation is unholy and depersonalising as it treats other individuals, apart from the I, as mere objects or means to be used in achieving one's life goal. It is an instrumentalist relationship. The *I-Thou* relationship, on the other hand, is a relationship that is mutually affirming. It upholds reciprocity and respect for others as against the *I-It* relationship, which aims at degradation, manipulation and exploitation (Rader 1980: 365). The *I-Thou* relationship upholds the belief that a person is fully a person in relation to other persons. In this light you are not a real person so far as you regard others as mere things or as mere objects or implements. Buber notes that the real meeting between person and person comes about only when each regards the other as an end.

Buber's position is instructive here because it appropriately describes the nature of the relationship among ethnic groups in Africa—between

the Hutus and the Tutsi, the Ijaws, Itsekiri and Urhobo, Hausa and Igbo, Yoruba and Igbo, to mention few instances in Africa. Granted then that we must embrace the I–Thou relationship, what are the necessary ingredients for the attainment of this? According to Buber, at the sphere of the interhuman, the actual happenings between men must be wholly mutual or must be tending to grow towards mutual relations. This is because ‘the participation of both partners is in principle indispensable’ (Buber 1980: 351). This then reveals to us that the sphere of the interhuman is one in which a person is confronted by the other and its unfolding is referred to as the dialogical (Buber 1980: 351).

There is thus a connection between Buber and Kant on interpersonal relationship. For Kant had expressed one of the essential principles in relationship that one’s fellow must never at any time be thought of and treated merely as a means but rather as an independent end. According to Buber, the Kantian view is expressed as an ‘ought’ which is sustained but the idea of human dignity. The element of the interhuman is close to Kant’s principle because:

It is concerned with the presuppositions of the interhuman. Man exists anthropologically not in his isolation, but in the completeness of the relation between man and man; what humanity is can be properly grasped only in vital reciprocity. (Buber 1980: 358)

Furthermore,

If genuine dialogue is to arise, everyone who takes part in it must be willing on each occasion to say what is really in his mind about the subject of conversation. (Buber 1980: 358–359)

We can thus see in Buber the need for us, irrespective of our ethnic affiliation, to break away from our narrow individualism to interpersonal fellowship. The elements of the interhuman spells out the fundamental basis of the *I and Thou* relationship. It does stress that the completeness or wholeness of man is not the sole virtue of a relation to himself but it embodies the virtue of his relation to others. We see then such elements as mutuality, everyone as an end, interpersonal fellowship and dialogue—genuine dialogue—as those elements lacking or in short supply in interethnic relations in most African states.

We should also note that embracing these elements does not even reduce one's authenticity; rather, it is through them that we can achieve the cardinal goal of existentialism, which is authenticity through genuine human relationship. Buber's element of the interhuman then goes beyond narrow individualism and oppressive collectivism because, according to him, 'the essential human reality is neither one of them' (Buber 1980:366).

Let us note that in a situation of exploitation of some ethnic groups by others, marginalised groups have consistently agitated for national self-determination as recently witnessed in Somalia, Ivory Coast, Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. The attendant marginalisation by the dominating group is often accompanied by large-scale corruption, injustice and wanton poverty and disease among the people. However, when the *I-Thou* relationship is used as the basis for coexistence among ethnic groups it would then be easy to address the problem of justice, equality, peace, security and development. The African Union (AU) and other African sub-regional bodies should actually see that all Africans are Africans qua Africans and should accept themselves not as means to satisfy their own ends, but as ends in themselves.

Although Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973) focused his analysis of the human situation mainly on how the individual grapples with 'being and having' as well as on 'problem and mystery', he nevertheless accommodated social relations in his existentialism. According to him, man is the only being that can make promises. Being able to make promise inevitably places one into a unique relationship between himself and another. In doing this he invokes the concept of fidelity. One's being can only be affirmed therefore through fidelity insofar as one responds to a world that makes demands and in which one assumes responsibilities (Stumpf 1989: 495).

In Marcel's existentialism, we see a philosophy of inter-subjectivity in which man not only related to the world but to others as well. And because man has to grapple with the problem and mystery of existence, he has to take adequate cognisance of other beings. The central notion of participation and relatedness in existence therefore forms the basis of cordial and mutual relationship, which as it were can be a recipe for harmonious coexistence at various levels. When Marcel talks about communion rather than just physical communication, he means that every man should make himself available to others in such a way that would foster the attainment of the goal of life and unravelling of the mystery of being.

MANAGEMENT OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Our pre-occupation in this work has largely been devoted to the existentialist attempt to reconcile the self with the other in managing ethnic conflicts in Africa. This work does not rule out the possibility of conflicts in spite of our suggestions. Neither are we saying that conflicts can be avoided. Our focus has indeed been on how the notion of intersubjectivity, construed in various ways by the existentialist thinkers we have identified, can be used to resolve, manage and ameliorate ethnic conflicts, thereby helping to preserve human lives, and property and promote sustainable development in a continent that is in urgent need of human and material development.

The existential approach as suitable as it may be, still needs to be predicated on certain democratic values such as the rule of law, justice, equality, fairness and freedom of the necessary kinds which are germane to the sustenance of a modern state. Interestingly, too, these democratic values can only have meaning in a context of the interhuman where one ethnic group accepts the other not only as an end in itself but also a partner in the quest for survival. For instance, participation in and sharing of power by ethnic groups in African countries should not end at the theoretical constitutional level, they must be seen to obtain in the actual operation of government. This is significant, according to Kalu, because:

While democracy as a mechanism of governance is not mutually exclusive with such ideologies as liberalism, authoritarianism and/or other ideological variants, most agitation's in Nigeria are about participatory rights within the context of liberal constitutionalism that guarantees citizenship as the dominant identity, political and economic freedoms of action. And, as long as those rights are not constitutionally guaranteed and protected, the type of regime in power will not assuage the memories and sources of agitations. (Kalu 2005: 31–32)

The above only suggests that no ethnic group in any state must be marginalised in the sharing of power and resources of the state. Also, no group should be accorded preferential treatment in reward and punishment. For instance, a corrupt case by a member of one ethnic group should receive similar sanction if another member from another ethnic group is involved.

Furthermore, we should also learn to align our private interests with the common good. This is important because:

Wherever a person or society lives from the maxim of consequent self-interest devoid of any regard for the common good, it soon finds itself in an artificial state of war and terror. Many modern African states find themselves in this type of artificial state of war in areas of business, politics, administration and mutual co-existence. (Asouzu 2004: 22)

While we cannot say that communalism functioned perfectly in traditional African societies, considerable attention was still given in common welfare. Perhaps, this what forced Mbiti to link personhood to the community when he wrote: ‘We are, therefore I am’ (Mbiti 1969). What the traditional African societies forced on the individual was the notion of joint survival which modern societies have neglected due to agitations for power and economic resources. Our ability in Africa to reposition ourself for development and to contribute meaningfully to the world ‘largely depends on our ability to acquire an accommodating comprehensive mindset that is in tune with the demands of the principle of complementarity’ (Asouzu 2004: 24).

To move Africa forward in the twenty-first century and beyond, we need to find ways of effectively managing our ethnic differences But we can only start to do this if we realise that all participants are important and that the ‘self must be reconciled with the other’.

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Migration, Myth, and History: A Cross-Border Case Study

Barry H. Rodrigue

Geographic barriers have served to mark boundaries between groups of people since ancient times. Mountains, rivers, and seas are still used as borders between nation-states and ethnic groups. Such physical and social demarcation is well-known in geography, anthropology, and history. What is often less considered is how boundaries also serve as markers for

An article that included some of the materials discussed in this chapter appeared in a regional American journal over twenty years ago. It has been updated and expanded, in part to address modern global contexts. Barry H. Rodrigue, 'The Cultural Trigonometry of Franco-American Stereotypes', *Maine History: The Maine Historical Society Quarterly*, Orono: Maine Historical Society, vol. 34, no. 1, 1994, pp. 40–57.

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ethnic stereotypes. Even when migration spills across frontiers, stereotypes persist for centuries and infiltrate our feelings about modern-day peoples. An antidote to this problem of superficial stereotypes is that deep ethno-historical study can mitigate the negative effects of shallow characterizations.

A classic work on this process is, *The Invention of Tradition* (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992). Other examples abound (Mohanty 2006; Shohat 2006; Stein 2006). What I present here is a case study, one focusing on cross-border relocation in North America, between the province of Quebec (Canada) and the state of Maine (USA). It was a ten-year effort to reconstruct its history, a process that employed unarchived documents, archaeology, oral history, cartography, geographic analysis, and the integration of a diverse array of data from multiple sources (Rodrigue 1997). The result was a revision of the region's history, one that began to change views of the transborder experience and challenged enduring stereotypes.

Today, there is a global crisis of relocated peoples that effects every nation-state on Earth. Although the plight of the Rohingya in Burma, the Syrians in the Middle East, and People of Colour in the United States dominate the media today, such issues have been an adjunct to global events for centuries (Rothenberg 2006). They persist today and will do so in the future. My proposition is that re-evaluation of the history of the migratory experience and its wide deployment among the affected people can help to heal old and new misunderstandings.

FRENCH AMERICA

The first well-documented French visit to North America was the Verrazano Expedition of 1524. Jacques Cartier's expeditions in the 1530s and 1540s in the St. Lawrence Valley failed, but Samuel Champlain's efforts in the first decade of the next century succeeded. The colony of New France grew from the Atlantic coast and the St. Lawrence Valley to the interior of North America and the Gulf of Mexico. Its hinterlands were a sketched entity—a few trading posts, fortifications, and missions scattered among allied indigenous tribes. The English colonies coveted these lands, as their own population grew along the Atlantic seaboard. The French population numbered less than 100,000 in a vast domain, while over a million English crowded onto the coastal plain. A series of colonial wars erupted from 1675 until the British capture of New France in 1763 (Map 11.1).



Map 11.1 French and British colonial claims in eastern North America. New France is shaded; the British claims are not; the Appalachian Highlands run between them. John Lodge, *A Map of the British and French Settlements in North America*, circa 1750 (Courtesy of the U.S. Library of Congress)

Although the British held title to the new colonies after their conquest, they had challenges attracting and keeping English-speaking settlers in the Province of Quebec. Various strategies failed, so the Crown came to better control affairs by funding the Catholic Church to assume management of the Province's social services after the Rebellions of 1837 and 1838. In return for money and royal sanction, the Church's assignment was to keep the French-Canadian population under control. This alliance led to an empowered Church, which adopted a conservative traditionalism that was highly visible on the landscape with its proliferation of stone churches, convents, schools, orphanages, asylums, seminaries, and hospitals (Fig. 11.1).

Nonetheless, British power gradually eroded in Quebec, as the Catholic Church and its French-Canadian allies promoted a clerico-nationalist government and new commercial enterprises that gradually



Fig. 11.1 Mount St. Louis Secondary School, Montreal, Quebec. Begun in 1888 by the Brothers of Christian Schools, it was one of the edifices reflecting the new Catholic power after 1838 (Courtesy of the Frères des écoles chrétiennes and Héritage Montréal)

took control of the province. English Canadians came to increasingly concentrate their finances and authority, first in Montreal and then in the neighbouring province of Ontario. During this time, the Quebec population began to naturally grow and spread to other parts of the continent.

The Industrial Revolution was beginning in the United States, but the American entrepreneurs did not have enough resident workers (this was before major migrations from Europe and Asia), so it was natural for them to seek help from the well-populated farming villages of nearby Quebec. One of the principal destinations for the French Canadians was to New England, an adjoining part of the United States that was a centre of factory development. At first, only a few thousand seasonal workers crossed back and forth over the frontier, using mill wages to supplement farm incomes in Canada. Over the course of the next century, as American industrial development radiated, up to a half-million French Quebec residents permanently settled in the United States (Rodrigue 2017).

However, when European migration to the United States began to rise in the mid-nineteenth century, it led to an influx of Irish, Polish, Italian, and other ethnic Catholics. As a result, fearful American Protestants began attacks on the migrants, including the French Canadians who had helped establish the Industrial Revolution. These views were reflected in an 1889 *New York Times* article, which concluded that ‘French Canadians do not give promise of incorporating themselves with our body politic’ and that US citizens should ‘insist upon maintaining American political principles against all assaults’ (Fig. 11.2).

By the mid-nineteenth century, after decades of conflict and animosity, many English Canadians, French Canadians, and English Americans developed a stereotypical view of themselves and of each other. French Canadians saw their parishes as protection from foreign intrusion, while their leaders saw themselves part of a wider mission to civilize North America. English Canadians derided French Canadians as backwards and lacking entrepreneurial acumen—the product of a deficient society that could only be remedied by Anglo-assimilation.¹ English Americans saw the French maintain a dangerous allegiance to Papal authority, which they feared would undermine democracy. This situation resulted in a cultural



Fig. 11.2 Excerpt of an article on French-Canadian migration into the United States (*New York Times*, vol. 38, 5 July 1889, p. 4)

trigonometry of stereotypes, a mythical historicism dominated by political agendas.

HISTORICAL TRIGONOMETRY

Lord Durham, a progressive British official, famously wrote in his report on British North America that the French Canadians were ‘a people with no history, and no literature’ (Lambton 1839: 95). This declaration was written sympathetically, but it set in motion antagonistic ethnic dynamics, as nationalist histories were developed as a tool to bolster assumptions of English-Canadian, French-Canadian, and English-American elites.

As the French-Canadian Catholic hierarchy achieved new powers in the mid-nineteenth century, they developed a new vision of themselves. When historian François-Xavier Garneau produced the first volume of his *Histoire du Canada* in 1845, the Bishop of Quebec forced him to rewrite it to emphasize the role of the Catholic Church ... or be proscribed from publication. In this way, Catholic power was extended into the past under the threat of censorship² (Gagnon 1982: 9–43). The myth of Catholic power in New France was an exaggeration repeated in subsequent confessional-driven histories, such as those of Henri-Raymond Casgrain, a historian-priest who lauded Garneau’s prelate-approved works—in contrast to American Protestant historian Francis Parkman (Casgrain 1912).

Parkman echoed the populist stereotypes of French Canadians seen by English Americans in the United States, as in his series, *France and England in North America* (1865–1892). Although very popular, these works were led astray not only by inherent bias but because Parkman had believed the new historical propaganda from Quebec describing the Catholic Church as dominant in the settlement of New France. He also saw the new migration of French Canadians to New England mill towns in his own time as an expression of that power. This caused him to describe a civilizational struggle in North America between Catholic and Protestant societies (Eccles 1961) (Fig. 11.3).

In English Canada, Parkman’s histories were widely read and seen as representing the popular view of themselves and French Canada. As elsewhere at this time, self-taught historians produced histories. In this way, retired surveyor William Kingsford produced his ten-volume *History of Canada* (1887–1898), which he developed from research in the newly formed Dominion Archives in Ontario. His works followed Parkman’s

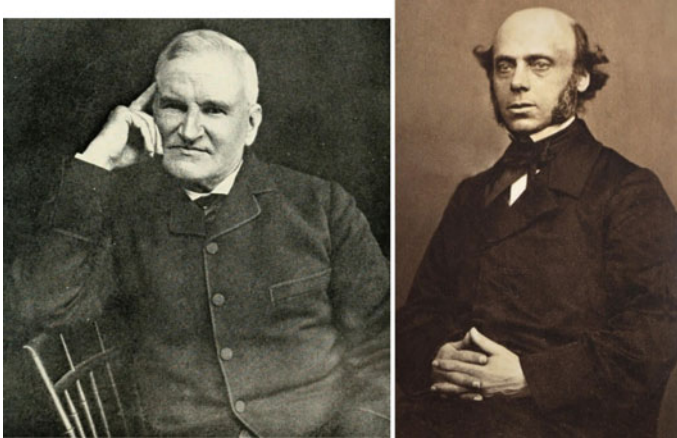


Fig. 11.3 Francis Parkman (left) and François-Xavier Garneau (right). Parkman portrait, circa 1890 (Parkman Portrait courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Garneau portrait, circa 1864, by Ovila Desmarais & Company, Montreal, courtesy of M. Bibaud/Library and Archives Canada/PA-074097)

vision and described the need for the assimilation of French Canadians, for ‘their own good’ and for the good of the new Canadian nation.

These three visions—French Canadian, English Canadian, and English American—played off of each other to create a political caricature of what it meant to be French in North America, as the variety of actual French-Canadian experiences and their multiple identities were clouded and ignored. That being said, we must keep in mind that this polarized historiography was of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when uncritical bias was prevalent and fluid boundaries existed between populist notions and academic work. But, the process continued into modern times and embroiled well-known historians in a variety of schools of North American historiography.

The Anglo bias against French Canadians was obliquely incorporated into the Laurentian/Staples Thesis of Canadian historiography (Creighton 1937), while a similar bias entered the Chicago School and was applied to French Canadians (Miner 1939). Quebec Catholic nationalism peaked in the works of historian Lionel Groulx, who founded the Institut d’histoire d’Amérique française (Institute of History of French America) at the University of Montreal in 1946, along with the journal,

La revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française (Review of the History of French America) the next year.

This is a broad-stroke and simplified background of a complex dynamic and, as such, it passes over efforts that sought to create harmony within these geographic areas (Osborne 1995; Courville 2001). There are excellent historiographies that detail these issues in a nuanced fashion (Berger 1976; Gagnon 1982, 1985; Taylor 1989). My point here is to briefly describe populist assumptions and the influential historicism that came to incorporate negative stereotyping.

Nonetheless, an independent historical tradition wound through this partisan hotbed. It existed at the Institut Canadien (Canadian Institute), a library/discussion group in Montreal (1844) and Quebec City (1848). Isolated scholars also spotted the academic landscape, steering a non-partisan course, such as historian William Eccles, economist Albert Faucher, and geographer Raoul Blanchard. With the rise of secular modernism in Quebec in the mid-twentieth century, an opportunity for historical accuracy opened, but it was a slow process.

My point of entry into these issues came in 1990, when I began graduate school in Canadian-American Studies at the University of Maine and in French North American Studies at Laval University. My research focused on the French-Canadian migrant experience into northern New England. I found that Franco-American society had been obscured by a similar set of stereotypes that had existed for a century and a half about French Canada, even in new publications that sought to chart progressive scholarship (Brault 1986; Weil 1989; Roby 1990; Chartier 1991).

My master's thesis was an industrial biography of the Franco-American shoe manufacturer Thomas G. Plant (1859–1941), which was published and went through several editions (Rodrigue 1992, 1994, 2018). In the process, I discovered that Plant had been rejected as Franco-American because of his very success and his later cultural milieu. English Americans could not believe that the child of French-Canadian immigrants could be so successful, therefore they imagined him to be a New England Yankee. The Franco-Americans ignored him because he operated outside of the system of a Catholic parish, in a national and international sphere. This conundrum caused me to wonder about the social dynamics of that period ... and the present, where the stereotypes of the past two centuries persisted and coexisted with modern historical thought.

It became a theme of my doctoral research, which I pursued at Laval University in Quebec. As fortune would have it, I joined geographer Serge Courville's new Centre interuniversitaire d'études québécoises

(Interuniversity Centre for Quebec Studies), which was engaged in a re-evaluation of Quebec's history in Canada. I then expanded their work into Quebec's southern frontier with the United States (Rodrigue 1999, 2000, 2001).

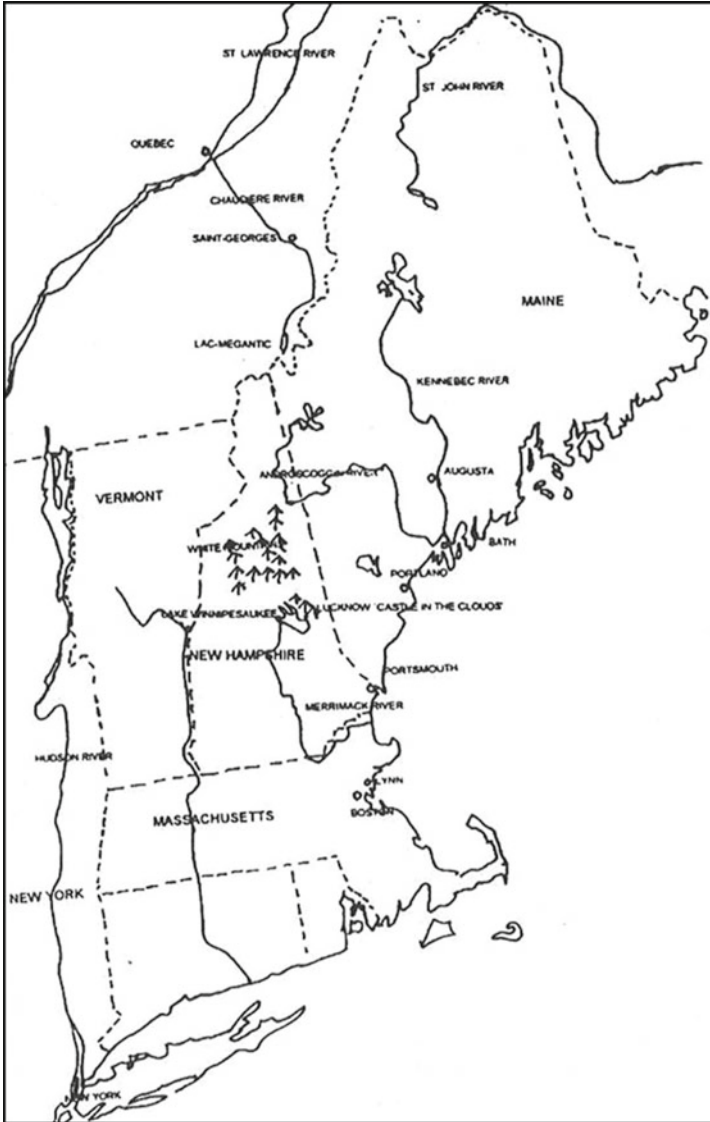
TOM PLANT: CASE STUDY

The life of Thomas G. Plant illustrates the need for a general re-evaluation of the French experience in North America. Plant was born in Bath, Maine in the United States in 1859. His mother, Sophie Rodrigue, had 'travelled through the woods' with her family from Quebec to Maine in the 1820s. His father, Antione Plante, came to Augusta, Maine in 1834. Antoine and Sophie settled at the mouth of the Kennebec River in Bath, married, and had children. Antoine worked as a sailor and was wounded during an assault on an enemy position by the Seventh Maine Infantry during the American Civil War (1861–1865). His father being an invalid, Tom grew up in poverty in a French-Canadian neighbourhood called 'Canada Hill' and 'French Hill' (Rodrigue 1994, 2018) (Map 11.2).

Tom left school at fourteen, during the depression of 1873, and took work as a boilermaker and ice cutter. He was known as one of the best baseball players in Maine. At this time, Massachusetts shoe manufacturers had begun to establish factories in Maine as a strike-breaking tactic against their home shops, and he became an apprentice shoe laster in one of these 'country factories' (Fig. 11.4). In 1880, young Tom departed Maine for Lynn, Massachusetts—the 'shoemaking capital of the world'. At the age of twenty-five, he founded a cooperative shoe venture with money from a baseball wager (Rodrigue 1994, 2018).

Over the next three decades, the Thomas G. Plant Company grew to become the world's largest shoe factory (Fig. 11.5). Plant became an advocate of enlightened capitalism and a supporter of President Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Party. He sold his business to the multinational United Shoe Machinery Company in 1910 and retired as the wealthiest Franco-American of his era (Fig. 11.6). Some estimate his fortune as high as \$26 million—almost \$1 billion in today's money (Rodrigue 2018).

Plant built a 6500-acre (2630 hectare) estate on Lake Winnepesaukee, an exclusive golf club, and an old-folks home for impoverished workers in Bath. However, just before the stock-market crash of 1929, his investments began to go sour. He had speculated in Russian bonds just before



Map 11.2 'The World of Tom Plant', the eastern borderlands of Canada and the United States (Cartography by Raymond Estabrook, Belfast, Maine, 1993)

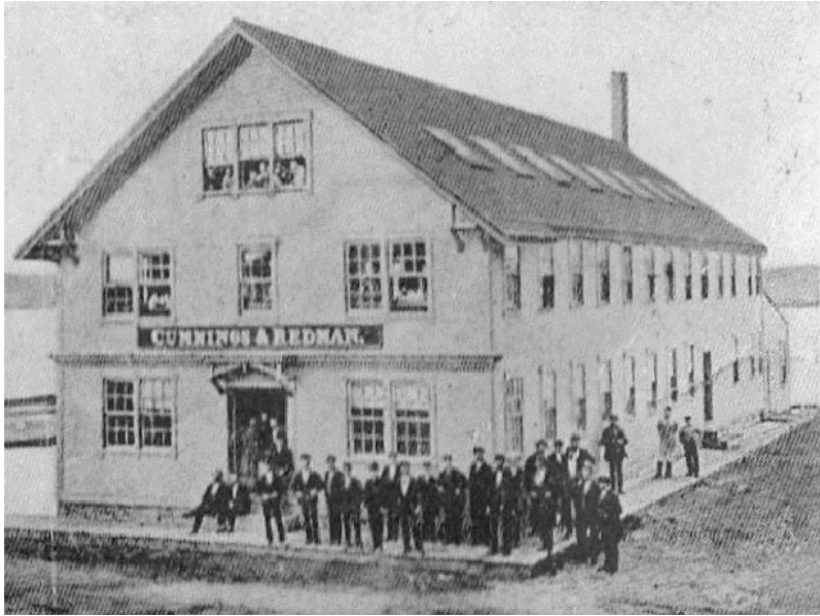


Fig. 11.4 Cummings & Redman Company, Bath, Maine, circa 1874. This factory was where Tom Plant apprenticed as a shoe laster (Courtesy of Kenneth Plant, Minneapolis, Minnesota)

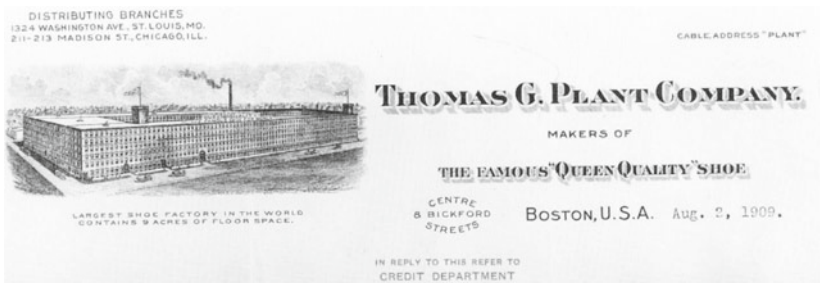


Fig. 11.5 Letterhead, Thomas G. Plant Company, Boston, Massachusetts, 1909 (Courtesy of Historical Collections, Baker Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts)

the October Revolution, in sugar just before its collapse after World War I, and in unproductive lands during the Jazz Era. He did not successfully make the transition from industrialist to financier and was forced to borrow money from neighbours and business associates. He died broke in 1941, just before creditors auctioned off everything he owned (Rodrigue 1994, 2018).

Although Plant never appeared in elite Franco-American directories like *Le Guide Officiel*, he would be considered a Franco-American by any yardsticks used to measure ethnicity. His parents were French Canadian, he was raised in a French-Canadian neighbourhood surrounded by family



Fig. 11.6 Tom Plant, circa 1910 (Courtesy of Kenneth Plant, Minneapolis, Minnesota)

and friends from Quebec, he spoke French, spent his leisure time studying French history and travelling in France, and was identified by colleagues as French Canadian. He is representative of a group of what I call ‘lost Francos’, descendants of French Canadians who came to the United States prior to the great mill migrations of 1870–1920. The timing of this early migration was a significant factor in his success and is representative of a different and often overlooked group of Franco-Americans who defy the cultural stereotypes of their societies (Rodrigue 2018).

EARLY CROSSING OF BORDERS

There are no hard figures about the numbers of French Canadians who left Quebec before 1840, but a majority are known to have entered New England by way of the Richelieu River and Lake Champlain. Farm work in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts maintained the travellers as they moved to southern New England factory towns like Worcester or Woonsocket (Vicero 1971; Roby 1990: 18–19). In addition, the Chaudiere-Kennebec route into Maine provided a significant alternative for a different population of French Canadians.

In the early nineteenth century, north-western Maine and south-eastern Quebec were still wilderness regions. The two rivers in this area connect the St. Lawrence valley to the Atlantic seaboard. The Chaudiere flows northwest for 185 kilometres from Lac-Megantic to the Saint Lawrence River. A portage over a narrow and marshy ‘height-of-land’ joins the Chaudiere with the Kennebec River system, which drains central Maine south for 241 kilometres from Moosehead Lake to the Atlantic Ocean. This route had been used by Indigenous, French, and English travellers long before the industrial revolution attracted *habitants* to Maine (Fig. 11.7).

Geographer Ralph Vicero estimates that 2500 French Canadians immigrated to Maine by 1840, 2680 by 1850, and 7490 by 1860 (Vicero 1968: 148). Comparing these numbers to demographer Yolande Lavoie’s calculations, this represents about ten percent of the total number of French Canadians migrating to the United States in those decades (Lavoie 1989: 24). Why did it occur?

As Yankees moved up the Kennebec River valley above Waterville in the early nineteenth century, they found themselves closer to Quebec City than to Boston. The capital of Lower Canada, Quebec City, was a port, military garrison, and administrative centre. It needed provisions,



Fig. 11.7 Appalachian Highlands, Canada Road region, Metgermette, Beauce, Lower Canada. Grayscale of colour *camera lucida* image from the Talcott Survey (1840) (Courtesy of the U.S. Library of Congress)

notably livestock and their products (Courville and Garon 2001). Farmers in north-western Maine gravitated towards this market, and by 1810 surveyors laid out a Kennebec-Chaudiere Road which was to connect Somerset and Beauce counties (McKechnie 1811; McKechnie and Neal 1811; Goodwin 1876; Rodrigue and Faulkner 1995).

Although the Canadians began to build their part of this road by 1815, most of the early effort emerged on the American side of the border. As an exporter, Maine stood to profit most from this international connection. Two years later, the state legislature authorized construction of the Canada Road. Trees were to be taken up by the roots to a width of fifteen feet (5 metres) and a ‘traveled path’ was to be made suitable for the passage of loaded carts, sleds, and other such conveyances (Massachusetts 1817). It was a rough passage for settlers, drovers, and travellers alike (Fig. 11.8).

The District of Maine became a state in 1820, separating from Massachusetts. The new legislators mandated an upgrade of the Canada Road to a carriageway in 1828, a reflection of the increasing trade north (Map 11.3). In 1831, it was reported that 1394 beef cattle, 249 horses, 956 sheep, and 14 tonnes of fresh fish passed over the road bound for Quebec City. These products came from several agricultural districts of Maine, and a considerable portion were articles that had glutted local markets. Lower Canada thus became an economic safety valve for Maine’s overproduction (Maine, Joint Standing Committee on State Roads 1832: 5–6; Locke 1832; Smith 1832).

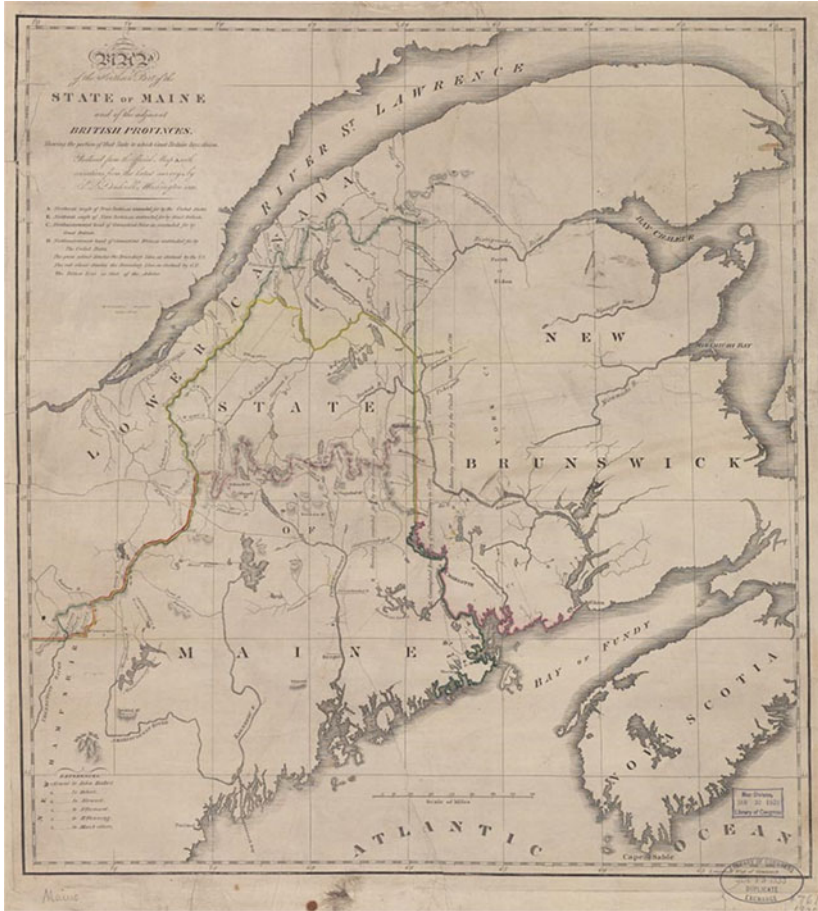


Fig. 11.8 Winter stagecoach sleigh on the Canada Road at Moose River, Maine, 1915. This was an upscale conveyance between central Maine and Quebec City; most travellers went on foot. Photograph by Zilla Holden (Courtesy of Ruth Reed, Jackman, Maine)

Events in Maine began to encourage a return traffic over the road. In 1829, administrators in Augusta, the state's new capital, began construction of a statehouse and laid plans for a hospital for the insane and a federal arsenal. Residents hoped for not only a bureaucratic future, but also for new industries, which led to plans for a dam across the Kennebec River to power mills. It was in response to the need for workers in towns like Augusta that the first French Canadians migrated into Maine. Many came from the Beauce.

The Beauce is a rectangular county abutting the north-western corner of Maine. It had been settled in the mid-eighteenth century by *habitants* who had developed a distinct regional culture. Their isolation from government centres made them highly independent (Fig. 11.9). Yankee merchants enroute to Quebec City brought the *beaucerons* information from the United States, and the Beauce residents gained a reputation for being shrewd traders (Garant 1985; Bélanger 1988; Courville et al. 2003).

The Beauce's economic base was agriculture, which left farmers vulnerable to weather. A brutally cold year in 1815–1816, a destructive hailstorm at harvest in 1829, and untimely frosts and excessive rains in 1834 caused crises, as elsewhere. The economic problems leading into



Map 11.3 S. L. Dashiell, 'The Northern Part of the State of Maine and Adjacent British Provinces', Washington DC, 1830. The Canada Road Corridor traversed the disputed boundary from the St. Lawrence River at the top left to the Atlantic Ocean at the bottom centre. Map Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC



Fig. 11.9 Grayscale of James Drummond's 'Canadian Wedding', 1840 (Courtesy of André Gladu, Montreal, Quebec)

the Panic of 1837 compounded natural disasters with poor market conditions (McCallum 1981: 3–8; Garant 1985: 109–110; Little 1989: 17–18; Roby 1990: 14–17, 19; Courville 1990: 241–256). The Quebec newspaper *Le Canadien* reported St. Georges and St. François suffered 'une excessive misère'. In the 1820s, we find the first recurring references to French-Canadian settlements in the Kennebec valley (Fecteau 1952: 10–14; Violette 1976: 20–21). The reports are sparse, but this was about to change, as the Yankee migration from the south met the French-Canadian migration from the north.

The Canada Road had mostly drawn Yankee settlers who hoped to make a living from increasing commerce between the two countries. The family of Elisha Hilton settled on the Maine side of the border in June 1831 and built a roadhouse for travellers. Their nearest neighbours were 18 kilometres away. Hilton hauled supplies to his farm from the Maine town of Concord, 97 kilometres to the south, and he had to go 32 kilometres further to grind his grain. He maintained a portion of the road on his own, removing blowdown trees in the summer and breaking

out snow in the winter. His expectations for making a living were disappointed, in part, by an unexpected influx of people. This was the result of many factors, including a large number of Irish immigrants into the St. Lawrence valley, a cholera epidemic that entered with them, and a decline of industrial jobs in Quebec City. Hilton estimated that he provided 1400 meals to immigrants during his first three-and-a-half years on the border. Others living on the Canada Road also sought state assistance for the relief they provided travellers, characterizing their efforts as public service (Hilton 1836; Shaw 1832).

The French Canadians who came to Maine in the 1820s and 1830s were no less wilderness travellers than those on the Oregon Trail at the far side of the continent. Their frontier lay to the southeast and the construction of the Canada Road in 1817 and its upgrading after 1828 helped workers migrate (Fig. 11.10). This first migration was indecisive: Some came and stayed, some left. A majority seem to have been sojourners, making money in Maine to take back to Canada to help maintain or acquire farms. It was by no means a one-way need. Maine employers needed workers and actively encouraged the migration of Quebeckers.

The distance from the Canadian frontier settlements to the nearest Maine town was about 80 kilometres, and travel could be treacherous. John Delano, from Quebec City, came down with smallpox just over the border on the Canada Road, forcing him to stop for two months at Seth Stewart's house. Stewart was a poor man with a large family and was hard-pressed to care for another person. James Jackman, from Maine, had first gone to work on the Canada Road as a labourer in 1828. Although an experienced woodsman, he encountered difficulties. On a return trip from Quebec City in February 1832, he froze his feet on the Height-of-Land and remained out of work for six months. In the summer of 1836, a woman carried a dead child on her back for 19 kilometres to Hilton's house before anyone would take her in or help bury the little one. Cemeteries along the Canada Road contained markers like 'One stranger found frozen along the road between Hilton Farm and the Canada Line' and 'One skeleton found while clearing a back field on the Hilton Farm' (Jackman 1835; Hilton 1836; Jackman Bicentennial Book Committee 1976: 132).

Those who moved up and down the Chaudiere and Kennebec rivers in the 1820s and 1830s were the first generation of the new industrialism—*oiseaux de passage* (migratory birds). They provided a reference point for later migrating kin, as their homes facilitated chain migration



Fig. 11.10 Canada Road, Sandy Bay Mountain, Maine, near the Quebec border, 1913. A dirt road, the difference between this image and the route in the early nineteenth century was that farms and cleared land had increased. Photograph by Zilla Holden (Courtesy of Ruth Reed, Jackman, Maine)

and chain employment, where relatives, friends, and neighbours secured housing and jobs for their French-Canadian compatriots (Roby 1990: 19, 23). The newly opened Canada Road made such travel more practical for entire families and temporary migration for seasonal jobs more attractive (Whitney 1830). As the economic situation improved in Maine, many sojourners decided to stay. None of Sophie Rodrigue's seven brothers and sisters married in Quebec (Eloi-Gerard 1946: 251; Gilbert-Leveille 1986: 220–227). This pattern increased as the century progressed.

One of the more complete English-language views of early French-Canadian settlement along the Kennebec River came from the pen of author Nathaniel Hawthorne. In the summer of 1837, the thirty-three-year-old Hawthorne visited his old college friend, Horatio Bridge, for a month in Augusta. The son of a local politician, Bridge had begun construction of an extensive dam across the Kennebec River and was learning French in order to deal with French-Canadian workers on the project (Hawthorne 1932: 3–24; Mellow 1980: 27) (Fig. 11.11).

Hawthorne described the city in a state of construction. Quarrymen blasted rocks two or three times a day, and the roar echoed through the

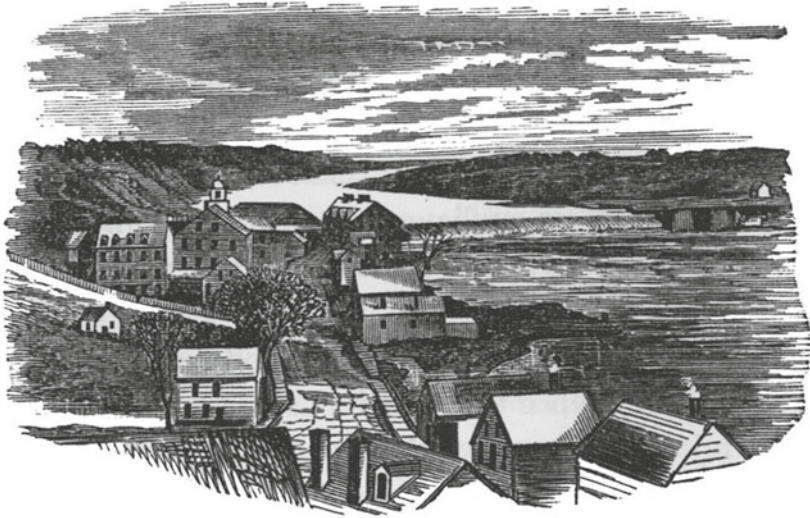


Fig. 11.11 Kennebec River and dam at Augusta, Maine, looking northward in 1858 (Lithograph of a photo by Simon Wing in James North's *The History of Augusta*: Augusta: Clapp & North, 1870, p. 777)

valley; chaises and wagons stopped to allow their passengers to view the dam, while rafts of boards navigated through a gap left mid-stream; a constant hammering mingled with the voices of the French and Irish workers. Mansions under construction contrasted with 'board-built and turf-buttressed hovels' that were 'scattered about as if they had sprung up like mushrooms' (Hawthorne 1932: 4–5, 8–10, 15, 20).

Augusta, like all of central Maine, was in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution, and developers welcomed the migrating French-Canadian and Irish workers. Hawthorne thought it peculiar to hear Gaelic and French intermixed there 'on the borders of Yankeeland', as children went from door to door selling strawberries (Hawthorne 1932: 10). He described his encounters with workers and their families in a sympathetic but condescending manner, projecting an elite Yankee view of these recent arrivals.

It was about dusk—just candle-lighting time—when we visited them. A young Frenchwoman, with a baby in her arms, came to the door of one

of them [the workers' houses], smiling, and looking pretty and happy. Her husband, a dark, black-haired, lively little fellow, caressed the child, laughing and singing to it; and there was a red-headed Irishman, who likewise fondled the little brat. Then we could hear them within the hut, gabbling merrily, and could see them moving about briskly in the candle light, through the window and open door. (Hawthorne 1932: 7)

The Irish and French lived together in three small hamlets on the outskirts of Augusta. Their houses could be built in three days and were valued at four dollars. Up to twenty people would occasionally live in a hut six by six metres in size. Earth would be piled up to a meter thick against the outer walls and occasionally sod covered the roofs, making an almost subterranean dwelling. Clay-covered boards or an old barrel, smoked and charred by a cooking fire, would serve as a chimney. The heavy construction on the dam was winding down. Many of the people occupying these villages during Hawthorne's visit were lodgers who moved in after the 1836 work season. These families sold and exchanged rights of occupancy between themselves (Hawthorne 1932: 7–8, 11–12; Coffin 1991).

Completion of the dam did not end the need for French and Irish workers in the Kennebec valley. Fires, floods, and other disasters called for almost continual maintenance and repair. Workers were needed in the mills powered by the dam. Sawmills and machine shops grew and, in 1846, the first cotton mill was built, as well as a flour mill (Diocese of Boston 1838). Those *habitants* who penetrated into urban Maine knew that they had come to a new land with a different language, a different religion, and different opportunities.

However, not all the immigrants on the Canada Road were recently arrived Irish, poverty-stricken *habitants*, or diseased travellers. Over a period of nearly twenty years, Elisha Hilton reported having served hundreds of 'ship-wracked' sailors from the Saint Lawrence River, many being citizens of the United States. Hilton probably did not recognize the work pattern of seamen. When the great river froze in the fall, it was typical for mariners who had been caught in Canada to go on the tramp for winter jobs in Downeast ports or further south (Hilton 1848; Fingard 1982: 205, 210). Hilton's report might provide a clue to Antione Plante's migration to Bath.

The life of a sailor was not easy, especially if one had the desire for a home. This was doubly true for a Canadian on the Saint Lawrence River.

Lumber ships and newly made vessels from Quebec usually left the river on a one-way voyage, being sold or rerouted upon their arrival in Europe. Once in Europe, Canadian sailors had to compete for a berth back to North America. This prospect did not encourage settled French Canadians to follow a sailor's life (Fingard 1982: 17). Perhaps this situation motivated Tom Plant's father, Antoine Plante, to settle in Bath, Maine, where he could go to sea and have a family too. Bath's rise as a preeminent Atlantic port provided a good alternative to hard times on the Saint Lawrence.

After the War of 1812, Bath became a centre of industry and the busiest port to the east of Portland. It was said to have had its vessels wrecked on the coast of every continent in the world. A joke ran that Bath shipwrights built their vessels by the mile, just sawing them off to fit on a bow and stern. The 'Shipbuilding City' developed a thriving economy based on the West Indies and European trades (*Portland Times* 1947). So it was only natural, after the Rodrigue and Plante families came down the Canada Road, that they would have been attracted to Bath, where they and their children found work in its energetic and growing industries.

Although dominated by the carrying trade, Bath attracted many support industries, such as foundries, lumber mills, brick yards, sail lofts, ropewalks, and shops for making ship components. The city was a booming manufacturing centre, offering a diversity of employment (Fig. 11.12). Early records show that Antoine Plant worked as a sailor and Levi Roderick (Olivier Rodrigue) as a brass moulder—occupations not usually associated with French Canadians in Maine, while their names became anglicized (Greenough, Jones and Company 1876: 67; United States Census 1850, 1865).

French Canadians and Irish Catholics intermarried, but such marriages were difficult to arrange, because of the small Catholic ministry in Maine. The entire state had only two Roman Catholic parishes before 1830, and only six more by 1850. Until a parish was established, Catholic rites were performed by travelling priests, *missionaries de passage*, who made circuits from their home parishes through unorganized regions (Allen 1970: 64, 67). Fr Moïse Fortier of St. Georges, in the Beauce, reported in 1841 that some of the French-Canadian Catholics he met in Maine had not seen a priest for twenty years (Fortier 1841). It would appear that Catholics also had another alternative—conversion to Protestantism. The first interethnic marriage in Plant's family took place in 1844



Fig. 11.12 Riverview of Bath, Maine, 1858. Drawn by A. C. Warren, wood-block engraving by F. E. Fox (Courtesy of the Maine Maritime Museum, Bath, Maine)

between Levi ‘Rodring’ (Rodrigue / Roderick) and Mary Hart. Protestant minister John Deering performed the ceremony. After St. Mary’s Catholic Church was established in 1857, the Plant family joined the parish (Rodrigue 2018).

As the Plant and Roderick families were establishing themselves in Bath, anti-Catholic feeling in the United States was coming to a head. The ‘Know-Nothing’ movement was made up of White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants born in the United States, who blamed economic hard times after the Panic of 1837 on immigrant and Catholic workers. Cities in New England experienced a sharp rise in mob violence (Anbinder 1992).

In 1854, a street preacher in Bath excited crowds with an anti-Catholic message in a series of open air meetings. A mob broke away from one of his gatherings to converge on the Old South Meeting House, a Protestant church recently rented by local Catholics. The church was ransacked and then burned (Fig. 11.13). The riots continued for five days, mostly in the evenings. Catholic families were threatened. Their houses were



Fig. 11.13 Burning of the Old South Church, Bath, Maine, 1854. Oil painting by John Hilling (Courtesy of Patten Free Library)

pelted with sticks and stones, and some destroyed. City officials, police, and militia did little, although there were some heroic acts by individuals to halt the mob. Only one person was arrested for the violence, and he was not convicted (Mundy 1990: 135–162; Owen 1936: 206–210).

Others of Tom Plant's extended family more accurately represent the mobile lives of the immigrants in this era. Tom's uncle, François-Xavier Rodrigue (Meserve Rodrick), was born in Maine in 1835, while his family was likely working on the Kennebec dam. They returned to Canada, but some of them came back to Maine by the late 1840s. Meserve married Harriet DuRocher in Skowhegan and they went to Bath in 1855. They left Bath around 1860 to work on the Penobscot River, where he ran a livery stable. He then migrated to Augusta in 1876, where he worked as a teamster and his descendants remained for the next century (*Daily Kennebec Journal* 1914: 11; Rodrigue 2018) (Fig. 11.14).

Prior to the Civil War, a few thousand French-Canadian settlers in Maine found themselves adrift in a sea of Yankees. The pressure to assimilate was strong—indeed, assimilation was a matter of survival. Small



Fig. 11.14 Henriette DuRocher and François-Xavier Rodrigue (Meserve Rodrick), circa 1910, Augusta, Maine. Both their families had come to Maine from Quebec in the 1820s and 1830s (Courtesy of J. Peter Grenier, Augusta, Maine)

French clusters began to grow in Maine cities, but they were not fortresses against the Anglo world. These early newcomers learned English, changed their names and religion, took ‘atypical’ employment, and patriotically participated in US events. Tom Plant was among these early families, and his assimilation was a significant factor in his rise to success.

The above narrative is limited, but it points to the need for better study of French North American cultural stratigraphy. The French-Canadian experience in the United States was diverse. Within two generations of the Plante and Rodrigue settlement in Maine, industrial expansion created a huge demand for workers. The subsequent influx of a half-million French Canadians brought about the development of a new Franco-American society and identity with new challenges. A wide gulf stands between these French migrations; different circumstances created different societies from the same culture.

FRANCO-AMERICAN CONUNDRUM

The term ‘Franco-American’ has come to refer to a specific ethnic experience—the families of French-Canadian immigrants who came to the United States between 1870 and 1920, grew up in the *petits Canadas* (Little Canadas) of New England mill towns, spoke French, worshipped in the Catholic faith, endorsed conservative political agendas, and did not assimilate into Yankee society until after World War II. This became a hidebound stereotype that collapsed the various waves of French-Canadian immigration into a single narrow identity and distorted a rich heritage into a fossilized image of what has been and continues to be a diverse social phenomena³ (Louder and Rodrigue 2002).

While some scholars have attempted to diversify this view, notably historian C. Stewart Doty (1989, 1993, 1994, 1997, 2007), many surveys of Franco-Americans generally follow the antiquated models. In respect to the earlier half of the Quebec migration to New England (1820–1870), authors often state ‘little is known of the early migration’, add a few token pages of scattered anecdotes, and then devote most of their text to the mill-migration period (1870–1920). Both periods were fifty years in duration, but the disproportion of coverage is significant.

This imbalance is understandable, since historians favor easily accessed texts, such as those by Lionel Groulx, Robert Rumilly, and their Franco-American counterparts (Groulx 1919; Rumilly 1958; Trépanier 1992;

Quintal 1993; Bélanger 2003; Bock 2004). Even more modern, progressive Franco-American work falls into this traditionalist trap to greater or lesser degrees, as with the publications of the Franco-American Centre at the University of Maine (Forum 1974) and the French Institute at Assumption College (Quintal 1993).

We cannot fault these authors too severely, since a thematic choice is their prerogative. It is much easier to access the later mill-migration source material, and source-driven histories are a common path for professional and amateur scholars alike. Two of the major archive collections used by scholars have been those of the Franco-American assurance societies—the Association Canado-Américaine (1897) and the Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste d’Amérique (1900). Both formed in the later mill-migration period and focused on the collection of Catholic-oriented documents. Since this filio-pietic tradition persists in the Franco-American community, it is no surprise that we find it repeated in English North American and French Canadian histories.

What is not acceptable is the ostracism of groups of people and the distortion of their history based on stereotypes. This exclusion has by no means been for just Tom Plant but has involved other Franco-Americans, like social activist Joseph Labadie and electrical engineer Cyprien Mailloux (Ferland 2018). It has also involved sizable groups of people, such as the French Huguenots, who came to North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In the spirit of this critique, historian Nelson Madore and I produced an anthology of this more diverse Franco-American experience. It included a wide variety of topics, from secularists, the LGBTQ community and social activists to women and Huguenots as well as those of the Catholic mill-migration era (Madore and Rodrigue 2007). The collection was cited for that year as the ‘the most important book published in American Studies’ by a reviewer in Canada’s *University Affairs* (Laberge 2008), and the text was presented to Nicolas Sarkozy, President of France, at a ceremony in Washington DC in November 2008.

By understanding the first French Canadians who migrated to Maine and the alternative routes to success that they took, we can see the many possible paths that were open to Franco-Americans. Indeed, the Franco-American exceptions of the mill-migration era should be scrutinized more closely to re-evaluate the larger picture. The stereotypes were not universal or all-encompassing. By revising our view of the past, we can change the present. As French North Americans come to appreciate

the diversity of their experiences, they will discover they do not need to feel ashamed about either fitting or not fitting into stereotypes imposed upon them, and can liberate themselves from unnecessary definitions.

CONCLUSION

The reconstruction of cross-border histories often requires a significant interdisciplinary effort, but the struggle can be fruitful in promoting new understandings. An example is sociologist Nachman Ben-Yehuda's study of the popular and academic notions surrounding the fortress of Masada, in which he sorted myths from facts. What is perhaps the most engaging part of his work is the way in which he explains the process of selection used by the myth-makers as well as the historical contexts that motivated their choices. The result is not so much a condemnation of the 'inventors of tradition', but an understanding of their times, an explanatory technique that generates sympathy in a reader. In this way, people come to be understood in a nuanced way and the record begins to be set straight (Ben-Yehuda 2002).

In this spirit, historian Charles Allen has reconstructed the complex process by which colonial and indigenous scholars in Asia brought together data in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that led to the startling recovery of the Buddhist history of India, a history that had all but been erased from the geographical and mental landscape. The struggles of these dedicated scholars with myopic officials, mercenary administrators, and biased religious leaders read much like the struggles surrounding French North American identity—struggles that persist globally even today (Allen 2003).

As science philosopher Peter Kosso describes it: '[B]efore applying the methods and structure of history and archaeology to an understanding of knowledge in general, we should revise our understanding of the former and tidy it up in light of the case studies just completed' (Kosso 2001: 171). In my own work, I had to articulate archaeology, history, and geography into a new conceptual framework, which allowed me to access a wider melange of data, in order to recover a historical profile of the northern Appalachian borderlands and its peoples (Rodrigue 1997).

Certainly, such integration of disciplines is not new in human studies, as has occurred with ethno-archaeology and ethno-history. Taking the logic of integrated human studies to its widest possible realm has led to the 'super-interdisciplinary' field of big history (Rodrigue 2020). One of

the take-aways of big history is its emphasis on global humanity. While ethnicity and other identities are important, we are ultimately all human beings with more in common than what divides us. The revision of inaccurate history facilitates the present, especially when we face the global challenges of today.

In a global landscape that is rapidly transforming, climate changes like drought and inundation will make many humans into migrants. We will have to establish a process that emphasizes the common humanity of the world's people, so as to accommodate the disruption. Nor is it just an issue of humanizing cultural history to promote social coexistence, it is a matter of maximizing human interaction so as to bring out the best ideas from everyone for solving problems. Our very survival will depend on it.

NOTES

1. One of the ironies pointed out by historian C. Stewart Doty was how Anglo bias against French Canadians coexisted alongside an appreciation for continental French 'civilization' (Doty 2007). In modern globalization studies, the economic arguments for assimilation has been referred to as 'the myth of catching-up development' (Mies 2006).
2. The French-Canadian Catholic Church had participated in the settlement of New France, but their role in this colonization movement was but one of many participants. Its priests, brothers and nuns were spread over a vast area, so its cumulative effect in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was as marginal as other sectors of the society. The settlers were indeed Catholic, but, until the mid-nineteenth century, with British funds and support, the Church was largely a family-based spirituality.
3. Even in the later period, the characterization of the Franco-American mill migrants suffered from extreme simplification. The actual diversity of experience within the *petits Canadas* is seen in works like Félix Albert's 1909 memoir about his complex migrations between Quebec and New England, a work that was well edited and annotated by historian Frances Early (Albert 1991).

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From the Danger of the Routes to the Alleged Certainty About the Roots: The Journey to India from the Early Eighteenth to the Late Nineteenth Centuries

Detlef Briesen

Routes and roots, so the approach of this anthology, refer to each other. The contribution here is about the question of how the way of travelling, the routes and their characteristics, changes the dealing with the roots, i.e. with human identities, more precisely, about supposed security in the question of self- and foreign stereotypes. The essay is thus based on a typical historical-scientific approach, which, for example, does not understand identity as something fixed or unchangeable. Human identity, or rather the multi-layered identities that a person has, is something fluid and has many points of reference that become obvious in concrete experiences of difference. Identity or the roots of a human being are therefore not

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based on a static, self-resting state, but are activated in a context-related way. Therefore, people do not only have one identity, one inner core, but a complex system of identities. Such an insight is one of the basic prerequisites of today's social-psychological and philosophical research, which Richard David Precht a few years ago put well with the following question: "Wer bin ich - und wenn ja, wieviele?" (Who am I—and if so, how many?).¹

This idea, that "roots" are answers to specific challenges posed by the environments surrounding people, is elaborated here using exemplary selected travelogues from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The essay is based on a selection of reports that Europeans wrote about their experiences on the journey to "India" during these two centuries. Such reports have already appeared in these centuries in large numbers, especially in Germany, either originally written in High German or translated from French and Dutch and also from languages less widely spoken in Europe at that time, English, Spanish and Portuguese. "Typical" products were selected, for the eighteenth century these were travelogues of merchants and soldiers, for the (late) nineteenth century mainly travel guides for a then rapidly expanding commercial tourism. All these analyzes show how strongly the reflection on cultural roots at that time was dependent on the dangers or safety of travel, the routes.²

One more note on my own behalf: In the second part of this essay, readers are confronted with racist stereotypes. The author does not share these stereotypes, but considers it very important to include them in his analysis.

SECURING THE ROUTES UNTIL THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

From the discovery of the sea route to India by the Portuguese to the conquest of Egypt by Napoleon, Europeans could only rarely reach India by land. India, by its European name, meant not only today's India or the subcontinent, but a wide area around the entire Indian Ocean. It encompassed the Indian and Southeast-Asian Peninsulas and especially today's Indonesia. The latter was the primary destination of Europeans until the eighteenth century; and the mass of travelogues that appeared in this period was more about the Spice Islands than about the world of the Mughal Empire.

However, whether travellers went to the Malabar and Coromandel Coast, Ceylon or Batavia, until the opening of Egypt in 1798, the route around the Cape of Good Hope was the standard. The motives for the journey to India were rarely scientific curiosity or religious zeal: as a rule, the long and dangerous journey was undertaken in order to make a fortune. The main concern of the travellers until the nineteenth century was only in the at least cases the confrontation with the cultures prevailing in India (in a broader sense) or even self-reflection, but the safest possible journey there and back again. In the terminology used here it was therefore not about the roots, but about the routes. So what were the motives for choosing the routes to India as it was understood by the Europeans?

Until the nineteenth century, economic interests predominated both for soldiers and traders who were by far the largest group of travellers and of whom also the vast majority of written travel reports have been handed down. Besides the trade in spices and later in textiles, the business with precious stones was especially important in the Indian Subcontinent. As the inhabitants of Asia had little interest in goods produced in Europe until the nineteenth century in general, the ships departing for the Indian Ocean were not loaded with many goods: The ships carried mainly large quantities of sailors, soldiers and employees of the trading companies, as well as weapons and silver (from the Americas). Only on their way back to Europe did the ships transport goods such as spices, textiles and, of course, in much smaller quantities, Indian gems. On the way to India, particularly until the eighteenth century, the ships were so crowded with people that unimaginable conditions prevailed with regard to hygiene and the supply of drinking water and food. On the return journey, however, the ships were often almost deserted: the mortality rate on the outward journey was already enormous and the conditions and dangers in India did the rest. The crews on the way back to Europe were small, and the death of a few sailors could be enough to render the ships manoeuvrable and the crew to certain death.

The routes for the trip contributed significantly to this high mortality as the ships had to adhere to the respective transport routes, depending on their national origin. This was also ensured by the habit of putting together convoys of ships for reasons of safety and control. As a result, the voyage to India was hindered by the limited nautical knowledge of the time and by numerous other, primarily political factors.

Firstly, the sea voyage was dependent on the changing seasons and the associated wind and current conditions on the Atlantic and Indian

Oceans. Since Vasco da Gama the ideal route looked like this: One sailed in the northern spring or summer with the trade wind until shortly before the Brazilian northeast coast, waited there for the chance to cross against the south-easterly trade wind as early as possible in order not to have to sail too late, i.e. not in the southern winter, around the dangerous Cape of Good Hope. Then the most demanding part of the journey began, the tedious cruising in north-easterly direction against the winds and strong currents east or west of Madagascar, until finally, after 6 to 9 months of total travel time, the ports of contemporary Indonesia, or for the journey to the Indian Subcontinent, first of all today's Sri Lanka were reached. The success of such a high-risk venture depended mainly on being able to take advantage of the seasonal changes in wind and current systems. Delays on the way to India could expose the ships to weeks of calm, terrible winter storms or cyclones.

Secondly, the journey to India depended on the infrastructure provided by the state authorities or the monopoly trading companies of European countries. Ships from Portugal were obliged to take the direct route to India from Lisbon, Lagos or at the latest Madeira without stopping at another, even Portuguese, base. Already at the latitude the Brazilian northeast coast, ships, crews and passengers were often already in such a miserable condition that once landed, they hardly suitable for further travel without extensive repair and regeneration. Both could then take months or, because of the wind systems, a whole year.

In the seventeenth century, the Portuguese ships were gradually replaced by a much more efficient and safer travel system introduced by the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or VOC for short. It was based on improvements in navigation and shipbuilding on the one hand, and on the other—and this was the crucial point—on the establishment of supply stations on the way to India. Of central importance for the Dutch was the Cape Colony which was founded with Cape Town in 1652. It was an exception along the entire African coast, as Europeans avoided for various reasons longer stays in Africa or even direct contact with Africans at all.

The Cape Colony changed the journey to India considerably: On the one hand, after the first part of the journey, which had already lasted four to six months, the ships could now be repaired and the crews could regenerate. On the other hand, this also changed the second part of the voyage nautically: Now the ships went with the permanent westerly winds around the 40th degree of latitude until shortly before the West Australian coast

to reach Batavia with the south-east trade wind. From there, it was no longer complicated to sail to today's Sri Lanka, the ports of the Malabar Coast and later the Ganges delta with the same trade wind.

The better organization of the journey to India was a major reason for the fall of the Portuguese monopoly. Since the seventeenth century, it was disputed first by the Dutch and then by the French. The Dutch system of supply stations was adopted by France. Since 1665, France extended its own supply stations with Réunion and since 1715 with Mauritius. In the beginning, in the eighteenth century, England entered the India trade not with own supply stations but rather by using the bases of Spanish and Portuguese colonies that it was permitted to use by the *Asiento*-contracts about the transatlantic slave trade. Therefore, the British domain in India originally was not the spice and gem trade but the purchase of Indian textiles with which the slaves of America and the inhabitants of Africa were clothed. Finally, Great Britain—via the successful naval wars in the Home Waters—conquered the connections to the Dutch and French supply stations, such as the Cape Colony and Mauritius. At the latest with the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the United Kingdom then took control of the sea route to India.

ENCOUNTERING THE ROUTES IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

As already mentioned, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, travel to India often meant first a trip to contemporary Indonesia, which was largely under Dutch control at the time. In the German-speaking world, representations of Banda, Sumatra or the Moluccas formed the bulk of reports. One reason for this was the large number of German or Swiss Protestants who had entered the service of the VOC. On the other hand, many reports in the Netherlands (as publications there in general) were not published in Dutch or Lower Saxon but in High German. After all, the voyage, whether to the Subcontinent or the Indonesian Archipelago, followed the same route on Dutch ships since the seventeenth century: the first leg of the journey led from Holland to the Cape of Good Hope. Then it was decided whether one would travel first to Batavia or directly to the Malabar Coast or Ceylon. The reports on this first leg of the voyage became increasingly uniform in the eighteenth century, and numerous standardized actions mentioned in travelogues bear witness to this.

A good example of this was the report by Ernst Christoph Barchewitz.³ He came from Thuringia, was a trained white tanner and finally arrived in Delft during his journeyman's wanderings, which took him all over Central Europe. Because he had difficulties finding work, Barchewitz decided to join the VOC. After swearing an oath, he received his first monthly pay and a sea chest with signs of the company. On April 20, 1711, the two ships going to East India sailed from Sluys in the Meuse to India.

The main theme of Barchewitz (as with nearly all other travellers) was firstly catering on board and secondly comfort and safety. It seems to have been common practice to eat and drink as much and as abundantly as possible before setting sail. Barchewitz, for example, reports that before the ship sailed off, there was much more food and drink than the newly hired soldiers, sailors and civilian employees could bring down. This included in particular an ample supply of alcohol, i.e. beer. As soon set sail was set a rationing system was introduced, the captain of the ship had the beer barrel sealed in particular: Since then every day, a certain amount of beer was distributed per person. The beer supply was already exhausted on the latitude of Spain—now brandy was distributed and everyone received a daily ration of drinking water too. Barchewitz had his difficulties with this; he had never drunk water until then, according to his own statement—perhaps because of the health risks? For over 14 days, at least, he drank brandy, in which he dipped rusk—then he gave up. His thirst had obviously become unbearable. At the beginning of the journey there was still as much bread as one wanted and in addition Edam cheese, horseradish, onions and butter. The food brought along was supplemented by fish, which the sailors fished out of the sea. Barchewitz did not report any problems with the supply of food and drinking water until he reached the Cape Colony.

This did not apply to the safety and comfort on board or to the state of health of the travellers, especially the sailors. Thefts were frequent: Barchewitz, for example, slept on his sea chest during the entire voyage for fear of theft. Frequent quarrels between the travellers occurred. Barchewitz reported violence, especially between the sailors on board. For example, one sailor had smashed a hole in the skull of another with a ham bone for a nullity. He was sentenced to 150 blows to the buttocks, which he “got right”.⁴ Accidents and illnesses were also apparently very common on sea voyages; sailors fell overboard and were rescued, if at all, only after hours. Psychological problems were also massive: even north of

the Canary Islands, a quartermaster became so ill that the captain had him locked up. The sailors in particular were apparently chronically malnourished, as they suffered more from scurvy than the accompanying soldiers or civilian employees of the VOC. After a few weeks, many of them started to loosen their teeth, and before reaching the cape, one of the sailors died, apparently having undergone several phases of extreme malnutrition already. Barchewitz himself was almost killed by a jib pole that had come loose from the yards during a sailing manoeuvre. A corporal of the accompanying soldiers suffered for weeks from seasickness, the constant nausea weakened his body to such an extent that he died before reaching the cape. In stormy weather, even going to the on-board toilet was life-threatening—it was located in the gallion in the bow of the ship. Barchewitz reports on the miraculous rescue of a fellow traveller who had to make his escape in the storm off the cape. Washed from board by a wave, he had the unbelievable good fortune to be hurled back onto the deck of the ship by another wave.⁵

But all in all, boredom on board was more characteristic of everyday life. With a good wind and calm seas, it was dispelled by exercises for the sailors and drills for the soldiers. The biggest event during the many weeks at sea was the ship's party that was celebrated off the coast of north-eastern Brazil when the ship crossed the equator and entered the south-east trade wind. There was Spanish wine, freshly slaughtered meat, music was played and comedies were performed. Like all travellers, Barchewitz finally emphasized the excellent condition of the Cape Colony. After the months at sea, the colony with its abundance of fresh food and excellent wines must have seemed like paradise to the travellers.

It is astonishing how little Barchewitz was concerned with his stay in India itself. This indicates that after their arrival Europeans lived in extensive isolation from the people around them, that is, in their community, and how little merchants, soldiers and sailors really cared about the conditions in India. They went there to get rich and started a return journey as soon as possible, which was at least as dangerous as the outward journey.

This isolation becomes even clearer when one looks at another travelogue written in Dutch in the eighteenth century and translated into High German, the travelogue of Jacob de Bucquoy.⁶ A slight deviation from the respective standard routes of the European trading companies meant danger to life, and survival on the journey and in the country of destination, India, was only assured if the travellers were able to move within a

system of European support. Therefore, this travel report also focuses on the efforts of travelling and not the conditions in the destination country.

Bucquoy had sailed from Holland in November 1719, and had reached the Cape on 4 March of the following year. There he stopped his journey to India, because he had apparently been commissioned by the VOC to scout the Portuguese colonies in East Africa. Bucquoy joined a Dutch caper fleet in February 1721 which explored the southern coast of Mozambique around the Rio de la Goa and then sailed to Madagascar to capture the Portuguese ship that went to Goa in India once a year. Tropical Africa proved to be a life-threatening challenge for the Dutch again: in the six weeks they spent in there, almost 2/3 of the ship's crews and soldiers died. A fever epidemic was the direct cause of most deaths. It carried off most of the crews after only a few days. The Dutch also suffered from terrible skin parasites "as thick as a quill and most of them an inch long".⁷ The worms caused great pain and apparently also sepsis, as many of those afflicted died within just two or three days.

Bucquoy finally landed in the city of Mozambique via a dangerous and exhausting detour: The caperers lost their last ship off Madagascar and the surviving crew spent several months on the island. As one of the few survivors, Bucquoy finally arrived on a "Moorish" ship at the Portuguese branch in Mozambique, i.e. the fortress of São Sebastião on the island of Mozambique. There he was interned and waited four months before he was taken on a ship sailing to Goa in India on the instructions of the governor there.

It is an indicator of the weakness of the Portuguese colonial empire in the eighteenth century that the possibility of such a journey was rare, even from Mozambique.⁸ Every year only one large sailing ship sailed from Brazil via São Sebastião to Goa. In Mozambique its crew provided itself with drinking water, firewood and food and a "commodity" that was also tradable in India, black slaves. As many of these slaves as possible were taken on board. The ship was therefore catastrophically overcrowded, especially since, in addition to the sailors and also soldiers were on board in large numbers—conscripted "bandits, who are sent to India because of their misdeeds, where, according to the nature of their misdeeds, they have to stay either for a certain number of years, or for their whole life".⁹ Bucquoy led a miserable life on the Portuguese ship. He was urged to do hard ship work and was forced to attend the daily Catholic ship service. This contempt for his Protestant denomination was perhaps the worst humiliation for Bucquoy. The main reason for this was probably that he

achieved compassion through attention and reverence, and was thus given food scraps by the ship's crew. In this way, Bucquoy was able to get from Mozambique to Goa in eight weeks.

In Goa, Busquoy spent several more miserable weeks before he went off on his own. It was crucial for his survival to regain access to the VOC infrastructure. He therefore had to head south, because the only Dutch base on the Malabar Coast was Cochin. He travelled south from Goa on Indian ships and for the most part by land. Especially on the land journey Bucquoy had positive experiences with hospitable people but he described all his experiences only from the perspective of his efforts for pure survival. Nevertheless, the land journey alone was an aberration that lasted over ten weeks, from which he was finally saved only by a Catholic priest. For the first time in weeks he received sufficient food and a guide, who finally brought him to Calicut in a few more months. On this journey he again took advantage of the hospitality of Christian families in order to survive.

It becomes clear how much Bucquoy had to fight for his life without the supporting network of a European/Christian infrastructure. Only after Bucquoy had finally reached Cochin via Calicut and thus a larger Dutch base, did his situation stabilized again. Since then, he mainly describes trade routes and trade goods and the benefits that a Dutch merchant can derive from them.

SECURING THE ROUTES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the journey to India changed fundamentally. It became safer, more comfortable, travel times shortened and the risks of travel itself had reduced. With the Congress of Vienna, a lasting peace order was established among the major European powers, which apart from a few crises around the middle of the century, was to last until the outbreak of the First World War. Within this framework, Great Britain assumed the role of an international guarantor power, which at the same time controlled communications and transport between all continents.¹⁰ As a result of the Napoleonic Wars, Great Britain had brought almost all major maritime transport routes and support bases under its direct or indirect control. Although Pax Britannica favoured the citizens of England and Scotland, it also created a basis for travel, trade and exchange for members of other "civilized" (i.e. European) nations—and also for those who had recognized the signs of the new age in India

or China. Another important milestone was the Napoleonic conquest of Egypt and its separation from the Ottoman Empire which had considerably changed the way to India since then. The dangerous and lengthy route around the Cape of Good Hope lost its importance. It was now possible to reach Alexandria from the Channel coast in about three weeks, mostly via Marseilles. From there, it was possible to travel by ship up the Nile to Cairo, from where you could reach Suez in a few days by camel, horse, mule, sedan chair or on foot. There one had to take into account a longer waiting time, because the Red Sea was a difficult area for the new sailing ships, which were now also equipped with steam power. After all, from Suez it rarely took more than four weeks to get to India.¹¹

The role of the Empire increased even more when the Suez Canal was opened in 1869. A chain of British military stations, protectorates or crown colonies from Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus and Egypt to Aden and Ceylon secured this new transport route. It shortened the journey to India considerably: from at least six months before 1780 to about two to three weeks only a good 100 years later. Shortly before the First World War, the possibilities for luxurious travel had become excellent: the direct route from Hamburg, Portsmouth or Le Havre on a luxury liner led through the Suez Canal to Bombay or Colombo. It was now also possible to combine the new means of transport, a trip by night train to Marseilles, Genoa or Trieste, from there—if you wanted to see the antiquities of Egypt—to Alexandria, Cairo and Giza or even without a shore leave through the Suez Canal to India directly.

The new comfort of travelling was made possible by the military securing of the traffic routes by the Royal Navy and the expansion of the supply stations on the way to India, by the central axis of the Empire, via Malta, Alexandria, Aden and Colombo in particular. These stations were the hubs on the international transport routes; the submarine cables for telegraph traffic between all continents were also laid from these British bases. Since 1870, a cable connected London to Bombay via Malta and Alexandria. The bases were of at least equal importance for the energy supply of the ships, because the new types of steam sailing ships consumed large quantities of coal, which initially far exceeded their loading capacities.

The change from sailing to motor-driven ships took place in the nineteenth century in a transitional period that spanned several decades. All early steamers for use on the high seas were hybrid constructions; i.e. fully sailable ships that initially used their steam drive only in poor wind

or current conditions. The hybrid ships were driven by paddle wheels attached to the side or stern. The construction of ships changed only slowly; until the 1890s, wood-iron constructions dominated shipbuilding. Only after 1890 did riveted steel become the standard material in shipbuilding. Again, improvements in propulsion technology were an essential prerequisite for this. The invention of the triple expansion steam engine improved the efficiency of the ship's engines, which meant that higher ranges could now be achieved with considerably larger ships. However, it was not until the 1870s that the ship's propeller finally established itself as the drive technology; and it was not until 1889 that the "Star Liner Teutonic", the first ocean-going steamer without any sails, was put into service. Thus, the historical development towards cheap and safe mass transportation of people and goods around the world reached its first peak before the First World War.

REFLECTING THE ROOTS

In our context, the new ways of securing sea routes and sea voyages had two main effects: On the one hand, they enabled the colonial conquest and control of the Indian subcontinent, on the other hand they fundamentally changed the travel experience, to India and there itself. Whereas early travelogues were mainly about adventurous stories of one's own survival, since the nineteenth century the focus has increasingly been on expressing experiences of difference. The travelogues now contain numerous stereotypes, they now express the otherness of an India that is sharply contrasted with the world of Western civilization described as "modern", "progressive" and "orderly". Put simply, the hardships of travel are coming into the background, the experiences of difference into the foreground. The roots become more important than the routes.

Carl Graf von Görtz was a typical profiteer of the new opportunity that had opened up after the end of the Napoleonic era: to travel the entire world for interest, curiosity, business, diplomatic, military, religious or scientific reasons or simply to pass the time. The latter was Görtz's main motive. However, he chose a somewhat unusual route at the time, as he circumnavigated the world from east to west. Görtz came to India via China, Java and Ceylon. He was thus already accustomed to "Asian" conditions in a certain way when he ferried from Point de Galle in today's Sri Lanka to Madras on October 30, 1846. Görtz obviously enjoyed the crossing on the steamship Bentinck; a double-decker with 1900 tons and

520 hp. There was a strict hierarchy on board, as “dirt and work” were banished to the lower deck of the two-decker. Although the approximately 100 passengers on the upper deck had enough space, the “care for the travelling public” was low, despite, as he emphasized, excessively high prices and “despite the almost exclusively good company that tends to gather on this route”.¹² But this good society was not only made up of Europeans. On the upper deck of the *Bentinck* there were wealthy “fire worshippers” (i.e. Parsees), Mohammedans and Hindus. The crossing from Galle to Madras did not take long; already on November 2, 1846 the *Bentinck* moored at the roadstead of Madras. It was notorious for her high waves. Therefore, the passengers were landed with so-called *Masulahs*. These were rowing boats held together by ropes made of coconut fibres, which were better able to ride the strong waves and currents due to the flexibility of the construction.

Still from the *Bentinck*, Count Görtz had noticed Fort St. George and the ice house of Madras, “a prominent landmark and at the same time a welcome foretaste of cooling pleasures”,¹³ as he remarked. Görtz rented a roomy and comfortable house in the United Service Hotel, which he found to be spacious and comfortable and which offered the long missed but much appreciated British quality of accommodation, privacy. As was customary in India, Görtz and his companions provided themselves with Indian servants, subjects as he called them, so-called *Dubashis*, who did all the necessary errands for the Europeans, especially shopping and obtaining commissions—and “cheated him in the most heathenish way, but in return they stole nothing of the master’s luggage and protected him from other rogues. Their babbling in bad English and their importunate service are unbearable, they follow the Lord on his foot, even if he suffers, to where even the Emperor goes without an entourage”.¹⁴

With the first mention of servants, Count Görtz was already associating them with a negative view of the mass of Indian Hindus, which was new compared to the eighteenth century and which now confronted Europeans as servants, but in any case as subordinate persons. Disreputable and without self-respect, the Hindu himself expected nothing but bad treatment and interpreted kindness or courtesy as weakness or trickery. Greedy of money and at the same time a good judge of character, the Hindu speculated on the reluctance of the Europeans to be stingy and therefore marked the helplessly oppressed. A good payment would therefore not be rewarded by the Hindus, rather it would be that they themselves

would not expect more than the bad wages usual in the country. Better pay lowered performance and reduced respect.

The (alleged) characteristics of the Indians mentioned here were part of those experiences of difference that were much more prominent for visitors to the semi-continent in the nineteenth century than in the eighteenth century. They also included those differences that resulted from the colonization that had taken place since then. Particularly visible in the extreme spatial segregation between the Asian and European districts, the so-called “black” and the white city, which not only Görtz could understand as typical of Asian cities. Görtz stayed in Madras near the port at the southern end of the (white) business city; also to the south, the Fort St. George, itself a small city with government buildings, barracks and apartments, and finally the black city were attached to it. From the fort itself, well-maintained roads led west to St. Thomas Mount. There were the country houses of the European inhabitants of Madras. Halfway in between, an equestrian statue of Sir Thomas Munro, a former governor of Madras, had been erected. In the evening hours, the social life of the English upper class of Madras was concentrated around the monument: “I was amazed at the amount of elegant European equipment, beautiful English horses and selected toilets, and one really feels transported back to Europe, if it were not for the runners in picturesque national costumes and the exotic carriages in which the natives travel along...”¹⁵ Besides the promenade around the equestrian statue of Sir Thomas Munro every evening, there was a second regular social event in Madras: military music, which was performed twice a week near the fort. This delighted Count Görtz immensely:

the long missed sounds of good music, accompanied and often interrupted by the roar of the always violent surf, make a great impression, and I can never listen to the beautiful Danube song waltzes by Strauss without thinking of the happy hour when I heard their native sounds for the first time under the serene evening sky on the seashore of Madras.¹⁶

The difference to the Black City could hardly be greater; to get there alone, in order to preserve European dignity, requires a carriage ride and strolling around the aforementioned equestrian monument was unimaginable. The crowds of the people, the importunity of the beggars and the dust were too great.

One sees long streets consisting of the most miserable huts, often not even with a wall in front, but revealing all the nakedness of a poor household; then again shops with the most diverse necessities of life, in between now and then a clean house of a wealthy Hindu or Muslim, temples and pagodas, weddings and funerals, and a dense crowd of picturesque appearances in the most diverse costumes and colours.¹⁷

On his walk through the “black” city of Madras, Görtz finally saw a wedding procession, tried in vain to gain entry to a mosque and visited a religious ceremony in a Hindu temple. On the advice of his companion Delessert, Görtz also took an excursion from Madras to the then French Pondicherry.

The aristocratic pleasure and educational journey also prepared the way for the incipient tourism in the late nineteenth century. This was structured early on by travel guides, such as the publications of Wilhelm Böckmann. His description from 1893 also showed how regulated and standardized travel to India had become in the meantime.

Wilhelm Böckmann travelled to India for the second time in 1893—from Genoa to Colombo he used a ship of the North German Lloyd, the *Bayern*.¹⁸ The interior decoration of the ship left nothing to be desired, the travelling party was pleasant and consisted of Germans, British and Americans. The captain provided entertainment, and under his guidance people played shuffleboard, a deck game still popular on cruises today. Of course, the weather played an important role on this trip as well, because in the Mediterranean Sea and behind Aden there were some stormy days—the dining rooms then remained almost empty. Otherwise the weather was rather cool, until Aden there was a north wind. Only after entering the Indian Ocean could one wear the typical white linen clothing that distinguished Europeans in the tropics loved so much. Nevertheless, after just 19 days of sailing from Genoa, from 21 November to 10 December, Böckmann arrived in Colombo with his friend Kiehn. The manager of the Grand Oriental Hotel had himself come on board the *Bayern* on a steam launch to pick up the distinguished guests. Directly in the evening there was a gala dinner in honour of the officers of the German warships, which were anchored at the same time off Colombo, in the house of the German consul...

In the travel report not only at this point arrogance and conceit mixed. Travellers like Böckmann could not only distance themselves from the inhabitants of India, they also exposed them demonstratively. This was

already evident during shore leave alone—Böckmann, like so many of his predecessors, travelled on from Ceylon to Madurai. There he observed the process of disembarkation of the local fellow travellers:

Immediately more than a hundred natives were disembarked, and we watched them with interest; the men climbed forward into one of the lighters, and women and children followed by hand like bundles. In the same way, hundreds of belongings of an unbelievable kind and quality were walking into the spacious belly of the lighter. At last the work seemed to be done, and we waited for the opportunity that would bring us ashore, when the chief steward invited us with an obliging expression to enter the same lighter as well. What? Us into this chaos? Impossible, there's no room for a dog in it!¹⁹

In Madurai Böckmann visited the great temple and the royal palace, and now follows a description that had become typical for the India travellers of his time:

The deepest impression on me was an overview of the city, which I could take from the battlements of the already mentioned royal palace. There all dirt disappear, the eye looks over the traces of decay and general misery. Framed by a classical background of mountains, among which some fantastic rock groups of reddish-brown colour, rising abruptly from the plain, have a special effect, the city lies there in banana and palm groves, overlooked by the pagodas and palaces, which are particularly imposing when standing on the raised point of view. The sight is like a fantastic theatre decoration to a fairy tale from 1001 nights. Actually, one should not see anything more of such a city than the great overall picture, in order to consequently travel further.²⁰

The country had been opened up by the railway. It also offered inns at the railway stations, but these did not meet the needs of a first-class traveller. This attitude reflected the growing distance to the Indians as well as Böckmann's statements about servants and even the country's local elite. For Böckmann now reached Madras by train on the morning of Christmas Day 1893 via Trichi and Tanjore:

Until then we had always had a first class coupee for ourselves on our train journeys. This time, at the last moment when the train set off in Tanjore, another distinguished native boarded the train, in shiny, richly embroidered clothes, but with bare feet and calves, that is, real. A rich

company accompanied him to the coupee and arranged his things. The same man behaved very modestly toward us... Here we were told that we could have just thrown the man out, and he would have left without further ado. In the caste system that still reigns here, he would have found this quite natural, just as he would have dismissed a man from a lower caste of his people without hesitation, without meeting the slightest resistance.²¹

The same thing—i.e. distance and demanded submissiveness—now also shaped the relationship with the Indian servants. They became part of the movable furniture of apartments, railway compartments and hotel rooms.

From Madras, Böckmann then followed a typical route of those tourists who travelled in increasing numbers in India in the late nineteenth century: by ship from Madras to Calcutta, from there by train to Siliguri. There Böckmann changed to the so-called Toy Train, which took him to Darjeeling. After a trip up Tiger Hill, he returned to Calcutta and continued via Benares and Lucknow to Agra. In Agra Böckmann visited the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort and finally travelled on to Delhi. Then followed the stations Jaipur with the Fort Amber and Ajmer, via Borada we went to Bombay. Böckmann finally travelled back to Europe on the *Imperator*, another German ship. The return journey to Trieste was also very pleasant. The last leg of the journey to Berlin was finally covered by train, with a stop in Vienna.

In his travel description, Böckmann left behind numerous pragmatic and detailed recommendations for the traveller to India. But first of all, one should not pack too many things in the suitcase:

A suitcase of medium size must be enough, next to it a small cabin suitcase for side trips. As everywhere, too much luggage is also here of evil. Anyway, the necessary bedding already gives you extra luggage.²²

The most critical point for a safe and comfortable journey for India was the hiring of a suitable servant, for this purpose it is best to start the journey in Bombay, the city with the best supply of servants. Böckmann also submitted a proposal for a standard trip to India: Starting in Bombay, and then continuing on via Jaipur, Delhi, Agra, Benares, Darjeeling to Calcutta. By ship to Madras, from there a detour to the South Indian cities and possibly to Mysore and Bangalore. From Madras to Ceylon, especially the stay in Kandy would be very worthwhile, and then with the best steamer back to Europe. However, there is one thing that the

traveller to India should be clear about before setting off on his journey: “If you cannot do without the pleasures of modern comfortable life for a while, you should not go to India”.²³

SUMMARY

It became clear how the routes have influenced the roots from the beginning of the 18th to the end of the nineteenth century. The struggle for survival on a dangerous journey was replaced by colonialist and racist superiority mania, which created the projective spaces for the attribution of identities. Or to put it another way—in this article it was shown that it is not only decisive for cultural interaction who travels, but also how he travels. It would be an exciting task to apply this finding to other travel experiences, experiences of migration, etc. in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

NOTES

1. Precht, Richard David (2007): *Wer bin ich - und wenn ja, wie viele? Eine philosophische Reise*. München. All translations from High German in this essay are by Detlef Briesen.
2. Fundamental to this paper are: Braudel, Fernand (1982): *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible (= Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century. Volume I)*. New York. Chaudhuri, K. N. (1990): *Asia before Europe. Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge. Wallerstein, Immanuel (2004): *World-Systems Analysis*. Durham. Bayly, Christopher C. (2004): *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914*. Malden. Osterhammel, Jürgen (2009): *Die Verwandlung der Welt: eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*. München.
3. Barchewitz, Ernst Christoph (1762): *Ernst Christoph Barchewitz, Thur. Der edlen ost-indianischen Compagnie der vereinigten Niederlande gewesenen commandirenden Officiers auf der Insul Lethy, Neu-vermehrte Ost-Indianische Reise-Beschreibung, darinnen I. Seine durch Deutsch- und Holland nach Indien gethane Reise; II. Sein eilfjähriger Aufenthalt auf Java, Banda und den Südwest-Insuln ...; III. Seine Rückreise ... in sein Vaterland umständlich erzehlet wird: Dem bey dieser Auflage noch viele merckwürdige Begebenheiten und saubere Kupfer beygefüget worden; wie nicht weniger eine ausführliche Landcharte der Südwest- und Bandanesischen Insuln, welche in andern Landcharten und Geographien nicht beschrieben, nebst einem vollständigen Register. Erfurt.*

4. Barchewitz, Ernst Christoph (1762), p. 47.
5. Barchewitz, Ernst Christoph (1762), p. 58.
6. De Bucquoy, Jacob (1771): *Reise nach Indien*. Aus dem Holländischen übersetzt. Leipzig.
7. De Bucquoy, Jacob (1771), pp. 10–11.
8. De Bucquoy, Jacob (1771), p. 141.
9. De Bucquoy, Jacob (1771), p. 41.
10. For the development of British naval power, see in particular Marshall, Peter J. (ed.) (2001): *The Eighteenth Century* (= *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 2) Oxford.
11. See in particular Porter, Andrew N. (ed.) (2001): *The Nineteenth Century* (= *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 3). Oxford.
12. Görtz, Carl Graf von (1854): *Reise um die Welt in den Jahren 1844–1847*. Dritter Band. *Reise in China, Java, Indien und Heimkehr*. Stuttgart. pp. 332–333.
13. Görtz, Carl Graf von (1854), p. 334.
14. Görtz, Carl Graf von (1854), p. 336.
15. Görtz, Carl Graf von (1854), pp. 343–344.
16. Görtz, Carl Graf von (1854), pp. 344–345.
17. Görtz, Carl Graf von (1854), p. 345.
18. Böckmann, Wilhelm (1893): *Reise nach Indien*. Aus Briefen und Tagebüchern zusammengestellt. Berlin.
19. Böckmann, Wilhelm (1893), p. 17.
20. Böckmann, Wilhelm (1893), p. 19.
21. Böckmann, Wilhelm (1893), p. 23.
22. Böckmann, Wilhelm (1893), p. 75.
23. Böckmann, Wilhelm (1893), p. 82.

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Indigeneity, Cultural Memory, and Hybrid Identity: Politics of ‘Belonging’ Among Zomi–Chin–Kuki People of India–Myanmar Borderlands

N. K. Das

Borderlands are the contact zones, imagined geographies, and discourses that produce both order and violence (Lucero 2014). The anthropological discourse pertaining to ‘border’ is traceable to analysis of social boundaries and territorial borders (Evans-Pritchard 1940). Border came to limelight in the later studies pertaining to ethnic boundary (Barth 1969) identity, community, and social boundary (Rosaldo 1988). Ethnic identities ‘function as categories of inclusion/exclusion and interaction,’ in other words, ethnicity situated in the realm of social interaction between the groups (Hall 2017). Edmund Leach (1960) had problematized the conventional notion of political frontiers and located a zone in which cultures interpenetrated dynamically, through varied political, ecological, economic, and kinship frameworks.

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Border studies pertaining to Indo-Burma/Myanmar-Bangladesh borderlands broadly perpetuate the direction provided in the ‘Burmese studies’ by Edmund Leach and F.K. Lehman. In the monographs of Lehman and Leach societies were considered as complex systems in perpetual movement rather than static objects. Leach (1954: 281) challenged ‘conventions as to what constitutes a culture or a tribe’ and simultaneously undermined the structural-functionalist conception of a tribe as a discrete, homogeneous social unit in equilibrium (1954: 43). Moerman (1968: 156–158) highlighted the need to understand the degree of flexibility or vulnerability of ethnic identity in the context of shifting patterns of intergroup relations. A monograph on kinship and law in Naga society, reviewed by Lehman (1997), belongs to this genre, which analysed ethnic self-identification of the tribe, using territorial, kinship and dialect-based identity and origin myths (Lehman 1997). Indeed, to a great extent, the Kachin, Chin/Zomi/Kuki, and Naga exhibit common principles of group formation, territoriality, social control, and ethnic memory in shaping indigeneity.

RATIONALE OF THIS ARTICLE

Political boundaries such as South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Central Asia, divide Asia artificially. These divisions dodge varied commonalities that transcend such boundaries and lead to constriction of people who live in borderlands. This article aims to discuss this issue, by focusing on the predicaments of allied ‘tribes’ such as Zomi, Chin, Mizo, Kuki, and others who have been traumatized by the bifurcation of their homeland between three countries. The article provides a narrative of ethnic origin, with support of rich folklore and cultural memory endured by the Zomi people, and their present concern for transnational reunification of ‘Zomi’ ethnicity through the demand for ‘Zogam’ (Zomi Homeland). The struggles of these tribes are elucidated by juxtaposing the themes of indigeneity, borderland, and memory since the oral traditions have helped harness the assertions about identity, belonging, and indigeneity in this borderland. The article also discusses how these people have experienced both continuities and ruptures in social formation and how a prolonged trend of grouping/regrouping has given rise to hybrid formations. Further, the article also briefly discusses the Zomi people’s reinterpretation of indigenous faith and their ‘search of roots’ in terms of Jewish affinity which has led to a syncretistic religious amalgamation involving indigenous faith, Christianity, and Judaism.

ETHNONYMS VIS-À-VIS DECEPTIVE NOMENCLATURES AND FALLACIOUS CLASSIFICATION

The Indo-Burma borderland, being a major corridor for human migrations, had witnessed influx of large number of people who came to inhabit in this region speaking mostly Tibeto-Burman languages. The Chin, Zo, Zou, Zomi, Kuki and Mizo tribes, whom the author will refer as ‘Zomi’ henceforth, for expediency, have numerous component tribes who have settled in these borderlands at the intersection of India, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, sharing correlated linguistic-cultural traditions. They claim the border to be their primeval ‘homeland,’ ruined by colonial/postcolonial regimes. Colonial authorities not only divided their territory; they subjugated them through imposition of multiple identities and labels disregarding the basic ethnonyms. Several of these deceptive nomenclatures, such as Chin and Kuki, got internalized in due course.

Zo is the original ethnonym of all Chin, Zomi, Mizo, and Kuki ‘tribes’ located in frontier regions of three countries. However, they were identified as ‘Kuki’ in Manipur, ‘Lushai’ in Mizoram, and ‘Chin’ in Burma. Colonial ethnographers employed varied nomenclatures to describe these people such as ‘Chin–Lushai’ (Reid 1942), ‘Kuki–Chin’ (Grierson 1967 [1904]), ‘Lushei–Kuki’ (Shakespeare 1912) and even ‘Kuki–Lushai–Chin’ (Fuchs 1963). While the word ‘Kuki’ is considered to be a Bengali term (Shaw 1929), ‘Chin’ is a variant of the Burmese word ‘Khyen’/‘Khyang’ and ‘Lushai’ is a corrupted word for Lusei (Suan 2011). B.S. Carey and H.N. Tuck (1896) designated the Zos as ‘Chins’ in Burma, while Grierson who undertook the extensive linguistic survey in the Indo-Burma borderlands called them ‘Kuki–Chin.’

How the trend of fallacious classification persisted in postcolonial India may be briefly discussed. In northeast India all Zomi tribes came to be placed under the category ‘any Lushai’ and ‘any Kuki’ tribes in Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura. The listing replaced the nomenclature ‘Kuki’ with a separate list of 29 ‘tribes’ in Manipur. When the List was again modified in 2003, the nomenclature ‘any Kuki tribe’ re-entered the ‘Scheduled Tribe’ directory in the state; this time no sub-tribe was separately listed under it. Under the category ‘any Kuki’ in Assam, Meghalaya, and Mizoram about 37 ‘sub-tribes’ each are included under it. Tribes like Gangte, Vaiphei, Sukte, and Thadou which are separately listed as tribes in Manipur came to be subsumed under the category ‘any Kuki’ in these states (also vide, Suan 2011).

Since the postcolonial states, India and Burma, did not resolve the pragmatic concerns of nomenclature issue, the Zomis are reviving their cultural symbols, cultural memory, and are reunifying themselves under indigenous nomenclature 'Zomi.' Before discussing the gamut of this reunification endeavor and solidarity movement for 'homeland,' author will discuss below at first the characteristics of ethnic indigeneity, collective sensitivity about common ancestry, cultural memory surrounding 'Chinlung' (origin-spot) as also Chinglung memory folksongs, together with indigenous spirituality.

Borderlands do separate physical topographies, but they also comprise people flanking cultural, social, linguistic, environmental, and folkloric domains. Hence, new studies have focused on power, culture, and memory in relation to border identity (www.borderidentities.com). Jan Assmann (2005) has pointed out the connections between cultural memory and identity. According to him, cultural memory is 'the faculty that allows us to build a narrative picture of the past and through this process develop an image and an identity for ourselves.'

HOMELAND ORIGIN, 'CHINLUNG' LEGEND AND CULTURAL MEMORY

The Zomi highlanders allege that their Homeland (Chinram) had been wrongfully divided by creating illusory false lines drawn on map for the ease of administration. The British subdued Zomi communities and Zomi chiefs by claiming the land and imposing taxes. After the Chin-Lushai Conference held at Calcutta in 1892, the Chin and Lushai Hills were officially separated to be administered from Burma and Assam, respectively. Eventually, the Zomis came to be divided in three countries. Thus, while West Chinram (the present Mizoram State) became part of India, East Chinram (present Chin State) remained with the Union of Burma (following Panglong Agreement, 1947) and a small part of Chinram became part of East Pakistan/now Bangladesh (Sakhong 2003: xvi).

A widely acknowledged myth among the Zomi people demonstrates that these people came to this world from a cave called 'Chinlung,' which, is spelled slightly differently, such as 'Chinnlung,' 'Jinlung,' and 'Sinlung.' The legacy of 'Chinlung' as the origin-spot has been cherished and treasured in folksongs, folktales, and legend known as Tuanbia. For people with no writing system, a rich oral tradition consisting of folksongs was the most reliable means of transmitting past events. The songs

were sung repeatedly during feasts and festivals, and the tales are told and retold over the generations (Sakhong 2003). Chinlung myth, as narrated by different tribes, has also been reported in colonial ethnography (Shakespear 1912: 93–94; Carey and Tuck [1896] 1976: 142; Parry 1932).

Vumson, a renowned community scholar, has affirmed that the Zomi people originated from Chinlung, a cave (Kipgen 1997: 26). It is located in the Chindwin Valley, Chindwin means ‘the cave of the Chin’ (Gangte 1993: 14). The Ralte clan of the Mizo Hills has preserved the memory of the Chinlung in folktales. The story was recorded by Shakespear in 1912 who wrote:

The place whence all people sprang is called ‘Chinglung.’ All the clans came out of that place. The two Ralte came out together, and began at once chattering, and this made Pathian (Supreme God) think that there were too many people, and so he shut down the stone (Shakespear 1912: 94).

Chinlung Memory Folksongs

Different tribes within Zomi have kept the legend of ‘Chinlung’ alive in several folksongs. One folksong, sung during *Khua-brum* ceremony and other important occasions, says:

*My Chinland of old,
My grandfather’s land Himalai,
My grandfather’s way excels,
Chinlung’s way excels.* (Kipgen 1997: 36).

Another folksong is as under:

*Kan siengna Sinlung ram hmingthang,
Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai,
Chawngzil ang kokir thei changsien,
Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai.*
(My Motherland, famous Sinlung,
Home of my own ancestors,
Could it be called back like Chawngzil,
Home of my own ancestors).

*Khaw Sinlung ah,
Kawt siel ang ka zuong suok a;*

*Mi le nel lo tam a e,
Hriemi brai a.*

(Out of countryside Sinlung
I jumped out like a mithun;
Innumerable were the encounters,
With the children of men). (Pudaite 1963: 21)

*Eiteng khawlkhawm atuam omlou
Vannuai chiteng khul a piang,
Tun sungkhat a piang hi ngeingei.*

(We all are bonded in one, no one stranger,
Everyone under the sky born in Khul
Born surely from the same ancestor). (Zamzachin 1992: 2)

In Zomi folklore one also notices the myth of ‘flood.’ The Laimi tribe has a very well-known myth called Ngun Nu Tuanbia, which relates the destruction of human life on Earth by the flood (Sakhong 2003: 6). In one version, abandoning the cave was caused by a ‘great darkness’ called Khazanghra (Thimzing/Chunmui).

Zomi Indigeneity: Chin-Ram, Miphun, and Phunglam

The Zomi people define themselves as Miphun and associate themselves with Ram—the original homeland. For the Chin, Miphun cannot exist without Ram. The inner link between the concepts of Miphun and Ram was strengthened in Zomi community through the worship of Khua-hrum at the Tual ground. In Chin society, the Tual ground, the site of worshipping the guardian god Khua-hrum, has been the sacred center, standing as protector (Smith 1986: 29). Among these people Ram denotes homeland with well-defined territory and Phunglam implies ‘ways of life’ including cultural traditions, religious practices and aesthetic aspects of life such as dance, song, and even the customs of feasts and festivals (Sakhong 2003: XV).

These notions of common origin in a specific spot, presence of ancestral Tual ritual ground, worship of guardian god Khua-hrum, and memory of Chinlung, cherished by all Zomi people even today shape the indigeneity/indigenouslyness and ethnicity of Zomi people. The fact that such memories, and rich folklores, did not wipe out, despite segregation of clan/tribe segments, over centuries in three different countries

indicates the thriving sensitivity of belonging and ethnicity (Das 2016). Scholars such as Smith argue that ‘ethnicity is a matter of myths, memories, values and symbols, and not material possessions or political powers.’ (Smith 1986: 29).

In his ‘Zo History,’ Vumson (1986) mentions that the ‘remains of Chin settlements are still found today in the Chindwin Valley, two miles from Sibani village, not far from Monywa, in the Chin ritual ground. The Memorial Stone, now decayed, is called by the Burmese as Chin Paya or Chin God’ (Sakhong 2003: 34). The Chin in Burma lived together in ‘Chin Nwe’ for a certain period. But they split into tribal groups because of ‘their struggle against each other for political supremacy’ (Khai 1984: 41). From ‘Chin Nwe’ most of the clans moved toward the north direction and were called as ‘Zomi,’ meaning thereby the ‘northern highlanders.’

The Khul (Cave) and the Zogam (Zomi Country)

According to traditional folksongs, a sizeable group of the Zomis from the Kale-Kabaw valley settled in the north-western corner of Burma which came to be called as Zogam, *Zo Country*. Another group migrated toward north and *arrived at the khul (cave) where they founded Chiimnuai and Saizang*. A folktale of Saizang strongly asserts that the Zomis were descendants of a couple named Thungthu and Nemvung, who had sprung out of the cave (khul). On the basis of this belief the people of Saizang area even today perform a ritual by sacrificing a he-goat every year at the cave (<http://www.zomiradio.org/zomi-history/zomi-who-they-are/>).

One group from Saizang area migrated to the central Chin Hills and reached at Falam and Haka. Some groups migrated to Manipur, Tripura, Chittagong Hill Tracts, and Lushai Hills in fourteenth century and formed many tribes. Some of these tribes were collectively called ‘Kuki’ by the plains people. Chiru and Anal are mentioned in the Manipur Chronicle as early as the sixteenth century while the *Aimol made their first appearance in 1723*. The Lusheis were the last major emigrants from the Chin Hills, Burma, into the Lushai Hills. The Lushei clans under various chiefs of the Thangur family came into prominence in the eighteenth century (<http://www.zomiradio.org/zomi-history/zomi-who-they-are/>).

One Zomi folksong tellingly delineates the area of Zogam as follows:

‘Penlehpi leh Kangtui minthang,
 A tua tong Zouta kual sung chi ua;
 Khang Vaimang leh tuan a pupa
 Tongchiamna Kangtui minthang aw’

‘Famous Penlehpi and Kangtui; Between the two is the Zomi country;
 Southern King and our forefathers made an agreement at the famous
 Kangtui.’

This song clearly defines the Zomi ancestral homeland. Here Penlehpi is a Burmese word for the Bay of Bengal and Kangtui is identified with Tuikang, the Chindwin River. This Zoland is geographically contiguous, where the Zomi permanently settled for centuries. Within Zogam they were knitted together by common culture; common mode of living; language and Zomi Nationalism. They governed themselves in accordance with customary laws. It was a sovereign land (<https://zo-lengthe.blogspot.com/2007/07/zomi-and-their-country-zomi-tribes-may.html>).

There are records of Zomis settling in and around Loktak Lake, Manipur, for decades even before the arrival of the British. They concluded a peace agreement with the Maharaja of Manipur in *March 1873*. Based on this agreement, the following Zomi folksong eloquently delineates the spread of the Zomi country:

Our forefathers had a pledge with the Meiteis of Loktak;
 From the famous Loktak to Chindwin,
 It is the land of the Zomi. (<http://www.zogam.org/entry-zo-country>)

Zo/Zomi Proliferation in ‘Northern Zomi’ Territory (Burma and India)

Almost all the Zomi tribes inhabiting the Chin State in Burma, Bangladesh and Northeast India regard Zo as their apical ancestor and progenitor. Hence the term Zomi becomes a natural extension of Zo. Concurrently, the term Zo implies highland and Mi means people and hence when referring to Zo people, the nomenclature Zomi denoting ‘highlander’ becomes imperative. Many native historians too have used the term Zo to imply Zomi. The official term Mizo, which is reverse of Zomi, also means ‘highlander.’ F.K. Lehman (1963) said:

No single Chin word has explicit reference to all the peoples we customarily call Chin, but nearly all peoples have a special word for themselves. This word is almost always a variant form of a single root, which is Zo, Yo, Ysou, Shou and the like.

Vumson, an indigenous Zomi scholar, suggests that the Kuki, Chin, Zo people should be called Zo (Vumson 1986: 26). In the present era of political mobilization, in Burma as well as in India, tribespeople are bonding with term Zo side by side with Zomi. Hence, in this article both terms are used as per context, but the term Zomi is used in general.

As discussed above, in the ethnohistory of these people, the term ‘Zomi,’ meaning ‘northern people,’ became crucial because it specifies the pathway chosen by original clans, who reached Lushai hills and Manipur, before spreading in other areas. The ‘Northern Zomi Territory’ (Burma and India) comprises a large number of clans/tribes. They are geographically concentrated in contiguous locations, in general, such as the Tonzang district and the Tedim district (both are in Burma), Mizoram, parts of Manipur, Naga Hills, the Somra Tracts, the Hkamti district, the Kale-Kabaw valley and the North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong in Assam. Northern Zomi’s socio-cultural features indicate closer affinity with the Central Zomi (<https://zo-lengthe.blogspot.com/2007/07/zomi-and-their-country-zomi-tribes-may.html>).

Zomi is a conglomeration of about 53 sub-tribes, according to 3rd World Zomi Convention, held in Lamka, Churachandpur, on 27th October 2013. Earlier, in a Memorandum submitted to the British Government on April 22, 1947 by the Mizo Union; 47 Zomi tribes were mentioned including *Aimol, Anal, Baite, Chiru, Hmar, Hrangkhawl, Kaihpen, Lushei, Lakher, Paite, Pawi, Ralte, Thadou, Tarau, Vaiphei, Zoute, and Gangte* (<http://www.zogam.org/zomi-tribes-northern-zomi>). In Bangladesh, seven Zomi tribes identified are the Bawmzo, Asho, Khami, or Khumi, Kuki, Lushei, Mosho, and Pankhu. In Manipur, as many as 21 tribes are ‘Zomi’ tribes. They were listed as scheduled tribes in the 1956. The Zomi tribes of Tripura include the Langrong, Bong, Kaipeng, Hrangkhawl, Darlong, Lushei, Paite/Paitu, Namte, Lantei, Khephong, Khareng, Balte, Jantei, and others (<https://zo-lengthe.blogspot.com/2007/07/zomi-and-their-country-zomi-tribes-may.html>).

It is observed that most often a single tribe is in possession of two different nomenclatures, using them contextually. The Simmtes (Simte)

in Dun's account, for instance, are the same as the 'Paithe' (Paite) of Shakespeare's account, though they claimed to be different groups (Dun 1975: 33).

Dialect Divisions/Mixtures, Tribe-Formation, and Hybrid Identities

In Chin/Zomi areas the 'tribe' formations are result of repetitive immigration mostly on account of clan accretion and segmentation and dialect fusion. In fact some scholars have tried to see this process as development from clan to sub-tribe and then to 'tribe.' Indeed, the social formation within Chin/Zomi congregation is a phenomenon characterized by a multifaceted ethnicity. Let us examine the Kadu tribe's status within Chin ethnicity. The Kadu tribe is connected with the Chins through the communities to the east in Upper Burma. The Chin element in the Kadus is very faint. They are for the most part, like the Danus, a Burmese-Shan compound, but they have also an appreciable mixture of Kachin besides the trace of Chin. They are the result of a fusion of all four stocks. Their language, which contains a large number of Kachin and Chin words as well as Burmese and Shan, is fast dying out and they are now more or less Burmanized (Rigby 1897: 236).

A well-known fact is that the Chin-Zomis are divided into separate dialect groups such as Falam, Hakha, Laotu, Mindat, Matupi, Mizo, Paite, Sizang, Teddim, Thado, Zo, Zotung, Zophei, and many more. The different dialects they use, however, are more or less comprehensible (Vei 2009). Historical evidences indicate that the Chin people had lived peacefully in Upper Chindwin of the Kale-Kabaw Valley for a long time, and founded their capital at Khampat. Their eventual migrations facilitated formation of diverse dialect-based tribes, and mushrooming of diverse nomenclatures.

The Chin-Zomi dialects came to be divided into four major groups, such as Northern, Central, Old Kuki and Southern groups, in the linguistic survey conducted by Grierson:

- The Northern group: Thado, Kamhau, Sokte (Sukte), Siyin (Sizang), Ralte, Paite
- The Central group: Tashon (Tlaisun), Lai, Lakher (Mara), Lushai(Mizo), Bangjogi (Bawmzo), Pankhu
- The Old-Kuki group: Rangkhoh, Kolren, Kom, Purum, Hmar, Cha (Chakma)

- The Southern group: Chin-me, Chin-bok, Chin-pun, Khyang (Asho), M'ro (Khuami), Shendus (Yindu), and Welaung (Grierson 1904: 67).

Perusing the above groupings, from modern perspective, some incongruities become obvious in Grierson account. In above list, the Lais, Maras and Shendus are shown separately in central and southern groups. Another study has shown that Lais and Maras were collectively known as Shendus in Bangladesh. The Lais are also popularly known as Pawi and the Maras are popularly known as Lakher in Lushai Hills/Mizoram and Manipur (Doungel 2011). Further, under the Old-Kuki group, in above taxonomy, one notes presence of Purum and Chakma as single language speakers within Chin-Zomi congregation. The abnormality here pertains to absence of Chothe group when Purum is enumerated, because Chothe indeed is the principal group and Purum is its ill-conceived and miscomprehended segment. The Chothes are an 'Old Kuki' tribe of the Kuki people. In the past, T.C.Das, had studied a section of the Chothe, but called it Purum, which was mistaken as it was their place-name. They were part of Thadou tribe, though they are also identified as Kom tribe (Komrem) of Manipur. Some Purum clans such as Lupho, Lumpheng, Misao, and Neitham got absorbed in other tribes of Manipur in due course of time. Chothe tribe is close to Aimol, Chiru Koireng, Kom Kharam tribes. Their custom, culture, and language are similar and they remember their origin from the cave. The 'Purums' are notable because their marriage system became a debatable subject of anthropological analysis. In his ethnography, T.C. Das (1945) had stated that the Purum marry only in selected clans. This came to be challenged and further analysis of anthropologist Needham revealed error in depiction of 1945 Purum data (Needham 1958).

Colonial census records of 1901 in Burma revealed that some Chin tribes such as the Chaungthas, Taungthas, and Saks or Thets were 'admixture' of the Chins with the Burmese and Arakanese plains-dwellers in their vicinity (Rigby 1897: 78). The term 'Taungtha' was applied to numerous tribes in Arakan. Located to the east of the Central Chin uplands the Taungtha tribes remained undoubtedly the Chins who adopted Buddhism and absorbed some of the blood of the plains-dwellers. They speak a Chin dialect; their women have a dress which is neither Burmese nor Chin but is described as a white petticoat with a blue or dark colored cotton shawl (Carey and Tuck 1896).

The instances cited above indicate apparent mold of dialect fusion, dialect-shift and ethnic-fusion. They have also indicated certain reflection of ‘hybrid identity.’

Chin/Zomi Spirituality and Pau Cin Hau Reformist Movement

The concept of Khua recapitulates the basic principles of Chin/Zomi religion and theology. Khua in Chin thought is a philosophical concept which includes all the spiritual beings: such as Khua-zing, Supreme God—Khua-hrum, guardian gods; Khua-chia, evil spirits; Khua-vang, shaman, and diviner. Term vancung-khua indicates heaven and khua-ram, land on earth. Khua-hnaw indicates cosmic forces of rain, wind, heat and fire, ni-khua, the Sun, the Moon, the Universe, and Nature—including weather (Laisum 1994: 126). Khua-zing is also identified as ‘the source of life’ (Parry 1932: 349). The Zomis recognize the God as *Pathian*. In the prayer, the word *Pathian* represents the attributes of the *Khua-zing*. Zomi social structure is based upon *Tual*, in which the religious concept of god, *Khua-hrum*, the political authority of the chiefs and the economic system of land management are embedded (Sakhong 2003: 24–32).

The Chin spiritualist Pau Cin Hau was a person of multiple qualities. He launched a popular reformist movement in early 1930s and also developed the ‘Chin Script.’ The Pau Cin Hau movement developed slowly into a religious movement aimed at socio-religious reforms. The movement appeared at a time when the Zomi people were heavily burdened with traditional wealth-consuming rituals and sacrifices. Within a short span of time, Pau Cin Hau and his followers carried forward the movement from Tedim, the place of its origin, to other areas and beyond the western and northern borders, overcoming language and cultural barriers. Pau Cin Hau offered a religion that could easily adapt with the indigenous culture. He allowed the people to drink *zu* (rice-beer), and to continue practices of traditional singing and dancing, all of which were part of the Zomi traditional lifestyle. The Pau Cin Hau movement has too often been viewed as an ‘alternative religion.’ By strictly emphasizing a single god, which they called *Pasian*, in place of the numerous deities, Pau Cin Hau and his followers successfully reoriented Zo cosmology (Pau 2012). Pau Cin Hau was a visionary and an intellectual par excellence. He launched not only a reformist movement; he also developed the ‘Chin Script.’¹

*Chin-Zomi in Burma and India: Struggle for a Common
Nomenclature*

The Chins called themselves as Zho, or Shu, Jo, or Lai (Scott 1921: 106). The Burmese imposed the term Chin and gave it legal recognition. The term Chin was used by Newland in his book 'The Images of War' (1891). In Burma the creation of Chin Special Division in 1948 and later Chin State in 1974 led to recognition of 'Chin' nomenclature. Writing in 1921, Scott stated that, 'Chin is the Burmese name given to all the people in the country between Burma and Assam.' The Chins in Burma had historically lived in Chin State. In the aftermath of Burma's separation from India, the Burmese constitution of 1937 proposed reforms only for 'Ministerial Burma.' The border hill areas were defined as 'excluded areas' and were placed under the direct control of the governor, without their political institutions. These excluded areas included the Shan State, Karen Hills, the Kachin Hills and the Chin Hills on the North-West (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_rule_in_Burma).

Chin State borders Northeast India in the north and west. The Chins of Burma described themselves as Chinbok, Chinbon, Dai, Lai, Laizo, Mara, and Ngala. They are related to the Zomi tribes of northeast India. In Burma the northern Chins have different customs and beliefs from the southern Chins. The Chin universe is divided into two parts: the sky world which includes the land of the dead and the earth. The Southern Chin tribes bury their dead and hold a second burial in which the bones are placed in a jar. It is believed that the spirits of the dead occasionally visit these. Memorial stones are also set up (<http://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Myanmar>).

Since 1990s, the nonspecific generic names Chin and Kuki have been discarded by many tribes in Burma and northeast India. Instead, they have chosen to adopt 'Zomi' nomenclature (Gougin 1984). Paite and Tedim are known as Paite and Tedim in India and Burma. In both countries, these people have adopted the term Zomi as ethnic name. In Burma, term Zomi was accepted by church leaders at Saikah in March 1953 and Zomi Baptist Convention was subsequently established (Khai 1995, pp. 69–71.). The fact that the Chins changed the name of the Baptist Association, established in 1948, to Zomi Baptist Convention indicates the urge of Chin people of Burma to be known by ethnic name Zomi.

The manner in which tribes in Burma and India are abandoning alien nomenclatures in favor of Zomi indicates these people's concern for ethnic identity recognition in Burma/India.

Mizo Nomenclature Decried and Abandoned

The official use of term Mizo, which is reverse of Zomi with same meaning, began with the formation of Mizo Union in April, 1946. After the Mizo Accord and following the creation of Mizoram state, term 'Mizo' acquired a constitutional status. Consequently, the name of erst-while Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council was changed to Mizo Autonomous District Council. Term Mizo was popularized as a wider label so that various small tribes having Chinlung origin may be integrated within the Mizo fold, but this design was challenged. Fact remains that the term Mizo, coined specially to fight for sovereignty under Mizo National Front (MNF) is hardly an inclusive term. This term Mizo is restricted within the area where Lushai clan-people speaking Duhlian language are 'dominant' segment. This 'domination' of Lushai clan became bone of contention, and many smaller marginalized clans/tribes gradually moved out of Mizo canopy and projected their own names and independent statuses. Mara, Paite, Hmar, Tedim and Lai became the earliest people to disown Mizo identity. Indeed, now many of these small tribes are affiliating themselves under the term Zomi.

Kuki Tribe: Disintegration, Contradiction and Rupture

The term Kuki first appeared in a 1787 report of John Rawlins (1787: 187). Robert Reid pronounced that the Kukis form a 'mingling of clans,' speaking dialects of the same language, and are known by various names, such as Kookies, Lushais, Pois, Shendus, Chins, etc. (Reid 1942: 23). Hodson (1901: 308) remarked that 'The Kukis are migratory, from the force of circumstances, and possess a strong fissiparous instinct.' Kuki scholars have castigated many biased references to Kukis in colonial ethnographies.

According to C.A. Soppit (1893), the "Old Kukis" migrated to Manipur in the early eleventh century, while the "New Kukis" migrated to Manipur during the first half of the nineteenth century. The nomenclature Kuki was never used by the Zomi/Chin people themselves. The

term Kuki had originated in Sylhet, now in Bangladesh. Shakespear wrote in 1912 that,

The term Kuki on the Chittagong border, is loosely applied to most of the inhabitants of the interior hills; in Cachar it generally means the Thado and Khuathlang clans, locally distinguished as new Kuki and old Kuki. – These Kukis are more closely allied to the Chakmas, and the Lushai are more closely allied to the Chin.

Shakespeare consistently employed the term ‘clan’ instead of ‘tribe’ when referring to the various Lushai–Kuki groups (Shakespeare 1912: 8). Dun (1975: 32) had observed in 1886 that the term ‘clan’ is undoubtedly the best way to describe the Kuki ‘subdivisions.’ Such clan/ dialect groups often fought for territorial supremacy in the past. Thus, the Hmar and the Thadou dialect groups in North Lushai Hills were believed to have dislodged groups such as the Hallams, Hrangkhawls and Bietes from the northern Lushai Hills at the turn of the eighteenth century. These groups were made to migrate as far as Cachar, Tripura and Sylhet. When the Sailo chiefs established themselves firmly in Lushai Hills, Thadou migrated to the plains of Cachar and the southern hills of Manipur around 1848 (Kipgen 1997: 59).

In the past the Kukis of Manipur included numerous tribes such as Thadou, Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Gangte, Zomi, Baite, Ralte, Purum, Kom, Aimol, Anal, Chothe, Chiru, Hmar, Koireng, Lamgang, Lushai, Moyon, Monsang, Zou, Simte, Sukte, and others. Today with the exception of the Thadou, most of the other tribes have disowned their allegiance with Kuki ethnicity. They want to be identified independently and not as a Kuki (Vaiphei 1995: 127). Thus, the collective compound nomenclature Kuki seems to have been broken. One may notice the new aspiration among various component tribes of Kuki to be identified as ‘distinct’ tribes right from 1950s. In fact, when the census reports were released in 1956, in the aftermath of abolition of clumsy category of ‘any Kuki tribe,’ Aimol, Anal, Lusei, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Koireng, Kom, Lamkang, Maring, Monsang, Moyon, Paite, Ralte, Simte, Vaiphei, Zou, and others claimed themselves to be ‘independent’ tribes (Gangte 2003: 30–32). In 1993, many such ‘independent’ tribes like Paites, Vaiphies, Zous, Tedim Chins, and Simtes decided to form the Zomi Reunification Organisation (ZRO).

Kuki Nomenclature: Argument, Counter-Argument, and a Rejoinder

Since mid-1980s, the Kuki militant organizations have been active to safeguard their interests and to preserve their identity (Jusho 2007: 76). During this period, the Kuki Innpi, the apex body of the Kuki tribes, stressed to retain the term 'Kuki' as a legal nomenclature for all the Zomi tribes. This caused mistrust between various groups, leading to ethnic violence in the late 1990s (Thangtungnung 2013). In the meantime P.S. Haokip, President of Kuki National Organisation (KNO), has brought out a publication titled 'Zale'ngam-The Kuki Nation' outlining the map of Kukiland covering areas in India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar which was once under the authority of the Kuki Innpi (Kuki Government) of 'Kuki Independent Hill Country' (Haokip 2008: 6-8).

Within Manipur and elsewhere there is increasing demand for recognition of Zo/Zomi nomenclature and fostering the larger Zoness in transnational borderlands in the present phase of history. However, since the Kuki activists and political leaders have declined to give up Kuki nomenclature, despite alleged inadequacies inherent in Kuki nomenclature, a protracted rejoinder is released in media, as a 'reply' to the various assertions of Kuki activists. Some relevant assertions from a rejoinder addressed to Pu PS Haokip are summarized and reproduced below:

Respected Pu PS Haokip,

We would like to thank you for your continued efforts in seeking a way forward from our clannish fragmentations, and move beyond the divisive elements that hamper our collective flourishing. Believing in humble dialogue, we pose a primary question to revisit the issues such as Kuki as a viable political identity - - and the rationale for Kuki statehood demand (by UPF-KNO).

There is affirmation by several leaders that 'Zo as an identity represents the entire nation' for those categorized as 'Chin', 'Kuki' or 'Lushai'. The emergence of Zomi as a form of political mobilization can be seen as an acknowledgement of this part of history.

It is a reality that several groups using the Kuki terminology appear to represent only a section of the numerous kindred clans, - - -. As such, there seems to be an ambiguity in what the term Kuki connotes. For instance, while the 'Kuki' in Kuki National Organization claims to represent all the Zo clans/tribes, the 'Kuki' in Kuki Inpi Manipur, applies mainly to the Thadou-speaking members. It is this uncritical usage of the term 'Kuki' which demonstrates the gap between the ideology that it carries and its currency on

the ground. This is where we remain unconvinced on the adoption of 'Kuki' as a platform.

In all fairness, Zomi, as promoted today, is not an attempt to usher in more clannish divisions, but it is an attempt to re-unify the Zo family, - - - The use of the terminology 'Zomi' is only an attempt to translate our being 'Zo people' in a language that is meaningful to us. To us, our long history of struggle – including Zo Gaal of 1917–19 is a claim to our rightful status as a free people. That, we hope, is what Zale'n-gam promises – the land of the free. It is the quest for the Zo spirit of autonomy and freedom that ought to guide our movement.

Sincerely,

Sam G Ngaihthe and Golan Suanzamong Naulak

(Rejoinder: <https://zogam.com/articles/>).

The above 'rejoinder', drafted by combining issues of historical legacy of ethnic oneness, Zoness, and stressing 'reunification' of all people has highlighted the redundancy of the term Kuki in modern context.

NOMENCLATURE POLITICS, FRAGMENTATION OF KUKI ETHNICITY AND EVOLVING NAGA-KUKI HYBRID IDENTITY

The fact remains that the history of Kuki ethnicity has been replete with phenomena of disintegration, inconsistency, and rupture from an early time. In fact, certain crack came into limelight soon after the formation of Kuki National Assembly (KNA) representing all Kukis in 1946. The constituent Kuki tribes of KNA were the Thadou, Paites, Vaipheis, Gangtes, Simtes, Zous, Anals, Koms, Hmars, Guites, Chirus, Monsang, Koirengs, etc. (Singh 2004). However, within a year in 1947, some Kuki tribes established the Kom Rem Association and abandoned the Kuki identity. The tribes Kom, Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, and Kharam were unhappy by the Thadou supremacy (Singh 2004). This unity of non-Thadou tribes gave birth to Khulmi National Union in 1947 and the tribes like Vaiphei, Gangte, Simte, Paite, Zou, Manlum Manchong, Kom, Chiru, Aimol, Purum, Tarao, Moyon, Anal, Maring, Baite Hrangchal, Khongsai and Saum Dongel who cherished 'Chinlung' cave legend became the constituent units of the canopy term Khulei (Singh 2004). Many tribes such as, the Hmars, Paites, Gangte, Vaiphei, etc. too disowned the nomenclature Kuki and launched independent political outfits of their own (Singh 2004).

In the meantime, several small tribes belonging to the Old Kukis such as Anal, Aimol, Khoibu, Lamkang, Maring (to name a few), decided to follow their leaders in joining the ever increasing edifice of the Nagas (Gangte 2011: 63). The expansion of Naga identity through the ‘Nagaisation’ process in Manipur is seen by Gangte (2013: 146) as a process of eventual fragmentation of the Kukis. Indeed, the Naganisation process among the old Kuki tribes taking place allegedly under the shrewd utilization of ‘Church and gun’ as instruments compelling the old Kukis to join Naga-fold politically are variously commented upon. Some observers believe that some of these Nagaised tribes continue to vow for their old identity. It is also reported that the old Kukis and Nagas do not share common traits in any form from historical, cultural, and linguistic point of views. One local scholar argues that only common trait between the Nagas and old Kukis is their identical social and political systems, mainly the practice of republican chieftainship (Doungel 2011).

Manipur had witnessed severe conflict between Nagas and Kukis during last decades. Consequently, several Kuki ‘tribes’ such as Gangte, Vaiphei, Zou Simte, Hmar, and Paite declared themselves to be part of the Zomi group, so as to avoid being identified as Kukis and targeted by the Naga armed groups. The ideology of Naga nationalism is strong enough to engulf the small tribes who are in constant search for a protective and supportive coverage from the larger groups (Singh 2004). The names of the Kuki tribes being part of the larger ‘Naga’ conglomeration and supported by the United Naga Council Working Group are Anal, Chothe, Koireng, Monsang, Poumai, Thangal, Chiru, Kharam, Lamkang, Moyon, Puimei, and Tarao (Oinam 2003).

It may be surmised here that the process of Nagaisation and submission of Kuki identity within larger Naga ethnicity do indicate a reasonable hybrid identity accretion, though future will tell if it is a robust process.

TRANSNATIONAL URGE FOR ZOMI REUNIFICATION AND DEMAND OF ‘ZOGAM’—THE ZOMI HOMELAND

Today there is a greater awareness about the Zomi solidarity among the scattered Chin, Kuki, Lushai, and Zomi people in Burma/Myanmar and India. Even though some resistance persists, there is by and large unanimity among vast segments of people to seek Zomi reunification, in addition to creation of ‘Zogam’, the Zomi Homeland. Even though the solidarity/reunification movement has picked up in recent years, the

demand for 'Zogam' has a long history. The Zomi National Council (ZNC) formed in 1976, under T Gougin, had demanded the creation of a separate territory called 'Zogam' for the Zo tribes of India, Burma, and Bangladesh (Thangtungnung 2013). The Burmese Zomi Revolutionary Organisation (ZRO) was established in April 1993 at Phapyan, Kachin State, Burma. Its objective was also to ethnically reunify all Zomis, and fight for creation of Zogam as a single administrative unit (Thangtungnung 2013). Earlier, in 1987, a political body was formed at Aizawl for the reunification of the Zomi tribes scattered in India, Burma, and Bangladesh. The body was christened as Zomi Re-Unification Organisation (ZORO).

In the first ZORO World Convention at Champhai in 1988 more than forty delegates participated from Arakan, Chin State, Kachin State, Saigang Division, and Magwe Division (Burma); Chittagong (Bangladesh); and Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, Assam, and Nagaland (India). They signed a charter of agreement and endorsed the demand for Zomi Re-Unification within Indian Union (Thangtungnung 2013). In the next ZORO Convention at Lamka (Churachandpur, Manipur) on 14 March 2013, representatives from every Zomi tribe participated. The Convention asserted that the Zomis were dispersed people, the British and Bengalis had given them various nomenclatures, though Zomi tribes had inherited their ethnic names, culture, and traditions from times immemorial (Manipur Express, 15 March 2013). Another council formed in 1998, the Zomi Council, also espoused the Zomi cause. Representing eight major tribes, it had submitted a memorandum to the Home Minister of India in 2001, demanding the creation of Zomi Political Autonomous Region in Manipur for tribal development (Thangtungnung 2013). The Kuki National Organisation (KNO) is the conglomeration of over ten Kuki militant groups. It had demanded a full-fledged Kuki state under the Kuki Innpi (Manipur Express, 25 March 2012). The United Peoples Front (UPF) is another umbrella organization consisting of Zomi and Kuki underground groups. Since 2005, KNO and UPF have entered into cease-fire agreements with the Government of India. One may presume that eventually the pragmatic prerequisite of a robust Zomi ethnicity buttressed by the Zomi solidarity will materialize with ultimate support of some dissenting voices.

**ZOMI-JEWISH IDENTITY AND SYNCRETIC
CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: DISCOURSE
OF SYNCRETISTIC RELIGIOUS CONGREGATION**

There are thousands of Zomi people in Indo-Burma-Bangladesh borderlands, who have been practicing Judaism for more than four decades. They believe that they have discovered their ethnic roots as also the 'indigenous' religion of their ancestors. Since late twentieth century, the Chin, Kuki, and Mizo peoples have adopted the practice of Judaism. These Judaist Zomis are collectively known as Shinlung in Northeast India and in Israel they are called Bene Menasseh, a Biblical tribe (Weil 2004). The Shinlungs are primarily from Mizoram but there are others who live in Manipur, Tiddim area of Burma, and in Israel. Till date, some 700 Zomis have been converted to Judaism by orthodox Rabbis in Israel.

There are oral traditions, referring to travels through Persia, Afghanistan, and eventually settling in Manipur and Mizoram (Weil 1991). Most of the folklore which supports the Bnei Menashe's Jewish ancestry is found in Hmar folk literature. One song is replete with references to enemies chasing the people over a red-colored sea, quails, and a pillar of cloud (Hmar 2005). Reproduced below from the same source is the translation of the lyrics 'Sikpui Hla' (Sikpui Song):

While we are preparing for the Sikpui Feast,
The big red sea becomes divided;
As we march along fighting our foes,
We are being led by pillar of cloud by day,
And pillar of fire by night.
The big sea swallowed them like wild beast.
Collect the quails,
And draw the water that springs out of the rock.

The transformations undergone by the Shinlungs are rooted in indigenous worldview, and it is the appeal of ethnic roots which prompted them to associate with a new religion. The recent conversion to Judaism by Shinlungs, who had earlier converted to Christianity, is also seen as connected to the millenarianism witnessed in indigenous religion of the area.

In continuation of the Christian Revivalism Movement, which swept through the Mizo hills in 1906, the Mizo began writing their own

hymns, incorporating indigenous religious elements, after the 1919–1924 Revival. Thus, they created a unique form of syncretic Christian worship.

The Shinlungs do not form a tribe. They retain their basic identity as Zomi. Yet, the language of the printed pamphlets sets them off from other tribes (Sailo 1975). The significance of the new identity is extensive for it merges elements of traditional religion with major traits in the Jewish religion (Kammerer 1990). Thus, the Zomis who have embraced the Jewish identity find themselves in the midst of a syncretistic religious continuum. This continuum is result of interpenetration of spiritual traits between indigenous faith and Judaism. Side by side with sustaining dual characters, dual identities, and dual religiosity, the Zomi Shinlungs may also be viewed as part of a flexible hybrid entity since these people continuously balance between numerous identities, tribal faith, Christianity, and Judaism.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND DISCUSSION

Since the 1990s there has been an explosion in anthropological and cultural research on borders in terms of the number of approaches adopted. Donna K. Flynn has observed that a deeply placed stable identity can be created by a borderland (Flynn 1997: 312–313). She uses the term ‘deep territorialization’ to describe the sense of rootedness in the border that people articulate. This expression seems to be befitting for Indo-Burma borderland milieu, especially in relation to vast Zomi people. Most clan/tribe segments within ‘Zomi/Chin/Kuki’ confederation, as discussed above, are actually numerous ‘dialect-based’ entities located within a continuum of small and large tribe/identity and involved in regular transnational interaction and ethnic accommodation. As discussed the Zomi tribes inhabiting the borderlands at the intersection of India, Myanmar, and Bangladesh share correlated linguistic-cultural traditions, identical origin myth and a rich folklore. These people claim the border as the ‘homeland,’ ruined by colonial/postcolonial regimes. Their plight had begun when the colonial authorities subjugated the border tribes, created boundaries and imposed deceptive labels. In this backdrop, this article has tried to comprehend the concerns of these frontier tribes, in terms of historical continuity, rupture and emergent solidarity expressed through their struggle in support of ‘reunification’ and political autonomy. Such mounting spirit of unity among these tribes is critically analyzed by juxtaposing the themes of indigeneity, borderland, and memory.

The Chin, Zomi, Kuki tribes have a thriving tradition of origin myth and cultural memory of their settlement in Chinglung, which has helped them harnessing the assertions about identity, belonging, and indigeneity. Employing ethnic disposition of common origin myths and identical language use, various Zomi tribes are trying to define and essentialize the Zominess of the community. There has been increasing concern during last decades to reunify the segregated ‘tribes’ and adopt a common nomenclature. Undeniably, Zo and Zomi have emerged as alternative terms among most of the Zomi-Chin-Kuki tribes, spread in Myanmar, Manipur, Mizoram, etc. Nonetheless, some incongruity is observed. This clash is mainly witnessed in the persistence of certain Kukis to retain colonial era nomenclature and pursuing an independent ‘political ideology’ which have caused barrier for reunification. Many local scholars are worried that such occurrences have prevented the emergence of pan-tribe unification.

Borderlands are seen not only as the meeting places of various cultures, and ethnic and linguistic groups, but as hybrid spaces, spaces of flows— (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 18; Bhabha 2007). Numerous segments within Zo-Zomi confederacy, as discussed above, too have created sort of hybrid spaces and evolved fuzzy margins between themselves. One example of the blurred identity configuration is seen in emulating the trail of robust Naga ethnicity, on part of some smaller tribes. The way these smaller tribes have shifted their allegiance from one ‘tribal’ identity to another portrays them as ‘hybridized’ subjects giving shape to highly “unstable” boundary distinctiveness.

Another example of hybrid absorption and a process of syncretistic religious amalgamation, discussed above, pertain to adoption of Judaism among the Zomis who gained inspiration to do so via indigenous Zomi faith and reinterpretation of folklore. Indeed, a reinterpretation of folk-songs has prompted the search of ‘ethnic roots’ through Jewish ancestry and a demand to ‘return’ to the Holy land. This spiritual revivalism via indigenous faith among the Zo people indeed points to a syncretistic religious amalgamation involving indigenous faith, Christianity, and Judaism. The indigenous religious cosmological worldview is so dominant among the Zomis that within Christianity itself the Zomis have blended many indigenous philosophical-religious features in a syncretic manner.²

The fact that thousands of Burmese Chins are forced to migrate to Mizoram during last decade, having been religiously persecuted

in Myanmar has created a dilemma in the sphere of larger ‘ethnicity’ discourse. The Mizos indeed provided all help in sheltering the immigrants (with and without government assistance). However, since the government has not provided any viable alternative to ‘accept the refugees,’ the vulnerability of Mizo people is manifesting in terms of resentment and which has triggered a perception of ‘otherness,’ thwarting the concept of belonging. One may presume however that this emergent situation threatening the discourses of citizenship, ethnicity, and belonging, may prove to be ephemeral. There is need to acknowledge the larger transnational issues and sensitivities of the Zomi people and revisit the multifaceted and inestimable borders of present-day in rationally profound ways.

NOTES

1. Development of the Chin script known natively as ‘Pau Cin Hau lai’ or ‘tual lai’ (‘local script’) had taken place in Chin area of Burma in 1930s. The script also had some use for Christian literature in 1931–1932 in Burma. The Pau Cin Hau script is a term used to refer to one of two scripts created by Pau Cin Hau, a religious leader from Chin State, Burma, in chronological succession: first, a logographic script consisting of 1050 characters, which is a traditionally significant number based on the number of characters appearing in a religious text, and second, a simplified alphabetic script of 57 characters, which is divided into 21 consonants, 7 vowels, 9 final consonants, and 20 tone, length, and glottal marks (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pau_Cin_Hau_script).
2. Lalchhanhima Sailo, the founder of the Chhinlung-Israel Peoples Convention, is campaigning across the state to change the name of the Mizo tribe to Chhinlung-Israel. He also aspires for a greater Chhinlung-Israel State that includes the Mizos (Zomis) of neighboring Burma and Bangladesh, a prospect that may not be welcome in Dhaka, Rangoon or New Delhi (<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2054640,00.html>).

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Rethinking Postcolonial Identity: Caught in the Spiral of Violence

Peter Hechs

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, postcolonial studies became a red-hot academic sub-discipline. Scholars of critical theory explored the ins and outs of the “postcolonial condition,” a rather vague term evoking a complex of political, economic, social, cultural, and psychological factors that were said to characterize the common experience of people who lived in countries that had recently emerged from colonial rule. This meant, in practice, people living in the former imperial possessions of Britain, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, and one or two other European powers.¹ Their empires broke up between the late

¹Many of the countries in question were not colonies in the strict sense of the term, that is, countries that were home to a significant number of permanent settlers from expansive states, for example Australia, Algeria, and the Dutch Cape Colony. India was never a colony in this sense. A better term for its status while under British rule is “imperial possession.”

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1940s and the early 1970s. The outcome was the birth of dozens of new nations, most of which experienced considerable growing pains.

After the colonized countries achieved independence, Western-trained political scientists, economists, and sociologists turned their attention to them. Their main objective was to study the way the new nations integrated themselves into the Cold War political order. Not until the 1980s did the inner life of the people of formerly colonized countries attract academic interest. A handy source of information on the inner life of national groups is literature. This helps explain the popularity of postcolonial literary studies over the last forty years.

To contemporary critics, “postcolonial literature” means more than “literature written after the colonial period.” It is concerned with the response of the colonized people to the colonial experience after the colonizers have gone. Former colonies bear the impression of the colonizers’ influence for decades, even centuries. World history provides countless examples: The political, legal, and social institutions established by imperial Rome live on in today’s Europe and America. Greco-Roman artistic and literary forms dominated Euro-American cultural life for two millennia. The influence of the British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese empires on the lives of formerly colonized countries is also pervasive. Some of this influence is readily apparent—political, economic, and social institutions; languages; artistic forms and styles. Some of it is subliminal—ideas, cultural assumptions, habits of thought.

Much postcolonial literature and art is concerned with the conflict between Western cultural patterns and reimagined indigenous traditions. This theme is played out endlessly in novels, films, and intellectual chatter. Who will get the hero in a Bollywood blockbuster: the “traditional” modest sari-clad girl or her brash jeans-wearing “modern” sister? And so forth. Cultural skirmishes of this sort are still going strong seventy-five years after the start of decolonization. But is it still useful, after all this time, to speak of the “postcolonial experience” of countries made up mainly of people who never experienced colonialism? In 2018 only 6.18 percent of India’s population of 1.3 billion consisted of men and women over 65 (tradingeconomics.com 2020). Eighty million seniors are a lot of people, but they are massively outnumbered by every other demographic cohort.

It is certain that the colonial experience left a huge impression on post-1947 India. But the same can be said of the impact of all historical periods on all subsequent periods. Traces of the Mughal Empire and its successors are still evident in many parts of India. The new state of

Telangana corresponds roughly to the central portion of a kingdom established by a Mughal satrap in 1724. Yet no one today speaks of Telangana as a “post-Mughal” state. Have we reached the point where the epithet “postcolonial” is equally outmoded?

POSTCOLONIAL OR POST-POSTCOLONIAL?

Scholars often trace the start of postcolonial studies to the 1978 publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. The term “postcolonialism” seems to have been coined by New Zealand academic Simon During seven years later. In the 1980s and 1990s there was a rapid growth of postcolonial criticism and the field became a fixture in the curricula of English departments throughout the world. But as early as 1997, British theorist Bart Moore-Gilbert confessed to “a suspicion that the postcolonial ‘moment’ has been and gone” (1997: 185). Before long, some critics were wondering whether the *post*-postcolonial moment had begun.

Over the last decade a number of writers in the former colonial world have referred to their work as “post-postcolonial.” Whatever else this term may mean, Bahamian poet Christian Campbell observed in 2010, “I think that may be one way to locate my work generationally. I am very much a post-Independence (and post-Civil Rights) baby” (Campbell and Allen-Agostini 2010). Similarly Jamaican novelist Marlon James said that he called himself “post-postcolonial” because he belonged to a “new-ish generation of writers,” who are “not driven by our dialogue with the former mother country,” but rather with contemporary political and social realities (James 2014). Among the features of West Indian life that both these writers highlight is violence. “The Caribbean is shaped by error, rupture, violence,” Campbell said, and it was the job of the poet to respond to this (Campbell and Allen-Agostini 2010). The violence of 1980s Jamaica forms the backdrop of James’s 2014 Booker-prize-winning novel *A Brief History of Seven Killings*.

Violence is a feature of the post-postcolonial experience not only in the Caribbean but also in Africa and Asia. The threat or reality of violence is never far off in the recent literature of South Africa, Nigeria, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia. In what follows I examine how this theme plays out in two twenty-first-century Indian novels, *The Point of Return* by Siddhartha Deb (2002) and *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai (2006). Like Campbell and James, Deb and Desai deal not with the oppressions of the past but the conflicts and violence of the present.

POST-POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITY

One of the great, if unintended, benefits of the colonial experience in India was to lay the groundwork for an Indian identity. Before the establishment of the British Indian Empire, “India” was a geographical and cultural abstraction. By bringing the subcontinent under one rule and giving the formation a single name, the colonizers made it possible for people in Punjab, Bengal, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu to speak of themselves as “Indians.” The sense of Indianness grew during the struggle for freedom—indeed it helped make the freedom struggle possible. Without the feeling that people in all parts of subcontinent belonged to one political and cultural unit, it wouldn’t have been likely that British India, minus its two Muslim wings, would have ended up as a single political entity.

India was one of the first Asian countries to throw off colonial rule. It established a pattern that dozens of other former colonies followed: On the day of independence a new flag was raised. A new set of rulers took up the reins of government. A new constitution was promulgated, new laws were passed, and newly minted citizens made plans for a better future. But there is more to being a country than having a working government. There must be a sense of shared national identity, a common past, and future. To many critics, the creation of such an identity is the task of postcolonial literature. Frederic Jameson wrote in 1986 that “third-world texts”—his term for postcolonial texts—“necessarily project a political dimension in the form of a national allegory” (Jameson 1986: 67–69). A year later Simon During wrote that postcolonialism was “the need, in nations or groups which have been victims of imperialism, to achieve an identity uncontaminated by universalist or Eurocentric concepts and images.” During went on to criticize the tendency of thinkers like Jameson to overemphasize the political side of the postcolonial project. Postcolonialism was, to be sure, “closely connected to nationality” but even more so with language: hence the importance of postcolonial literature. “The postcolonial desire,” During wrote, “is the desire of decolonized communities for an identity,” and this desire finds its voice in literature (During [1987] 1992: 449, 458).

What During failed to see is that states emerging from the forced uniformity of colonial structures have, more often than not, a multitude of identities to deal with. This is true of the peoples of the Caribbean, whose insular identities prevented them from coalescing into the West Indies Federation. It is true of the former British, French, and Belgian

colonies of Africa, where the persistence of tribal identities have hindered the development of nationalism. It is also true of India, where a multitude of ethnic, religious, social, linguistic, and cultural groups have hampered the formation of a cohesive national identity over the last three-quarters of a century.

Deb and Desai made this clash of cultural identities the background of the novels I will examine. *The Point of Return* and *The Inheritance of Loss* are both set in northeast India. In both, the protagonist and protagonist's family are viewed as outsiders by members of a group who claim priority in the region. In both, the protagonists turn their backs on the town in which they spent their childhoods and look for a place where they can thrive without needing to butt their heads against aggressive regional identities.

Both novels stretch across three generations. The grandparents are born in late colonial India; the parents come of age in an era of post-colonial promise; the protagonists find themselves living in a world of post-postcolonial violence. The grandfather of Babu, the protagonist of *The Point of Return*, lived in East Bengal until 1947, when he and his family were forced to flee during the turmoil that accompanied Partition. Despite suffering "the greatest disaster that can fall upon this social class—the loss of ancestral farming land—my grandfather had not done too badly," Babu later reflected. Settling in Cachar, a Bengali-speaking district of Assam, Babu's grandfather was able to pass his last years watching "the trees grow and the fishes multiply" (Deb 2002: 26). His eldest son (Babu's father Dr. Dam), managed to get through college and enter the veterinary service of the Assam government. Eventually he was posted in Shillong, the town in the Khasi hills that was then the capital of Assam.

The East Bengal refugees who lived in Cachar shared a sense of identity defined "not by what they were—that was uncertain—but by what they were not. They were Indians because they were not [East Pakistanis or] Bangladeshis, Hindus because they were not Muslims, Bengalis because they were not Assamese. They clung to their language fiercely, and yet they were not really Bengali, because they spoke a dialect that aroused only amusement and derision in the real centre of Bengali culture and identity, in Calcutta" (78).

When Dr. Dam moved to Shillong, he acquired another negative identity: he was a Bengali (or even a "Bangladeshi") because he was not a Khasi tribal. At first the ethnic differences seemed unimportant, the Khasis unprejudiced: "If anything," Dr. Dam later admitted, it was "his

fellow Bengalis and the other non-tribal groups who were insular, with a vague sense of superiority over the tribal officers” (54). Things changed toward the end of the 1970s, when Khasi students began to assert themselves. At school, Babu and an Assamese friend were kicked out of the cricket ground. At work, Dr. Dam was obliged to do the bidding of corrupt, uneducated officers. Because he was upright, he made powerful enemies. Once, during an anti-foreigner—that is, anti-Bengali—*hartal*, he was attacked and beaten. He persevered despite the violence, working out a scheme to deliver milk securely and cheaply to the people of the state. His plan was coopted by a venal minister, who wanted to trade the distribution booths for political favors. The minister’s gun-toting nephew, whom Dr. Dam offended, threatened to kill him.

Even after retiring, Dr. Dam had to suffer for the sin of being a non-tribal in a tribal state. One morning, as he waited for his pension cheque (which was delivered after hours of delay and lacked the dearness allowance), a Khasi man turned to him and Babu and said: “Bengalis? ... No use for Bengalis, always coming over the border,” always carrying “hordes of screaming children, coming across like locusts, like rain.” Then, gesturing to Dr. Dam to go ahead to the pension office, he spat out: “Get your money and go through the border again” (15–18). This is the post-postcolonial India that Babu grew up in.

Justice Jamubhai Patel, the maternal grandfather of Sai, the protagonist of *The Inheritance of Loss*, was, like Babu’s grandfather, born in a colonial backwater. His path out was very different. Winning a scholarship to an exclusive school, he studied hard, passed the Indian Civil Service examination, and set sail for England using a steamer ticket that was part of his bride’s dowry. During his years at Cambridge, he “envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians both” (Desai 2006: 119). Returning to India as an ICS officer, he was posted in a small town in the North, where he set up home with the wife he hardly knew. Soon he learned to hate her as well. After a couple of years of unhappy marriage, he sent her back to her family in Gujarat. There she gave birth to Sai’s mother. Sai’s parents hardly appear in the novel. Members of the first postcolonial generation, they took part in the Nehruvian nation-building endeavour until their lives were cut short by a traffic accident in Moscow. The orphaned Sai is sent to stay with Justice Patel, now living in retirement in Kalimpong, near Darjeeling.

From the moment of his return to the country of his birth, Justice Patel found himself a foreigner among Indians, just as, with better reason, he had found himself a foreigner among Englishmen in England. Now, in an English cottage in the foothills of the Himalayas, he has “the solace of being a foreigner in his own country” (29). He takes no interest in the social life of his neighbors, relics from British colonial days or settlers from metropolitan Bengal. He has even less interest in the Indian Nepalis, commonly called Gorkhas, who make up the bulk of Kalimpong’s population.

Hardly aware of the discontent that is building up among the Gorkhas, Justice Patel has a rude awakening when a band of them enter his house, demand the rifles they know he has, and when he refuses, point their gun at his beloved dog Mutt: “Go on, get them,” the boy with the weapon demands. “We will kill the dog first and you second, cook third, ladies last.” Sai, the lady in question, rushes off in terror and comes back with the judge’s rusty old rifles. The intruders then herd them all into the kitchen. The captives realize that “they might all die,” that the “world was upside down and absolutely anything could happen.” The boys content themselves with stealing some food and liquor. Before leaving they demand that the judge recite: “*Jai* Gorkha” and “Gorkhaland for Gorkhas” (4–7). This is the post-postcolonial India that Sai comes of age in.

If there is a theme that unites these two novels, it is hatred, and the violence that hatred breeds. Desai highlights this theme in a devastating passage in which she describes the feelings of the Gorkhas of Kalimpong for Bengalis, Gujaratis, everyone who is not a Gorkha:

The men sat unbedding their rage, learning, as everyone does in this country, at one time or another, that old hatreds are endlessly retrievable.

And when they had disinterred it, they found the hate pure, purer than it could even have been before, because the grief of the past was gone. Just the fury remained, distilled, liberating. (161)

The classic form of postcolonial hatred is the hatred of enemies across borders established by colonial regimes: the hatred of Syrians for Israelis, of Somalis for Ethiopians, of Pakistanis for Indians. The classic form of post-postcolonial hatred is hatred between ethnic and religious groups within a single country: Nigeria, Iraq, India. Desai depicts the way such hatred leads to violence by examining the Gorkhaland agitation of 1986.

Returning home after a riot that left a dozen Gorkha boys dead, the judge's cook passes a convoy of tanks "rolling down from the cantonment area into the town. Instead of foreign enemies, instead of the Chinese they had been preparing for, building their hatred against, they must fight their own people" (278).

Sai, just seventeen, is caught off-guard by the sudden explosion of violence. In the beginning of the novel she is so absorbed in her infatuation for Gyan, her Gorkha mathematics tutor, that she hardly knows what is happening outside her fantasy world. Waiting for Gyan minutes before the robbers burst in to her grandfather's house, she bends forward to "imprint her lips upon the surface" of a mirror, "a perfectly formed film star kiss" (2). This teenage romantic does not yet know that it was Gyan who told his rowdy friends that there were guns in the judge's house.

As the political situation deteriorates, the emotion that possesses Sai is not shock at the hatred of Gorkhas for plains Indians, but anger at Gyan's growing indifference to her. In the end she too succumbs to the hatred that has infiltrated her tidy little world:

She fled outside. Stood in the rich humus dark in her white cotton pajamas and felt the empty burden of the day, her own small heart, her disgust at the cook, at his pleading, her hatred of the judge, her pitiful selfish sadness, her pitiful selfish pointless love.

Then, as she stands in the rain, she suddenly feels "a glimmer of strength. Of resolve. She must leave" (321–323).

Hatred also permeates *The Point of Return*, stretching across three generations: the hatred of Bengali Muslims for Bengali Hindus, of West Pakistanis for East Pakistanis, of Assamese for Bengalis and Bengalis for Assamese, of Assamese and Bengalis for Khasis, and of Khasis for Assamese and Bengalis. This last form of animosity led to a slaughter of the Bengalis of Meghalaya in 1979, a bloody fate the fictional Babu narrowly avoids. Yet for him, as for Sai, it was the personal side of the all-encompassing hatred that mattered most. He was born in Meghalaya, far from his family's ancestral lands. He thought of the hill-state as his home because "I was born here and because the land was in my blood." But the people who claimed the land as theirs considered him a foreigner. He grew up hearing the word *dkhar*—"foreigner"—muttered as he passed and seeing posters saying "Go back foreign dogs" plastered on the walls (Deb 2002: 178). He got out as soon as he could.

Returning as an adult on a working visit, he wished he could learn to love his hometown again, but he could not make it work. Instead, he “went through periods of completely different emotions, oscillating between a desire to blend with the town and the insiders and a virulent hatred for the place and a desire to leave it forever so that I would never hear that word, ‘Foreigner,’ again” (179).

THE ILLUSIONS OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

Identity politics of the blood-and-soil variety are based on the premise that a given ethnic group has lived in its homeland forever and therefore has the right to decide what other groups can stay there and the conditions under which they will live. This sort of nativism is on the rise throughout the world today. In almost every case, the founding premise is wrong. The northeast part of India has always been a crossroads of many different cultures. Today the region is home to Bengalis, Biharis, Nepalis, Tibetans, Sikkimese, Bhutanese, Ahoms, Khasis, Nagas, Manipuris, Chins, and other groups. None of them can lay claim to perpetual occupation. Most came from somewhere else. The Khasis are linked linguistically to peoples of Southeast Asia and are supposed to have migrated from that region in relatively recent times. The Ahoms entered Assam from what is now Myanmar in the thirteenth century. Out-migration from Nepal in all directions has been “a conspicuous historical phenomenon ever since the eighteenth-century unification of the country” (Kafle 2007: 82). Bengalis followed the British to the hills in the late nineteenth century. Kalimpong and Shillong, the centers of action in our two novels, were founded by British colonizers during the 1860s. At that time the sites of both future towns were uninhabited.

Established during the colonial period as therapeutic, economic, administrative, and educational centers, Kalimpong and Shillong became cosmopolitan towns during the early postcolonial years. But by the 1970s their multi-ethnic character was under stress. One reason for this was the attitude of the Bengalis who had replaced the British as the dominant group in both places. As Dr. Dam’s old friend Dr. Chatterji admits:

We [Bengalis] were not perfect, we are not perfect now and never will be. We were insular and narrow-minded, with a false sense of superiority when we first came here. We saw the honesty of the tribal people as stupidity, and through that we taught them our own deviousness. That is the irony.

The Khasis vented their frustrations during the anti-Bengali riots of 1979–1980. They were not satisfied with driving out most of the Bengalis and terrifying those who remained. In 1987 “they went after the Nepalis ... burned their sheds, butchered their cows, and killed those who tried to resist” (214). Then, in 1992, it was the turn of the Biharis. All these conflicts continue in Meghalaya today and are mirrored by similar “anti-foreigner” drives in Assam, Manipur, and other states (Dutta 2013).

Social scientists tell us that the construction of enemies is a recurrent feature in the formation of national and subnational identities. “In social life,” writes political scientist Vilho Harle, “identity is not an objective thing but a socially constituted element.” This constructed identity is made up of positive attributes, descriptions of who *we* are—the Self, the In-group—and negative attributes, descriptions of what we are not—the Other, the Enemy. These two sorts of negative stereotype differ in the degree that they appear to threaten the existence of the Self. As Harle explains: “While the Other is just an opponent against our policy, the Enemy is, furthermore, perceived as hostile toward us *and evil in its nature*” (Harle 2000: 17–18). To create such an enemy is a powerful way of affirming our identity.

In an important recent study, *Identity, Violence and Power: Mobilizing Hatred, Demobilizing Dissent*, social psychologists Guy Elcheroth and Stephen Reicher describe what needs to happen for a social situation to “feed into a spiral of violence.” First, the victims and the community they belong to “must be defined in ethnic terms.” Second, the perpetrators of the violence must conceive themselves not only in ethnic terms but “as members of an ethnic out group.” That is, they have to view themselves as victims. Finally, “it is necessary to attribute violence to an enduring hatred that members of the ethnic outgroup have for the ethnic ingroup.” It is not enough to say that the conflict arises from specific issues, because those issues could be addressed and dealt with. The violence must be motivated by a deep-rooted grievance that can be removed only by the permanent removal of the enemy (Elcheroth and Reicher 2017: 74–75). It is easy to see how this analysis applies to our novels and also to the myriad forms of hatred and violence we read about in the international and national news.

How can we escape from “the spiral of violence” that Elcheroth and Reicher theorized and Deb and Desai depicted in their novels? The first step is to address the immediate problems that underlie the conflict. This is never easy to do. Political scientist Indrajit Sharma has examined a

recent movement to improve the conditions of the so-called “tea tribes” of Assam. The movement grew out a complex of social causes: “disenfranchisement of identity together with exploitative conditions of work and life,” along with “a perceived sense of deprivation.” Its goals include “the quest to defend and promote collective interest in terms of their recognition as STs [scheduled tribes] in the state” (Sharma 2018: 78). Unsurprisingly the movement is opposed by caste Hindu Assamese, who view the tea tribes as outsiders. So far this movement has not provoked widespread violence. Other out-groups in Assam have not been so lucky: witness the massacre of Bengali migrants in Nellie, Assam, in 1983, and the imprisonment and deportation of Chinese-origin Assamese in 1962, the subject of the award-winning novel *Makam* (“Chinatown Days”) by Assamese novelist Rita Chowdhury.

To deal with the causes of social injustice is an external way of extirpating the roots of violence. More important are the changes that must come about in the minds and hearts of participants. Neither Deb nor Desai provide much help in this direction. Their response, after all, was to get out. Yet in their closing scenes they seem to offer traces of hope. Looking back on his hometown, his point of return and re-departure, Deb reflects: “I want it to be home for everyone who lives there, for everyone to have a place in it that cannot be lost or stolen.” But how Shil-long will reach this positive outcome “is no longer my concern” (227). Desai provides a cinematic conclusion that at least hints at the possibility of a kinder world:

The five peaks of Kanchenjunga turned golden with the kind of luminous light that made you feel, if briefly, that truth was apparent.

All you needed to do was to reach out and pluck it. (324)

WHO’S TO BLAME?

A central assumption of postcolonial studies that the problems faced by formerly colonized nations are direct results of the colonial experience: it’s all the fault of the British, the French, the Dutch, the Portuguese. No one would deny that colonizing nations stripped the wealth of their colonies and imposed on them alien institutions and practices. These have had a lasting effect on the development of the new nations. But at what point do these nations become responsible for their own destinies? After fifty years, a hundred, a thousand?

It is the business of politicians in every part of the world to blame everyone but the leaders and members of their own parties for the problems their nations face. In postcolonial India a common ploy was to evoke the spectre of the “foreign hand” to explain internal crises. In much the same way, postcolonial economists shifted the blame for arrested development from colonial masters to multinational corporations. There is, of course, a certain amount of truth in such claims. But one wonders when people will begin to think that these remedies have exceeded their shelf-life.

The writers we have been studying had the courage to admit that India’s post-postcolonial problems are now the responsibility of the Indian people. Strife between the country’s religious, ethnic, linguistic, social, and other groups preceded the arrival of the British and survived their departure. The character of the strife changed during British rule but, as Deb and Desai show us, the conflicts themselves were indigenous. To use the verb they employed continually in their books: Indians did not need the British to teach them how to hate. Our authors did not propose a positive solution, but honest readers of *The Point of Return* and *The Inheritance of Loss* will be forced to conclude if Indians are ever to free themselves from the spiral of hatred and violence, they will have to do it on their own.

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In Search of Territory: Women's Existential Traverse Through Varied Routes

Meera Chakravorty

To the question whether a woman has been able to take a journey on her own to her chosen destination(s), the response may sometime be in the Indian context, not a radical departure from the conventional position. The Indian conservative tradition which describes how a woman over a long period of time has to be confined did already determined her path she should follow and claimed that any transgression would bring nemesis to her being. However, in exceptional situations in many countries some women have always made an impact by their remarkable traverse through challenges and difficulties to point out that these can be crossed over like a river in spate if there is will power and determination. Otherwise, she finds herself enslaved in relation to the life-situations, being pushed to the ideological-cultural divisions coming from the dominant power to restrain her chosen journey to whatever destination she would have liked to go. This is generally the single most important factor with which she has been over the centuries struggling. This has been her existential reality. As the notions of freedom and responsibility are fundamental

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to existential situations, a woman's choice and capability are the ways to aspire for freedom and take responsibility to understand the underlying challenges that she would like to traverse in search of her root potentially or actually and possibly all by herself. Hence, the issue concerning her journey becomes a matter of serious reflection. Though staying in the same society in which both men and women co-exist it's a woman's selfhood which has always been challenged. It is interesting in this context to note that Giri's introductory essay explains how the maritime network despite its own limitations, "enabled a cultural flow nothing short of world-transforming"... and helps us "explore new possibilities." Quite interestingly, he emphasizes how ethnicity challenges us to understand a dynamic process when used as nouns or verbs along with a further pointer that besides the categories of nation, ethnicity, etc. "we need to add the category of soul—self... to bring the dynamics of generativity and regeneration." Giri has mentioned that roots/routes therefore are "need of the human soul." Therefore there is a particular need to examine the issue in the light of a woman's attempt to go for her root through her own route that might situate her in her own concerns of agency which has been continuously denied to her. It may then aim to perhaps intend to demonstrate the "dynamics of generativity."

In the human history, one of the most powerful ideas has been that of the route/root related to territory capable of explaining a woman's past, present, and future; her discontent and ingenuity, pain and pleasure while taking the journey of life. Like time and space, territory is used both as a domain of existence in the present and as regeneration in future or to put it otherwise in its memory and reality. A woman's participation in both has been unique. As memory it has passed through historical stages in which the struggle of a woman continue though fractured several times, and though incomplete, the expression of these journeys are found in various genres. The nature of the journey has always been through many routes as sensitive as it is inseparable from the fluctuating conditions of women's lives. However, sometimes traversing to a given territory there is an imagination of a possible secure and infallible way of remaining with it. It is hard to imagine a way of life that is distanced from this. Such imagination is not only reassuring; it energizes her selfhood by prompting her to think that she has the will power and determination to thwart any alienation which may cause obstructions. The other dimension of the legend of the travel that has always consoled her facilitating her imagination of some place she can take resort to is a kind of solace that situates her in the social milieu. It can be followed later in this article how women

tried to devise plans to explain how comforting it is to be in such territories and didn't find it hard to explain how real life-situations often are condemnable in real territories.

We may possibly find in almost all cultures the critical issues of subjectivity concerning women's journey. Whether it is pre-industrial society or modern society with technological advancement a woman's identity has remained a dominant concern as there have been continuous attempts mostly violent to replace her own identity with the identity framed by the patriarchy. There are contexts which highlight the tensions between women's attempt to assert her own 'self' and the forceful subversion of the same by the patriarchal hegemony. At times though there have been gestures used in recognizing and coming to terms with her "being" and her own space, these are mostly exceptional in nature which rather justifies the prevalent values of the male-dominated society. To reflect on such a contrast, we may find how in the early Indian society, the reflections in the ancient texts known as the "Vedas" which were generally meant to be the Book of Knowledge, helped to sustain some space for women across diverse ideological trends over the years. These texts are often expressions of the values and beliefs, traditions and practices central to people's life. The extensive materials, which fall within the purview of these texts, known as "Shruti," or the oral tradition and, contain the narratives of life—experience of the people from various strata of society. Besides, recommending what values and attitudes people must adopt and practice to become a good citizen of the community, these texts acted also as law books governing the civil society. In this tradition, generally there is a sort of reasoned account available of the practices, which are supposed to be followed though sometimes the reason is totally ignored. One may even suspect that at times the statements seem emotional and personal, a reflection on memory. However, one can certainly maintain that the range and profundity of all these materials forming the guidelines are explained and analyzed in accordance with the academic positions of the later code makers/editors and the demand of the time they belonged to when some of the contents from these sources were taken to form the systematic code of law. And this tradition is known as "Smriti" or the written tradition. These law books have not always taken a distinctive path when compared and contrasted with each other, but they have sometimes made an impact to the transformation of our understanding of our language, thought, and subjectivity with reference to the complex legacy of culture and tradition prevalent in the society. They are, in many ways a product

of differences from and similarities to other books in the same tradition. Any study and re-study of these sources therefore may appear precarious when they involve classification in relation to their cultural space, time, and the code maker as the code maker is inclined to follow a certain kind of commitment he thinks he ought to engage the people of the community for an “appropriate” way for living a fulfilled life. Besides these, there are the epic texts well known as Ramayana and Mahabharata which also surprisingly and rigorously critique important dimensions while recording significant resistance to the dominance of oppressive forms affecting the lives of women in particular and people in general.

It appears from the study of the sources from the shruti or the oral tradition that though the idea of being born as a woman was not quite announced from the tree-top as unwelcome, there was not perhaps the feeling of a trauma and loss as women generally experienced in later times when the smriti texts were getting edited and which of course are against such a trend that continues even today. However, analyzing the information used in these sources, it is interesting to note that a certain kind of revitalizing elements can be found in the shruti tradition which allows some space to communicate the possibilities of asserting women’s subjectivity. Some instances are provided which mentions that if for better or worse, a woman is able to appeal to the people in the power-structure to provide possible conditions for an open communication she is not negated, though provided with a difficult territory. A story mentions of a debate in king Janaka’s court to show how a woman scholar challenged her opposite sex in an argument to provide with the explanation on the subject of a metaphysical nature. Though she is allowed to ask questions at the same time she is provoked by a warning to keep silent immediately when she has completed. This context is found in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (Radhakrishnan 1953: 223),¹ in which, the male debater warns Gargi, the woman scholar, admonishing that if she asks too many questions her head will fall on the ground. Indeed, the opening scene of the assembly where the debate is scheduled appears an alienated space where Gargi is seen to be present as if not for the love of wisdom but as a challenger to the structure of hegemony because she says that her questions are like sharp arrows intended to pierce the recipient deeply. Thus, in this context, the authority of the hegemony is not just challenged through words but an attempt is made by Gargi to subvert the same. Through

the act of debate a communication of assertion and a refusal to be co-opted by the system may be seen as the harbinger of women's journey to identity and it also points out what was going to emerge in future.

In this context it is necessary to note that when territory came to be invested with power the inter-relationship of women with it, bears the evidences for varied directions that were pursued at various intervals of time. In a monarchical system the territorial attachment of people had to follow the sovereign's requirement. The ministers, for instance, in a king's court were the owner of vast areas of real land simply because the king will have their co-operation and support while making decisions right or wrong. Their rights were the rights they appropriated over the labors of their peasants and retainues and the land that they possessed. This was in return for co-operation, trust, long term commitment, and the willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the king which also had potentially dangerous consequences. The growth of territorial wealth increased the power position in a manner that created an institution of its own with its infrastructure and norms of behavior. This extended the scope for possessive individualism and the vulnerability of the power inter-relation which was traded in appropriate time. The case study of Gargi, as mentioned in the above context is exemplary. In the dramatic transition from the migratory, as she is engaged in the study of Self and hence her travel is continuous, to an authority like that of Yajnyavalkya's, the sage who is supposed to possess the spiritual authority represented the new strength in her journey. In the absence of rights in the system of administration in the then monarchical era there was no question of the majority consensus to be considered a priority for those who were confronting a situation of strife to establish her. Consequently, no legitimacy was rendered to such consensus. The distribution of power, property, and territory was carried on by the hegemonic institution. In such situations the most attractive and promising realm of protecting the future power could have only been acquiring yet another territory as Gargi did traversing through her debate regarding the study of self.

In yet another context we find how a woman who could consciously mark out terms to break with the conservative thinking and tradition taking a new route to evaluate her freedom responsibly, when her son, wishing to go to the teacher for learning, asks her about his father's identity. In reply his mother says, "I do not know, my child, of what family you are. In my youth, when I went about a great deal, as a maid servant, I got you....However, I am Jabala by name and you are Satyakama by name. So

you may speak of yourself as Satyakama Jabala,” (the son of Jabala) (ibid.: 4.4.5).² It may be simplistic to say that these are just stories. Because, these narratives of the past define the historical experiences of women rooted in past traditions, they could presumably be specific experiences of women and their long traumatic moments of radical break, experimenting with their search of space in their life’s journey. Therefore, these narratives of the past are the vision from the past provided to get the insights on women’s travel which could provide us with a new geography of reason. This can be the context in which we may try to explore a new aesthetic, a different ontology, a new politics, and a new kind of epistemology while renewing our acquaintance with these women since their subjectivity here needs to be revisited and may be reflected as regeneration to use Giri’s term.

Both the journey and the space described above were totally denied in the later period when the codes of customary law (known as Smritis) got compiled and edited. Hence, there appears a suspicion that these smritis were against any kind of continuity with women’s own journey and their own space as it would be difficult to face the challenge posed by women. To one’s assertion that our perception of women is derived from the traditionalists, an aspirant to the egalitarian society may reply that it is derived from a pre-industrial, pre-technological era in which the code-maker’s pursuing with a certain degree of intensity brought the woman out on their side of existential situation which had ceased to be transparent. However, an enquirer to the women’s question must make the causal connection clear to see how chasing the woman’s journey out of the patriarchal commonsense into her subconscious and relying on her nature of subjective and collective experiences, one may finally arrive at the understanding of the problematic nature of the archetype woman, as narrated in these smriti texts which are clearly the products of the totalitarian system attempting to gag her voice and certainly restricting her subjectivity to challenge the systemic hegemony. Women’s independent identity and agency are almost obliterated in these texts, because, the totalitarian, patriarchal system appears to be intensely worried about women’s participation and the changes that might consequently cause an upheaval. It was easy therefore, to choose to destroy women, a potential force, by suppressing their roots and routes that they might take to assert their point of view. Further, the system imposed its own version of identity and subjectivity on them. This journey is what is to be reflected

upon. The state of affairs regarding women's aspiration for her own territory cannot be founding the smṛiti texts as the texts reflect only the imposed version which legitimizes the sense of inferiority ascribed to women through agencies other than her own and which would demand prohibition and exclusion of women's participation from almost all walks of life restricting her aspired journeys completely.

However, despite this great adversity the śruti texts provide some space a woman could manage to preserve in some ways which helped to generate much of her capability—potential that would help her with an understanding of her further journey from her compressed life. It further shows how she could ensure her inevitable presence and equip her with a sort of indigenous autonomy as narrated in the example quoted in this act of ritual below. As the smṛitis were particular about rituals, women did find ways integrating them into the framework of her support-system widening the space of routing her journey. In this narrative, we find that it is a commonplace practice to associate a ritual for the birth of a male child which is performed elaborately, but it is rarely known that it was also associated with the birth of a female child as mentioned in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. However, it was later removed from the smṛiti texts generally. The details of the ritual as given in this source explains how by uttering the hymns to the deities like Agni (Fire) and Savitri (the Sun), the husband has to offer prayers along with his wife. The Upanishad says: "Now if one wishes that his daughter should be born, who is learned, that she should attain a full term of life, they should have rice cooked with sesamum and eat it with clarified butter, then they should be able to beget her"(ibid.: 6.4.9).³ The name of the ritual is "Garbhadhana," probably comes from the practice "garbham dadatu" i.e., to implant an embryo, as stated in the hymns. The depths and nuances of meaning in some of the hymns in this story which is not generally brought to our notice, may help us to explore alternate routes to correct the only proposed reading imposed by the priestly-hierarchy and to show that the śruti tradition which is known as the tradition of enquiry and an oral tradition is much different and positive than the rarefied smṛiti texts which erased this journey as part of its hegemonic design.

It may appear logical that within this overarching framework of support from the śruti source there emerged a new route for women which can be described as a possibility for a new kind of discourse or a reverse discourse. Its dimensions may be explored in those contexts in which women both subtly and in an expressed manner attempted to assert with

the same terms that the men adopted, to make themselves equally and effectively valuable. In an act of disavowal of the imposition by the power-structure, the epic-examples in this context will show how the women's identity as defined by the social-structure can be shifted over time from the patriarchal to the women-oriented journey. Vyasa, the author of the epic Mahabharata, narrates how his mother Satyavati who was earlier a fisher-woman devised a plan to gain favors in return to Parashara's (his biological father) wish to have sexual favors to make a literal journey, in fact, to the king's palace. The incident narrates that a certain sage Parashara needed to be ferried by the boat. At that time, it was Satyavati who happened to be there at the river-bank. She was known as Matsyagandha or the fish-smelling maiden who was asked by her father to ferry passengers as he was away on other duties. This physical journey is equally symbolic. As Parashara desired her sexual company, she argued with him: "I am a young girl, ruled by my father, if I get involved in this act, I will stain my virginity" (Lal 2005: 75–79).⁴ The sage promised to return her virginity beside making her body sweet-scented for which she came to be known as Yojanagandha because, the fragrance from her body reached one yojana (a measure of distance). In this case of mutual subordination the asserting and untraditional behavior of Satyavati is vibrant, she is also able to keep her independence as she desired. Such a liberalist position may be derived from the fundamental conceptuality of women's identity prevalent at that time. Understanding this way today, may give us a critical combination of changing the paradigm of reason regarding the definition of a woman's identity and the paradox of an equivalent political journey theoretically. Satyavati played an important political role in shaping the Kuru-Pandava dynasty, her future generation. Nevertheless, the power-structure tends to see a woman as belonging to the second-class status unless she can possibly emerge as a powerhouse of strength in particular, and in general as the agent of potential source of change not just as a force for resistance but as a center of power for transformation. Contrast this with today's "Gender Equality and Human Development—Measurement Revisited,"⁵ report which mentions on the capability and enthusiasm of women to enter the traditional male fortresses of politics and administration. In India, women in Panchayat or local self-government have proved the myth false that women cannot negotiate for power or that they cannot yield power with responsibility while delivering justice to the community. Economist and philosopher Martha Nussbaum emphasizes on Capability potential theory when she says: "Women in much

of the world lack support for fundamental functions of a human life. Unequal social and political circumstances give women unequal human capabilities...The central question asked by the capabilities approach is not, "How satisfied is this woman?" "How much in the way of resources is she able to command?" It is, instead, "What is she actually able to do and to be?" The core idea seems to be that of the human being as a dignified free being who shapes his or her own life, rather than being passively shaped or pushed around by the world in the manner of a flock or herd animal" (Nussbaum 2002: 123–125).⁶

Interestingly, the epic points out how the question of her journey toward justice becomes a different narrative to explain her capability that she uses to gain her own territory. This important dimension in woman's construction of herself narrates the incident of how a woman, a queen was confronted by the men in power present in the assembly of king Dhritarashtra, challenging her in the discourse on justice. After Draupadi, the queen of the Pandavas went through sexual harassment and utter humiliation in the court of the reigning king, she raised the question of how and why without any significant qualms the identity and existence of a woman who asserts her own being and fights for a cause, gets undermined and obliterated, hinting at the nature of justice rendered to the community of women. Besides suggesting that the founding concept of justice has to be challenged she questioned the elders present in the court pointing out that they were people of high scholarship, expertise and wisdom, yet they expressed their inability to answer her and remained silent with the comment that the route to justice is too complex and hence difficult to shed opinion on. The operation of this dialect on the one hand might express the complicated question of justice while on the other it also shows how women's travel to justice is allowed to be the object of negation and erasure. This is how polarizing them as a "category" known by the term "Other" has come to existence. The event that followed to disrobe Draupadi in the assembly is certainly "the" reason to qualify the act as gross injustice and can in no way be negated or overlooked. However, the most outrageous behavior she pointed out was to take to "silence." Silence, she appeared to speculate as the position to subvert her journey to assert her agency, her being. She was infuriated to see how her journey toward justice was sabotaged by the authority. A clear tendency of this sort is depicted by the Nobel scholar Prof. Amartya Sen. in his book "The Idea of Justice." He describes an occasion regarding the impeachment of Warren Hastings (the then chief of administration in British

East India Company) on which the political philosopher Edmund Burke addressing the parliament (on 5 May 1789) said, “an event has happened, upon which it is difficult to speak, and impossible to be silent.” While commenting on this Sen. observes that: “In impeaching Warren Hastings, Burke invoked the ‘eternal laws of justice’ which, Burke claimed, Hastings had ‘violated’. The impossibility of remaining silent on a subject is an observation that can be made about many cases of patent injustice that move us to rage in a way that is hard for our language to capture. And yet any analysis of injustice would also demand clear articulation and reasoned scrutiny”(Sen 2009: 1).⁷

Thus, as a measure of justice, and given the complexity, a woman’s subjectivity needs to be re-defined and re-written to challenge the established ideology that was continuously denouncing her space, her root, her very existence. Not that the modern times are the first root or location from which women gave clarion call to demand transformation, in earlier times too, such aspirations from women made them travel toward this goal. Though history bears many evidences to the journeys initiated by many women to assert their existential situation, inevitably, these were consequently denied and subverted by the patriarchy. Not only subverting such efforts but also twisting them to interpret them as part of patriarchal value system became the norm with the established tradition. Thus, the politics of appropriating women’s root and adumbrating them as the political positions, the patriarchal power-structure could inscribe these as legitimate and valid. Since Mahabharata is quite a popular text, explanation of such validity through it could work more easily. The author of the epic however, was in no mood to support such anti-women behavior. On the contrary, left to himself, he did rather express the dynamic part of women’s character than erase them totally. In fact, portrayal of Gandhari is one such identity which aims at a counter-discourse challenging the mainstream discourse. Princess of Gandhar (now Kandahar/Quandhar, Afghanistan), the beautiful Gandhari had to compromise with her life when she was asked to marry the blind prince Dhritarashtra of the Kuarava kingdom (the place was known as Kuru-Panchala, near present-day Punjab), for political reasons. King Subala, her father, was not at first willing to support this marriage- alliance as the groom was blind however, he relented later (Lal 2005: 555).⁸ Perhaps Gandhari, initially the hapless princess was made to feel the same way. Not really inclined to marry him, she had to thus foreclose all her aspirations and actions which she had for herself and take a physical journey to a kingdom regarding which she

appeared to be quite apprehensive. Upon marrying the king, she must have in desperation, imposed artificial blindness on herself by tying her eyes forever. One may see this act of her as her journey against injustice. It may be described as an act of strong protest in a framework of women-oriented autonomy. But patriarchy interpreted this act of her as an act of "chastity," an act of loyalty to her husband. It continues to glorify her act as an act of virtue, a mark of respect toward her husband. But, silently enforcing voluntary blindness was for her another journey which she alone chose to fulfill. Gandhari, in fact, refused to see anything in the outer world. This surely is a case of reverse discourse. Through this act of her, she protested against the denial of her identity, her existence and the perception that she is the property of the male member of the family who could use her in any way.

Women like Gandhari who chose to traverse through varied routes may appear to pursue a remote and ideal territory which captivates their imagination and invests them with the power to be in the realm of their free will. This helps them with the strength to achieve transformation without expecting any help from the existing system, and takes them toward a journey of remedy. In the epic Mahabharata, the journey of Gandhari can be seen as one of many examples which explain this explicitly. The story is well known in the context where regardless of the established rights of the men, she had to face the conflict of extremes between not marrying a blind king and facing the unhappy situation at her own home. However, she travelled physically to the other kingdom to marry but on her own terms. As she had to accept this marriage under humiliating conditions she decided to confront the society through a unique route which was her refusal to see the world. For Gandhari, the queen, it was truly a decisive moment to take on a different journey altogether. There were situations of selfish and violent abuse of powers that she failed to restrain despite her best efforts. While all these events caused her pain and desperation, her journey can be speculated as an attempt to address her freedom. It was a necessary journey to bring in transformation to modify existing conditions to evoke the consciousness of balance and the elements of ethical purpose. This journey for her must have been remedial in this sense. Gandhari used her power of agency for her existential freedom. The imposed blindness of Gandhari is a symbolic act of a rebel woman, an act of transgression of patriarchal power. Through this act of transgression, Gandhari reiterated her identity en-route to liberation.

But patriarchy cannot tolerate Transgression; hence, women who transgress must pay for the same. This is how Draupadi is exposed through the implicit linkages between the concept of materiality applied to a human being when she is taken as property and the application of so called family “values” which are to be sustained by her alone, it becomes clear that the patriarchy’s conspiracies can exterminate her identity if she chooses to transgress. Because property cannot make a journey, it has to be attached with the man always. Therefore, when her husband staked her in the game of dice played in the assembly hall of the Kauravas, it is because she was considered as property. However, in an attempt to transgress, Draupadi challenged this position. But, the winner of the game Duryodhana refused to budge and asked her to join the maid’s quarter since she as property now belonged to him, he said, “Put her in the maid’s quarters, and make her sweep the rooms”(ibid.: 417)⁹ and, it was the punishment declared by the violator of her modesty among the cheers by other men present there. Though the concept of women being the property stands in stark contrast to the explicit expression of women as equal citizens in the Indian Constitution, the attitude of the patriarchy has hardly changed. It would therefore not be necessary for women to take the journey with patriarchy as it is not a just system. If not, then it would equally be necessary to transgress it and it’s so called value system. Hence, Draupadi’s question remains valid even when we try to understand the reasoning about justice which exactly was her focus and which further remained unanswered. In this context, we may observe how Sen. explains that “The requirements of a theory of justice include bringing reason into play in the diagnosis of justice and injustice. Over hundreds of years, writers on justice in different parts of the world have attempted to provide the intellectual basis for moving from a general sense of injustice to particular reasoned diagnoses of injustice, and from there to the analyses of ways of advancing justice. Traditions of reasoning about justice and injustice have long—and striking—histories across the world, from which illuminating suggestions on reasons of justice can be considered” (Sen 2009: 5).¹⁰ However, this observation still does not challenge the foundational concept of patriarchy which is considering this system of justice as reasonable. As mentioned earlier, despite the equality clause, women’s subjectivity is often derecognized in her day today journey, it is not considered as a site of alternative praxis. That is why the Women’s Representative Bill still has not passed the house despite many attempts made by women from various sections. Because if it is passed it would be

a challenge to the patriarchal bastion and assume a critical importance as a counter measure to the routes made by patriarchy and further it would help her traverse toward her own space and destination. However, in their journey for their selfhood the Women's Bill is dynamic and may well be considered as a milestone. It is still important to see that this space remains as a potential source to create a new identity of women's journey to selfhood. On the one hand, the respective parties promise to support women's cause by planning some schemes and programs which would benefit the economically marginalized women, and on the other, the same parties when in power, camouflage their dominance keeping the real issue of subjectivity at bay while asserting that the political parties have given power to women in various local governments. The real problem is that if an issue is discussed in the parliament and if consequent to that a law has to be made or likewise if a serious concern demands discussion, women will not be part of the discussions and negotiations. Indeed, it is of fundamental importance to women that their historical experiences should articulate their subjectivity and further, this subjectivity should not become an opaque expression of the hegemony. Perhaps frightened like the French who felt very uncomfortable by the rise of feminism, the Indian leadership too thought that not passing the Women's Bill in parliament but keeping it alive by playing a game would fool women enough to go on hoping for a better day. Earlier, when "The rise of second-wave feminism in the United States spawned by Betty Friedan's book, 'Feminist Mystique' was inspired by Simone de Beauvoir's (1908) 'The Second Sex' the French were concerned that expanding equality to include matters of the family was detrimental to French morals. In 1966, abortion in Europe was still illegal, and contraception was extremely difficult to access. Many were afraid that legislation would 'take from men the proud consciousness of their virility' and make women 'no more than objects of sterile voluptuousness. The French Parliament in 1967 decided to legalize contraception but only under strict qualifications (Hunt 2014: 226-227).¹¹ Therefore, with the same concerns the members of the Indian parliament too must have reflected that with this new route to equality, a dramatic opposition might occur on various issues and it will be too difficult to contain the same, so, it would be better to be opaque on issues like equality. It is however, important to remember that opacity which clearly facilitates anti-women policy- thinkers to construct a fake subjectivity considering woman as a mere sexual being has to be challenged as observed by Simone de Beauvoir, she says that the, "woman

can be emancipated only when she can take part on a large social scale”... in policy-making, ...“ and is engaged in domestic work only to an insignificant degree” (Beauvoir 1949: 2)¹² because, the opacity is used as a mechanism to oppose resistance and assertion by women and it is in diametric opposition to the idea of women’s subjectivity as game-changer.

Thus, women’s subjectivity assumes critical importance when this opacity is transformed into a strategy and a journey for the reverse discourse attempted by Draupadi, Jabala, Simone de Beauvoir, Rosa Luxemburg (1871), Meerabai (1498), and others by defying the patriarchy’s value system and asserting women’s perspective on the same. Luxemburg was a prominent personality in the German Social Democratic Party (May 1898). On women’s question, on suffrage, and on other issues she along with Clara Zetkin (1857), “confronted the fact that the male members were not ready to grant to her the same powers as to her male predecessor” (Dunayevskaya 1982: 90)¹³ and so she brought it to the forefront when she spoke (1912) on women’s suffrage addressing the women present in large number and concluded saying, “The present forceful movement of millions of proletarian women who consider their lack of political rights a crying wrong is such an infallible sign, a sign that the social bases of the reigning system are rotten and that it’s days are numbered ...Fighting for women’s suffrage, we will also hasten the coming of the hour when the present society falls in ruins under the hammer strokes of revolutionary proletariat” (ibid.: 95).¹⁴ For Luxemburg, women’s journey could seek a space accompanying implications of liberation through revolution and thus allow her subjectivity an important step for growth, yet at the same time she was aware that women from the proletariat class play an increasingly central part in laying the foundation for especially political freedom. Luxemburg, remained actively championing the cause of women’s rights through the World War I (1914–1918), and even later, writing on the necessity of the steps to be taken to further the cause. She mentions that, “For the propertied bourgeois women, her house is the world. For the proletarian woman the whole world is her house...Bourgeois women’s rights advocates want to acquire political rights in order to participate in political life. The proletarian woman can only follow the path of the workers’ struggles, the opposite to winning a foot of real power through primarily legal statutes. ..The ruling society refuses them (women) access to the temple of it’s legislation...but to them the Social Democratic party opens wide it’s gates” (ibid.: 95).¹⁵ It’s unfortunate that for her strong views

to assert her agency, Luxemburg's journey was exterminated. She was murdered. Meerabai, the mystic poet of India, who resorted to songs and poetry was not allowed to go to public places beyond the threshold of her palace boundary even when she wanted to be on a journey to see other saints. She crossed the border musically and poetically. She takes to music composition when she is prevented by the family authorities from traveling to places.

The journey of a woman through the routes of writing and through many other routes therefore, remains an exploration to find her lost roots. Till then she may experience a condition like exile. The sense of fragmentation that she experiences on her way to her territory can never render her root as stable and static. Yet she attempts to take a journey in search of a new aesthetic, yet another new space for a definition of her own self despite the fear of being alienated or exterminated. Martha Nussbaum emphasizes that "at the heart of the liberal political thought is a twofold intuition about human beings: namely, that all, just by being human, are of equal dignity and worth, no matter where they are situated in society, and that the primary source of this worth is a power of moral choice within them, a power that consists in the ability to plan a life in accordance with one's own evaluation of ends" (Nussbaum 1999: 57).¹⁶

It appears that the gates to women's "evaluation of ends" are still not opened fully. In countries which are vibrant with democracy in the present time, women face increasing valorization of male values considering women as second-class citizens. The behavior of the male presidential candidate who got elected in 2016 election in the United States toward his competitor was weird because of his practice of opacity. His comments on women made from the voyeuristic point of view were very humiliating for women and women voters did express their displeasure by protesting against such attitude. Traversing the path all the way from the early period till now when the situations for women in various countries have changed sometimes for better and sometimes for worse, we find women's selfhood still remains to be recognized. That a woman is a free human being and that, she has equal rights mostly remain in the Constitution, the ground reality happens to be much different. We find Hillary Clinton, in 1995, when she was the first lady delivering a speech at the United Nations Fourth World Conference On Women in Beijing called "Women's Rights are Human Rights" thus: "Speaking to you today, I speak for them, just as each of us speaks for women around the world who are denied the chance to go to school, or see a doctor, or own property, or have a say

about the direction of their lives, simply because they are women. The truth is that most women around the world work both inside and outside the home, usually by necessity. We need to understand that there is no formula for how women should lead their lives” (jstor 2016).¹⁷ What this brings home is that the practice of opacity and non-recognition are both the strategies of patriarchy crucial to non-articulation of the subjectivity of women. The principal implication of all these observations strongly indicates that women are perceived as devoid of subjectivity by the denial of her existence as a human being. The dominant discourses disavow a woman’s subjectivity valid, along with her efforts to be persistent at discourses and practices. In such a situation it will be either a search for a new path or route a new alternative along with transgression which has been a strategy and a journey as explained above, and also by contesting at different levels for assertion of women’s selfhood. As by the reverse discourse, similarly by the discourse on “Inclusivity” women have been able to extend their territory. By joining other struggles for emancipation women have been able to broaden their horizon and articulate possibilities of other journeys to seek their own space. This dynamic of women’s perception to encompass a journey toward alternate destinations is surely going to gain more space for women in the long run.

However, the consequence of women’s dynamic journeys, the richness of which has contributed to women’s lives both at the individual and collective levels is not to be undermined at all. Her response to the conditions of possibilities for cross fertilization of roots and routes, for instance, through radically grounded counter actions like reverse discourse and transgression as explained above are not just impersonal encounters, these are the conditions of a woman’s intelligibility to envisage her territory radically. A careful reflection on her traverse at times nomadic, and at other times anonymous enable us to see how insightful these journeys have been and how the transformation, which is not immediately noticed but make huge impact on both her lives and on the lives of others are really intriguing. To mention a notable example is that of an Indian woman known as Saalumarada Thimmakka,¹⁸ or Aalada Marada Thimmakka which means the elder sister (akka) who planted banyan trees (Alada mara). She is called Thimmakka. She planted about 385 banyan trees along a four kilometer stretch of highway between Hulikal and Kudur, in the state of Karnataka. Besides, she has also planted 8000 other trees. She has been recently awarded the Padma Shri (in 2019) by the Government of India for her laudable work. Such journeys of a woman

have inspired and enriched people both from within the Indian communities and from the international ones equally deeply and may well be an example of cross-border travel by her which has been immensely transformative. People from younger generation especially both from schools and other fields continue to come together exploring the territory where social justice and agency are the foremost concerns being influenced by her tree-planting activities. Women like Thimmakka, find immense joy in their journey since it involves their being, their soul, their agency. What is also important to note is that a woman's journey through both physical and non-physical routes to her root need not recognize the territory and her travel as static which involve a process of continual change mediating and facilitating others to participate with her.

How this is done may be a theme for yet another deep reflection.

NOTES

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Making a Commonsense over Roots
and Routes in a Time of Emotional Turmoil:
The Marwaris and the Nationalist Use
of Kunti's Suffering Self to Construct
the Imagery of an Idealized Indian
Womanhood

Rajsekhar Basu

In the early years of the twenty-first century, litterateurs and social theorists, particularly in the United States felt that any history of long-distance migration involved issues of roots and routes. There were strong voices who argued that even though the Atlantic slave trade have ended two centuries before there had hardly been much attempts to understand the impact of trans-oceanic circulation of people. In terms of the broader disciplines of humanities represented by language and literature, there were a number of scholarly assertions which described the trans-Atlantic

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migration often referred to as the ‘middle passage’ as one which inferiorised human beings and justified crimes against them by humans who prided in their superior culture and civilization.¹ Hinton Rowan Helper has made a very interesting observation

The truth is, slavery destroys, or vitiates, or pollutes, whatever it touches. No interest of society escapes the influences of the clinging curse. It makes Southern religion a stench in the nostrils of Christendom—it makes southern politics a libel upon all the principles of Republicanism—it makes Southern literature a travesty upon the honourable professions of letters.²

There are a number of non-African, American writers who in course of these years have also addressed the conditions of de humanization which resulted from this slave migration and also the politics of slavery. But what is particularly interesting, is the way in which Black women writers have tried to interpret the buried and untold histories of the ‘middle-passage’ in many of their scholarly works. Elizabeth Brown-Guillory has popularized the concept of ‘healing rituals’ which possibly she believes could serve as a unifying link. Guillory argues that these rituals

empower women to resist the systems of oppression that are both internal and external to the community. The rituals generally involve water and motion and are intricately connected to the re-enactments of the Middle Passage and the subsequent voluntary and involuntary migrations. The women often race to bodies of water where they bear up each other, ridding the waves of disappointment, disenfranchisement, dislocation, and disconnection. The bonds that the women develop become the bridge that allows them to survive destabilized terrain.³

However, there have been theorists who argue that excessive priority on roots can lead to ethnic absolutism with its narratives of cultural, national or racial exclusivity thereby denying much opportunities to counter the racisms and the nationalist discriminations which have emerged in the context of the migration and residence of the ‘otherised’ groups. Therefore there has been an intellectual attempt by many to adopt Edouard Glissant’s preference for ‘relational identities over root identities’. It is clear that many contemporary writers in the West whose intellectual pursuits revolve around migration and diaspora are more keen to uphold the fact that there is enough dynamism and mobility between roots and routes which unlike James Clifford’s assertion should not be seen as a tension that informs many diasporic cultures. Though roots and routes

might seem as two different concepts they could collapse into one and another or remain distinct in terms of the emotional expressions of the descendants of the migrating population. Interestingly, there have been writers like Dionne Brand, who impressed by V. S. Naipaul, argue that roots and routes do not matter for women descendants of Indian and African diasporas, because 'return' itself is a distant dream, and there is the dread of 'the possibility that in fact one is unwanted back home, perhaps hated, perhaps even forgotten'. Voicing the concerns of these women she expresses their feelings in the following manner 'we have no ancestry except that black water and the Door of No Return.....it is not India which is beyond imagination; it is the black water'.⁴

Nonetheless, Kalapani and the Middle Passage which are often ridden with histories of endless traumas also unquestionably serve as roots. This entire debate on 'routes and roots' have a special relevance for scholars interested in recovering the lost voices of the Indian labouring groups or the Grimityas in Fiji. It is also a history which can be written in terms of brokenness, in terms of senseless dislocation of human groups, killing of innocent people and attempts by the colonial state to redefine the physical attributes of women and their sexual behaviour. In the case of Kunti, a young woman, whose story in Fiji would feature in the following parts of the chapter, the colonial state was very strong in its assertion that all allegations of sexual misconduct that had been levelled by her against the Indian sirdar and the Australian overseer were malicious and fictitious. The colonial state tried to interpret Kunti's assertion in terms of an unsound mind born out of insecurity of livelihood and the lack of support from her husband and her supposed paramour. But this was essentially a racist version of an incident affecting the modesty of an Indian woman and really made no attempts to understand the experiences of Indian women, born out of displacement, settlement in an alien land and the imposition of new forms of patriarchal control and regulations. The drama over Kunti's allegations brings forth a new story very different from the Afro-American experience in the New world, because it retraces the entire issue of routes and roots distinguishable in some respects and indistinguishable in some other ways. Kunti's episode brings back issues related to origins, race, gender and those of identity which definitely form a part of the very complex discourse on migration studies. In fact, Kunti's experiences in a foreign land revived an understanding that the primordial links with the motherland were not always severed, because of voluntary and involuntary migration to the colonies, but one which could lead to a reinterpretation of the very ideas of nationhood and nationalism, that has seldom been discussed in the histories of trans-oceanic migration.

I

On August 1, 1913, *Bharat Mitra*, a Hindi daily published from Calcutta carried a story titled 'The Wails of Women'. The story was a personal account of an Indian Indentured women labourer in Fiji by the name Kunti who had been exposed to sexual exploitation and various other forms of injustices. In the story, Kunti talking about her fate observed

'I Kunti, daughter of Charan, by caste Chamar, am an inhabitant of village Lakhiapakar, P.O. Belghat, Thana Belghat in the district of Gorakhpur in Hindustan. With my husband whose name is Jal, I came to Gorakhpur and one day happened to come across a coolly recruiter. From there he bought me with my husband and other registered people down to Calcutta where he left us in the depot. For a few days only, we were in the Calcutta depot and faced many troubles. Then we were despatched to Fiji and packed like so many sheep on board the steamer Sungola No.4 Neither the depot people in India nor the Arkatis ever told us anything about law or work or jail summons. When we arrived at the town of Suva in Fiji by the steamer, we were again thrust like so many sheep into a boat and made to disembark at the Nuklao Depot. I and my husband were despatched to the Waini Bokasi factory in the district of Rewa. The sardar and the overseer allotted me the work of grass cutting quite detached from the men and women, in the banana plantation of Saber Kara, and there the Sirdar and overseer came to commit a beastly assault on me. On the overseer peremptorily ordering the Sardar, the latter wanted to seize me by the hand, and when I ran away at the risk of my life, jumped into the adjacent river. But a boy named Jagdeo in his boat nearby and ferried me across the river. I told my master, thekothiwalla, all that my oppressor did but he said "go-away, I won't hear anything about what takes place in the plantation." Presently the overseer and the Seirdar came and wanted me to work. I did not go for work for three days. From the 14th April, 20 jaribs (Chains) of the plot of land called Nabada have been assigned to me for rooting out the grass... My husband has been given work at a place just a mile off from where I am" I prayed to the master for the preservation of my chastity in the presence of Sundar Singh, who is my witness, and requested that the agreement of myself and my husband be cancelled for which we offered to pay £ 8. The master of the factory agreed but the overseer opposed and threatened to resign, whereupon neither I was discharged nor the agreement cancelled by the Manager.

Reader, I am twenty years old now and have two daughters one of whom is aged three and the other only one year. Alone my husband is unable to face or stand in the way of overseer or the Sirdar. Now I am

prepared to kill myself by drowning, giving up all love of the world, of my daughters and my husband, if my chastity is ever violated and I ask my Indian sisters never to commit the mistake of coming to this side or their condition too will be miserable as mine. I pray also to the leaders of the country to put a stop to this bad system and earn the great merit of protecting helpless women from oppression by saving them from the miseries caused by the contract.

(Sd, I, Kunti have given the impression of my right hand thumb)⁵

The story was also reproduced in many Hindi vernacular dailies and it also drew the attention of the colonial bureaucracy in India. The Government of India acted in a bout of celerity and sought additional information in this regard from the Government of Fiji. On the Government of India's insistence the Immigration Officer in Fiji met Kunti to ascertain whether there was any veracity in the story published in her name in the Hindi daily *Bharat Mitra*. Kunti claimed that whatever had appeared in the paper was a true account of the experiences encountered by her as an indentured labourer in Fiji. She made it clear to the immigration officer that though she felt happy with his own personal presence in investigating the matter, twice before in the same official capacity he had turned a deaf ear to all her complaints. The *Bharat Mitra* in its columns had reported that despite her complaints in previous occasions the authorities in Fiji had shown no interest in investigating the woes and pains being suffered by women indentured labourers. Perhaps it was this averseness on the part of the colonial bureaucracy that had forced Kunti to take the help of some other person in getting her experiences recorded as a story to be carried in the pages of *Bharat Mitra*. Despite the colonial bureaucracy's attempt in Fiji to whitewash the allegations made by Kunti, the editors of the *Bharat Mitra* strongly stated that it was Kunti's own story and nobody had impersonated for her in depicting the harsher side of the exploitative indenture system. They also exhorted that at a time when the conditions of the Indian labour in Fiji were being investigated by Messrs. McNeill and Chamanlal there was hardly much problem for the colonial bureaucracy in Fiji in cooperating with them but also in exploring the reality in which women like Kunti found themselves in Fiji. In the end, the *Bharat Mitra* lavishly praised Kunti for her patience, valour and strength of mind which had enabled her to show more determination than many well to do (high class ladies) in the defence of their chastity. In a patronizing tone however, Kunti was still being referred to 'low class woman' born in the

cobbler caste and it is through her courage that she has earned her place in the list of honourable and brave ladies. The *Bharat Mitra* in its appeal to the British government observed 'We beg to inform the British Government that it would be Impossible to get on without putting an end to the indentured system. Kunti's case is but one of the few brought to light. God knows how badly indentured labourers are treated ... we hope that she will get justice'.⁶

Kunti's story ignited passions in India and the Anti-Indentured Immigration League which had its headquarters in Calcutta took up the matter with a great deal of seriousness with the higher authorities of the Government of Bengal and the Government of India. A number of Indian notables, prominent among whom were men like Tej Bahadur Sapru wrote strongly to the Government of the United Provinces to conduct an impartial enquiry into the allegations made by Kunti. Interestingly two important conclusions were drawn up by two high ranking members of the colonial bureaucracy. Both of them stoutly dismissed the contents of the story which had been carried in the form of a letter in the columns of *Bharat Mitra*. The Acting Agent General of Immigration, in his official correspondences with the Colonial Secretary tried to vindicate that the letter with the title 'cry of an Indian women' was handiwork of an Arya Samaj missionary by the name of S. M. Saraswati who had arrived in Fiji at the beginning of April 1912 and had thereafter been found to be inciting the Indian indentured labourers against the colonial regime and the planters lobby. Undoubtedly, this sort of interpretation tried to vindicate that Arya Samaj radicals had come band of Indian nationalists had joined together in a conspiracy to create disturbances in Fiji, possibly to spell a doom for the British Empire in the Pacific region.⁷ The Inspector of Immigrants posted in Suva reported that the Arya Samaj missionary Saraswati was referred to by the Indian coolies as Swaminath and that he was not the sole person who drafted the letter. Rather the letter was drafted in consultation with an Indian Indentured labourer by the name of Totaram working in a sugar plantation in Nausori. It was argued that overseer against whom the charges of molestation had been made had always enjoyed a good reputation and the women coolies have never levelled any allegations against him. Moreover, the contention was that it was on the insistence of Kunti that the overseer had granted permission to her to work in a desolate place, since there were constant quarrels between the Indian women labourers. Cobercraft, the inspector also reported that the trouble brewing over Kunti's allegations had to be explicated in terms

of some developments in the recent past, notably the dismissal of the Sardar named Sundar Singh. Kunti and Sundar Singh were believed to be on friendly terms more so when her husband Kunti was in jail convicted of larceny. The inference that was drawn is that in the absence of her husband and being solitary pregnant women, Kunti had no other option but to display some special feelings for him. The overseer, on the evidence provided by an Indian coolie Rehman Khan was said to have dismissed Sundar Singh of improper conduct, breaching the moral boundaries oblivious to the marital status of Kunti. The inspector dismissed the allegations that the sardar and Ramharak who was co-accused in the charges of rape had ever any intention of committing a criminal assault on women. The overseer had just displayed his anger at Kunti because she had hardly shown much interest in completing the task work assigned to her and there had been no such incident of any attack on her modesty. He also dismissed the fact that Kunti did not jump into a swirling river and that if at all she had straddled into the water 'it was just over her feet'. The young boy Jagdeo did not save her from drowning but rather he had ferried her across the creek in his boat. The inspector also claimed that Sujni and his wife the two people whom Kunti met after the trouble, had never talked of assault. Such reporters obviously influenced the magistrate of Wainibokasi to dismiss the allegations that had been made against the overseer and the sardar, thereby leaving no room for Kunti to seek a legal redressal against the alleged crime.⁸

However, the Hindi vernacular press continued to find pores in the statements issued by the government officials. The Hindi press alleged that despite adhering to the hard task work schedule, both Indian men and women continued to live under starvation wages. The women faced more insult than the men and they were often the victims of rape and other forms of indecent conduct. Interestingly, it was through the Hindi counter public that several limericks circulated in rural northern India which by themselves brought out the Indian sense of patriarchy and gender subordination. One of the limericks expressed the Indian sentiments in the following manner

Jhagra kia aur use (meaning the husband) chor kar hazaro mil chaley aye?
 Bhariman ko halka karne keliye apne aap hi gautthe
 Saiyan tere karan, jalbal ho gayi rakh Path
 se mein bepath bhaye,

Pane hi mein gaye rakh.⁹
 Beloved it is for you, that my life
 has been turned to ashes.
 From righteousness it has been of moving to ashtray,
 leaving me in a state of shame.
 The limericks continued jo mein aisi janti Fiji aye dukhhoye
 Nagar dhindhora pittti Fiji najaiyo koi.
 Had I known that coming to Fiji meant encountering sorrows
 I would have moved around the town beating a drum that
 No one should go to Fiji

There were also several limericks which were extremely critical of the planters, overseers and the subordinate labour bureaucracy comprising of a fairly large number of Indian sardars. The white plantation officials were ridiculed in one of the passages

Rang gora hai magar dil to tera kalahai.
 Bhagawan ne kaisi sanche me tujedalahai.
 Your complexion is white but your
 Inner heart is black
 God perhaps knows why he put you in this cast.

The reactions of the Hindi counter public became far more strident in the wake of the reports on the alleged rape of Kunti in Fiji which appeared in the columns of the Calcutta-based *Bharat Mitra*. In fact, several columns like the one given below started appearing in Hindi books and journals valorising the conduct of brave Indian women like Kunti, but at the same time reviving the two interconnected ideas of patriarchy and family, the corner stones of the Hindu way of life. The Hindi writers presumed that the women could be brave and valiant though the gendered divisions had always put women in a subordinate role to men, despite fulfilling in their roles familial obligations as mother and wives. This gendered if not an (en)gendered version of Indian patriarchy was one which was virulently endemic in the writings of the Hindi columnists who saw in patriarchy an effective mechanism for the protection of the Hindu cultural system. This was revealed in a limerick.

Satiyon ka hame diganeko jab, Anyayon
 kamar kasi.

Jalagam mein, Kunti kudhpari, Par
 bhi majdharnahi
 Atyachar ki chakki mein, piskar hume nahi chori. Hindupan
 apna kho bhaiti,
 Bharat ke bir gavar nahi.
 Is patan ka kuchto yatankaro,
 Har Kunti ka jivan safal rahe.
 Bina dharna dharan ki,
 sukh shanti kaisa char nahi.¹⁰
 When the forces of evil tried to
 Shake the religion of chaste women
 Kunti jumped into deep water,
 With no banks in sight
 Despite the injustices,
 She did not detract from her own religion
 Do we lose our Hinduness
 The brave Indians are no fools
 Something has to be done to address this fall,
 Let every Kunti's life be successful,
 In the absence of religion, how
 Can prosperity and peace reign.

II

Historians like BrijLal have tried to interpret the Kunti episode from the point of view of the broader working experience of the Indian Indentured women in the Fijian plantations. It has been argued that the Indian female worker was more than often derogatorily stereotyped as a mercenary character who had been responsible for bringing all the major social and moral ills to the plantation society. To put it plainly, Indian women labourers in the plantations were seen as crucial social agents who had instigated suicide, murders and illegal foeticide, something which was linked to the lust and greed that inherent in their feminine character. BrijLal contradicted these sorts of ideas by arguing that the co-modification of labour and its linkages with a very coercive regime of labour management was more responsible than the women themselves for producing all the problems connected with indenture.¹¹ He seems to have taken up woman's question, because too often colonial officials and the planter lobby would describe the Indian Indenture women as one of 'low caste and loose character'. Perhaps this type of stereotyped sexual behaviour of Indian women

was even to be found in the writings of men like C. F. Andrews who was an ardent nationalist. Andrews on a fact finding mission to Fiji had observed

The Hindu woman in this country is like a rudderless vessel with its mast broken drifting onto the rocks; or like a canoe being whirled down the rapids of a great river without any controlling hand. She passes from one man to another, and has lost even the sense of shame in doing so.¹²

Interestingly, the accounts of female deviance in colonial Fiji are not by any means difficult to interpret by any means. Women were always seen as rule breakers, castigated for their overt sexuality, for which there had to be regular colonial if not patriarchal efforts to regulate the feminine behaviour. Margaret Mishra in her researches based on police records, court proceedings, and news items preserved in the National Archives of Fiji, has tried to show how both indigenous Fijian women as well as Indentured Indian women were seen as humans who had the habit of transgressing the socially constructed paradigms of morality. Mishra, has argued that the deviant blot that had been inflicted upon these women does raise some doubts whether the representation of these female subjects can at all be possible through the big event of historical scholarship or whether it could be a point of study of minor and feminist history whose methodology would bring out the nuances of the miniscule history that lay hidden.¹³ Mishra admitted that this patriarchal imposition of Feminine deviance could only be understood through the connectivity of feminine history, ethnography, anthropology, which could create a situation leading to the recovery of the lost voices.¹⁴

On the other hand, there have been scholars who have tried to understand the issues of caste, indentured women as well as those of patriarchal disciplining and violence from a perspective which is different. Charu Gupta, has very strongly argued that the way the image of the Indian subaltern women was constructed by nationalist, reformers, writers and articulate elite men and women bring out both the sympathetic and yet the contradictory ways which often suppressed the layers of meaning linked to the story of their migration. In fact, there can hardly be any disagreement that like Kunti there were many such women who came from lower caste backgrounds. Undoubtedly, by the early years of the twentieth century, the increasing instances of violence being committed on 'lower caste' women became subjects warranting publication in the

pages of the Hindi counter public. By this time, there were noticeable shifts in the interpretations related to caste, class, labour, gender and family all of which became enmeshed in discussions dealing with emigration. Gupta has rightly argued that the moralizing discursive practices of the Hindi writers depicted serious attempts on their part to resuscitate, rehabilitate and revive the Hindu social system. This encouraged the condemnation of the subaltern Indentured women rather than lending primacy to their victimhood born out of the injustices they had suffered in the colonies. Gupta identifies this propensity on the part of the Hindi literati and the elite sections of the Hindu society as a fall out of arguments about national honour, women's chastity, manual labour, notions of morality, citizenship and sorry 'sisterhood' the contemporaries representations that of Indian Indentured women as innocent victims. Subsequently, the Indian Indentured women came to be depicted as innocent victims and guilty migrants, thereby making them a part of the nation as well as beyond it.¹⁵

More importantly, indentured workers whether males or females returned back to India and became public spokesperson. Kunti, Totaram Sanadhya, and Bhavanidayal Sanyasi, Baba Ramchandra lent their support to the voices of nationalism. Charu Gupta, has argued that this often led to representation of ideas which matched with the narrow language of nationalism rather than in framing of polemics which represented a wider and more expansive notion of transnational rights. But even if the Indian indentured woman was seen as a part of the Indian nation they hardly had much opportunity of representing their own dishonoured selves. In other words, their voices could only travel if it was expressed through the writings of benevolent men, who in real terms were a part of the exclusive patriarchal system. The Hindi narratives very often drew upon the symbiotic relationship between indentured women, water and virtue. For Kunti, it had been a 'trial water' to prove her innocence. The drowning of women in water was seen as 'shame' for their apparent transgression of gender behaviour and boundaries of sexuality.¹⁶

Nonetheless, the importance that was given to victimized women like Kunti afforded an opportunity to the Hindi reformers and nationalists with a strong moral opportunity to condemn the colonial rule. Infact the mutilated body of a emigrant woman was a rhetorical trope that led to the enactment of a legitimizing structure through which a protest could be orchestrated against the illegitimacy of colonial policies.¹⁷

Yet, the ‘immoral character’ of such women often expressed in the writings of nationalists lent a distantly traditional if not a patriarchal tone to the campaign against the indenture.¹⁸ Charu Gupta argues that the obscene behaviour and the lack of shame associated with the image of the emigrant women posed a serious threat to the moralities of the middle-class, upper class reformers and this led them to make a distinction between them and such women. In fact, this was responsible for the branding of immigrant women as ‘prostitutes’ because the lower class women were alleged to be promiscuous in their sexual behaviour. This sort of depiction of the ‘low caste’ women as lustful women deeply embedded in immorality was seen as something which could not be extricated from the experiences of indenture. Thus, it was in the fitness of things that the low caste women remained the outsider and it was left to their superior sisters ‘to speak on her behalf and make strong pleas that they be returned to their homeland from these alien territories where dangers loomed large on their womanhood. Beyond all doubts, the imagined sisterhood and citizenship, which was forged was also deeply hierarchical’.¹⁹

III

However, in this entire story of nationalist protest against the indignation caused Kunti because of the indenture system in Fiji, there has been too little emphasis on the role of the Indian trading and mercantile groups. The debate on indenture on the early part of twentieth century is believed to be one where the participation was increasingly of the liberal English speaking political elite in British India. However, this is only a partial side of the story of protest and resilience since the involvement of the Calcutta-based Marwaris is entirely ruled out.

In this chapter, I would like to argue that one needs to go beyond the nationalist versions as represented in the upper caste Hindi counter-public narratives and the statements of the elite Indian nationalists to understand the reasons behind the protest against the indentured system in colonial Fiji. The Marwari reformist involvement with the abolition of indenture could be seen as something which was linked to their own social concerns in early twentieth-century Calcutta. This reformist zeal predated the campaign against the abolition against indenture in Fiji in the mid-1910s. The researches on the Calcutta-based mercantile groups prove beyond doubt that there was a difference between the rich conservative Hindi

speaking orthodox Hindu Marwaris and those of the Indian western educated liberals particularly when it came to understanding the social and economic implications of colonialism. As revealed in the diatribes against the indenture system, the Marwari rhetoric was replete with instances and evidence drawn from Hindu Shastras and simple references in Hindi proved to be more attractive for individual males and females, who had voluntarily and involuntarily been drawn towards emigration to the sugar plantations of Fiji.²⁰ However, a discursive reading of Timberg also makes us aware that there were solid economic reasons behind the Marwari opposition to Indenture. By the time the First World War broke out their trading expertise had given them an opportunity to outbid other Indian trading groups and corner a large share of work contracts which had been given to India. The involvement of Marwari businessmen in the jute market increased during these war years and this made them the later day barons of the jute industry. In their role as capitalists, they were also emerging as major business opponents of British capitalists in the Indian subcontinent, vying with them over matters related to labour recruitment and also competing with them.²¹ There was an implicit understanding on the part of the Marwaris that cheap labour increasingly drawn from the eastern Hindi speaking hinterland would give them a competitive edge in the world market and would be of great benefit to them. However, the Calcutta Marwaris unlike the Indian industrialists from other parts of India were reluctant to admit their immediate economic motives behind their brazen opposition to the indentured system. Omkar Goswami has argued that by the early years of the twentieth century the Marwaris who were traditionally involved in trade and money lending had the requisite funds amassed for setting up industries or needed for working capital. In the years between 1901 and 1914 and later during the world war years, Marwari entrepreneurs such as Birla, Hukumchand, Mungeera Bangur, Nagarmall, Goenka, Bajoria and Onkarmal Jatia made fortunes in raw jute trade, share trading and 'phatka' and these newly acquired fortunes were now available for investment in, jute and coal industries. It was cleared that the Marwaris by the end of the war would start moving from trade to industry and would be establishing new jute mills and also running collieries.²² They based their arguments about the indenture in terms of transgressions from the *dharmic* injunctions that had been laid down in the Hindusastras. Positing their arguments based on the Hindu dharmic order and that of their own versions of deceit and fraudulent practices for the enslavement of men and women, they sought to challenge the legality

behind the entire logic of indentured migration. This sort of strategy resulted in an alliance between the town of villages on part of Bhojpuri speaking 'rustics' of rural eastern and northern India and Marwaris who for centuries had oppressed them as the money lenders class. Despite the differences on class lines this alliance seemed to be much stronger than the alliance between the villagers and the English educated nationalists.²³

In fact, the entire Kunti episode would not have gained currency in India had not there been a movement for social reform among the Marwaris in the early twentieth-century in Calcutta. This was clearly revealed through the emergence of the Marwari Sahayak Samiti in Calcutta a society which from its very inception had shown interest in helping indigent Marwari families. But its involvement within the Marwari circles did not prevent it from endearing itself to the other Hindi speaking people who had escaped from the coolie depots and had sought shelters in the 'dharamshalas' of Burrabazaar. The deserters were usually very poor and had virtually no money to secure legal aid to express their resentment as being sent to the colonies as against indenture labourers. The samiti was prompt in providing legal aid and in arranging tickets for their return to their upcountry homes.

This was clearly revealed in the story of Shankar Rao, son of Vital Rao by caste a Maratha Surja Vanshi and by occupation a *naik havildar* (earning remuneration 16 per Mensem) attached to the Third Imperial Service Infantry. In his statement before the Calcutta Police on October 15, 1912 he stated that was encouraged to migrate to Agra or Mathura by one Zakkar Hussain on the promise of a job which would fetch him rupees 50 per month as salary. But he alleged that Hussain left him in-between and a person by the name of Romjan tried to convince him that he should migrate to Jamaica and work on a salary on twenty one annas per day. Shankar Rao agreed and he was taken to coolie depot No. 61 at Metiaburz. Within a few days he expressed his unwillingness to leave for Jamaica leading to repeated threatening's by Romjan. Finally, with the help of a Bengali babu (gentrified Bengali) and his wife he was able to secure a discharge from the depot. There was a great deal of uncertainty whether he could return back to his native place. There was no help forthcoming for him and the Bengali babu suggested to him that he should earn money by begging in the streets of Calcutta. Towards the end of 1912, on the advice of a postal peon he came to know that the Marwaris of Burrabazaar would give shelter and food to people like him who were penniless. He reached Burrabazaar and found there were

about 200–300 men and women like him, who were providing homeless because they had been brought to Calcutta on false promises of lucrative jobs. Such accounts actually were a part of the background to the developments which involved the Marwaris in Calcutta in the wake of the outcry raised over the insult suffered by Kunti in Fiji.²⁴

Scholars like Karen A. Ray have argued that by 1913 Marwaris had changed their policy from that of helpful assistance to escapees to active opposition directed against the indentured immigration. The immediate origins of this opposition to indenture were shrouded under what has been described as a ‘romantic mist’. In fact, stories from Hindu mythologies were cited time and again to illustrate the darker sides of the indentured system.²⁵

Babu Rambahari Tandon, the Secretary of the Anti-Indentured immigration League, occupying the premises of 160, Harrison Road, Calcutta wrote a letter to the Undersecretary Government of India bringing out numerous instances of hapless women who had been waylaid by the *arkartis* (native agents) through false promises to sign indenture contracts for work in the British colonies.²⁶ One of the women who had this misfortune of being duped by the *arkartis* was Krishna Devi, widow of late Sur Ram Tewari of Basti who was enticed during a pilgrimage to Ayodha and was later taken to Faizabad. In her deposition before the Alipore Court on May 11, 1914, she stated that from Faizyabad she was taken to Calcutta, and there in the depot the *babus* took away the ornaments of many women like her. It was in Calcutta that they realized that they had been deceived and even sent letters to their relatives to take them back. Despite the constant pressure from the *babus* to deposit her personal belongings she did not do so and preferred to keep them with her. Interestingly, Kishori Devi’s case was represented by a Bengali *vakil* (native lawyer) Purnachandra Mitra, who had been hired by one Kishori Lal Gupta of 9, M. Sadruddin Lane in the Bara Bazar area of Calcutta. Similar, stories of the ill fate of women like Lakhiraji Brahmani and Ram Piyari Halwain were also recorded before the Calcutta police by Kishori Lal Gupta. Interestingly, all these depositions were made in the month of May 1914, on behalf of deserted women who had been provided temporary shelter at Suraj Mal Dharamshala in Burra bazaar. The complicity of both upcountry Muslim and Hindu *arkatis* featured in these depositions. There were also stories of the fraudulent practices encouraged by the ‘Doctor Babu’ (medical officer at the Depot) to legitimize the forcible collection of jewellery that was in the possession of these women.

There were also interesting narratives about the Marwaris of Burra Bazaar. Many of these women, as in the writings of the Secretary of Anti-Indentured League had been approached by the Marwaris for securing their release. But the Depot *babus* and their accomplices interested in most cases had driven them away. The Depot *babus* were reported to have told these women that Marwaris were not their relatives and it would be ill-advised for them to secure their support. One of the *babus* was said to have derogatorily referred to the Marwaris as Goondas (social undesirables prone to violence) of Bura bazaar, who would dishonour the 'deserted women' and keep them as slaves forever.²⁷ Despite, such misrepresentations of the 'altruistic' motives of the Marwaris many of the women like Lakhiraj Brahmani and Ram Piyari Halwain reposed their faith on the Marwaris and preferred to go with them. The Marwaris got them released by paying Rupees' thirty for an individual.

However, though these stories might have buttressed the Marwari opposition to the indentured system, the mobilization against immigration from Calcutta gained a greater significance with the circulation of the story of Marwari woman Lakshmi. She was reported to have been passing through her days in utter despair in one of the coolie depots in Calcutta. It was reported that her message to the local Marwari leaders was conveyed through a young news vendor selling English newspapers to steamer passengers in the Calcutta jetties. The Marwari leaders reached the conclusion that the imprisonment of a Marwari 'coolie women' warranted active intervention from their side. A delegation of Marwari leaders visited the depot and found Lakshmi, her daughter and another woman who was identified by her as her servant. The Marwaris narrated a very horrific picture of a coolie depot which was believed to have been packed with more than thousand such recruits. The lawyer who had been recruited by the Marwaris to represent the case before the police reported that he was accosted by more than a thousand recruits who on seeing him

...began to cry and to entreat us to arrange for their release.... one woman said that she had been separated from her child, only six months old.... still another said she was a Brahmin women and there she was failing from her religion by having to take her meals with low caste men like Chamars..... While all this was going on, some depot officers reprimanded the poor helpless women and forbade them to speak to us and threatened to turn us out of the depot if we spoke to the coolies.²⁸

The Marwari intervention managed to free fourteen of these women who had all had been lured by the false promises of the *Arkatis* that

they would be sent to Shri Ram Tapu (an island very close to the shores of India). Much later, they came to know that they had been duped by the *Arkatis* and that Shri Ram Tapu was not a *thakurbari* (a place of richness and wealth) but there the Indians were made to toil hard for wages as coolies. The women also testified that they had been robbed, beaten and forced to eat with 'low caste' men and compelled to take new 'husbands'. In all the court room depositions, Marwari involvement was visible and in the end the court verdicts went in their favour as saviours of Hindu women. Subsequently, the Marwaris with their own financial contributions arranged for the passage of these women back to their homes provided their family members were willing to take them.²⁹

In the succeeding months, the Calcutta Marwaris, particularly those owing allegiance to the Marwari Sahayak Samiti began to campaign against indenture with a great deal of fervour. They used their commercial contacts in the Garden Reach area to gain access to a few returned immigrants and interviewed them on the conditions prevailing in the overseas colonies. The Anti-Indentured Immigration League which was formed by the members of Sahayaik Samiti of Calcutta had a large support base among the Hindi speaking Hindus of Calcutta and in places like Delhi and Allahabad where it had opened its branches in 1914. The members of these societies were influenced by a fever of religious revivalism because they felt that emigration itself was a trap laid by the government for encouraging Hindus to violate their religious laws. The office bearers of the Anti-Indentured Emigration League were able to convince men like Tota Ram Sanadhiya, Buldeo Thakur, and JalChamar to speak in a voice which favoured the mobilization against the indentured system. On July 13, 1914 Tota Ram Sanadhya son of Rewati Ram Sanadhya of Ferozabad testified before the Calcutta Police Court that he had sailed by the steamer Yamuna and on board he had found meat and rice being cooked together and served to everyone who had to eat at the same place. He protested but nobody ever gave him an audience. After reaching Suva he was kept at Nukalo Depot for about ten days. He was asked to deposit rupees three hundred, if he wished to return. In his reply, to the depot officials, TotaRam clearly stated that he did not have the money and could only request his relatives for sending in to him. But the depot officials could not afford him any opportunities of establishing communication with his relatives. He further stated that full wages were seldom received by the labourers and the deductions were made by the supervisor and the employers on false allegations relating to the non-fulfilment of the task

work. Totaram also alleged that no coolie serving under indenture was admitted in a hospital unless he was found to be suffering from high fever or afflicted by a disease leading to their incapacity. The lesser maladies were not considered for medical treatment by the plantation officials. The strenuous conditions in the plantations were blamed for causing psychological disorders of the labouring populations, often leading to suicides the numbers of which were very large. Sanadhya concluded that indenture was the worst form of exploitation and that it afforded no opportunity to the immigrant labourer to make savings and the majority lived as paupers throughout their lives.³⁰

The sentiments of Totaram were echoed in the testimonies of other men who had migrated to Fiji from the United Provinces. On July 27, 1914, the day on which Totaram Sanadiya deposed before the Magistrate in the Calcutta police court Buldeo Thakur also got his statement recorded. He had been a resident of Bareilly district and had been taken to a depot by a Muslim named Munni who told him to affirm before the Magistrate that he on his own favoured migration to an island. It was only after reaching Calcutta that he learnt that he would be taken to Fiji. He expressed his disenchantment over being taken to Fiji but an elderly 'Sahib' told him that there was no option for him to stay back because he had been brought from Calcutta to be shipped as an indentured labourer to Fiji.³¹ Buldeo also reported that the conditions of the people in Fiji were extremely miserable and that labourers had to toil from 7 in the morning to 5:30 in the evening with only one-hour interval in the midday. Around 4 am every morning the sardars came and woke the coolies from slumber so that they found time to cook and take their meals and be ready for work at the appointed hour. The conditions of the majority of the labourers were very poor and few of them could pay for their repatriation at the end of the period of their contract. They were forced to enter into another agreement or remain in the island as free labourers. Lastly, there were allegations that female labourers were not only given fewer wages than men but they also faced a great deal of deprivation. In matters related to their wages usually 6 annas a day was fixed for them provided that they were able to carry out their fixed task. This was too paltry for meeting their daily food expenses. Most women lived in under a state of insecurity and were held in concubineage by men who have exceeded the women in terms of numbers.

Jal Chamar, a returned emigrant from Fiji represented by a Bengali Pleader Narayan Das Dutta in his depositions before Ambunath Chatterjee Presidency Magistrate Calcutta expressed the view that there was hardly any privacy for the married couples. This sort of assertion vindicated much of the allegations that had been expressed over the alleged criminal assault on Kunti, as carried in the pages of the Hindi newspaper *Bharat Mitra*. According to Jal Chamar, women who were alone were often dishonoured and their complaints were taken no notice of by the *Sahibs* (white officials). The injured women were also not permitted to seek the intervention of the law courts. It was also stated that the men could not always afford protection to these women, because of the fear of revenge at the hands of the *Budmeshes* (bad characters who were known to be tough). According to Jal Chamar, the women had no other alternative but to accept the injustices leading to depravation of their characters. In other words a shocking sense of immorality, that prevailed in the coolie lines. Lastly, it was argued that the coolie agent afforded no protection to the indentured labourers against the oppression of the *kothivalas* (free labourers who were assigning their huntments on *rent* to the indentured labourers). The *Chota* Agent (the Assistant Protector of Emigrants) as Jal Chamar referred to him carried out visit once in six months to enquire about the allegations against the Madrasis against the deduction of the wages. However he did not look into the overseers private note book in which the actual amount of the pay was entered. The cooly agent often abused the indentured labourers by saying ‘you *Sala* (is an Indian slang), it is you, who are thieves, not the *sahibs*’.³²

IV

The Calcutta-based Marwaris not only publicized these accounts of the returned emigrants, as expressed before the police and the law courts but also send their representatives to parts of northern India for carrying out propaganda against the indentured system. These representatives often made public statements that the contracts bound the people to work for five years or else be liable to serve jail sentences. These statements lacked veracity because such conditions were not stated within the contracts. However, the representatives were able to convince a substantial section of the rural population of the northern India that the conditions of life in the colonies were very poor and the recruiters were very much like the slave proprietors.³³ Karen A. Ray has argued that these speaking tours were

supplemented by pamphlet distribution. These pamphlets compared the recruiters or depotwallas (deputy officials) to *thugs* (swindlers) and warned the villagers from falling into their trap lest they wanted to go to hell. Marwari volunteers often camouflaged themselves as potential emigrants and during their journey to Calcutta tried to convince the recruits not to emigrate.³⁴ But more importantly, the issue of indenture offered the Marwaris as a social group to develop links with the main stream of Indian public life. The publication of Kunti's story and many other accounts in the Hindi vernacular press brought them close contact to the nationalist leadership and a bit later with Mahatma Gandhi. It was their connections with Gandhi that led to Andrews and Pearson's investigative trip to Fiji, which brought out the horrors of the lives of women residing in the coolie lines and also the difficulties in retaining their chastity, either as a single woman or as a wife wedded lawfully to her husband.³⁵

Much before C. F. Andrews had painted the Hindu women in Fiji as a rudderless vessel; white overseers saw them as immoral beings were willing to trade favours in lieu of physical intimacy. Walter Gill an Australian overseer who worked in Fiji during the last days of indenture denigrated the Indian female labourer by saying that she was 'as joyously amoral as a doe rabbit. She took her lovers as a ship takes rough seas; surging up to one who would smother her, then tossing him aside, thirsting for the next'.³⁶ BrijLal has argued that Indian Indentured men remained rather reticent if not oblivious to the degradations suffered by their own women, but were perhaps were 'more charitable in their comments'.³⁷

The utter indifference towards the labouring women's issue was clearly revealed in the statement of a woman by the name of Sujani who was cross-examined by R. M Booth Agent Commissioner, in the wake of Kunti's allegations about alleged sexual misconduct on the part of a white overseer and an Indian *Sardar* (head of a labour gang). The woman Sujani claimed that she had seen 'Kunta' a woman indentured to Nawada estate working in the banana fields close to her house, about six months ago. She had only seen the overseer visiting the field once though he preferred to venture deep into the fields. The woman he recalled was sitting down and not working. In reply to the overseer's instruction to her to work, she replied 'I cannot use a fork'. Sujani there after stated

The overseer called the Woman a pig and then went on to his house. I went away to cut the grass for my cows; the women said nothing to me. That is all I know, and I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing

the same to be true and by virtue of provisions on an Act made and passed in the sixth year of the reign of His Majesty King William [...].³⁸

In the law court, the statements made by John Barber the overseer and sirdar Ram Harak Singh seemed to downplay the allegations made by Kunti. And both of them tried to convince the Magistrate that the complainant had lodged false charges against them. In his deposition before the law court John Barber made the statement

On last Friday week at 9 am the defendant reported that complainant was not at work. At midday, I went to the lines and asked her why she was not at work- she made no reply and I told her to go to work and she refused – the defendant was with me, and the Sardar took her by the hand and led her out of the house and took her about 20 yards when she lay down and kicked and cried. I then told the defendant to leave her. I then went with defendant to the field.³⁹

Ram Harak, in his deposition before the law court observed

I am Sardar at Wainibokasi. On last Friday week the labour was carrying cane plants and defendant said she could not carry cane plants and she complained that the labour were swearing at her. I said I would inquire into it and I asked about it and ascertained that no one swore at her. Then she asked me for a weeding task and I said I had no instructions about weeding and she sat down. I went away and when I returned complainant had gone. At 1 pm, I was at the lines with Mr. Barber- and Mr. Barber asked her why she was not working and she said she was not well. I felt her hand and I told her she had no fever. I held her by the hand and told her to go to work and took her about 20 yards. Then she sat down and kicked and Mr. Barber told me to leave her and I went with Mr. Barber to the field. I did not touch complainant's hair. I did not ask her to go into the cane (*sic*) with me.⁴⁰

The Magistrate's ruling completely absolved John Barber and Ram Hark Singh of the crime of causing physical assault on Kunti. The complainant Kunti's plea was dismissed by the law court on the ground that the allegations had been made many months after the incident taken place. This court's ruling proved beyond doubt that Indian indentured women lacked support from their own community members as well as the crime committed against women was endorsed by those in the colonial bureaucracy undoubtedly these reactions born out of the explicit racism

and sexism. The colonial plantations bureaucracy attempts towards re-ordering of space and gendered relations made it look that Indian women were far relaxed and were open to solicitations by males. It was beyond doubt that the social environment in the colonies gave enough space for a patriarchy that would provide every licence for ill-treatment of women and for singling them out as objects of sexual lust and gratification.⁴¹

V

However, the publication of Kunti's story, which led to the investigative mission by Andrews and Pearson, opened up an altogether new dimension. Banarasidas Chaturvedi, a Hindi journalist who enjoyed a close relationship with Andrews encouraged a Fiji returned ex-indentured labourer Totaram to narrate his experiences in the island colony. Totaram's testimony which subsequently appeared in an autobiographical form titled '*Fiji Mein Mere 21 Varsh*' became the most reliable version when it came to understanding the life of the indentured emigrants in Fiji. In a very simple language, Totaram had first recounted his experiences before the Presidency Magistrate at the Calcutta Police Court on July 13, 1914 as has been described earlier. He was critical of the indenture labour system and he felt that it was because of this system that the majority of the labourers remained confined within a semi-bonded state and they hardly had the money which could give them the status of independent labourers or provide for their repatriation back to India. Totaram quoted one of the writings of an Australian Methodist missionary Hannah Dudley to bring out the injustices committed against men and women from India, because of the prevalence of the indentured system. Dudley's testimony was used by Totaram to publicize the fact that Indian women indentured labourers in Fiji faced double discrimination on the grounds of gender. This is clear in Dudley's observation

When in the depot these women are told that they cannot go till they pay for food that they have and had for the other expenses, they are unable to do so. They arrive in these country timid fearful women not knowing where they are to be sent. They are allotted to plantations like so many dumb animals. If they do not perform satisfactorily the work given to them, they are punished by being struck or fined, or they are even sent to jail. The life on the plantations alters their demeanour and even their very faces. Some look crushed and broken-hearted, others sullen, others

hard and evil, I shall never forget the first time I saw ‘indentured’ women. They were returning from their day’s work. The look on those women’s face haunts me.

It is probably known to you that only about 33 women are bought out to Fiji to every one hundred men, I cannot go into details concerning this system of legalised prostitution. To give you some idea of the result, it will be sufficient to say that every few months some Indian man murders for unfaithfulness of the woman whom he regards as his wife.⁴²

Fiji Mein Mere 21 ekkis Varsh, despite being an autobiographical account of Babu Totaram was authored by Banerasi Das Chaturvedi, who himself was a part of the enlightened Hindi literati. Totaram was a Thakur by caste who had been passed off in the Calcutta depot by the *Arkatis* who had claimed that he belonged to an agricultural caste. His journey to Fiji was itself a tortuous one because of his resistance to board the ship. This had resulted in his solitary confinement and denial of food. The twenty-one years he spent in Fiji saw him in myriad roles, first as an indentured labourer in the cane fields, then as a priest and writer and later as activist claiming the rights of the Indian population in Fiji.⁴³ These manifold experiences accounted for the popularity of the book and the first edition ran into fifteen thousand copies and was distributed on the *Kumbh Mela* ground in Allahabad in early 1915. These copies were distributed both to the literate and the non-literate people because the *Melas* were the favourite recruiting grounds of the arkatis who allegedly enticed pilgrims mostly single men and women with false promises of better living in the colonies. Totaram’s story became a part of the nationalist propaganda against the indentured system, which had surfaced in a big way following the publication of Kunti’s story. Totaram was well aware of Kunti’s tribulations in Fiji and this formed the major plank of discussion in the play *Coolie Pratha* which he published in 1916. In this particular play, there was an emphasis on Hindu Muslim cooperation in abolishing indenture. There was also a somewhat hidden dictum that the indenture system could only be ended through popular protests. But it remains extremely difficult to draw a line of argument whether Totaram wholeheartedly favoured such a movement that was being carried throughout northern India under the patronage of the Calcutta-based Marwaris. Karen A. Ray has pointed out the anti-indentured propaganda of the Marwaris seemed to have taken a radicalized turn unnerving some of the British officials.⁴⁴

Significantly, much before the women's anti-indenture groups were formed in India, Indian indentured women as subaltern subjects who had encountered, gender, race and class prejudices did not deter from speaking about their degraded status. Social theorists, like Prem Misir have rightly argued that by expressing their disenchantment over exploitation and social injustices indentured women developed into a human agency having a voice of their own. In fact, there is hardly much to deny that the Indian population in the plantation colonies who for decades had been marginalized through the use of terms like 'inferior', 'repulsive' and 'disgusting' could come out with a language of protest. Interestingly, this was primarily crafted by non-literate women based on their understanding of which had been long hierarchical patterns and systems of authority that prevailed in the colonies.⁴⁵ In other words, Indian women in Fiji as well as in the other colonies demonstrated the capacity to act and transform their little worlds was ensconced in the three institutions of oppression representing race, gender and class.

Kunti's story has gained scholarly attention both in India as well as abroad was because this story of exploitation as narrated by the labouring women questioned the legal apparatus of the colonial regime and there was an attempt to isolate the women to insulate them from further attacks by creating a barb of security around them. But more importantly, it is their ability to comprehend both the inner and the outer worlds that led to their transformation as catalysts of change lending credence to the entire argument of human agency. But this entire discourse of Indian indentured women as a human agency particularly veering round the Kunti's story also had led to a new theoretical discussion in the academic sphere attracting both western and non-western academic elites. In fact, postcolonial theorists though not all, but at least some of them feel that western ideas and that of the third world interacted in some situations leading to acceptance or rejection. But the most powerful and engaging scholarship that had lent strength to the long silence of post-colonial studies have been somewhat resilient in recognizing the voice of the third world female. It is inexplicable as to why social theorists like Homi K. Bhaba do not see the third world and first world in a binary structure of opposition, despite presenting the third space as a methodological framework of study. But, what postcolonial studies has done is to prove that the world of the oppressor and the oppressed did not remain two distinct compartmentalized spaces, rather informal negotiations between the Indian indentured women labourers and the plantation

officials created opportunities for a new discourse and a new space.⁴⁶ Indian indentured women used particular expressions and dictums to address the issues related to their own injustices and this led to a new space which could accommodate the discourses of both resistance and dialogue. But the language of resistance was important because women like Kunti who espoused them were doing something which was no less than a revolution. To put it simply discourses on power hierarchy and resistance were challenging the very economic foundations of the plantation system, heavily dependent on the sexual division of labour. But this was simply not a matter of economy; rather it had a great deal of implications on the social and psychological plane in which most women found themselves in the colonies. By challenging the economic logic premising on the task load system and the women's workload less compared to that of the men, the Indian indentured women were taking up an altogether new battle against their depiction as passive individuals, voiceless and powerless in creating their own histories which could challenge racial-based class and gender discriminations. In the end, Kunti's story expressed some of these concerns of the indentured women who in their own ways were trying to seek some powers which eventually put a pressure on the planters to relent to acts of scrutiny against the horrors of exploitative system. But while Prem Misir eulogises this version as women as an agent who could successfully challenge plantocracy, it remained doubtful whether the Indian indentured women could come up with such a facile victory on their own. While, it may be partially true that their emergence as a human agency was changing the social scenario in the colonies, but this sort of opening up of a new space could have barely achieved the task of abolition of indentured system. It was the involvement of the upper and middle-class women in the anti-indentured groups that added a new definition to the entire issue of women's agency. Consequently, protest and resilience of Kunti and other indentured women was gradually subsumed within the language of upper and middle-class nationalist protest in India. Kastubva Gandhi, along with Lady Mehta (the widow of Sir Feroz Shah Mehta) and Ramabhai Ranade supported by Lady Tata, Lady Fazulbhoj, Currimbhoj, Lady Chandarvarkar and Lady Petit came to together in a historic meeting in Bombay. This was the first time that the association of this woman came to be defined by the English press in India as political. The developments in Bombay inspired Indian women of 'respectable' background to protest against the continuation of indentured labour system which dishonoured women hood. There

were also moves on the part of a section of these respectable women to involve themselves in the Home Rule league ostensibly for a protest would force the Viceroy of India to issue orders of abolition of the indentured system.⁴⁷ C. F. Andrew's description of the Fijian coolie lines also led to frantic appeals from the vernacular and Indian owned English press for ending this immoral system. The '*New India*' published from Madras strongly stated that it was the British empire that was mainly responsible for the slavery of men and women and more so for dishonouring women because they were sent in far lesser numbers compared to men.⁴⁸ Anne Besant in Madras felt that the indentured women were the victims of an exploitative system and they lived in a condition of hell and that they could only be redeemed through an abolition of the indentured system. Though the government officials did not fully agree with the demand for the abolition for the indentured system it was clear by the early and mid-1910s that middle-class western educated politicians were trying to seek a legitimation of it based on the dwindling labour reserves in agriculture and industries. In December 1914 G. A. Natesan, in his speech before the Indian National Congress session strongly made a fervent plea that the ignorant peasantry was being exploited through immigration to the colonies and that the fellow Congressman were silent about the degradation suffered by men and women of the labouring classes.⁴⁹ Karen A. Ray has argued that it was the middle-class anxiety, alongside the problems arising out of racial discrimination in other parts of the British Empire which quickened the movement for the abolition of the indentured system. But even there if might have been some other viable reasons behind the empire's decision to abolish the indentured system, many believed that it was the protest of the women against their exploitation which added momentum to the movement. The middle-class Indian nationalist politician also utilized the nationwide indignation over the insult to womanhood to buttress their arguments that the indentured system and was nothing less than one of bondage to be abolished. It would be quite banal to argue that the degradation suffered by woman was the only factor behind the abolition of the indentured system but the fact that is ignored is that this agency of the indentured women could be utilized by middle-class educated men and women for winning their battle against the empire. Despite the symbolism attached to the protest that was waged by women like Kunti and many others, their resilience

was not accommodated within the dominant language of congress politics which the congress in the 1920s despite the mass-based nationalism that came into existence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

VI

The nationalist assertion against the very issue of immigration which was to some extent influenced by the Marwari diatribes against the degradation of Indian women was by no means linked to ideas of liberation and emancipation. As Charu Gupta⁵⁰ has argued the nationalist opinion was intensely rooted in a privileged understanding of Indian nation. It has been argued that the indentured woman in the form of Kunti was needed by the nationalists because she could be a symbolic figure in the nationalist battery against the colonial government. Though the Hindi public sphere had played a big role in publicizing the degradation of the labouring women in the colonies, the middle-class location in the reportage was quite evident. The campaign against indenture could have created a much bigger movement based on the intersections of class and caste gave but on the contrary it gave way to a movement where middle-class nationalist acquired a greater deal of prominence. Thus, the agency of Kunti was lost and it was the middle-class women who now started writing about them by publicizing the discourses of rescue and the women as victims. The patronizing comment on women, many of whom were dalits was something which favoured the denial of the women's agency. In the end, these developments transformed the anti-indentured movement into one which was guided by middle-class notions of patriarchal conservatism and on images of silent suffering women. Undoubtedly, it is this representation of inferiorised women that needs to be analyzed at greater details when one tries to assess the failure of protest which had been launched by indentured women in the colonies.

NOTES

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3. Brown-Guilloy. 2006. *Middle Passages and the Healing Place of History: Migration and Identity in Black Women's Literature*. Introduction. Columbus: Ohio State UP.
4. Dionne Brand. 2001. *Bread Out of Stone a Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*. Doubleday: Toronto, p. 61, cited in Micheal A. Bucknor and Daniel Coleman. 2005. "Rooting and Routing Caribbean-Canadian Writing" *Journal of West Indian Literature*, Vol. 14, No. 1/2. p. iv.
5. Report of the Marwari Association Reel 2, Preserved in Nehru Memorial (NMML).
6. File No. 126, 1914, Commerce & Industry (British Emigration) November 17-20, Part B Serial No. 1-4, National Archives of India hereafter NAI.
7. For more details see File No. 85, Department of Commerce & Industry Proceedings 1914, Part B, NAI.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Vimalesh Kanti Verma and Dhira Verma. 2001. *Fiji Mein Hindi Sarvarup or Vikas*, New Delhi: Pitambra Prakarshan, p. 58.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
11. Brij V Lal and Chalo Jahaji. 2000. *ChaloJahaJi*; on a journey through indentured Fiji, Australian National University, Canberra and Fiji Museum, Suva. pp. 196-197.
12. C. F. Andrews and W. W. Pearson. 1918. *Indian Indentured Labour in Fiji*. Perth: Privately published, Appendix, p. 6.
13. For more details see Margaret Mishra. "Your Woman Is a Very Bad Woman': Revisiting Female Deviance in Colonial Fiji" *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Bridge Water State University Vol. 17, Issue 4, July: 2016. pp. 67-68.
14. *Ibid.*
15. For more details see, Charu Gupta. 2017. *The Gender of Caste: Representing Dalits in Print*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, Ashoka University. pp. 232-233.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 246-251.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 252-253.
18. C. F. Andrews A friend of the Indian nationalist movement had observed after a fact finding visit to Fiji had observed "The Hindu woman in this country is like a rudderless vessel with its mast brokes drifting onto the rocksor like a canoe being whirled down the rapids of a great river without any controlling hand. She passes from one man to another, and lost even the sense of shame in doing so". For more details see, Brijvilal. 2000. *ChaloJahaJi*; on a journey through indentured Fiji, Australian National University, Canberra and Fiji Museum, Suva.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 254-256.

20. Anne Hardgrove, in her researches has pointed out that Marwaris for a fairly long period of time were considered backward in social and educational matters unlike the Parsis who were seen as the quintessential colonial subjects. The Parsis had adopted and identified western education, culture and colonial authority much more than any other Indian community, and they represented themselves as rational progressive and masculine. The Marwaris finally were able to surpass the Parsis, but they never constructed a self-identity that used the British colonizer as a model. To many other Indians compared to the Parsis the Marwaris appeared to be anti-modern, a bit resilient to English education and clannish and conservatively old fashioned in their social intercourses. The Marwaris were seen as capitalists and exploitative outsiders whose only motive was to make money and whose idea of themselves remained amorphous if not undefined. Possibly this encouraged the Marwaris not to promote a local dialect but become major financial supporters of the nationalist Hindi movement. For more details see, Anne Hardgrove. 2004. *Community and Public Culture: Marwaris in Calcutta*. Oxford University Press.
21. Thomas A Timburg, 1978. *The Marwaris from Traders to Industrialists*, New Delhi. pp. 50–55.
22. Omkar Goswami, “Sahibs, Babus, Baniyas: Changes in Industrial Control in Eastern India, 1918–50” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (May 1989). p. 294.
23. Karen A. Ray, “Kunti, Lakshimbhai and the ‘Ladies’: Women’s Labour and the Abolition of Indentured Emigration from India” *Capital and society/Travail, capital et soiete*, Vol. 29, No. 1/2 (Special Double Issue April–November 1996). pp. 140–141.
24. Report of the Marwari Association (Calcutta) reel 2, NMML, New Delhi.
25. Karen A. Ray, “Kunti, Lakshimbhai and the ‘Ladies’: Women’s Labour and the Abolition of Indentured Emigration from India” *Labour, Capital and Society*, Vol. 29, No. 1/2 (Special Issue: Women and Work in South Asia). pp. 142–143.
26. Proceedings, June, File No. 85, No. 1-3, year 1914, *op. cit.*
27. Report of the Marwari Association, *op. cit.*
28. The Honorary Secretary, Marwari Association, Calcutta to the secretary to the Govt. of India, Commerce and Industry, B Proceedings, 7 February 1916, government of India, C & I, Emigration, NAI.
29. A- proceedings, 43–45, December 1914, NAI, Cited in Karen A. Ray, “Kunti, Lakshimbhai and the ‘Ladies’”, *op. cit.*
30. Report of the Marwari Association, *op. cit.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. Report of the Marwari Association, *op. cit.*
33. For more details see, Karen A. Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*
36. Walter Gill, *Turn North-East at the Tombstone*, Rigby Adelaide 1969. p. 73.
37. For more details see Brij V. Lal, “*Kunti’s Cry*” (chapter 11) in Brij V. Lal edited *ChaloJahaji*, *op. cito.*, p. 198.
38. File No. 8-12 Proceedings Part B, NAI, *op. cit.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. Proceedings Part B 1914, File No. 8-12.
41. Brij V. Lal, “*Kunti’s Cry*”, *op. cit.*
42. Totaram Sanadhaya. 2009. *Fiji Mein Mere 21 Varsh (Memoirs)*. Ghaziabad: Remadhav Publications Pvt. Ltd. pp. 73–74.
43. For more details see the editorial note titled, *Ai Mere PyareVatan, Ai Mere BichraeChaman*, in *Fiji Mein Mere 21 Varsh*, *op. cit.*, pp. 7–26.
44. For more details see Karen A. Ray. pp. 145–156.
45. Prem Misir (ed.). 2017. *The Subaltern Indian Women: Domination and Social Degradation*. Singapore: Springer Verlag.
46. Homi Bhabha, accepted the political economic notions o the exploitations o the third world by the first but wanted to create a cultural appositional politics. This made him explore the new languages of theoretical critique which could emerge from semiotics, post-structuralism and deconstructionism moving beyond the narratives of original, initial subjectivities Bhabha identified a tension within critical theory particularly those between institutional containment and revisionally force and prefer to favour ambivalence, which could explain the interactions between cultures. He opposes cultural difference and instead looks towards cultural diversity in the politics of culture. He opposed cultural difference to cultural diversity in the politics of culture. The concept of cultural difference focused on the ambivalence of cultural authority which Bhabha interpreted in terms of ‘the attempt to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of difference’ this leads to enunciative process where a fissure takes place between the traditional culturalist demand for a stable model and the negation of certitude through the articulation of new cultural demands which could be seen in France Fernan’s ‘culture as political struggle’. Bhabha argued that interpretation can never be a single act of communication involving two people in two different places, and he observed, ‘The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilised in the passage through a Third Space’. Bhabha states that it is the Third space that introduces ambivalence in the act of interpretation and dislocates the western narrative. Thus, hierarchical claims over purity over cultures are untenable and it is the element of hybridity that is empirically and historically demonstrated. For more details see, Homi. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, London: 1994). pp. 34–37.

47. Karen A. Ray, "Kunti, Lakshmibhai and the 'Ladies'", *op. cit.*, pp. 146–147.
48. New India, January 17, 1917, cited in Karen A. Ray "Kunti, Lakshmibhai and the 'Ladies'", *op. cit.*, p. 147.
49. Karen A. Ray, *Ibid.*, p. 148.
50. Charu Gupta, *The Gender of Caste*, *op. cit.*, pp. 264–265.



Crossing the Border: A Postcolonial Discourse of Double Consciousness and Multiple Solidarities with Reference to the Texts *Brick Lane* and *The Mistress of Spices*

Sulagna Mohanty and Santosh Kumar Biswal

In the contemporary globalized periphery, the postcolonial diasporic women appear to be the victims of “double colonization.” While crossing the border of their nations, these doubly exiled migrant women carry the baggage of their fragmented identities. Taking a different route, these postcolonial women crave for their roots and try to sustain it. This paper aims at exploring the double consciousness of the protagonists in the texts *The Mistress of Spices* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and *Brick Lane*

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by Monica Ali. Written in the milieu of the Diasporic work of art, these texts articulate the transnational women's breaking of the perceived social, cultural, and sexual norms and explore their womanhood and sexuality while seeking new vistas and new identities. Dealing with the trauma and turbulence of the Indian character Tilo and the Bangladeshi character Nazneen, this paper tries to juxtapose the identical positions and designations of Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices* and Nazneen in *Brick Lane*, two women belonging to two different traditions. This paper tends to highlight the evolution of these cosmopolitan women who finally obtain physical, psychological, sexual, and spiritual liberation and re-assert their identities as individuals on their own right. To understand the complexities and perplexities of self discovery through roots and routes, this paper deals with the discourses of political analysis, modes of oppression, resistance, and the reinvention of cultural identities.

As Anedith M. Schneider asserts, the distinction between center and margin is, of course, not solely geographic, as can be seen in a colonial context where the colonizer culturally and politically belongs to the center, while physically living in the colonial periphery. In contrast, the colonized subject who travels to the colonizing center for education or work, no matter how much metropolitan culture he or she may acquire and internalize, will remain in terms of power and political status on the periphery (Schneider 2001, 86).

The loss of their nationality and their assimilation with the host country leaves the diasporic migrants baffled and perplexed as they suffer from a sense of identity crisis. There is a case of dual identity and they experience various hazards in the process of settlement in the adapted country; their cultural dilemmas and displacement, the generational differences, transformation in their identities with the new demands, and the new possibilities and new ways of thinking ironically, all of these inform their fluid sense of identity in the new land.

This living "in-between" condition is very painful and marginalizing for the diasporas. There is yearning for home, to go back to the lost origin and to the "imaginary homelands" (Rushdie 2001, 9). It is created from the fragmentary and partial memories of the homelands. They face cultural dilemma when their cultural practices are mocked at and there is a threat to their ethnic and/or cultural identity. They stand bewildered and confused, nostalgic and homesick and show resistance to the discourse of power in various forms. Joel Kuortti observes that:

In the field of literature, diasporic writing comes from the margins, entering the arenas that it is allowed to occupy. The liminal and marginal status of diasporic writers comes through, for example, in the terms that are used to describe this extremely heterogeneous group: expatriate, exile, diasporic, immigrant, migrant, hyphenated, dislocated, NRI. (Kuortti 2007, 12)

In the ensuing generations these confusions, problems, and yearnings become less intense as the migrants are influenced by the culture of that country and adapt themselves to it. However, the feeling of “not being home” remains owing to factors such as skin color and continuing cultural practices in the community.

In the context of Tilo and Nazreen, the diasporic discourse comes from the margins, entering the arenas that it is allowed to occupy. The liminal and marginal status of diasporic writers comes through, for example, in the terms that are used to describe this extremely heterogeneous group: expatriate, exile, diasporic, immigrant, migrant, hyphenated, dislocated, NRI (Kuortti 2007, 12). In the ensuing generations these confusions, problems, and yearnings become less intense as the migrants are influenced by the culture of that country and adapt themselves to it. However, the feeling of “not being home” remains owing to factors such as skin color and continuing cultural practices in the community. The identities of diaspora individuals and communities can neither be placed only in relation to some homeland to which they all long to return nor to that country alone where they settle down in. They, by all means, face the crisis of hybrid or dual identity, in either space, which makes their existence all the more difficult.

The settling of migrants just described has not been unproblematic. They have experienced prejudices, overt and covert racism, segregation, and discrimination. One example of the problems is the outburst of violence in New Jersey in 1987, when a group that named itself “Dot-busters” violated South Asian women who were wearing the traditional decorative bindi (Kuortti 2007, 11, *emphasis original*). Such cases of identity crisis have been well portrayed in various works of diasporic writers who have dealt with the themes of immigrant experiences, clash of cultures, nostalgia about lost homelands, identity crisis, hybridity, assimilation and the tangled ties between disparate generations. Femke Stock rightly observes that

such longings for home and homeland can not necessarily be seen as direct, if partial, knowledge of past experiences. The act of remembering is always contextual, a continuous process of recalling, interpreting and reconstructing the past in terms of the present and in the light of an anticipated future ... it also hints at the layeredness of a notion of home that is not necessarily bound to physical places but may also allude to symbolic spaces of belonging. (Stock 2010, 24–25)

This is an experience universal to all Indian diaspora, irrespective of their caste and religion which they so strongly and fanatically clung to during their stay in India.

Hence, in the age of migration and globalization, the transnational woman is the new “other” in the metropolitan space. Gayatri Spivak in her famous essay “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*” asserts that “in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (Spivak 1988, 28). This founding essay “Can the Subaltern Speak” (1988) by major post-colonial critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak challenges the cultural legacy of colonization and interrogates the position of the new “subaltern” or the newly emerged marginalized selves in the contemporary global periphery. While marginalization, no matter local or global, has been described in the postcolonial fictions and non-fictions of contemporary times, it has also portrayed various segments of prejudices in terms of social, political, economic, caste, and class faced by the marginalized.

The marginal or subaltern status of woman is considerably highlighted when she is a migrant. The dislocation of her geographical periphery becomes connected with her distorted identity as a woman and then as a migrant. These postcolonial discoveries of identities find their roots in the apprehensive relationship between the erstwhile colonizers or the western host nation and the colonized along with the legacy of colonialism. The journey of Tilo and Nazneen reconfigure “the struggles of ordinary people who had customarily fallen outside historical narratives, been characterized in general terms as the masses, whose resistance has been continuous and who have yet to achieve emancipation or social equality” (Young 358–359). A postcolonial analysis of marginalization, here, not only offers a construction, reconstruction, rewriting and rereading of human history that covers an extensive series of subjugation, and victimization but it also confers an alternative historical narrative that speaks for the marginal and thus gives voice to the unvoiced.

In *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo is the owner of an Indian spice store in the alien land of America whereas in *Brick Lane*, Nazneen is a Bangladeshi house maker cum part-time worker in the metropolitan city of London. While “negotiating with the intricacies of metropolitaneity and of hybridity” (Jussawalla 2001, 383), the journey of both Tilo and Nazneen find their roots in the apprehensive relationship between the center and the periphery. Both Tilo and Nazneen originate from the socio-cultural periphery and migrate to the geographical center. They experience the “double bind that female migrants face, treated as alien by their host nation and as commodities by the men in their own communities” (Cormack 2006, 700). When Tilo sighs, that “[S]ometimes it fills me with a heaviness ... when I think that the entire length of this land not one person knows who I am” (TMOS 5), Nazneen is lost in the alien city of London which “would not pause even to shrug” (BL 59), and, thus, they are marginalized in their respective personal spaces.

Having identical dispositions, both Tilo and Nazneen symbolize the borderless women whose identities have dispersed across the globe. They are Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s “Third World Woman” (1991, 5–6) who is doubly exiled and these two protagonists as Asian migrant women who fall victims to the traditional patriarchal power structure where they are colonized as the subalterns. Their positions in a global postcolonial periphery narrate the politics of patriarchy and imperialism. Tilo and Nazneen’s dispositions can be seen as a “violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third-world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization” (Spivak 1988, 306). Their identities, as an Indian or a Bangladeshi, have been blurred while combining a sense of longing and nostalgia and it has created a sense of spilt-consciousness in the female selves of both the women. Nazneen’s identity in her household is structured by her ability to work as Chanu acknowledges, “[W]hat’s more, she is a good worker. Cleaning and cooking and all that ... As I say, a girl from the village: totally unspoilt” (BL 23). Likewise, Tilo is reminded by the Old One that, “Remember ... You are not important. No Mistress is. What is important is the store. And the spices” (TMS 5).

However, the texts *The Mistress of Spices* and *Brick Lane* go beyond being simplistic narratives of memory, nostalgia, and imaginary homelands. In this contemporary context, both Tilo and Nazneen become the migrant self “in a western country, or someone who is part of a culture and yet excluded by its dominant voices, inside yet outside ...” (Young 2). In both the texts, Tilo and Nazneen are confined spatially into their

so called “home.” While Tilo is supposed to find her shelter in her spice store, Nazneen is trapped in her home, something that resembles more of a prison and less of a home. Tilo is not prohibited to cross the “forbidden threshold of the store” (TMS 28) to explore the external world. Though the spice store is the only home for the marginal immigrant Tilo, it is less a home and more a trap. Her trapping inside these four walls is no shelter. She is confined to her spice store not only metaphorically but also literally, as she is not allowed to cross the threshold of the store. In *Brick Lane*, too, Nazneen is helpless due to the strict Muslim social codes prescribed by her husband Chanu and the society she lives in. The trapplings of these protagonists inside their four walls are more of a burden than a refuge. These are the walls, the borders which keep these women within their boundaries, making it complicated for them to cross their borders. For them, these tyrannical “walls are no home. These are the ones with no windows. They are the walls that stretch through the countryside or zigzag across the city, built as border fences to keep people and things out” (Young 66). These walls aim more at limiting the liberation of the spirit of Tilo and Nazneen rather than shaping their sense of security which usually a home is associated with.

With the emergence of migrant women writers like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Monica Ali, one can notice certain unconventional forms of struggle as feminist resistances in their writings. In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen’s husband Chanu, in his employment of social and sexual power, is an embodiment of the patriarchal principle. Nazneen’s marriage with Chanu, “inexorably, locks her into a social system which denies her autonomy” (Berry 130). Indian feminist author Sarojini Sahoo, contends that to realize feminism, the eastern women need two types of liberation. One is from financial slavery, and the other is from the restrictions imposed on female sexuality through social and religious norms. Confirming the theory that “a woman’s body is a woman’s right,” Sahoo claims that the patriarchal society has held significant control over the sexuality of women. As in the case of Nazneen in *Brick Lane*, she encounters many restrictions in terms of her sexuality. Likewise, In *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo is forbidden to fall in love with any “mortal man” (TMS 43). These women are viciously denied the right to express themselves as sexual beings. They are, sadistically, discouraged from taking an active role or even allowing themselves to experience the act of love, as they want. Both Tilo and Nazneen are taught that they should not be frank when it comes to their sexual desires. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo as a mistress is

forbidden to lead a life of a mortal being. She is prohibited to see her own image in a mirror—“(for mirrors are forbidden to Mistresses)” (TMS 5), to use spices for her own sake for “[T]he Mistresses must never use the spices for their own ends ...” (TMS 71–73), to leave her store, to touch any human being, and most importantly, to fall in love with any “mortal man” (TMS 43). To sum up, she is forbidden to do anything that a young heart yearns for. In such a context, the female selves of both Nazneen and Tilo are not allowed to live their lives on their own terms. They are forbidden to ask questions or to raise voice for themselves. As Nazneen remembers her mother saying, “If God wanted us to ask questions, he would have made us men” (BL 80). In this context, one can realize the authenticity of the words of Simone de Beauvoir who believes that “one is not born, but becomes a woman.” The society decides the norms and codes for the woman to follow. Similarly, Tilo, in *The Mistress of Spices*, is reprimanded by her Guru, the First Mother that “You’ve been nothing but trouble ever since you came, *rulebreaker*” (TMS 42, emphasis added).

There have been numerous “representation[s] of the average third-world woman as ‘ignorant, poor, uneducated tradition-bound, domesticated, family oriented, victimized’” (Mohanty 2008). But the new versions of woman in the texts *The Mistress of Spices* and *Brick Lane*, present the third-world woman as transformed, “modern, as having control over their own bodies and ‘sexualities,’ and the ‘freedom’ to make their own decisions” (Mohanty 2008). Nazneen breaks social norms by starting an affair with a younger Bangladeshi Karim. The exploration of her own sexuality comes as a step toward her spiritual liberation. The exercise of her politics of sexuality can be seen as a craving for her identity as a woman. It gives her a sense of safety and security, which her own marriage and her own home in Brick Lane have never been capable of giving. When Nazneen gets attracted to the hybrid identity of Karim, Karim recognizes the “real thing” (BL 320) in Nazneen. When Nazneen is a symbol and “an idea of home” (BL 380) for Karim, for Nazneen, Karim is the representative of an alternative, more western way of liberation. For her, her affair with Karim is an alternate discourse of interrogation. Her relationship with Karim as a mark of her spiritual fulfillment, a feeling she had only experienced when she was young, back in her village in Bangladesh. Even Nazneen confesses that she displays her sexuality to Karim only because she just “wanted to feel like she was at home.” This “home” is far different from her so-called home in London but it is a new “home”

which compels her to violate the long held social, cultural and sexual norms to find her individuality as a woman.

Nazneen's struggle for identity reaches its crux with the recognition of her own womanhood and she stands up for her own dignity and self-respect. She wants to break herself "away from the culture into which one was born, and in which one's place in society was assured" and becomes one "re-rooting oneself in a new culture" (Hancock 1987, 39). Her fascination for the game of ice-skating simultaneously depicts her subconscious sexual frustration, the longing for sensual romance, and her sexual frankness. For all these years, she manages to hold back her deep emotions inside her confined home. The beautiful projection of a male and a female ice skaters and their romance through dance, leaves its mark in Nazneen's mindscape. Her imagination of herself as an ice skate dancer dancing along with the male dancer, once again confirms her craving for tenderness in life and freedom from fixed norms. The thrill, euphoria and liberation that is associated with the act of ice-skating forces her to realize the intensity of her own feelings. At the end of the text, her learning of the ice-skating becomes a metaphor for her transition from a native identity to a more cosmopolitan one.

Likewise, her counterpart Tilo, the Mistress of Spices, inadvertently breaks all the rules of the spices in the text *The Mistress of Spices*. Her hyphenated status and her migration to the geographical center of America do not eliminate her problems. Tilo's identity is at terrible crisis when she realizes the fact that though being known as the Mistress of the spices, actually she is the slave of the spices. The First mother makes it clear that no mistress is greater than the spices. It's the spices who rule and not the mistress. Being trapped in an old body and a young heart, Tilo is caught in between the duality of her existence. Her sense of exile and alienation makes her lonesome.

Like Nazneen, Tilo too, turns rebellious, follows her instincts, breaks rules, and chooses her love over the spices. By using the spices to make herself beautiful, by touching the mortal Raven, by making love to him and by crossing the threshold of her store, Tilo emerges as a metaphor of womanpower in due course of action. Her recognition of power starts with the recognition of her own beauty and womanhood. Now, she becomes the seductress. She uses her femininity and sexuality as an alternative device to be powerful and to execute power over others and, she does it all with an amazing sense of pride and achievement. She affirms that "I acted out of love, in which is no sinning. Were I to do it over, I would do

the same again” (TMS 298). Her loss of identity as a mistress of spices is restored with the realization of her own strength, existence, dignity, and self-esteem. Tilo renders a rebellion against the world of spices, against the social codes and seeks to find a solution to her conflict.

The Mistress of Spices and *Brick Lane* break the colonial perception of the articulation that “sexual desire/sexual preferences or being promiscuity, is immediately classified as ‘immoral’” (Nayar 2008, 150). Divakaruni and Ali’s stand at the bold portrayal of Tilo and Nazneen break the long held notion that the “mechanism of regulating women’s sexuality is through morality” (Nayar 2008, 150). When Tilo leaves Raven never to meet him again and Nazneen rejects the marriage proposal of Karim, both the protagonists move beyond their identities as women and achieve their own self-regulating space as individuals. Tilo and Nazneen try to construct a self-authoring female community and win over their independent spaces. Both of them in their parallel lives in their respective spaces, struggle and do not “not wait for the future to be revealed” (BL 16), but make it for themselves. For the postcolonial woman, be it in the first world or the third, the world seems to be a single abode of oppression, injustice, as well as resistance and hope while seeking for their identities.

Thus, Nazneen and Tilo create new meanings for themselves and represent the benevolent globalized women that make them “something different, something new and unrecognizable” (Bhaba 1990, 211). With the new definition of woman in *The Mistress of Spices* and in *Brick Lane*, one can notice “the rise of the ‘third-world woman’ to the ideological tourism of the Western/liberal feminism” (Gandhi 1998, 84–85). The new Tilo and Nazneen find their “‘new world’ as a land of opportunity” (Nayar 2008, 191). Tilo’s ultimate identity as Maya and Nazneen’s decision to stay back in London break the “mythos of return” to homelands. When Tilo decides to leave the spices forever and Nazneen leaves her husband, they come out of the captivity of “being female” that the society expects them to stay in. These new forms of identities are more liberating for them and they share the “global sisterhood” as being migrant women across borders and cultural contexts.

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Roots and Routes: The Novels of Su Tamilselvi and Kanmani Gunasekaran

Rebecca Diane Whittington

VĒRKAḶAI TĒṬI (IN SEARCH OF ROOTS)

“Roots” in English suggests origins and permanence, even if it can be extended to connote change, as in the idea of “grassroots.” While these meanings are present in Tamil discourses of roots as well, a close reading of contemporary literary works “rooted” in regional language and practice demonstrates an active, mobile, and diverse engagement with literal and figurative roots and routes, revealing the gendered entanglements of plants, people, and practices in local, regional, and planetary spheres of movement. In the work of two living Tamil writers, Kanmani Gunasekaran and Su. Tamilselvi, attending to the symbiosis of local language, practice, and plants becomes integral to approaching global discourses of feminism, social justice, ecology, and claims to land and natural resources.¹ They offer ways of listening to the stories of marginalized people living in places “lying at the edge of knowledge” that acknowledge their resilience and creativity in responding to structures

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of oppression and the precarious intimacy with the landscape that puts them at the forefront of environmental and social change, even as they live on the fringes of mainstream discourses.² If Deleuze and Guattari offer the philosophical rhizome as an alternative to arborescent linearity,³ Gunasekaran and Tamilselvi draw attention to the routes taken by roots in the liminal, gendered spaces of cultivation: in *naṭavu*, or transplantation of rice seedlings; in the ambiguities of *kāṭu*, field, forest, or grove; and in the multifarious local uses and aesthetics of roots, seeds, grasses, and bushes—wild and cultivated, native and introduced.⁴ These figures give grounding and momentum to the writers' exploration of the lives and thought-worlds of Dalit women.

In Tamil, *vēr* denotes “roots” in the sense of the system that anchors and nourishes a plant, and *kīlaṅku* in the sense of underground plants that nourish us, the ones that are good to eat. Above ground, plants provide staple crops like *nel* (paddy) and a wide variety of *koṭṭai* (seeds, nuts) and *pul* (grasses). The discourse of *vēr* (roots) that Gunasekaran invokes in his 2015 speech at the Perambalur Book Fair, titled “*vērkaḷai tēṭi* (in search of roots),” may sometimes be a gendered discourse of origins, as his language of grandfathers and great-grandfathers suggests,⁵ but in the novels of both writers, women's work of *naṭavu* and foraging for *kīlaṅku* and *koṭṭai* offer a powerful counter-discourse that does not let us forget the struggle of roots in search of the sustenance hidden in the soil, in the course of routine uprootings and other journeys, and their subterranean correspondence.⁶

Kanmani Gunasekaran's work posits writing in dialect as a mode of attention: to everyday stories that have seldom been told either in written (literary) or oral (folk) forms; to local knowledge of lands lying “at the edge of knowledge” and the often translocal roots of this knowledge (etymological and botanical); and thus to the value of a rooted writing that is not merely a visitor in the village. In fact, Gunasekaran has spent considerable time with both roots and routes, as a cashew and peanut farmer in his ancestral village of Manakkollai and a mechanic with the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation. Gunasekaran writes short stories, novels, and poetry and is committed to regional language in all three forms (Gunasekaran 2007, 351–354). He began writing poetry in 1993, after he was struck by the sight of a medicinal plant growing by the side of the road as he was cycling to the Industrial Training Institute in Ulundurpettai (ibid., 348, 352). He wrote his first short story collection *Uyirtannīr* (Water of Life) entirely in dialect, out of a sense of necessity; in later works, he moved toward a combination of styles

(Gunasekaran 2007, 350).⁷ His first novel, *Anjalai* (*Anjalai*, 1999) came out of an encounter with a woman in his hometown who, having heard that he wrote poetry, jokingly asked him to write her story (Kannadasan 2012). His second novel *Netuncalai* (*The Highway*, 2009) maps the intersecting lives of three employees of the State Transport Corporation in Virudhachalam.⁸ In the preface to *Anjalai*, he describes this choice as *cankatamāna*, difficult, troubling,⁹ but the choice gained him critical acclaim from those who consider dialect-only texts a form of “torture” (*citravatai*) (Tamil Makan 2015). Unlike some writers and critics, for whom the distinction between the language of narration and dialogue is key to good style, for Gunasekaran it is merely functional; his language of narration is not a trompe l’oeuil “spoken”¹⁰ and is no longer entirely dialectal but is one that can converse comfortably with his often nonliterate characters in stories drawn directly from the communities he knows well; his writing is exclusively set in his home region. He is a vocal advocate of dialect writing and engagement with local communities, their language, and their collective memory, speaking at book fairs, on television, in academic conferences, and in interviews with literary magazines and newspapers.¹¹ Against the grain of the assumed untranslatability of dialect writing, I argue that Gunasekaran’s work engages in a difficult form of translation, foregrounding the refusal of local language, not to be translated, but to remove itself from the page, challenging the reader who refuses to read.

Su. Tamilselvi is a feminist writer from Thiruvavur district of Tamil Nadu, now living in the Virudhachalam area where she is an educator. Her work, in my reading, frames local language and verbal forms as play (*velayāttu*), which emerges as integral to her understanding of “women’s struggles” (*penkaḷin pōrāṭṭam*). Specifically, her writing explores the creative responses of low-income and Dalit working women to intersecting systems of inequality. The settings of her novels span several districts on the east coast of Tamil Nadu: her home district of Thiruvavur and the adjacent districts of Thanjavur to the west and Nagapattinam to the east; and Virudhachalam in Kadalur district (directly north of Nagapattinam). Beyond this, her characters’ travels take them to the union territory of Puducherry north of Kadalur, to Tiruppur in the western part of Tamil Nadu, and across the sea to Singapore. While her work is certainly in conversation with transnational feminism, it is matter-of-factly rooted in a fine-grained appreciation of women’s tactics of habitation—in their natal and marital homes, as well as outside the home region

in markets, factories, and domestic labor abroad via human trafficking. Women's forms of verbal play such as work-songs and *oppāri* (laments), the figure of play refusing, suffusing, and subverting the received structures of women's work and relationships, and the irrepressible play of *āca* (wish, hope, longing, desire, love) in the interstices of *vairākkīyam* (detachment). This intensely and actively local engagement, I argue, is the root, the route, and the condition of possibility of this writing's feminism, enabling a deeper understanding of women's work, play, subjectivities, and communities than a standardized or universalizing feminist language could ever yield.

The two writers share a strong engagement with local language and everyday practice, understood in Tamil as *vattāra valakku* (roughly "dialect," from *vattāram* "region" and *valakku* "practice"), and with lives and thought-worlds of women, Dalits, and the marginalized more broadly. They are part of a larger trend in contemporary Tamil writing which foregrounds the stories and the speech of formerly under- or misrepresented communities, both within the demarcated space of "Dalit literature" and outside it in writing centered on various regional and minority communities.¹² Their writing diverges and converges in intriguing ways in their approach to gendered relationships with overlapping physical, social, emotional, and aesthetic geographies.

NAṬAVU (TRANSPLANTATION): CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

The figure of *naṭavu* or transplantation, usually of rice seedlings, is a reminder that roots move. Not only do the seeds of a rooted plant travel and put down roots of their own in other places, but plants are uprooted, transported, and replanted by human hands. In the novels considered here, the work of transplantation is performed primarily by Dalit women and is mirrored in the practice of patrilocality which transplants women to their husbands' towns. The passivity expected of women in this process of permanent relocation is evident in the frequent usage of the standard, gendered phrase *vālkkaiṭṭavatu*, [for a woman] "to get married" or literally "to experience/be subject to life" in conjunction with the name of the husband's town—for example, "*vaṭiyakkāṭṭile vālkkaiṭṭava*, a woman to whose lot it has fallen to live in Vadiyakkadu" that is, who has married a man from Vadiyakkadu and gone to live there, as well as dialectal terms of abuse such as *nāṭumāri*, "woman who changed countries," or left her husband for another man. Gunasekaran's *Anjalai* and

Tamilselvi's *Karralai* hinge on Dalit women's relationships with the *ur* (towns) they inhabit as children, wives, and workers, articulated in forms of verbal play ranging from banter, gossip, and ritualized teasing of the landlords to stories, work-songs, lullabies, and *oppāri* (laments). The work of *naṭavu* and its associated forms of play set the stage for the awakening of the characters' social consciousness in both novels, but in markedly different ways.

Gunasekaran's *Anjalai* (1999, third edition 2010) opens with the serious ramifications of a playful incident during *mūlai naṭavu* (dial., "diagonal" transplanting) of a rice field. Anjalai goes to work as a day laborer for the local *āṇṭai* (landowner), and being an expert worker, is called upon to plant the first seedling. When the *āṇṭai*'s son forgets his ploughstaff in her *menai* (dial., a unit of land suitable for one worker to transplant seedlings), she plays the traditional "game of the fields" (*vayakkāṭṭu viḷaiyāṭṭu*) by planting a seedling on the ploughstaff and ransoming it to the young man. His discomfiture at her first demand of double wages sets the other workers "shaking with laughter, so the water dripped from the roots (*vēr*) of the paddy seedlings in their fingertips," but when she demands instead that he admit he has "lost" to her, this bit of boldness does not go down well. Anjalai becomes "fodder" for gossip—an activity elsewhere expressed with the phrase *kata vaḷakkiratu*, to grow stories—and her mother feels forced to marry her off in a hurry. The joke is now on her as the workers remark that she will turn from "*vayakkāṭṭu Anjalai* (Anjalai of the fields)" into "*muntirikkāṭṭu Anjalai* (Anjalai of the cashew groves)," characterizing the difference between her hometown of Karkudal and her husband's town of Manakollai. Anjalai is thus transplanted.

The central figure of the novel is Anjalai's movement between three towns, her natal village of Karkudal, her first husband's village of Manakollai, and her second husband's village of Tolar. The three towns, located in three microclimates with different-colored soil producing three different principal crops (rice, cashew, sugarcane), register Anjalai's emotional states and emerging subjectivity. However, the key role of skills in establishing this connection underscores the need to attend not only to the broad strokes that paint Anjalai as one with her landscape, but to the profusion of frustrating little words—dialect words, usages, and orthographies—that the impatient reader may be tempted to skip over: for example, *vāṭṭappali* and *kuttuppoti*, two methods of winnowing grain. Anjalai's degree of skill and participation in cultivating and harvesting

the three crops is directly correlated to her degree of estrangement from family and community. In Karkudal's rice fields and threshing floors, she is an expert, performing both women's and men's tasks with a surpassing skill and beauty that she inherits from her late father. The newly transplanted rice fields of her native village Karkudal are ripe with expectation at the opening, but after her failed marriage the pleasure of showing off her skills is gone as working in the fields along with men only gains her further disrepute. In Manakkollai, initially choked by the deceit of her husband's family and the red-earth dust, she briefly regains her sense of wonder and discovery when a local girl named Valli befriends her and gives her a crash course in the local taxonomy of a bewildering variety of cashew fruits and *kottai* (seeds/nuts), their harvesting techniques, and their place in a changing local ecology. But the excitement of learning new skills and the new bird's eye view of the region she discovers from the tops of the trees likewise turns to fear when gossip makes her vulnerable to sexual harassment. In Tolar, where Anjalai marries a second time and has a daughter, the sweetness of a new beginning in love quickly turns to the bitterness of a second disappointment, and she never has a chance to explore outside the confines of the house because, in the interest of preserving a façade of respectability, her sister forbids her to go out to work in the sugarcane fields. This episode is marked by the absence of local detail; dialect here is divorced from the land and unleashed in a steady stream of abuses from the mouth of her own sister. It is perhaps this sense of being cut off from the cultivation and thus the culture and community of her new town that leads to a moment of estrangement when she sings a lullaby to her baby girl:

Rice on the stove—and our
 Little beauty in the cradle!
 Should I take off the rice
 Or pick up my little beauty?

...Anjalai would ask herself, 'Has Amma ever thought about this song? How many times do we make rice here? In Karkudal we have rice only at night. The rest of the time it's just millet porridge...How did she sing this? Some song passed down from mouth to mouth, a comfort to a crying baby, that's all she knows.'

This sense of incongruence brings back into focus the caste and class inequality that Anjalai grew up accepting as normal: her hands know every

inch of the paddy field but the rice grown there was a rare treat in her childhood, reserved for the landowners and the market; in her street in the *ceri* (Dalit “colony,” neighborhood or ghetto), all the houses face away from the road to avoid contact with the people of the “town street,” at whose doors she has so often waited for wages in kind.

Anjalai thus explores the emotional and physical ravages of being cut off from the everyday forms of play that bind a community together, celebrating its skills and re-inscribing its boundaries and codes along with compensatory moments of carnivalesque release. It is Anjalai’s estrangement from these forms stemming from the community’s punitive rejection of her which produces a new kind of critical discourse. However, the novel stages this discourse melodramatically, drawing not only on fragments of oral forms such as lullaby and *oppari* but arguably on deeper folkloric structures and affects, reinventing them to tell stories folklore does not tell.

Tamilselvi’s novels, by contrast, take head-on the challenge of following the trajectory of a Dalit-feminist discourse from the *naṭavu* fields out in a variety of possible directions. The matter-of-fact narration explores women’s movements between places where they live and work and the forms of play through which they learn and bond with an intimacy that draws attention to their transformative potential. The characters’ physical movements, while giving shape to the novels’ narratives and weaving them into an intertextual fabric, bring them into contact with the languages and lores of multiple places, which in turn become a part of their subjectivity and create the conditions of possibility for new understandings of self, community, and society. As in Gunasekaran’s work, Tamilselvi’s writing emphasizes the relationship between localized work, skills, and play, but with a significant difference in perspective. Her characters’ sense of intimacy with land and locality not as a birthright but as something gained through work, ritual, curiosity, and play is markedly feminine in the context of her narratives of “women’s struggles” or *penkaḷin pōraṭṭam*.¹³ Tamilselvi stages these struggles through the play (*velaiyāṭṭu*, formal *vilaiyāṭṭu*) of *āca* (formal *ācai*, desire, hope, love) and detachment (*vairākkiam*, a Sanskrit-origin term translatable more literally as “freedom from desire,” but used here colloquially), a constant push and pull that is not so much a tug-of-war (despite the sense of “battle” carried by the word *pōraṭṭam*) but a fluid ebb-and-flow.

In Tamilselvi’s *Karrālai* (*Aloe*, 2002), set in her home district of Thiruvārur and neighboring areas, the story of protagonist Manimekalai’s

transplantation from her hometown of Kappunakolam to her husband's town of Vadiyakkadu is nested within the *naṭavu* cycle in which she takes part as a wage laborer. The repetition of seasonal rhythms in the early part of the novel not only indexes local resources and practices and marks the passage of time but lends the narrative a sense of cyclicity which seems to have a distancing effect on human temporality, so that even major events in the characters' lives are recounted rapidly or mentioned only in retrospect. However, it is not the implacability of nature or time but the dysfunctionality of human society that is at stake.

For example, at the opening of chapter 15, it is the month of *āṭi* (July–August) and the women of Vadiyakkadu village have gone to weed the fields in nearby Perumaḷai in preparation for transplanting. In the next section it is the rainy month of *āvani* (August–September), the work of transplanting begins, and the women not tied down with small children are working day, evening, and night shifts (*nera*, *anti*, and *rā-naṭavu*). In chapter 16–17, the rainy season comes around again, indicating that a year has elapsed; the women work in the rain transplanting the seedlings and cross the flooded river to take work there as well. Within this *naṭavu* cycle unfolds the narrative of Manimekalai's own transplantation from her hometown of Kappunakoḷam to her husband's town of Vadiyakkadu and her psychological and practical responses to cycles of domestic abuse. Though Manimekalai worked “like a cow” in her mother's house, this is her first time working for an employer. We learn in some detail of Manimekalai's first experience of wage labor and the new set of relationships—friendly and exploitative—in which she finds herself: Kulla Canaki heads a “set” of women wage workers; her job is to call them for work, distribute wages, and find out about the next day's work. Attracted by the promise of steady work and timely wages, Manimekalai's mother-in-law Mamani has left her dried-fish business and joined the set, bringing her daughter-in-law along. For Manimekalai, it is hard work for no pay, as her mother-in-law keeps all her wages except for a small allowance to buy her husband's beedis. A sudden bout of physical abuse from her husband results in the loss of Manimekalai's unborn child and she returns to her mother's house to recover, where she arranges for her younger sister to study in the Vedaranyam *kurukulam*, a women's welfare organization and boarding school for low-income girls.¹⁴ The violent loss of Manimekalai's first child, of tremendous emotional significance, is recounted briefly and matter-of-factly, so that it almost feels like a digression from the work of transplantation. This generates a sense, not so much of the natural

cycle's indifference to Manimekalai's suffering, but of her state of shock, which gives way to a sort of numbed practicality labeled *vairākkīyam* (detachment, 169). It is her sister Valarmati who rails against her brother-in-law for his atrocious actions, while Manimekalai takes this opportunity to enroll Valarmati in school and goes back to her husband feeling "at peace...she prided herself on 'having done such a good deed in the twenty or twenty-five days she had been sick here'" (171). Clearly, she considers education a safeguard against the abuses she suffers. Yet, this task accomplished, in the following chapter, we pick up where we left off, with the transplantation of the *campā* paddy, as if a time warp has erased the year that has presumably passed between the end of chapter 15 and the beginning of chapter 16: Manimekalai rejoins the seemingly natural (though cultivated) rhythm of seasonal work with a sense of comfort, and the erratic, unnatural actions of her husband recede into the background.

The cycle of agricultural work thus offers something closely linked to but distinct from the *oppāri* form of women's laments: while the central affect in an *oppāri* is the incongruence or dissonance between the riches and beauty of the landscape and the absence of the beloved person (or other lost object of *āca*), here it is the absence of love itself that finds solace in women's work. Importantly, while *oppāri* often functions as a collective rite of mourning and leads to catharsis,¹⁵ *naṭavu* generates forms of play that constitute an alternative social space. Two consecutive scenes concisely establish the relationships among women agricultural workers and between them, the landowners, and the land through dialogue, song, and story. While the women are transplanting *campā* paddy in the rain, as they do every year, some tension arises between older and younger women around their perceived right to complain about the working conditions. Mamani diffuses the tension by suggesting they sing a song together, to which they readily agree, declaring proudly that their song should be heard far and wide. The singing not only makes the work go faster but gives Manimekalai a deep sense of pleasure and empowerment: "she liked the way more than twenty women standing in the pouring rain raised their voices in song just as they pleased...she thought how satisfying it is to work in the midst of laughter, play (*vilaiyāṭṭu*), song, and fun/joking. She thought she shouldn't stop coming to transplant the fields even if she didn't get any wages" (175). With this thought, we come full circle to the tension at the beginning of the chapter between the women of the "set" over their perspectives on the conditions of work and the mutual responsibilities of workers and

employer. The song, then, has been a temporary release, and does not itself have transformative power. However, the experience strengthens the bonds between the women despite their differences of opinion, and they will need this sense of unity to handle situations like the one that arises in the next chapter, where a man from across the river hires them at a higher rate than their current employer and they are harassed for accepting the offer. While this sense of collectivity culminates in *Karrālai* in the leveling space of an urban factory, it plays out in Tamiselvi's earlier novel *Alam* in the salt flats of Vedaranyam and in her later novel *Kaṇṇaki* (2008) in the fields of Karkudal.

KILANKU, KOTTAI: ROOTS & SEEDS OF DISSENT ON THE MARGINS OF CULTIVATION

Tamiselvi's *Kaṇṇaki* (2008) and the earlier *Alam* decenter the formal structures of *naṭavu* and draw attention to the marginal tactics of foraging and defiance of the structure of property that excludes Dalits and especially Dalit women.

Kaṇṇaki's Karkudal, precisely mapped in terms of resources and work arrangements, caste and folkloric space, provides an interesting contrast to *Anjalai's* Karkudal. This difference has to do with inhabiting the town as a native and as a married woman, but also with how the landscape feeds the two novels' respective interests. You will recall that *Anjalai's* Karkudal and her own subjectivity are strongly identified with rice cultivation; Gunasekaran's three towns of Karkudal, Manakkollai, and Tolar are characterized by the different crops that grow in their different soils: rice in Karkudal, cashew in the red earth of Manakkollai, and sugarcane in the blackish earth of Tolar. By contrast, our introduction to Karkudal in *Kaṇṇaki*, shortly after she comes to live there with her lover Acaitambi in the house of her father's friend and his wife Cinnaveṭai, focuses on the tamarind grove by the lake, highlighting caste issues. The grove and lake are both part of a government-owned village commons; each year, someone from the town will lease the grove to harvest the tamarind but will rarely go to the side adjacent to the Dalit colony, keeping a contract laborer (*pannaiyāl*) there as a watchman instead. During a cholera scare when everyone has gone to get vaccinated, including the watchman and his wife, *Kaṇṇaki* and her sister-in-law steal a lot of tamarind and sneak it home in their saris. This feat along with *Kaṇṇaki's* growing reputation as a skilled worker persuades her mother-in-law Nakammal to finally take

the young couple into her household. Thus, in *Kaṇṇaki*, Karkudal is not characterized through contrast with other villages in terms of dominant crops; the various crops in this one town, regardless of the relative extent of cultivation, are various sites to explore Kaṇṇaki's growing awareness of the social and economic forces to which she is subject. Coming to Karkudal as a married woman from a significantly different environment—her semi-rural, semi-urban childhood surrounded with cattle, milk, and meat—Kaṇṇaki is in a position to look at the town with analytical clarity as well as aesthetic pleasure, as Anjalai does in *Manakkollai*. Although Karkudal is a rice-growing town, Kaṇṇaki's sojourn there is introduced not through *nataru*—which she does perform there and which, as seen in *Karralai*, is conventional women's work, linked with ideas of wifely virtue, though with an implicitly demarcated, gendered space for play—but through the quick wit and survival tactics exemplified in her tamarind heist. Moreover, while caste discrimination is inscribed in everyday use of space and work relations throughout the work of both writers discussed here and in much of contemporary regional writing by both non-Dalit and Dalit authors, *Kaṇṇaki* addresses caste directly even as the narrative's core concerns are gender and sexuality, pointing to the intersectionality of these structures of oppression through the affects of land.

In fact, the sequence of chapters following Kaṇṇaki's arrival in Karkudal draws a parallel between her experience of domestic violence and the awakening of her caste consciousness. Like Manimekhalai in *Karralai*, Kaṇṇaki miscarries twice due to brutal beatings from her husband, who lashes out at her body “fattened on meat” (52), referring to her growing up with her grandfather the butcher; later, he brings home a second and a third wife, and the fact that her same beloved grandfather had three wives does not make this development any less hurtful. After each miscarriage, she goes into a state of shock; other women try to bring about catharsis by encouraging her to cry and sing *oppāri*, but she does not respond, so they have to sing for her—the absence of any quoted *oppāri* in this text is notable, as is the lack of an *oppāri* in Manimekhalai's voice in *Karralai*, and suggests that *oppāri*'s cathartic function, so effective in coping with death and social injustice, cannot fully operate in the face of domestic abuse (54, 71) These two violent episodes are sandwiched with two scenes in which Kaṇṇaki goes to work in the fields with her mentor Cinnaveṭai, who lays out for her exactly how the landowners limit workers' agency and access to economic mobility.

Cinnaveṭai's critique of the system of informal labor and its economic and psychological impact on Dalits is interwoven with stories of the land and its supernatural guardians. Listening to these stories (*kata*) and critiques with equal attention, Kaṇṇaki becomes aware of her twin desires (*āca*) for ownership of the land she works and of her own body. Kaṇṇaki and her neighbors, like Anjalai, are Paraiyars by caste and landless laborers by occupation. Cinnaveṭai explains in chapter 8 that most of them are under contract (*pannai*) to a particular farm in the village and therefore cannot take work in the next village for higher pay, because the landowners will prevent them from going there—and yet they go to the landlords' houses for leftovers and brag of their masters' affection and generosity, which goes against Cinnaveṭai's sense of self-respect (57). In chapter 13, Kaṇṇaki's sister-in-law Cakuntala is married to the son of one of the “*eṭṭukūṭṭāli* (eight friends),” who are the only Paraiyars to have come together and rented land directly from their elderly landlord, which they are even on the point of buying despite upper-caste opposition. Despite their apparent success, no one else has “come forward to live with self-respect (*cuyamariyātai*)” (95).¹⁶

In a crucial scene right before Kannaki leaves Karkudal, she and Cinnaveṭai are going to clean *mallāṭṭa* (dial., peanuts, cf. Gunasekaran's *mallaṭṭa*) in a field that lies past the Karuppannacami temple. Kaṇṇaki finds this land enthralling: “When I see this earth and these crops, I desire them (*āca*).” Cinnaveṭai comments: “The body will go into the earth, the body will mingle with the earth as earth. Then seeing that earth, won't you feel desire?” (74). This desire for the land and its deep connection to the body frames the following series of anecdotes: first, Kaṇṇaki recounts how she visited the temple once when escaping from a landlord with some stolen sorghum—one of three thefts that confirm Kaṇṇaki's fearlessness and virtuosity, if not conventional virtue; second, Cinnaveṭai tells the story of the three local deities, brothers who lost a ball when playing together and spread out looking for it to three points where they still remain, watching over all good people who pass through the land thus delimited (229); and third, when Kaṇṇaki doubts if she is a good woman, blaming herself for her repeated miscarriages, Cinnaveṭai responds with her characteristic combination of piercing insight and local wisdom: she observes that this is due to her husband's abuse—“What can god do about that?”—but goes on to suggest that Kaṇṇaki do a ritual bath called “*moṭavan molavu* (lame man's bath)” (78). She tells Kaṇṇaki the backstory behind this ritual, which also gives an etymology

of local place-names, including their own town, Karkudal: a king, his mind poisoned against his son by a new queen, orders his followers to cut off the prince's legs and leave him in the forest. The prince picks up his severed legs, drags himself to the Manimukta river, which is in flood, and sings:

*punkamaram pulāṅki puliyamaram vērkelāṅci
vārālām kāvēri malaipariya cīmaikkē...*

Boiling the beechnut tree, stirring the roots of the tamarind tree
they say the Kaveri will come to the edge of the mountains... (80)

At this, the flood sweeps him off, he is sighted by villagers and rescued, and miraculously recovers his legs, hence the name Karkudal (>kālkūṭal, "rejoining the legs"). Kaṅṅaki worries the townspeople will object to her bathing at the designated place, "Motavantorai," for caste (untouchability) reasons, but Cinnaveṭai dismisses this as "it's not standing water like a tank or a lake, you're going to bathe in running water...what is this *tīṭtu* (ritual impurity) we supposedly have anyway?" (81) In conclusion to this conversation, Cinnaveṭai further points out that the owners of the land adjacent to the town proper are Pillais, Reddys, and a few Iyers (Brahmins), while the owners of the *akkaraveli* and the land adjacent to the Paraiyar colony are Paṭāccis (82); the Paraiyars' landlessness is the root cause of all the humiliations they suffer at the hands of the upper-castes, because it forces them into economic dependence. At the end of the chapter, the word *vairākkīyam* appears for the first time as a synonym for determination: "A *vairākkīyam* arose in Kaṅṅaki's mind that she must get a slice of land in Karkudal for her own, one way or another" (82).

Kaṅṅaki's nascent caste consciousness and desire to own the land she tills is thoroughly entwined with her all too full awareness of the violence of patriarchy and her desire to own her own body. She asserts that she has no desire for a child, but desires the "*paccaimokam* (lit. green, or young, face)" of the grain. Cinnaveṭai objects that she is talking "like she owns twenty *kani* of land," but Kaṅṅaki retorts: "Does the grain know whether I'm a landowner (*kollakāri*) or a laborer (*kūlikkāri*)?" (106). She later admits that she is beyond the point of wishing for a child to distract or protect her from her husband's abuses and would choose to abort should she now conceive: "a child is the one born of desire/love (*āca*). the one born of harassment is not called a child" (116). This conviction finally

compels her to set out on her own, abandoning the hope of land. Yet as with Manimekalai in *Karralai*, I argue that Kaṇṇaki's scrappy, passionate, but ultimately thoughtful intimacy with the land is what equips her to survive the blows she is dealt along the way and finally to stand on her own feet, if not as the owner of twenty *kanis* of rice field, then eventually as the owner of a small fish stall in Pondicherry, where she reigns with the grace of self-respect and self-care.

In Tamilselvi's *Aḷam (Salt Flats)*, the salt industry overshadows agriculture in the local economy, making it difficult for families with little or no land to sustain themselves. Though salt production provides a seasonal livelihood to most of the town's residents, Sundarambal and her daughters avoid it as long as possible due to the harshness of working conditions. Abandoned by their father, they subsist on what they can grow and forage on their plot of land and in the village commons and what they can earn through casual wage labor for their neighbors, surviving in this way through illness, injury, terrible storms and floods, until finally they are forced to take up work in the salt flats. Yet despite these grim conditions, the narrative repeatedly draws attention to the irrepressibility of *velayāṭṭu* (play), *āca* (desire), and *alaku* (beauty) as they learn the uses and pleasures of local natural resources, creating a strong counterpoint to the theme of *vairākkīyam*. In contrast to *Karralai* and *Kannaki*, both stories of migration that draw on the Tamil "epics" to explore women's journeys in the context of modern work, *Aḷam* is firmly predicated on commitment to a single place.

The novel introduces the reader to a wide spectrum of local plants and trees and their recreational, nutritional, and other uses. The girls' childhood games naturally involve the use of local trees and other materials, and their ability to find joy in these things is framed by, and subtly entangled with, adult desires, disappointments, and drudgery. For example, five months after her father leaves for Singapore, Vadivambal gets a scolding because her younger sister Rasambal has hurt her knees falling from a makeshift swing in a *pūca* tree (29). This incident of childhood play is woven into a scene that sketches multiple disappointments of grown women's *āca*: one Meenatci *atta/āttā* (auntie to the mother, grandma to the girls) comes to visit Sundarambal after one of her perennial fights with her daughter-in-law; during their conversation we learn that Sundarambal's father had hoped to marry her to one of Meenatci's sons, but settled for another groom. Meenatci, feeling unwanted and humiliated by her daughter-in-law, now regrets this.

The swinging scene is echoed later in the novel when Vadivambal's irrepressible desire to play and enjoy dances around the figure of her mother, stiffened by hardship and anxiety. At this point, it has become clear that her father will never return, and Sundarambal, concerned that Vadivambal remains unmarried several years after coming of age, consults an astrologer and finds that she has a *tōcam* (fault) that must be removed by means of a pilgrimage to the seashore. On the day of the pilgrimage, Vadivambal and her mother sit with their backs to the dark forest looking out at the *aḷam*, waiting for enough light to see the path; in the pre-dawn silence, the sound of the train gives Vadivambal "happiness" and she feels a desire (*āca*) to see the train (71), but it is not visible. Even in the dawn light, they cannot see the track that will lead them through the forest to the rail-line, so Vadivambal climbs a *naval* (jamun or black plum) tree to search for it. Comfortably perched there, she starts swinging on the tree branch. To Sundarambal's rhetorical questions, "Did we come here to play?... Aren't you too old to play?" Vadivambal simply responds "*ācaṅarukkummā* (I want to!)" (73).

The entire chapter is devoted to this journey of discovery for Vadivambal, who has never traveled this route and has no faith in the pilgrimage, describing in rich detail the lay of the land, natural and human-made landmarks, and their stories: the narrow track through the *karuvaikkāṭu* (forest of acacia or mesquite) just outside the town; the vast expanse of the *aḷam* (salt flats) on three sides, treacherous to cross due to deep mud; the *kōṭiyakkāṭu* (cape forest) to the southwest; the railroad from Agastiyampalli to Kotiyakkarai that splits the *aḷam* in two; the temple of Cervarayan, a local deity, in a *vīramaram* (veerai tree, a kind of small fruit tree); *ivāmarpātam* (Rama's footprint), where Rama came searching for Sita and gazed across the sea to Lanka, and *avuliyākani* (the dargah of Auliyakani, a Muslim *pir*) under another veerai tree, which Vadivambal has heard about in other women's stories; and Akastiyampalli temple, where the desire of the sage Agastya to see the wedding of Siva and Parvati, inscribed in the legend of the temple, converges with the Sundarambal's desire to see her own daughter's wedding (79). Through Vadivambal's eyes, we see the entanglement of human life with the local ecology on multiple scales, from the intimacy of subsistence labor and local ritual to the hugeness of the salt flats—not a natural feature but an indication of the scale of exploitation—and the networks that connect the people of her village to other worlds, by rail-line or by story-line.¹⁷

As the family's poverty grows increasingly dire, the girls discover many kinds of edible plants, and we learn their names, tastes, how to harvest them, and how to cook them. When a terrible storm (*poyal*, formal *puyal*) hits Koviltalvu in chapter 6, the youngest of the three girls, Anjammal, expresses a naïve desire to see it: "Hey...I've never seen a storm...is it going to hit now, *akkā?* I want to see it (*pākka ācaiyārukku*)" (84). Characteristically, her mother snaps back, "You want the storm to hit? I'm praying for it to let us off lightly, and she says she wants the storm to hit. When it hits, you'll know all right" (85). In the wake of the storm, which nearly buries them alive in the house, the family scrounges for various kinds of roots, a preoccupation that takes up the next several pages. At first they eat the immature (*kurutta*) roots of *panaimuttu* (palmyra). Anjammal proves to be the expert on edibility of available plants: she tells her older sister, "Akka, the seeds of these young palmyra roots are like mango seeds." Here begins our crash course on the varieties of edible seeds of tuberous plants: *karaṇaikkoṭṭai*, those in which the sprouts do not grow into roots but shrivel into stubs, and when cut, the flower inside is sweet and a floury texture, unlike the root-bearing ones, which are inedible; *tannīrkkoṭṭai*, those in which the flower is soft and tasteless and submerged in a watery substance; *calikkkoṭṭai*, those of very young roots which spurt a thick substance, having moderately good-tasting flowers; and *mākkkoṭṭai* (not described but presumably larger, judging from the name). Since all the roots are immature, they are not suitable for frying and must be boiled; in any case, starting a fire with damp wood after the storm is not easy, so the girls' aunt resorts to a rhyme: "*pāppā vūttula pāluncōrum vāṅkittāram pattikkō, pattikkō* (I'll buy milk and rice for baby's house, catch, catch)" (97). The irony of this rhyme is that the storm has completely destroyed Vadivambal's longed-for rice crop, which she insisted on sowing against her mother's wishes, and the whole town is to survive the storm's aftermath by foraging. The girls move on to harvesting *kotti* roots (an aquatic plant with purple flowers) from the low-lying fields (*pallakkollai*), now the main source of food for the townspeople. The object of *āca* has shifted from staple rice to scrounged roots and seeds, from the excitement of new sights and perspectives to immediate sustenance; but the sense of play and discovery remains irrepressible.

KĀṬU: LIMINAL ECOLOGIES OF CULTIVATION

Between the formalized informality of *nataṟu* and the marginality of foraging and theft lies a liminal space of localized cultivation. I want to return to the passage in Gunasekaran's *Anjalai* in which the village women joke that she will change from "*vayakkattu Anjalai* (Anjalai of the fields)" to "*muntirikkattu Anjalai* (Anjalai of the cashew groves)." This statement plays on the fertile ambiguity of the common word *kāṭu* (field, forest) embedded in both compounds: people speculate on the slightly outlandish behavior of the groom's party as signifying something about the culture of their native *kāṭṭupuram* (forest town). The cashew region is cultivated—in fact, the cashew is a non-native plant introduced from Brazil by the Portuguese as a cash crop; this history is unlikely to have been completely forgotten, but the crop is now so closely associated with microregional identity that it does not seem foreign. Yet the Karkudal people's impression of the cashew country suggests a kind of liminal space between what is, according to standard dictionaries, the secondary meaning of *kāṭu*, a tract of land—as in standard *vaya(r)kkāṭu*, fields or cultivated land (from *vayal*, paddy field) or in Gunasekaran's dialect, *kollaikkāṭu*—and the other ("primary") meaning of *kāṭu*, uncultivated land (whether forest, jungle, or, classically, desert): for the Manakkollai people, the primary meaning of *kāṭu* is a cashew grove, while for the Karkudal people these cultivated groves of foreign fruit are after all not fields but tracts of entangled vegetation, and thus have something of the forest about them.¹⁸ This strangeness should not be over-emphasized, as the unit of belonging/difference is the *ūr* or town, falling within a local mapping of known micro-variation, and Anjalai's mother expresses a positive view of the match, which will establish a relationship of mutual courtesy and exchange between the two towns. However, the slight "wildness" associated the groves is tied to a perception of Manakkollai and environs as an out-of-the-way place.¹⁹ This marginality is emphasized in some of Gunasekaran's short stories: in the early story "Uyirtannār (Life-water)," written entirely in dialect, officials demand generous amounts of cashews as bribes for making a pretense of seeing to basic services, namely, a water pump, while the man sent to install the pump infuriatingly complains about the lack of good drinking water.

An important point needs to be made here regarding the intersection of local ecology and planetary history in dialect writing. At the heart of Gunasekaran's commitment to his local roots as a writer are

two crops produced in his hometown—the same Manakkollai of the novel—cashew and peanut. Both are non-native plants introduced from faraway places. As noted above, cashews were probably introduced by the Portuguese from South America. As Gunasekaran states in his essay titled “Mallāṭṭaimanirkal (Peanut People)” (2008) the local dialect name for peanuts is *mallāṭṭai*, derived from *Manila koṭṭai* or “Manila nuts,” indicating their introduction through the Philippines (where they were probably introduced by the Spanish from the Americas). As with cashews, there are many varieties of peanut, all with local names. In the essay, peanuts come to stand for people, places, and words that have been overlooked; discussing his lexicographical efforts in compiling a dictionary of the *natunāṭṭu* dialect, now in its second edition, the writer concludes that it gives him comfort to record the words of “this ‘peanut land,’ lying at the edge of knowledge.” The point here is that the ‘local’ roots to which writers like Gunasekaran have such a strong commitment go both deep and wide, they are entangled with planetary routes; local language and practice embody creative responses to changing ecologies and economies shaped by the violence of the colonial past and the “globalized” present.²⁰

The relationship between cultivated and uncultivated land (both, as we have seen, understood as *kāṭu*) has significant ramifications in understanding the precarity and resilience of Dalit women’s lives on the one hand, and the vulnerability and vitality of wildlife on the other. When Valli is showing Anjalai around the cashew groves, she picks up a *vavvākoṭṭai* or “bat seed”—a cashew nut discarded by a bat (*vavvāl*) who has eaten the cashew fruit. She remarks, “When I was little, we’d come running at the crack of dawn to gather these. We’d get twenty, thirty nuts. Now they don’t come around much, and we don’t get many nuts either” (Gunasekaran 2010 (1999), 77). Why have the bats disappeared? The question remains unanswered as the young women hide the nuts in their saris, fearing the *kāṭṭukkāran* or grove owner might think they stole them from his trees.

The liminality of *kāṭu* thus offers a way into the entanglements of microlocal dynamics of belonging and difference with the planetary reach of plants and politics, while the vital plurality of *koṭṭai* demonstrates the stubborn centrifugal force of language even as it bears the traces of “world” history, insisting on the importance of local, gendered practice as that which engenders language and, paradoxically perhaps, enables the sowing of seeds of resistance even to the structures in which these practices are embedded.

CONCLUSION

In an interview on “Why I write” (Kanaiyāli, 2002, reprinted in Naṭunāṭṭucollakarāti, 2007), Gunasekaran responded to a question about the need for “commonality” in writing with his inimitable humor and intensity:

More than the readers, it is writers who put forth the notion that we need commonality. Readers who strive will grasp the writing. When you write with particularity, with regional specificity, it is possible to bring out the depth and breadth of that land, the roots of that culture. Even if the bloody stickiness of a newborn child seems gross at first, the curl of that newborn’s body suddenly snatches the heart of the viewer—like that, even if you feel unsure about dialect writing in the beginning, as soon as readers get deep into it they are so absorbed in a kind of warmth that they feel they can never get out. (350)

“Regional” writing, closely associated with narratives of marginalized communities and women, comes up against the problem of intelligibility in multiple ways, not least in the pressures of a publishing industry at home and abroad that values translatability. However, this writing places an ethical demand on the reader to become intimate with opaque forms. This demand resonates with the work of Gayatri Spivak on the structural illegibility of subaltern agency and with the “subterranean transversality” of Glissant, but it is articulated here through the heteroglossia of novel form, rooted in and routed through local forms of life and language.

The novels of Gunasekaran and Tamilselvi explore, in different ways, the many dimensions of the search for cultural, linguistic, and edible roots and their entanglement with the routes travelled by plants and people in response to their political, social, and physical environments. This writing’s intimate attention to local language and practice, far from making it irrelevant in the “globalized” world, serves as a potent reminder that we cannot pretend to grapple with the “global” present and its still-living pasts without thinking through microlocal ecologies and the marginalized communities who know them. It is also a reminder that diversity is radical: a community is not a homogeneous entity but a living being with plural roots. With this kind of attention, a grain of paddy, a peanut, or a palmyra seed can be seen to hold many intersecting histories and perhaps a radical potential for change.

NOTES

1. The present essay is based on material drawn from two chapters of my 2019 doctoral dissertation, *Tug-of-war: the play of dialect in modern Bengali and Tamil literature*, UC Berkeley, which I am editing for my book with the same title. The dissertation won the 2019 Sardar Patel Dissertation Award, University of California, Los Angeles, 2019, for best dissertation on any subject in India. I wish to thank my dissertation chair George Hart and research mentor Kannan M. for their guidance during the research and writing of these chapters of the dissertation.
2. Gunasekaran 2008, 286. This formulation owes much to Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen* (1993). Although the present essay is less concerned with state power and examines literary representations of rural farming communities rather than ethnography of indigenous people in remote areas whose marginality is more extreme, I find Tsing's sensitivity to the creativity, diversity, and complex gendering of their responses to marginalization highly relevant.
3. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 1987, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press.
4. Throughout the essay, I have used diacritical marks for Tamil words quoted from the texts. I have used accepted spellings for proper names of authors and places when available, and loosely phonetic spellings without diacritics for characters' names.
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHJSzfHNEu0>.
6. The cover of a volume of essays titled *Streams of Language: Dialects in Tamil* (2008, ed. Kannan M., French Institute of Pondicherry) bears an illustration by D. Parkins, courtesy *Nature* 449 (7159), 2007, of plants with swirling leaves and tendrils above ground and their roots below, grasping each other with human hands. Accompanying the image credit is a quote from John Whitfield's article in the same journal (136–138), which reads "...above ground, plants compete for life-giving sunlight, but below the surface a more complex picture emerges..." It is this "more complex picture" of roots that the volume and the present essay tries to keep in mind.
7. Dialect writer Perumal Murugan reports a similar trajectory in "Dialect as creative language" (Murugan 2008), describing his "self-imposed" exclusive use of dialect in his early work and later transition to a combined style. Interestingly, Imaiyan has had the opposite trajectory, using both varieties consistently throughout his earlier work and ending up with the exclusive colloquial of *Enkate* (see Imaiyan 2008, 293–300).
8. Virudhachalam is a sub-district in the district of Cuddalore (Kadalur), Tamil Nadu.

9. “Īramkāyātu... (Compassion [lit. “moisture”] never dries out...),” preface to first (1999) edition of *Anjalai*, 2010, Chennai: Tamizhini.
10. The Tamil language is diglossic. While representations of “spoken” and dialectal Tamil in dialogue have a long history in Tamil literature, contemporary writers have experimented with the use of colloquial or “spoken” Tamil for entire narratives. Though such writings are idiosyncratic, as there is no standardized representation of spoken Tamil, they are not necessarily always dialectal. See for example Imaiyam’s *En Kate (My Story)*. I have discussed this dynamic at length in my dissertation, *Tug-of-war: the play of dialect in modern Bengali and Tamil literature*, UC Berkeley, 2019.
11. For a recent interview, see “Naṭunāṭṭu makkaḷ kataiyai eḷuta ālilla (There is no one to write the story of the people of Natunatu),” *Vikaṭantaṭam* magazine, April 2018, 6–23.
12. A survey of contemporary Dalit and regional writers in Tamil and their predecessors is beyond the scope of this paper. A few writers have been widely translated into English, such as Dalit feminist writer Bama and regional writer Perumal Murugan, while the scene in Tamil-reading circles features too many well-known and lesser-known writers relevant in this context to list here.
13. This is how the author characterizes her work in the foreword to *Karṇālai*.
14. Tamilselvi herself attended this school from 8th–10th standard. See Preface to *Alam*.
15. For an interesting discussion of *oppāri* as a collective rite in the context of “cultivation” on both agricultural and moral levels in a marginalized community, see Anand Pandian, 2009, *Crooked Stalks: Cultivating Virtue in South India*. Duke University Press.
16. The term *cuyamariyātai*, along with its approximate synonym *tanmānam*, were the keywords in the Periyar-led Self-Respect Movement.
17. The cape of Kotiyakkarai, also known by the anglicized name Cape Calimere, is a wildlife sanctuary with dry evergreen forests, mangrove and wetlands.
18. Given the predominance of agricultural land in Tamil Nadu, which leaves very little room for forest, it is not surprising that the meaning listed in dictionaries as secondary is in fact colloquially the primary meaning in some regions. However, regional usage of the word varies. Perumal Murugan, a dialect writer from another region of Tamil Nadu known as Kongu Nadu, has written about the amusing difficulties arising from this word in translation: the translator of one of his novels, a native Tamil speaker but not from his region, consistently translated *kātu* as “forest” instead of field, completely transforming the landscape of the novel. As Murugan remarks, it’s fortunate no one in the novel needed to relieve themselves, as this activity is normally referred to in his region

as “*kāṭṭukku pōka*, to go to the fields” (Murugan 2008, 265). In Tamilselvi’s novel *Karrālai* (*Aloe*), when a woman and her daughter move from Thiruarur to Tiruppur the older has trouble adopting this usage in place of her native “*tekkākka poren*.”

19. Notably, the tamarind grove featured in *Kannaki* is referred to in the text as *toppu*, grove, not as *katu*.
20. Another notable plant that makes a frequent appearance in the work of both Gunasekaran and Su. Tamilselvi is *cīmaikkaruvai*, literally “foreign acacia,” an invasive species of mesquite used as a hedge.

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The Roots and Routes of Mourning: Performing Craft and Community in Migrant Cultures in India

Abhijeet Paul

In the last scene of *Jukti, Takko, ar Gappo*¹ (Reason, argument, and a story, 1974), Nilkantha Bagchi,² a bemused intellectual of the 1970s played by the film's auteur director Ritwik Ghatak, dies of a bullet wound as he is caught in crossfire between the West Bengal state police and the Naxalites somewhere in the plateau-forests of Purulia in the western part of West Bengal, India. As Nilkantha dies, he reminds his wife, Durga, of the character called Madan *tanti* (weaver) in Manik Bandopadhyay's short story "*Shilpi*" (roughly "The craftsman," 1946). In the last scene of that short story, Madan the weaver is seen weaving phantasmagorically on an empty loom; he has no yarn to weave cloth because he has refused to pay interest to the local "yarn controller," Bhuban Ghoshal. Madan is categorically opposed to getting yarn through a mere *phore* or middleman (also a *mahajan* or money-lender) who has no art or craft on

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his side, only managerial or pecuniary capital. The story insistently foregrounds the theme of resistance through the trope of craft work, which must be routed through migrancy to take roots in community. As a result, craft work is not a simple function in the story—instead, it is a form of life deeply bound to community and social identity that is being threatened by commodification. Madan is no ordinary figure of resistance, but an extraordinary figure of individuation and of desire that has not yet been “co-linearized,” to borrow a term from Frederic Lordon’s recent critique of Marxist alienation in the domain of capitalist and other forms of employment (Lordon 2014).³ In short, the identity of craft can only be realized in the affective routes of performance.

Madan’s situation presents moments of mourning and loss of craft, which must now be hailed as event in the era of homogenized capital. At the same time, Madan is mourning the onset of the infamous Bengal famine of 1943, which gave rise to the Tebhaga *andolan*, literally “the movement of the Thirds” (peasants being the Third arm of feudal-industrial Indian society). Tebhaga Andolan, as feminist critics such as Raka Ray have argued, shaped the women’s movement in Bengal despite, sometimes, the relatively weak links within nationalist and especially socialist political modernities in India in the 1930s and 1940s (Ray 1999).⁴

I want to draw attention to *biraha* or mourning as affect from the perspectives of performance, politics, and community. I argue that *biraha* is essential to understanding performance in traditional and non-traditional (virtual and techno-folk) contexts. What do these performances teach us about the roots and routes of craft and community, especially in the context of modernity and migrancy?

ORIGINS OF MOURNING: GIFT, COMMUNITY, AND PERFORMANCE

The history of mourning invokes community, for it is community that feels the pinch of loss first. (In this formulation of community, I include the household and the petty exchanges within its economy, as well as the larger community outside.) Mourning and its relationship to community go beyond a system of pecuniary and monetized carryovers—the credit system—to touch on deep societal bonds. Marcel Mauss, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Jacques Derrida⁵ have spent considerable time explaining the question of mourning as part of a debt-gift cycle or obligatory forms

of exchange, which, I argue, play a role in explaining complex theoretical and practical formations of caste, community, and other relations in colonial and postcolonial places. But western notions of exchange rooted in this obligatory form often fail to capture the moods and rhythms of nonwestern community formation rooted in the performance and performativity of debt, gift, and mourning. The latter are visible in everyday oral and oral-literate forms, often constituting and defining working and migrant communities, which form the crux of this essay.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY: POSTCOLONIAL CRITICISM AND COMMUNITY

The substance of mourning and affect in community has not been adequately covered in the existing literature of work and labor.⁶ In *Rethinking Working-Class History* (1989), for example, Dipesh Chakrabarty missed the opportunity to engage the notion of “community.”⁷ Community in migrant cultures, according to him, is laced with class-consciousness, even if “elementary” (Chakrabarty 1989, 187). In defocusing performance—central to community—and entering the cultural space of modernity with its attendant technological forms, Chakrabarty missed how the performance of mourning constitutes verbal and nonverbal modes of gender and the household. Discussing how, for economic migrants from Bihar in Eastern India, the choice to enter a jute mill was one between wage slavery or freedom, Chakrabarty cites a Bhojpuri proverb⁸ and a song—both taken from Gyanendra Pandey’s work—assuming that the speakers were male, when the voice represented in both instances is actually female. The proverb says,

*Poorab ke deshwa men kailee nokaria te kare
sonwan ke rojigar jania ho*

(One who gets a job in the east can fill his house with gold.)

And the song says,

Railiya na bairi, jahajiya na bairi, nokaria bairi ho.

Railways are not our enemy

Nor are the steamships.

Our real enemy is *nokaria* [job]/Our real enemy *nokaria* is taking our husbands away.

Both of these lines reflect the nostalgia of the feminine, in which work in its modern mode is seen as antithetical to family. Work and family are seen here as being in a long-distance relationship: work exists in a hyper-masculinized space, neglecting the feminine, sexual, and the familial. The preponderance of *nautanki*, a popular open-air musical/theatrical genre,⁹ in which women are shown or heard railing against the money-fetish of modern work, imploring husbands to recognize sex, family, and other pleasures as more desirable things, is too obvious to ignore.

In fact, the lines of the song quoted above form the crux of Bhikhari Thakur's *bidesiya nautanki*, or *nautanki* of (the lover) being in a strange land (*bides*). As Dhiraj Nite has written recently, miners, loaders, fitters, *mistris* (mechanics), and "family-gangs" of *mazdoor* (laborers) appear in dramatic and satirical forms in the everyday performance of *nautanki* inspired by the theme of *bidesiya* (the lover being away in a strange land), which is closely related to *biraha* (mourning or more specifically, love in separation) (Nite 2014).¹⁰ As I pointed out earlier, the important thing to recognize here is that the lamentations may be sung by men, but are always in the voice of the woman, whose *maradua* (husband) stays away in factories or collieries for too long for anyone's good. Even the wages and goodies the men bring home during seasonal and off-seasonal vacations cannot console these women for this separation or *biraha*.

OTHER STORIES OF COMMUNITY, THE CRISIS OF CLASS AND PROPERTY, AND THE PLACE OF MOURNING

A similar story of the unhappy consciousness of community can be raised in our reading of everyday labor and work via Marx. Marx was generally optimistic in his early and middle writings about workers' future under capitalism because the lessons of the failures of Bonapartism in the *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1851–1852) were to learn to strike and act when the situation presented itself. But Marx was gloomy about property and ownership in general. J. P. S. Uberoi makes a nice case out of this lack of faith in the question of ownership of property especially in the young Marx of the 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (Uberoi 2012).¹¹ Uberoi asks, discussing Central Asian peasantry and yeoman farming community, if property should be viewed simply as ownership mediated by labor—and I add, Locke's famous dictum of "The labour of his body, and the *work* of his *hands*, we may say, are properly his ..." ¹²—or by "local community

ecology of local household demography?” Uberoi thinks that the young Marx was gloomy because he worked out the dialectical tension between private property and alienated labor. The young Marx’s conclusions were therefore that private property is the product of “alienated labour” and not the other way around (*ibid.*, 74). The matter is contentious because for labor to be alienated property a specific mode of capitalist disenchantment must come in the picture first. Uberoi does not necessarily deal with this before-after problematic of “property” in a philosophical-literary or a philosophical-anthropological context but pushes us to think beyond the “philosophical” and into the practical problems of the work of the local ecologies that exist regardless of mediations of alienated labor of factory/farm. I suggest that in this somewhat gray area of property-labor-community relations lies the space of mourning, which can fully recall the passage of the “true” meaning of work in community. Perhaps Uberoi’s case would have been stronger if he had used actual examples from the material practices of community in a literary and anthropological sense. Pertinent, the work of mourning reminds us constantly how “transitions into capitalism,” as Dipesh Chakrabarty puts it, are also the manifestation of a certain desire to mark, enclose, and erase. However, what neither Uberoi nor Chakrabarty engages is the object of “mourning” itself, which is hidden in the temporalities of oral, literary, and performative traditions in the context of community. In this precise sense, community is neither to be judged as existing in the “waiting room of history” nor is it to be relegated to a prepolitical or postpolitical stage (Chakrabarty 2000). Mourning helps us treat community in an entangled and individuated manner that has deep literary and anthropological bearing. The question now arises, are oral and literary community performance inside or outside the enclosure of property?

CAPITALISM AND “UNDIGESTED COMMUNITY”

The above structural relationship between community, capital, and labor further helps us understand the ironic and critical comment made by contemporary political activist Gour Goswami in Kolkata. According to Goswami, though capitalism and industrial relations have swallowed traditions and communities through enclosure and erasure, much has remained undigested—*hajom hoyni*.¹³ The gastronomic analogy works as a sharp critique of capitalism: local traditions and community can be repressed, partially co-opted, transformed, etc., but they cannot be

entirely assimilated with capitalism's universalizing histories and identities. Goswami's comment indicates that, contrary to the long-held position among humanists and social scientists that those communities without the backgrounds of European science and reason have found capital's driving logic difficult to follow, it is in reality the other way around!¹⁴ In Ranajit Guha's later work, *Dominance without hegemony* (1998), his historicization of the "appropriation" of Indian pasts (meaning religious, peasant, tribal, and numerous other histories of communities), a struggle that neither Britain nor the colonial nationalist elites "won" (with the consequence that they could never truly transform their "will" in terms of Gramscian "hegemony"¹⁵), resonates with the views of anthropologists and grassroots workers like Goswami to a great extent. But Guha, like his Subaltern and postcolonial colleagues, is more interested in the intellectual and historiographical representation of the moment of "appropriation" of a past, rather than an exploration of the notion of the "community" in terms of material culture and its relationship to work, rituals, and ethics.¹⁶

MOURNING: A SHARED COMMUNITY OR A LITERARY HISTORY?

Below, I attempt to show that there are ways to address the lack of community in labor studies. Mourning in oral, literary, and performative texts and traditions exists on the level of community. The focus shifts from the imagined communities of print cultures to the unimaginable circuits of mourning and affective forms in actual performances in local cultures. While such a perspective destabilizes the conventional tropes of textual study, it offers new possibilities of understanding indebtedness—something that has bothered local communities and high literary artists alike.

Biraha, particularly in the form of Radha's longing for Krishna or the devotee's longing for the divine, features prominently in the Bhakti (devotional cult) in north India and Bengal, while in the Baul sect of wandering mystics in Bengal it takes the form of longing for the *moner manush* (literally, 'human being of the heart/mind' or loosely, the true self). In modern Bengali literature, champions of mourning include the bard Ram Prasad Sen, who composed lyrics and odes to the benign goddess Kali complaining of her distance, and novelist Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay. Mourning has bearing on the twentieth century works

of Manik Bandopadhyay, Jibanananda Das, Kamalkumar Mazumdar, and many others in ways it is beyond the scope of this essay to explore. The Urdu/Hindi author Premchand and his successor, the Hindi author Renu, foregrounded disruptions to the cycle of mourning that reveal the dependency of fertility and other rituals on the relationship between mourning and community. In Bhopjuri performance in jute neighborhoods in Bengal and in the *mofussil* or small towns in Bihar, mourning is tied to the notions of *dukhwa* (sadness), *biraha* (mourning), and *bechwa* (selling), or to the father's grief at selling his daughter to the feudal overlord or to the bridegroom.

A telling example is Premchand's 1930s story *Sadgati* (The Deliverance, 1931) made into a short film by Satyajit Ray in 1981. In both the story and the film narrative, an upper caste Brahmin is forced to deliver the body of a dead *dalit* (oppressed) bonded laborer who dies of overwork in the Brahmin's yard. The dead man's *dalit* friends refuse to deliver the dead as a reprisal against caste oppression, and since no upper caste Hindu person would touch a *dalit* in a caste-ridden Hindu rural neighborhood, the passage of mourning is interrupted. Meanwhile the body undergoes rigor mortis and shows signs of rotting in the heat of summer. The Brahmin is forced to drag the body by the leg into the outer bounds of village. If Premchand wished to set this up as an allegory, we can see how the Brahmin's cycle of debt to his ancestors could be easily interrupted by the *dalit's* misdemeanor of dying on the Brahmin's doorstep. The Brahmin, in fact, says something to this effect. However, the *dalit's* death is caused by the perennial cycle of debt to the Brahmin (it is a fact in the story and generally), who can overwork the *dalit* to death. The rites of mourning are seriously interrupted, and along with this interruption, the negation of the dead by letting the dead rest in peace calls for further speculation on the nature and order of things in the caste-ridden hierarchies of Hindu society and its concomitant moral universe. Indeed, the violence that accompanies the act of deliverance is shattering and calls for reflection on our complicities with it.¹⁷

Let me return to the Manik story about Madan the weaver. The story is built around particular forms of exchange in which Madan has been caught. The vicious cycle of debt (implied in the text) is turned into a gift-giving opportunity in the form of mourning. As Madan simply says in the end, he is a weaver (this is his gift—in the factory context it is a skill, to gain which many believe you must have some gift) and so he must weave, even if that means weaving on an empty loom. Incidentally,

the focus of the text here is not so much on the pragmatic consequences of not becoming a wage laborer (those are becoming evident already as Madan's family alienates him slowly) but on the ethical correlate between work and individuated forms that have concrete meanings in everyday life. Both Nilkantha in Ritwik's film and Madan in Manik's story have made that tough ethical choice from two different positions, which Ghatak emphatically alludes to in the "*gappo*" (story) part of the film narrative.¹⁸

Clearly, to arrive at this kind of story of belonging, it is necessary to be interested in the bulwarks of something deeper—an infrastructure. This infrastructure is built on the solid structures of institutions as well as the affective structures of intuition, beliefs, customs, and rituals. These make up the necessary contexts in which labor, language, and subjectivity become complexly produced things or objects. For the rest of this essay, I explore mourning in the performative acts in jute machine communities, locally known as *chatkalia*. Affects are manifest in performative literature and other oral forms. The phenomenological splendors of the written word, the superimposed sound, the collisions, elisions, and sub-narratives evident in textual histories of community need careful attention.

PRASAD'S *CHATKALIA* POETICS

The Bhojpuri and Hindi poet, editor, and commentator Gopal Prasad (1936–2000?)¹⁹ lived and worked in Kankinada as a weaver in the Kankinada jute mill. Prasad wrote several books of poetry and prose, and edited a monthly magazine called *Ira*. Prasad's *chatkalia dohe* (year unknown, probably early 1980s), *Phoolon mein dupabriya ho gaya hoon* (I have become a noon flower among flowers, 1993), and several other books of poetry and prose are regarded as deeply resonant of *chatkalia* poetics. *Chatkalia*, or the culture of jute, is embedded in Prasad's work as in Bhojpuri songs, skits, street plays, personal notes, memoirs, and the performance form known as *nautanki*.

Chatkalia's affective worlds are steeped in everyday domesticity. As metaphor, chatkalia is rich in meaning, as evident in Prasad's reworkings of Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas* (a revered poem about the life of Rama, hero of the *Ramayana*) and Kabir's *doha* (couplets) in the context of *chatkal* labor. Prasad's work is indebted to a long legacy of writing in Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali on body, desire, fantasy, and labor. In the poem "*Patni* (Wife)" cited below, Prasad writes about the desire of the wife

of a *chatkalia* laborer to be represented in a poem. The poem becomes the site of a complex narrative that draws us into the life of *chatkalia* domesticity, caught in the binds of kitchen, love, and labor, which the wife calls “household war.” Household war creates that place to critically examine gender stereotypes as the wife in the poem questions the masculine space of unionizing and the universalizing theories of toil, labor, and other political forms of representation, which *chatkalia* labor also inhabits. Prasad exposes the inadequacies of masculinity in *chatkalia* discourse by letting the wife speak in the manner of the everyday, which is characteristically colloquial, but perhaps incommensurable with other realities in labor politics:

bathing in the river of sweat that flows
 on our bodies
 our hard-earned labor
 finds such pleasure
 whose pain is and why
 I don't know

the roti I roll out—
 that's a poem
 the stuff you write—
 that is my roti—
 of enemy bullets
 upon my body
 there is no trace

...

drenched in sweat
 every day I survive this household war (52–55)
 [Translator: Rebecca Whittington]²⁰

This focus on gender and the household throws light on our earlier discussion of *bidesiya/biraha* in relation to Bhikhari Thakur's *nautanki* plays.

CHATKALIA SOUND-WORK

In a poem, the Bengali poet, Jibanananda Das (1899–1954) wrote:

“A beggar licks water from the hydrant.” (“Light moment,” *Satti tarar timir*/Darkness of the seven stars, 1948)

This beggar, a destitute and abject person living on the streets of Kolkata with fellow beggars, carries out a long and compelling discourse about justice, water supply, and the basic premises of property—the site of all enclosures. Similarly, in *chatkalia* neighborhoods, it is not uncommon to hear sound-works which resemble poetic and philosophical exchanges amid honking trucks and a thousand bazaar noises. Through a construction of the sound-works and their metaphors, it is possible to show how affects are being exchanged every day.

One of the most prominent verbal forms in the *chatkalia* sound-works is the dramatic form called *nautanki*. *Nautanki* can be accessed in original and remixed forms. The sound-works of mechanical reproduction are as critical as the mental sound-works of poetic representations. While one is original and the other a remix or a copy, it is not always easy to follow the mimetic paths that the original dictates. I will not rush to compare this hybridization of sounds with mechanical hybridization, but I will make note of the “feedback loop”²¹ between original and remix in live performance. The recreation of the originals into remixes follows the logic of available technologies, but first and foremost a desire to listen to the sounds that came from the villages, where oppressive landlords and caste Brahmins turned most people’s lives into living hell. They also remind the *chatkalia* neighbor about a thousand pleas to forgive debt falling on the deaf ears of local moneylenders and mafia dons, moving around in motor-bikes as part of “bike-gangs.” What I am suggesting is that the poetic is too powerful to ignore in the political life of *chatkalia*, although it is perfectly useless in modern and legal forms of negotiations and union bargaining practices. I discuss briefly the “originals” and the “remixes” in light of the exchanges of similar affects below.

ORIGINALS

Popular examples of modern and contemporary sound-remixes include:
 (“authentic” folk):

Arra hilavalu Chhapra hilavalu
 (Arrah shakes, Chhapra shakes)
 Baleswar Yadav, “*Arrah bilavalu*,” 2012

(techno-folk):

tu lagaubelu jab lipstick
hilele Arrah district
 (when you put on lipstick
 you sway Arrah district)
 Pawan Singh, “*lollipop lagelu*,” (looking like a lollipop), 2012

In techno-folk, albums are produced by both EMI-Virgin labels and local producers (often singers-producers) in self-publishing ventures through the internet. The example below is taken from a more reputable production, which is evident in the less mechanized “*jbankar beats*” (computerized sounds):

Bada maza aye rasgulla mein
 (there is a lot of fun in *rasgullab*)
 —Baleswar Yadav, 2012

Bangal mein danka bajaile tohar
Bihar mein danga karhaile tohar
UP mein ghad gayi jhanda
 (you played trumpets in Bengal
 you made riots in Bihar
 and a flag got stuck in UP [Uttar Pradesh])
 —*Tohar kiriya* (your rent), Kalpana Patowary 2012

Place is crucial to understand in both traditional folk songs and remixes. Arrah, Chhapra, Gorakhpur, and other districts in Bihar, the eastern state of India, are frantically mentioned in these performances. Why so?

These places have traditionally supplied cheap labor to the modern Indian economy and the diasporic indentured labor economy as well as

the Gulf economy. U.P. or Uttar Pradesh is a northern state in the Indian union which has significantly greater respectability than Bihar because of its influence in national politics. U.P. is the most politically represented state in the Indian union, with eighty seats in the Lok Sabha or central parliament. U.P. is also known for its caste and communal politics. The most recent incident in memory is the Babri Masjid controversy, which brought the Hindu right represented by the Sangh Parivar (a high-tension family of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and the Bharatiya Janata Party) out of the woodwork. The main issue was demolishing the Babri mosque and building a Ram temple commemorating the Ram Janam bhoomi (the birthplace of Ram, the Hindu god). These references are popular and ideological and do not need further gloss. The fact that they are invoked in popular “item numbers,” songs in which women are portrayed as “sexy”/“hot” dancers to please corrupt men (who are the members of the coal, mineral, information technology, and other political mafia) speaks volumes of the ideology and culture of the viewers and audience. The cheapness associated with the moral universe of the *nautanki*, the item dancer, the migrant laborer, and the audience at large plays on the semantics of power in which a money-spinning industry, sponsored by filmed entertainment industries, big and small, makes profit. The technology used for these productions range from the crude to the snazzy—from mp3 downloads crawling with viruses to EMI/Virgin music labels. (The myth that small town and the districts of India are internet free or suffer from slow download speeds is just that: myth! Since the 2000s, broadband technology and other internet infrastructures have developed significantly to attract whole new genres of self-promoting performers and a mushrooming of websites—see songs list below and their production date stamps.)

As mentioned earlier, Hindi/Bhojpuri musical genres are dependent on the original, “serious” *nautanki* form, such as the work of Bhikhari Thakur (1887–1971), and the more contemporary Narayan Dubey, in jute localities in India. However, the distinction between “high” and “low” is usually blurred in *nautanki* because community performances are shared through mythical, ritual, and social commonalities rather than the hierarchies of print cultures. In this sense, as a form, the *nautanki* provides us with greater flexibility. Contrary to received opinion, the intuitive in the *nautanki* is not at all contrasted with the formal and the rational outside—there is no inside and the outside in *nautanki*—it is performed usually with three-sided openness and therefore calls for

open-ended theories of live performance instead of the more controlled environment of stage plays. Skeptics often rhetorically say that the entire Bollywood or the Bombay film industry is one big *nautanki*. In this sense, *nautanki* is tied to the notion of the excess of emotions that a given play brings to life through sentimentality, melancholia, ribald and bawdry humor, and physical theater. In this sense, the body, the self, and the sovereign are shown in a new light—that of the everyday—and cannot be subjugated, at least insofar as the play repeats the themes of debt and mourning, which require a steady contact with the audience. The power of sounds, images, bodily movements, and the chatter of domestic and community lives are too proximal to be contained by the formality of the literary form. In this sense, it is futile to make a distinction between the high and the low, the useful and the useless, and the intuitive and the discursive. *Nautanki* embodies the individual's sense of being in a community through its everyday performance of debt, gift, withdrawal, renewal, and the many struggles through a form of musical theatricality and histrionics.

CHATKALIA BIRHA: WORDS AND SOUNDS OF BLOOD AND TOIL

The internecine routes of the *birha* affect is distinctly evident in communities of jute through contemporary ballads and performance. This is evident in the popular moment in the 1990s in Indian techno-folk performance that attempted to remix classics like Bhikhari Thakur's *bidesiya* and *birha* and the politics of work. Blood, sweat, and toil are pervasive in popular Bhojpuri and *chatkalia* entertainment as well as poetry and everyday conversations. As the popular Bhojpuri duet folk song sung in the genre of *bidesiya* (foreignness) and *biraha* (separation) in the 1990s tells us:

Woman: *Chhod de chatkal ki naukriya sunaye sajna*

Gharhi karake tuwari sunaye sajana

Man: *Humke chatkal ki naukriya ji choddawa Dhaniya*

Kuch din manwa ke apne manwa raniya

(Woman: Leave your job at the jute mill

Come back home, my love.

Man: You want me to leave my job at the jute mill, my Dhaniya (name of wife)

Keep your heart in reins, my queen.)

In this Bhojpuri ballad, the woman is urging her husband to leave her job at the jute mill. The reason she offers him is that she misses him and so his toil at the jute mill is making no sense to her (anymore). So, she thinks that he should give up his job at the jute mill and come back home to work on the agricultural plot of land. The distance between her and her husband is unbearable. The husband sings back saying that giving up a job at the mill is silly. He reasons that to do farming today, one needs money. And so, he sees no reason to give up his jute mill work because that is their source of income. If that income dries up, they will have no money for food and even water. As a compromise he promises to take her (presumably to Kolkata) in the month of *sawan* (monsoon season). Of course, there is no dearth of Bhojpuri popular performance around the themes of *bidesiya* (foreignness) and *biraha* (separation/sorrow). Television, cable television, mp3 downloads, and the internet are full of entertainment programs celebrating these two themes in Bhojpuri popular forms. The story of this kind of entertainment goes back a long way to the legacy of Bhikhari Thakur, dubbed by the Bhojpuri literati as the Shakespeare of Bhojpuri because of the ballads he sang and the songs that he wrote as a traveling dancing troupe. Thakur's preferred form is the *nautanki*—a popular theatrical form that inflects Bhojpuri sense of identity, especially in the entertainment media. One of the prominent singers of Bhikhari Thakur's ballads is Kalpana Patowary. Patowary is from the north eastern state of Assam but is one of the most popular Bhojpuri singers on the television and cinema circuit both inside and outside Bihar, especially in Bollywood. In an interview, I asked Patowary about the legacy of Bhikhari Thakur and its relations with toil, to which she replied,

Thakur's songs and music bring closer to heart the hardship of the individual in search of work, home, and family. That home and family is always Bhojpuri.²²

The question that arises here is, does this performance help us figure out the difficult part of the day: the toil on the floor that is related directly and sometimes tacitly to the machine? There are no easy ways to answer this question. Based on my experience of witnessing toil and its relations with the personal identity of the *chatkalia* mechanic, weaver, or manual worker, I claim that workers and machines share a relationship on the factory floor that presents specific correlations with labor and work on several charted and uncharted terrains. In pragmatic relations

(industrial, managerial, supervisory, and operational) jobs—mechanical and human—are seldom differentiated. Besides the labor office circulars, *sardari* system, contract worker regimes, and intermediary networks, the supervisor’s notebook (red or black) determines the order and organization of the hours, shifts, and the day on the floor. But each note or instruction represents the deployment of techniques of control over production and maintenance. Indeed, the work of each worker at first appears as a part of the pure logic of mechanical production. But in what follows, we might conclude that is not so. Instead, we might be able to see how machines create stories and how stories are created around the machine. These stories are mostly hidden from log books and instructions, but they circulate as word of mouth, and sometimes reveal themselves in the hurly burly of doing and activities. They also reveal themselves amply in jokes, theatrical notes, and *chai-paani* moments both inside and outside the sites.²³

“BREAKING NEWS” (BOOK OF POEMS)

In a book of poems *Taaza khabar* (Breaking news, 2009), Indu Singh draws on everyday ideas, acts, practices, beliefs and trust networks that constitute labor and gender relations in *chatkalia* lifeworld in Gouripur. In her eighth canto of her poem called “Taaza khabar,” she writes,

they’re big shots these days
 the ration-shopwalas
 sometimes there’s no wheat
 sometimes there’s no sugar
 don’t even talk about kerosene
 lines form, of bricks, of stones
 people buzz like flies
 when will it come—
 when and where will it go?²⁴

In the above fragment, the narrator of the poem depicts the everyday lines in front of government ration shops, where most women and children spend their mornings or evenings waiting for subsidized supplies of basic commodities: rice, flour, cooking-oil, and kerosene. Singh’s ironic commentary on life and politics in Gouripur has left its impact on her students from *Padhao*, a literary reading group that she has helped found. Drawing on her experience of organizing *Padhao* and her work with girls

and women of the *mohalla* or neighborhood in the local library called Maitreya Granthagar, Singh engages the various occupational groups associated with *chatkalia* masculinities and femininities—from the shift and wage laborers to the informal women contract *kachra* pickers to invisible laborers in servitude. The rather tense relationship between masculinization and feminization of everyday workspaces remains at the heart of Singh's work, in which writers, *netas*, *mullahs*, priests, petty-bureaucrats, feminists, union-workers, and many other kinds of individuals in communities are often seen interacting and deliberating on matters of everyday *chatkalia* practices. Particularly relevant in Singh's work is the problem of understanding the notion of juggling a variety of work in *chatkalia* neighborhoods, as no one job is enough to supplement the husband's income or in many cases provide for the family. Singh's *chatkalia* feminist works in the Kankinada-Gouripur areas are somewhat representative examples of cross-pollination of ideas across *chatkalia*, labor, literature, gender, and critiques of neoliberalism and globalization, which have previously found representations in the works of Gopal Prasad and *nautanki* authors such as Narayan Dubey's *bidesiya* theatricality.

CONCLUSION

In the migrant routes of jute roots, therefore, bodies matter, and what matters in those bodies are their sensations, perversions, pleasures, enjoyment, disgust—each in stylized, imaged, symbolized forms through a wide variety of affects. *Chatkalia* articulates the rhizomatic, nervous, obsessed, capillary, and trace-like relationships between material and immaterial worlds of work and life, leisures, pleasures, and a peculiar sense of attachment to technology and mechanical objects. These stories are often iterated in ordinary language or stories are sometimes too trivial and sometimes blown out of proportion, and sometimes seem all too natural and real. One can pick and choose—and the long-standing practice among those who have written historiographies and critical studies of labor within the social sciences or empirical or analytical or cultural research have picked and chosen their favorite stories—strikes, communal riots, union work, policies, development, wage fairness, inequality, welfare, solidarity, working-class consciousness, communal ties, and so on. I am not suggesting that those stories are anomalous in this context—they are relevant and must be kept in mind to make sense of a certain notion of the reality on the “outside,” which impacts the project

of what is on the “inside” of the world of labor and work.²⁵ Be that as it may, outside narratives are not often equipped to catch the breathlessness—which is how stories usually describe the moments in the lives of those who spend their days and nights among machines, processes, statistics, profits, politics, and the intermittent worlds of family, leisure, pleasures, and gossip.

NOTES

1. Ritwik Ghatak, 1974, *Jukti, Takko, ar Gappo* (Bengali, 120 min). Also see, Dipendu Chakrabarti, 2001, “*Ritwiker jukti, Ritwiker takko, Ritwiker Gappo*” (Ritwik’s reason, Ritwik’s argument, and Ritwik’s story) in *Ritwik Ghatak*, Rajat Roy, ed. (Kalakata: Srishti Prakashan), 193–195. Also note, in the Bengali context, unlike in English, the first name is used for author reference.
2. Nilkantha (*nil* = blue; *kantha* = throat) meaning one with a blue throat, is a Hindu mythical reference to the Lord Shiva. According to the *Puranas*, Shiva’s throat is blue because he swallows the poison of the universe to keep it away from the miscreant *asuras* (literally “unmelodious,” or “un-godlike monsters”). Ritwik’s films are loaded with references to Hindu mythology, though his cinema does not fall under the rubric of the mythological.
3. See Frederic Lordon, 2014, *Willing Slaves of Capital: Marx and Spinoza on Desire* (London and New York: Verso).
4. See Raka Ray, 1999, *Fields of Protest: Women’s Movements in India*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
5. Lévi-Strauss had acknowledged his debt to Mauss in thinking about “debt,” gift, and mourning in *Introduction à l’oeuvre de Marcel Mauss* (1950; English translation: *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, 1987). Later, the book was extensively debated by neo-Marxian and poststructuralist authors, such as Maurice Godelier, Jacques Derrida, and Pierre Bordieu. Since then, it has deeply influenced various sub-disciplines of anthropology and cultural theory. See Derrida, 1992, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans., Peggy Kamuf, Chicago: University of Chicago.
6. The work of mourning in community has been studied in anthropology. For instance, caste in Louis Dumont’s formulation as a system of mutual interdependence is entrenched in everyday rites of mourning and work. Dumont and others writing on the work of caste in India do not escape the “organizing principle” of caste, as caste-historians like Sekhar Bandopadhyay, Padmanabh Samarendra, and others, as well as anthropologists like Arjun Appadurai, have pointed out. These scholars reason that the desire to classify and reconstruct caste, an essentially “foreign”

notion, is based on every available straw produced by ethnic, occupational, racial, and endogamous groups, and even on the *varnas*. The result is that such forms of knowledge-production in the colonies have produced lop-sided views of populations and groups that were then classified for the sake of administration and other governmental purposes. See Bandyopadhyay, 2004, *Caste, Culture and Hegemony: Social Dominance in Colonial Bengal* (New Delhi: Sage), 17, and Samarendra, “Anthropological Knowledge and the Statistical Frame: Census in Colonial India,” in *Caste in Modern India: A Reader Vol. I*, Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar, eds. (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2013), 255–296. In our present scenario, caste is encoded in everyday performance of *nautanki* and other spoken and written verbal forms.

7. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, 1989, *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal 1890–1940* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
8. Dipesh Chakrabarty does not cite the original Bhojpuri.
9. See “*Nautanki*,” in *Indian Theatre: Traditions of Performance*, Farley P. Richmond, Darius L. Swann, and Phillip B. Zarrilli, eds. (Manoa: University of Hawaii, 1990), 249–274. Also see, Suresh Awasthi, “*Nautanki*—An Operatic Theatre,” *Quarterly Journal of the National Centre for the Performing Arts* 6, 4: 23–36.
10. Cited in Dhiraj Kumar Nite’s, 2014, *Work and Culture in the Mines: Jharia Coalfields 1890s–1970*, Ph.D. Dissertation, JNU, India, p. 272. The translations of the terms *bidesiya* and *biraha* given here are mine.
11. J. P. S. Uberoi, 2012, “Marxism of Labour or Property?” in *Economic and Political Weekly* XLVII, 32: 73–80.
12. John Locke, 1690, “Of Property,” *Second Treatise of Civil Government*.
13. Gour Goswami has written on the topic of undigested Marxism-Leninism for several decades in little magazines in Calcutta. A clear and concise view can be found in the publication, *Samakal katha* (These times) that comes out from a locality called Khardah in the industrial belt in Kolkata. The magazine, run by Amal Datta, has been in print since the 1990s—the moment of India’s neoliberal reforms.
14. Gour Goswami, Interview, 8 September, 2011. The expression *hajom hoyni* in Bengali means undigested and is commonly used if there is serious lack of comprehension or understanding of a concept or a problem. The expression particularly applies in situations when the outcome of such lack of understanding yields undesirable results. In the case of capital community relations, Goswami is critiquing the absurd consequences of imposing alien values on communities that will not give up their identity/ies as a community/ies so easily. They will manage their encounters in a variety of ways, which most grassroots activists are aware of.

15. Antonio Gramsci, 1971, *Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers).
16. Material culture is a term borrowed primarily from archaeology, architecture, and the material sciences. It presumes a thorough knowledge of the material or matter in question—physical, technical, scientific, aesthetic, spiritual, poetic, etc. It presumes that historical relations are forged because of the presence of matter. Thus, to understand religion, it is not enough to understand religious practices but also to understand the matter of religion itself. Similarly, weaving involves the loom and techniques—it is necessary to understand how the loom works as those practicing weaving on the loom do.
17. Judith Butler, in her book on mourning, 2000, *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, orig. 2003), raises the question of complicities in the carrying out of violent acts in the context of contemporary affairs, namely the Iraq War of 2003. The differences between Butler's and Premchand's or Ray's example are quite large, but the manner in which mourning affects our capacity to be social (and I argue, to belong to community) deserves attention.
18. "*gappo*" is colloquial of *galpo* (story). The word has the connotation of *adda*, an informal and impromptu interaction, a favorite leisure activity among the Bengalis and others interacting with the Bengalis.
19. It is unclear when Gopal Prasad died. Local people have said that he died in 1999 or 2000. It is telling that no one cares to remember worker-weaver poets who have literally redefined working-class writing from inside the spaces of the factory.
20. Rebecca Whittington, published in "Alienated from the Pleasures of Work: Zan Boag Interviews Abhijeet Paul," *New Philosopher*. <http://www.newphilosopher.com/articles/alienated-from-the-pleasures-of-work/>.
21. See Gopal Prasad, *Ira*, 2000. Prasad discusses how sounds in a factory and the bazaar seem to exist in a feedback loop as if one never left the factory though one is singing a fifteenth century Bhakti song authored by Kabir, the mystic poet.
22. Kalpana Patowary, Interview, June 10, 2012. Also see, Sanjiv's, 2004, *Sutradhar* (New Delhi: Radhakrishna Paperbacks), a novel based on the life of Bhikhari Thakur.
23. Along with these, machines, which control the greater part of actual labor tie in with a variety of discourses of techniques and individuations, and their direct and tacit relations with the everyday.
24. Translated by Rebecca Whittington; unpublished.
25. Indeed, a large portion of the historical debate on labor, class, and gender is based on the idea that factory and industrial labor in India does not resemble European proletarianization (Dasgupta, Joshi, Chakrabarty, Chandavarkar, Fernandes, Basu, Sen, et al.). According to this view, labor

in India is more organized around family and kinship ties even though they have continued to toil under a more or less modern and modernized factory system. Thus, there is extensive accounting of community practices, religious rituals, communal relations, gender tropes, and other types of social and cultural formations anchored in historical and cultural research. While these are essential recognitions of the facts on the ground of labor, they do not adequately tell us about the temporal forms, shapes, and relationships that men, women, and some children experience at their workplace.

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Cinematic Representation of Disability from Pity to Human Rights in India: Investigating the Changing Roots and Routes

Santosh Kumar Biswal

INTRODUCTION

Roots and routes are integral realities and have been posing perennial challenges to themselves and culture and society in large. They continue to shape and renew our identities from time to time. Our identities undergo changes, emerging out of dynamic interaction between roots and routes (Giri 2017). Socio-cultural identities have pertinent associations with nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality and the like (Barzilai 2003). The deliberations on socio-cultural creativity and regeneration remain half-hearted without touching upon their roots and routes in the epoch of history to contemporary times. In this context, Jean-Luc Nancy's (2007) has coined the concept of mundialization which is emanated from cross-fertilization of roots and routes, creating an alternative globalization. Cultural creativity and regeneration have been the

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essence of such alternative creations of the world. Similarly, Ann Reed (2015) asserts that roots and routes are the paths of understanding diasporic heritage. Alternative globalization is grabbing the eyeballs of several fraternities worldwide to overcome social, political, economic, and environmental issues which are germinated from contemporary neoliberal globalization. On the contrast, globalization, as a late stage of capitalism, has made innumerable social changes possible. However, numbers of maladies of various sorts have come to the fore, indicating several national and international conflicts (Pokhrel 2011). The subject of disability and cinema can be contextualized in the light of roots and routes. The roots of the disabled in the Indian society are ingrained and keep on evolving. Cinema has been very much part of Indian society and accepted as people's medium in the age of globalization and mass culture. Assessing the social-cultural equations, contemporary theorizations, arguments, and confrontations linking to roots and routes on the mentioned topic have warranted academic prominence. The chapter attempts to contest and interrogate the roots of the disabled and cinema as routes in the process of cross-fertilization and globalization.

Defining Disability

A disability is a functional impairment that could be cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical, sensory, or some combination of these forms (Tanaka and Seals 2003). Here the following definition of disability by World Health Organization (WHO) is helpful:

Disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or an action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives. (World Health Organization 2016)

The concept of disability remains a contested topic and its meanings are interpreted in different communities (Linton 1998). The disabled are subjected to stigmatization, socio-economic, and political backwardness (Reeve 2004). Sometimes their identity is reduced to inspiration porn in course of portrayal discourse (Wanshel 2017). Therefore, disability right

activist are protesting how this marginalized section can be mainstreamed in the society.

Jenny Morris (1991) asserts, “Going out in public so often takes courage. How many of us find that we can’t dredge up the strength to do it day after day, week after week, year after year, a lifetime of rejection and revulsion? It is not only physical limitations that restrict us to our homes and those whom we know. It is the knowledge that each entry into the public world will be dominated by stares, by condescension, by pity and by hostility.”

The models of disability—pity, charity, medical, social and rights—are often debated in the light of social inclusion and activism. Generally, in India the disabled are often treated in pity and medical model. However, the rise in activism and the presence of human right bodies have intensified the level of disability rights. Nevertheless, the level of such activism remains slow-paced. The issue of gender is not free from disability issues. A woman with disability faces double discrimination than her male counterpart. In addition, the plights of a disabled person in rural regions are doubly manifested than his urban counterparts. Therefore, their condition and issues have invited numerous discussions, but in vain. In this context, the role of visual communication, especially cinema in addressing the issues of disability, can be worthy of discussion.

Visual Media for Social Change

When we discuss the cinema and its impact on society on the lines of cultural identity and socio-cultural regeneration, it is equally important to understand the vitality of other visual media as various types of routes.

Patnaik (2019) stresses on television as an influential medium, which enjoys people’s maximum engagement. The televisual representation has its own space in the larger discourse of development, and hence warrants its due measurement. Panda et al. (2012) underlines that certain educational programs in television are useful in students’ formal education. Nair (2007, 2014) observes that Planning Commission in India is suggested to employ visual media for Information and Communications Technology (ICT)-based health governance practices. Further, the researcher has suggested that ICTs along with televised state assembly meetings are required to achieve digital democracy which also enables to reach out to the marginalized. Jaggi (2011) finds that fiction remains an accepted genre in Indian television programs. The researcher navigates the vitality

of soap operas in assessing cultural identity and ethos. Similarly, Malhotra and Subhedar (2017) claim that reality shows are popular in television programs in India. However, the reality shows carry “masculinity” messages, reflecting a mark of gender stereotypes. In addition, Hemamali et al. (2010) find the relationship between representations of violent images in television and violent treatment among children is not normal, raising ethical perspectives to overcome the issue.

News media in visual forms are the possible routes can be discussed in the light of transformations. Youths are more interested to consume news from online platforms (Ghosh 2019). Similarly, Patankar (2015) and Pandey (2013) also finds that *Facebook* has become a platform for news dissemination. Moreover, Jaggi et al. (2017) observe that *Facebook* also accommodates the news on specialized beats like health and fitness. Going beyond, Pradhan (2013) asserts that as news media is equipped communication technologies and interactive properties, the demarcation between news producers and consumers has blurred. As a result, news consumers have become pro-sumers. At the same time, social media has become a tool of media pedagogy worldwide (Kumari 2015). Therefore, the root of news is fast evolving through various routes.

When it comes to cinema, particularly the Hindi cinema in India, it has been found that it is able to disseminate social messages to the audiences by constructing and deconstructing varied social, economic, and psychological aspects of society (Kumar and Pandey 2017). On the other hand, Kusuma (2018) highlights that the South Indian cinema resorts to male gaze perspectives, which further cultivate the gender stereotypes. Apart from the issues in contents, Indian cinema is not free from the shackles of reckless censorship (Jaggi and Thirumurthy 2015) which further stifles the entertainment industry in India. Since the Internet has become of part of today’s life, certain video contents along with other forms of contents cannot be left detached from this discussion. Some video contents go viral than others in virtual space (Govil and Patra 2015). Further, extending the canvas of discussion, Chauhan and Tiwari (2019) affirms that advertising, a form of business communication, is not free from the representation of gender stereotypes and hence, demands the Advertising Standards Council of India to check over such kind of misrepresentations. Overall, Verghese (2017) suggests that media representation which is relatable and adheres to reality, should promote greater understanding and acceptance among India’s diverse subcultures. All sorts of visual communication can be brought for discussions under of

larger umbrella of roots and routs. In a nutshell, visual representation has the connection with community identity and socio-cultural regeneration, which have the bearings on roots and routes of transformations in a given society.

SOCIO-CULTURAL REGENERATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Regeneration can be understood as renewal, revitalization or transformation of a place or community. It is both a process and an effect. It can be manifested in physical, economic, social, or cultural aspect (Alexe, n.d.). Real success of regeneration depends on community engagement and local ownership. For strategizing any developmental process, socio-cultural regeneration is equally important like environmental and economic regeneration (Evans 2005). Social regeneration can pave the way for social inclusion and can strengthen social identity of a community. Here the following thoughts of Stevenson are helpful:

Social inclusion is achieved through economic development which is achieved by fostering the creative industries (which in practice largely refer to ‘the arts’, but discursively embraces the popular and multicultural) in a way that ‘includes’ the marginal and rejuvenates degenerative urban spaces. Through their participation in the economy, the marginal will thus be integrated into society as ‘full’ citizens, and redeveloped urban space will become the public sphere wherein citizenship is expressed and social inclusion affirmed. (Stevenson 2004: 128)

Socio-cultural regeneration can be instrumental to meet the socio-cultural objectives like integration, social cohesion, tolerance, and the formation of local identity. In other words, the importance of socio-cultural investments has come to the fore.

INDIAN CINEMA, SOCIAL-CULTURAL REGENERATION AND THE DISABLED

In a view to understand the socio-cultural regeneration of the disabled in India through its roots and routes, Hindi cinema, popularly known as *Bollywood* and regional cinema has been taken into account.

Hindi Cinema

A film is a mirror that reflects the society. It has the power to change the society as well. *Bollywood*, known for the highest film producers in the world, is not an exception to it. It has been a change agent through numerous films. And *Bollywood* as a medium of communication for the cause of disability, has a pivotal role to bring about changes in Indian society.

Koshish (1972)

In the cinema *Koshish*, directed by Gulzar, Sanjeev Kumar, the male protagonist (Hari Charan Mathur) and Jaya Bhaduri, the female protagonist (Aarti Mathur) played the disabled characters. Both the characters were speech and hearing impaired persons. Both characters were represented as subject of fun for certain amount of time for the audiences. There were certain scenes in which both the characters were immensely mocked because of their impairments. Gender partiality was also shown in the cinema. The character of Hari was the primary and the character of Aarti was the secondary treated in the storyline. If both the characters are critically analyzed, one can find the prominence given to the male character with disability. Dialogues like “Ladakiya aisa nahi kiya karti” (Girls do not do like this) fosters gender discrimination. Probably, it could happen because of maximum influence of dominant class, indicating ideological state apparatus. The theory of ideology by Althusser has major bearings on this social conditioning of characters (Leitch 2001). Social exclusive terms like “Gunga” and “Bhera” were often used. The sexual manifestation in the story was under the carpet. It reflects the repressions from the society (Hey 2016).

The model of pity, charity and medical endorsed in the story, could not foster socio-cultural regeneration and social inclusion. The hindrances for such regeneration were manifested. The roots were not changed. The cinematic route representation of disability can be held responsible for such kind of consequences.

Sadma (1983)

Sadma, directed by Balu Mahendra, Sridevi played the role of a disabled character. Sridevi met with an accident and suffered from amnesia. Even though the story was based on a character who suffered from disability, Kamal Hasan played the main character. In the story, the dialogues like

“Achha tera kya naam hai? Tera naam Hari Prasad hai” (What is your name. Your name is Hari Prasad); “Jo kuchch tum karne jaa rehe ho, kuchch theek nahin laagta” ((Whatever you are going to do does not seem right); and “Ladki ka aage pichhe kuch maaloom nahi. Kaun hai tuu Janata bhi nahi. Tum upper se bolta hai uski dimaag ka thikana nahi. Phir bhi tum usko yahan utha laya. Log kya bolenge” (We do not know anything about the girl. You don’t even know her. Also, you say that she is not mentally sound. Still you brought her here. What will people say) were discouraging and fostered the pity and medical model of disability. The songs like “Ahe zindegi gale lagaa le” (Oh life, embrace me) and “Surmayeankhiyonmein” were sweet and failed to foster social participation of disability community (Arnstein1969).

The story of the cinema encouraged the pity and medical model of disability. There was a bit of social model of disability that was quite negligible. There was a complete absence of human rights model of disability. Inclusive development was denied. There was no space for socio-cultural regeneration. The cinematic route for such regeneration was miserably failed.

Taare Zameen Par (2007)

Taare Zameen Par was directed by Aamir Khan. Darsheel Safary played the character of an 8-year-old dyslexic child. The cinema *Taare Zameen Par* was acknowledged from several critics. It bagged the Filmfare Award for Best Film for the year 2008 and the 2008 National Film Award for Best Film on Family Welfare.

The dialogues like “Duniya mein aise aise heere paida huye hai, jinhone sari duniya ka naksha hi badal diya ... kyun ki yeh duniya ko apni alag nazar se dekh paaye” (There are so many good people born here, who have changed this whole world ... because they have different angels and perspectives); “Har bachche ki apni khoobi hoti hai, apni kaabiliyat hoti hai, apni chahat hoti hai” (Each and every child has their own speciality, potential, and likings); and “Apni ambitions ka wajan apne bachcho ke nazuk kandhon pe daalna ... it’s worse than child labour” (There is a ruthless competitive world outside ... and in this world everyone wants to grow toppers and rankers in their house) reflected the social and human rights model of disability. This art form of cinematic representation could pave the way for socio-cultural regeneration. The cinematic route for such regeneration was highly praised.

My Name Is Khan (2010)

My Name Is Khan directed by Karan Johar, Shah Rukh Khan played the disabled character Rizwan Khan. Rizwan was suffering from Asperger's syndrome. The main dialogue in the story was "My name is Khan, and.... I'm not a terrorist." This dialogue sounds simple, yet it was the base of the film. The whole cinema revolved around this theme. However, at the same time, the issue of disability took a back seat. "Meri ammi kaha karti thi ki duniya me sirf do kisam ke insaan rehte he, ek accha insaan aur doosra bura insaan.....Mein accha insaan hoon, mein, acche kaam karta hoon" (My mother used to say that there are only two types of people in this world. Good people and bad people. I am a good person, I do good deeds). This reflects the social model of disability. In the story, Rizwan's brother was found encouraging by saying "I got success, because I worked hard. Now it's your time to work hard." It stressed that a disabled person has equal potentialities and they too can succeed. The dialogues like "Hum Honge Kaamyab" (We will succeed) was cultivating positive attitude among the audiences.

Overall, the cinema proved to a promising route for socio-cultural regeneration. It fostered social inclusion and participation. The cinematic representation of disability could attempt to root out the social stigmas through various characters.

Margarita with a Straw (2014)

Directed by Shonali Bose, *Margarita with a Straw* portrayed Kalki Koechlin as Laila, a teenager with cerebral palsy. So far it is the one and only movie which focused on gender, disability and sexuality. It reflected the social and rights model of disability. The social and public participation of the female disabled character Laila was delegated power and citizen control (Arnstein 1969). It represented disability, sexuality and queerness through a woman character with disability. The character Laila questioned and argued for her sexual rights and attempted to fill the vacuum between the myth and the reality. The dialogues like "How dare you! This is my privacy" utterly spoke for the right of sexuality. Gathering courage, Laila revealed her sexual relationships with Jared. Moreover, Laila spoke to her mother about her bio-sexual behavior with Khanum and her mother was taken aback. The story stressed on sexuality of two female disabled characters—Laila and Khanum—indicating the subject of human rights for discussion.

Coming down heavily on the wrong notion that disabled women are asexual and they do not have inner desire to have sex like other abled-bodies, cinema with the strong message came forward to defend for their support and hence, brought awareness for disability rights of sexuality. Moreover, the repressions from the society toward disability were exposed through the message (Hey 2016). In a view to protect the sexual and reproductive rights, this cinema tried to strike a right chord within the issues of sexuality, woman and disability by disseminating the right answer to the Indian society. The study of Hindi popular cinema reflects that there has been paradigm shift in representing female characters with disabilities. It has transitioned from *Koshish* to *Margarita with a Straw*. Gone are the days when *Bollywood* used to follow more of pity, charity or medical model of disability, forgetting the social and rights model of disability.

With the release of film *Margarita with a Straw*, the discourses on three pertinent issues on three different areas—women, disability and sexuality—have widened the scopes, unraveling the fundamental flaws in these three different areas. The issue of sexuality of women with disabilities has been marginally touched in the mainstream Hindi cinema. Therefore, there is an urgent need to showcase sexuality of the disabled so that mindset of general public can be changed and the transformation of society can realized.

The story endorsed the social and rights framework of disability. The filmic route for socio-cultural regeneration could be disseminated to the audiences. Social inclusion was grossly discussed in the story.

Kaabil (2017)

Kaabil directed by Sanjay Gupta, the story portrayed two lead characters—Rohan Bhatnagar (Hrithik Roshan) and Supriya Sharma (Yami Gautam)—were the disabled. Breaking the stereotypes to gain sympathy and pity, the cinema attempted to normalize the issues of disability. Heavily relied on research inputs, the cinema was nuanced with the terms of representation. It also subtly highlighted the misconceptions on sex and sexuality. However, it invited certain pitfalls.

The dialogues like “Aadmi Ka Khud Pe Bharosa Uski Taqat Hoti Hai...Tum Aur Main..Hum Kamzor Nahi Hain” (A person’s trust is his power); “Andhere Mein Agar Kisi Ka Saath Ho Na ... Toh Andhera Kam Lag Sakta Hai” (If there is someone to support you in your darkness, then the darkness seems to reduce); and “Hamari Zindagi Se

Zyada Andhera To Aapke Law And Orders Mein Hai” (Your law and order is darker than our lives) signaled the amalgamation of social and rights framework of disability. However, the disabled character starring Hrithik Roshan acted as a superhero fighting off all the villains. Moreover, the film was gender insensitive. Praise to the routes here. The cinematic representation of disability could foster socio-cultural regeneration and social inclusion of the disabled.

Zero (2018)

Made with a behemoth budget of ₹200 crore and directed by by Aanand L. Rai, the cinema *Zero was* released last year. In his most expensive film, Shah Rukh Khan played a character with dwarfism, while Anushka Sharma, a woman with cerebral palsy, used a wheelchair. Shah Rukh played the character of Bauua Singh, the name which attempts to tame the common viewers. There was no doubt that the impact of hero worship is embedded into the character to take the mileage of his stardom and the importance of disability. Anushka played as Aafia Yusufzai Bhinder, a NASA scientist with cerebral palsy. This was for the first time that a woman with disability played a serious character like of a scientist. It provided a space for two disabled characters with a new format of depiction of disabled characters, yet not fully pragmatic in nature.

Katrina Kaif played the role of a *Bollywood* actress who was alcoholic. The complicated love-triangle between three stars, the melodrama buried the critical narratives on disability. Like other previous films, this has also failed to send the real message to the viewers. It had a host of special appearances including Salman Khan, Kajol, Rani Mukerji, Sridevi, Alia Bhatt, Karisma Kapoor, Juhi Chawla, and Deepika Padukone and has fulfilled the commercial dimensions.

Dialogues like “Ristey barbari ka ab huahaibauye” (The relationship is of equality... bauye); “Hum jiske pichhe lag jate-hain....life bana dete hain” (Whomever we chase, we make their lives); “Main akela hi Chala tha janib-e-manzil magar, Log Saath aate gaye aur karwaan banta gaya” (I started alone, slowly slowly people joined me forming a group); and “Sitaaron ke khwaab dekhne walon, hamne to Chchaand ko kareeb se dekha hai” (You dream about stars, I have seen the moon closely) encouraged the social and rights framework of disability. Such kind of cinematic route for socio-cultural regeneration for the disabled could be possible.

Regional Cinema

To understand the roots and routes for social-cultural regeneration of the disabled, Odia and Marathi cinema were taken into consideration.

Odia Cinema

Social Exclusion and Models of Disability

Directed by Ashok Pati, *Divana* (Mad) in the year 2018 focused on the pity and charity model of disability (Darke 2010). The cinema *Sriman Surdas* (Mr. Surdas) stressed on socially inclusive approach. Nevertheless, the song “Dusshera re mili jau Balma” (To get a girl friend in Dusshera) and certain dialogues fostered the essence of melodrama and suffered from Swank.

Disability, Metaphor, Identity, and Deprivations

Directed by Parbati Ghosh, *Chamana Atha Guntha* (Six Acres and a Third) in the year 1986 was based on the pity and charity framework of representing disability. The concept of disability was less known subject in those times. The story sent the message on the exploitation of landless farmers. Directed by Susant Mani, *Mu Eka Tumara* (I Am Only Yours) in the year 2013 represented the weakening ground of disability identity (Zhang and Haller 2013).

Disability and Male Gaze

The film cinema *Pua Moro Kala Thakura* (My Son Is God) in the year 1988 was admired by the audiences. One of the women protagonists played the character of a visually impaired. She was represented as a dependent but was keen on doing so many deeds. The song “Asiba asiba jane dine ta asiba” (A day will come, someone will come) was superficial and enjoyed the state of impractical approach. In addition, it cropped the issue of the male gaze (Devereaux 1995; Walters 1995). Directed by Sudhanshu Sahu, *Samaya Kbeluchhi Chaka Bhounri* (Time Playing Swing) in the year 2002 represented a woman with disabled character which also suffered from such issue. Above all, the cinemas were based on pity and charity model of disability (Darke 2010).

When it comes to the cinema based on disability, most of the stories in Indian cinema are based on charity, pity, and the medical framework of disability. The disabled characters attempt to underpin the overdose of medicalization; and non-existence of privacy and dignity of the disabled. Pathologizing the disabled characters have been quite apparent on the silver screen (Biswal 2019).

*Marathi Cinema***Chaukat Raja (1991)**

Chaukat Raja (1991) directed by Sanjay Surkar which is about a family encourages take a mentally challenged person to develop his skills. The disabled character Nandu (Dilip Prabhavalkar) was shown with sadness and gloom for most of the time with her mother Durgamaushi (Sulabha Deshpande). With little confusion, he was socially abandoned by Rajan Ketkar (Dilip Kulkarni) and his wife Meenal Ketkar (Smita Talwalkar) and their daughter Rani. He was shown as a character of fun, socially awkward and assault. Initially, Nandu was shown in the model of charity and model of disability. He was treated unsocial which reflects the social ladder. However, Meenal could explore the qualities of a good painter, which were latent with Nandu. The song “He Jeevan Sundar Aahe” (This life is beautiful) was quite melodious, but there was no connection with the disabled. However, the songs like “Ek Jhoka Chuke Kaaljacha Thoka” (Joyful swing skips the heartbeat); and “Mi Asa Kasa Vegla Vegla” (How am I different like this) were relevant to the character. The film ended with rehabilitative measures for Nandu but could not appeal any measures from the dimension of human rights. The cinema can also be criticized based on gender and geography perspectives.

Yellow (2014)

Marathi cinema *Yellow* (2014) directed by Mahesh Limaye has won the 61st National Film Awards in the category of Special Jury Award, Special Mention (Feature Film) for Gauri Gadgil and Special Mention (Feature Film) for Sanjana Rai (Child actor). The cinema is all about mother Mughdha (Mrinal Kulkarni) daughter relationship and developmental disability and behavior of a child, Gauri (Gauri Gadgil). Overall, the film was an inspirational to many disabled and sent the message on their ability to overcome the odds, but in different ways. The mother’s approach toward disability was shown effectively. She made Gauri understood about various colors and trained to cope with the newer situations. Even though her husband was not supportive to enable Gauri, Mughdha came forward and proved that a special child can achieve something. She was dealt in an effective manner in which she could know and memorize various types of color. Gauri was found living at her best.

The dialogues like “Special child” and “Yes you can do it” sent a sign of positive message and attempt to change the mindset of people toward

the issue of the disabled. The film dealt with the issues of the disabled from the dimension of gender. Since the disabled character was a girl in the given film, it attempted to highlight the issues of women with disabilities. However, sometimes the dominant portrayal of Coach Pratap Sardesh mukh was seen more than the achievement of Gauri. In addition, the whole film was based on urban setup and hence ignored the aspects of the disabled who resides in rural areas. It is noted here a disabled who stays in rural areas, is doubly discriminated in several respects.

Overall, it is found that the cinematic route of representation social-cultural regeneration of the disabled has not been impressive when it comes to regional cinema in India. Most stories in *Bollywood* are based on pity, charity and medical model of disability. Therefore, regional cinema as a route has not much been socially and culturally regenerated.

THE WAY FORWARD

The portrayal of disability characters in *Bollywood* is not a new phenomenon. From the cinema *Dosti* (1964) to *Zero* (2018), it has witnessed a paradigm shift, showcasing the disabled characters. Probably getting in a nuanced manner, the characters with disabilities are written into mainstream genres including action, drama, romance, horror or musicals. The models of pity, charity, sympathy and medical have been transformed into social and human rights models of disability (Biswal 2017). Thanks to the growing acceptance of *Bollywood* in accommodating disabled characters in Hindi cinema.

Bollywood's prowess in handling the issues of the disabled through characters in the silver screens is becoming pragmatic and inspiring, but it is slow-paced. The authenticity of cinematic representation of disability in mainstream cinema remains questionable. Over the years, the discourse has been manufactured and cultivated for public consumption. The cinema has cultivated the enigmatic position of the disabled.

With an amalgamation of entertainment and reforms, the films like *Koshish* (1972), *Sparsh* (1980), *Sadma* (1983), *Khamoshi* (1996) and *Iqbal* (2005) have the doses of inspiration. However, owing to draw the viewers' attention, the films like *Golmaal Series* (2006, 2008, 2010, 2017), *Housefull 3* (2016), *Krazzy 4* (2008), *Tom, Dick and Harry* (2006) and *Mujhse Shaadi Karogi* (2004) have belittled the disabled characters by poking fun at them. Going in and out of box, *Lagaan* (2001) set an example of mainstream film by making an inclusion of a Dalit disabled

person. There are certain films like *Black*, *Taare Zameen Par* (2007), *My Name Is Khan* (2010), *Paa* (2009), *Guzaarish* (2010), *Barfi* (2012), *Margarita with a Straw* (2015) and *Kaabil* which have laid stress on mental disabilities.

Suffice to say, the roots and routes are changing when it comes to social and cultural regeneration of the disabled in India are concerned. Be it a Hindi cinema or any other regional cinema, the approach toward disability is transforming. The route of such creative endeavor to bring social changes and messages, immensely depends on the attitude of film-makers and the consumption of such entertainment contents. Judicious amount of activism from cinema industry, disability rights activists and civil society is required. There should be adequate amount of research to be carried out before making a cinema on this subject. The routes should be pragmatic so that roots of disability can be socially and culturally regenerated for the greater interest of the society.

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Transnational Communities: The Quest for Development and South-South Connections

Abdulkadir Osman Farah

INTRODUCTION

Transnational communities were in the past categorized as dispersed communities (Tölölyan 1996), struggling with assimilation in host societies (Brubaker 2001); preoccupied with the nostalgic of return (Cohen 1997); long distance nationalists (Anderson 1998) as nationalist movements (Sheffer 2003). In this paper I propose that instead of the static diaspora conception, the transnational community conception is more suitable to a complex and continuously changing communities in terms of locations, activities and networks (Portes 1996; Vertovec 1999; Al-Ali and Koser 2003; Levitt and Schiller 2004). Recent literature sees such communities as transnational families (Baldassar and Merla 2013); as transnational aid workers (Horst 2013); as transnational activists (Hammond 2013a). The conception of transnational communities in this paper refers to evolving diaspora communities positioning

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themselves in between nations, states and societies to access opportunities. The approach also reflects Faist's (2000) argument that research on transnationalism is currently North-South centric and there is a need for also looking on South-South social processes and transformations:

Transnational approaches have centred on cross-border interactions and social formations in the context of international migration, and have thus pointed to sustained and dense cross-border transactions involving North and South, East and West, most research has focused on, and been carried out in, the West and the North. But not only has research focused on these regions – not surprising in view of the fact that most scholars working in a transnational vein were socialized and work in these regions – what is noteworthy is that comparatively little attention has been given to a balanced description of North-South sites and linkages.... If the South is included, they are mostly valuable studies on locales in the South... What is certainly needed is a strengthening of research on the South and the East, giving perspectives from scholars from the South. (Transnationalization: Its Conceptual and Empirical Relevance—Faist 2010)

In line with Faist (2000) and other scholars calling for research expansion, I therefore propose two main transnationalism conceptions. Firstly, transnationalism in which communities are distinctive social groups that belong to the dynamics of nation-state systems. Secondly, a transnationalism in which communities horizontally diversify the processes of obtaining citizenship, precluding exclusion, developing their original homeland, promoting justice and forming novel and complex transnational connections.

The second transnationalism contradicts the more institutionalized transnationalism in which economic and political transactions cross boundaries. This type of transnationalism prevailed for centuries (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). Unlike such top-down transnationalisms, community transnationalism often involves communities with common, real or imagined, history of migration and belonging—as well as symbolic and practical relationships and interactions with a host and homeland societies and beyond (Sheffer 2003). Such communities dialectically engage in dual or multiple processes of, on one hand acquiring and maintaining a proper citizenship, while on the other preventing and overcoming exclusion.

This paper, therefore, argues that transnational activities and connections by transnational communities represent a new form of socio-political transformation. Transnational communities are often addressed within the nation-state frame (Bloemraad et al. 2008; Joppke and Morawska

2014) and also within the marked (Conway and Cohen 1998; Morgan 2001). So far, few studies dealt with transnational communities beyond the nation-state frame—discussing methodological approaches (Wimmer and Schiller 2002); the significance of religion (Mandeville 2003); as transnational social movement involved in transnational space formation (Sökefeld 2006). This paper seeks to fill the void in discussing transnational communities from the sociological and literary perspectives. As studying transnational communities remain inter-disciplinary with the application of multiple methods and approaches (Tölölyan 2007), this paper departs from a qualitative interviews and observations conducted in multiple locations (Africa, Asia and Europe). The focus rest on the activities of the community that this paper tries to understand and interpret critically in discussing the dialectics and inconsistencies in terms of what Werbner refer to “The Materiality of Diaspora—Between Aesthetic and ‘Real’ Politics” (Werbner 2000).

BACKGROUND: EMERGING TRANSNATIONALISMS

When a delicate and overcrowded makeshift boat—massed with frightened youngsters from the Horn and the wider African continent—tragically capsizes in the Mediterranean Sea—the public becomes alarmed and demands border closures and prevention of the youth from leaving their home countries (Follis 2015). The immediate concern herewith reflects on conventional ideas of migration as movement from one country to another—or from one region to another with possibilities of returning if opportunities arise. At destination countries, people call for migrant/refugee integration.

However migrant realities in general, and the Communities in particular, integration or assimilation is not an end itself. People remain transnational and are in constant move whether at the local, national or international levels. Consequently, Communities continue to transnationally form the countries and the societies they left as well as the countries they migrate to. For example, the first African transnationals migrated to near abroad (East and central Africa, Asia and the Arabian Peninsula) due to empire prioritizations and trade enterprises. Later due diverse society-state transformations in the region—as well as global ideological changes—second wave of transnationals moved to the west—including Europe and America. Currently, a third wave of African transnationals

pursues transnational formations in emerging powers such as China, India and South Africa.

Unlike other ethnic transnational formations, Some African transnationalism lacks clear cut reference to a nation-state. Instead communities prefer linking to ancestral regions and provinces. The geography of the community therefore reflects not nation-states and regions but city and province connections. Accordingly, for instance, cities like Mogadishu becomes transnationally linked not to other world capitals but to Dixon, Canada (Kusow and Bjork 2007) and in recent years to Minnesota, the USA.

Transnational formations occur in the world simultaneously. Communities not just form and contribute to the societies they migrate to, but also to the societies in the Horn of Africa. This includes the transfer of transnational ideas, politics, language, consumerism and culture. With new forms of complex transnational formations, new types of transnationalism emerge. Transnationalism in which often people quest for justice and development, transnational citizenship, transnational education and entrepreneurship emerge.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME: FROM NATION-STATE TRANSNATIONALISM TOWARDS COMMUNITY TRANSNATIONALISM

State Transnationalism (the Vertical Conception)

In conceptualizing the state through “Westphalian” terms Max Weber portrayed the state as a “political community” (Weber 2013: 160). Such political construction-based on organizational hierarchy and administrative system—was institutionalized in Europe and later through colonization and globalization—expanded as the norm for nation- and state-building processes in most parts of the world (Renan [1882] 1996; Anderson 2006). Despite this formal expansion even powerful states fail to exercise complete territorial control (Risse 2013: 3–5). In addition, corporate transnationalism eclipses states due to multiple transnational “complex interdependencies” (Keohane and Nye 2000). For Africa, people still contest or remain hesitant to embrace Westphalian state conception (Laitin and Samatar 1987: 88–93). A nation often assumed homogenous and with traditional form of democracy (Lewis 1999: xi).

A thesis confronted with heterogeneous social, economic and linguistic evidences (Ahmed 1995: xi; Kusow 2004).

Building on Habermas' conception of the "public sphere" (1989, 2009) in which the nation-state is constructed through public interaction and discourse, recent research (Silva and Vieira 2009; Castells 2013; Regilme 2016; Rundell 2016) characterizes the nation-state as a continuing process of reflection, reinvention and recreation undertaken by diverse societies. Under such processes, people continuously form and shape whatever type of nation they imagine and want to be a part of.

In expanding Habermas' nation-state centric public sphere Nancy Fraser argues for a non-nation-state centric transnational public spheres.¹ Such transnational approach stresses new forms of transnational engagement creating transnational public spaces (Williams and Warren 2014). Departing from this theoretical position, this paper proclaims the nation-state frame been insufficient to explaining the complexity of transnational connections—particularly not transnational formations involving ethnic communities. To better understand the dynamics of such type of transnational connections this paper mainly draws on the conception of community transnationalism.

Community Transnationalism (the Horizontal Conception)

Relaying mainly on Max Weber's idea of nations as imagined communities in which transformation of "peasants into Frenchmen" occurs—Hannerz suggests that people have capabilities to move beyond the dichotomy of *Gemeinschaft* vs *Gessellschaft* towards a "Global *Gesellschaft*" of cosmopolitan identity (Hannerz 1996: 100–111). This is connected to the emergence of "transnational commons" or "shares resources" linking social and political structures to economic, environmental and human development domains (*ibid.*). Moreover, borrowing on Kroeber's idea of *ecumene* consisting of "an interwoven set of happenings and products" Hannerz argues that organizations, meanings and actions hang together (*ibid.*, p. 7). This web of connections, he argues, promotes cultural formations across boundaries. Processes that occur within four levels of societal contexts: *everyday life, asymmetrical forms of the state, the market and purposeful change*. Although stressing the crucial link between the local to the global, Hannerz identifies no specific transnational societal structures that cross national boundaries (Durrenberger 2001).

Furthermore, Hannerz distinguishes “transnational connections” from “globalized” or “internationalized” connections. For him the term “globalization” appears too broad for cross border activities uncontainable within nation-state context. Instead, he suggests, the term “transnational”, referring to current global connections in “scale and distribution” taking us beyond international entities such as “nations, states and corporates”, and in highlighting the role of “individuals, groups, movements and business enterprises” (ibid., p. 6). More significantly, the term “connections” entails what Hannerz sees as “looking at the world in terms of interactions, relationships and networks” (ibid., p. 8).

So far, few studies focusing on transnational “network” and “Simultaneity” sought to concretize transnational connections beyond cultural frames (references). These include research on diverse networks transnational communities often create: “villages” (Levitt 2001), “transnational circuits” (Bissell 2012); highlighting the simultaneity of transnational community networks due to advanced technology and communication that linking multiple spaces (Levitt and Schiller 2004; Vertovec 2001; Mazzucato 2008; Van Dijk 1997; Mazzucato et al. 2004).

By presenting concrete empirical cases on how such connections evolve and form across boundaries, this paper seeks beyond the vertical state-oriented transnationalism in stressing horizontal community centred transnationalism with non-state centric varieties of community based transnational connections. Based on extensive research among Somali transnational communities in Africa, Asia and Europe I herewith suggest varieties of transnational community engagement. This paper considers the activities of the transnational community—not just a means to cultural or nation-state structural ends—but dynamic processes of having own ends in the pursuing of citizenship, justice and development and the formation of novel transnational connections.

THE PURSUIT OF COMPLEX CITIZENSHIP

Transnational communities often combine the deployment of ethnic identity with the quest of citizenship rights in transnational spaces (Soysal 2000). For instance, people cherish holding citizenship privileges such as passports but refrain from cultural identification with the citizenship providing country. However, research have shown the existence of generational difference as younger generations appear more host country oriented and has stronger citizenship attitudes towards the host

country compared to the country of origin (Hussain and Bagguley 2005). In general though, communities instrumentalize citizenship rights for practical reasons such as mobility and accessibility.

Scholars refer this phenomenon as an external citizenship (Bauböck 2009). For the communities the external citizenship also reflects the diversification of belonging (Faist 2000). Through, for instance, the strategic use of citizenship and migration, people often plan mobility, return, optimizing financial as well as social network opportunities in many countries (Waters 2003). Due to the possibility of claiming citizenship without compromising original identity, transnational communities disrupt the presumed link between citizenship, state and nation. Despite this fact, citizenship procedures remain nation-state domain, while research on how transnational communities instrumentalize citizenship opportunities remains marginal (Nagel and Staeheli 2004). Somali transnational communities are probably unique in this regard. This is a community that for decades so far operated transnationally without direct reference to a cohesive nation and functioning nation-state. This position makes them both vulnerable—as there is not a nation-state to lean to in crises periods. But at the same time, this provides the community essential flexibilities to combine and experiment. This paper, therefore, sees the activities and the living experiences as well as pursuing of well-being by the communities as the main objective—and not the static identification with general societal structures.

Similarly, our research confirms that transnational citizenship—though creating beneficial opportunities—mostly inaugurate informal transnational organization and periodically also sustain hierarchy in the community. While, for instance, transnational communities, with western citizenship lead a transnational life occasionally accessing different resources and capabilities (Al-Sharmani 2010), Communities with legal and citizenship challenges suffer from labour market exclusion as inaccessibility to social and citizenship rights (Fangen 2007). After committing some offences in host countries, some of them have been deported to volatile Somalia where they confronted further exploitation (Peutz 2010).

Though Communities—due to civil wars and dispersal—remain scattered around the world—they still have some form of Somaliness in common and this is—according to some respondents, what the community should preserve.

Communities need to overcome internal unnecessary division (constant debates on language difference and food consumption etc.). They need to organize where they are. Actually Somali Transnational communities can lead and protect Somaliness at the global level. (Interviews, October 2010)

Moreover, transnational communities are not just the communities abroad living in host countries. An increasing number of transnational community returnees challenge the often prevailing Somali categorization of “*Dal joog*” people living in the country and “*Dibad Joog*” people residing in the diaspora. Many Communities have returned to the homeland, particularly to more peaceful regions (Lindley 2010: 81). Many others also participate in the governance of the country both at regional and national levels (Hammond 2013b). Here transnational communities contribute to the development of their country—as they return not only with economic capital but also with social and educational competencies acquired during residence in more developed host countries:

I returned because I feel for my country and for patriotism. I want to help and help myself. I cannot stay and relax in Denmark while my country suffers. When I returned I started working for a firm for a salary of 500 USD. I felt that with my experience I have helped people around me—indirectly gave them jobs etc. Through my presence and contribution I felt many of them learnt from me. For instance the way I work and my conduct- I studied business. (Interviews, November 2010)

Some have, however, questioned the developmental and altruistic motives of such return:

In my opinion communities who return does so because they are looking for qabiil (clan). There is no difference in the communities- all are suffering. The main problem is culture and religion. (Interviews, October 2010)

According to Bauböck and Faist, globalization and increased transnationalization provides communities opportunities not to assimilate into their host societies (Bauböck and Faist 2010: 300–301). This happens because in certain states, multiculturalism and dual and transnational citizenships accommodate ethnic communities’ multiple priorities and connections (Cohen 1997). It is not only communities, but also countries that also strategically exploit transnational prospects. Certain nation-states

encourage their transnational communities to obtain foreign citizenships with the aim of gaining extraterritorial power and enhancing transnational political capacity through, for instance, the communities' economic remittance (Sheffer 2003: 123).

THE PURSUIT OF COMPLEX JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT

Confronting the injustices of poverty and insecurity—Amartya Sen connects the prevalence of injustice with poverty, though it should be noted that he does not directly advocate for the universal, idealistic eradication of injustice and poverty. Instead, Sen reiterates the need for concrete steps to reduce poverty and insecurity with the aim of increasing human dignity and coexistence. Such concrete steps, he argues, can address human needs and capabilities in the short term while helping overcome structural social injustice in the longer term. We can, for instance, start with feeding, rescuing, caring for, vaccinating and educating people before undertaking any other social endeavours. Here, the focus rests on the realization of justice in real life situations, and the message is that it is best to implement justice practically and gradually instead of rhetorically engaging in imaginary or “revolutionary justice discourses” (Sen 2000). For Sen, distributing wealth from richer to less privileged constituents of the society is not enough. There is also the moral responsibility of giving people capabilities and opportunities so that they become engaged citizens who can participate in and contribute to social activities (Sen 2011). Clearly, poverty is not just a matter of suffering from economic deprivation; food scarcity and hunger also undermine the independence, integrity and dignity of the afflicted people. Similarly, the combination of insecurity and poverty compromises people's overall ability to actively participate in society (Nussbaum 2011).

Thus, the human welfare-centred conceptualization of justice contradicts the often proclaimed state-centred Weberian approach of linking justice with the consolidation of state apparatuses and the monopolization of violence (Weber cited in Poulantzas 2000: 80) which often leads to patrimonialism or personal rule that enriches relatives and political cronies while impoverishing the greater part of the society (Fukuyama 2014: 285–289; Sen 2008).

The Somali case, more than others, illustrates the direct link between extreme poverty and insecurity. The Horn of Africa nation is one of the world's poorest and most insecure countries. While religious and cultural

differences had, until recently, less significance, the mismanagement of the political economy for decades remained the main cause for excessive violence and impoverishment. As a result of poor leadership and gross mismanagement by the dominant political system, which applied no focus to fostering human capabilities, people eventually failed to perform, participate, or contribute positively to society.

In contrast, social movements at the grassroots and civil society level represent a critical platform from which to ensure proper social justice (Smith 2001). Such associations not only articulate broad social justice norms but also help consolidate democracy and transparency by defending ordinary people from dictatorships. In accordance with this trend, transnational communities strive to ensure that people attain social respect while pressuring states to avoid violations of basic human freedoms. Their main goal is the appropriation of state order with an expanded social dimension. If states comply with such demands, justice parameters shift beyond enforcing laws and security procedures and begin to prioritize rudimentary welfare for a larger body of people.

Transnational community efforts—The global Somali diaspora, for example, has been involved through its efforts at remitting, investing and empowering.² The diaspora also plays a central role in restructuring and reconstituting the Somali national and state identity. While often targeting grassroots needs, some emerging transnational community organizations support and advocate for justice, poverty alleviation, education, female empowerment and general progress in a developing country.³ Professor Suleiman, who heads a successful transnational higher education organization, explained its rationale in an interview with Somali media:

When the state collapsed, serious conflicts and destruction happened. Those who most suffer are the youth and their education. If there is the slightest instability, education is suspended—if there is fear, wars, and lack of administration then education will suffer—The education will be the first to stop. Even hospitals continue their work as they care for the wounds et cetera but education stops. Those at the universities fled abroad, those at the secondary and lower classes could not continue their education—nations where its youth is on the street will not get stability. A minority was fortunate to flee abroad with their parents, but the majority stayed behind. So children on the streets who don't have a place to study are problematic. It was the diaspora that came with the idea to do something. There are two ways you can cope with youngsters. You give them education so they can get jobs later on. Or you give them jobs. ... The

education comes first. We started to start universities, not like the West to teach and research—but to bring the hope back to the youth, to create a peaceful atmosphere and culture—to return hope to the people—that was the main objective—hope, stability, and to get the youth back to schools. (my translation)

Because members of the Somali diaspora originally fled from insecurity, injustice and poverty, their initiatives take a leading role in the reconstitution of a peaceful society. Migration is an integrated part of human life. We migrate to survive and maintain a dignified life. Communities fled from *fitnah* (widespread intolerance and violence), poverty, exclusion and injustice.

While Communities have been migrating for more than a century in search of livelihoods overseas, in recent years, the seemingly endless civil strife and uncertainty over the fear of the future have driven many young people, despite the risk of drowning at sea, to search for tolerable and decent life opportunities in wealthier parts of the world (Ciabbari 2014). Significant portions of the Somali diaspora comprise refugees and their dependents that fled their homeland following persecution and economic deterioration under military rule. Many others joined after the collapse of the regime, fleeing from the extreme civil war that generated perpetual poverty and insecurity.

Therefore, the Somali diaspora continues to be involved in and to contribute to homeland developments. Most feel guilty and express a willingness to share the privileges acquired in host countries with their distressed relatives back home. Others are involved in the movement for social status and economic reasons. The diaspora contribution is not restricted to economic and humanitarian matters but also involves political mobilization initiatives and the acquisition of sociocultural capital. For instance, Communities who remained in the homeland often receive diaspora returnees as heroes, sometimes more appreciated and respected than the local leaders:

When you return, people in the homeland will welcome you better than their rulers and local chiefs. (Interviews, February 2012)

As remittances are often deducted from diaspora members' limited incomes, their continuation might negatively impact their donor's well-being in the host country; so established transnational communities aim

at contributions beyond remittances. Hence, members consider replacing monthly monetary remittances:

We are trying to help Somalia in such a way that they can overcome poverty. We, for example, invest in small projects for about 2,000 USD. In this way, we will replace dependence on remittance. (Interviews, February 2012)

Mulki, a 39-year-old Somali woman in Denmark, is married and has several children, and she also remits money to her homeland. She and others in a Somali women's association in Denmark aim to change the system of making monthly remittances to Somalia to a long-term strategy of empowering women and children in the homeland. Mulki and the other women in the organization believe that people in Somalia, particularly women, should receive micro-credits of about US\$2000 to make them independent in the long run. Communities have reduced household poverty through such initiatives (Adams and Page 2005).

In addition, transnational communities are among the first to respond to humanitarian needs in the homeland (Nicholas 2012). As seen, for example, in the famine of 2011–2012, Somali transnational communities donated to famine-hit regions. In the study *Cash and Compassion: The Role of the Somali Diaspora in* contribute to about 50% of investment in Somalia—significantly impacting not just the economy but the overall well-being of the society (Hammond et al. 2011). Furthermore, in relation to community empowerment and in partnership with NGOs, privately owned educational institutions in major cities provide classes for formal judicial education. One well-known NGO, the Netherlands-based NOVIB, supports local human rights-focused Somali NGOs in documenting human rights abuses. The organization offers countrywide training on investigation, report writing, lobbying and the creation of archives. Also, a local NGO called Haqsoor has been established to form and monitor community policing initiatives through which local elders will have a formalized relationship with public authorities. In another context, resource groups established civic institutions such as Madani in Hawatako, a community-driven initiative based on Somali *xeer*, in which local residents “committed themselves to joint neighbourhood defence, raised local money and hired an independent militia to protect citizens” (Le Sage 2005). Since the state lacks the capacity to collect taxes and deliver services, transnational communities currently mobilize funds

such as the “Fursad Fund” to provide opportunities for the youth, the unemployed and the poor (Winsor 2016). Others call for action to raise funds to subsidize wages for the Somali National Army, which often does not get paid for months due to corruption. Leaders of the African Union Mission in Somalia also recognize Somali transnational communities’ potential capabilities as “the champions of change and growth the country needs”.⁴ It will, however be difficult to bring the communities’ efforts to fruition without comprehensive national reconciliation and the subsequent formation of national state institutions.

EMERGING TRANSNATIONAL SOUTH-SOUTH FORMATIONS

Since countries like China and India become economically and politically assertive, new forms of state and society transnationalism emerged (Amar 2012; Gray and Gills 2016). Such structural transformation at the state level gives way to social transformation. In the *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault describes a process where individuals and groups aim at moving beyond state structures. This is a situation in which “*The political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the State and its institutions but to liberate us both from the State and the type of individualization linked to the State. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity*” (Foucault 2005: 54). For Bourdieu (1986, 1990) it is not easy to overcome institutionalized bureaucratic systems but individuals and social groups can strive at achieving favourable institutional positions in accumulating diverse forms of capital in multiple social fields. Such pursue of capital diversification takes place in relation to what Fergusson refers to *transnational typographies of power* simultaneously occurring at the local (community, civil society), national (state, society) and transnational levels (transnational institutions & organizations) (Ferguson 2006: 90–94)

Our research finds that there are emerging transnational Chinese spaces in Africa as well as African spaces in China. The willingness of individuals and groups to moving beyond state structures in accessing and accumulating resources generated such transnational space formations.

According to Howard French (2014) in recent years increasing number of Chinese created transnational spaces in Africa mainly to gain economic opportunities. French estimates there are at least two million Chinese in Africa are involved in trade and economic development. Most are in Africa to stay as Africa provides better social and economic opportunities.

On the African transnational community site, research conclusions by Bodomo (2012) shows that Africans got economic and educational opportunities in China. Africans in China are traders, Students, professionals—teachers—professors, officials, Tourists and temporary business travellers. Bodomo argues that The African presence in China will determine the future relationship between China as emerging global power and Africa.

Additional research confirms increasing “grassroots transnationalism” between emerging powers such as China and other developing countries. Important factors that sustain this trend include China’s developmental seriousness and constructiveness towards Africa (Naidu 2007) as well as its developmental generosity in giving aid to Africa (Gregory and Quadir 2012). In general therefore Africans consider China trustworthy and respectful role model for the developing world (Sautman and Hairong 2008).

The current research confirms a largely positive perception towards emerging powers like China. For the community the South-South link through China transformed African image. Community members, for instance, argue that before China’s rise, ordinary people’s ideas and opinions were not taken seriously. In certain cases, people were considered ignorant, poor and not been able to pursue agency and imagine progress. Ordinary people can now access knowledge and initiate relevant projects on their own. In the past, even if a country wanted to develop industry, the process often took generations, but now both at project as well as industrial levels projects and ideas are co-developed transnationally and instantly. As the following remark indicates, it is not just people that adjust to industrial development, but industrial development also adjusts to people’s needs and priorities:

A normal person – an individual in Africa – proposes an idea about something he needs to be manufactured. Then his/her idea is quickly transformed into a reality where the product is produced. This person found some people who will listen and take his/her ideas and wishes seriously. Such activities take place all the way from Africa to Dubai and China. (Interviews, November 2014)

The willingness to present and co-develop ideas rests on trust between societies where a legacy of direct colonialism does not mediate relationships. People don’t normally consider China as an oppressor and

colonizer. By contrast, they see China as a nation of people who historically sacrificed and managed to develop from being poor to now being among the wealthiest.

People consider China as a role model. People are not afraid of the people from newly powerful countries. (Interviews, November 2014)

There are new countries in the world where people have more trust. In these countries you find what you want. These countries did not colonize Africa. The other countries were colonizers. People consider them as role models. People are not afraid from the people of newly powerful countries. (Interviews, November 2014)

Colonization often creates barriers for the majority of the people. In certain contexts, it was just the elite who had access to opportunities to acquire knowledge. Now, with technological progress and its spread to new emerging powers, ordinary people have the opportunity to overcome both the expense and accessibility obstacles they use to confront:

In Mombasa, the individual gets what he wants without leaving his/her house. There is no need for long costly travels. There is established trade, commercial links, openness and exchange of knowledge. Many students study in China, for example. These students could not get a good education before. (Interviews, October 2014)

Communities think China provides opportunities and accessibility of better education:

In Mombasa the individual gets what he wants without leaving his/her house. There is no need for long costly travels. There is established trade, commercial link, openness and exchange of knowledge. Many students study for example in China. These students before could not get a good education. (Interviews, October 2014)

Although the south-south connection and transnational communities' engagement in China appears horizontal and more accommodating, it is the business and the student classes that dominate the connection. These are privileged transnational middle class that escaped poverty and marginalization traps both in the West and in the Horn of Africa.

Challenges to balance material and human resources—Development represent complex multidimensional processes involving both human agency and the accumulation of material wealth and resources. Human potential, freedom and dignity ensure development in the long term. China brings a lot of material goods. But China concentrates on development and unlike western countries focus less on human rights and democracy debates.

The Chinese just work and build they don't interfere internal issues. (Interviews, November 2014)

There is difference between the old China and the new China. The old China use to just build and support, the current China makes business and profit. (Interviews, October 2014)

Organizationally, Somali transnational communities in China could be divided into two main groups. The first are a transnational entrepreneurship and trade involved groups. These entrepreneurs link China with Africa (Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria Congo and Angola and many others). From their Chinese networks they get accommodation (residence & business environment) and many of them have transnational citizenships. One of their major tasks is to compete with established transnational Indians and Chinese companies and communities in the African market. The second group is students, many of them with transnational citizenships, pursuing transnational education in China. Many of them study at Chinese universities (Medicine, Engineering, Business and IT). They are attracted to reasonable fees and scholarships (Haugen 2013). After ending education many get work opportunities in China. At the beginning they may confront language and cultural challenges.

Compared to the West and to the Middle East the presence of transnational communities is rather limited but increasingly influential. With increasing educational, economic and developmental exchanges the south-south transnational connection have the potential to compete and challenge the traditional south-north relations.

CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH PROSPECTS

In this paper we identified a pattern of activities in which Somali transnational communities engage in pursuing transnational citizenship in

multiple locations as well as engaging transnational justice and development in the homeland and beyond. With the aim of accessing opportunities provided by emerging global powers such as China, the communities also contribute to the emerging south–south connections. The activities of the transnational community reflect an agency as well as a process of adjustment into macro-structures if the community finds crucial for its well-being

This research does not provide a complete overview of Somali transnational communities and their experiences, but presents a glimpse of the activities that constituents of the community are involved at the transnational level.

We argue that the activities of transnational communities have implications for nation-state centric theorization on the organization and interaction of societies. Such approaches present social and political connections in dualistic terms that presumably end history in, for instance, dividing societies into winners and losers (Fukuyama 2006), in perpetual civilizational conflict between different antagonistic nations and communities (Huntington 1997) or a process in which societies descend to “the time of the tribes” in which people abandon the virtue collectivism and isolating individualism (Maffesoli 1995).

In contrast our findings show that transnational communities, such as the Communities, demonstrate transnational capabilities to overcome dualism in constructing living realities—based on what Heidegger will refer to as “*being and time*” in pursuing citizenship, justice and development and novel connections. Apart from the ingrained human insistence on dignified meaningful life, this implies the multiplicity of understanding, interpreting and participating in world affairs. Thus, there is a need for further research and analysis on the way in which transnational communities and their transnational connections operate beyond the restrictive nation-state paradigm.

Most human migration in the world today is south-south but theories and analytical frames in understanding such mobility remain mainly south-north for variety of reasons such as research resource imbalance and organizational hegemony (Nawyn 2016). Recent research conclusions—applying south-north theorization to south-south migration processes—document both emerging similarities and differences (Nawyn 2016; Abel and Sander 2014), which include pattern of social and economic integration, immigration policy, ethnic and racial issues and transnational south-south NGOs interaction.

The NSS-TCN network explores ways of south-south experiences and asks whether we can learn from existing theories—or whether existing theories and methods can be applied to emerging south-south transnational formations.

In addition, the network addresses migrant and diaspora transnationalism and seeks to add knowledge on existing conceptions and theorizations on nativism, restrictive integration policies and border regimes and mobility governance. The focus is how transnational communities as grassroots actors interact with transnational civic organizations, authorities and state institutions as well as the way in which migrants and ethnic communities mobilize both nationally and transnationally in pursuing strategies to overcome exclusion.

Finally, this paper suggests that studies on south-south connections should in prospect address the following aspects. First, we have to explore the extent to which established social and political theorizations can accommodate the social and political institutions transnational, regional and global connections/cooperation. Secondly, we will have to present empirical analyses of comparative transnational instances aiming at beyond homogenization and nation-state organization and institutionalization beyond conventional north-south transnational contexts. Finally we must address the pluralization and diversification of transnational formations introduced by north-south, and south-south diaspora and transnational communities. It is also important not to forget the increasing interactions, strategies and joint networks by transnational NGOs and transnational communities.

NOTES

1. It is common to speak of “transnational public spheres” “diasporic public spheres” “Islamic public spheres” and even emerging “global public sphere”. And such talk has a clear point. A growing body of media studies literature is documenting the existence of discursive arenas that overflow the bounds of both nations and states. Numerous scholars in cultural studies are ingeniously mapping the contours of such arenas and the flows of images and signs through them. The idea of “transnational public sphere” is intuitively plausible, then, and seems to have purchase on social reality (Fraser in Benhabib et al. 2007: 45).
2. “It is—difficult to differentiate a diaspora from the economic and political migration of a people stemming from a socially segmented society and

comprising notable differences of identity. The recent character of migration (since 1957) and the segmented type of society constitute obstacles to the recognition of a real diaspora. To take better account of these phenomena, researchers such as Vertovec (1999) and Kastoryano (2000) have suggested the concept of transnational community". *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, ed. Rainer Bauböck and Thomas Faist (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

3. See, for example, <http://www.dhaf.org/>; <http://www.amoudfoundation.com/>.
4. See African Union Mission in Somalia, at <http://amisom-au.org/2015/03/amisom-head-engages-with-eu-partners-and-somali-diaspora/> (March 2015).

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Afterword: The Intersection Between Roots and Routes

Jonathan O. Chimakonam

The desire to be part of a social group appears to be one unique feature of humans in comparison to other animals. Belonging to a social group becomes crucial to human identity. This proclivity is what grounds the concept of ethnicity. In its purest form, ethnicity refers to the quality of belonging to a social group with common traditions, norms, or nationality (Peoples and Bailey 2011).

The beauty of ethnicity is the comradeship it affords members of a group. Beyond the cul-de-sac of group cohesion, the blend of various ethnic groups often shows the uniqueness of culture and tradition in identifying nations and peoples (Gellner and Breuilly 1983). The concept of ethnicity, as often argued, is expressed not just in culture; by culture I mean, music, food, dressing, art, dance, rituals, social behavior, traditions, and intellectual history; it is expressed also in geographical locations.

Ethnicity cannot exist in isolation, as members of an ethnic group would have to occupy geographic spaces. It is within these spaces that ethnic groups express their culture, hence the claim that ethnicity is linked

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to culture and territory. For this reason, ethnic groups around the world lay claim to territories under the appellation 'ancestral lands'. These territories bear significant historical meanings to ethnic groups. This historical meaning, in turn, raises emotional attachment to territory, and this is not bad in itself. It becomes problematic when such attachment is prized in isolation of other groups. This exclusionary attachment to territory does not foster transnational cohesion and collaboration. Prizing territorial attachments in isolation of other groups is all too common in today's world. It leads to hate crimes, xenophobic attacks, inter-tribal wars, communal tensions, territorial disputes such as those of Israel and Palestine (Agha and Malley 2001), Russia and Ukraine (de Carbonnel 2014) and the likes all speak to the underlying issues addressed in this text.

The famous migrant crisis or refugee crisis that started in 2015 with movements from Afghanistan and Syria into Europe (Clayton 2015) raises some interesting challenges to our understanding of roots and routes. With the interconnectedness afforded us by the internet, global trade agreements, and progressive diplomacy within the international community, there has been heightened migration for three main reasons, conflict, economic difficulties, and climate change.

First, migrations across routes have heightened because of conflicts (Cohen 1995). War-torn areas like Afghanistan and Syria saw a wave in the movement of citizens of these nations to better and peaceful countries in Europe (Thomas 2015). The need to escape conflict and seek refuge in more peaceful places constitutes a fundamental reason why migration is prompted.

Second, migration across borders have spiked as a result of economic hardship. According to the UN Refugee Agency (2019) between 2017 and 2018, over 5000 migrants have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea in an attempt to seek better lives in Europe. Survivors have found their way to cities in Spain and Italy. The challenge of poverty, which has characterized these movements, has tested the resolve of European nations to look beyond racial and ethnic differences. This has not been very successful as there has been an increase in racism and other discriminatory ills such as islamophobia.

Third, there have been continuous concerns that the impact of global warming and indeed climate change is a motivating factor for chain migration across routes. Economic activities have been hampered by harsh weather conditions, and the inability to grow food due to drought has necessitated the desire to move across borders for safety and sustenance.

The awareness of the world to the lurking dangers of climate change can be said to have quickened some sort of planetary realization. To deny that this realization has little impact on migration, routes and roots, is to deny the obvious.

There are negative and positive ways to view this new reality of movement. On the negative side, it speaks to how conflict and hardship have necessitated the mass movement of peoples through harrowing routes and paths in search of a better life. This has often led to many deaths and is thus an indictment on our humanity. On the positive side, what the movements across routes tell us is that these conditions have created opportunities for the redefinition of identities and cultures. With the influx and movement of people to previously homogeneous societies, there is now a confluence of cultures/ethnicities and this is leading to a redefinition of national identities.

The richness of diversity has been underplayed by the rise in right-wing populism, which seeks to challenge the notion of cross-fertilization of cultures. This tendency seeks to strengthen the claim that roots should remain unchanged and unaltered. The increase in right-wing populism questions the belief that every ethnic group within a geographical space can coexist by retaining their individual peculiarities. Beyond the argument of preserving cultural identities in an unadulterated form, right-wing populism, as seen in Europe, has become a sort of normalized aggressive nationalism, which has strengthened the ‘us versus them’ mentality, creating conflict and hindering cross-cultural fertilization. The ‘us versus them’ thinking puts up a blockade to any meaningful dialogue and conversation between cross culture groups (Chimakonam 2017). This mind-set is a defensive posture that limits the possibility of engaging in cultural exchange that can both be educative and positively transforming.

With the significant rise in right-winged ideologies, such as the emergence of Donald Trump as President of the US, BREXIT in the UK, and considerable gains of conservative parties in Europe that oppose immigration, entrench islamophobia, and advocate some form of Euroscepticism (Camus and Lebourg 2017); it is clear that there is a desire to reach back to roots. And by roots, I mean a desire to retain a purified version of individual cultures. However, this desire shows a misguided ethnocentric commitment. The danger of ethnocentric commitments often is that it assumes that a certain ethnic group is better than another, which inadvertently weakens the possibility of border crossing, bridging of cultural

gaps, and cross-fertilization of cultures. Regardless of technological or economic advances made by one nationality, race, or ethnic group, it does not imply that they possess some cultural superiority over another disadvantaged group. The discipline of intercultural philosophy for example, seeks to show that in a horizontal relationship, every culture has something worthwhile to bring to the table (Egbai and Chimakonam 2019). Armed with this mind-set, it becomes easy to maintain an open mind in engaging with people of different groups.

With this complex social configuration of roots and routes, there has been an increase in conflicts, hate crimes, anti-Semitism, stereotyping, racism, and the likes. The inability to conceive of the coexistence of diverse groups and cultures within a geographical space has become problematic. Unfortunately, the task of creating a politics of hospitality has been ceded to the political class. It should be noted that the political class ground their popularity, especially with the rise in right-winged populism, by stoking the embers of hate and aggressive nationalism. This protectionist mind-set of trying to preserve historically significant national or ethnic cultures from a perceived adulteration and cross-fertilization of culture, challenges any attempt at building an inclusive society.

How then can we have a politics of hospitality? Quite a number of answers come up in response to this question. Perhaps the most challenging notion put forward in this book is the proposal of non-violence especially in the face of brutality and aggression. The focus on how we may quell inter-ethnic tensions stems from our pursuit for strategies that have proven to resolve human differences in time past. Clearly, a non-violent approach adopted by the global icons like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, and Nelson Mandela proved to be helpful. A look at proponents of non-violence such as Thoreau, Tolstoy, and Gandhi lends us some credence to this philosophy and shows that if applied judiciously in today's context of hate, we are likely to come out successful.

The concept of Satyagraha (Majmudar 2012) as used in this text speaks to effective ways to curb extreme nationalism by engaging with a politics of passive resistance. By passively resisting blockades to the intersection of roots and routes, we create new identities. This is because the fusion of diverse identities caused by an interaction between roots and routes shows the revolution of our identities as humans. To achieve this, academics must take the baton from the political class. Knowledge of the importance of a blend of cultures in contrast to an exclusionary politics should inform policies, and this is why this text is crucial.

The journey to a new identity can aptly be captured by the deeply philosophical concept of self. The continuous evolution of national and transnational identities by the interaction between roots and routes must be seen as two distinct concepts. This is because there is a tendency to see routes as a derivative of roots. Roots indeed may inform our notion of self and its manifestation. However, routes create stories that make the entrenchment of roots possible. By journeying through routes, we journey through self-discovery to actualize new identities that transcend individual cultural boundaries to identities that are transnational.

Ananta Kumar Giri and his colleagues have done a commendable work by editing this collection, raising awareness to the presupposed tension that exists between the two concepts—‘roots and routes’. Indeed, there is a complementary union between both concepts as they both shape our identities, especially in a fast changing world. Several of the contributions here have awakened sensitive subjects that confront our world today; however, they have been addressed in the most creative and praise-worthy ways imaginable. They have offered plausible arguments and counter arguments on how best we are to forge a future that consolidates roots and routes. Indeed, attention has been drawn to new ways of conceiving identities and justifications of why cross-border movements happen and how best to respond to them. In all, we are challenged by how deeply intellectual history should be of influence in society beyond academic circles to shape policies and thereby shape our world.

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